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OUR WORLDVIEW & THE TRENDS OF OUR TIMES

And take upon 's the mystery of things, As if we were God's spies.

Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Act V, scene 3

Introduction

Shelley viewed 'history' as a "cyclic poem written by Time upon the memories of men" where the Past is the rhapsodist. We have the choice to hear, or not to hear. It is even possible to evade its inexorable logic by treating it just a mere 'dust-heap' (as Augustine Birrell considered it), or 'a pack of lies', (as Sir Robert Walpole thought). Bernard Shaw quoted Hegel in his *The Revolutionist's Handbook*: "What experience and history teach is this— that people and governments never have learnt anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it." But on deeper reflections on realities of our changing times, Winston Churchill struck a more optimistic note in his *The Gathering Storm*; saying categorically : "...it is wrong not to lay the lessons of the past before the future." All that we did, all that we are doing, shall surely condition and determine all that we shall be doing and facing in times to come. T.S. Eliot said in his *Four Quartets*:

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in the time past.

With this perspective, I intend to see and evaluate the oeuvre of our collective and individual deeds on our fast changing times. I have immensely enjoyed my odyssey on "the stream of Time", which we 'can neither create nor direct', but upon which we can 'steer with more or less skill and experience.'¹

In this Chapter, I intend to reflect on our worldview, and the dominant ideas which have shaped our human conditions and destiny. I would divide this Chapter in several short, but distinct, sections, each dealing with topics of importance.

I

**UNDERSTANDING THE GRAMMAR OF THE
DOMINANT WESTERN WORLDVIEW**

As the Western ideas have shaped the worldview of our elite, I would reflect on them to show how, on core points, the West has not outgrown from the ancient Judeo-Christian tradition. It is a strange irony of history that the intellectual sub-structure of the Western thought is still in its old groove. With Abraham began the history of Judaism. He was at the apex of the family in which at later times Jesus and Mohammad were born. They shared common Arabic tradition, and grew to become revolutionaries having divergent outlook on life. The Judeo-Christian tradition of thought shaped not only the religio-cultural thoughts of Christianity and Islam, it also shaped the materialistic ideas of Karl Marx. I have reflected on them in Chapter 20 of this Memoir.

Bertrand Russell has rightly pointed out in his *History of Western Philosophy* that one can understand the well-known concepts of Marxism by understanding certain fundamental concepts from the Judeo-Christian tradition. Russell has observed insightfully that the Jewish “pattern of history, past and future, is such as to make a powerful appeal to the oppressed and unfortunate at all times.”² St. Augustine was most influential in developing the Western Christianity which grew on the assumptions much different from the simple assumptions of the messianic Jesus of the early tradition. St. Augustine conceived the Church as the spiritual City of God, and the realm of the temporal powers as the Earthly City, the former was supreme in matters spiritual, and the latter, in the worldly affairs maintaining unflinching obedience to the City of God. Both grew to provide models for the polity in the Western world in many ways: (i) by providing a pattern in which the organizations for powers, spiritual and temporal, could interact; and (ii) by providing structure for their inner realms. The structure of the City provided models to the ‘nation states’ and the ‘corporations’ to organize their structure. Besides, the subservience of the Earthly City to the City of God provided, in this phase of Economic Globalisation, a model for subjugating the nation states to the economic realm, led by the ‘corporations’. It seems Christian worldview never went much beyond that point. We have seen three clear phases in the history of the West: (i) the Phase of the Church domination, (ii) the Phase, after the Reformation, when the native states became supreme, (iii) and, now, the Phase when the corporate oligarchy is becoming triumphant: first it was the mighty Church, then the powerful states, and now the rule of corporations.

After examining various factors and vectors in the Western thought, Russell drew up a precise eschatological statement, Russell found that St. Augustine adopted the Jewish pattern of history to Christianity; and Marx, to express his own philosophy of Socialism. He tells us that to understand “Marx psychologically” “one should use the following dictionary”:

Yahweh = Dialectical Materialism
The Messiah = Marx
The Elect = The Proletariat
The Church = The Communist Party
The Second Coming = The Revolution

Hell = Punishment of the Capitalists

The Millennium = The Communist Commonwealth

“The terms on the left give the emotional content of the terms on the right, and it is this emotional content, familiar to those who have had a Christian or Jewish upbringing, that makes Marx’s eschatology credible.”³ I would draw their corollaries, and would briefly mention how some of these ideas are different from those held under our Hindu religio-cultural tradition, and also the points where they come close.

- (i) Russell has aptly stated that “the Jewish pattern of history, past and future, is such as to make a powerful appeal to the oppressed and unfortunate at all times”. I have mentioned in Chapter 20 of this Memoir how many persons considered Krishna and Jesus great revolutionary role-models for the oppressed and unfortunate.
- (ii) The Judeo-Christians believed in God that could create, whereas in the Hindu Philosophy God does not create anything; the creations are the outcome of the interactions of *prakriti* and *purusha* emanating from God. So, philosophically speaking, it was impossible for the Hindus to conceive that *Ishwara* (God) could help anyone anyway in acquiring political power, or in setting up the structures in the political or economic spheres.
- (iii) The entire Judeo-Christian thought is essentially dialectical. In the earliest phase it was represented by the conflicting forces of God and Satan; and in the Marxist philosophy, it becomes dialectical materialism. For Marx the “history of all human society, past and present, has been the history of class struggle”. His dialectic works with a measure of inevitableness. If under the Judeo-Christian thought, the favoured few were “the Elect”, in Marxism, the “Proletariat” became the Elect. The Hindu worldview does not contemplate such conflicts. I have discussed this aspect of the matter in Chapter 20.
- (iv) The eschatological statement, that Russell gives, explains certain core ideas about the socio-economic management in the Western society. The idea of Yahweh was articulated as the concept of the Supreme Creator who was also the Supreme Regulator. Marx substituted for that the idea of Dialectical Materialism. The terms Marx used, as presented by Russell with their suggestive and approximate equivalence in the Judeo-Christian thoughts, are so well known that no elaboration is needed for the purposes of my reflections in this Chapter.
- (v) The core concepts of the Judeo-Christian thoughts shaped the Islamic and the Christian thoughts producing certain ‘family resemblances’ between the two. Their ideas were, of course, shaped in later times by the political and economic factors and the dominant interests in the changing contexts of times. The track they adopted led them to evolve a worldview that helped those who dabbled in power politics to become the ‘empire builders’ of the later times. As Christianity was used for long time to promote imperialist designs of the European countries, Islam too had been used by the empire-builders in certain phases of history to promote their imperial interests. Francis Fukuyama, in *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) believes that Christianity is more ‘evolved’ religion than the other faiths as it considers all men equal and morally free to choose between right and wrong.⁴ This is

- a plea for saying that Christianity is more relevant to the present-day neoliberal culture, than any other faith.
- (vi) The Hindu religio-cultural thought had adopted an entirely separate trajectory; and its rich oeuvre shows the following features emerging from the Hindu society's 'cultural consciousness':
- (a) It maintained a balanced view maintaining right equilibrium between one's material requirements, and spiritual needs. It conceived human life to evolve at two levels: one spiritual and other material. But it never saw between the two any dichotomy. An individual's life has two movements, like the earth's rotation and revolution: one suggesting spiritual evolution and the other the material progress.
 - (b) It neither rejected wealth, as Jesus had done, nor accepted it with the passion of attachment, as the Church had done, or as the corporate world is doing now. It valued 'property' only when fairly acquired and justly held on trust for all.
 - (c) The Hindu religio-cultural thought could never promote economic expansionism, and capitalism on the Western pattern, which had led to the old-style colonialism and imperialism, and their present-day variants at work in the neoliberal architecture.
 - (d) The Hindu religio-cultural thought helped us to evolve a worldview in which consumerism and hedonism have no place. 'Social Justice' became the core principle in the utilization of society's material resources. Under this view, the importance of a man was not for the wealth he possessed, but for the efforts he made to evolve spiritually, and for his acts for the welfare of himself and all others. As it saw divinity everywhere, in nature and in man, its thoughts and ways became dedicated to the egalitarian ideas which, in my view, had shaped the perception of the makers of our Constitution. This worldview led them to love our earth (*Prithvi*) which was personified as a deity for whose welfare, as the *Srimad Bhagavat Mahapurana* tells us, Krishna had come to the world. Under this worldview, we never thought of misusing or polluting the natural resources for extracting profits, or for seeking unrestrained pleasures.

