Occasional Paper Series : 4

NATIONALISM
&
GLOBALISATION

By
Aijaz Ahmed

Department of Sociology
University of Pune
Pune - 411 007

Occasional Paper Series : 4

NATIONALISM
&
GLOBALISATION

By
Aijaz Ahmed

Department of Sociology
University of Pune
Pune-411007

Published by :
The Head,
Department of Sociology,
University of Pune,
Pune-411007.

Printed at :
Pune University Press,
University of Pune,
Pune-411007.

[P.U.P.—400–5–2000 (213) [PC-1]

PREFACE

This is the fourth monograph in the series launched under the UGC Special Assistance Programme-II Phase in the Department of Sociology. The author Professor Aijaz Ahmad was invited as Visiting Fellow to the Department in March 1999. During his visit he delivered three lectures on *Nationalism : In Theory & In Practice. On Cultural Nationalism and Some Contradictions of Indian Nationalism.* And the fourth one. *Globalization & the Nation-State* has been included as a part of this series. The Department decided to publish his lectures in the form of monograph.

The author identified varieties of nationalism, viz., bourgeois nationalism, anti-colonial nationalism, cultural nationalism, linguistic nationalism, hindutva nationalism, secular nationalism, economic nationalism, imperial nationalism, anti-imperialist nationalism and revolutionary nationalism. Interestingly, he notes : "the nation that had become independent of colonialism was unable to defend itself against imperialism in the postcolonial period". In his argument on nationalism in India, he says that if we don't have progressive / rationalist / secular nationalism, class exploitation and casete oppression will be supppressed by a religiously-defined cultural nationalism consequently to claim the culture of hindu upper castes as the culture of the nation as a whole. Looking the direction of cultural development and a step taken to review the Constitution today, the author was right when he said last year that : "This Hindutva nationalism is so redically incompatible with the letter and spirit of the Indian Constitution that it must sooner or later, destroy the Constitution itself". In his *Globalisation & the Nation-State,* the author observes majoritarianism, revivalism and ethnic cleansing as the necessary consequence of the globalization which blocks a rational organisation of societies.

The Department is grateful to the Visiting Fellow Aijaz Ahmed for sending the drafts of his lectures for publishing it. We acknowledge the UGC assistance under the DSA Programme.

S. M. Dahiwale
Coordinator,
DSA Programme

Pune
14th April, 2000

Author's Note

All four lectures included in this volume were initially drafted to be delivered at the University of Pune, upon invitation of the Department of Sociology, in March 1999. For reasons beyond the author's control, only three of these lectures were delivered. The fourth one, on Globalisation and the Nation-State, has been included here, however, in view of the fact that it was originally conceived as a part of this series.

In drafting these lectures I have drawn upon some previous public lectures of mine and upon diverse materials from the Graduate Seminar on the topic of nationalism that I have taught at York University, Toronto, during the Autumn term for the past three years. Two extracts from the second and third lectures have appeared in **Frontline** and **The Hindu** respectively, under different titles. A couple of paragraphs from the first lecture have also appeared in **Monthly Review.** An earlier version of the fourth lecture appeared in **Seminar** and was also translated in Hindi. In the present form, though, all the material has been freshly conceived.

I am very grateful to Professor Dahiwale, Chair, Department of Sociology, for his kind invitation to deliver these lectures, and to Professor Sujata Patel whose attention and persistence made it all possible for me to take up the invitation. A number of people went out of their way to be helpful and to offer generous hospitality. I wish to thank them all.

Aijaz Ahmed
New Delhi

[Lecture One]

NATIONALISM : IN THEORY & IN PRACTICE

The present is perhaps not a very auspicious time to discuss nationalism. In the conceptual field, the past two decades have witnessed two concurrent shifts. We have on the one hand, the shift of emphasis to caste, community, ethnicity, sexual identity, racial difference, religious belonging, and so on, which has meant that the idea of 'the nation' has fallen into terrible disrepute. In much social science now, and especially in currents associated with postmodern social theory, the 'nation' is commonly regarded as a mechanism of coercion, uniformity, and the rule of elites and patriarchs in general. On the other hand, the neo-liberal worship of the market as the supreme measure of the common good has displaced the historic vision of the nation-state as the agency for radical social change and re-distribution of wealth in the service of all; for creating an educated and participatory democracy; for guaranteeing health and welfare for the whole citizenry. These are different pressures but they are also inter-linked. We need to distinguish among these various pressures, and then see them also in some conjunction.

In the social sphere, thus, there are multiple pressures to dilute the nation into its constituent units, or at least weaken its hold on these units. Such pressures can take both a progressive as well as a highly retrogressive form. In the progressive accents, there is the vision of a body of common and indivisible rights for all but then also a much larger body of secondary rights for the oppressed castes, classes, communities and social groups of various kinds. This progressive challenge to a mindless and elitist emphasis on national unity is based on the idea of the right to historical redress and the right to special protection for those who have been historically oppressed and unprotected. I would argue that these challenges from below are not compatible with the vision of the nation-state that the ruling classes and the upper castes have held, but that these pressures are perfectly compatible with the spirit and over-all structure of the Indian Constitution as it was originally conceived, notably by Dr. Ambedkar.

But this pressure to dilute the nation as a compact of equal citizens with no consideration of caste, class, gender or religious affiliation comes also from the Right, especially the Far Right. That pressure seeks to re-structure the nation, in stead, into a conglomeration of religiously and denominationally defined identities, dividing the nation into permanent majorities and permanent minorities, converting the religiously defined majority into a permanent political majority as well, subjecting the minorities to the will and projects of that majority. This project to abrogate a nation based on equal citizenship rights would nevertheless call itself a nationalism, even a cultural nationalism, but it is always and everywhere a rightwing majoritarianism, and in the strict sense anti-national. I shall return to this majoritarianism that parades as a nationalism, but two initial points are worth keeping in mind. The first is that within the field of political contestations in India today this is obviously the project of the Far Right; however, there is also an objective convergence— not a subjective affiliation at all, but an objective convergence nevertheless—between this majoritarian project of the Far Right and the very powerful indigenist trends in Indian social science, as represented for example in the work of such institutions as the

Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and such schools of historiography and social theory as the Subaltern Studies Group, where secular nationalism is rejected in favour of traditionalist communitarianism and where traditional societies are said to have been not at all hierarchical but pluralistic and tolerant, superior in that sense to modern conceptions of secular and casteless equality. Within India, of course, this representation of the traditional society as non-hierarchical and tolerant is essentially a Brahminical ideology which has no basis in fact. It is worth recalling, though, that this kind of majoritarianism is in our time a fairly widespread phenomenon, emerging in countries as diverse as India, Egypt, France and the statelets that have arisen out of the ashes of former Yugoslavia— the only difference being that the role that is played by religion in some cases is played by race in others. Indeed, it is possible to argue, I think, that a caste-based religion inevitably has intractable racialistic undercurrents as well.

In the sphere of political economy, meanwhile, there is an equally strong pressure to dilute the nation-state and re-distribute its functions downward into the market and upward toward the World Bank, the IMF, the transnational corporation, the international financial institutions, the globalised telecasting and information highways that are undermining and bypassing the ideological, educational systems and modern cultural communications that were until recently the preserves of the nation-state. In the arrangements that are now advocated, the shell of the nation-state is sought to be maintained, as a way of enforcing differential labour regimes in different parts of the global capitalist system, but then the nation-state is expected to obey the dictates of the market while the nationally enclosed market is itself opened up to unhampered action of global capital. Labour is of course not nearly as mobile as capital, but is much more so now than in the previous phases of capitalism, introducing new elements into the fabrics of nations. In the oil-producing Gulf sheikhdoms, bulk of the labouring humanity is non-national; in North America, the scale of Asian and Latin American immigration is fast changing the demographic maps of these essentially European settler colonies, while vast numbers of people of non-European origin are now stranded in Western Europe even as this Europe draws an iron curtain against any further immigration from the Third World and witnesses the rise of new racisms and fascisms across the continent targeting precisely those non-European segments of the population.

Meanwhile, within that same Western Europe, the growing consolidation and even expansion of the Community has introduced novel co-ordinates in which a whole range of issues— from national sovereignty to citizenship, from national culture to language policy, and from national parliament to political party to trade union— must be re-thought and re-structured beyond the traditional boundaries of 'the nation'. Elsewhere in Europe, the re-drawing of the maps in the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe has led in some rare cases to a relatively smooth transition from bi-national and multinational polities to a couple of mini-nation-states such as Estonia or the Czech Republic. More frequently and generally, the process has unleashed barbaric conflicts and ethnic cleansings of great ferocity, which are mirror images of that whole range of Asian and African countries, from India to Algeria, where secular polities are under attack from religiously-based nationalisms of the Far-Right. In these times, then, nationalism— all varieties of it— appears either irrelevant or vicious or both.

This signals a shift of historic proportions for someone like myself who was a child of anti-colonial nationalism, in the most literal sense of having been born in an India that was still a British colony. As I grew up, Algeria was to my childhood what Vietnam was to become for my youth: a way of knowing the world, staking a claim upon that world. Anti-colonial nationalisms served for my generation of the Left as the most profound bond of international solidarities across the world. All the revolutionary upheavals that occurred during those decades— in Cuba, in the Portuguese colonies, in the Indo-Chinese countries, not to speak of the many that failed— seemed to suggest that socialism as an aspiration could materialise itself only in conjunction with nationalism. By now, of course, that world of revolutionary nationalisms has collapsed so thoroughly, receded from common memory so very sharply, that even to recall that period, barely a quarter century later, appears to be a very indecent form of nostalgia. The memory now seems particularly irrelevant because heroic as those movements might have been, the later performance of the regimes that arose out of those struggles have no real hold on our imaginations. None of the little countries where great revolutions had taken place was able to make a transition to what one could reasonably call a socialist society, primarily because the far superior forces of imperialism either destroyed so much in the very course of the revolutionary war itself, as in Vietnam, or strangled the revolutionary regime so soon after its coming into being, as in Cuba, that none ever had a chance to achieve levels of material progress without which foundations of a socialist society simply cannot be secured.

But, then, the very texture of that memory is greatly complicated by a whole host of other facts as well, related to that same period, which have an altogether different salience. Even before the onset in the early 1970s of that economic stagnation that was to at length wreck the Soviet Union, the event that had decisively eroded its legitimacy was none other than the violent suppression of the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia; it was in reaction against the Soviet tanks in Prague that large sections of the population in Eastern Europe as well as in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union began responding sympathetically to the mostly rightwing nationalist ideologues of their respective countries. Throughout this period, before Prague and after, more Soviet troops were stationed on the Sino-Soviet border than in Europe, clashing routinely with Chinese troops. Conversely, in post-revolutionary Indochina itself, the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia could reasonably be regarded as a necessary step to put a halt to the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge but China's invasion of Vietnam was quite obviously dictated by nationalist rivalry. Imperialist pressure, which always included large-scale military pressures of all kinds, was undoubtedly the primary reason why the countries that attempted to build socialist societies eventually failed to do so. But the problem of nationalism was undoubtedly one of the rocks upon which the project of socialism was shipwrecked.

Elsewhere in Asia and Africa, where radical-nationalist regimes had arisen at the end of the colonial period, what I have elsewhere called the 'nationalism of the national bourgeoisie' was exhausted by the late 1970s, giving rise either to frankly pro-imperialist regimes, as with the advent of Sadat in Egypt to replace the radical-nationalism of the Nasser period, or to bureaucratic degeneration as in the case of the FLN regime in Algeria, or to personalised dictatorships, as in Iraq or Syria. In retrospect, then, anti-colonial nationalisms themselves came under scrutiny as having been at best ambiguous affairs, built on a whole range of internal coercions Such coercions were quite evident in the instrumental uses of women in the service of male-dominated nationalist

organisations, as for example in the course of the Algerian revolution, and the repression of minorities in the course of consolidating the nation-state, as in the case of the Kurdish minorities in Turkey, Iraq and elsewhere.

It is in this wider world context that a sea-change occurred in theoretical positions and ideological outlooks whereby nationalism, which had been celebrated in the period of decolonisation and revolutionary upheaval as a fundamental progressive force was now increasingly dismissed, variously, as irrational, repressive, authoritarian, masculinist, reactionary, a discourse derived from European modernity, an ideology of Third World elites, and so on. Schematically speaking, one might say that if in the third quarter of this century nationalism was seen as an absolute good, in the last quarter of the century, which is still with us, nationalism has come to be seen very nearly as an absolute evil.

I recall all this here not to dispense a capsule history of the modern world but to suggest that social and political thought is not some detached wisdom culled from the ages, in calm contemplation of timeless things. The thought of a generation is always contaminated by the actual experience of that generation. If the previous generation can now be seen as having nursed too many illusions about nationalism it is because we can now, with the benefit of hindsight, actually see how many of their aspirations were in fact illusory. But we shall be making a very great mistake if we were to now take our new-found disillusion with nations and nationalisms as being entirely free of the illusions of our own age. Many of our own illusions are born of defeat: the anti-imperialist project of nationalisms that arose against colonial autocracy was defeated, in practice, by the sheer power— military power and economic power— of the advanced capitalist countries; and, in a country like India, the peasantry that was mobilised so massively by anti-colonial nationalism was then equally massively defeated and harnessed by the very national-bourgeois state that arose after Independence. What I am suggesting is that the bitterness of the defeat ought not persuade us that the project itself was worthless. Similarly, an abiding scepticism about nationalism arises in our time also out of a fatalistic belief, loudly proclaimed by the imperialist media as well as the neo-liberal ideologues and hardly ever questioned by Keynsians or even social democrats, that there really is no choice to the perfection of the world market; that economic nationalism simply cannot fight back against forces of globalisation; that it is only by accepting the terms of this globalisation that any development of the productive forces within the country is at all possible; that state regulation has been the main impediment to economic development in India and, therefore, a high degree of integration into structures of transnational capital and a high level of accumulation on part of the Indian big bourgeoisie are the preconditions for benefits of all that accumulation to eventually begin to trickle down to the masses of people. It is in this climate of ideology, itself induced by the grates victory that capitalism has known in its history, that we then begin to accept the market not as a servant but as the very master of national policy.

It might be useful then to first of all step back a little from the pressures as well as illusions of the present, so as to grasp the movement of things theoretically before returning to discuss the more contemporary realities. Let me then offer you a set of broad generalisations.

The first propositions I should like to offer you is that contrary to certain sorts of Marxism, which ultimately rest on Stalin's famous identification of all nationalisms as bourgeois,

it appears to me that nationalism is not in itself a class ideology, and that different class segments and coalitions take hold of it in a variety of circumstances. In other words, nationalism is not some singular ideology with an identifiable essence. It always exists in articulation, in combination— and the politics that it comes to represent at any specific juncture always depends on the particular power bloc that takes hold of it and utilises it for establishing its own dominance. Thus it is that, historically speaking, nationalism has been combined with such different and mutually antithetical movements as communism and fascism, and virtually everything else in between. In short, then, nationalism as such is neither a progressive nor a retrogressive phenomenon. There are progressive nationalisms and there are retrogressive ones— and great many that are progressive and retrogressive at once, in their different aspects and objectives, a matter to which I shall come momentarily.

Second, most nationalisms and nation-states have been intimately connected with colonialism, or at least with conquest and expansion. Whenever we think of nationalism, anti-colonial kinds of nationalism are not very far from our minds. So, it is well to remind ourselves that colonialism itself rested, ideologically, on the nationalisms, indeed competing nationalisms, of the respective European nation-states. The colonial enterprise was central to the consolidation of the British and French nations, and even German fascism was in fact a particularly malignant variant of the imperialist nationalisms that were the norm in European formations during the colonial period. The same could be said of the connection between the American imperialist designs in the world at large and the extreme forms of nationalism and xenophobia within the United States today.

In its ideological underpinnings, then, imperialism is a particularly aggressive and expansionist form of nationalism which is never entirely distinguishable from racism. And, it is precisely because imperialism itself is a nationalism that it produces, as its dialectical opposite, an answering nationalism of the colonised. This anti-colonial nationalism seeks to establish a nation-state of its own precisely because the colonial structure was itself a distorted, backward, particularly repressive replica of the imperial nation-state. In the course of consolidating the modern nation, the imperial nation-state grants to its own inhabitants the rights of citizenship; but not so in the colonies, since no one can be colonised and citizen simultaneously. The essential task of the anti-colonial nationalism is to turn the realm of colonial subjection to a realm of citizenship. In the colonies, therefore, socialists have never been able to altogether bypass the issue of nationalism; indeed, the revolutions that occurred in the Third World in the course of this century were the ones where revolutionary forces were able to establish their own leadership over anti-imperialist nationalisms. This is well enough known, so I shall press this point in a somewhat different direction.

Anti-colonial nationalisms have been uniformly progressive in so far as they have sought to destroy the colonial structure. In many other respects, their progressive character is not quite so clear-cut, especially in their internal structure, with respect to the labouring classes, women, religious or linguistic minorities, the dispossessed and socially oppressed castes. In most cases, colonial autocracy was followed by dictatorial rule, based not on democratic rights of citizenship but on new forms of subjection; or, the formal rights of citizenship, where they existed, as in India, were never translated into substantive rights of social and economic equality. Even in terms

of opposition to foreign domination, the line between anti-imperialism and mere anti-Westernism and even anti-modernity has been frequently quite unclear. The Islamic nationalism of the Irani Revolution is a telling example. The eviction of the American structures of power and the destruction of the monarcho-bourgeoisie was undoubtedly an advance. But then what had remained of the Left and the secular forces after the Shah's witch-hunts was also now definitively destroyed. In deed, the manufacturing of an Islamic identity for Irani nationalism was opposed to the entire secularising trajectory of Irani society throughout this century. This negation of the main trends of the previous decades in Irani history is what explains the Terror, without which the clerics could not have succeeded in imposing their regime of authoritarian social conservatism.

This, then, is my first point: that nationalism is not a singular ideology, with an identifiable essence. It arises out of the very structure of modern states and the political form necessary for their production and reproduction, but the actual content of any given nationalism is determined by the power bloc that takes hold of it and the political project in which it gets embedded— be it imperialist or fascist or Islamicist or anti-colonial or communist or, in deed, anti-Communist. And, as the example of the Irani revolution shows, most nationalisms are progressive and regressive simultaneously. We need to do more than merely distinguish between various nationalisms, some progressive, others not; and we need to consider not just one aspect of a nationalism and declare it progressive or regressive based on that singular criterion. The far more difficult task is the disaggregation of elements within a particular nationalism that might make it progressive and pathological at the same time. If we ignore the anti-imperialist and anti-monarchical content of the Irani Revolution, if we forget that they did throw out the monarcho-bourgeoisie and instituted a number of social reforms, including the provision of essential commodities to the general populace and extraordinary expansion of modern education and profession for women, we will never grasp the objective bases for the immense popularity of it among the Irani masses, including among the women of the less affluent classes, and we may then have to accept the propaganda of the clerical regime itself which assigns this popular consent to Islamism as such. But, as I just said, if we do not recognise that Islamism itself is a complete negation of the main currents of Irani history during this century which have been essentially secular, then we shall never be able to explain why the Islamicist revolutionary elite there had to undertake the Terror on such a scale, in the course of a popular revolution.

