Centre for Culture and Development, Vadodara

Third Foundation Lecture

The Paradox:
Nationalism and Pluralism

By
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Centre for Culture and Development

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Preface

Centre for Culture and Development (CCD) is a Jesuit inspired social research centre established in 2001 with the aim of harnessing the knowledge of social sciences to the service of Gujarat society, more especially to its disadvantaged sections-the minorities, tribals, dalits and women.

Over the 18 years CCD has worked on 30 research projects, held 35 national seminars and published 20 books mostly in English through national and international publishers. Recently it has begun a Series of publications edited by Professor A.M.Shah and Lancy Lobo, "*Indian Anthropology, 1886-1936*" from the archival material of the *Journal of Anthropological Society of Bombay*. In 2017 it began a training programme, '*Critical thinking on contemporary India*' for young Jesuits. It also began Foundation Lecture series in 2018 by eminent scholars. The first lecture was given on 27.2.2018 by the scholar- activist Dr.Walter Fernandes on '*Dissent and Contestation as a Social Process in India*'.

The second lecture was given by one of the worlds' leading political philosophers, Lord Bhikhu Parekh, entitled, "*Dialogue between Cultures: Limits and Possibilities*' on 26.2. 2019.

We are indeed extremely happy to have Dr. Rudolf Heredia, an eminent Jesuit scholar and theorist who readily agreed to deliver the third lecture, "*The Paradox: Nationalism and Pluralism*". Having obtained his doctorate in Chicago university, he began a social research centre at St. Xavier's college, Mumbai and later worked at the Indian Social Institute, Delhi. He has conducted research in tribal areas and has authored many articles in prestigious journals. Of the many books, the notable among them are: *Changing gods: Rethinking conversion in India* (2007), *Taking sides: rethinking Quotas and Minority Rights in India* (2013). He has made his services available to the church in India on many occasions.

Vadodara

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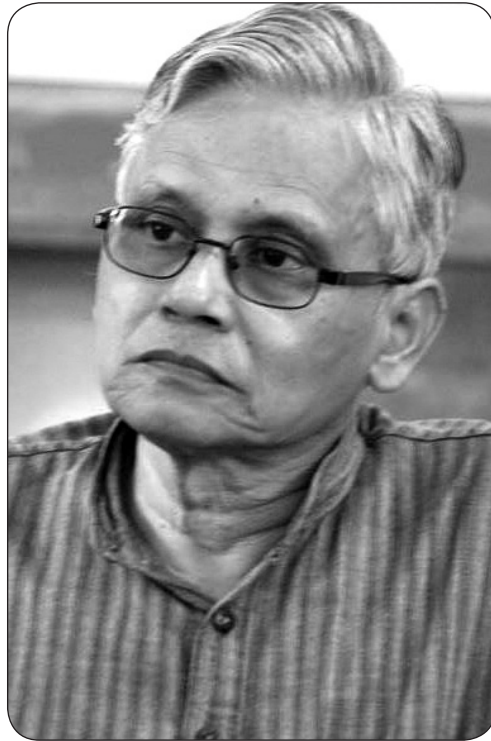
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The Paradox: Nationalism and Pluralism

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Abstract: *The paradox of nationalist pluralism is resolved only with an inclusive nationalism and a tolerant pluralism. Nationalism is a powerful unifier and motivator, pluralism demands tolerance and understanding of difference. Our Constitution affirms liberty, equality fraternity for all citizens, while protecting minorities' rights and affirmative action for the marginalised, the poor and discriminated.*

Our cultural diversity and religious pluralism could be an example to a broken and violent world. Unfortunately, authoritarian ethno-nationalism favours uniformity and single party dominance. It took two World Wars before the European nations were ready for the European Union. It is still a work in progress, but yet an example for The Union of India.

I.   Introduction: Method and Context

1.   The Approach

The way we conceptualise a situation already sets the parameters for our response, which will inevitably reflect the limitations and leads, the confusion or the clarity in our thinking. Hence the more incisive our understanding, the more decisive can be our response.

In this presentation, we will take a hermeneutist rather than a deconstructionist stance. We will exercise our "sociological suspicion", but we will try at the same time to indulge in the "art of listening" to the various voices that speak from different perspectives. But if we want to set the meaning of their text in a meaningful context, then we must also attempt to uncover the pre-judgements that pre-set their 'horizon of understanding', as well as the pre-options that predispose their responses.

For with Marx and Gandhi, the truth we seek is not just the object of a subtle or ethereal intellectual quest, nor merely a pragmatic technique, but rather truth as a reality, a *satya*, authenticated by its humanist and liberative potential.

We can of course hope for a 'fusion of horizons' which will yield a new 'surplus of meaning' and a new more comprehensive vision/perspective. We can also expect a cross-fertilisation of options to make for better focused choices and more committed responses. In opening up this discussion we will first clarify and describe the key concepts contexts involved.

2. History as Prophecy, Remembrance and Interpretation

An authentic historical consciousness can best be described thus: passionate concern with the present, a compassionate interpretation of the past and taking both into a creative anticipation of the future. Hence history as both remembrance and prophecy is necessarily contemporary.

> "Any interpretation moves from the illusive history to the engaging story…. History is accessible only through tradition and comprehensible only through interpretation" (Charlesworth 2007: 461).

Our values are embedded in our traditions and carried into our future by memory, remembrance. Hence a sense of where we come from and where we are going is critical to our self-understanding for today and to project it into the future for tomorrow. We connect sequential events to interpret them and tell a 'story'. My story connects with other people's stories and network of connections that becomes the 'story' the history of the community. In belonging to that community we find our social identity.

These interaction actions are facilitated and intensified by interdependencies and communication that creates a sense of belonging, a conscious of kind (Giddings 1896) not premised on ancestry and blood. These are "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983) when they seek political expression and recognition and invent their supportive traditions and memory based on a selected history, they become 'nations', a political community unified by a common constructed identity. A nation creates powerful loyalties which precipitate wars between them. Nationalism was one of *The Five Ideas that Changed the World* (Ward 1959). It is the ideology which drives this process of nation-building: "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist" (Gellner 1983: 169).

However, when there are many imagined communities in a single polity, we have the multi-nation state, very different and far more problematic than the original European nation-state. Hence a pluri-religious, multi-cultural society demands a correspondingly adequate ideological construct.

II. The Paradox

1. Unity and Diversity

The paradox of nationalism versus pluralism or rather the contradiction between an nationalist agenda and the reality of Indic plurality is a contradiction we tend to ignore, even as an exclusivist hyper--nationalism sweeps through our majority community, as

evidenced in the last two general elections. The last one in 2019 foregrounded the strength and extent of Hindu nationalism as an exclusivist, muscular and aggressive ideology, as authoritarian and majoritarian, oppressive of the 'different other' who does not belong: the marginalised and the poor, the minorities, especially the Muslims as the largest one, the scheduled castes and tribes.

Here 'minority' is understood as defined in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences:*

> "a group of people, differentiated from others in the same society by race, nationality, religion or language, who think of themselves as a differentiated group and are thought of by others as a differentiated group with negative connotations. Further, they are relatively lacking in power and hence subjected to certain exclusions, discriminations and other differentiated treatment" (Rose 1968:365).

Minorities as communities are defined less by demographic numbers than by being less privileged. The *Hindu Rastra* of extremist Hindu ethno-nationalists is not Gandhiji's *Ramrajya*. This is not the nationalism of our freedom movement, one the largest and longest in the national struggles in the world, a people's movement premised on nonviolence (*ahimsa*) and *satyagraha* (truth force), inclusiveness of all Indians but with a preferential option for the underprivileged, Gandhiji's last and the least Indian. This is the India we made a tryst with the first midnight of our Independence and is articulated in our Constitution.

Further such ethno-nationalism does not represent the capacious, inclusive Hinduism that for all its ambiguities still wants to be tolerant of and open to the other. Hinduism as a popular religious tradition resisted turning into a political ideology even as it expressed itself primarily in civil society with an amazing plurality. As the dominant religio-cultural tradition, it influenced other minority traditions similarly. This is what makes our subcontinent one of the most multicultural and pluri-religious regions in the world.

Except for the colonial period, it was not a political state. Rather an overarching Indic civilisation held this bewildering diversity together. India has been a cultural, not political civilizational unity, for ages. For India is more a civic state than a political one, not so much a nation-in-the-making as rather a *multi*-nation federal state. This Indic plurality is the contrary of uniformity an ethno-nationalism demands of an Indian nation-state'.

Earlier,

"the national movement fully recognized the multifaceted diversity of the Indian people. That India was not yet a developed or structured nation, but a nation-in-the-making, was accepted and made the basis of political and ideological work and agitation (Chandra 1988: 555).

Bipin Chandra argues that secular nationalism "provided a real solution to a real problem – national liberation as against colonial domination.... Communalism was the false consciousness of the historical process of the last 150 years" (ibid. 20-23). Secularism provided the neutral ground on which all players could interact and dialogue.

This is the Indian paradox of unity in diversity or more pointedly a given diversity that seeks an inclusive unity, not a unity as prior to diversity but vice versa. This was an overarching civilizational unity at a higher level of integration. This demands an inclusive patriotism that is not indifferent to the 'different other' but is premised on tolerance, open to dialogue and which reaches out in empathy and compassion.

It should be apparent that the incompatibility between nationalism and pluralism is the contradiction, between 'unity in uniformity 'and 'unity in diversity'. All nationalism, even secular ones, tend to create and reproduce uniformity'. It is easier to govern than a diverse plurality. Secular nationalism too tends to produce a mass society of alienated people. Ethno-nationalism inevitably must lead to ethnocentrism and a closed community.

People accepting Hindu nationalism little realise that its effect will be a more aggressive, less tolerant Hinduism, as we see already happening. For ethno-nationalism of one community will tend to provoke others to the same, even to sub-nationalisms and further divisiveness and polarisation. What happens when states begin insist on their own distinct identity? As when *Gujarati asmita* is confronted by Tamil Pride? Linguist nationalism once threatened national unity. A compromise three language formula saved the situation, by recognising regional linguistic identities. Any hint of imposing one language on all states will reignite the controversy again.