The above exposition leads me to conclude that the western intellectual traditions tread in the old groove. By adopting unilinear view of history, they think they are progressing towards a better future. They harbour the hubris that they are scaling new heights of culture. But this claim is not sustainable when we think about Neros, Genghis Khans, and Hitlers; the devastations wrought by the World Wars, and the way circumstances are being crafted to drive the humanity towards World War III; the lustful promotion of greed, and such senseless acts as the Bhopal Gas-leak, the Chernobyl and the Fukushima disasters; the greedy extraction of the natural resources and the pollution of our environment; the hurry with which we are moving towards our doom, and the worry with which we carry the burden of life towards destination we do not know. This also takes our mind to the 'moral deficit' in the economic management of our times. I have discussed in Chapter 20 this syndrome of decadent morality in a fast-changing technological society.

We in India find ourselves at a strange cusp, at a baffling crossover point. We are wrenched by the memory of the past when we see how in our times several national and multinational actors are working hard to erase our past to allow the 'Invisible Hand' of this economic globalization to write the text authored by the corporate oligarchy, and their patron institutions. We come to live in this phase when our vision is blurred, and our worldview confused by uncritically borrowed ideas from the West. We find ourselves in a situation that brings to mind the first sentence with which *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens begins:

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way.... “

II

THE TRENDS OF OUR TIMES

The Mahabharata War was over. Destructive devastation had been wrought. Even the victors were sad. The great Vyasa told the King Yudhisthira to reflect on the way Time had choreographed events: पश्य कालस्य पर्ययम् (See, what Time has done). The events on the stream of Time cannot be ignored. In this Part of this Chapter, I intend to measure the wisdom with which the modern world has unfolded itself. I would first mention the lessons that many political thinkers learnt on evaluating what they saw in the early phase of imperialism and colonialism in the 18th century. Their ideas deserve consideration because, though they did not receive acceptance by the Great Powers of the world then, they have become dominant ideas promoting the neoliberal paradigm after World War II. In this Part, I intend to reflect on what led to the two World Wars, and also on the circumstances which might drive our World towards a more devastating World War III. I would also focus on certain factors which seem to be at work to bring about, perish the thought, our collective doom.

What they learnt from Modern History

(Great Realization in the mid-19th century: The Responses of the Great Powers)

(i)

(a) India's First War of Independence: Its subtext as the imperialism's think-tanks and the cheer-leaders read

I have told you in Chapter 8 my reasons for considering the so-called Indian Mutiny of 1857-59 as our country's First War of Independence. The castle of power that the British imperialism built through the wands of stealth and craft, and through brutalities, cracked under the seismic waves set in motion by our patriotic people. My teacher, Dr. Kalikinkar Datta, crisply stated the effect of the event: “For more reasons than one, the Revolt marks a turning-point in the

history of India.” “I wish,” remarked the late Lord Cromer, “the young generation of the English would read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the history of the Indian Mutiny; it abounds in lessons and warnings.”⁵ The English imperialists took a spate of measures to ensure the continuance of their *imperium*, perhaps till eternity; but insightful Russell, the *Times* Correspondent in India, observed in his Diary that “the mutinies have produced too much hatred and ill-feeling between the two races to render any mere change of the rulers a remedy for the evils which affect India, of which those angry sentiments are the most serious exposition. . . .”⁶ I may hasten to mention that the English imperialists saw numerous trouble-spots spurting around the globe. The revolutions of 1848 left Europe divided. The interventionist British government noticed the restiveness in China though it had succeeded forcing the Chinese ports open for the British goods; and had acquired Hong Kong under the Treaty of Nanking after the first Opium War (1839–42). The imperial hubris reached its climax when Palmerston justified his intervention in the domestic affairs of a foreign country to protect the commercial interests. I need not develop this point as I have already discussed it in Chapter 26(iv)⁷.

(b) The Lessons that they learnt

The think-tanks of the imperialists learnt certain lessons from the realities which were obvious in the mid-19th century. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* notes: “In the middle years of the century (the 19th century) it had been widely held that colonies were burdens and those materials and markets were most effectively acquired through trade.”⁸ Commenting on it, I wrote in 2005 in my *Judicial Role of Globalised Economy* (at p. 17): “What was then scripted on the five inches of ivory has become in the Uruguay Round Final Act a plot wrought by self-seeking corporate oligarchs. And “trade” is now receiving such a wide semantic widening that, perhaps, everything would become nothing but *res commercium* in a wider gestalt.” The imperial powers felt, as Paul Kennedy put it, that those “colonial acquisitions were unnecessary, being merely a set of ‘millstones’ around the neck of the overburdened British taxpayer”⁹.

Paul Kennedy has perceptively underscored the evident contradictions in the ideas of the think-tanks and the desires of the imperialist politicians of that time. He pointed out that “the fact was that the empire continued to grow, expanding (according to one calculation) at an average annual pace of about 100000 square miles between 1815 and 1865.” If ‘capitalism’ led to ‘imperialism’, ‘colonialism’ was its overbearing bastard. And “the appearance of capitalism give rise to the discipline now called economics.”¹⁰

The imperialists over the most part of history have worked through some cloak. The cleavage between what they said, and what they did was always wide. “Thus in 1784, the British Parliament announced that “to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of domination in India are measures repugnant to the wish, honor, and policy of this nation.” Shortly after, the conquest of India was in full swing.”¹¹ But in the Eurocentric world, the imperialists pursued the aggressive imperialism in the old protocol with two variants; (i) formal (as in India), and (ii) informal (as in China and South America).

What led the ideas of the aforementioned think-tanks to be shelved by the politicians-in-power was thus brought out by Asa Briggs in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol. 29 (15th Ed. P. 84):

“His [Disraeli] first ventures in “imperialism” —a speech at the Crystal Palace in 1872, the purchase of the Suez Canal shares in 1875, and the proclamation of the queen as “Empress of India” —showed that he had abandoned the view, popular during the middle years of the century, that the colonies were millstones around the mother country’s neck.”

(c) The emergence of the syndrome of the ‘Sponsored State’

The western imperialists had come to India not to promote any altruistic purpose. The imperialists had learnt that the best strategy was to capture market for trade leaving political power with the native factotums. In the early history of British India, two models of imperialism were minted: in one the imperialist powers controlled the administration and the markets leaving the façade of the Nawab’s government intact to receive all the brickbats from his people for things getting wrong; in the other no such pretence was maintained, and power was directly assumed over the people who could see, even see the targets of their wrath, straight within their sight. I called the first model of imperialism the system of ‘Sponsored State’. I had spelt out its core features in my *Judicial Role in Globalised Economy* (2005):

“Under the sponsored state system which Clive set up he found that despite the dewani which enabled to promote the commercial interests of the East India Company with no holds barred, it was essential to manage the system of governance from inside the ramshackle and truncated political structure over which Mir Jafar or Mir Kasim presided as nawab. Clive pursued this objective with a stroke of stealth by securing for Rida Khan, who was Clive’s deputy dewan, the post of the nawab’s deputy. The inevitable consequence was the emergence of powerful coterie of bureaucrats and self-seekers who worked for the Company whilst swore loyalty to the nawab.”

The first model of covert vampirism won approval of the think-tanks of the imperialists. This model came in for appreciation in this neoliberal phase of the present-day Economic Globalisation. It facilitates the capture of the markets and the economic resources of the target countries. The IMF-World Bank strategy illustrates what the early imperialists had adopted, but later on gave up that approach for direct and conspicuous control. The Uruguay Round Final Act, setting up the WTO, is also designed to promote the system of the ‘Sponsored State’. This situation can become alarmingly shocking even in a democracy. The democratic election process can be engineered to provide the structure of governance to promote the neoliberal agenda for the corporate welfare.