Is each nationalism, then, sui generis? To explore this question I should want to transit again from mere description to a certain historical periodisation as well as some theoretical abstraction. I shall be addressing in brief two questions in the remainder of my presentation today. First, what has been the essence of the theory of nations and nationalisms, especially on the Left, and what are the deficits in this theory? Second, what has been in essence the historical experience in the formation of nations on the global scale? In my lecture tomorrow, then, I shall return to the question of culture, cultural nationalism and the disastrous consequences of collapsing culture into religion and religion into politics, as has been our experience in India but also, notably, in some Muslim countries of West Asia and North Africa. After mapping out this whole historical context, I will then return, in my third lecture, some two weeks from today, to the contradictions of various kinds of nationalism that have been formulated in India over the past century or so. At that time, I shall also return to a question I am holding in reserve for now, namely: what now is the status of the nation-state in the era of so-called globalisation?

Let me begin my reflection on this theoretical legacy by saying that there is no theory of nationhood in the writings of Marx and Engels, but we can find very extensive comments on the subject in many of these writings, and these comments have not always had a salutary effect on the theories that ensued later. The **Communist Manifesto,** for example, is notable for its proposition that globalisation of capitalism was already bringing about the decline of national differences and specificities. The **Manifesto** was published in February 1848, but the revolutions that broke out throughout Europe a few weeks later, across what are now thirteen different countries, were all national, and even nationalist revolutions, laying the foundations not only for the break-up of the Habsburg Empire but also the unification of Italy and Germany as distinct nation-states. Over the next one hundred and fifty years, we have witnessed not the decline of the nation-state form but a proliferation of this form throughout the world. More nation-states have emerged over the past five decades than in all the previous history of humanity.

Marx himself learned many lessons from the actual experience of the national revolutions which belied the hopes of the **Manifesto,** but I don't have the time to deal with that. It needs to be acknowledged, in any case, that the origins of Marxist thinking on the issue of nations and nation-states had the fatal flaw that it began with the assumption that the nation-state form was a passing phenomenon. The second fatal flaw was that all that thinking was premised on the European experience alone, in which the West European experience, especially that in Britain and France, was considered as the progressive norm, while Eastern Europe itself was regarded as a backward deviation from that norm while the rest of the world was simply ignored. The transition to capitalism was the yardstick used for deriving this norm. The nations that had made the transition were considered "historical nations" while nations that arose in predominantly agrarian societies were declared "non-historical" or, as the unfortunate phrase has it, "peoples without a history."

These two flaws— the tendency to think of nations and nationalisms as passing phenomenon; and the tendency to dismiss the nationality claims of agrarian nations— were not to be redressed for half a century or more, and it is significant that the major Marxist theoreticians of the nationality question— Kautsky, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Otto Bauer— who began redressing those flaws all came either from Germany where national consolidation had been a contemporary experience for Kautsky, or from the multi-national Habsburg and Czarist empires where the national question was a pre-eminent issue. Rosa Luxemburg attempted to theorise the national question in relation to the capitalist and colonial systems as a whole, but she spoke very much from inside the experience of the Polish national question as it existed within the Czarist empire. Otto Bauer also attempted something of a universal theory but his theoretical perspective was itself deeply marked by the Slavic nationalisms of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which had of course been dissolved by the time he published his book, in 1924. Bauer's is perhaps the first major attempt to theorise the desirability of multinational states alongside the imperative to respect the autonomy and historic density of particular cultures within its territory; and yet for Bauer, as for socialists in general, it is always the cultures of the minorities that require active defence against cultural chauvinism of the majority. And, when Lenin spoke of the right of national self-determination, he spoke of this right for predominantly agrarian nations, either on the peripheries of the Czarist Empire itself or in the belly of other empires, especially the French and British empires. Lenin was the first to comprehensively recognise that in the agrarian economies

of the colonised peoples there was a profound connection between national liberation and the project of socialism, and that the national question was essentially a peasant question. In the concrete situation of the colony, then, resolution of the national question required two things: liberation of the nation from colonial rule, and the liberation of the peasantry from the rule of property. As you can readily see, the first task— that of overthrowing colonial autocracy— was accomplished in India but the second task— that of liberating the peasantry from the rule of property— was not; and because the peasant revolution was so remorselessly blocked, while both the rural and the urban bourgeoisies emerged as the main beneficiaries of de-colonisation, the nation that had become independent of colonialism was unable to defend itself against imperialism in the postcolonial period. It is in this wider context that the national question has now returned to us in an irrationalist form, not as an anti-imperialist movement of national liberation and social emancipation, but as fascist majoritarianism.

Now, in theories of nationalism that predate Marxism and yet have survived into our own times, there have been two quite different emphases: there are emphases that arise from the perspective of political economy, and there are other emphases that arise from the perspective of culture, and, thanks to the pre-eminence of philology in 19th century Europe, culture has been associated mainly with language. In the culturalist variant of the theory, then, the nation was first regarded fundamentally as a linguistic community and the presumption was that wherever you have people speaking more than one language you are also speaking of more than one nation, either in a multi-national state or in a state that deserves to be divided up into its constituent linguistic units. In some of those former colonies where secular polities have either not arisen or are too weakly rooted, and where there are great many languages, we have had a situation where the primacy of language has been replaced by the primacy of religion in the culturalist definition of national cohesion. The so-called two-nation theory of Jinnah which led to the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan was precisely this kind of culturalist theory of nationhood where language was replaced by religious difference as the defining characteristic of a nation, and the Hindutva ideologues of contemporary India propagate precisely that kind of religion-based culturalism, even though what they want is not Partition, which is what Jinnah had sought, but a permanent subordination of non-Hindus to what is said to be a Hindu majority. It is chastening to recall that Jinnah had demanded a Partition precisely out of the fear of the kind of subordination and repression which the Hindutva forces now profess and practice. I might add that once a Muslim-majority Pakistan came into being, Bangladeshi separatism could no longer organise itself on the religious basis and reverted to language as the defining characteristic of nationhood, even though this linguistic nationalism did not apply to all Bengalis, considering that Indian Bengalis were not imagined as a part of that nationalism, so that the language-based Bengali nationalism that arose in East Pakistan was simply the nationalism of that section of Bengalis who had become Pakistanis and wished now not to be so. Bangladesh is now linguistically the most cohesive— really the only linguistically cohesive— nation in South Asia, but it is mercifully much too weak to force its linguistic nationalism upon West Bengal.

I shall come to the projects and paradoxes of cultural nationalism in tomorrow's lecture. Let me return to that other emphasis in theories of nationalism which I mentioned earlier, namely the emphases that arise out of the materialist perspective of political economy. The first point here is that the issue of nationalism is inseparable from the problematics of the state. It is simply

axiomatic that nationalisms aspire to found states and that states are what determine the final contours of any nationalism. Hence the hyphenated term, nation-state. Now, the emergence and consolidation of the state presumes a high degree of centralisation of the economic surplus, which in turn presumes the subjection of local powers to a central authority, the unification of the realms of law and revenue, and a substantial degree of commercialisation of the surplus to underwrite the consumptions and projects of the state authority. That type of state had arisen quite early in great many social formations in precapitalist Asia whereas in feudal Europe sovereignties were parcellised, with no unification of legal or revenue systems and no pre-eminent central authority that was not itself dependent upon the large number of local magnates in the given territory. In India, for example, we have had not only vast imperial formations based precisely on that kind of centralisation of the social surplus, but also regional princely formations encompassing territories larger than most countries in Western Europe. The parcellisation of sovereignties into tiny units, which was so much the norm in feudal Europe, was for us always an exception, a symptom of short-lived crisis which in time led to the consolidation of some other centralised authority, often accompanied by a shift in dynastic power.

In short, then, if the centralisation of the economic surplus and political sovereignty is what accounts for the rise of states in the modern sense, then we can say that the process of this formation has been much older for us than in Europe. Thus, in the sphere of linguistic development itself, we have not only Tamil, which has been both a classical and a modern language in a way that no contemporary European language can even remotely claim to be, but also several modern languages of India, from Bengali to Telugu, which emerged out of histories of gestation at least as prolonged as that of English, the language of our colonial rulers and now the pre-eminent language of global capital; strict standardisation of scripts and grammars have of course come only after print technology which arrived here much later than in England. To the east of us, imperial unity over vast territories in China was for centuries guaranteed by a mandrinate bureaucracy that covered the entire territory and gave rise very early to what is now known as Mandarin Chinese. A language, undoubtedly, of the governing elite alone and not of the general populace, this idiom of the mandrinate was nevertheless more widespread and possibly more widely understood than, say, literary Italian was until the beginning of the 19th century in what came to be called 'Italy' after the Unification.

To the West of us, most Arab states were not feudal, and with the exception of Egypt, not even predominantly agrarian; most were largely mercantile formations with impressive levels of urbanisation, so that brisk movement of peoples created in the Arab world the unique phenomenon of a single language of high culture, namely classical Arabic, in which all the literate Arabs, from the Yemen to Algeria, can now converse. If language be taken as the defining characteristic of a national cohesion, the experience of the Arab world is quite the opposite of that of Europe. In the Arab world, speakers of the same language are scattered over eighteen nation-states, so that the difference between an Egyptian and a Syrian is based not on language but on different production systems, territorial boundaries and the respective central authorities, all of which have combined to give them quite distinct cultural identities as well; it is the state authority, in other words, that has in each case created the nation. In Europe, by contrast, most nation-states were either distinguished by different national languages at the very outset or were so distinguished in the course of a state formation that imposed a national language and suppressed

all others; divided by merely the eighteen miles of water, the languages of Britain and France are radically different, but then the generalisation of a standard English in the United Kingdom presumes a prior suppression of Welsh and Scottish as languages of administration, profession or techno-scientific education— not to speak of forced extinction of regional dialects within England itself.

The consolidation of a national language undoubtedly has a lot to do with the projects of a state authority, and in the singular case of 19th century Europe there does appear to have been a coincidence between linguistic consolidation and national consolidation. Which partly explains Gramsci's sardonic comment that nationalism is an ideology particularly of philologists, poets and schoolteachers. In the major Asian countries, there is no such coincidence between nation-state and a singular language; most of our polities are multi-lingual, thanks to processes that span the precolonial as well as the colonial periods.

In other words, the greater potentialities of nationhood in precapitalist Asia have to be traced back not to some civilisational essence but to the crucial difference that, unlike feudal Europe where sovereignties were parcellised, production of material goods in our region had for long presumed centralisation of surplus as well as sovereignty, which then also had cultural consequences. I don't mean to imply that the India as we know it today was already a consolidated nation or that some unitary nationalism was latent in that social formation. It does mean, though, that already in the precolonial period there existed large units across linguistic and denominational boundaries which could have been the foundation for the emergence of the national state form of the modern type. Whether or not that potentiality would have led to a single nation-state or to several is irrelevant for the present argument. The point, rather, is that if the modern Indian nation-state encompasses enormous diversities of region, language and denomination, this form of unification ought not be regarded as a gift of colonial modernisation. The roots are much older, though the tree itself, as we now have it, has grown only out of the crucible of August 1947.

What about the common idea, then, that modern nationalism has its origins in Europe and has spread from there to its colonies through the Western educated middle classes? Some of the ideas that have served as staples of nationalist mythology, such as the identification of nation with language, are undoubtedly of European vintage. But there is, I believe, another way of mapping this history, which I will now briefly summarise.

It is generally agreed that the making of modern nations and nationalisms had a lot to do with the French Revolution, in two quite different ways. First, in the sense of transforming monarchical realms into modern constitutional states based upon the general will, so that sovereignty comes to reside not in the king by divine right but in the people themselves— that is to say, the nation— which are now governed by laws that they have collectively given to themselves. That of course was the project of the French Revolution itself, as spelled out in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. But French Revolution contributed to the rise of nationalism in another way as well, as the ideology of a response to Napoleonic conquests. This was as true of Spain, where what came to be known as guerrilla warfare was invented against French occupation, as of Germany where Fichte and Herder formulated the philosophical premises of Romantic, culturalist nationalism, again in response to Napoleon's arrival on the German soil. I shall return to this founding moment of modern nationalism tomorrow, especially with reference to Fichte,

because those two conceptions of nationalism— the one based on conceptions of popular rights, and the other based on the cultural essence of a nation— shall be germane to our discussion of the paradoxes of nationalism. Today, I want to propose to you something else that is not generally recognised— again, I believe, because of a Eurocentric bias.

We need the reminder that Napoleon's armies, indeed Napoleon himself, had arrived not only in Germany but also in Egypt; and that part of what sealed Tipu Sultan's fate in Mysore was the defeat of the French in Europe and the Near East. It is worth remembering that Tipu was a prince who at times fancied himself a Republican, thanks to the rumours of the French Revolution that had reached him. The matter of Egypt is more substantial, however. The ruler there, the modernising Prince Muhammad Ali, had just consolidated the de facto separation of Egypt from the Ottoman Empire and, faced with the threat from Europe, he undertook a program of state-sponsored industrialisation that was to be the largest anywhere in Asia or Africa throughout the 19th century, with the single exception of the Meiji Revolution in Japan. Japan of course succeeded in the latter half of the 19th century where Egypt had failed in the opening decades of that century, with the upshot that Japan managed to beat back colonial pressures and at length emerged as the only great industrial power anywhere in Asia or Africa. The point nevertheless is that modern nationalism was born in Egypt during exactly the same decade when it also emerged in Germany, in response to the Napoleonic invasion in both cases, and that the Egyptian variant was much freer of Romantic irrationalism than was the German variant.

European historiography is generally agreed that the 19th century in Europe was a century of nationalisms. The revolution of 1848 is often referred to as the "Spring of the Peoples," meaning that it was a time when people across Europe rose to fight for their national rights. But this historiography neglects two sizeable facts. One is that it was an age of nationalism in Europe in another sense as well, as an age of the most ferocious nationalist rivalries among the main imperialist powers, which led to constant warfare and culminated at length in the First World War and then in the Second, during the present century itself. But the second fact is even more crucial, namely that resistance to foreign occupation, which was to give birth to fully fledged nationalisms in the course of time, was a generalised phenomenon in Asia and Africa. There was hardly a country in these continents which fell to European powers without great struggles. Engels himself described the Boxers' Uprising in China as "a war for defence of the Chinese nationality." The city of Hanoi in Annam, that is to say North Vietnam, fell after full ten years of siege. In Algeria, Abdel Kader's followers fought the same kind of hit-&-run skirmishes against the French during the 1870s as the Spaniard guerrillas had fought against the French some half a century earlier. In Libya, one of every ten inhabitants fought actively against Italian occupation. All this European historiography does not recognise as nationalist because those resistances were mounted not by a rising bourgeoisie but by peasant masses under the leadership of traditional authorities. I would argue rather the opposite, namely that the 19th century gave rise to nationalist ideologies and movements in our own continent as much as in Europe, with the difference that ours were fought not by urban populations but by the peasants, including peasants in soldiers' dress, and that their leaders were not the rising bourgeoisie but either the traditional elites or a modern salaried class whose development into a fully fledged bourgeoisie was obstructed by the colonial authority itself. One could say that those anti-colonial struggles of the 19th century mark in our own

societies a transitional phase between the dominance of traditional central authorities and the consolidation of colonial rule, and that the memory of those early struggles against colonialism in its founding moment was an essential part of the more modern anti-imperialist movements of the 20th century.

This would imply that our own nationalisms are in fact as old as the European ones, that defeat and foreign occupations played as large a part here as in countries like Germany or Italy or Spain, and yet our nationalisms can be clearly divided between two historical phases, the first under the leadership of the traditional property holders, and the second, which emerged after the lapse of many years, under the leadership of the newly emergent urban middle classes. In most of our societies, the beginning of this second phase can be dated somewhere between the 1880s and 1920s. These nationalist movements generally became mass movements toward the end of this phase, in the twin shadows of the First World War on the one hand, and of the Bolshevik Revolution on the other. In all phases, the peasantry was always the class that transformed nationalism from a minority current into a mass movement.

It was in this general context that Lenin first proposed that the national question was essentially a peasant question, and that if the newly formed working class parties were to emerge as hegemonic political forces in their respective countries they had to contend for leadership of the national movement itself, which in turn they could not do without the overwhelming weight of the peasantry. In any materialist conception, in other words, the fate of the nation in the imperialised countries has always been tied up with the fate of the peasantry, and the national bourgeoisie has always been called upon to choose between imperialism and the peasantry. Our experience in postcolonial societies is that every national bourgeoisie has sooner or later betrayed the peasantry and reconciled itself to imperialism. It is on this rock— the betrayal of the peasantry and reconciliation with imperialism— that the historic trajectory of Indian secular nationalism has now crashed. How so?

This question we shall take up at some length in later lectures. Let me simply suggest to you, in closing, three propositions. One is that the project of the radical side of the Enlightenment, which sought to create rational and humanistic societies, actually crashed on the shores of capitalism and colonialism. Rationality came to be concentrated mostly in either the techno-scientific fields or in some areas of abstract thought; irrationality not only remained rampant in actual economic organisation and social conduct but also got organised in forms and on a scale that only modern urban societies could have produced. Religion did not decline; instead, it got hugely commodified. Enormous increases in the production of wealth created, under capitalism, not communities of modern civic virtue but catastrophic kinds of lonely individuals many of whom were able to find a sense of community only in terms of a primordial identity. There is a kind of primordialism, an ideology of 'blood and belonging', which is not the product of tradition as such but of capitalist modernity— as aggression, and as escape. As colonialism spread across the globe, racism also spread as a generalised phenomenon, initially as a Eurocentric bias against the non-European, then as a racialistic biologism in which everyone had to belong to some race or another, superior or inferior, and then as the very model under which the colonised began to think of their own differences; the upper caste ideologies and the majoritarian communalism that are so dominant in India today are modelled precisely on practices of racism.