2.   Nationalism and Patriotism

The idea of a nation-state originated in the West, as an imperative for political unity for a people that had a common socio-cultural heritage, i.e., a nation, melded into a political unity, i.e., a state. It was a powerful idea but one that imposed a uniformity, cultural, religious, economic with a brutal aggression visited on their own peoples subsuming lesser communities into the dominant one: first with absolute monarchies and centralised states in Europe, but later also on others as these projected their power beyond their borders and expanded to the colonies subjugated to their rule, adding a racist dimension to their nationalism.

With the nation-states of West this pursuit of a collective destiny has been murderously homogenising, as with civil wars, violent revolutions and even world wars. The last century has witnessed horrendous clashes of aggressive nationalisms in Europe, engulfing the world in two World Wars. But we have not as yet managed to exorcise such nationalisms from our world. In fact they are making a comeback with the new conservatives of the right: put America first; Brexit: give my country back.

Moreover, when religion is used to construct this national identity, then religion is politicised into an 'ideology', and vice versa, nationalism is sacralised into a 'religion', resulting in politicised religious traditions and a religionised politics: in other words, a nationalised religion and a sacred nationalism. This entanglement of religion and politics inevitably becomes explosive, as religion becomes fundamentalist and exclusive; and politics becomes extremist and violent. Very much the same happens when a national community is identified by any ethnic marker, like race, or language, or some ascribed identity.

New States (Geertz 1963) in the postcolonial age still endeavour to mobilise their masses with a nationalist ideology in their rush to develop and catch up with the older nations of the West, learning all the wrong lessons from them. Nationalism becomes the political projection of a people's right to self-rule, the legitimising creed of the modern state's claims to authority, and compulsions to create a national identity, as a common socio-cultural-historical identity, and give political and economic expression to it as a unified nation-state. Toward this local languages and dialects, ethnicities and subcultures were all subsumed in a uniformised national identity: one nation, one people, and at times even one ideology, one leader. Thus the rich diversity of the peoples' of the country was sacrificed for the supposed glory and power of the nation-state.

However, this diversity is the basis from which dominant consensus can be challenged. Hegemony thrives on the supposed unity which uniformity brings, whereas in reality it rather favours the dominant classes. For freedom comes with its ambiguities, and people often do not want the responsibility for the choices that freedom imposes. This is the authoritarian personality syndrome (Adorno et al. 1969). But as the discontents of modernity (Smith MG 2016) overtake these societies they seek security and comfort in their ancient traditions, a kind of messianic atavism, that can be aggressive and exclusive. This process has been replicated in post-colonial nations, and in South Asia too.

Nationalism as devotion to one's country easily becomes exclusive: my country first right or wrong. When national interests clash with that of other countries, nationalism inevitably becomes antagonistic and hostile to other countries and results in violence and war on the world stage, rather than dialogue and tolerance, leading to a compromise for the greater common good and peace. Such chauvinist nationalism thrives on finding

or creating national enemies, whether without or within. However, patriotism as a non-exclusive love of one's country is be premised on a self-confidence and openness to other countries without fears and suspicions. This is a far better and more constructive basis for an inclusive society, both national and international, than jingoist exclusiveness.

Political leaders often find it convenient, even profitable to confuse nationalism and patriotism so as to mobilise their followers on the basis of a politics of hate, masquerading as nationalism, rather than painstakingly cultivating a patriotism as a love for one's people that reaches out to other peoples as well. Thus 'patriotism' is rooted yet open, while nationalism can be aggressive and chauvinist. To paraphrase Mother Teresa from a different context: I love all nations but I'm in love with my own! Such patriotism is a far more viable basis for a national community in pursuit of the common good, rather than the self-interest that the social contract of Thomas Hobbes (1651) which founds our politics today, both national and international, whether this self-interest be individual or group, national or international. This prioritising of self-interest over the common good is what plagues communities in our country and nations at the UN, despite so much pious rhetoric.

Both Muslim and Hindu nationalism on the subcontinent betrayed this ideal of an inclusive patriotism with the Partition of British India in 1947. After the assassination of Gandhi by a Hindu fanatic member of a Hindu nationalist organisation, Hindu nationalism was convincingly rejected at least for a while. However, not long after Independence the Indian National Congress itself in effect abandoned Gandhi's ideals, and compromised the democratic institutions Nehru had nurtured, with partisan party politics, which finally split the party.

3.   Perspectives on Indian Nationalisms

The Indian Subcontinent was a civilizational unity not a political one. As such there was no real consciousness of a common national identity or a quest for nationhood. The colonial British created a subcontinental political unity, which precipitated a response by the end of the 19th century: a cultural renaissance beginning in Bengal and a radical social reform movement beginning from Maharashtra. The struggle for independence from colonial rule was premised on both these and hence more than just a political movement it was for radical social transformation. The struggle against colonial rule was the beginning of a national awareness premised on our older civilisation unity.

The struggle for Independence brought various strands of the movement with different political emphases, under its umbrella but wedded them into a common core, the 'idea of India', however form its earliest phases there were two distinctly different perspectives on the India they were fighting for: the Hindu revivalists and the social

reformists. Thus there was an inherent ideological tension in the freedom struggle: between a vision of an idealised ancient past prioritising religious and cultural revivalism, and a dream of an enabling ew future centred on social transformation and concern. Thus the response to this East-West confrontation of colonial rule precipitated was a religio-cultural revival of Hinduism and a social reform in civil society. These projected different perspectives for the nationalist movement.

The first perspective projected a nationalism that was more Hindu than Indian, with a definite inclination to religious revivalism, though somewhat moderated by new organisations like the *Brahmo Samaj* and others, and somewhat subdued in the freedom struggle. It found an echo in the Hindu Right as it gained ground in the post-Nehruvian period. Today this finds effective political expression in the *Bharatiya Janta Party* (BJP), and its mentor the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS, National Volunteer Association) founded in 1925, and supported by the *Sangh Parivar* with its extended family of numerous front organisations. Their ideology of Hindutva (Hinduness) (Savarkar 1989, 1st 1923) claims to be a 'cultural nationalism' which seeks to establish a '*Hindu Rashtra*, a vision of an idealised ancient past prioritising religious and cultural revivalism

The second perspective found expression in the freedom struggle, was inspired by a social transformation and concern, dominated by the Indian National Congress, (INC) founded in 1885, and its leaders, especially Gandhi and Nehru, whose liberal secularism and democratic socialism it enshrined in the Constitution. Gandhi's *Swaraj* privileged the last and least Indian but now his ideals are served more in the breach than in fact. The dominant Nehruvian consensus of the early independence era was premised on the second, a secular, democratic socialism, but it never could quite contain or defuse the lure of the first.

Now Hindu nationalists attack Congress as pseudo-secularist and project a majoritarian *Hindu Rashtra*, thus making other minorities extremely insecure. Their coming to power at the Centre and in many states has intensified rather than moderated the majority-minority community divide, precipitating a sharp escalation in violent communal conflicts. Religious minorities constitute some 20 per cent of the population and religious violence tears apart the social fabric, something a tolerant, and just society cannot countenance. The consequent trauma and polarisation undoes the social structure of society.

4.   Many Indias, Many Nationalisms

Indian Nationalism has been contested by opposing constituencies with their antagonistic ideologies, seeking to co-opt it for their own partisan purposes. However, the overwhelming dominant player in the freedom movement was the Indian National

Congress (INC). Different trends came to prominence at different times in the national freedom struggle's ideology and culture. Many stands were interwoven into its texture even in the Indian (INC) itself, though the Gandhian one prevailed, till the Nehruvian consensus became dominant after Gandhi in Republican India.

But whether it was the genteel liberalism of Gokhale or the deep humanism of Tagore, the aggressive revivalism of Tilak, or the radical reformism of Gandhi, or the democratic socialism of Nehru or Ambedkar's uncompromising on the 'annihilation of caste', the surreptitious privileging of it by revivalists, down to the Muslim nationalism of Jinnah, the pragmatic politics of the national opposition and regional parties today, all through these phases Hindu nationalism has had a subterranean existence even when it has been marginalised in national politics, it survived and later thrived in the *shakas* of the RSS and the *Sangh Paivar*, until today as the BJP it dominates the national stage today.

Here I briefly mention a few of the icons of the freedom movement who foregrounded an inclusive pluralist India.

III.   The Idea of India

1.   Setting the Context

The idea of India in our Constitution cannot be forced into a sectarian, communal interpretation without doing violence to its basic structure. Further such identity politics displaces interest politics and basic issues remain neglected. This precipitates popular resistance, which provokes a blowback from the government of greater repression of any dissenters and critics, who are perceived as subversive enemies of the state, only to provoke further resistance.

2.   Patriotic Humanism

The contestation between religio-cultural revival for independent *Bharat* and an enabling future for free India begins with "idea of India", first articulated by Rabidranath Tagore. He rejected a narrow aggressive nationalism, for a broad inclusive patriotism. His "idea of India" – a phrase first used by him in 1902 and later popularised by Nehru's *Discovery of India* (1946) – was distinctly syncretic (*Bharatvarsher Itihas* 1902) a civilization "embedded in the tolerance encoded in various traditional ways of life in a highly diverse plural society" (Nandy 1994: x–xi), welcoming all peoples and cultures, until the middle ages when Brahmanic Hinduism built:

"a system of barriers. Its nature was to forbid and to exclude. The world never saw such a neatly constructed system against assimilation of any kind. This is not a barrier only between Hindus and Muslims. People like you and me who want freedom in conducting our life are also impeded and imprisoned" (Tagore 1922: 313).