(ii)

(a) From the Hall of Mirrors to World War I: the folly of the governments

We all know how in the Congress of Vienna (1815), the leading European powers divided their spheres of dominance round the world. They behaved as if they were dividing an apple placed on the golden platter on the round table which the Tsar of Russia, Castlereagh of England, Metternich of Austria and

Talleyrand of France attended in their efforts to mould the Europe after their own image. They held republicanism and democracy in utter contempt, and did everything their mind could invent in their quest for total security for the monarchs and their empires. The old game continued, and continued till the circumstances begotten by their deeds and notions, drove this Eurocentric Europe to World War I.

(b) The tragic error of judgment

The World Wars proved Bloch's *The War of the Future* (1898), and Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion* (1910), wrong in stating that "new economic factors clearly prove the inanity of war". Henry Noel Brailsford had felt that in Europe "the epochs of conquest is over" and had felt "that there will be no more wars among the six great powers." The World Wars proved that the "commercial disaster, financial ruin and individual suffering" couldn't stop a war. I wonder if our Peter Pans would ever "admit with Hamlet that human reason is limited and surrounded by great mystery."¹²

Errors are often the cause of destruction. The World Wars I and II were wrought by 'the error factors'. 'By the 1930s moderate historians had concluded, with Lloyd George, that no one country was to blame for the war: "We all stumbled into it."¹³ World War II too was substantially the outcome of indiscretion, and gross miscalculations. It "came because Britain and France dithered between appeasement and resistance," leading Hitler to miscalculate; and thus they exposed the world to hazards. "The British historian Anthony Adamthwaite concluded in 1984: "Hitler wanted war, and Western and Soviet policies throughout the 1930s helped him to achieve it"¹⁴.

After analyzing what led to the Great War of the Mahabharata, the great poet 'Dinkar' spelt out the two factors which had caused the War: one was hubris breeding megalomania, and the other was 'greed' generating demonic lust. It is appropriate to appreciate the wisdom the poet conveys in these lines:

युद्ध का उन्माद संक्रमशील है, एक चिनगारी कहीं जागी अगर,
 तुरत बह उठते पवन उनचास हैं, दौड़ती, हंसती, उबलती आग चारों ओर से?
 और तब रहता कहाँ अवकाश है, तत्त्व चिंतन का, गंभीर विचार का?...
 युद्ध को तुम निन्द्य कहतो हो, मगर, जब तलक हैं उठ रही चिनगारियां
 भिन्न स्वार्थों के कुलिश-संघर्ष की, युद्ध तब तक विश्व में अनिवार्य है...

[The maddening passion for war is infectious, and it spreads. Once the conflagration begins, other factors creep in to enhance that into a fiery conflagration. And then none can find time for cool reflections to weigh things to determine what is right. You condemn war; but can it be avoided till the selfish interests keep on colliding with ferocity?]

It is often said that the capitalists are interested in peace only because they can promote their trade. They can protect their wealth only when wars are avoided. Bertrand Russell has written about the attitudes of the capitalists towards wars. I would quote him to set out my reservations on some of his ideas. He said¹⁵:

“Those who adopted a utilitarian ethic, on the contrary tended to regard most wars as folly. This, again, at least in the nineteenth century, brought them into alliance with the capitalists, who disliked wars because they interfered with trade.... The attitude of capitalists to war, it is true, has fluctuated. England’s wars of the eighteenth century, except the American war, were on the whole profitable, and were supported by businessmen; but throughout the nineteenth century until its last years, they favoured peace. In modern times, big business, everywhere, has come into such intimate relations with the national State that the situation has greatly changed. But even now, both in England and in America, big business on the whole dislikes war.

Enlightened self-interest is, of course, not the loftiest of motives, but those who decry it often substitute, by accident or design, motives which are much worse, such as hatred, envy, and love of power.”

The capitalists are interested only in their gains: they seldom think of larger issues pertaining to humanity. They serve democracy, autocracy, and fascism; They have been happy with the patriots, and also with those who work to sell the honour of the country. The history of India has had many instances of such things. If wars promote power and provide opportunities to garner wealth, war is good, otherwise it is bad. Common people have always been against wars because they only suffer, whilst the unworthy prosper. And the Big Business can sow seeds of discord make them grow on account of their growing greed that breeds anger. I wonder how Bertrand Russell missed the lessons of history whilst he evaluated Locke’s or the Utilitarians’ self-comforting thesis. Human history attests the operation of an inexorable principle which, with an uncanny insight, H.A. L. Fisher stated in the Preface to *History of Europe*, which I admired from my undergraduate days for soundness of judgment, intellectual perception, linguistic felicity and the economy in the treatment of subjects without ever economizing with truth. He very perceptively said:

“I can see only one emergency upon another as wave follows upon wave; only one great fact, with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalizations; only one safe rule for the historian: that he should recognize in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen”.

Major wars have often minor proximate causes. But numerous reasons conspire to drive things go off the precipice with catastrophic effect. Circumstances take new and amazing turns. The Uncertainty Factor works not only in physics, as Heisenberg showed, but also in life we live. But it is an irony of history that Hitler thought that the principle of certainty would work in his favour always. It is again an irony of history that in our days the economists are prone to believe that the Certainty Factor would always work in favour of their assumptions of the present-day economic fundamentalism.

(c) The Great Wars as the Metaphors for us to reflect: World War I

World War I ended with the Treaty of Versailles which was signed on 28 June 1919 in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles. They signed this Treaty in the Hall of Mirrors, but had no wisdom to see themselves and the emerging world in the

mirrors of history. What an irony! The empires had crumbled, and the map of Europe was re-drawn. Phillip Snowden, who later became Viscount Snowden, and a Cabinet Minister in England, made the following insightful comment on the Treaty:

“The Treaty should satisfy brigands, imperialists, and militarists. It is the death-blow to the hopes of those who expected the end of the war to bring peace. It is not peace treaty, but a declaration of another war. It is the betrayal of democracy of the fallen in the war. The Treaty expresses the true aims of the Allies.”¹⁶

We could tell such leaders: “You are one of those that will not serve God, if the devil bid you.” (Shakespeare, *Othello* I.i.108).

On good grounds it was said that the seeds of World War II were sown in the Treaty of Versailles; and World War II was, as Lipson rightly says, “in continuation of World War I”. If we reflect on the drama between the two World Wars, their prologue and dénouement, we find the events as an allegory to show that the law of *karma* operates as much in the Palaces and Castles, as in the cottages of the lowliest and the humblest.

(d) The royal road to World War II: Scripting human destiny sans wisdom, sans foresight.

The greedy powers, fire-eating narrow nationalists and power wielders led Europe to World War II. The ideologies of dictatorship, democracy and communism provided intellectual underpinnings to their diverse deeds all driving the molten lava up to erupt in 1939.

Everything that begins comes to end. So World War II ended in 1945. It was a pyrrhic victory recalling ‘Pyrrhus of Epirus who defeated the Romans at Asculum in 279 BC, but sustained heavy losses.’¹⁷ The real victorious power that emerged from the cauldron of World War II was the United States of America. Paul Kennedy, in his *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (p. 464-65), says:

“‘American experience’, exulted Henry of Luce of Life magazine, ‘is the key to the future....America must be the elder brother of nations in the brotherhood of man’.¹⁸Whoever was so purblind as not to appreciate that fact — whether old-fashioned British or Dutch imperialists, or leftward-tending European political parties, or the grim-faced Molotov — would be persuaded, by a mixture of sticks and carrots, in the right direction. As one American official put it, ‘It is now our turn to bat in Asia’¹⁹; and, he might have added, nearly everywhere else as well.”

To conclude World War II, the USA dropped atom bombs on Japan (at Hiroshima and Nagasaki) compelling it to surrender. It was a horrendous act with terrifying consequences. This decision could have been avoided. What led to this act, for which the United States was wholly responsible and would be remembered in infamy, has been thus stated with utmost brevity by A.J.P. Taylor:

“They wished to demonstrate to Congress that the money spent had not been wasted Many also were actuated by scientific curiosity; having prepared an experiment, they wished to see the results.... *War*

suspends morality..... When Truman heard the news from Hiroshima, he was excited and said: "This is the greatest thing in history."²⁰ [italics supplied]

We realize that if there is no ceiling on excellence, there is no bottom to degradation. Human stupidity has no confines.