My second proposition is that these features of capitalist irrationality have been particularly sharp in the specifically colonial modernity which formed the ideological universe of the bourgeoisie in our countries. This bourgeoisie lives a self-divided existence in which it apes the unbridled consumerism of the advanced capitalist countries even as it knows that its own material productions and levels of wealth are inferior. Against this sense of inferiority, it posits the claims of a superior culture. But the lived culture of this bourgeoisie is simply a more tasteless version of the culture of the imperialist bourgeoisie. So, the claims of culture are transferred from the lived to the imagined, from action to faith. The more voracious consumerism becomes and the more the value systems break down, the more hysterical the claims of a superior tradition and cultural ethos become. Religion, then, comes to have brand new uses; it becomes the only marker of identity that distinguishes the dependent bourgeoisie from the culture of its imperialist superiors. Even as the per capita income of the people of South Asia freezes at about two per cent of what it is for the core capitalist countries, and even as more than half of the world's illiterates come to be concentrated in this region, our claim to cultural superiority comes to rest exclusively in religious difference; the Hindu is intrinsically superior because he is intrinsically spiritual. It is in this context that religion gets increasingly commodified, politicised, even militarised. Once gained in this market-friendly, socially aggressive form, one's own religious identity is then posited not so much against the imperialist master, of whom one is afraid and upon whom one depends for capital and commodities, but against one's neighbours.

My third and final proposition is that like the national question itself, secularism too is ultimately tied to the question of the peasantry, in the sense that secularism does not arise spontaneously out of the social solidarity of traditional societies; it is a modern civic virtue which cannot take deep roots in our society in all its breadth without radical transformation of the culture of the popular classes, and their culture cannot be transformed without fundamental changes in the conditions of their material life. You cannot have a secular society that is not a modern society, and you cannot have a modern society unless modern material goods, including educational and cultural goods, are widely available to the vast majority of the populace. I do not at all mean that the traditional values of the peasantry are communal values; my sense, and my own experience at least in Uttar Pradesh, is that peasants who still work on the land are much less communal than the urban middle classes. I mean, rather, that in a rapidly transforming society such as ours— and a distorted society in which electronic literacy of video and tv is perhaps more widespread than the basic literacy of reading and writing— traditional values are very much in crisis, very much under pressure of even more rapid changes that are now coming. In this situation, the popular classes cannot forever live by their values of traditional decency and co-operation. Modernity is here, it is irreversible, and its ideological reach into the countryside is even faster and deeper than the reach of its material wealth. Caught in this vortex, the popular classes shall have to choose between different value systems which are available within this modernity, the value systems which are rational and progressive on the one hand, and those other value systems that are irrationalist and savage on the other. But the popular classes cannot make such choices in the abstract, unless they are free agents in control of their own lives and their own choices, and unless they have the wherewithal to make such choices rationally. We should remember that the experience of mass misery does not necessarily lead to a revolutionary consciousness, it can equally lead to social conservatism and a susceptibility toward hysterical

forms of national and communal consciousness. Under these circumstances, it is not at all inconceivable that Hindutva, which is so obviously in essence a project of the upper castes and the upper classes, may take root among substantial sections of the lower petty bourgeoisie and the urban poor, which is of course where the typical member of the Bajrang Dal comes from. The best defence against mass hysteria is the removal of those conditions of misery which make hysterical conduct attractive to the wretched of this earth.

*In the time of the Nazis in Europe, Clara Zetkin remarked that fascism was a just punishment for having failed to make the socialist revolution. In that same spirit, I would argue that irrationalist majoritarianism is our just punishment for not having transformed our anti-colonial nationalism into a mass movement of the oppressed for liberation within the nation.

[Lecture Two]

ON CULTURE AND CULTURAL NATIONALISM

Before carrying the discussion forward, let me briefly recall some of the propositions from yesterday's lecture.

First, I proposed a certain periodisation and suggested that whereas nationalism was almost universally regarded as a progressive force during the great wave of decolonisation, between, let us say, 1945 and 1975, more contemporary social theory, reacting to various developments of the recent period, tends to dismiss all nationalism as repressive, irrational etc. I suggested that nationalism as such is neither necessarily progressive nor necessarily pathological and we need, therefore, to distinguish between the progressive and reactionary elements that might in fact co-exist within a nationalist project.

Second, I suggested that the dominant strands in European theories and historiography of nationalism were wrong on several counts. Processes of state formation are older in Asia than in Europe which means that potential for the rise of the nation-state was greater in the Asian precapitalist societies than in European feudalism. Similarly, I argued that nationalism did not arise first in Europe and then spread later into Asia and Africa; events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries laid the foundations for the rise of nationalism in both continent simultaneously. European social science does not recognise this because, unlike Europe where intellectuals allied with the rising bourgeoisie were the main agents of nationalism both in its rationalist and the Romantic forms, nationalism in our continent arose initially as a class alliance between traditional property holders and the peasantry and very much later came to be led by the middle and upper classes of the modern type. In both phases, and throughout Asia and Africa, it was the peasantry that transformed anti-colonial nationalism into a mass movement.

Third, I suggested that in the conditions of socio-economic backward of a predominantly agrarian colony, anti-colonial nationalism had to perform not one but two historic tasks: liberation of the nation from colonial rule, and liberation of the dominated classes, especially the peasantry, from the rule of property. In conditions prevailing specifically in India, this liberation of the dominated classes itself had two distinct aspects: freedom from class exploitation, and liberation from caste oppression, in the sense that although caste and class do not coincide perfectly in India, nor should caste subordination be regarded simply as an epiphenomenal effect of economic exploitation, there is, none the less, a very high degree of coincidence between ritual subordination and economic exploitation. You cannot liberate the peasantry as a class without putting an end to varnashram and jativad as a whole. The refusal of the national bourgeoisie to align itself with the peasantry, and in stead align itself with the upper and middle caste landowners internally and with imperialism globally, is at the heart of the re-subjugation of India through mechanisms of liberalisation and globalisation, as well as the decay of Indian nationalism into an irrationalist majoritarianism. In a society such as ours, which has been a colony quite recently and where national formation is still very much in an embryonic form, nationalist ideology is an objective

necessity, and if you don't have a progressive, rationalist, secular, anti-imperialist nationalism, you are bound to degenerate into an irrationalist, anti-secular, bourgeois, majoritarian nationalism. Questions of class exploitation and caste subordination will then be suppressed by a religiously-defined cultural nationalism which will then claim that the culture of the hindu upper castes is indeed the culture of the nation as a whole. Imperialism shall then be understood as 'cultural invasion' while the political economy of imperialism remains intact and deepens further.

Please keep this line of unfinished argument in mind, as I now begin a very different discussion, about culture and cultural nationalism, because yesterday's arguments will frame today's discussion indirectly and will re-surface more explicitly later.

First, then, the issue of 'culture.' The discussions of culture that are dominant in India tend to take three alternative directions, which also sometimes overlap. In one direction, culture is collapsed into 'civilisation' and civilisation into 'religion', as a kind of patrimony. As soon as you start discussing culture, you find yourself discussing texts and belief systems that have come down to us from the ancient and medieval times, and the status they have today, for different social clusters in different regions. We then get much more concerned with continuity than with discontinuity, the premodern than the modern. Dissident strands in this discussion then seek to construct— or re-construct-– an alternative history, from below, which privileges the history of oral and vernacular texts over the history of Brahminical classicism, the variety of popular beliefs over the normative injunctions of the dharmashastras, and so on. Both these strands of thought, the dominant and the dissident, inhabit essentially the same universe— of renewal, resurgence, renaissance. They differ over the definition of that which is to be recovered and renewed: shastric knowledge or medieval Bhakti, the Brahminical text or the Buddhist text, the Valmiki and the Tulsi Ramayanas or Tukaram and Kabir Das. What is sought in contentions over the problem of culture is civilisational depth and enduring systems of belief, including dissident belief. There is almost always a search for a culture that is specifically and exclusively Indian: any transformation that is owed to an external influence is set aside as a contamination or at best a subordinate element; in case of Kabir, for example, his advaita is very much foregrounded but his vahdat-al-vajood is either not recognised or is dissolved into a very vague notion of sufism; and about Buddhism itself, the confrontation takes place over the issue whether it is a dissidence within Hinduism or a wholesale rejection of Brahminism and thus a rejection of Hinduism as such. Hinduism remains the centre of gravity in these confusions of culture, civilisation and religion. Christianity, which has an older presence in India than most smriti literature, is rarely regarded as an intrinsic part of this all-Indic culture and is jettisoned, in the discourse of revivalist conservatism, to the domain of missionaries. Islam, which has an older presence here than most of medieval bhakti, is itself regarded as marginal and additional. I would argue that the very terms of this debate, with their extraordinary orientation toward the past, pave the way, objectively speaking, for a revivalist kind of cultural nationalism, and what the more supple Hindutva ideologue then has to do is to fashion an inclusivist discourse which lays claim to the whole of this past, from Manusmriti to Mirabai, and from Shankara to Vivekanad, thus marginalising as well as incorporating the dissent that arises within the contentions over the meaning of 'Hinduism', which is more or less what the RSS ideologues have sought to do— and this they must do if they are to include in their hegemonising project all those whom they describe as Hindus. Incorporation, rather than exclusion, is the central objective in this kind of cultural nationalism; nor should we

underestimate the powers of such incorporation in a situation where all discussions of culture, even from the dissident side, tend to look to the past and abandon the fundamental principle that modernity is here, it is irreversible, and that one of the more difficult and exacting demands of modernity is that it find its normativity within itself, which is what gives to modernity its own extraordinary orientation toward the future.

The other strand in discussions of culture in India is more familiar from the traditional British model where culture is synonymous with the traditions of literature and the arts, and more generally with the zones of the aesthetic. We take from the European literary-critical traditions the well-known hierarchical distinction between the canonical and the classical on the one hand, and the popular and the vernacular on the other. We take from social anthropology the equally disastrous distinction between the unity of the great tradition on the one hand, the multiplicity of little traditions on the other. And we observe these same protocols in the way we package India through the powerful medium of our tourist industry: on the one hand the great testimonials of our civilisation in Ajanta, Khajuraho and the famous tourist triangle of Delhi-Agra-Jaipur; and on the other hand, the idyllic pastoralism of what we call village India. No Orientalist could believe in the essential spirituality of the Indian, not even Hegel could believe in the timeless quality of the Indian village community, more fervently than do the bureaucrats of our tourist industry, who of course only replicate the prevailing wisdom of our literary, artistic and anthropological establishments. What is striking about this understanding of Indian culture is how very much it overlaps with that other conception which I just summarised for you, in which religion is the central element. There, the debate is whether the classical text or the popular belief defines the 'true' India. Here, the populist preference for the beauties of Indian life collides with the classical temper which prefers the frescoes of Ajanta and the countless murtis of Khajuraho.

Then, there is the third version of Indian culture, the one that is authorised by the state, which naturally tries to mediate the disputes between the classical and the pastoral, which goes under the formulae of 'unity-in-diversity', and which offers to us a breathless celebration of everything under the Indian sun, therefore requiring our master photographers, such as Raghubir Singh, that they aestheticize everything, including the poverty of the vast majority of people in this country. This is of course a very supple ideology of reconciliations. It can reconcile the Vedic past with the petrochemical plants, Brahminism with modernity. It can contract to address the four-part bhai-bhai ideology of 'Hindu Muslim, Sikh, Easai', or it can expand to include all the three thousand or so communities that the Anthropological Survey seems to have identified in the country. The main virtue of this ideology is that it is not specific enough even to be wrong. This version of Indian of course comes to us mainly in the Nehruvian version of all the peoples of India, in their immense diversity and with no mutual conflicts, marching together, on the strength of their great national traditions of great antiquity, toward an infinitely promising future. The broad tolerance inherent in this vision is certainly matched by the pure, other-worldly idealism of the picture it presents of India. It is worth remarking, though, that Hindutva also has its own version of this unity-in-diversity version in which a unified Hinduism is perfectly reconcilable with the immense intricacies of sectarian difference and the varna-jati system, and in which even Muslims can be re-born as Mohammedi Hindus, not to speak of the Adivasis on whom Hinduism has never been very keen but who are designated as Hindus as soon as some of them adopt Christianity in pursuit, mostly, of education and profession.

In all these versions, then, culture is spiritual, civilisational, aesthetic, and heavily weighted toward religion. Not all versions of it but certainly the predominant ones tend to offer us cultural discourses as a politics of nostalgia, as identitarian utopia, and as a narrative of salvation— all at once— so that the whole sweep of such versions can be quickly summarised in the language of 'renaissance', 'resurgence' and 'return'. Thus it is that for a whole century now, cultural competitions in India have been replete with rhetorics of revival, from the liberalising 'Bengal Renaissance' to the atavistic hindu jagran munch.

Is there any other way of thinking about 'Culture'? With this question, then, I suspend a reflection on the cultural discourses that are dominant in India today for a different kind of exploration, in which 'culture' shall be viewed not so much as a condition of the soul as a set of material practices, not a civilisational attribute but a terrain of social conflicts in which human beings try to conceive and then live the terms of their own existence. For this part of my discussion I want to recall an argument that might be familiar to some of you who have seen a short piece I published in Frontline last year. What I had tried to do there was to think of Indian culture not as patrimonial inheritance but as we live it now, concretely, and this I had done by posing the question in terms of a contrast that has always seemed to me both distressing and astonishing. The terms of that contrast are as follows.

India is one of the few countries of the world, certainly the only country of considerable size or claim to world distinction, which will enter the twenty-first century with half of its people illiterate and, according to India Today, its women facing a dowry death every one hour and forty-two minutes, a rape every fifty-four minutes, a molestation every twenty-six minutes. India also produces an impressive cross-section of the world's technical personnel and some of the world's most celebrated novelists in the English language; exhibits and auctions organised by such illustrious agencies as Christi's would suggest that an increasing number of Indian painters and other artists are now selling at very good prices in the global art market. How are these contrasting facts related to the state of culture in India half a century after Independence?

But before answering that question, one needs also to reflect on the very term, 'Culture', which strikes me as one of the more difficult words in vocabularies of modern thought. In one range of meanings, 'Culture' refers to cultivation of superior intellectual abilities and spiritual refinements, as reflected, for example, in institutions of higher learning and the arts. Novelists, painters, professors, scientists, filmmakers, theologians, and specialists of various kinds are crucial for this sense of 'Culture'. But 'Culture' also means 'a whole way of life' as it is sedimented historically and lived in concrete material practice by a people, whether organised in units of nationality or not. Third, however, it is often presumed that culture as 'a whole way of life' is distilled and crystallised in a 'High Culture' of superior learning and finer perception. A country that has a large number of literrateurs, scientists, sculptors etc is presumed to have attained a high level of culture, since the great scholars and the great artists are said to represent the culture of their people at its best. Finally, 'Culture' may also refer to aggregate patterns of civic life: 'culture of civility' may be distinguished from a 'culture of cruelty' and the one may give way, in conditions of social transition, to the other, as a culture of relative civility is currently giving way in India to a very widespread culture of cruelty, practised methodically by the Far Right but also spreading as acts of undirected individual violence that indicate the depth of crisis especially in patterns of our urban life.

The definition of 'Culture' as 'a whole way of life' is perhaps the most arresting, since this can be read in great many ways. For instance, references are often made to 'Indian culture' or 'Hindu culture' or, more plausibly, to 'Brahminical culture' or 'upper class culture'. The latter two claims seem to me more plausible because members of the same consolidated caste or class do tend to share broad parameters of a certain culture. But usages where culture is identified with a nation-state or a religion tend to obfuscate matters considerably, since nations are internally too divided for all its members to share in a single national culture and because "the determinate essence of a religion is always historical . . . [because] a religion is always produced and reproduced according to the exigencies of society and polity, though this is almost invariably undertaken in terms of a fundamentalist motif, a myth of origin claiming a particular textual genealogy." (Al-Azmeh) Moreover, the culturalist claims of an organised religion in the context of modern politics, where religion gets intermeshed in cultural nationalism, almost always conceal very high degree of violence against those who stand outside the charmed circle of this religiously defined cultural nationalism. For example, the Hindutva ideologues claim that there is what they call the 'Indian cultural mainstream' to which Hindus seem to belong by birth and the majority that exists outside and below the structure of caste Hinduism— Dalits, adivasis, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, the agnostics and the atheists— is urged to swim into. Similarly, 'Hindu culture' can only be the culture of caste hindus. No one is ever urged to join the 'Culture' of the oppressed castes or the casteless who are generally presumed to be culture-less as well.

Social conflicts of various kinds, along lines of class, caste, gender, ethnicity etc actually leave very little room for a 'whole way of life', in the sense of roughly equal access to cultural goods, that may be shared by 'a people' or a whole nation to any significant extent. This fact is often concealed in analytic distinctions of the kind that are often observed between 'high culture' and 'low culture', 'great tradition' and 'little tradition', 'classical' and 'folk', 'cultures of literacy' and 'cultures of 'orality', and so on. Such distinctions tend to conceal the real cultural tensions of a caste-ridden, class-based society behind images of conflict-free plurality while always presuming the superiority of one term over the other in such binary distinctions; the unity of the 'great tradition' is always supposed to intrinsically higher, more classical, more literate, even perhaps more enduring and trans-historical than the multiplicities of 'little traditions', though it is impolitic to actually say so. Meanwhile, the distinguished members of 'high culture' rarely concede that their access to distinction may in some way be related to the deprivation of others, or that this relation between achievement and deprivation may itself be defined as 'a whole way of life' and therefore as 'national culture' in its own very concrete and material way. Compared, for example, to the number of illiterates in the country, the number of those who get science degrees or those who read Salman Rushdie or Anita Desai is minuscule. This is a fair index of the cultural situation in India at the present time.

This 'cultural situation' could also be called a 'class structure', in the sense that access to cultural goods is very much a matter of class, and in the sense that depriving the vast majority of people any access to modern cultural goods is itself 'a whole way of life' in India. Simply put: no male member of the upper class is illiterate any more, not even in U.P. or Bihar. Culture, in other words, is not an arena for harmonious unfolding of the National Spirit, as is often supposed by those who borrow their nationalist vocabulary from German Romanticism. Nor is 'Culture'

simply a zone of the aesthetic. It is a field, rather, of contention and conflict, among classes and among other social forces that struggle for dominance. Every nation has at any given time not one culture but several, and these contentions take not only the benign form of 'unity in diversity', as our nationalism presupposes, but also as unity of opposites. The proper metaphor for 'Culture' is not that of organic growth or of dialogue, but that of warfare, as cultural nationalists of the Hindutva vintage quite fully understand.