Tagore was keenly aware of dangers of nationalist chauvinism (Nationalism 1917) and sharply apprehensive of the militant nationalism in India. The genius of India he elaborated in terms of a spirit of cooperation: "Let our civilisation take its firm stand upon its basis of social cooperation and not upon that of economic exploitation and conflict" (Tagore 1996: 465). Tagore was quintessentially a humanist and an internationalist. A man before his time, Tagore today could still inspire a more humane globalisation.

3. *Swaraj* versus *Swatantra*

Gandhi dominated the freedom struggle. *Hind Swaraj* (1908) expressed Gandhi's "India of my Dreams" (*Young India* 10 Aug 31). For him "Civilisation is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty" (Gandhi 1909: Ch.13). The basis then of his *swaraj* could not be just rights, it had to be duties as well. It had to be a person's rule over one's self in this path of duty, before it could be the collective rule over one's *desh* (country). He incisively rejects of Western civilisation built on colonial imperialism, industrial capitalism, and rationalist materialism and then presents his alternative for India:

swaraj (self-rule),
swadesh, (devotion to one's country as a neighbourhood not an abstraction)
satya (truth as experiential, not speculative) and
seva, (service as selfless prioritising the last and least)
satyagraha (truth force) was pursued with
ahimsa (nonviolence) against injustice

Gandhi was a patriot who wanted "Indian nationalism to be non-violent, anti-militaristic and therefore a variant of universalism" (Nandy 1995: 14). Already in 1908 he wrote: "By patriotism I mean the welfare of the whole people" (*Hind Swaraj* Ch.15). Later he could affirm: "my patriotism is for me a stage on my journey to the land of freedom and peace," (*Young India*, April 13, 1924: 112) which was always inclusive. Indeed, Gandhi was an internationalist and a patriot, not a narrow nationalist.

He was very wary lest the nationalist movement merely replaced 'white sahibs' with 'brown' ones. He feared we might succeed in getting independence, (*swantrata*), from the British for the political and other elites, and fail in achieving freedom, (*swaraj*),

or rather *purna swaraj* (integral self-rule) for the Indian people, especially for the last and least among them. In Gandhian terms this meant going the distance from *swatantra* to *swaraj*: 'freedom from', but more so 'freedom for', freely to fulfil one's duties not merely affirming of one's rights. Herein lay true freedom that finally led to moksha via ahimsa and the *seva-marg*. This was not just an economic-political agenda, but a socio-cultural one for a civilizational revolution. Today we find his fears have proven all too prescient.

4.   Discovering India

Nehru sees India not in exclusive terms, but rather as a multicultural and pluri-religious civilisation that was to be the defining basis for its national identity.

> "Nehru traces this right back to the meeting between the Aryans and the Dravidians, and later between the settlers and the Iranians, Greeks, Parthians, Bactrians, Scythians, Huns, Turks (before Islam), early Christians, Jews (and) Zoroastrians" (Bhattacharjee 2015: 21).

Though the basis of such a synthesis was the "astonishing inclusive capacity of Hinduism" (Nehru 1946: 74). This *Discovery of India* (1946) that Nehru, the Enlightenment rationalist, made was not bound by religious roots or defined by specific practices.

Nehru distinguishes culture and history. For him "the clash between different cultures was rather fictitious; the real thing was the historical opposition" (Paz 1967: 14). Thus the clash between East and West was historical rather than cultural and not always negative, as evidenced by "this unique moment when the West has something new to offer to other civilisations in spite of its ugly baggage of colonialism" (Bhattacharjee 2015: 20). This anti-traditionalist stance on culture makes a mixed composite possible.

For Nehru there were two most critical problems to be faced, as he communicated to Andre Malraux in an interview:

> "Creating a just state by just means, … Perhaps, too, creating a secular state in a religious country. Especially when its religion is not founded on an inspired book" (Malraux 1968: 160).

Today these are still unresolved yet even more urgent challenges for us

5.   Republican Constitution

For Ambebkar Buddhism originally defined India, but through the ages Buddhism was displaced by a Hinduism that was corrupted beyond redemption by Brahminism. He hoped his neo-Buddhist Navayana would restore the original Buddhist ideal and be the foundation of the newly constituted Republic of India, where justice means liberty, equality, fraternity, and caste would be annihilated.

After Independence was won, the Constituent Assembly debates, over which Ambedkar presided, hammered out the compact expressed in *The Constitution of India*. It represented the broad consensus of the movement led by the Indian National Congress. Despite differences and disagreements this was not a pragmatic political compromise lacking conviction and commitment but a compact based on mutual trust to allow for various underlying approaches and perspectives, to be sorted out with sensitivity and understanding.

Constitution we gave ourselves expressed the ideal of our freedom struggle. But it left a fertile ground for conflict between the political compulsions of the government and the constitutional propriety of the courts. In his last speech at the closure of the Constituent Assembly, 25th Nov 1949 Ambedkar had warned:

> "The working of a Constitution does not depend wholly upon the nature of the Constitution. The Constitution can provide only the organs of State such as the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. The factors on which the working of those organs of the State depends are the people and the political parties they will set up as their instruments to carry out their wishes and their policies. Who can say how the people of India and their purposes or will they prefer revolutionary methods of achieving them? [sic] If they adopt the revolutionary methods, however good the Constitution may be, it requires no prophet to say that it will fail." (CAD 25 XI: 330).

> Ambedkar's constitutional democracy anticipated the dangers of populist leaders.

6.   The Tryst We Made with Destiny

The freedom movement was reformist and the Constitution articulated this as a document for a social and gradualist transformation, not a violent revolution. One of the early experts on our Constitution insisted that it

> "is first and foremost a social document. The majority of its provisions are either directly aimed at furthering the goals of the social revolution or attempt to foster this revolution by establishing the conditions necessary for its achievement" (Austin 1966: 50).

There are ambiguities in India's freedom movement that cannot be gainsaid. The failure of Hindu-Muslim unity is something we still have not come to terms with and infects communal harmony in the subcontinent, within India and with Pakistan, but it has some epic dimensions as well: a mass movement of people inspired by *ahimsa, satya,*

seva (non-violence, truth and service). Bringing ethics to politics and not politicising religion. The nationalism of the freedom movement was premised not on scribed status, neither on religious nor ethnic exclusivist nationalisms. Rather it was inclusive of all peoples in the imagined nation, and reached out to the whole world.

Following Nandy (1994) we will indicate the similarities and complementarities between two icons of our freedom struggle to help enrich our understanding of this people's movement. Tagore's patriotism was deeply humanist, and like Gandhi's was a rejection of a narrow nationalist agenda, even as it was anti-imperialist and non-militaristic. Tagore refused a primacy to polities, but sought rather to reconcile the contradictions and conflicts of his country in a higher cultural order, just as Gandhi did on the more basic little traditions of his peoples (Nandy 1994: 2).

Tagore was critical of all nationalism. He viewed it as an impediment to the internationalism, which he saw as our global future. But Gandhi felt we must be nationalists before becoming internationalists and in his debate with him on the subject emphasised that India's national movement would not be exclusive but concerned for the liberation not just of Indians but all subject peoples.

Both were patriots and

"in this ideology of patriotism rather than of nationalism, there was a built-in critique of nationalism and refusal to recognize the nation-state as the organizing principle of the Indian civilization and as the last word in the country's political life" (Nandy 1994.:3).

For both, again,

"Overtime, the Indian freedom movement ceased to be an expression of only nationalist consolidation; it came to acquire a new stature as a symbol of the universal struggle for political justice and cultural dignity" (Nandy 1994: 2-3).

For both

"the ultimate civilizational ambition of India: to be the cultural epitome of the world and convert all passionate self-other debates into self-self debates" (Nandy 1994.:82).

In other words to convert divisive debates into integrating dialogues, to transform exclusive identities into inclusive ones, to change hostile controversy into empathetic consensus. J.P. Narayan, the hero of the 1975-77 Emergency, speaking at Dadabhai Naoriji Fund lecture series on "Origin of Nation" concluded: "Two of our great teacher

and leaders – Tagore and Gandhi have given us a vision of Nationalism that is based on that unity of spirit which makes of the entire human race one single nation of man" (Narayan 1990: 300).

The declaration of Independence in 1947 and the promulgation of our Constitution in 1952 were defining moment in India's national history. But we are still to keep our tryst with destiny. Tagore critique in his *Essays on Nationalism in India* (1917) ends on a hopeful note:

> "And yet I will persist in believing that there is such a thing as the harmony of completeness in humanity, where poverty does not take away his riches, where defeat may lead him to victory, death to immortality, and in the compensation of Eternal Justice those who are the last may yet have their insult transmuted into a golden triumph."

IV.   Hindu Ethno-nationalism

1.   Hinduism and Hindutva

Regrettably over the years the mainstream political parties and the successive governments they have formed failed to effectively address the very real long-term challenges that have and still confront India. The Nehruvian consensus intended a gradualist transformation of India into a social democracy with a Fabian socialism. Real progress was made but it could not keep up with the "revolution of rising expectations" as Adalai Stevenson said of the postcolonial masses. After Nehru, the consensus on a secular socialist governance began to fragment. With some exceptions, poor governance by lesser leaders in pursuit of short term goals and vested interests prevailed.

This displacement of 'eco-political interest politics' by 'religio-culural identity politics' has polarised our society into regional and linguist, caste and religious communities. The consequent cascade of crises and disruptions leaves us with an unresolvable contradiction between the Constitutional idea of a Republican India premised on liberal constitutional democracy, and an ethnic populist state. Procedural democracy, with regular elections contested by political parties seems well established. However, substantive democracy of liberty, equality fraternity, is being marginalised and displaced by a religious majority with an increasing political authoritarianism. So have we missed our tryst with destiny or have we now chosen a new one?