(e) World War II: the *Mahabharata* provides perspective which the world must not overlook

When the bombs were dropped in 1945 at Hiroshima (on August 6) and Nagasaki (August 9), I was of eight years. My father, after having undergone rigorous imprisonment on account of his participation in the Quit India Movement, had founded M.C.H.E. School at Darbhanga, and was functioning there as its headmaster. But my house had become a rendezvous of some well-informed persons who never missed to scan the way World War II was unfolding itself both on the western and the eastern theatres. As if I were a self-appointed rapporteur, I noted events in my mind to narrate them, as best as I could do, to my mother when we sat every evening on straw-made mat in the light of an earthen lamp. Hearing about those incidents, she told me two stories from the *Mahabharata* which I intend to recall here though I do not have her knack of storytelling. I would make some comments to highlight their contextual relevance. Now the stories :

- (i) Raja Drupada performed with great sanctity *aputrakami yagna* to get a son who could destroy the great Acharya Drone who, Drupada felt, had humiliated him once in the past causing excoriating agony. They had been good friends. He got a son called Dhrishtadyumna who had done the military formation in the battle-field of Kurukshetra. It was he who killed Drone considered invincible, almost immortal. Later on, this story made me reflect over the course of the European politics between the two World Wars. The Treaty of Versailles humiliated Germany, saddled that country with debts, made it bleed with reparations after holding it guilty of crimes of waging the First World War. A cat or rat might tolerate being laughed at, not a great nation of high creativity and verve. The great German people reacted, and forged the course that led to World War II.
- (ii) Ashwatthama, the son of Dronacharya, exercised the ultimate weapon of destruction, the *Narayanashtra*, in the great battle of Mahabharata, to destroy all the Pandavas in a moment. This weapon could have decided the fate of the battle in favour of the Kauravas on whose behalf he fought. It was only to counter that weapon that Arjuna used *Pashupatastra* which he had got from Lord Shiva Himself. The collision of these two weapons would have destroyed the whole animate world. So he withdrew his weapon. The greatest amongst the wise men, Vyasa, had to intervene to persuade Ashwatthama to withdraw his weapon too. The great Vyasa told him: "Look, Arjuna was a master-operator of this weapon of destruction, but he did not exercise it against you. He used his weapon just to neutralize the impact of your weapon already used; and he withdrew it before it could become destructive." This story, in my later years, led me to view that the dropping of atom bombs on Japan in World War II was a horrendous act. America had no valid reason to exercise this ultimate weapon. Besides,

America did not withdraw the weapons once used; it did not know how to recall or control the weapon once exercised. Krishna punished Ashwatthama with a curse which distressed him for three thousand years undergoing sufferings and loneliness. What verdict Destiny would cast on the United States for such indiscreet acts, remains to be seen.

After the 1945 event, Bertrand Russell gave a timely warning to the world in the course of his speech in the House of Lords against the hazards of a nuclear war. This great warning by the great seer went in vain. "The nuclear peril", said Russell, "represented a danger which was likely to last as long as governments possessed nuclear weapons, and perhaps even longer if such destructive objects get into private hands."²¹ Russell has drawn our attention to two points which we cannot afford to ignore:

"There is a motive which is stronger than self-preservation; it is the desire to get better of other fellow. I have discovered an important political fact that is often overlooked, as it had been by me; people do not care so much for their own survival —or, indeed, that of the human race —as for the extermination of their enemies."²²

How abiding this tragic trait in our human species is can be well understood by considering what was shocking in World War I, and also in World War II. Reflecting on the First World War Bertrand Russell aptly observed:

"I had supposed until that time that it was quite common for parents to love their children, but the War persuaded me that it is a rare exception. I had supposed that most people liked money better than almost anything else, but I discovered that they liked destruction even better."²³

III

(a) The World at the tinderbox: Towards World War III

I have felt shockingly amused by the foolishness of some of our noted politicians, and the bureaucrats at the helm of affairs, who believe that the economic interdependence and integration of the present-day economic globalization would rule out the possibility of World War III. In 1928 Sidney B. Fay of America found the core reasons for World War I in "the alliance systems, militarism, imperialism, nationalism, and the newspaper press" to which could be added finance capitalism. I have believed that World War II too had similar morbid drivers. The technological advancement and the proficiency acquired in the tactics of destruction are fast exposing us to World War III.

We all know how in the second half of the first decade of this century, Dr. Manmohan Singh worked so aggressively for the Indo-US Nuclear Deal. Like many others in our country, I considered that it was an unfortunate pursuit as it would make more and more countries to adopt aggressive nuclear programmes. It could expose us to World War III, and also our common people to the hazards much worse than the shocking Bhopal Gas Leak Tragedy. What made that Deal so noxious was the way the Executive Government concealed for long the treaty-terms, depriving our people to assess the implications and effects of the Nuclear Deal. Even after great hue and cry against the way the Government moved in the

matter, our people could get no more than peripheral information about the Deal. We know how the Executive Government had accepted the WTO obligations by signing the Uruguay Round Final Act in 1994 without posting our Parliament and people with the knowledge of that devastating treaty which has gone a long way to subvert our Constitution.²⁴ I wrote 15 articles critical of the Nuclear Deal. These were then published at www.taxindiaonline.com; and you can read them at <http://shivakantjha.org/openfile.php?filename=articles/articles.htm>. I had good reasons to make comments like these:

- (i) “Why should the country be exposed to the evils of secret diplomacy promoted through secret treaties?.... Why should we take massive strides, through a structure of deception, towards World War III? And under the operative realities of our times it is not difficult to realize that once caught in the octopus-grip of the obligations flowing from an open ended treaty of this sort, there would be no exit left, and we would reap the consequences of our morbid actions and culpable inactions....”
- (ii) “They brag that if the Indo-US Deal is delayed or given up, the image of India as a democracy would suffer. The Indian Prime Minister says that the whole Deal is non-negotiable. These assertions are most painful. The image of India would emerge great if on popular demand the government bends, or even breaks. The assertion by the leader of the Executive that nothing is now negotiable is clearly fascist in tone. None should forget what the history of India has taught us all: in India government is optional. Thomas Balogh said in *The Irrelevance of Conventional Economics*: “The modern history of economic theory is a tale of evasions of reality.”
- (iii) “They can explore the possibilities of the alternative sources of energy. This author believes that all resources are limited, hence the best engineering to manage our scarce resources is to reduce consumption in the sectors where plenty of wealth has begotten shameless extravagance and gaudy consumerist culture.”

We have seen how many destructive events have taken place by mistake. Miscalculations have often misled us. Besides, it is not always possible to take into account all the factors, and the nature and operation of the Uncertainty Factor. Besides, human hubris stands in the way of right comprehension, and right assessment of the causative factors and events. What distressed me most was the uncritical assertiveness displayed in going in for the Nuclear Deal under the corporate pressure, under the U.S. leadership. We were brilliant in measuring the growing needs for electricity in the coming years, but showed no interest in developing a life-style which did not consume electricity so much. Besides, hardly any sincere effort was made to find out alternative sources for obtaining electricity. Besides, the missionary zeal of Dr. Manmohan Singh, the then Prime Minister, illustrated an aspect of his economic fundamentalism. It was difficult to understand how a suave and reticent scholar turned so aggressive and loquacious. The approach of our government was medieval and unscientific. Peter Watson rightly highlighted the overriding norm for decision-making in a scientific society. He said: “While it has revealed to us some of the fundamentals of nature, science has also taught us that the pragmatic, piecemeal approach to life

is by far the most successful way of adapting. We should beware grand theories.”²⁵

In this context, I wish to mention certain blemishes in the decision-making process of governments. The constraints of this Memoir do not permit me to go into details, but I would quote two short extracts which reveal the defects with remarkable candour and exquisite felicity: one from Nehru, and the other from Harold Pinter –

“Men in authority —kings, statesmen, generals, and the like – are advertised and boomed up so much by the Press and otherwise that they often appear as giants of thought and action to common people.....A famous Austrian statesman once said that the world would be astounded if it knew with what little intelligence it is ruled.”²⁶

“Political language, as used by politicians, does not venture into any of this territory since the majority of politicians, on the evidence available to us, are interested not in truth but in power and in the maintenance of that power. To maintain that power it is essential that people remain in ignorance, that they live in ignorance of the truth, even the truth of their own lives. What surrounds us therefore is a vast tapestry of lies, upon which we feed.”²⁷

To my mind, the above mentioned blemishes result from the most worrisome factor we have seen at work in the decision-making process of the persons at apex in the structure of power. This is mainly on account of our deficiency in developing “the capacity to analyze the sources of current difficulty and to devise (when possible) workable solutions for their benign resolution.”²⁸

Our illusion : that the economic globalization is a sufficient Guarantee against a major war

Mankind suffers from many tragic traits: one of which is not to realize the limitations on human reasons, and the possibilities of the factors of which even the most intelligent persons cannot get a prevision. They all forget what Shakespeare had so suggestively made his Hamlet say:

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Greed and lust, foolishness and knavery, error and chance, and the ways of destiny spin the trap from which even the mightiest of the mortals cannot escape. It is good to think of human frailties when we think of human achievements.