Culture in the sense of 'High Culture' (e.g., techno-managerial strata, Midnight's Children, Christi's auctions, and now The God of Small Things), and culture in the sense of 'a whole way of life' (e.g., illiteracy, violence against women, child labour), have not been mutually unrelated phenomena in Independent India, and the latter is not on the way to being eradicated by the former. These conflicting patterns within a single national culture have functioned for us as an organic whole, as two aspects of our specific kind of embourgeoisment.

Looked at in this way, it is really quite astonishing how closely culture is connected with politics and economy, and with the pedagogical practices of the state. About the cultural impact of Independence one could say roughly what Kosambi said of Nehru's Discovery of India: it was a sign that the Indian bourgeois had come of age. The anti-colonial movement had undoubtedly been a mass movement, but under strict bourgeois hegemony. Which then meant that the first task on the morrow of Independence was the self-consolidation of the bourgeoisie as the culturally dominant class, while also making some concessions to its allies among the popular classes. Hence the magisterial Academies (of Arts, Letters, Dance and Music), the Research Councils (for History, Social Science), the Institutes of Technology, the Central Universities, the state-sponsored scientific establishment, and other related complexes of 'high culture'. This organisation of the cultural field in independent India, which concentrated cultural resources in the main cities, notably Delhi and secondarily some state capitals, while making little effort to eradicate illiteracy, provide mass education or develop villages and peri-urban townships as centres of modern creativity, was entirely in keeping with the Mahalanobis model of economic growth in which development of industry, especially capital goods industry, was to lay the foundation for a much postponed, eternally promised modernisation of agriculture and of the peasantry that bears the burden of its backwardness.

In the model of cultural construction in newly independent India, the emphasis was on higher education but not on primary and secondary education; on the production of scientists, research scholars and world-class artists rather than a healthy and literate citizenry; on Culture as refinement of Spirit rather than Culture as a mode of collectively shared civic values. Scientists and artists were not to grow, organically, out of a mass of educated citizens with a wide access to cultural goods; they were to be drawn, rather, from the national bourgeoisie and the very narrow spectrum of a meritocracy which brought sections of the middling castes and classes into patterns of embourgeoisment, which then came to have its own rather large share of nepotism and sleaze. Cultural capital, like money capital, was to be concentrated, not re-distributed. In its own curious way, this model has worked. At the upper end of the scale, India has an intelligentsia which aspires to, can and does rub shoulders with the best and the brightest in metropolitan centres of culture in the advanced capitalist countries. The bottom half of India does not read or write, and another thirty per cent or so does but barely.

The past decade has witnessed three fundamental shifts in the cultural field. First, the Hindutva forces, which used to be marginal to national culture in the days of the National Movement and in the opening decades of the Republic, are now the main contenders for political dominance and cultural hegemony, especially in North India. Second, economic liberalisation has vastly accelerated the creation of a pan-Indian culture of commodity fetishism which the electronics media is carrying far beyond the urban habitats of the bourgeoisie, fairly deep into the countryside. Together, these far-reaching attacks on the founding principles of the Republic have led to an immense brutalisation of day-to-day cultural life, certainly of the affluent but with far-reaching consequences for society at large, as competing spectres of greed satisfied and of greed unsatisfied stalk the land. Third, the lack of a national project for social justice and the acceptance of the supremacy of the market as the final arbiter of the social good, combined with full commodification of competing religiosities, has led to a new eruption of the savage identities of caste and denomination, which gets intellectual respectability from the indigenist scholars for whom secularism is the sin of modernity while savage identities of religion and community are the very essence of what they call 'tradition'. Of these, indigenism is arising as a particular pathology of 'high culture', and Hindutva poses the most immediate danger to the culture of secular civility, but the greatest long-term danger comes from that worship of the market that goes currently under the name of 'liberalisation'. For, unleashing of an uncontrolled market in a multi-cultural society that rests on such concentrations of wealth and magnitudes of deprivation promises to create a culture so brutish, so much at odds with itself, so devoid of any sense of culture as a 'common way of life' that neither political democracy nor the compact of a united nation may survive this brutalisation.

I have so far detained you on two alternative ways of thinking about culture. In one conception, culture is seen as accumulation of a long past, as civilisational ethos, as spiritual essence, as a zone of the aesthetic and the traditional; in India, this conception has been largely associated with religion as well. This conception tends to dissociate culture from the relations of the production and reproduction of material life, and tends to incline culture toward what Gramsci broadly called classicism, in the sense of a class ideology of patrimonial and traditionalist authoritarianism. At its worst, this conception of culture produces revivalist crusades. Even at its best, this conception of culture limits cultural work to the task of ideological redemption.

The alternative conception thinks of culture as a web of material practices, in which different social groups create meanings differentially in accordance with their own needs and conditions of existence. In this conception, the very idea of culture as a cultivation of spirit is seen as a privilege that is available to some and denied to most. The distinctions between high culture and popular culture, between the great tradition and the little tradition, are then seen as so many modes of the hierarchical organisation of the sphere of culture as a whole, which is by its very nature repressive. In this conception, then, classicism is seen not just as accumulated wisdom of the ages but also an anachronism that weighs upon the souls of the oppressed. The various kinds of media, print media and even more centrally electronics media, are then seen not as just entertainment outside the spheres of culture but as the very central element in cultural control, as a well-oiled cultural industry that dispenses ideology not as an abstract set of beliefs but as image and narrative that seeks to inhabit the soul and colonise the unconscious on behalf of those who control the heights of this culture industry.

I might add that the majoritarian cultural nationalism that is arising today makes use of both these conceptions of culture. It appeals to the vedas but sets out to transform the media as well as the modern institutions of education and research in terms of programming, personnel, textbooks, popular fiction and pamphlets and so on. Constant harping on classicism in this project is a transparent mode of legitimation. For example, the religious consciousness that is then dispensed through this culture industry makes all the required references to ancient texts but is specifically a modern, irrationalist consciousness.

These two contrasting conceptions of culture give us then contrasting conceptions of cultural nationalism as well as conceptions of the tasks of the nation-state. From the materialist conception of culture— the conception of culture as sets of material practices by different strata in society— comes the conception of what Gramsci called "the national-popular," in which the nation itself is identified with the popular classes as such so that a `national culture' can only arise out of the practices as well as aspirations of those classes. This conception of national culture as `national-popular' has an orientation not toward the past, as in revivalist conception, but toward the future; culture itself is conceived then not as a finished common possession, beyond the various social hierarchies, but as a struggle for cultural entitlements as part of a much broader democratic struggle for social and economic entitlements of various kinds. This conception of the `national-popular' distinguishes itself from mere populism in two ways. One is that it does not regard the oppressed as cultureless, it recognises that there are numerous traditions of the oppressed which are intrinsically libertarian and egalitarian, that those traditions are among our central resources of hope for the future; but, unlike facile kinds of populism, it also regards the totality of the cultural life of the oppressed critically and even with suspicion, because there is much in the cultural life of the oppressed which reflects the internalised forms of the dominant ideology and even the distortions which are produced in the consciousness of the oppressed by the mechanisms of oppression itself. On the other hand, the conception of the `national-popular' refuses to concede the culture of the upper classes to those upper classes because it recognises that dominant culture itself is not a product of leisure but of labour, so that it is indeed the working classes and strata of society which have in fact produced, through blood and sweat, the culture that the upper classes call their. The work of creating the `national-popular' thus involves a critical task twice over, in other words a critical appropriation of all that is best in the cultures of the oppressed as well as the oppressors, in the service of a general liberation. I might add that abolishing the state of the ruling classes and building the national-popular state of the majority is a central objective in this conception because the oppressed cannot have equal access to the cultural goods of their time without utilising the material resources and pedagogical machineries of the nation-state.

This is also a cultural nationalism in its own way, though it is radically different than the cultural nationalism of the right. And because these are two different conceptions of culture and cultural nationalism, they are also rooted in two radically different traditions of state formation. Which brings me then to the third set of my reflections today, namely on the history of formation of the nation-state itself.

That is obviously a very complex history which one cannot hope to summarise but among the many processes that have gone into the making of this complex history, I should want to

isolate for your consideration two conceptual moments that are analytically separable but appear in real history in varying combinations.

First, the modern constitutional state that rests upon the idea of the nation arose initially as a profane civil entity, against religious authority and monarchical or feudal or even colonial autocracy. In the conception of the nation that derives from the French 'Declaration of Man and the Citizen' the idea of citizenship is radically separated from race, religion or any other kind of primordial belonging, and is made much looser, available to all who are willing to accept the authority of the nation-state and the rights and obligations that apply to all equally and universally. The emergence of this conception of the nation marks the transition from subjection to citizenship, from obligation to rights, and constitutes a realm of political action and legislative function based on some modern conception of legitimacy. It is in order to meet the requirements of legitimacy that the constitutional state claims to represent not the rulers but the people, who are re-born as 'nation'. This realm of citizenship is then seen as an active ingredient in agencies of positive social change, be it revolutionary or reformist. From Hegel to Croce to Gramsci, there is a strong tradition in political thought that requires from the nation-state that it should punctually act as an ethical, pedagogical function designed to serve people's needs for progress in the various social and economic domains. One may designate this as the Enlightenment conception of the state, in the original sense of a rationalist project that was often expressed in Idealist terms. Even the Leninist conception which squarely identifies the revolutionary moment as the moment of the smashing of the state rests on the notion of the need to create an alternate form of state, the proletarian state, as the ethical form for the realisation of a classless society. In none of these conceptions is the nation-state regarded as the expression of an ethnos, as some inviolable thing, a condition of the soul, an expression of culture, a matter of religious identity and primordial belonging. A nation is emphatically not a race. From Rousseau and Kant to Lenin, this type of state has been associated with rational plans for creating the good society, while citizenship in a nation is seen as transitional toward an eventually universal society. By the time you get to Marx, of course, there is a deep distrust of the division of humanity into nations and states, even though, as the Manifesto emphasised, every proletariat has to settle accounts, first of all, with its own national bourgeoisie.

The other, contrasting moment in the making of modern nations and nationalisms is descended essentially from that tendency in German Idealism that is most forcefully represented by Herder and Fichte. Upon re-reading it recently, I was quite struck by the fact that in A History of Western Philosophy, a book written as far ago as 1945, Bertrand Russell associates Fichte with rightwing romanticism on the one hand, and with Nietzsche on the other, and characterises him as a prophet of what Russell calls "nationalistic totalitarianism." In this alternative conception, the state embodies a general will arising not out of a common citizenship but out of a cultural essence, based on ethnicity, race, religion, language or some other form of a primordial intimacy specific to an entity that by definition excludes others. In this conception, there is a sharp distinction between the national Self and the rest of the world; citizenship in such a nation is conceived not in terms of expanding toward a universalist inclusion but in terms of self-definition, enclosure, even self-purification. This conceptual universe rests, ultimately, on cultural wars and civilising missions; and on the obliteration of heterogeneity to obtain homogeneous nations. More often than not, such conceptions of the nation have been prone to xenophobia, irrationalism, cultural differentialism, racism, and relativisms of all sorts.

Between these competing notions of the nation-state I prefer the universalist and inclusivist conception which rests on the criterion not of primordial difference but of modern citizenship. But, as I said earlier, we can separate these two conceptual moments for analytical purposes only. In the unfolding of actual histories of nationalism, the two are almost always intermeshed, which is what gives to each nationalism its ambiguity and its ability to be progressive and pathological, liberating and repressive in its different aspects, simultaneously. I shall return to the question of the universalist and inclusivist conception a bit later, since that is what I should want then to more or less defend. So, let me detain you somewhat longer on the issue of that other kind of nationalism that has been formulated most powerfully in the idiom of European Romanticism and cultural differentialism but which, in various versions, we find in great many other nationalisms as well, around the globe, including great many nationalisms that have never heard of Fichte or Herder or anyone else of that tradition. And, opposed as I might be, I want to acknowledge that this kind of nationalism, born as it was in the moment of defeat, has been attractive for those in Africa and Asia who have been defeated and despised. In deed, we might say that this kind of nationalism arises out of the experience of defeat almost spontaneously. Let me give you two famous passages from the earliest moment of this discourse— that is to say, from Fichte's Addresses to the German Nation, which he of course delivered in response to Napoleonic conquest of his part of Germany. One of these passages runs as follows :

The, first, original, and truly natural borders of states are beyond doubt their internal borders. Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human art begins . . . Such a whole cannot absorb and mingle with itself any other people of different descent and language without itself becoming confused, in the beginning at any rate, and violently disturbing the even progress of its culture. From this internal border which is drawn by the spiritual nature of man himself, the marking of the external border begins as a consequence.

By the term "internal border" Fichte of course means what others may simply call "national culture," but he also means that this national culture is a lived experience that is available to each member of the nation but inaccessible to the foreigner; a territorial border the conqueror may violate and cross, but no army can batter down the wall that each of the vanquished can draw around his or her own cultural essence. This much many of us shall find highly attractive about this vivid image of an "internal border." You will also notice, however, that all the premises of primordialism are here. In this moment of a twin birth, of Romantic nationalism and of philology, language of course serves as nature, and its close identification with "descent" already presses it toward biologism and racialism. In the hands of a state really committed to this idea of a pure nation that "cannot absorb and mingle with itself any other people" without violently disturbing its own culture, such an ideology can easily lead to all the paraphernalia of gas ovens, ethnic cleansings, and communal killings of the sort we know from the experience of Germany or Serbia and now, increasingly, India as well. What also interests me, however, is the notion of a prior "internal border" of language and culture before the "external border" of territory. The priority here seems to be both chronological, as nature is prior to culture, as well as expressive, in the sense that a specific nature having expressed itself in culture then expresses itself in a territorial state. We thus have the triad of language, nation and state which now, two hundred years later appears so natural to us— as "natural" in fact as Fichte claims it is. In the

ideologies of modern Hindutva, of course, "culture" is said to derive from religion much more fundamentally than from language, though there have also been attempts to give the Hindi language a special relationship both with Hinduism and with Sanskritic classicism, hence a certain priority over other Indian languages; and there is undoubtedly much talk of a Hindu race which is said to have a special relationship with Indian territory that non-Hindus simply cannot have. The Hindutva ideologues, like the Nazis, also press this idea of a biologistic primordialism in extremely retrograde directions. Let me remind you, however, that this idea of the "internal border," which is drawn not on a territory but within the soul, has been immensely attractive to great many of the anti-colonial nationalists, in varying measures, because all ideas of national culture, all ideas of cultural nationalism, all ideas of the defence of national culture against the conqueror's onslaughts, tend to have some notion of an interior cultural space that remains inviolate, and must be kept inviolable, despite the territorial conquest. In our societies, this "interior border" has been drawn most frequently with reference to religion, custom, status of women, indigenous forms of patriarchy. However, this punctual use of the "internal border" for the most retrograde rightwing purposes ought not blind us to the power of the longing to save at least some areas of civility and subjectivity against the imperialism of others. Fichte himself gives to that sentiment the most moving expression, as follows:

We are defeated; whether we are now to be despised as well, and rightly despised, whether in addition to all other losses, we are to lose our honour also— that will still depend upon ourselves. The fight with weapons has ended; there arises now, if we so will it, the new fight of principles, of morals, of character. Let us give our guests a picture of faithful devotion to friends and fatherland, of incorruptible uprightness and love of duty, of all civic and domestic virtues, to take home with them as a friendly gift from their hosts, for they will return home at last some time or other. Let us be careful not to invite them to despise us; there would, however, be no surer way to do this than if we either feared them beyond measure or gave up our own way of life and strove to resemble them in theirs. . . our safest measure will be to go our own way in all things, as if we were alone with ourselves. . . and the surest means to this will be for each one to content himself with what the old national conditions are able to afford him. . .

I have quoted from Fichte deliberately. I could have quoted just as well from Gandhi or Vivekanand in India, Abdel Kader or Ben Badis in Algeria, Ali Shariati in Iran, the poets of Negritude, or, selectively, from Frantz Fanon. And, in bringing together such names I am not tracing any genealogy of influences. What I am trying to illustrate is a certain quality of the nationalist imagination— a certain thematic— which has been common in the situation of the conquered and has been used as often for religious revivalism as for cultural renaissance.

Let me return to certain phrases and accents of Fichte, though: the recapturing of "honour" after defeat in "the fight with weapons;" his idea that a much more rigorous and long-lasting war of position is now at hand, which shall be fought with other kinds of weapons, and these other weapons are your own unique "principles," "morals," "character," "civic and domestic virtues," fearlessness, refusal to imitate, and contentment with what he calls "old national conditions." If you try to be like them, they will only despise you, as the British colonialists in India did indeed despise those educated Indian whom they called `babus' and `wogs'. Fichte insists that the proper way to protect yourself from the contempt of the conqueror is for the Germans to recognise that

their culture is intrinsically superior, from which they, the conquering French, shall have to learn, and that superiority lies in the very character of the German family, coded here as "domestic virtues," and in a culture not modern and revolutionary as that of the French invaders but traditionally German and even primordial, coded here as "old national conditions." Over a hundred years later, Gandhi, a London-trained barrister, driven to fury by British racism, would write his famous Hind Swaraj, to eulogise the intrinsic superiority of the ancient Indian village community over the "evils" of modern society and would abandon his coat and tie to don the dress of the Indian peasant so as to affirm the superiority and cultural authenticity of the "old national conditions", even though at least some of the time he wore that peasant dress in the company of the likes of Birla and Bajaj, the great industrial magnates who financed him liberally. And, of course, broad sections of the male middle class literati spent much time throughout the colonial period eulogising, as British Orientalists had taught them to eulogise, the fidelity and chastity of the husband-worshipping hindu wife as the living embodiment of "the old national conditions". And then there was Vivekanad, who even set out to take Hinduism to Chicago already in the 19th century, as many a gurus and maharishis have done in the 20th century, in light of a common wisdom that spirituality is the primary vocation of an Indian and that spiritual India is intrinsically superior to the materialist West. On balance, of course, we have always imported much more capital, many more commodities from this materialist West than all the spirituality we have been able to export. And, it is in the name of these "old national conditions," our pristine Hindu spirituality, our glorious past, the abundance of our gods and goddesses, that new proto-fascist majoritarianism has fashioned the hysterical forms of religion-based nationalism against our secular modernity.

What I am suggesting is that the 'internal border' can be both a necessity and a pathology. Indeed, this pathology has been common enough among the colonised precisely as the other face of the pathology of colonialism itself; a hysterical kind of defence mechanism is a weapon of the weak against the racialist arrogance and aggressive impositions of the conquerors. But, then, if this 'internal border' is not only a pathology but also a necessity that arises out of cultural imperialism itself, then where precisely is this border to be drawn, and how is necessity to be lived with as little of the pathology as possible?