This really would amount to a betrayal of our secular constitutional Republic, a surrender of our democratic rights and freedoms. Some blame our present predicament as on the "pragmatic communalism" of "pseudo secularists", who have used the communal

card to appease the minorities, or on secular rationalists, who rubbished religion and provoked a backlash. Others explain it as the well planned "programmatic communalism" of the extremists who manipulate religious sentiment and polarize religious communities. Secular modernists see this religious fundamentalism as a failure of rationality and a regress into a reactionary tradition. For postmoderns the blame is on the homogenising nationalist state (Gellner 1983) with its "technocratic mind sets" (Kothari 1988: 2227).

Underlying these reactions are lost selves in lost worlds. This is fertile ground for populist politics of collective identities and quick fixes, an invitation for strong leadership with readymade remedies, rather than citizen participation in sorting out the issues.

Already as the freedom struggle gained momentum, and India's Independence was now inevitable, the more conservative Hindus, generally those from among the *savarnas* (upper castes) were apprehensive of the rapid changes in the status quo this would bring, and what this might mean for them. They would rather settle for a revival of past religious traditions not a risk new and changed ones. There were many such groups and movements, very varied in their approach, from religious fundamentalists to political extremists and much more in between. The more religiously inclined, like the Arya Samaj and the Ramkrishna Mission eschewed politics for social reform; the more political ones, like the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS were politically engaged in more or less transparent ways.

They felt the secular nationalist movement led by the Indian National Congress (INC) was a betrayal of Hinduism and a weak compromise of the pre-eminence of what the majority Hindu community should be. Already we see the beginning of a Hindu ethno-nationalism in Bengal, which gets articulated in Maharashtra by V. D. Savarkar's (1883-1966) Hindutva as a polemic political ideology of ethno-religious nationalism to include culture and race (Savarkar 1989).

But who is a Hindu was a pertinent question the time at the beginning of the Hindu revival in Bengal. In 1910 the Daily Hitavadi in Bengal on 5th Nov concluded a discussion on this topic thus: "whoever calls himself a Hindu is a Hindu"! (Sarkar 2002: 84). Belief was not relevant, though social customs were to be respected. The Hindu tradition emphasised orthopraxis, right conduct, not orthodoxy, right belief. Even today in our personal law 'Hindu' is a default category. Hinduism is better described than defined.

However, for Savarkar "Hinduism must necessarily mean the religion and the religions that are peculiar and native to this land and people" (Savarkar 1989: 104). He identified Hindus in terms of "the three essentials of nation: realm (*Rashtra*), race (*Jati*) and civilization (*Sanskriti*)" (Savarkar 1989: 101). The first important qualification of a Hindu is that "the whole continental country from the Sindhu to Sindhu, from the Indus to the Seas", (Savarkar 1989: 82) "is not only a *Pitribhu* but a *Punyabhu*, not only a fatherland but a holy land" as well (Savarkar 1989: 111).

In his speech to the Hindu Mahasabha at Nagpur in 1938 he insisted that "India must be a land reserved for the Hindus." Others were here on sufferance as lesser citizens. His Hindutva, then is a political ideology intended to unify and mobilise the Hindus across all their internal divides of inegalitarian classes and hierarchical castes, different languages among Hindus , bringing them all under common 'Hindu identity' in terms of '*pitru bhumi*' and '*punya bhumi*', fatherland and holyland, for a *Hindu Rashtra*.

S.P. Gokhale identified the following four specific features that identify Hindus and distinguish them from Muslim:

> (a) all those sects and panths, whether Vedic or non-Vedic in their origin who consider *'Aa Sindhu' Hindustan* i.e., the Indian subcontinent from the river Sindhu to the Indian Ocean] as their fatherland and mother; (b) all Hindus who belong to the same racial stock; (c) they all share a common cultural heritage; (d) those who regard *Bharat* as their *punyabhumi*, the (or, holy land in the sense Christianity uses the term holy (Gokhale 1949: Introduction).

Such an ethno-religious nationalism that would have an inevitable mirror effect on the Muslim community and their leaders to take advantage of was not lacking. In his presidential address to the *Hindu Mahasabha* in Ahmedabad in 1937, he said: "There are two antagonistic nations living side by side in India" (Savarkar 1971: 24). This was dangerously divisive. Savarkar wanted Hindustan for Hindus, with the minorities here on Hindu sufferance. Jinnah was in agreement as regards the two nation theory, which he espoused in 1941. Eventually, Subcontinental Muslim nationalism resulted in the Partition of 1947. In 1971 East Bengali nationalism brought another partition and we can only hope there will not be more with other sub-nationalism.

Savarkar, who was much inspired by Guisepe Mazzini (1805 -1872), the founder of Italian Fascism, is the first and principal ideologue of this extreme Hindu nationalism. Others repeated rather than advanced his argument. M.S. Golwalkar, the RSS *sarsangh chalak*, (supremo), from 1940 to 1973 followed with *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (1980, 1st 1939). This was an official text until the RSS spokesperson "officially disowned" M S Golwalkar's book, as "neither representing the views of the grown *Guruji* nor of the RSS". ..the book that is central to "us is Golwalkar's Bunch of Thoughts since it consists of his views after he became sarsanghchalak on June 21, 1940" (Times of India, 9 Mar 2006 (https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/RSS-officially-disowns-Golwalkars-book/articleshow/1443606.cmsofficially-disowns-Golwalkars-book/articleshow/1443606.cms).

Some of the textual expressions in *Our Nationhood Defined* were embarrassingly extremists, as his praise of Hitler anti-semitism against the Jews as "racial purity"

(1939: 43). But the substance of ideological prejudice remains and is still reflected in the pragmatic praxis of the RSS, the politics it encourages, prioritising Hindus as against the different other, especially the Muslims.

To my mind, the future of our multicultural, pluri-religious peoples can only be even bloodier with Savarkar's Hindutva displacing Gandhi's Hinduism. As a political ideology Hindutva promotes an aggressive, exclusivist Hindu nationalism. It is not particularly religious. In its present avatar it claims to be 'cultural nationalism'. But its exclusivism polarises the nation and projects a politics of hate. Hinduism as a religious tradition promotes an expansive inclusivism.

The rationalism of Nehru's *dharma-nirapekshata* does not have real mass appeal with the religiosity of our peoples. Only Gandhi's *sarva-dharma-samabhava* (equal respect for all religions) or rather *sarva-dharmi-samabhava* (equal respect for persons of all religions), can possibly be an effective basis for an inclusive nationalism of all our diverse peoples on which to premise a just inter-religious peace and harmony.

2.   Gandhi's Hinduism and and Savarkar' Hindutva

We have only to contrast Gandhi's Hinduism with V. D. Savarkar's Hindutva to see how starkly contrapuntal they are! Savarkar's "Hinduise politics and militarise Hinduism" is the very opposite of Gandhi's *sarva-dharma-samabhav*. Gandhi did not believe in a separation of religion and politics. But he brought a religious ethic to politics rather than political militancy into religious communities. Savarkar's ideology was narrow and exclusivist in its conflation of *janma bhoomi* and *puniya bhoomi*. Moreover, it played on the insecurities of the traditional upper caste elite, now trying desperately to make the transition to a modern upper class one.

Hence in spite of its pretensions to be nationalist and modern, its militant chauvinism and authoritarian fundamentalism make Hindutva not a new synthesize of Hinduism, but the very antithesis of Gandhi's Hinduism. With Gandhi's leadership, a man who did not and could not hate, the Indian freedom struggled was to convert divisive debates into integrating dialogues, to transform exclusive identities into inclusive ones, to change hostile controversy into empathetic consensus.

Savarkar's Hindu nationalism for a *Hindu Rastra* demands uniformity for unity: one nation, one culture, one religion, one language… Non-Hindus would be second class citizens, here on sufferance. This exclusive nationalism would uniformise our diversity. Such exclusive nationalism affects all citizens. It marginalises the minorities and stymies any national contribution from them. But the majority community too would have to conform to official version of one culture, one language, one people, as happened with the early history on nation-states in Europe in their bloodied path to nationhood.

Gandhi's inability to bridge the religious divide between Hindus and Muslims, was matched in many ways by his failure to bridge the caste divide between Dalits and others. Gandhi never quite understood Jinnah, and one could say the same in regard to Ambedkar. Ambedkar and his Dalits have never forgotten or forgiven Gandhi for the Pune Pact. And we can only wonder now whether separate electorates for Dalits then would have made reservations for them unnecessary now. What we do know is that the caste divide has only deepened with increasing conflict and indeed the same can be said about the religious divide and religious conflict in this country.

V.   Nationalisms and Nation

1.   Deconstructing Hindutva

Antonio Gramsci (1996) has shown how nationalism can also become a hegemonic imposition by dominant classes on subordinate ones. Dominant religious groups use nationalism to suppress or assimilate other groups. Such religious nationalisms are inevitably resisted, by secular and other minority religious groups, and the confrontation often spins out of control. Pankaj Mishra correctly traces the rise of Hindu nationalism of V.D. Sarvarkar's Hindutva to Giuseppe Mazzini's nationalism, premised on a selective historical memory, called for a restoration of the glory which had been destroyed by barbarian invasions:

> "an acute consciousness of the defeat and humiliation of ancestors, an awakening to historical pain, and a resolve to rectify the wrongs of the past with superhuman efforts at power and glory in the present and future. The latter include self-sacrifice for the greater cause of the nation, as Modi has repeatedly exhorted after unleashing demonetisation. An intellectual genealogy of Hindu nationalism, however, reveals that there is nothing uniquely 'Hindu' about it" (Mishr, 2017).

Mazzini's Young Italy for a united Italy was the model for Savarkar's *Abinav Bharat* for *Akhand Bharat*, for all of subcontinental India. This is the Hindutva the RSS has adopted as its commanding ideology, but without the militant rationalism of Sarvarkar.

Unfortunately, religious nationalism and fundamentalism have not received the attention these warrant from the liberals and leftist. They were all too dismissive of the possible dangers due to their rationalist and secularist 'prejudices'. Much to our consternation now, Hindu nationalism, in the numerous affiliates of the *Sangh Parivar* of the *RSS and other like-minded* organisations, is dominating and even dictating the political agenda.