Besides realization of the human limitations, we must know how to stem the growing craze for armaments. We had seen how in the years leading to the World Wars, the capitalists reaped super profits from the armament industries which they promoted through bribe and deception by invoking trained lobbyists to operate at all levels. All the voice of wisdom against disarmament, even when joined by some of the finest specimens of humanity, was all in vain. The things after World War II are no different. We all know how Einstein’s heart had bled on seeing his efforts for disarmament fail, and how he sought some counselling from Freud to assuage his ruffled feelings. He had written to Freud;

“They” [the politicians and statesmen] have cheated us. They have fooled us. Hundreds of millions of people in Europe and in America, billions of men and women yet to be born, have been and are being cheated, traded and tricked out of their lives and health and well-being.”

He was assuaged by Freud in his comprehensive reply. In effect, the great psychologist told the great scientist that his sorrow was natural as that sort of depression generally awaited people who worked for the benefit of humanity. Einstein did well for humanity because of his own cultural attainments, but humanity had not developed so high as to appreciate such efforts. Hence, those who work for public weal need not get dismayed if frustration comes as the reward. Even great Vyasa had iron in his soul. Towards the end of the great *Mahabharata*, his heart bled in these words of gnawing agony:²⁹

I raise my both the hands to tell
That it is *dharma* alone which ensures salvation,
That it confers, besides, wealth and pleasure.
*But none listens to me consternating me with amazement:
Why my words are going all in vain!*

We all know the several efforts which have been made in our times to bring about nuclear disarmament. But there must be some sinister reasons restraining the mighty Five even from implementing the obligations under Art. VI of the NPT, which says:

“Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in *good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament* under strict and effective international control.” (Emphasis supplied).

Now we have reached a phase where this forgetfulness might invite our doom which we shall not be able to ward off. In the ‘Aranya Kand’ (the Canto describing events in the forest) of the *Valmikiya Ramayana*, Goddess Sita tells Sri Rama: अग्नि संयोगवद्भेतुः शस्त्र संयोगकारणम् (it conflagrates if weapons are close at hands). This applies more to the benighted and hubris-driven mortals who determine our destiny in this world of baffling complexities, well-crafted deceptions, and most insincere strategies taking us towards misery and destruction. Mayr wrote that ‘the history of life on Earth ... refutes the claim that “it is better to be smart than to be stupid,” at least judging by biological success: beetles and bacteria, for example, are vastly more successful than humans in terms of survival.’³⁰

They say that the ‘democratic’ countries do not fight; “some argue more controversially, democracies do not go to war with one another.”³¹ But the basic question is: What sort of ‘democracy’? ‘Sham democracy’ generates hatred and hostilities: it makes many turn either hostile, or feel insignificant and dispensable. Human beings, wrenched by the sense of injustice, can seldom repose faith in ‘democracy’. A ‘democracy’ requires an effective parliament, representing people on free and fair election, where all the vital decisions are made by people effectively present there through their representatives. ‘Democracy’ rejects outright this noxious post-modernist thinking that the general good can be promoted

best only by the syndicate of great investors, financiers, high net worth individuals, and corporations from the theatres of their choice; anywhere on this planet or somewhere in the cyberspace. They say: the needs of common people are well served best by the “trickle-down effect” of wealth under the ownership and management of those born with great fortune and great endowments. They even say that there should be no intrusion to know how they acquire their wealth, and how they manage that. For them, the concept of ‘equality’ is unacceptable. When I read John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, I discovered that in the craft of logical pleading, God is no match to Satan, the greatest of all logicians that the West ever produced. Some economic sophister consoles the *demos*: “a rising tide floats all boats”. No ‘democracy’ can succeed if its citizenry develops a conviction that life has no purpose, and the virtual world is the only sphere for the ‘wish fulfilment’. I would resume this thread of my thought later in this Chapter, in the context of ‘our cultural crisis’.

We see how the ensemble of the corporations, the propagandists, the lobbyists for the capitalism, and their hirelings at the seats of power, are skillfully at work. Our Constitution’s ‘socialistic mission’ has been ignored, and a neoliberal gloss has been imposed on it. This sort of ‘democracy’ can become a mere structure of deception. Noam Chomsky has highlighted the vectors and drivers seen at work. He concludes describing what ails the present-day Western democracy:³² He says :

“What remains of democracy is largely the right to choose among commodities. Business leaders have long explained the need to impose on the population a “philosophy of futility” and “lack of purpose in life,” to “concentrate human attention on the more superficial things that comprise much of fashionable consumption.”³³

(b) Institutions for international peace, and the operation of international law

The efforts to build international institutions were made mostly by the Eurocentric Christian countries. Lipson points out: “The Holy Roman Empire was the vision of Isaiah —a world united in peace.” And we know why it crumbled? It crumbled because of its plutocratic and exploitative culture where morality had decayed, and excessive luxuries had debased social values. In modern Europe, after the establishment of the Westphalian states system in 1648, a great effort was made to set up an international institution to promote peace and co-operation. It was the establishment of the Concert of Europe to ensure the operation of the European public law. Alliances, both holy and unholy, were made under its umbrella, but Europe invited World War I. Again a great institution for peace was established in the form of the League of Nations. It was an integral part of the Treaty of Versailles (1919). The League was an attempt to cultivate amongst the mighty powers of that time ‘peace mentality’. But this again was a failure, and the humanity was exposed to World War II. The reasons for the failure of the League were many, but the core reason was, to say in the words of Lipson:

”The conclusion which may be drawn from the history of the League is that *the moral progress of our age has lagged far behind its mechanical progress*,”³⁴ (italics supplied)

After World War II, the great international institution, the UNO, was set afoot with high hopes for promoting international peace and co-operation. It is yet to pass through testing times. It has numerous structural blemishes, operational faults, and ideological roadblocks. Even in this short span of career, its shortcomings are more evident than its success. It is again an irony of our times that whilst the international political institution, the UNO, is somehow surviving accumulating failures, the economic and commercial organizations, which originated in the post-World War II phase (like the World Bank, the IMF, and, later, the WTO), have grown in power and impact. They have become most powerfully intrusive into the domestic spheres. Commenting on these institutions, David C. Korten has rightly observed:

“The needs of the world’s largest corporations are now represented by a global body with legislative and judicial powers that is committed to ensuring their rights against the intrusions of democratic governments and the people to whom those governments are accountable.”³⁵

When ‘We, the People’ of India had created and adopted our Constitution, we believed that international law would help us establish global peace, co-operation, and fair play. So in Article 51 of our Constitution, we expressed our determination to promote international peace and security by taking steps including the fostering of respect for international law and treaty obligations. Unfortunately, the international realities, in this era of Economic Globalisation, have jolted our conviction in the role of international law.

Georg Schwarzenberger said that the supremacy of international law over a country’s internal law is the *amour propre*³⁶ of international lawyers’. I have said something about it in Chapter 21. These so-called ‘international lawyers’ are the corporate pleaders, ‘tax haven’ advisors, neoliberal spokesmen, and paid hirelings deployed to promote the interest of the super-rich.