This is the point where I should like to return to that other conceptual moment within nationalism that I had identified earlier, the moment of making a universalist and inclusivist national culture: the concept of the nation not as patrimony but as project, not as primordiality but as an orientation toward the future. In this alternative conception, the making of the national project may critically appropriate whatever traditions of the past may yet be usable but the modern nation itself cannot be the product or bearer of those traditions, and must therefore, as a product of modernity, discover its normativity from within its present. It is in the discovery of the normativity of national culture from its own present that inclusivist nationalism departs from virtually all the premises contained in the Fichtean position I have cited and summarised above.

Fichte's formulation anchors the primordiality of the nation in what he calls "nature" and at times "human nature." These formulations of course press us, at once, toward a conception of "natural rights" and a cultural organicism. The expressive locus of this "nature" for him is language. Even if we were to replace, in the multi-lingual context of India, the specificity of

language with the broader sociology of 'culture', essentially the same problems would remain so long as the nation is referred to primordial origin and exclusivist cultural purity, as Fichte clearly does. That is why even in the second, much more moving passage I quoted to you his idea of the 'internal border' remains within the problematics of conservation and the image of the nation as a set of primordial and familial intimacies ("as if we were alone with ourselves," as he puts it). That is why all cultural nationalism must to some degree always be conservative and incline toward cultural differentialism.

It seems to me that we have to break with this whole tradition. Rights in the modern state simply cannot be referred back to a human nature that is prior to society, or religion that is prior to modern political equalities, and must be based, instead, on requirements of equality and aspirations for freedom— requirements that are intrinsically non-traditional and non-hierarchical, and so very radical in their conception that we do not even know what rights there would actually be that would meet so strict a criterion. Far from conservations of cultural nationalism, the basing of nationhood in equality of rights indeed commits the nation to constantly create new rights in order to satisfy not just new needs but also to create new grounds for equality among the extremely diverse human subjects who participate in the national project. To the extent that the national project here refers simply to equality of rights and obligations within a materially productive society, the project presumes that there is no contradiction between diverse cultural communities and a national space for the twin processes of their individual autonomy and mutual integration. In one sense at least, this conception of the national project goes far beyond the unity-in-diversity rhetorics so common in India, or notions of identitarian or communitarian pluralism being introduced here under postmodernist pressures. That communitarian argument assumes that it is the obligation of a pluralist state to guarantee the preservation and reproduction of cultural difference among various communities. This strikes me as being yet too close to the Fichtean notion of a cultural essence and the need for its conservation, except that the essences and conservations are now pluralised. In stead of common and equal rights for all citizens, we have in that conception, a variety of religious and denominational entities who are presumed to have their own essences which their elites are free to define, and it becomes the task of the nation-state to conserve these respective essences. By contrast, I believe that the energies of the nation-state should be devoted mainly to removal of cultural oppression but not to consolidate cultural boundaries; successive generations shall themselves then decide what to preserve and what to discard, what is usable and what is anachronistic in what may today be called 'national culture'. In this formulation, then, the emphasis is on the dynamism of cultures rather than on their timeless durability. What distinguishes a country like India is that the multiplicity of cultures within the modern nation is an old civilisational attribute, with very intricate patterns of inter-penetration and differential consolidations. Secondly, the modern Indian nation was born in consequence of an anti-colonial movement that was consciously organised so as to represent as many of the cultural nationalities and ethnic groups as possible, and with a deep commitment both to democratisation and modernisation. In this context, then, traditions of linguistic and religious classicism serve for us not only as a great heritage out of which 'internal borders' may be constructed between Indian culture and foreign cultures, between Hindu culture and Muslim culture, and so on. These very traditions also serve as so many anachronisms forbidding the making of a civil, secular, democratic, non-hierarchical modernity. In a situation such as ours, in

which each cultural configuration comes with its own internal hierarchies, too much conservation of what passes for tradition shall only serve to stabilise the supremacy of the upper castes, the traditional elites, the patriarchal arrangements of family and society, just as too blind a faith in 'modernisation' can only stabilise the dominance of the dominant classes associated with capitalist modernity. If the idea of national culture has to remain at all useful, it has to be radically separated from the false dichotomy of 'tradition' and 'modernity'. It is in this situation that it seems to be absolutely essential that the normativity of a national culture be sought within the requirements of its present and its orientations toward a future, not in its past— or pasts, in the plural— and that this normativity takes as its starting point— in deed, as its only legitimising principle— the liberation of the oppressed.

[Lecture Three]

SOME CONTRADICTIONS OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

Let me start again with a quick summary of the previous two lectures where I had sought to chart out two contrasting conceptions, first of Culture, and then of Nation and Nationalism, so as to suggest that all politics involve a politics of culture; that in every nationalism very much shall always depend on whether that nationalism views the nation more in terms of a cultural essence or in terms of rights and equalities. What, precisely, were the basic terms of those contrasting conceptions?

In the first instance I had tried, more or less schematically, to distinguish between two different conceptions of culture that are dominant today. There is, on the one hand, what I might call the culturalist conception which looks at culture as civilisational ethos, and spiritual essence; in India, this sense of culture has been commonly associated with religion as well. Even in its normal expressions, this conception inclines toward a certain classicism, in the sense of conservative ideologies of the traditionally dominant. Max Mueller was perhaps a paradigmatic exponent of this classicist conservatism. A great German Sanskritist who spent virtually the whole of his adult life in England, Mueller was of course central in giving authoritative definition of what texts were to constitute the core of India's spiritual tradition in the Indological cannon. In keeping with what he took to be his classical temper, however, he always refused to actually visit India and greatly discouraged his students from doing so, on the plea that any direct contact with the daily rough-&-tumble of life here was likely to contaminate the purity of the sense of Indian culture that one could get from studying its classical texts. This, I should say, is cultural classicism at its purest and elitist best.

At its worst, however, this conception of culture as primordial spiritual essence tends also to get entangled with certain interventions in the public sphere and produces a politics of nostalgia and purification, leading inevitably to revivalist crusades. It should bear some emphasis, though, that this traditionalist conception of culture is itself a thoroughly modern phenomenon and that every revivalism preoccupies itself with what Eric Hobsbawm has eloquently called "the invention of tradition." Any cursory study of the mobilisation techniques of Hindutva shall clarify how traditions are invented, how references to classicism serve merely as means of legitimation, and how the religious consciousness that is created through the invention of these traditions makes all the requisite references to ancient texts but is specifically a modern, anti-rationalist consciousness.

There is, on the other hand, an alternative conception of culture which is preoccupied not with the classical past or monuments of aesthetic and literary tradition but with contemporary practices through which meanings are created and exchanged in the real life-process of individuals and groups in society. The orientation here is not toward the past but the future, not toward conservation or revival but toward the dynamics of change, not texts but lived experience in the

here and now. In this conception, then, the very idea of culture as a cultivation of the Spirit is seen as a privilege that is available to some and denied to most. A cultural worker in this alternative tradition is likely to occupy herself less with the authenticity of translation and interpretation of the great books, and much more with literacy rates, distribution of cultural goods, cultural policies of the contemporary state, or centralisation of the means of cultural production such as the electronic media. Indeed, cultural work in this alternative tradition would neither dismiss the media as simply vulgar, as the classicist surely will, nor celebrate it as 'popular culture'. One would rather argue that no 'culture' can be genuinely 'popular' if its production is not democratically controlled. From this perspective, then, the centrally or monopolistically controlled media are seen not as value-free informational technologies, nor just as entertainments outside the spheres of culture, but as the very central element in cultural control and as a well-oiled culture industry that seeks to inhabit the soul and colonise the unconscious on behalf of those who control the heights of this culture industry.

From this materialist conception of culture— as sets of material practices by different strata in society— comes the conception of what Gramsci called "the national-popular," in which the nation itself is identified with the popular classes as such, so that a 'national culture' can only arise out of the practices as well as aspirations of those classes. Culture itself is conceived then not as a finished common possession, beyond the various social hierarchies, but as a struggle for cultural entitlements as part of a much broader democratic struggle for social and economic entitlements of various kinds.

These contrasting conceptions of culture are in fact associated with contrasting conceptions of nation, nationalism and the nation-state. Here the basic contrast is between the culturalist conceptions of nation and nationalism on the one hand, and what one may call the constitutionalist conception. Both these conceptions first arose, as dialectical opposites— as revolutionary project, and as anti-revolutionary conservatism— out of the crucible of the French Revolution, which was itself so central an event in the formation of the modern type of nations and states. Let me briefly summarise this contrast as well, before going on to the main argument of today's lecture.

The modern constitutional state that rests upon the idea of the nation arose initially as a profane civil entity, against religious authority and monarchical or feudal or even colonial autocracy. In the conception of the nation that derives from the French 'Declaration of Man and the Citizen' the idea of citizenship is radically separated from race, religion or any other kind of primordial belonging. Equal rights and equal obligations of citizenship are then the only basis of the nation's existence. One may designate this as the Enlightenment conception of the nation-state. I would argue that what is often called the Nehruvian state in India, and for which Dr. Ambedkar framed the Constitution as its founding document, was such a rationalist project for the creation of radical equalities. To the extent that the actual structure of Indian society rests upon the triple evils of capitalism, patriarchy and the varnashram, this social structure is incompatible with the rationalist humanism embodied in that Constitution. When I speak of the contradictions of Indian nationalism, this incompatibility of social structure and constitutional obligation strikes me as the first contradiction which has been preserved even by what we call our secular nationalism and which gave us what we call the Nehruvian state.

The other, contrasting conception of the nation is descended essentially from that tendency in German Idealism that is most forcefully represented by Herder and Fichte. In this alternative conception, the state embodies a general will arising not out of a common citizenship but out of a cultural essence, based on ethnicity, race, religion, language or some other form of a primordial intimacy specific to an entity that by definition excludes others. More often than not, such conceptions of the nation have been prone to xenophobia, irrationalism, cultural differentialism, racism, and relativisms of all sorts. The communalist conception of India as a Hindu nation, in which non-Hindus are by definition outside the cultural essence of the nation, is derived precisely from this xenophobic irrationalism which is descended from German Romanticism. German Jews were of course the paradigmatic victims of this kind of nationalism which requires crusades of purification. We have yet not arrived at the stage of full-scale genocide, on the model of Germany or Serbia, but the low intensity warfare that rages in this country against minorities and the oppressed castes points in that direction. This Hindutva nationalism is so radically incompatible with the letter and spirit of the Indian Constitution that it must, sooner or later, destroy the Constitution itself.

When I refer to the origins of these types of nationalism in Germany and France some two hundred years, I do so not to shift the discussion from India to Europe but to say, I suppose, three things. First, a fundamental feature of modernity is that it creates a world history over and above national specificities and we shall do well to think not only of what is specific and exceptional about India, which distinguishes it from other formations in the world, but also, most centrally, of that which contemporary Indian society, as a product of modernity, shares with the rest of the world. This then implies that conflicts which initially arose in a little corner of Europe some two hundred years ago, at the beginning of the state formations of the modern type, have been fought and are still being fought, over and over again, in various parts of the globe, including India. As such conflicts get intensified, we may find some of our rationalist and humanist resources in our collective past, especially the traditions of dissidence and revolt in the past, but the core of our resources shall have to be drawn from within the systems of thought and strategies of action which are essentially modern and which too now have a universal character. The essentially universalist character of the principles of class politics is obvious enough, but let me point out also that the women's movement, for example, may well look to some moments in our past when some women rebelled against patriarchal oppression, but the women's movement itself is a product of modernity, hence essentially universalist in character, so that it seeks affinities either laterally, with other projects of emancipation within the nation, or globally, in women's movements elsewhere, in other countries. The same would apply to other emancipatory projects, whether on the issue of community or caste. Looked at in this light, the contest in India between the secular and the religiously defined nationalisms, which has been a punctual feature of our politics for well over a hundred years, is not a contest between Hindu spirituality and Westernisation, between tradition and modernity; it is a contest between two kinds of modernities, the rational and the emancipatory on the one hand, and the irrational and xenophobic on the other.

Those who are particularly interested in the history of philosophy shall recall the famous passage in Hegel's Phenomenology where the Master-Slave dialectic is presented as a universal form of the dialectic and where Hegel argues that the slave always knows more than the master because the master needs to know only how to exploit the slave whereas the slave must know

not only the conditions of his exploitation but also the whole structure within which he is exploited, so as to enable himself to create the means of his own emancipation and recognition as an equal. In keeping with the principle that the slave always knows more than the master, I would argue that only the privileged can think of the past as providing the norms for the good life in the present, whereas those who are struggling for their own emancipation— be they proletarians or women or the oppressed castes— know that they are faced not with a choice between the traditional and the modern but with the very difficult task of creating, for the first time, a kind of modernity that has never been. This is more or less what I mean when I say that modernity must find its normativity from within itself, through a critical understanding of the real, and the only desirable point of reference for this normativity is that the values and projects it affirms are values of radical equality and projects of general emancipation.

The last two centuries have witnessed the rise of hundreds of nationalisms and nation-states, including notably our own, and the only real criterion for judging whether a particular nationalism, or a particular tendency within a nationalist movement, is progressive or retrogressive, is to ask whether a particular nationalism is based on the politics of primordial difference or the politics of modern citizenship. Now, there are hardly any pure nationalisms, oriented exclusively to primordialism or, equally exclusively, to the sole criterion of modern citizenship. The contrasting conceptions I have outlined are in effect conceptual categories, abstract in the precise sense of abstracting some essential quality from a much more complicated reality. Most nationalisms include both tendencies and many shades in between, which gives to each nationalism both its ambiguity and its specific character, and yet that particular criterion— whether primordial difference or equal citizenship is preferred— remains the normative value for judging any nationalism, in all its contradictions.

Now, I have given to today's lecture rather a grandiose title, "Some Contradictions of Indian Nationalism," but no one lecture can capture the whole breadth of such an exploration. All I shall be attempting today is to illustrate some of those contradictions which arose in our own context from precisely that conflict of conceptions and practices which I have just summarised. Three points seem to me quite obvious. First, that Indian history truly is a part of world history, and the conflict between primordialism and modern citizenship that has been fought and shall continue to be fought elsewhere is also being fought, very sharply, here as well, so that terms like "communalism" and "secular nationalism" are the code words— I believe, rather limited and very impoverished code words— for that larger conflict. Second, however, I also believe that whereas the communalist forces can be very clearly and firmly analysed in terms of a primordialist form of modern irrationalism, the history of what we call our secular nationalism cannot be so easily and entirely identified with the revolutionary project of basing a nation-state on citizenship rights of radical equality and on the rationalist project of creating civic virtues for which the only criterion of normative value is that they contribute to general emancipation of all. Third, the failure of our "secular nationalism" to base itself on the sole criterion of radical equalities and its tendency to constantly refer itself back to some traditionalist form of authorisation is not a failure of ideology. In fact, ideological articulation was frequently very sophisticated and radical. Rather, this failure has been a result of the very limits imposed upon the project by the objective requirements of a politics conducted within the predicates of colonial and neo-colonial dispensations, and by the very nature of the nation-state that was sought to be built after

de-colonisation, with very distinct class and caste features. Finally, the social reform movements that very much preceded but also accompanied our `national movement' tell us a very great deal about what Ranajit Guha has called "the failure of the nation to come into its own," so that some commentary on the limits of those social reform movements may well be a point of entry into a discussion of some of the contradictions of Indian nationalism.

The key fact about India is that modern politics began here in the colonial context, and that no colonial society can be based on rights of common citizenship, which meant that conditions were exceptionally unfavourable for the growth of secular, democratic politics. The initial phase in the rise of national consciousness, lasting roughly until World War I, therefore had some distinct features. Except for the underground revolutionary groups which in India always remained very small, political organisations arose under severe legal restrictions and essentially as pressure groups. Lack of the structures of popular representation, such as universal suffrage, meant that representatives were either appointed from above or claimed to represent 'the people' when no one had authorised them to do so. In either case, such elite groupings arose, first of all, as supplicants in relation to the colonial state. Development of the classes of modern society itself remained weak, thanks to the colonial blockage of industrial development, which was then reflected in the weakness of class organisations and the proliferation of non-class pressure groups, organised from above; the proletariat remained small, and rather few among the numerically very small modern bourgeoisie were particularly bourgeois. In such circumstances, organisations of the modern type arose more in the social arena than in the political, and most such organisations arose along the fault lines already available in premodern society, such as denominational community, religious sect, or caste association. Under colonial conditions, prohibitions on the politics of equality, even in the simple juridical sense, served to enhance savageries in the politics of difference. Even the type of social organisation that worked for reform, such as the educational society or philanthropic trust, arose mainly to serve caste and communal constituencies. If much 'modern' education was dispensed through caste societies and denominational schools and colleges, most of politics was similarly conducted in the form of deputations and conferences representing castes and denominations. In other words, the emergence of modern forms of power, in the shape of the state of colonial capital, required the emergence of corresponding political forms through which the colonised could represent themselves; however, in blocking collective representation in the form of equal citizenship rights and universal suffrage, the colonial state fragmented the emergent nation into its social units and greatly accentuated the existing cleavages, even though the fact of being governed by the same colonial state produced in each of these units some rudimentary form of nationalist consciousness.

Thanks to the colonial character of this modernity, the very sense of history among sections of the 19th century literati was deeply marked by the colonially propagated ideologies of Aryan identity, Vedic purity and "Muslim tyranny," increasingly becoming a kind of common sense in which Brahminical primordialism and Hindu majoritarian communalism could easily take root. Even Rammohun Roy, who had authored his first book, Tuhfat al Muwahideen, under Islamic influence— specifically, under the influence of the Mu'atazillite rationalism— was capable, by 1814 and at least in stray remarks, of justifying British rule in India on the grounds that it had delivered Bengal from Muslim tyranny, as Mill and others in Britain had also argued. The typical reform movements that arose in this situation had a curiously revivalist character.

Based as they were among the beneficiaries of traditional systems of caste and property, the reformers frequently had a vested interest in propagating a romantic notion of the cultures of the upper castes to which they themselves belonged and which were now presented as the very essence of being `Indian' and `Hindu'. This took several forms.