There is a historical continuity between the Hindutva and the dominant caste-class coalitions today, that already made its crucial presence felt in the nationalism of the Hindu renaissance of the colonial period, and which in turn has far reaching roots in the brahmanic Hinduism of the early medieval times. Once we begin to deconstruct and situate these traditions in their social context, we find a substantial continuity in the hegemonic project of the modern Hindutva agenda and the traditional *savarna* sensitivities: the former becomes very much a radicalized and politicised extension of the latter. Hence it is important to distinguish Hindutva as a political ideology from Hinduism as a religious faith tradition. But this distinction has more validity for a liberal reformist Hinduism, which identifies itself as a religious faith, embodied in a religio-cultural tradition, not extremist Hindutva that politicise it for partisan purposes.

Hinduism as a religious tradition is not nationalist. Rather it is universalist. *Vasudaiva kutumbakam*. To politicise it into an ideology diminishes its rich cultural and undermines its deep spirituality. To turn it into an ethno-nationalism is to subvert its universalism. How different would India be from any other ethno-religious state of whatever religious persuasion? There are many examples of such states failing to deliver on their promise. Will India be one more?

2.   Contesting the Idea of India

In India nationalism today is a contested term that opposing constituencies with their contrary ideologies use to promote their partisan purposes: the enabling nationalism of our constitutional Republic with its unity and diversity, and the ethno-nationalism of an authoritarian majoritarianism, where unity means uniformity. This has become the shibboleth for distinguishing good citizens from bad ones, the loyal from the seditious, urban Naxalism from civic sensibility. To make a critical analysis of this contemporary situation and come up with a committed response we must search for the origins of such nationalism. Many players are implicated in the complex dilemmas and anomalies in this historical drama of nation-building,

An exclusivist nationalism which does not treat all its citizens as equals, makes subjects of those excluded, i.e. persons with duties to, but no rights against the state. A society hierarchised by caste, and stratified by class, segmented by ethnicity and polarised by religion, cannot claim to be a nation, a community of fellowship with a consciousness of kind, an empathy for one's neighbour. Elite groups, and dominant communities, do project a nationalism of liberty, equality fraternity. But unless it is equally inclusive of all, even the minorities and the marginalised, it cannot pretend to be a modern nation or a liberal democracy. What we will then have is a nationalism without a nation, an anomaly of the dominant groups claiming to represent the whole national community and setting

the terms of engagement for the rest. This is an exclusivist *Nationalism without a Nation* (Aloysius, G. 1997).

All exclusive nationalisms are intolerant of religio-cultural diversity and economic-political dissent. This is not just an impoverishment of our culture, it is an injustice to our people. For our sense of identity and dignity, both as persons and as a people is embedded in our local community cultures which require to be recognized and affirmed not marginalised and repressed (Taylor 1992). An inclusive nationalism can extend beyond one's own nation to others as with the internationalism of Tagore and the rooted openness of Gandhi's nationalism, as when he said:

> 'I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them' (*Young India*, June 1921: 170).

Interestingly, Gandhi rather spoke of *praja* not *rastra,* of the people, not the nation/state. (Parel 1991: 262) Nationalism as an ideology must be at the service of the people, and not vice versa: the people to be sacrificed on the altar of nationalism. So too must religion embrace the *seva-marg* and not sacrifice people at the altars of the gods. Surely we can do with a surgical strike into the prejudice and hatred in our hearts and minds.

There is an underlying cultural complementarity, a societal commonality of our common humanity though differently expressed in different societies. For Gandhi the ontological unity of the cosmos was the premise for human unity: *vasudaiva kutumbakam* (the world family). Moreover, the intensification of trade and finance, facilitated by media and migration, results in a imploding globalising world. The consequent rapid and radical change brings a blowback of uprooted people seeking lost roots once again in localisation. Moreover, 'locals' and 'cosmopolitans' need not imply exclusive individual or collective identities. These can be multiple and fluid, with an overarching openness needed to contain different diversities. Socrates could consider himself a citizen of the world, precisely because he was a citizen of Athens, a city open to the world. The same could not be said of a Spartan.

3.   India as a Multi-Nation-State

The idea of a nation-state originated in the West. As an imperative for political unity in melding a people into a nation, a brutal uniformity, cultural, religious, economic was enforced with an aggression visited on their own peoples and also on other nations, as when the imperial European powers expanded their colonies and subjugated them to their rule.

The 20th century, saw post-colonial nations replicating this process in their haste to catch up with the developed nations. As people constructed a common socio-cultural identity, they sought to give political and economic expression to it as a nation-state (Geertz). Local languages and dialects, ethnicities and subcultures were all subsumed in a uniformised national identity. Thus they sacrificed the diversity of their peoples for the supposed unity of the nation. Post-colonial nations began replicating this process of enforced uniformity for unity in their nation-building: whether it be Islam in Pakistan, or Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Bahasa in Indonesia, or secularism in Turkey. But ethno nationalism can be problematic and precipitate dangerous national crises.

Furthermore, the suppression of dissent introduces a dangerous divide between government and governed. Populism pretends to bridge the gap, but it cannot address the real issues once a rational politics of interests gets displaced by a passionate politics of identity. However, it does manage to transfer he blame on some convenient scapegoat.

A people made insecure and anxious by rapid and radical social change look for a strong man/woman savior who promises quick deliverance with little concern for due process. Even performance counts less than faith in the reassurance of the strong leader: *ache din aanewale hain* (good times are a coming) was the slogan in 2014, in 2019 it was a plea for a second chance. Such rampant populism has no place for the different other, whom it assimilates and absorbs on unequal terms. It so flattens the reality of the given plurality of our diverse peoples, which is an enriching pluralism of tolerating difference and dialoguing to consensus.

This uniformisation would hardly be possible in the Indian Subcontinent without a Balkanisation. Differences of caste and class, religion and region, ethnicity and language are still deep and volatile, and could easily explode into violence if exacerbated by forced repression rather than being contained and constrained by a consensual overarching unity embracing the bewildering diversity of India's rich religious and cultural heritage. This was a dominant inspiration of our freedom struggle against the colonial Raj, to celebrate an inclusive political unity in our rich cultural diversity, a federal union of linguistic states with protective minority rights and affirmative action Dalits and tribals.

VI. Cultural Nationalism

1. Nehruvian Consensus and Majoritarianism

In the contemporary context as the people of India, there are three defining/ game changing moments:

First**,** the end of the British Raj on 15th August 1947;

Second, the national emergency declared in 1975 and lifted in 1977;

Third the emergence of the dominant pre-eminence of the BJP on the national scene after the general election of 2014 and emphatically confirmed in the 2019 election.

Each of these in turn had implications or our nation and society. The first gave us our Consttitution and the Nehruvian years that built and stabilised democratic institutions and political practices in the country. The humiliation of the Indo-Chinese War of 1962, dented Nehru's credibility. The second moment began with the undoing of much of the Nehruvian consensus with a personalised power politics that split the Congress Party: The new populist leader was identified with the party, the party with the government, and the government with nation. The agenda was basically left leaning and pro-poor, more rather than less secular.

But India is too complex and has too many overlapping and cascading crises for any short term redressal by a populist authoritarian leader. This first Emergency suspended fundamental rights and promoted the idea of a committed, but in actuality a submissive judiciary and bureaucracy, while the government became increasingly authoritarian. Then in 1977 an electoral wave drowned the government, both leader and party. But the post emergency fragmentation of party coalitions, excepting some periods of respite, made for fractured governance and improvised policies. Even the ten years of the UPA (2004 – 2014) could not reverse the public perception of ambiguity and drift.

The post-Nehruvian Congress party has been riddled with factionalism and compromised by corruption. So in spite of some significant achievements it has left a path of unfulfilled promises and betrayed hopes. Even in its last avatar in the United Progressive Alliance, led by Congress (UPA 2004 - 2014) its very successes raised people's expectations which it could not meet; its pragmatic opportunism lost them the people's trust; its dependence on dynastic rule marginalised regional satraps and paralysed grassroots cadre. However, the chauvinism and ethnocentrism of regional parties have been unable project a viable national alternative, preoccupied as they are with their own local compulsions and squabbling among themselves.

In the pursuit of lesser short term goals, vested interests poor governance has prevailed. Over the years, elected governments failed to effectively address the real long-term challenges that have and still confront India; they failed to meet the rising expectations of the people, to do what they were elected to do, choosing partisan politics over a principled one to implement the Constitutional agenda on the integral development of society and progress for all its citizens. This eventually precipitated the displacement of 'interest politics' by 'identity politics', which has polarised our society into regional

and linguist, caste and especially religious communities while basic issues remain neglected as The Hunan Development Index (HDI) shows. As popular resistance hardens and it eventually provokes a blowback from the government of greater repression of any dissenters and critics, who are perceived as subversive enemies of the state, only to provoke further resistance.

The consequent cascade of crises and disruptions leaves us with an unresolvable contradiction between the Constitutional idea of a republican India premised on liberal democracy, and a *Hindu Rashtra* premised on the Hindutva agenda of cultural nationalism, and exclusivist majoritarianism. However, the idea of India in our Constitution cannot be forced into a sectarian, communal interpretation without doing violence to its basic structure.

We can be justly proud of our democracy which has shown enduring resilience in spite of the hiccups, like the Emergency of 1975 – 77, but as yet this is an electoral democracy. A substantive democracy has still a long way to go to bring *swaraj* to the Gandhi's least and last Indian. However, today this idea of India is being contested as never before. The 2014 general election was an alarming warning of the real and present danger of our Republic being high-jacked by an aggressive majoritarianism. The 2019 election was an emphatic reaffirmation of the new India of neoliberal saffronisation.