When we invoke Article 51 of our Constitution, it would be imprudent for us not to notice how the World’s hegemonial power, the USA, is looking at international law. It is essential to think about this aspect of the matter when we are getting closer and closer to that power, and there are good reasons to believe that secret diplomacy and secret alliances are back again, though under deeper opaqueness. Noam Chomsky tells us about the US attitude to international law and treaties:

“The basic problem with the World Court and the world, so we learn from UN ambassador John Bolton, is that they misinterpret international law. Bolton writes that “in the rest of the world, international law and its ‘binding’ obligations are taken for granted”. But no such binding obligations can apply to the United States. Treaties are not “legal’ obligations for the United States, but at most “political commitments””

Michael Glennon considered international law just “hot air”. John Dewey aptly described politics as the “shadow cast on society by big business”. Condoleezza Rice explained the U.S. indifference to the International Court of Justice decision in *Nicaragua Case* as it went against the U.S. interests.

IV

THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

The article on 'International Relations' in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Vo. 21 p.897: the 15th ed.) concludes with the following observations:

“that the world might soon be rent by a “clash of civilizations” pitting the democracies against militant Islam and an imperial China; by the spread of “chaos” as millions of refugees from the southern half of the world invaded the wealthy lands of the north; by ecological and demographic disasters touched off by the spread of industry and disease in the developing world; or by the spread of nuclear and missile technology into the hands of terrorists.”

It is most unfortunate that a lot of foolish persons have theorized pretending to provide intellectual underpinnings to the ideas which have the inevitable effect to aggravate this “clash of civilizations” On 26 August 2005, I addressed a gathering of intellectuals, presided over by Justice D. P. Wadhwa, a former Judge of the Supreme Court of India, at the India International Centre, New Delhi on the occasion of the release of my book, *The Judicial Role in Globalised Economy*. I mentioned in my speech how hubris of the capitalism's think-tanks led Francis Fukuyama, in *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), to consider the liberal democracy of the Globalised Economy of our day as the 'endpoint of mankind's ideological evolution'. I said:

“It is said that the civilization of India, Pakistan, Iran, Malaysia, and Indonesia is medieval and decaying. Arrogance reaches its nauseating height when it is shamelessly stated that Christianity is more “evolved” than other religions and philosophies. The days have gone when Bloomfield considered *Panini* the greatest monument of human intelligence, when Frederich Schlegel marveled at Indian philosophy and Schopenhauer (1788-1860) preferred religions of India. Gone are days when Spangler and Toynbee saw great light in the East, when Aldus Huxley and Isherwood found in the *Vedant* the culmination of human thought, when T.S. Eliot and Somerset Maugham got most stimulating and illuminating thought in Indian Literature.”

The theory pertaining to the 'clash of civilizations' was developed, in the early years of 1990s, with a measure of paranoia by Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996). The neoliberal thinkers were angry with those civilizations which had austere commitments to their values which made those societies the potential challengers of the present-day consumerist society of the West. It seems that whilst they intended to use Christianity to promote their brand of capitalism (as they had done right from the heydays of the Roman Catholic Church), they feared the passionate commitment of the Hindus and the Muslims to their values, and religious thoughts capable to enable them to withstand all the strategies of the neoliberals and the global corporations. They know that the Hindus are largely introverts. The Hindus have great inner strength to remain faithful to their values, but are, when all is said, conspicuously deficient in assertive responses to challenges. The Islamic society has had

enormous inner strength of deep commitments, and also external assertiveness turning into combativeness.

My reflections have led me to conclude that the whole idea of the 'clash civilizations' is baseless, mischievous, and unfortunate. As a student of world's major civilizations, I am of the considered view that civilizations never clash: they co-exist enriching each other through interactions. Clashes are brought about only by those who use cultural values (of which one species is 'religion') for extraneous and unworthy purposes. The great Islam, in itself, is perfect, and is; capable of promoting peace and welfare of people under the aspects of justice. I have developed my position on this point in Chapter 20 in the Section dealing with 'Krishna and Muhammad'. The ideas of Jesus are as great as those of the *Qur'an*, or of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The imperialists had used Islam or Christianity for their own purposes in the changing contexts of history right from the Middle Ages.

It is extremely saddening and most unfortunate that some of us exhibit idiocy which might aggravate cleavage between, or amongst, the great civilizations of modern times. I read with shock and surprise in Chomsky's *Hegemony or Survival* (at p. 160) that some Western powers saw "Hindus and Jews (plus Christian) as forming a 'strategic alliance' against Islam and Confucianism."³⁷ It is unwise to think that way. The Hindus, the Islamic people, and Christians must live to co-exist and promote peace and justice. We must treat the story of crusade closed, and closed for ever, and wholly forgotten. Our tender modern world would remain disturbed, running the risk to turn into smithereens, unless we resist the emergence of such ideas.

To Octavio Paz, it was a surprise that Hinduism and Islam have co-existed over centuries. "Between Islam and Hinduism there is not only an opposition, but incompatibility."³⁸ But his surprise was only on account of ignorance of facts. I have dealt with the factors in Chapter 20 to show how Hinduism and Islam are the fraternal faiths. Paz wondered how the monotheism of Islam could co-exist with the polytheism of Hinduism. I wish someone would have told him that Hinduism's most fundamental idea is absolute monism of *Brahma*. Other gods are themselves the creations subject to the cyclic process in time. Shankaracharya believed in absolute monism. But such metaphysical differences easily get resolved in harmony. Paz should have considered why Christianity and Islam, the two flowers of the same tree, have carried on conflicts which seem unresolved even to this day. I pray to God that our world leaders and our intellectual heavyweights would have the wisdom to see the pros and cons before they brag such things. The French Emperor could have solved his people's problems, and saved his own head during the French Revolution. But he did not do that: and there was a deluge that washed him away. Nehru has insightfully commented on the Fall of Bastille in the French Revolution:

"It is curious how these people become even more foolish as the crisis deepens, and thus help in their destruction. There is a famous Latin saying which just fits them — *quem deus perdere vult, prius dementat*, whom God wishes to destroy, he first makes mad. There is an almost exact equivalent in Sanskrit — *vinash kale viparit buddhi*."³⁹

In the *Mahabharata*, the great Vyasa tells Arjuna: भवन्ति भवकालेषु विपद्यन्ते विपर्ययं (when bad times come, wisdom and intelligence depart).

In fact, the grammar of the *Bhagavadgita* is fully shared by Islam at the fundamentals. Rather, I believe that there is no religion in the world, no scientist anywhere, that does not share the vision of life and the creation that we get in the *shlokas* 18 and 28 of Chapter 11 of the *Bhagavadgita*. Their import has been thus stated by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: to quote —

“Thou art the Imperishable, the Supreme to be realized. Thou art the ultimate resting-place of the universe; Thou art the undying guardian of the eternal law. Thou art the Primal Person, I think.” (Chapt. XI.18)

“As the many rushing torrents of rivers race towards the ocean, so do these heroes of the world of men rush into Thy flaming mouths.” (Chapt. XI.28)

V

OUR CULTURAL CRISIS

In my view, our country is exposed to the worst cultural crisis in our history. It is usual for imperial powers to subjugate and subvert the culture of the people they want to keep under their servitude. We all know the strategies which the British rule had adopted in our country. The objectives they had pursued in India would be amply evident from the following quotes, one from Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education' (1835), and the other from Dr. Duff's address (1835). Their ideas had shaped the educational philosophy of the British India:

- (i) “English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of Government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East... We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.”
- (iii) “But the most important communication which the Hindu could receive through the medium of our language would be the knowledge of our religion... Wherever this knowledge should be received, idolatry, with all the rabble of its impure deities, its monsters of wood and stone, its false principles and corrupt practices, its delusive hopes and vain fears, its ridiculous ceremonies and degrading superstitions, its lying legends and fraudulent impositions, would fall.”