Throughout the 19th century, most reform activity in Bengal was directed at reforming the social life of the upper castes in general and the Kulin Brahmins in particular; the Muslims and the oppressed castes either did not appear in those discourses of reform or appeared negatively, as sources of the evils that had permeated the social life of the upper castes which now had to be eradicated. As several scholars, such as Sumanta Bannerjee have documented in detail, the effect of those reforms of upper caste culture was in fact to draw a much sharper line between the cultures of the reformed upper castes and the unreformed oppressed castes. In deed, a new kind of Bengali language was sought to be constructed, with the aid of Anglicisation and Sanskritisation, that was appropriate for the newly emergent bhadra culture, male as well as female, but was sharply distinguished from the irreverent, impolite, sexually charged language that was spoken on the street. In short, much reform activity was designed to produce a new kind of embourgeoisment of the commercial and rentier classes which also served to strengthen caste identity and privilege.

Alongside this conservative and casteist form of embourgeoisment was the tendency to seek classicist and religious authorisation for what was in essence a modernist reform. The two registers of Rammohun's activity on the question of widow immolation are significant in this regard. In one register, the emphasis was much more on utilitarian principles and on what he called "social comfort"— that is, a humanist concern with correcting an injustice and the insistence that a particularly cruel social practice, authorised by certain kinds of traditionalist belief, was incompatible with modern rationality and must therefore be suppressed. In the other register, however, the emphasis shifted to the argument that widow immolation was incompatible with the core of the injunctions in the dharmashastras which much preferred a chaste widowhood. Rammohun was obviously trying to beat the traditionalist elements at their own game by demonstrating that even classicism was on his side but, as Sumit Sarkar has pointed out, Rammohun's collection of shastric injunctions celebrating chaste widowhood was to create great problems for Vidyasagar when he organised his movement for the Widow Re-marriage Act. In any case, this habit of seeking religious sanction for modern reform, and limiting the very scope of the reform by thinking of it in terms of a choice between two traditionalist solutions, was to remain a punctual feature of our reform movements and the nationalisms that arose alongside those movements, right down to Mahatma Gandhi and beyond, including the secular-nationalist state that arose after decolonisation and whose official ideology always claimed, and still claims, that our secularism was superior to the European variety of secularism because ours was not a secularism at all but a very traditionalist kind of religious tolerance and a mutual accommodation of orthodoxies, which goes under the benign slogan of sarvadharmasambhava.

Finally, and in keeping with the whole edifice of reformist conservatism, there was the tendency to fashion for oneself an identity that was perfectly compatible with a certain sort of liberalism on the one hand and traditional piety on the other; Rammohun's own refusal to renounce the sacred thread and his highly significant public act of taking a Brahmin cook with

him on his trip to England are paradigmatic in this regard. And thus it was that Mahatma Gandhi could reconcile his crusades against communalism and untouchability with the pronouncement that "I am one of those who do not consider caste to be a harmful institution. In its origin, caste was a wholesome custom, and promoted national well being. In my opinion the idea that inter-dining and inter-marriage is necessary for national growth is a superstition, borrowed from the West."

I refer to Rammohun and Gandhi deliberately, because they were among the best as well as the most influential. In Rammohun, and then in the Brahmo Samaj on the one hand and the Derozians on the other, three tendencies seem to have been quite pronounced. First was the tendency to not break with upper class traditionalism; Brahmo Samaj itself, even in its more radical forms, never quite broke with specific Brahminical social practices, and most Derozians were much less libertarian than the master himself. The second was a certain elitism and exclusivity; for all the novelty of many of their positions, their influence remained so very limited precisely because they limited their activity to their own caste and class fractions. In hindsight, they seem very important to us precisely because it was the intelligentsia that they addressed and we, as contemporary intelligentsia, have a great interest in that address. On the larger society of Bengal, let alone the rest of India, their imprint was minimal; if embourgeoisment turned out to be more widespread in West Bengal, it was because the upper castes adopted modern education earlier and more widely. This inability to formulate a wider address too was not simply an ideological failing. Indeed, much of what Rammohun or Derozio propagated was very advanced for their age, if we only consider the ideology itself. The larger problem was the limits that their class belonging imposed upon their social reach during that formative phase of a public sphere in the colonial society. I might add that as a Eurasian, Derozio was hardly the darling of the Kulin Brahmins whom he disliked in turn. In his case, most clearly, the limitation was not of so much of caste as of class, though it needs to be added that in a caste-ridden society social class itself begins to have caste-like attributes. But, then, there was also among these reformers, though not so much in Derozio as in Rammohun and the later leaders of the Brahmo Samaj and the Derozians, a certain tendency toward growing conservatism in later life. The door for full-fledged reconciliation with the conservatism of their social milieu was always open to them, and most of them went through that door.

This was the milieu out of which arose, in the last quarter of the 19th century, the first generation of those whom one could reasonably call 'nationalists'. In Bengal itself, these nationalists tended to come typically from the professional strata whose chances of advancement in colonial society were severely limited, and from that secondary layer of the landed gentry who too were absentee rentiers but for whom the rents they collected were insufficient to sustain that re-feudalised style of life to which they aspired. Among them, too, one finds a significant paradox. Precisely at the time, during the closing years of the nineteenth century and the opening ones of the twentieth, when representatives of Indian economic nationalism were beginning to explain colonial exploitations in an objective and essentially secular terms, some of the most influential figures in the literary and cultural fields were deeply attracted by a cultural nationalism that was distinctly revivalist in character and religiously exclusivist by implication. Neither Bankim nor Aurobindo, neither the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal nor the Shivaji cult propagated in Maharashtra by such icons of Indian nationalism as Tilak himself, were quite untainted by that

kind of revivalist fervour. As this kind of cultural nationalism spread far beyond Bengal, and as the national movement first became a mass movement after 1919, appealing to increasing sections of the middle and low caste peasantries, so powerful was the revivalist culture of the upper castes that when anti-Brahminical movements surfaced in Maharashtra, whether under Phule or Ambedkar, it was the extremity of the backlash of the upper castes in this region that gave us the RSS in the first place.

This is not to say that either Tilak or Aurobindo would be quite approving of what the Hindutva of our own day is and does. And yet there is enough there for a common sense to prevail today among sections of the urban upper castes and middle classes, in various parts of India, especially the Northern and the Western, to be persuaded that the social vision and cultural idiom of this modern-day Hindutva is descended from that general ambience of our 'renaissance' and 'awakening' which begins in Bengal and flowers in the reform movements in Maharashtra. Indeed the potentials of that kind of revivalism were so pernicious that Tagore was to warn at length, already in the second decade of this century, that there was only a short step from revivalist zealotry to communal frenzy. In two of his great novels, Gora and Home and the World, which he seems to have written directly in opposition to Bankim and the more revivalist side of Swadeshi, Tagore was to portray with great sensitivity and acumen how revivalist politics and communal closures may be particularly tempting to the socially insecure and the upwardly mobile. I have written elsewhere about the extreme conservatism of Tagore's gender politics in Home and The World, but it needs to be said here that his own personal piety was nevertheless combined with a universalist scepticism about nationalism as such, and he warned even Mr. Gandhi about too zealous an involvement of religion in politics.

There were of course countervailing tendencies. As I remarked earlier, even the earliest expressions of economic nationalism in India were remarkably secular and modern in outlook. Similarly, if most reform movements were confined within particular fractions of the upper castes and the modernising elites, there were already the beginnings of anti-caste movements. And, with the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885, there began at least a consciousness that no movement could be national in a multi-cultural society like India, without some basic commitment to cultural, regional and religious pluralities. On the whole, however, strong currents of revivalism and traditionalism could be discerned even under the veneer of some superficial Westernisation. When the era of mass politics began, after the First World War, Indian colonial society was already organised, socially as well as politically, around the axes of caste, denomination and region. The contribution of colonialism to the growth of communal and caste politics was thus not merely tactical ('divide and rule') but structural, and these structural feature of colonial society were greatly augmented both by the inherited forms of caste privilege and the more modern forms of class privilege which arose on the basis both of earlier forms of cultural capital and the more modern accumulations of bourgeois property and agrarian rents. One of the connecting threads between 19th century reformism and 20th century nationalism is that we witness a remarkable degree of continuity in the visions that government the projects of social reform, even though a notable difference, after the anti-colonial movement became a mass movement, was that the oppressed castes and classes could no longer be kept out of these projects and had therefore to be controlled through new kinds of reform, as Mahatma Gandhi's career fully illustrates.

The most striking feature of these reform movements was that they too were usually confined to denominational, caste or regional boundaries, and to issues that were specific to these. When Muslim reform movement began in Northern India, specifically through the medium of Urdu, there was not even a trace of any consciousness that they might learn something from the earlier reform movements in Bengal or the contemporaneous ones in Maharashtra, which had been characteristically confined to non-Muslims. Similarly, from Rammohun to Phule to Periyar to Ambedkar, there is a rich history of radical reformers becoming heretics in relation to their own denominational origins, but there is very little tradition of Hindus participating in Muslim reform movements, or of Hindus including Muslims in their own reform projects, or of non-denominational reform movements working for the creation of anti-denominational civic and political secularity that would be blind to religious particularity. And, typically, most reform movements remained confined to specific regions. Most spoke of reforming 'the nation' but virtually all settled to reform that particular segment to which they were tied by birth. Modern consciousness in India was almost always a fractured consciousness, and those fractures have left an enduring mark on the non-revolutionary, divisive path that the Independence Movement took, as well as on structures of power and politics subsequently. In this context, then, co-operation among organised members of different denominational communities almost always took the form of mutual accommodation among exclusivist orthodoxies. I would argue that modern-day Hindutva has derived much comfort from those revivalist and exclusivist tendencies of the past.

This issue of even our secular nationalism taking the form of mutual accommodation of orthodoxies I should like to illustrate with reference to Mahatma Gandhi, with the understanding that this is not all that I have to say about the Mahatma and that what I am saying here is part of a much more complex picture. Now, Gandhi seemed to have shared with far too many others, of various political stripes, the conviction that India was a conglomeration of discreet religious communities and that its 'composite culture' therefore required an organisational form in which each community shall be represented by its own members who will then speak from the common platform of the Congress. This led, then, to a stark duality of claims. In relation to the world outside itself, Congress alone had the right to represent the people of India, regardless of denominational difference; inside the Congress, however, only Muslims had the right to represent Muslims. In other words, Congress could claim to represent Indian Muslims not because it claimed to be a party fighting for a common, secular citizenship in an Independent India, but because it included such eminent Muslim figures as Ansari, Azad, the Deoband ulema, and the rest. Jinnah claimed to represent Indian Muslims and described Azad as a "showboy" of the Congress; Gandhi treated Azad as the true leader of Indian Muslims, ignored Jinnah while the latter had insignificant following but then took to addressing him as 'Qaid-e-Azam' (the great leader), in the fashion of the League itself, from 1944 onwards, once Jinnah had shown that the British had indeed recognised him as the 'sole spokesman' of Indian Muslims which had, in turn, helped him garner the support of provincial Muslim leaders. What is striking in all this is an agreement between Gandhi and Jinnah, in principle, that Muslims could only be represented by other Muslims; what remained to be settled was whether Jinnah or Azad had among them the greater legitimacy. That no Hindu, not even Gandhi himself, could truly represent Indian Muslims was something on which Gandhi, Jinnah, the British, the whole culture of the caste-ridden, denomination-bound colonial society appeared to be almost wholly agreed.

In the individual case of Gandhi, however, there was another complication. His pietistic view of the world, and surely of India, meant that he found it easier to deal with pious, at least very traditional Muslims, especially the ones who at least formally accepted his status as the Mahatma. Muslims were for him, first of all, Muslims; and that meant religion! With Muslims of a modern temper, such as Jinnah, he felt distinctly uncomfortable, more so, strangely, than with the likes of Nehru, who were undoubtedly no less modern but were of Hindu origin. Aside from his own pietistic bias, it was perhaps the Khilafat Movement, which broke out so soon after Gandhi's own entry into Indian mass politics, which might have left an enduring impression on him that Muslims could only be led by men of the Quran. It is significant that while Gandhi gave eloquent support to the Muslim ulema who were leading the agitation for restoration of the Turkish Caliphate, Jinnah described that Caliphate as an "exploded bogey," refusing to endorse the unleashing of the religious frenzy. Whatever the origins, that conviction of Gandhi nevertheless had two sizeable consequences.

People like Jinnah, who were Muslim but modern by temper and strong in their own opinions, though no less devoted to Indian nationhood in their early political formation, found themselves increasingly side-lined and alienated. The advocacy of Partition and Pakistan during the 1940s was, for one such as Jinnah, in part a reaction of fury against frustrations accumulated through a lifetime in which he had sought to combine two prongs of his conviction: the generality of "Hindu-Muslim unity" which he often described as his life's mission, and the specificity of what he used to call "Muslim interest." But, then, in losing commanding figures such as Jinnah, Gandhi's Congress also lost increasing proportions of the modern Muslim middle class, who came to believe that their career opportunities would be far greater in a brand new country of their own but whose mentality had been prepared already by a whole history of education and culture which had been by no means communal but, like the rest of colonial society, deeply bound by a sense of denominational difference. The Aligarh University, for example, suddenly began to provide the cadres for mass mobilisation in the service of the Pakistan movement, even though its denominational character had not been until then, in any recognisable sense, politically communal. A slide from denominational assertions in the political arena to communal politics, in the accurate sense, was not inevitable but always possible.

The other consequence of Gandhi's proximity to the pietistic Muslims on the one hand and the Congress Right on the other was more complex. Majority of the Muslims of a modern temper who gravitated toward the Congress were the ones who were not religious and were of a leftist inclination. They gravitated, therefore, not toward Gandhi or even Azad but Nehru. This was the fraction that could be called 'secular' in the proper sense, secularism being practised here as an ideology not of accommodation between orthodoxies but of non-denominational, common citizenship. The fraction was unfortunately, and under the circumstances inevitably, rather small. And most leaders of the Congress looked at them with suspicion. In other words, the Congress as it evolved under Gandhi, Azad, Patel, et al., as an alliance of social conservatisms, valued Muslim nationalists very much but had little use for Muslim secularists as such.

The fortunes of the Muslim Mass Contact Campaign that was organised in mid-1930s, with the blessings of Nehru and seeming acquiescence of the Congress Right, were indicative in this regard. It was in initiatives of this kind that secular and left-leaning Muslims, such as

K. M. Ashraf, who had no roots in traditionalist Muslim politics, found their vocation within the Congress, fleetingly as it were. To the extent that Nehru was recognised as its real leader, this Campaign was the first, and in some senses only, mass initiative undertaken by the Congress on the principle that a non-Muslim could lead the Muslims directly, without conceding this constituency to a Muslim even of the same party. To the extent that key organisers of the Campaign were not pietistic but drawn from the Muslim fraction of the middle class, it promised to give the Muslim League a fight on its own grounds. And, to the extent that it was designed to mobilise the Muslim masses on a platform of the Left, it promised to tap areas of society to which League had no access and the Congress very limited one.

The Campaign had, in other words, great potential and, in the short span of life that was allowed to it, very impressive number of Muslims were registered for membership in the Congress. Under the circumstances, however, the Campaign could only die. In the factional struggles within the Congress Nehru was expected to be the main beneficiary, as Gandhi had been of the Khilafat movement; the Congress Right, led by Patel, could not allow that. The proposition that a campaign designed to mobilise Muslims could bypass the Muslim leaders of the Congress and, worse still, would mobilise them on a non-denominational, secular, Left platform was little short of heresy, in the eyes not only of Patel but also such pious Muslims as Maulana Azad. Those who organised it simply lost the patronage of the dominant Muslim leadership within the Congress while their linkages with traditional Muslim notables within and outside it were always minuscule. No wonder the campaign died the death of an orphan.

This brings us to one of the key questions about Gandhi's political career. He was undoubtedly the most authoritative figure in Indian politics; everyone seems agreed that his great mass appeal was owed to the fact that he had a unique rapport with the feelings and aspirations of the Indian peasantry; and Hindu-Muslim unity was the most cherished dream of his life for which he was eventually assassinated by a Hindu fanatic of the Far Right. Yet, the great tragedy of his life was that he was unable to prevent the Partition of India along communal lines, and when the chips were down, in the elections of 1946, the Muslim peasantry in Bengal, Punjab, and Sind went with the Muslim communalists. Why? Let me repeat: Gandhi's greatness is said to lie in his unique rapport with the Indian peasantry; what, then, about the Muslim fraction of that peasantry? He is said to be the greatest reformer India has produced at least in this century; what was the status of the Muslim peasantry in his reform projects?

Let me remind you of three facts. First, Gandhi spoke the language of class for only the first five years of his political career in India, between 1915 and 1919— in Ahmedabad, Kheda, Champaran. Starting with the Khilafat Movement and the Rawlatt Satyagraha, which propelled him to the top of the national movement, he never led a campaign strictly or even mainly on class lines. Throughout, classes were addressed mainly in the language of conciliation, restraint, the higher national interest. Second, as a reformer Gandhi was strictly a Hindu reformer; about the dire need of radical reform in the Islamic Shari'a he had nothing to say and his language of Hindu piety, with its visions of Ram Rajya, had little to say to the Muslim peasantry. Third, as I said, he held the mistaken belief that Muslims shall be led not by the modern middle classes but by the men of the Quran: he for the Hindus, Azad for the Muslims, and the Indian National Congress as the symbol of this mutual accommodation of respective pieties. In this vacuum, then, it was

the Muslim communalist who exploited the class issue; the Muslim peasants were told that they were exploited by the Hindu landlords in Bengal and Punjab, or by the Hindu moneylenders in Sind, not because they were poor peasants but because they were Muslims; the Pakistan movement became for those poor peasants something of a millenarian vision of a final liberation. Gandhi had abandoned those Muslim peasants to the mercies of Islamic conservatism. Azad, with his claims of aristocratic ancestry and Arabic learning, was far too remote from them. Nehru was forbidden to lead because a Hindu was not supposed to lead Muslims. The peasants were nevertheless addressed as Muslims but not as peasants, because that kind of nationalism did not allow the naked language of class. In this world of Gandhian, class-less, pietistic reformism, the Muslim peasant went to Jinnah and the country was partitioned.

I would have liked to speak of the equal, perhaps greater failure of the Islamic reformism, as represented for instance by Syed Ahmed Khan who was roughly a contemporary of Jyotiba Phule; and I would have liked to speak also of that other communalism which also called itself a nationalism, namely the Muslim nationalism of Mr. Jinnah who was just about as religious as was Savarkar. But we have no time. So let me move quickly, and more or less arbitrarily, toward a conclusion, which runs as follows:

Since the advent of mass politics in India during roughly the 1920s, there have been essentially three alternative visions that have competed for dominance here. There is of course the vision represented by the Left, which has been committed to creating a modern, civil, secular, democratic culture and which has held that such a culture cannot come into being, in the specific conditions prevailing in India, without also building a genuinely socialist society: socialist in a sense far more radical than the Nehruvian. Second, and far stronger, has been what one might call the vision of national independence together with social reform, industrial capitalism, and a political democracy— in short, a modern bourgeois order. Finally, there has been the conservative, caste-based elitism which came eventually to be monopolised by the RSS, which had itself come into being in opposition to both the communist and the bourgeois-nationalist movements.