Cultural nationalism conflates Hinduism with Hindutva to obfuscate the difference between an ancient religious culture and a recent political ideology that seeks to gain popular religious legitimacy for a partisan, chauvinist politics, which argues that because Hindus are the majority community, so Hinduism must mean nationalism – and vice versa! Hindutva, implies a social homogenisation that can only lead to the hegemony of the dominant groups of upper castes and classes in our society. In fact, class and subculture internally differentiate all majorities, which have more different than similar political concerns, more divergent than convergent economic interests. This is especially so with large religious majorities. Madan correctly insists, no religious community is undifferentiated, the Hindus least of all (Madan Madan 1997: 251).

2. Pedagogic Hegemony

While there is continuity in the hegemonic project of brahmanic Hinduism and contemporary Hindutvawadis there has also been adaptive change. For

> "situated in the broad sweep of history, today's Hindutva project brings out most vividly the three essential characteristics of all its past manipulations. In its intentions, it is hegemonic, homogenizing and pedagogic, all at the same time and in complexly interrelated ways" (Lele 1995: xvii).

Thus the *Sangh Parivar* seeks to establish its hegemony through a multi-pronged multi-dimensional "network of political institutions that will shape public policy as and for a proud Hindu nation" (Lele 1995: xvii). Adjusting to new social compulsions the Hindutva forces are attempting "a national consensus based on a homogenized Hindu identity that must be flexible and must accommodate diversity" (Lele 1995: xviii). This requires the co-option and assimilation of the non-dominant, and especially minority communities.

Finally, this hegemony and homogenisation is legitimised and sustained by a 'pedagogic violence' that selectively valorises and condemns historical memories, cultural symbols and religious traditions. It is the old process of appropriation and exclusion. It facilitates the "generational transmission" (Bourdieu 1973), of a taken-for-granted worldview, and blunts the critical competence of those who might challenge it, preventing "the gradual acquisition of experiences that can eventually translate into political action" (Devalle 1992: 237). This does not enable people to constructively confront their real life experiences, rather it encourages an escape from it into reconstructed myths and reinvented histories. A liberative ideology and liberating popular religiosity can conscientise people against such false consciousness.

3.   Saffronisation and Neoliberalism

The BJP from its *Jan Sangh* days was originally a party of small businesses and shopkeepers. In its quest for power it now favours big corporations and foreign capital investment, which it had earlier opposed but once in power they became willing partners. Big business corporations, which have embraced the neo-liberal free-market state have jumped on their bandwagon. The supposed 'ease of doing business' seems to be the attraction. This saffron neoliberalism privileges the urban neo-middle class but it will marginalise further the poor and the minorities. In a globalising world the free-market eventually compromises even the sovereignty of the state in favour multinational corporations and multilateral institutions.

With Big business and corporate media supporting, even promoting the saffron alliance, other political parties were no electoral match for this neoliberal saffronisation. They were unable to come up even with a common minimum programme as a core consensus. There was no national alternative to the NDA, so admittedly in spite of their poor performance – failing to deliver on most of their populist promises, falling GDP with rising unemployment, agricultural distress and industrial slowdown, - their alliance won an even more overwhelming majority in Parliament in 2019, than in 2014.

In the election in May 2014, even the winners were surprised at the saffron wave that swept the country on the explicit promise of free-market development. But the promises failed and the government performance was patchy and erratic. From the BJP campaign

in 2019 it was plain that the election was not about real issues of youth unemployment and agricultural distress, a looming economic crisis. The BJP with its allies won an even greater majority in in the 2019 election with its appeal to the socially engineered to Hindu majoritarian nationalism and pride, classic examples of the narcissism of grandiosity and the narcissism of victimhood.

Moderate Hindus who have bought into his ideology do not seem to realise the consequences of such ethno-nationalism, not just for the excluded 'different other, whether religiously or otherwise, but eventually for Hindus themselves, once the coalition of interests fractures. We have examples from our own neighbourhood in South Asia and the Middle-East of the havoc such ethno-religious nationalism can inflict on nations: Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka precipitated a civil war in is north from which it is still recovering, while religious terror has struck in its east; Pakistan has been riddled with terror by state and non-state actors. Afghanistan with its Islamist Taliban seems unresolvable. Hindu nationalism will take us down the same path.

The distress and anger at the inequalities generated by the free market finds a legitimised scapegoat in the different other, the minorities and marginalised that make safe targets while the state reassuringly stands by. Neoliberalism can marry a religious ideology and create social tensions which go unnoticed till they are deeply embedded. Today caste and ethnicity, religion and region have become fault lines along which collective violence periodically rips apart the social fabric of our society, leaving wounded people in broken communities, crying out for relief and justice that is delayed if not denied. In a multicultural, pluri-religious, society where ethno-nationalism is a populist option, the human price is high. Eventually, its erosion of the ethical foundation by its self-interest politics is self-destructive.

4. Constitutional Patriots

The crisis of neoliberalism is worldwide thanks to economic political neo-liberal global policies. Thomas Piketty's, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Piketty 2014) covers the last 300 years of the history of capitalism, challenges the conventional wisdom of neoliberal economists to demonstrate how the system reproduces and increases inequalities. (2014) Class strata are thus increasingly inherited and ascribed rather than merited, as with caste. In India this is reinforced by the traditional caste hierarchy to produce an upper class/caste hegemony. Thus there is clearly a connection between "Saffronisation and Liberalisation" (Ahmad 1996: 1329) and the predatory capitalism the latter has spawned (Lele 1995: 38). The conservative free-market rightists and "saffron neo-liberalism" (Teltumbde 2014) make willing bedfellows.

There is an urgent need for people of goodwill to come together not just on minority rights of one's community, but on the common ground of our basic humanity to affirm human rights and fundamental duties, and to stand by Gandhi's last and least Indian in our quest for a just and decent society. The Constitution we gave ourselves must be the common foundation to build this together as we draw on the best in our Indic traditions to make the Constitutional idea of India a viable and effective reality for all Indians, especially the poor and marginalised.

The challenge now, for all true patriots is to follow through and complete the social revolution promised with the promulgation of the Constitution and spelt out in terms of civil liberties and democratic rights, and contextualised in The Directive Principles of State Policy affirming our commitment to what was so eloquently expressed in the Preamble to our Constitution, of justice as liberty, equality, fraternity. Constitutional principles were further elaborated in The Directive Principles of State (Part IV, Articles 36-51), as guidelines to interpreting and implementing the principles for transformation of India as envisioned in our Constitution and forged in the freedom struggle.

Constitutionalism is being challenged as never before in this country by the populism of ethno-Hindu nationalism. Ambedkar had presciently warned us in his last speech to the Constituent Assembly on 25th August laid out three final cautions:

 "If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact, what must we do? The first …. hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives…..

The second …. observe the caution which John Stuart Mill has given … not "to lay their liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with power which enable him to subvert their institutions."

The third … not to be content with mere political democracy. … Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy" (CAD 1989: 336).

By fault or default, all political parties in one way or other, are involved in compromising our Constitution for short-term gain. Citizens and civil society has been compliant even complaisant Amit Chaudhury has urged that "is time to look inward: to recollect the journeys we've made, and assess whether we've ended up where we wanted to be" (Guardian 8 Oct 2019 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/from thr/oct/08/narendra-modi-bjp-india).

Do we want an inclusive nationalism of our freedom struggle for a social transformation 'or will we opt for an exclusivist ethno-Hindu nationalism premised on

past glory and selective history? Do we want to be dominated by the hegemony of an ethnic elite, even if they were one's own religious state? In South Asia there already is an Islamic state, and a Buddhist one. Do we want a *Hindu Rastra* or will the genius of Indic civilisation and be able to demonstrate that a multicultural, pluri-religious society can create viable social democracy, celebrate its diversity and prosper rather as a happy people than as a great power.

VII.   Diversity and Uniformity

1.   Nationalism and Uniformity

Today there clearly a struggle between visions of India: the first one of diversity and pluralism, originating in the Freedom Struggle. It finds its articulation in our Constitution as a social democratic liberal Republic. For all its short comings, failures and abuse, it was and has so far prevailed, due to the prominence of the Congress Party, which inherited the freedom movement. Gandhi, however had advised it to disband. But by fault and default, as it distance itself from ideals of, first Gandhi and then Nehru, it has begun to implode. Now it is a weak and failing opposition with a doubtful future.

The second, is a quest for unity in uniformity from its earliest expressions during the Independence movement, was a traditionalist revivalist movement. It found its expression in the Hindutva, as a cultural nationalism, which would subsume all diverse Hindu communities of sect and caste, of language and tradition into on united Hindu majority. Minorities would be marginalise, the Dalits would be outcastes and tribals would not really belong. Ethno-Hindu nationalism seems to sweep through the electorate and brought an overwhelming dominance to the Hindu nationalist BJP. Such a majoritarian ethno-nationalism does not augur well for the future of a liberal democracy of free citizens.

Secular rationalist states also seek unity in uniformity, such as a national language, and uniform national structures in education, the economy, the polity and through these form a national culture and identity. This creates uniformity, wherein older communities, their traditions and dialects are lost. Indeed. The path of the nation in history has been one of blood and war. That's perhaps why nations construct a selected history to emphasise their citezins commonality. Yet secular nationalism is not above ethno-religious appeals when under stress.

Recognising the multiculturalism and pluri-religious reality of India we chose unity-in-diversity. This gives all communities, religious and linguist, cultural and regional, a sense of identity and belonging. This also makes democracy rather messy: too many voices to be heard and considered all at once. Democracy has insightfully described as government by discussion" (Buchanan1954: 114-123).

But if it follows due constitutional process it is more participative and egalitarian, giving its citizens voice and choice (Sen 2009: 87-) and a sense control over their future. Populism as the opposite of such constitutionalism, relies on a "great leader' to solve all their problems, which mostly are too complex for short term, ad hoc solutions. This only ends with making the leadership increasingly authoritarian, suppressing dissent and critique.