The British rulers hesitated to become grossly aggressive to destroy India's Hindu and Muslim cultures for the fear of retaliation in this country, and also fearing severe criticism by the liberals in their home country. So they slowly, and under cover, imposed the English language and the Western values on us. The Indian youth had been subjected to allurements and persuasion. This process continued for long, and created generations of brainwashed persons. Dr. Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar' has drawn a graphic account of the degradation that had been brought about in our country:

“The young people, with verve, took to alcoholic liquors; and tried showing to their fathers, uncles, and brothers that they were radically

different from them all. Those, who were even more intoxicated with that impact, started teasing and befooling their fathers and grandfathers; even went to the extent to throwing beef morsel, and cow's bones into the temples. Bewailing at this condition, Vivekananda said that the first lesson that children learn is that their fathers are fools; the second that their grand-fathers are mad; the third that their teachers are hypocrites; and then that their entire scriptures are useless." ⁴⁰

It was easier to understand what was being done to destroy, or subvert, our culture; and we were in a position to react as we could easily see our targets of wrath; and we could devise our strategies against them clearly. The enemies were well-known, and our revolutionaries were fighting against them. In our time, especially in the years after the onset of the neoliberal economy in this phase of Economic Globalisation, that clarity in perception has gone. The new capitalism has spread its tentacles by adopting the technique of deception. The new imperialism is interested in capturing a country's resources by turning the country itself into a Sponsored State. If before Independence, the British Government could have subjected us to such international obligations as our government accepted by entering into the WTO Treaty, we could have condemned and rejected that treaty by resorting to civil disobedience, even direct action. Now we feel embarrassed. The advocates of the New Economic Order assert that it was India's own government that had signed that treaty, and was closely associated with the institution on the day-to-day basis. I have referred to the WTO for the simple reason that consumerism is being massively promoted under its agenda. My research has led me to think that the corporate oligarchy wants a strong government, with democratic structure, to plan for the neoliberal economy, to work symbiotically with the Market, and to tame the common people if they ever raise after protests against things going against *their interests*.

We live in bad times. We see our young pursuing the models from the West, whilst they show studied indifference, even contempt, towards our great literature, philosophy and the way of life. It would take not more than a few decades when the young Indians would forget the *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. We are taught these days to turn into cogs in the huge machine of wealth production and management. The title of Alvin Kernan's *The Death of Literature (1990)* is sufficiently suggestive. Poetry is dead, literature is dead, and books are passing into oblivion. We learn the art of life from television. Frederich von Hayek considers freedom as the function of the market : hence one's 'character' and values are shaped by commercial mores. ⁴¹

A lot is spent on propaganda to brainwash and persuade people to accept commercial mores and consumerist values. The technique is at its best when it subjects the target groups to crypto-psychic pressure. The technique had been massively used by Hitler and Mussolini, but the MNCs of our days have brought it to the point of perfection. Tawney said, in his *Acquisitive Society*, that capitalism does not go with democracy. This is also because of the role of the compradors and the lobbyists. You can know how they operate by reading Vance Packard's trilogy: *The Hidden Persuaders*, *The Status Seekers*, *The Waste Makers*. Never did we face crisis worse than what has overtaken us now. A society of well-fed pigs would sell democracy for a piece of pizza. I see it prudent to remind my reader

of those two lines from 'Yeats' 'The Second Coming', which I had read in Class VIII. I have had good reasons never to forget:

'The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.'

They do not find anything wrong in dishonesty if that works as the best policy in the market. The following consequences have emerged which are worrisome for our civilization:

- (a) Morality has ceased to be a matter of concern in economic management. The idea of Gandhi, that the moral vision and the economic vision can never go apart, has been ignored. The importance of morality in the sphere of economic management was recognized by Fritz Schumacher. He felt that the world has enough resources to maintain all, if moral principles are followed. He held that management was "not an economic question but a moral one, which is why for him economics and religion went together, and why they were the most important disciplines".⁴²
- (b) The natural outcome of the abandonment of moral vision is that 'truthfulness' has ceased to be of importance. Wherever it is felt that falsehood can promote selfish interests, people do not have qualms of conscience in resorting to it. Falshood has become the most cherished grist to the mill of the corporate and commercial advertisements through which desires are manipulated, and the values of life reshaped.
- (c) When moral vision gets blurred, corruption of all sorts flourish gradually eroding the society's standards for evaluation of acts and ideas, and a point is reached where nothing matters as everything becomes a short thrilling sensational triviality in meaningless human life. Such a society can never remain 'democratic' in its real sense. If every affair is a function of the controlling market forces, then everything, vice or virtue, is a commodity or service that can be purchased on consideration.
- (d) The environment that has emerged is promoting individualistic pursuits to the point of extreme lunacy. This excessive concern for individual welfare has fanned unrestrained greed, and has destroyed a sense of social solidarity and interdependence. This narcissistic behaviour has altered our social mores. Sanctity of relationship is fast vanishing. Fathers have fallen, and have become hated burden for the ungrateful progenies. One's spiritual attachment with society and culture is decaying fast. The commercial culture is out to promote an indulgence in the voyeuristic fantasies. Numerous ways are adopted to promote commerce by generating more and more wants and desires including an ever growing craze for hedonistic cravings.
- (e) Such a society loses creativity of thoughts which is needed to promote peace and coexistence in collective happiness. Such a society cannot produce great creative art, nor can it scale new heights in philosophy without which our civilization can neither develop, nor can it conserve our attainments as hitherto made. When I reflect on art and literature of the post-Globalisation epoch, I am shocked by the their alarming barrenness.
- (f) It is said that we are in a great scientific age illustrating a profound change in our perspective. They call this a 'paradigm shift'. But I do not think our

cultural crisis has anything to do with the concept of 'paradigm shift' which contemplates time, to say in the words of Thomas S. Kuhn, 'when our sense of the very nature of a subject and its possibilities and limitations changes radically.'⁴³ History of times shows that there is hardly any shift in the human approaches to the world's problems. True, modern science has discovered some new possibilities and limitations, but the humans have refused to grow as ethical beings. The neoliberal culture, that is being promoted by the corporations and their patrons, is grossly greed-driven. Such a society would prefer lies to truth if that enhances profits; such a society evaluates every thing conceivable in terms of utility, better, commercial utility; such a society helps the sections of the humans who become accustomed to consider that the earth exists for their pleasures alone. Such a society becomes deficient in sensitivity towards the poor and the oppressed. Such a society is destined to perish either through human follies, or on account of Nature's retaliation or punishment, or under some divine instrument of justice.

The impact of the commercial hedonism, under the corporate pressure, is being promoted by shaping the worldview of the young generations. Many devices have been adopted: perhaps the most potent is the Television. "Television, however, is not just a new way of doing old things but a radically different way of seeing and interpreting the world. Visual images not words, simple open meanings not complex and hidden. transience not permanence, episodes not structures, theatre not truth."⁴⁴ What Bertrand Russell had written about the Hellenic society in its bad days, can be said about the society that is fast emerging in our times:

"There seems no use in thrift, when tomorrow all your savings may be dissipated; no advantage in honesty, when the man towards whom you practise it is pretty sure to swindle you; no point in steadfast adherence to a cause, when no cause is important or has a chance of stable victory; no argument in favour of truthfulness, when only supple tergiversation makes the preservation of life and fortune possible. The man, whose virtue has no source except a purely terrestrial prudence will, in such a world, become an adventurer if he has the courage, and, if not, will seek obscurity as a timid time-server."⁴⁵

In Chapter 8, I have reflected on the education we impart these days, and the values which we promote through the academic activities. I have seen over the last fifty years a radical shift in our perspective on education. This shift is best illustrated by our changing attitudes towards many disciplines which improve the human qualities rather than commercial worth of the individuals. The subjects which do not have market utility, are being systematically ignored, or devalued, despite their importance in our culture, and art of living. It is seen that there is now a craze for 'economics' which is the direct offshoot of capitalism, and works for that. I have mentioned the apprehension of John Maynard Keynes in connection with economics in Chapter 8 of this Memoir. I mentioned there how the gross commercialization helped the growth of interest in such subjects as the

MBA which make its students 'one dimensional': only in the service of Market and its 'Invisible Hand'. For them, neither political independence, nor the feeling of patriotism has any value. They are indifferent to moral judgments, and consider themselves machine to enhance profits of the big corporations. They become the best specimens of beings which Macaulay and Duff wanted to manufacture during the British period, but could not wholly succeed in doing so then.

History shows that the supremely effective strategy to subject any society to perpetual servitude is to destroy its culture. This is what happened to many civilizations in the past, and this would happen in future also. The only option is to act with firm determination to save our culture. This is what Guru Gobind Singh prescribes for us:

Deh Shiva bar mohe ehe
Subh karman te kabhu na taron

(Never desist from your duty that promotes the weal of all.)