If the communist movement was inspired by Marxism, Hindu extremism was undoubtedly inspired by fascism, as the direct links between Italian fascists and such leaders of this extremism as Moonje and Shyama Prasad Mukerjee would testify. The conflict between the two visions was inevitable because they represented radically opposed visions, both on the national and the international scales. Within the country, though, the third vision, that of capitalist democracy in the framework of an independent polity, was by far the dominant one. So, whether a culture of civic virtues or a culture of hate and cruelty shall prevail in our country has depended, in general, on the actual balance of force among these competing visions, which we could also describe as visions associated with the Left, the Centre, and the Right respectively. Whether or not the Right could be contained depended, in other words, on whether or not the Centre would hold and incline, for its own survival if not anything else, toward the Left. And that indeed was the fundamental tendency in the early years of the Republic when the dialogue was essentially between Nehruvian radical nationalism of the national bourgeoisie on the one hand, and the Marxist Left on the other. I have referred earlier to the insufficiencies of that kind of nationalism, but, generally speaking, secularism was at that time a relatively more secure value in Indian political life because the openly communalist Right had been reduced to the margins of society and because even the spiritual traditions were viewed then, by the Marxist as well as the Centrist forces, not in the revivalist frame but critically, in relation to the larger project of building

a reasonably egalitarian society. That formal secularism of the more enlightened sections of the bourgeoisie could not survive the consolidation of the alliance that the bourgeoisie made with the landlords at home and with imperialism abroad, thus abandoning the project of emancipating the peasantry and building a modern, secular nation.

The contemporary crisis in India is owed essentially to two facts. One is that although the Left is today stronger in India than in most other countries, and although the Left does command here a degree of moral authority far exceeding its numbers, the Right— that is to say, the combination of the liberal Right and the Far Right— has managed to restrict its mass power to only a couple of states. Equally alarming is the fact that the Centre, or what could have been the Centre, has been collapsing for quite some time. Powerful elements of the dominant classes in Northern India, from the former ruling families of the princely states to sundry Marwari capitalists, patronised the RSS with a vengeance; Vajpayee's own early parliamentary career from Gwalior is inconceivable without the key patronage from the Scindias. Then there was the political elite. The roll call of those who were associated with the RSS in one way or another is embarrassing for all those who believe in some essential secularism or even civic decency of this elite. From Patel to Gulzarilal Nanda, with Jayaprakash Narayan and the whole Sarvodaya crowd in between, not to speak of myriad such as Dr. Karan Singh, large sections of this elite, so polite and liberal otherwise, trusted and co-operated with the RSS quite gladly.

In closing, then, let me draw your attention to an aspect of our current crisis that usually goes unremarked. India is today undergoing a historically unprecedented process. The tendency of the capitalist market is toward linguistically and culturally uniform national entities. The idea that every nation must have a singular national language and a uniform national culture is a specific product of this capitalist modernity. The most fundamental cultural demand upon immigrants who come from all over the world into the United States is that they all forget their own languages and learn to operate exclusively in English; for all the talk of multiculturalism, the basic demand upon the native Black population as well as the incoming immigrants is that they adopt what is generally called 'the American way of life'. Fascist movements are arising all across Western Europe because the Far Right in Britain, in France, in Germany, argues that the purity of their national cultures is being destroyed by the incoming immigrants from Asia and Africa who are of a different colour, speak different languages, believe in different religions, eat different kinds of food, wear different kinds of clothes. In the states that have arisen in Central Europe out of the ruins of socialist Yugoslavia, fascist militias are carrying out extermination campaigns in order to obtain mini-states that are racially, religiously, linguistically uniform. Closer to home, similar purification campaigns, of greater or lesser ferocity, are sweeping through the predominantly Islamic countries of Afghanistan, Iran and the Arab world. India is in the eye of this global storm, and we too are being subjected to this politics of savage identities. Contrasted to all that, the founding vision of the Indian Republic, as it arose out of the colonial crucible and gave to itself one of the world's best Constitutions, was of building a modern, industrialised, prosperous society based upon great diversities of language, religious belief, cultural productions, regional particularities, and so on. This, then, is the question: how to safeguard these pluralities while building a society of radical equality? I do not believe that cultural pluralities can be reconciled with the project of radical equalities without building a socialist society in which power does not descend from above but rises from below.

[Lecture Four]

GLOBALIZATION & THE NATION-STATE

The theme of the present lecture, 'Globalisation and the Nation-state', is almost a provocation. The literature on the subject is vast and the topic itself so familiar as to induce fatigue. Why bring it up yet again? One reason is that I want to highlight a certain history— of 'globalisation', of globalisation and the 'nation-state', of the hyphen that connects 'nation' with 'state'— so as to foreground the political side of this question.

The question itself is discussed these days almost exclusively in terms of information and travel technologies; the centrally produced entertainment and cultural goods for global sale and dispersal; the movement of commodities and capital (especially the 'virtual' capital of the speculators); the supra-national organisations— IMF, the World Bank, now the WTO— which are setting the terms of international transactions, and so on. This central emphasis on political economy is absolutely well-grounded. It needs to be said, however, that political economy too is not simply a set of economic practices or 'laws' but actually unfolds in an human environment that is itself conditioned by prior histories; capital continually modifies— even drastically modifies— that environment but it cannot become entirely free of it as quickly as is presupposed in too many discussions of the Globalisation question. I shall not be speaking of India directly but my thinking on the subject is provoked by the fact that the state here is currently supervising a certain transition from a high degree of nationalist protectionism to so-called globalisation of the economy. Throughout this presentation, I will make stray remarks about states and bourgeoisies of the advanced capitalist countries but I shall be concerned, mainly, with colonial and neo-colonial histories.

Let me start with a blunt statement of my basic premise. There is a prevailing wisdom which holds that globalisation, which opens up the area of operation for capital across national frontiers, and the nation-state, which encloses smaller areas for specific regimes of accumulation, are antithetical and that the progress of globalisation must necessarily lead to the decline of the nation-state. Contrary to this view, I hold that in the history of the actually existing capitalism, globalisation of the operations of capital have required and continue to require, not as its contrary but as its complement, the nation-state form for political control and for the reproduction of the conditions of capitalist production on the global scale.

My second proposition is that nation-states are but so many spiritual biographies of the capitalist mode of production. All states, notably the earliest and the most recent nation-states, arose in some fundamental relation to the global operation of capital, originally in the mercantile, colonial phase. The states which are exceptions to this rule are precisely that: exceptions that prove the rule. The oldest colonial powers in Europe— Britain and France, but also Spain, Holland, Portugal— are the ones that achieved state consolidations earlier than most others. The organisation of global conquest was a key function that helped such consolidations, and consciousness of nationhood arose in consequence of the consolidation of states. If colonial conquest required great consolidation of resources, rivalry for colonial possessions required

competing state formations. The territorial expansion for the operations of capital was always much larger than the territorial boundary of the particular state— Britain, France or whatever— which facilitated those operations. Empire was, historically, the other face of the typical European nation-state.

Then, the second-wave state consolidations— those of the Americas— arose out of the other end of the global operation of capital: nationalisms not of the colonising states but of the settler colons who wished to organise a local sovereignty in the political domain while participating in the globalised economic system, across the Atlantic. The two most extensive wars of this century— significantly called World Wars, One & Two— were fought for dividing and re-dividing the global economic space among the leading nation-states of Europe. Both wars led to intensification of nationalist movements in the colonies and the re-drawing of the maps of nations within Europe. The inter-war years witnessed the rise of a more integrated Atlantic ruling class than ever before, beyond American and European differences, and even as the end of the Second World War witnessed the dissolution of the older colonial empires, the rise of the United states to the status of a single, hegemonic global power, and the making of a multitude of nation-states out of the former colonies. The key coincidence is worth emphasising: the twenty-five years after the Second World War, 1945 to 1970, which witnessed, for the first time in history, the unrivalled global hegemony of a single power, namely the United States, were also the years when the world experienced the formation of more nation-states than ever before.

Which leads me, then, to my third proposition: the twin processes of the globalisation of capital and the formation of nation-states are contemporaneous but non-synchronic. The relation between the two is not causal but structural— though, as we used to say in the old days, there is a determination in the last instance. There are three main reasons underlying this structural relation. First, capital itself has always had the tendency to be global in its operations but capitalist classes have always been national in their origin and their sites of ultimate accumulation. Second, these respective national bourgeoisies have always required the power of their national states to guarantee the security and profitability of their operations, both domestically and globally. Third, although the operations of the leading capitalist firms have an intrinsic tendency toward globalisation, their operations rest on an international division of labour that can only be enforced, on the ground, by the national regimes in charge of the actual economic space in which particular operations take place. This last element has been not weakened but vastly strengthened after the dissolution of the old colonial empires, precisely in the period when operations of trans-national capital have become the most global.

In colonial times, the British themselves were there to protect what little British capital ever came to India. After Independence, it is the state of the Indian national bourgeoisie which guarantees the low-wage labour regime favourable to capital; what is happening now is that the advantages of that labour regime are being offered to trans-national capital on an unprecedented scale. The maxim I have coined for summarising this situation is this: capital, national or trans-national, wants not a weak nation-state but a state that is weak in relation to capital but strong in relation to labour. In the former colonies— that is to say, the imperialised world— the so-called decline of the nation-state is nothing but greater restrictions on its relative autonomy

in relation to imperialism, as well as its retreat from projects of building the national economy and from provision of entitlements to the working people. It corresponds, in other words, to the demise of the nationalism of the national bourgeoisie, the defeat of the anti-colonial project, and a far-reaching alliance of the national and trans-national capitals against all sections of labour, whether urban or rural. In this process, the state of the capital-exporting bourgeoisies, such as the United States, is strong in defending the global operations of its bourgeoisie, and the nation-state of the former colony is strong in suppressing indigenous labour in order to create conditions favourable to the alliance between indigenous and trans-national capitals. At both ends of this global process, we see the state of the respective national bourgeoisies, the imperialist and the imperialised, not in retreat but on the offensive. Neither policies of so-called 'liberalisation' in countries like India nor the sweeping monetarism of the Reaganite-Thacherite Right in the West would have been possible without brisk interventionism by the state to implement radically new policies. This whole process has been misrecognised in the relevant literature because the opposition is presumed to be between globalisation and the nation-state. The actual opposition is between capital and labour, which then unites the globalisation process and the nation-state form.

One could go further and say that the key fact about the relationship between 'globalisation' and the nation-state is that the stronger the nation-state the more securely the capital of its citizens can travel. A principal reason why the United States came to command the most globalised economy in history is that the bearers of its capital could rely on the support, including the crucial military support, that their nation-state could provide them, anywhere in the world. Conversely, Germany and Japan, the two strongest economies in the world now, have to accept the policy leads of the United States in key arenas of international relations precisely because, lacking great military muscle of their own, they must eventually rely on the U.S. military support in times of crisis far from their respective shores. It is also an observable fact that the national state is the weakest in countries mired in economic crisis but strongest in the leading capitalist countries— Japan, Germany, United States— and in countries that are in the process of making, or at least attempting to make, a transition to industrial society: the East Asian "tigers", China, as well as Malaysia and Thailand which are both knocking at the door for membership in what one may humorously call the post-war Japanese Co-Prosperity Sphere. Recent and contemporary history is too full of monarchs, dictators and strongmen who have wrecked societies and squandered precious resources to warrant the claim that a strong state produces development, but it is one of the preconditions.

Indeed, the role of the state seems to have always been substantial in the self-organisation of capital itself. In Marx's memorable phrase— which he uses to summarise the processes of primitive accumulation— it was the agency of the state that "begat" the economic dominance of capital "hothouse-fashion". And, in a wide variety of circumstances— from Bismarckian Germany and Meiji Japan to the Soviet Union, and from the `four tigers' to China itself in today's East Asia— sustained growth from low levels of development to substantially higher levels, and eventually a systemic breakthrough, seem to have always required strong state initiatives in defiance of a variety of external pressures exerted by the international environment. Even today, and even in Western Europe itself, the Union rests on negotiations among nation-states. The largest and the most powerful of these nation-states, Germany, has just achieved an expanded

national unification and is unlikely to surrender its national interests to the Union, as is amply demonstrated by not only its negotiations within the Union and the unilateral exercise of financial power by its national bank but also its newly defined national interests in Eastern Europe.

Within Asia and Africa, the past decades have witnessed not the decline of the nation-state form but its further consolidation, as mechanisms for regulating markets and revenues and as agents in local and regional wars. Within regions, national economies are more differentiated today than they were on the morrow of independence, as the experience of South Asia testifies. Transnational projects such as that of Arab nationalism have collapsed as the national bourgeoisie of each state has developed its own particularist interests. Alongside this trajectory, surely, Western capital has penetrated far more deeply into national economies than was the case in earlier decades. More significantly, most national ruling classes have achieved a far greater level of capital accumulation and have therefore developed a contradictory attitude toward their own nation-state: they wish to more or less bypass the regulatory aspects of this state (through liberalisation, marketisation etc), and yet utilise it both for securing the domestic conditions of production favourable to capital (by guaranteeing domestic labour regimes; by ensuring infrastructural development, etc) and for mediating relationships between domestic and foreign capitals. As I said earlier, the new national bourgeoisies, like globalised capital itself, want a weak nation-state in relation to capital and a strong one in relations to labour. It is in this framework that the nation-state remains, globally, the horizon for any form of politics that adopts the life-processes of the working classes as its point of departure, and which seeks to address the issue of the exploitation of poorer women, the destruction of the natural environment by national as well as Transnational capitals, or the Right-ward drift of ideological superstructures, all of which are deeply connected with labour regimes, gender-related legislations and ideologies, and investment and extraction plans guaranteed by the nation-state.

The structural dialectic of imperialism includes, in other words, the deepening penetration of all available global spaces by the working of capital and intensification of the nation-state form simultaneously. Far from destroying the national-state in its march toward globalisation, capital indeed needs the state, and in so far as economies and labour regimes are organised within national confines, it needs the nation-state, for the enforcement of contract law, internationalised legal systems and other instruments that are necessary to insure linkages between the national and transnational market forces, as well as to promote debt management, structural adjustment and financial transactions of many kinds. In all these aspects, global capital tends to strengthen the nation-state form in the central zones as well as in the dependent countries.

But why do you need a proliferation of states and statelets to manage economic processes in an increasingly globalised market? There are three main reasons for it. One is that whereas capital has had a tendency toward globalisation of its operations since its very inception, there is another, equally powerful tendency which combines far greater mobility of capital with relative immobility of labour. Second, this relative immobility is a structural imperative of the unequal division of labour among countries of the world upon which imperialism rests, and which make it possible for labour to remain much cheaper in the imperialised zones than in the advanced capitalist countries. Third, there is of course a pretence in most kinds of economics that prices are determined— perhaps brutally but 'freely'— in the market. The fact, however, is that prices,

especially the prices of labour, are determined historically, and the nationally constituted regimes of labour are a fundamental component of that history.

Having come this far in the exposition of my argument, I want to turn around and reflect briefly on the two terms we have been taking for granted: globalisation, and the nation-state. In other words, what are the implications of the term 'globalisation' beyond the economic, and what are the processes and magnitudes involved in the globalisation of the economic? Similarly, the role of the state in the reproduction of capitalist society is clear enough, but why should the state be, above all, national?

Before we get to the issues of the world economy that are said to be indicated by the term 'globalisation', it is best to consider a couple of other implications for which this term serves as a euphemism and which then contribute to the making of an ideological climate in which the dominance of global finance begins to have an air of inevitability. The crucial implication is that with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the system of states it represented, there is now only one system, that of the financial networks and commodity markets controlled by the advanced capitalist countries, and everyone better accept this fact. In other words, there is no longer any substantial economic space that may be outside the dominion of neo-liberal capital, nor is there any longer any other pole on which the poorer countries may lean either as alternative source of technology and superior kinds of manufacture or as a choice that may be invoked in an attempt to obtain from the advanced capitalist countries terms that may be more commensurate with national purpose. This understanding of the present is then extended, in a more or less prophetic mode, in such a manner that the conjunctural victory of neo-liberalism is represented as a permanent one, for all times to come. Two kinds of philosophising then ensue. In one variant, represented most influentially by Fukuyama, the Rand Corporation philosopher, this conjunctural victory of neo-liberalism is seen as the End of History; Hegel's idea of History as the pursuit of Liberty is invoked at very great length in arguing that humanity has now reached that EndState of Liberty to the extent that all peoples of the world have now accepted the neo-liberalist free market. This posthistorical thinking is then supplemented by certain strands in postmodern thought, best represented by such as Francois Lyotard, for whom the defeat of the socialist project represents a happy liberation from what is called 'the mode of production metanarrative' or, alternately, the 'metanarrative of Progress'. As Lyotard puts it, the illusions of Progress have been displaced by the enjoyment of goods and services. Between Rand Corporation philosophising and the philosophising of the Parisian avant garde, a certain ideological circle is thus closed.

Meanwhile, this brute victory of neo-liberalism is further reinforced by the great narrowing of the traditional rivalries among the advanced countries themselves. We tend to forget now that the anti-colonial and liberation movements of yesteryears had a dialectical correlation with such rivalries. The years between 1918 and 1925, immediately after the First World War, witnessed a tremendous upsurge of anti-colonial movements in great many countries of Asia and Africa, and the years after the Second World War produced a stupendous wave of decolonisation and national independence throughout our two continents. Since the Depression of the 1930s, however, the West had already begun the process of consolidating what a scholar has called 'the Atlantic ruling class', and from the 1960s onwards, we have witnessed not only the growing integration of West European economies but the emergence of a whole host of mechanisms for the integration

of advanced capitalist countries altogether, so that even the relative decline of U.S. hegemony after the early 1970s has not led to unmanageable rivalries among them. This then means that just as the developing economies cannot have recourse to an alternative pole that the Soviet Union had provided in the past, they also cannot take advantage of rivalries among the capital-surplus nations. This lack of alternatives is one side of the ideological climate in which the dominance of global finance is being presented as inevitable, as each state is called upon to tailor its policies within the predicates of this dominance.