Ethno-religious nationalism have not delivered on their promises. Their identity politics is focused on what keeps them in power rather than the politics of the real interests of their peoples. The extreme from of an exclusive ethno-nationalism becomes "a tyranny of the majority (Tocqueville 1862) in various degrees Tocqueville argued that the countless citizen associations was the bulwark against such majority tyranny, because of the diversity of views and interests they represent that a democratic government cannot suppress without losing credibility and eventually legitimacy too.

Plurality is a given reality, which implies diverse social communities coming together in some kind of overarching social order by the "incorporation of the collectivities that compose them," (Smith S B 1997: 427) whether these collectivities are defined by practice or by law and in racial, ethnic, religious or other terms).

These communities could be segmented or compartmentalised. And their interaction varies from cooperation, from involvement to indifference. This makes for a plural society. Pluralism is the social ideology that integrates them. A hierarchical or stratified society integrates these communities vertically, with caste and/or class. In a democracy the ideal type of the pluralist society, in which pluralism of the varied constituent groups and interests is integrated in a balanced adjustment, which provides conditions favourable to stable democratic government" (Kuper 1971: 7). The plural and pluralist societies are contraries not to be confused. Further in a pluralist society, the axis of integration, hierarchy or equality, will make for different kinds of pluralism, caste or *jati*; or one of freedom and choice.

For many nation-states unity means one people, one language, one history. Localism of folk, and linguistic dialects or sub-cultures are given little space, if any. Difference is seen as deviance, and their loyalty to the nation always suspect. They are the marginal who easily are made scapegoats. Seeking unity in uniformity leads to exclusivist nationalisms, which become anomalies in the complex diversity of our plural world. Rather they have led to collective violence, like pogroms, riots, even ethnic cleansing and genocides. For homogenising a complex plurality deeply embedded in tradition, such as the Indic one suppression or force can only make for an unstable and potentially volatile situation.

A pluralist society can be integrated by coercion or consensus. In any society, an effective pluralism would be premised not an on either-or dichotomy between the two

models but rather on a synthesis between them. However, a hegemonic and closed society would inevitably be premised more on coercion of various kinds, while a democratic and open society must necessarily seek a working consensus in various ways. But the transition from a plural to a pluralist society is a necessary prerequisite for modernisation today, especially for post-colonial plural societies (Kuper 1971: 60). The complexity and scale of an urban-industrial society allows for nothing less. Or else the rapid and radical the social changes which modernisation inevitably brings will alienate people with *Modernity and Its Discontents* (Smith, S B. 1997) escalate ethnic and communal strife and scapegoating is likely to become rife.

For a successful transition from plural to pluralist society, three prerequisite conditions must obtain:

> "(1) Effective institutionalisation of uniform conditions of civil and political equality throughout the country.... (2) Provision of equal, appropriate, and uniform educational, occupational and economic opportunities to all ... and the principled recruitment of active participation in approximately equal proportions from all major ethnic groups. (3) Public enforcement of the fundamental freedoms of worship, speech, movement, association, and work" (Kuper 1971: 60).

All these are democratic requirements for the transition, which must be inclusive and participatory. Its inclusiveness makes it cumbersome and slow, but it leaves space for diversity and dissent. An autocratic process might be quicker but at the cost of people's rights. Today when people are not involved in changes that affect them, they can be expected to resist them. Enforcing them would alienate them and could have a serious backlash later. The threat is perceived as one to their identity both individual and collective. They reject the uniformisation of individual and collectivities. In a multicultural pluri-religious society, such as India, democratic pluralism seems to be the only feasible alternative if the reality of diversity and difference is to be accepted and not dismissed.

There is no quick fix solution to the rising expectations of people. Poor governance over the years has accentuated attraction of populism, which promises much but delivers little, and easily becomes authoritarian and oppressive. Complex crises cannot be willed or wished away. They need to be collectively addressed. For this responsible democracy, may be gradualist but lasting for it seems to be the only feasible alternative, if the reality of diversity and difference is to be accepted and not dismissed.

2. Recognising Identity, Affirming Dignity

Identity politics is a powerful motivator and mobiliser, especial when individuals made insecure by rapid social change, and seek refuge in the collective, their group or

community. How identity is constructed here, will characterise the individual and the group.

Identity and dignity are intimately connected. Identity answers to, 'who am I?' dignity to, 'what respect am I due?' The affirmation or the negation of one carries over to the other. The right to identity must include as well the right to dignity, to recognition and respect. Both intimately concern the 'self', both necessarily implicate the 'other'. For one's identity is never developed in the isolation of a walled-in consciousness but in interaction with significant others. I discover myself, my horizon of meaning and value, with and through others. Who I am, is always reflected off, and refracted through others. What I am due, is always in a social context mediated by others. The denial of recognition and affirmation by others amounts to a negation of my human identity.

Negatively constructed identities are exclusive. They emphasise differences and set up oppositions and polarities with the other resulting in them-versus-us contradictions, attributing to the other the disavowed aspects of one's own self (Kakar 1992: 137). Positively constructed identities are inclusive ones and inclined to affirm similarities and complementarities with the other. These make for tolerance and flexibility. For example, identifying with one's language or religion need not negate or be hostile to other languages and religions and yet when used as hostile identity markers, language and religion have been among the most effective tools to divide people into warring groups.

A group identity, however, is socialised in a more public space. There is of course a relationship between the two but the first is never a straight forward projection of the latter. Identity provides a horizon of meaning in which individuals and groups understand themselves. Such a horizon necessarily involves inclusion and exclusion. The boundaries thus defined can be more or less permeable, they may overlap and cut across other boarders or they may get sharper and harder as they are politicised and contested, from without or within the groups.

Moreover, this construction the sense of self in the context of a hostile other is necessarily in function of the needs of the insecure individual and the group. What is unconsciously disowned and rejected in ourselves is projected and demonised in the other, what is desirable in the other is denied and attributed to the oneself: we are non-violent, tolerant, chosen, pure; the other is violent, intolerant, polluted, damned; they may seem strong, compassionate, devote, but they are not, we actually are.

In a world increasingly characterised by anxiety, uncertainty and disorder, there is an urgent need for the reassurance of security, trust and a sense of solidarity in a collective identity. Such identities become "vehicles for redressing narcissistic injuries, for righting of what are perceived as contemporary or historical wrongs (Walzer 1994: 52).

Collective action is resorted to in order to redress individual insecurities. The group solidarity then becomes a substitute for lost attachments, a support to heal old injuries and right historical wrongs. Such collective remedies to individual trauma easily become totalising and aggressive. Leaders manipulate and mobilise groups, confirmed in their self-righteousness, disregarding the dignity of other groups, or even its own members. In any situation of societal breakdown it is not difficult to see why extremist responses come into prominence.

Hence the importance of "the politics of recognition" in shaping our identity, especially in a multi-cultural context (Taylor 1992: 25). Moreover, "non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (Taylor 1992: 25). This is precisely what prejudice is all about.

For the politics of identity, must be contained within the politics of recognition with its concern for the identity and dignity for all (Taylor 1992: 25). It must comprehend the politics of difference, i.e., respecting the different other and the right to be different. This involves both the politics of universalism – equal rights for all – and the politics of difference – unique identity for each. The first is premised on human rights of individuals and the equal dignity of all citizens, and therefore is committed to enforcing equal rights for all. The second is premised on cultural rights, and is responsible for ensuring the unique identity of each cultural group. In the first individual rights, in the second collective ones are privileged.

As a way of coping with a plurality in society pluralism must be founded on a deep and comprehensive understanding of tolerance, especially tolerance of the different other, whose very difference interrogates oneself and can easily be perceived as a threat. But then again, only to the extent that such identities are defined positively and are open is any reconciliation for real tolerance possible. This is really the only viable option in a society as resiliently diverse as ours. This is the cultural challenge of democratic pluralism.

3.   Group Identities and Cultural Pluralism

The context of reconciling group identities in a society must be that of equal dignity for all groups qua group. The politics of particularism, with the concomitant affirmation of cultural and collective rights, cannot function justly and fairly in a multi-cultural society except in the larger context of the politics of universalism with the necessary promotion of political rights and civil liberties. There can be no "right to culture" where there is no "culture of rights"! (Bharagava 1991). For if in fact there can be no equal dignity without unique identity, then the converse is also true, if indeed identity and dignity are to be understood as positively related, not negatively opposed.

Cultural plurality is a fertile ground for the politics of identity, whereas structural plurality, particularly in the economic and political arenas, lends itself to the 'politics of interests'. Either of these can be mobilised on the basis of consensus or coercion, in an equilibrium or a conflict model respectively. This poses an educational challenge as John Dewey so well articulated in his *Education and Democracy* (Dewey 1957).

For both individuals and group identities are not monolithic organic wholes. Especially in a multi-cultural context there will be overlapping multiple identities and cross-cutting group boundaries. But as group identities get homogenized within groups, boundaries between them get sharpened and reinforced. This can make for easier internal mobilization, which is to the advantage of internal group elites, who often will manipulate such situations to promote their interests.

What specific symbols and issues are used to construct the group's ethnicity will depend on the social context and circumstances of these elites. Thus a religious elite will use religion, as the *ulema* have done with the *Shariat* for Indian Muslims, just as a more secular elite will use non-religious symbols like language, as the Dravidian movement in the south has done with Tamil.

A multi-ethnic, pluri-religious society like ours will do well to encourage not only a cultural diversity between groups, but also multiple non-exclusive group memberships that network across groups and make borders more permeable. For in the final analysis identity can be both mobilizing and divisive. It can be used to unite a group against discrimination; or to divide groups to exploit them. We must be sensitive to the delicate distinction between identity as a uniting 'myth' and its use as a dividing 'ideology'. But already Hindu majoritarianism sees this as an unacceptable restriction and any concession to the minorities as unnecessary appeasement. This option represents a negative tolerance, i.e., as a necessary evil, and is unlikely to be a stable or constructive resolution to the inherent tensions involved in a plural society of cultures and religions.