I have told in Chapter 10 about my first posting at Patna in 1965. Soon thereafter I visited the Gurudwara Patna Saheb. Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Guru of the Sikh religion, was born at Patna. The Hindus, the Sikhs, even the Muslims, pay homage to that Guru. It was he who summarized the core principle of the *Bhagavadgita* in those two lines. I was lucky to get a Saropa from the Gurudwara with a blessing couched in those words. Only sometime back, I heard Dr. Manmohan Singh recite those lines in our Parliament. I would not measure Dr. Singh on the standard prescribed in those great words, but I was happy to find that a moment came in the history of our democratic Republic when someone thought it fit to resonate in our Parliament those immortal words. What impact these words had on the collective and the individual psyche of the listening Members of Parliament is not for me to think about. What matters most for me is that these words planted salutary seeds in the consciousness of our Parliament to sprout, grow, and flower someday for the welfare of 'We, the People' of our country.

VI

THE JUDGMENT

We have reached a crossover point where all our ideas about 'man' and our expectations from the wisdom of the *Homo sapiens* are terribly confused. We all know that all the creations are astride on the course to which the *Bhagavadgita* refers in Chapter 11 in *shloka* 28. This Memoir does not provide me scope to develop such ideas in detail. But it is interesting to note what persons, far abler than me, have said about the destiny of the *Homo sapiens*. They have tried to acquire the prevision of the judgment of Time (our *Maha Kaal*) on us. Some of their views go thus:

(i) Noam Chomsky said—

"Mayr speculated that the human form of intellectual organization may not be favored by selection. ... We are entering a period of human history that may provide an answer to the question of whether it is better to be smart

than stupid. The most hopeful prospect is that the question will *not* be answered: if it receives a definite answer, that answer can only be that humans were a kind of “biological error,” using their allotted 100,000 years to destroy themselves and, in the process, much else.

The species has surely developed the capacity to do just that, and a hypothetical extraterrestrial observer might well conclude that humans have demonstrated that capacity throughout their history, dramatically in the past few hundred years, with an assault on the environment that sustains life, on the diversity of more complex organisms, and with cold and calculated savagery, on each other as well.”⁴⁶

(ii) Claude Lévi-Strauss said:

“There is today a frightful disappearance of living species, be they plants or animals. And it’s clear that the density of human beings has become so great, if I can say so, that they have begun to poison themselves. And the world on which I am finishing my existence is no longer a world that I like.”⁴⁷

(iii) Prof. Gould said reflecting on ‘The Bush of Life’—

“In most of my writings on evolutionary biology, I emphasize the unity of humans with other organisms by debunking the usual, and ultimately harmful, assumptions about our intrinsic self-importance and domination as the most advanced creatures ever evolved by the process predictably leading in our direction. All basic evidence from history of life leads us to an opposite interpretation of *Homo sapiens* as a tiny, effectively accidental, late-arising twig on an enormously arborescent bush of life.”⁴⁸

Their insight is denied to me. I can neither gaze through crystals, nor can I see the course of future configured on my palms. But it is sobering to hear their judgments on the humans. The final verdict is awaited: whether it is great to be humans, or to be born amoeba, or cockroaches or mosquitoes!

Whatever I heard, saw, and reflected has led me to believe that it is no use reflecting on the shape of things to come. There cannot be a guide better than what Krishna tells us in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Chapter II.47): its import has been thus brought by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: to quote —

“To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to action.”

One must act with a sense of duty as comprehended through wisdom (*viveka*). If yet destruction overtakes us, there is nothing to feel distressed about. All the humans and all the stars are subject to the course which is crisply stated in the *Bhagavadgita shloka 28* referred to above. Let things take the course as Nature requires, as Destiny demands, as God wishes. This is the worldview that emanates from what Krishna said: न मे कर्माणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा (I have no lustful attachment with actions, nor do I have any desire for the fruits of actions).

The Mahabharata’s ‘Maushal Parva’ deserves to be read, and reread, by persons like Chomsky, Will Durant, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Prof. Gould. The Mahabharata War was over. The Yadavas of Dwarika had become very powerful, but had turned unrestrained pleasure seekers. Great power had turned their

head, and they became lustful. They had taken to unrighteous path. As the consequences of the deeds of the Kauravas had led them to their destruction in the Mahabharata War, the misdeeds of the Yadavas invited their inevitable doom. At the instruction of Krishna, they assembled at Pravashteertha, a holy place. Even there they breached the norms of good conduct. They began the horrendous internecine warfare, and thus, destroyed themselves. Krishna had asked his people not to commit their follies which could drive them towards destruction; but they went ahead with their misdeeds. They wrought their own destruction as do the flies by running towards a flame to embrace it. Krishna did not shed even tears at their sad fate. Balarama went to the sea-coast, and abandoned his body. Krishna moved into a deep forest, and departed from the world, sitting under the *peepal* tree.

It is interesting to find that the great war of Mahabharata was conducted at a holy place (*dharmakhetre*: the field of righteousness); the end of the Yadava dynasty too came at a holy place. The poetry that these two events express is great. It suggests that none can escape the consequences of actions. This norm of existence ensues from *Dharma* itself.

Our only duty is do what our wisdom tells us to do. We must not forget that whatever is done must be for the *kalyan* (good) of self and all others. In this God's world we must act with a resolution well-expressed by Guru Gobind Singh: "*Subh karman te kabhu na taron*" (we must not shrink from doing what is right).

VII

CONCLUSION

I would end this Chapter with two cryptic comments highlighting the 'tragic optimism' of our times, the pangs and pleasures of which I have suffered and enjoyed in course of our collective journey to the unknown:

- (i) We must live to work with hope and dedication. Prof. Gould speaks of our 'Tragic Optimism'⁴⁹. The expression is amply revealing. We have seen and suffered tragic experiences, but our commitment to 'optimism' is steadfast and unswerving. He quotes very aptly from John Playfair's *Outlines of Natural Philosophy* (1814): "About such ultimate attainments, it would be unwise to be sanguine and unphilosophical to despair".
- (ii) We must do our duty always keeping in mind what Krishna said in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Chap. II.47): 'Your right is to action alone, Not to its fruits at any time.' If even after good work done, discharging one's *kartavya karma* (duty), destruction comes, one must accept that without anguish. I recall my musings that I had once whilst planting paddy saplings in the paddy fields after uprooting them from the soil-beds wherein we had sown the seeds earlier. I had heard how the saplings had sobbed on being uprooted from the soil-beds, and, later, I saw them, rich in the golden glow, luxuriating in the paddy fields with ripe grain. True, some of the uprooted saplings died in the course, but then that is what happens. Hence our experiences of

sorrow and delight have hardly any relevance in the larger scheme of things much of which we do not even know. W.H. Auden aptly said:

If we really want to live, we'd better start at once to try;
If we don't, it doesn't matter, but we'd better start at once to die'

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- 4 Peter Watson, *A Terrible Beauty* p. 254.
- 5 Majumdar, Raychoudhari & Datta, *An Advanced History of India* p.775
- 6 Majumdar, Raychoudhari & Datta, *An Advanced History of India* p.776
- 7 See Notes & References No. 48 in Chapter 26.
- 8 Asa Briggs in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol. 29 p. 85 (15th Ed.)
- 9 Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* p. 199
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- 29 The Canto describing the departure to the heavenly abode. *The Mahabharata* Vol. VI p. 6508 [My translation.]
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- 31 Robert Jervis, *American Political Science Review* 96 (2002)
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- 33 Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness* (McGraw-Hill, 1976), p. 85. See Michael Dawson, *The Consumer Trap* (Illinois, 2003), for an extensive review of the technique of "off-job control" developed from the 1920s as a counterpart to the "on-job control" of Taylorism, designed to turn people into controlled robots in life as well as work.
- 34 E. Lipson, *Europe in the 19th & 20th Centuries* p. 342
- 35 David C. Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* p. 174; also see Chapter 21 of this *Memoir*.
- 36 'Respect for oneself; self-esteem'.
- 37 Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival* pp. 160.

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- 38 Octavo Paz, *In Light of India* quoted in Peter Watson, *A Terrible Beauty* p. 763
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- 40 Dr. Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar', *Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyaya* (1956) p.448
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- 45 Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* p. 237
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