Such are the political and ideological underpinnings. In the strictly economic domain, the term 'globalisation' seems to refer to great acceleration in the mobility of capital and commodities, the increased role of export/import trade in national accounts, the power of communicational and transportation technologies with unparalleled global reach, the enormous power of finance capital and speculation over and above industrial capital across national frontiers, the ability of new and centrally produced cultural goods to bypass national apparatuses of education and information through telecasting and information highways, the rise of production and management processes which can be supervised through long-distance calculation and command, and in which the production process itself can be fragmented and located in different countries and/or quickly moved from one country to another.

These are formidable tendencies at the macro-economic level. And the flip side of this process, which greatly narrows the capacities of the national state in Africa and Asia, is no less formidable. I shall summarise only two aspects of it: the institutional network through which this 'globalisation' takes place, and the prior transfer of resources from South to North, especially during the 1980s, through debt mechanisms which produced the proximate situation in which country after country has had to accept the supremacy of those institutions. As one scholar has summarised the institutional development, "the World Bank, IMF, certain UN agencies, and the great array of IFIs (International Financial Institutions) and multinational corporations become a kind of Transnational ersatz state in laying down the rules and regulations within which the local state is required to operate in the sphere of international capital accumulation." Finance originating in the OECD countries does not travel across national frontiers, in other words, by its own volition and with the purpose of 'development' in mind; more often than not, it travels on the strength of the "conditionalities"— a word coined expressly for this purpose— formulated and imposed by this Transnational proto-state.

The same author also summarises the role that the Third World debt plays in this process: "The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund . . . have instrumentalised the debt crisis of the 1980s as perhaps the major disciplinary mechanism of the nineties." Some statistics may be of interest to you. For one hundred and eleven countries in the World Bank's reporting system, interest payments on foreign debt alone rose from 32.1 billion to 59.5 billion dollars between 1980 and 1989, while payments on the principals rose from 43.7 to 70.3 billion dollars during the same years. This had a far-reaching consequence for debt formation and balance of payments. In 1980, deduction of payments of principal and interest on previous loans was already of such magnitude that borrowers actually received only 30.6 out of the 106.4 billion dollars raised as fresh debt. By 1989, the annual payments on previous borrowings had increased to such an extent that all fresh borrowings were insufficient even to cover such payments, and borrowers had to

pay an additional 42.9 billion dollars of their own earnings just to cover those payments. During those same years, furthermore, the terms of trade for the Third World as a whole fell by 16 percent, so that even earnings from commodity exports were covering diminishing proportions of the accumulated debt. It is in such circumstances that in a typical Third World country the government's accountability to its own citizens diminishes while it becomes increasingly beholden to its creditors and balance of payments difficulties get cited as the reason for abandoning socially purposeful investment. This then becomes the concrete ground on which "conditionalities" are imposed to facilitate freedom for transnational capital while domestic currencies are devalued even as domestic prices and unemployment rates rise.

These "conditionalities" are made more acceptable, however, by holding out the prospect of rising rates of world trade which are promised to be favourable to exporting countries, and of course the prospect of great inflows of foreign finance. Past experience warrants scepticism on both counts. We saw earlier how terms of trade have been declining for the backward zones over the past many years. Magdoff also calculates that if we exclude the four so-called `Asian tigers'— Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan— the share of the Third World in the world export market during the twenty years between 1966 and 1986 actually fell from 9.2 to 6.8 percent. It is also possible to calculate that, quite regardless of the currently overheated rhetoric of "free trade" which got specially shrill at the time of the making of the World Trade Organisation, only about 25 percent of world trade is open to GATT intervention; another 25 percent takes place within multinational corporations and their subsidiaries, 25 percent is bilateral trade and 25 percent barter trade. Within this rather rigid structure, it is of course possible that some transitional gains in exports shall be registered by concentrating on a few profitable sectors, thanks to a combination of substantial external demand for those sectoral goods and the comparative advantage resting on low wages at home— as, for example, in the expanding sector of computer software in India. However, such gains will likely be at the expense of balanced social and economic growth since lopsided investment concentration in export-oriented sectors necessarily involves withholding investment from areas of domestic economy that might enhance mass purchasing power without contributing to the export volumes.

In this scenario, every dependent state produces more and more for export markets, competing against every other similar state for share in a very small proportion of the world trade, subjecting vast populations to regimes of competitive austerity, with no end in sight. Nor is this an idle fear. In countries like Bangladesh the state has contracted and atrophied to such an extent that part of the vacuum is being filled provisionally— and increasingly— by the entrepreneurial enterprise of the NGOs and the like. Worse still, within the Afro-Asian world, the underside of the growth patterns of the 'four tigers' in East Asia is the decay of some regions of Sub-Saharan Africa where in country after country living standards and infrastructures have declined below the levels achieved during the colonial period itself, and where negative growth levels have become so endemic that they may not be able in the long run to reproduce themselves even at present levels. In this context, Samir Amin's argument becomes quite plausible that contradictions of capitalism as a global system have reached such proportions at the periphery of the system that some regions may simply fall out of the cycle of expanded reproduction as such.

So, we come to the issue of the mobility of global finance itself. The first thing to be said here is that most of this floating capital has to do with financial institutions themselves, whose internal trading in financial instruments far outstrips, by a great margin, capital volumes engaged in either productive investment or commodity trade. Second, it is doubtless true that the amount directly invested in foreign lands tripled during the 1980s alone, ranging across diverse fields but mainly in services. However, throughout the past fifty tears, roughly 90 percent of all travelling capital has originated in the advanced capitalist countries, the only significant change being that since the 1970s the share of U.S. capital has declined and the share of Germany and Japan has grown proportionately. So, we know whose capital is global! More significant, from our viewpoint, is the fact that most of this capital is also absorbed, in increasing proportions, within the advanced zones. By now, roughly eighty percent of it circulates within those zones. Relatively little comes to the Third world, goes preferentially where infrastructural facilities are well developed, profit opportunities abundant and terms of repatriation very favourable; it tends to pull out in times of difficulty and wants in any case to keep its options open, therefore prefers short term investments. Typically, foreign companies tend to bring little capital of their own for productive investment. They usually gain favourable terms on the basis of the superiority of their technological goods and the corruption of their clients in the host regime, relying for actual finance largely on domestic resources. Thus it is that few of the countries that have accepted "conditionalities" have been able to attract large amounts of long-term foreign finance, especially for long-term investment in productive enterprises.

Let me summarise the argument thus far. First, globalisation has been inherent in the capitalist mode of production, as the Communist Manifesto noted one hundred and fifty years ago. The Manifesto also noted the immense dynamism of the productive forces and constant technological revolutions that this mode of production unleashes; the successive inventions of the steamship, the telegraph, the petroleum-based energy production, the trans-national aviation were as revolutionising in their time as computerisation of knowledge systems is in ours. In that sense, we are certainly faced with a new phase in the history of globalisation, but to single out this particular phase as one of globalisation, compared to all previous phases as resting on national economies alone, is, I believe, a category error. Yes, volumes of trade have increased enormously, but, as we saw, roughly half of this international trade is not directly subject to regulation by a singular, free globalised market, since that portion of the trade takes place in the form of bilateral and barter trade between strictly national economies. The fundamental shift, rather, is this: in stead of indicating a fusion of industrial investment and bank finance within one nation-state to constitute what Lenin called 'finance capital', the bulk of today's finance capital has little connection with industrial investment, offers much more possibility for bringing together 'hot money' originating in different countries, and tends to be overwhelmingly speculative. This kind of capital tends to be so very much more mobile not only because of the rise of new technologies for moving this capital across the globe at dizzying speeds but precisely because so little of it is fettered by any long-term connection with actual production.

That is the great novelty of what we now call 'globalisation'. Yet in great many other structural features the fundamental character of imperialism remains remarkably unchanged, as we saw, for example, with reference to magnitudes of debt formation, the further decline in the terms of trade for the poorer countries, and the secular decline of entire national economies, such

as the Sub-Saharan African economies, which may fall out of this global system altogether. Undoubtedly, certain countries, notably some of the ones on the East Asian Pacific rim, have experienced a remarkable rise in their productive capacities and affluence levels. But this is more than matched by the declining standards of living in most other countries of the Third World. In other words, this phase of globalisation is doing what earlier phases also did, namely not the greater equalisation of incomes but intensified differentiation and polarisation of incomes between classes and among national economies of the world. In all these respects, the term 'globalisation' functions simply as a euphemism for imperialism and seeks to conceal the intensifying cruelties of the system by representing it as the creation of a global interdependence through the benign freedom of the market.

I have said earlier that capital has always needed a system of states to guarantee the conditions of its own reproduction. This 'need' was itself conditioned by a complex set of historical processes. Even today, the rise and fall of individual nation-states is not entirely at the disposal of the economy of finance capital; it attempts, as capital has always attempted, to restrict the directive power of the nation-state and to utilise it in the Third World at least, to enforce "conditionalities" and obtain suitable regimes of labour across the globe. This requirement does not decline but in fact grows all the more after the dissolution of the great colonial empires because the advanced countries now operate on the world scale not primarily through military coercion, which now remains largely indirect, but by organising consent among the national bourgeoisies of the world that have arisen in the various independent states since decolonisation.

The postcolonial state thus functions as a principle of articulation between national and transnational capitals. The actual number of the states that exist in the world does not much matter to imperialism. There are roughly two hundred such states today, an incomparably larger number than was the case a hundred years ago. But imperialism could happily adjust to a relative decline or a relative increase in these numbers. However, it could not dispense with a system of relatively numerous states altogether, since neither the workings of the global markets, nor the policy formulations of the World Bank and the IMF, nor the overwhelming military power of the United States can ensure the actual conditions of reproduction for— and maintenance of— the global market without intricate mechanisms of political mediation and control. For all that, the structure needs systems of local administration, coercion and legitimation.

With this last observation, then, I draw closer to the question I have so far held in abeyance: the issue of the hyphen in the term 'nation-state'. In other words, why must the state be, above all, national? Here, we could usefully recall a certain distinction posed by Jurgen Habermas. In his formulation, the state is that structure of interlocking apparatuses— legal, administrative, even military and para-military— which the market needs in order to operate freely and to maintain the claim that it is, in its own operations, non-coercive. And, very much as the state legitimates the market by portraying it as the legitimate means for reproducing the material life of society as a whole, and by organising it on the basis of laws of general application, the nation is that which legitimates the state itself, in so far as the state derives its legitimacy from the claim of representing the people organised in a political society, that is to say 'the nation'. The hyphen is inherent, in other words, in the structure itself. The project of organising a state of their own, sovereign and indivisible, has been at the very foundation of modern nations,

in so far as each nation is said to be free only to the extent that it has an independent state of its own, and the state is said to be the material expression of the nation's need to reproduce itself and to demarcate the difference between the national and the foreigner. A state is seen as legitimate only to the extent that it performs this task of representing, safeguarding, demarcating. But what are the boundaries of a nation-state?

In a very strong sense, there are no normative bases for demarcating the frontiers of each and every nation-state. Most such frontiers have been obtained originally through violence, and it is a very great irony of modern history that international law rests on the presumption that frontiers once obtained through such violences may not be violated any more and must be maintained, rather, through neighbourly peace. Be that as it may! A further difficulty is that the boundaries of the state are not merely territorial; territory is merely the space where actual people under the jurisdiction of the given state actually live. What, then, is the extent of the people who legitimately belong in the political society that the state reproduces as 'nation'. Or, to put it only slightly differently: if nation is what legitimates the state, what legitimates the nation? Let me briefly recall a distinction I have spelled out at some length in earlier lectures.

On the one hand, the modern constitutional state that rests upon the idea of the nation arose initially as a profane civil entity, against religious authority and monarchical or feudal or even colonial autocracy. In this conception, it is the sole criterion of equal rights of citizenship which makes either the nation or the state legitimate and lawful, precisely because the people, organised now in the nation-state, become the subjects of the laws in a double sense— as the collective author of the laws, and as obeying the laws they themselves have made. To the extent that such a nation-state rests on equality in the domains of legal status and civil secularity, while leaving in tact the market as the regulator of economic production, process and need, this conception is specifically bourgeois, in which equal membership in the nation legitimates the machinery of the state while the state legitimates the market as the domain of freedom to buy and sell, on the prior basis of unequal access to property. This type of nation-state is traceable to the French Revolution, and the more enlightened elements among the anti-colonial intelligentsias have sought to universalise it far beyond the little corner of olde Europe. One may designate this as the Enlightenment conception of the state, and it is this conception which Lenin greatly radicalises, beyond recognition, when he identifies the revolutionary moment as the moment of the smashing of this type of state so as to create an alternate kind of state, the proletarian state, as the ethical form paving the way for the transition toward a classless society.

The other, contrasting conceptual moment may be traced all the way back to the Latin distinction between natio, as a pre-political society of natural belonging, and civitas, as a civil society that arises out of collective intentionalities in the service of the common good. The latter conception, civitas, may be fruitfully connected with what I have earlier called the Republican idea of citizenship-based state that arises in more modern times. But that other, equally powerful and perhaps more emotionally charged word, natio, as the imagination of a primordial belonging, is also at the very root of the demarcation between the native and the foreigner. In the making of modern nations and nationalisms, that kind of imagination becomes predominant in that tendency in German Idealism that is most forcefully represented by Herder and Fichte, and in which individuals are seen simply as bearers of a national spirit which inheres in them with the

properties of a collective soul. Citizenship in such a nation is conceived not in terms of expanding toward a universalist inclusion but in terms of self-definition, self-purification, xenophobia, racism, and relativisms of all sorts.

The ambiguity of anti-colonial nationalisms is that, across a whole range, they have tended to invoke both of these antithetical ideas of nationhood, in varying degrees. The idea of citizenship has been powerful in anti-colonialism because no one can be the citizen of a colony; in order to constitute oneself as citizen one has to abolish the colony and recast the people thus liberated into a nation. That is why all anti-colonialisms refer to themselves as nationalist, even though many influential Western theorists would either withhold that status from them altogether or call them 'proto-nationalist' or some such. But there have also been equally strong expressions of anti-colonial nationalisms in terms of a pre-colonial ethnos, which conceives of national culture not as that novel and necessary thing which you will be free to make once the colonialist has been thrown out, but as the recovery of a past that never was. This attachment to an ethnos, more imaginary than real, and to a culture that is distilled out of the culture of the upper classes and now presents itself as national tradition, was in some respects an understandable reflex against cultural imperialism practised by the colonial masters. But beyond a certain point, and especially since decolonisation, this identification of nation with ethnos has been by and large devastating, in several ways.

To the extent that most postcolonial societies failed to organise themselves as republics of radical equality among culturally diverse peoples, the state sought legitimation increasingly as representing ethnic primordiality over and above issues of citizenship which was denied in practice. Second, in the contest between the modern and the primeval, the conception of nation as ethnos tended to shift the balance in favour of the strata that claimed to represent tradition, especially religious forms of social authorisation and racialistic ideologies, thus giving rise to all sorts of revivalisms, fundamentalisms and home-grown racisms. Third, to the extent that virtually all postcolonial societies rest not on one cultural formation but many adjacent and overlapping ones, the idea of national culture came to be identified with the culture of the upper classes of whatever group happened to be more extensive and dominant in any given society, so that majoritarianism began parading as nationalism, while the rest were slotted into other groups and re-defined as national "minorities," which were tolerated, or suppressed, or exterminated to varying degrees. Fourth, if each nation is to be identified with a unique ethnos of its own, then it logically follows that any group that discovers its own separate ethnos, derived from language or race or religion or whatever, would be entitled to a state of its own; separatism thus emerged as the obverse of majoritarianism, and the search for ethnic truth became a zero-sum game in which every collectivity could be potentially blown apart into any number of fragments.

We thus witness a radical change in the processes that legitimate the nation, which then legitimates the state, which legitimates the market, which eventually legitimates globalisation. To the extent that the postcolonial state loses its autonomy in relation to imperialism, and to the extent that the national bourgeoisie makes a far-reaching alliance with transnational capital, to that same extent it becomes incapable of organising society on the basis of radical equalities of citizenship and secular civility, because equality in these domains leads to demands for other kinds of equality which that state and that bourgeoisie are unable to satisfy even minimally,

thanks to the low levels of overall accumulation and the barbarous zeal with which fantastic rates of profit are sought. In this situation, culturalism arises as a compensatory mechanism for decline in rights of citizenship, and the narcissism of little differences displaces common and shared struggles for liberty and equality. Thus it is that majoritarianism, revivalism, and ethnic cleansing are now world-wide phenomena wherever the revolutionary projects of anti-imperialism and socialism have been defeated. Yugoslavia in this sense is not an exception but indicative of what is increasingly becoming the rule. In each of the states that has arisen out of the ashes of former Yugoslavia, the descendants of fascists have fought to reverse the world that was made by the victory of the Partisans after the Second World War, all of them claiming to be the representatives of the ethnic nation, and ethnic cleansing now is where socialist universalism and multi-national civil secularity once were. This relationship between the fascist past of the 1940s and the claim of the ethnic nation of today is there even in the relatively much more benign case of Slovenia.

The point I am making is this: the world system for which we use the euphemism of 'globalisation' rests and cannot but rest on a system of nation-states. For this system to function with a reasonable degree of efficiency, at least a majority of the constituent states must command a reasonable degree of legitimacy, guaranteed by a demonstrable coercive capacity, within their national borders. This legitimacy can be based on non-denominational, non-racial civil equality of all the citizens collectively pursuing projects for enhancement of their well-being. Or this legitimacy can be based on claims of primordiality and cultural difference. To the extent that the alliance of the national and trans-national bourgeoisies makes it impossible in most parts of the globe for the people to pursue freely the projects for enhancement of social entitlements, to that same extent the nation-state must fall back on the legitimations it may obtain from the play of primordial identities. The revivalisms, the cultural differentialisms, the relativisation of all normative value that we are witnessing today are neither epiphenomenal nor archaic eruptions; rather, these are the necessary consequence of the very globalisation which undermines and blocks the possibilities for a rational reorganisation of societies.

In short, the more perfect the anarchy of the global market becomes, the more anarchic will be the social relations among human beings, until, as the Communist Manifesto once put it, human beings are so stripped of their dignity that they are forced to face the conditions that bind them to others of their kind.

The Author

Aijaz Ahmed is Professorial Fellow at the Centre for Contemporary Studies at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. His writings have been published mostly in Urdu and English but occasionally in Arabic and French as well. Three books and over sixty articles contributed to various journals and periodicals are to his credit. Nation, nationalism, imperialism, dictatorship, Islam, orientalism, Marxism, Hindutva, culture, postcoloniality, subalternity, modernity and the like have been the subjects of his writings and lectures. He is a recognized scholar in India and abroad.

□ □