All nationalism, whether secular or otherwise, strive for a political hegemony: one ideology, one party, one nation. Religious nationalism thrives on religious homogeneity: one creed, one code, one cult. However, the inherent diversity, cultural, linguistic and religious, among states like India has proven extremely resilient to any externally imposed uniformity. In India this obtains even among Hindus, differences of caste and tribe, of language and region, of gods and sages, Moreover, the endemic hierarchies of caste and insoluble inequalities of class need serious commitment to affirmative action for the last and the least for an egalitarian liberal democracy

Secular nationalisms have used a national language to promote a linguistic uniformity in their societies, just as religious nationalisms seek to revive and impose their religious tradition. Without a vigorous multi-lingualism and a vibrant religious pluralism,

the cultural and religious diversity of a society will not survive. Linguistic nationalism was among the earliest threats to our unity-in-diversity in India, when Hindi was sought to be imposed as the national language. Allowing space for regional languages has defused this threat. Religious nationalism and fundamentalism are now a greater threat to our religious diversity and political unity.

Religion is among the most common and most effective of the many identity markers that characterise such movements, providing an explosive mix of religion and politics in religious nationalism, which politicises religion but seldom democratises society. It puts a premium on religious homogeneity in its quest for a national identity. Dominant groups exploit this to establish their hegemony over others in the name of national unity. Modernity thrives best in an atmosphere of diversity and openness. Religious tolerance is best supported by a social pluralism and secularism, which opens spaces for diverse religious traditions in society. Eventually, religious nationalism may use modern means and technologies rather effectively.

VIII. Making History Prophecy

1. Two contrasting models for India

The paradox of nationalism and diversity in the Indian context requires compatible models for both nationalism and diversity. We have dealt with two contrasting models of nationalism: one originating in the freedom struggle and the persons who made the movement; the other premised on an ethno-majority rule, which excludes the different other.

The first is an inclusive idea of India going back to Tagore and his universal humanism, a vision of a tolerant, cooperative civilization. Gandhi's nationalism was inclusive and foregrounded the poorer, lesser people, the least and last Indian. For him *swaraj* meant rule over oneself first as the essential prelude to ruling over the community. Nehru was a secular nationalist and democrat focused on building stable, sustainable institutions to support Parliamentary democracy, tasked with demand for a social transformation as envisioned by our Constitution. Ambedkar worked for the abolition of caste and steered the Constituent Assembly towards a remarkable republican commitment to justice as liberty, equality, fraternity.

This was the Constitution model of the state that was born in the freedom struggle which Gandhi led. Thus the sovereign, secular socialist democratic Republic of India began an epic journey to modernise with universal suffrage even though it was a poor society, only 10 percent literate at the time. This was an act of faith in the people.

The second model of nationalism in our country today is ethno-nationalism. This is exclusivist, more religiously conservative and privileges the Hindu majority. It was an undercurrent during the Independence movement. Inspired by the ideology of Savakar's Hindutva, and was taken up by the RSS and launched into the political arena its affiliated BLP. Hindu ethno-nationalism is now the dominant political player setting the national agenda for the country. Free-market neoliberalism's economic inequalities adds to the tensions that such 'cultural nationalism' produces. In South Asia we have seen the consequences of religious ethno-nationalism in countries around us, but we seem unaware of the slippery trajectory we are following to a majoritarian uniformity and the loss of our rich Indic diversity. All too often, ethno-nationalism, scapegoats on the 'different other: the minorities and marginalised.

The Nehruvian years built a consensus with an inclusive secular nationalism, social democracy, planned growth with equity, and a respect for human rights and liberties. But the

"failure of states to create and distribute resources adequately intensifies conflicts and cleavages expressed in religious, ethnic and regional terms" (Kandiyoti 1991:439). This is "not merely technical but as 'moral' failures, which require a complete overhaul of worldviews underpinning..." (Kandiyoti 1991:439).

Already in 1988 Rajni Kothari anticipated the contemporary crisis which leaves us with an unresolvable dilemma:

"Right now India is in the throes of these opposite tendencies: of an exclusivist and monolithic definition of 'nation' and 'state' and more inclusive model of a pluralist participant and federal political structure" (Kothari 1988: 2227).

Today this nation-state is being projected as an ethnic Hindu nation.

2.   The loss of Heritage

India is a multicultural, pluri-religious society, that demands a federal multi nation state more than a conventional nation with one language, one people, and a uniform culture. Unity must be inclusive of diversity. Constitutionally we are a federal union of states, premised on protected minority rights. The present national crisis of violently conflicting communal identities represents, to my mind, a choice between the inclusiveness of Gandhi and the exclusionism of Savarkar. The future of our multicultural, pluri-religious peoples can only be even bloodier with the preclusions of Savarkar's Hindutva.

Who is a Hindu? Is the stark question, at the heart of a struggle in the Hindu community, especially of *sanathani dharmis* today. But it is not a struggle that concerns

them alone, it is a struggle mirrored in other communities and their constructed identities, particularly those that derive from an exclusive religious fundamentalism or political nationalism. What does it mean to be a religious Hindu or Muslim, Sikh or Christian in secular India today? This is a battle for the soul of India, that is redefining the future of for all our diverse peoples.

The modern nation-state, whether, secular or ethnic, poses a threat to cultural diversity. Modernity and globalisation is integrating economies, especially neoliberal ones, and promoting a uniformising cosmopolitanism among an international elite. This provokes a localization in a defensive ethnocentric response from threatened local communities. When this is up-scaled to the national level we have an ethnocentric state. When it is majoritarian, minorities and marginalised are disadvantaged and discriminated against. When it is authoritarian, dissent is taboo, and this eventually turns on the majority community as well. Free-market mechanisms precipitate anxieties and inequalities, which are not self-correcting, and once again redress is sought in group identity and security, which too often has proven to be more appealing than class based unity and action.

The loss of cultural and religious diversity in such an ethnocentric state, may not be recoverable. A mass culture compromises and undermines our rich cultural heritage, displacing it with a consumerist one. This makes for passive subjects, easily manipulated by the state. It does not create an active citizenry that would hold the state to account. Once the economy fails no satisfy consumer demands, ethnic loyalties may erode the state's authority and it loses its legitimacy. This is how most authoritarian states end and an alert and critical citizenry can precipitate its downfall.

Ecology teaches us that diversity is crucial for stable and sustainable ecosystem. The same is true of social systems. This has been the secret of the survival of Indic civilization cross the centuries: its capacious inclusiveness and its ability to cope with difference. An ethnic state will ''decivililise' (Fletcher 2003: 176-189) our rich ancient heritage.

We need space for the difference and legitimate dissent. We need an inclusive ideology adequate to the task which goes beyond the Enlightenment model of nation-state that precipitated so much violence and war. An exclusive nationalism, secular or ethnic is not compatible with our rich diversity. For India is in actuality a multi-nation state in the making.

It is possible to consider an indigenous model of,

"the state not as an instrument of an ethnically defined nation, but a political entity functioning under the control of a civil society. It will be a state for and on the behalf of civil society: in brief a civil state and not a nation state" (Sheth 1989: 626).

This civil state can be an answer to Rajni Kothari's dilemma between an inclusion in and an exclusion from the state, which was quoted earlier: an exclusivist monolithic nation-state and a plural, participant federal polity (Kothari 1988).

Thus beyond the monolithic nation-state, a civil-state embedded in a civilisational order would facilitate a multi-nation state in a multi-cultural, pluri-religious society. This will demand a more effective and real equity, that will allow for diversity without inequality, whether socio-cultural or political economic. Today India is the most unequal country in the world with more billionaires than China. Lucas Chancel, and Thomas Piketty (2017), call it 'billionaire raj'! The neoliberal priority is growth not equity: "The Inclusive Growth and Development Report 2017" of The World Economic Forum rated India as the lowest of all the SAARC nations. An Oxfam Survey headlined: Today India Richest 1% cornered 73% of Wealth Generated in India in 2017 (The Wire 22 Jan 2018) was the most unequal country in the world.

Our skewed economy needs another model of development; our degrading environment is urging us to the same. The consequent social tensions and strains precipitates a mobilization around community identities, since politics for the real interests of people has failed them. In the Gandhian view the more minimalist a state and the less dependent a society was on it, the greater the space for democratic participation and national integration for a unity in diversity (Jain 1989). Hence rather than the capturing of state power by a few, his endeavour was to generate people power for the many. This decentralisation and mass mobilization forms the basis of the concept of a moral polity and the non-violent state (Rao 1986: 147).

3.   Indic Pluralism and Indian Nationalism

The diversity of peoples of this subcontinent is a unique treasure. It was no utopia but its multicultural and pluri-religious heritage held together diverse peoples under one civilizational umbrella. The colonial state brought the sub-continental peoples under one state. After the Partition of 1947, the Indian Republic that succeeded as a Federal Union of States, where cultural, religious, linguistic was diversity, was accepted and protected by the state and even promoted and celebrated by our peoples.

Today this is being displaced by a centralised authoritarian, majoritarianism, led by an ethnic state that premise unity on the uniformity of a majoritarian cultural nationalism, one people, one culture, as against a multiculrural, pluri-religious civil state. The dominant majority imposes on the less powerful and the marginalised who become further marginalised from the main stream. Eventually, the oppression turns to dissent and deviance. Otherness is not tolerated. This can only be an impoverishment of Indic culture as we have known it.

The paradox of nationalist pluralism is resolved only with an inclusive nationalism and a tolerant pluralism. Nationalism is a powerful unifier and motivator, pluralism demands tolerance and understanding of difference. Our Constitution affirms liberty, equality fraternity for all citizens, while protecting minority rights and affirmative action for the marginalised, the poor and discriminated.

Our cultural diversity and religious pluralism could be an example to a broken and violent world. Unfortunately, authoritarian ethno-nationalism favours uniformity and single party dominance. It took two World Wars before the European nations were ready for the European Union. It is still a work in progress, but yet an example for The Union of India, and India for a similar Union of SAARC countries.

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