

In today's world, unfortunately, there seems to be an alarming rise in the instances of intolerance in both private and public lives. It impacts almost everyone in varied ways as it seeks to denounce all sorts of difference, deviation, divergence in the name of order, security and homogeneity. It can create havoc for the people on the margin in any system, particularly when it is backed by the organized forces of politics, economy and society. Interestingly, at times, intolerance can well be used positively, too. When it comes to facing the challenges of social evils like poverty, illiteracy, child abuse or violence against women and acts of terrorism, we cannot but be intolerant. Thus, intolerance has become an intriguing and multifaceted trait of our social psyche. Therefore, it is imperative for us, more than ever, to study this significant aspect of our times, carefully and critically.

To facilitate this, a RUSA-sponsored seminar titled 'Interrogating Intolerance' was organized on 3 March, 2017, by the Department of Political Science of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur Math, Howrah. In this seminar, resource persons and scholars from different academic disciplines like sociology, psychology, philosophy, political science, legal and media studies deliberated upon the origin, evolution, meanings, nature, traits and types of intolerance, the various instances of its manifestation, its uses and abuses, and sought to explore the feasibilities of engaging with the potential consequences of intolerance in a more sensible way.

The present collection contains the papers presented at this seminar by experts, scholars and researchers. We hope these thought-provoking papers will help us to have a better understanding of this dominant and ubiquitous psychosocial phenomenon of our times, intolerance.

Price ₹ 200/-



Interrogating Intolerance



Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira

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Editors

Indrashis Banerjee

Sandipan Sen



**Department of Political Science
Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira**

(An Autonomous Residential College affiliated to Calcutta University)

Belur Math, Howrah - 711202, West Bengal

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Section I

Interrogating Intolerance: A Prelude

Sandipan Sen

If we go by the trends of the current incidents at the local, state, national or international levels; perhaps there is no better topic than this to discuss in a social science seminar. Neither there is a better place than this college to organize this seminar, as it tries hard to retain a relatively autonomous domain in an increasingly polarized political environ.

Intolerance is as old as the human mind itself. However, the word ‘intolerance’ originated in the late eighteenth century Europe from the Latin word ‘intolerantia’, literally meaning the mental state of impatience with annoyances. Intolerance tends to make individual as well as collective views and orientations myopic, leading into insane self-aggrandizement, trivialization of others’ view-points and alternative notions of truth and reality, and ultimately, a very reductionist approach to life. In clinical terminology, intolerance refers to exceptional physiological sensitivity to a drug or inability of the body to absorb a substance properly.

In the nineteenth century, the term was used

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mostly to imply illiberal religious attitudes. From Rammohun to Gandhi, all leading luminaries of modern India referred to intolerance mainly from this perspective. In his famous speech at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago on 11 September, 1893, Swami Vivekananda introduced himself by saying: “We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.”¹ Vivekananda got this great message of harmony from his Master Sri Ramakrishna, who based on his rigorous spiritual experiments proclaimed: “*Jato mat, tato path.*”, as many *isms*, so many ways. Sri Ramakrishna could easily identify himself with seemingly opposing beliefs and practices of different religions. It is perhaps because of his unique renunciant attitude that he was able to overcome all egotistic obstinacies and embrace multiple interpretations of truth with equal enthusiasm.

Pointing to the tragic consequences of intolerance Vivekananda said in the same lecture: “Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation and sent whole nations to despair. Had it

¹ Vivekananda, Swami, 1992, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, Vol 1, p 3

not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now.”² He fervently hoped that the bell that had tolled that morning in honour of the convention would be “the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.”³

Unfortunately, it has not been the case. In the next hundred and twenty-four years, humanity has witnessed two World Wars, Concentration Camps, Gas Chambers, the nuclear, chemical and other weapons of mass destruction, racist and xenophobic regimes, and then, the emergence of transnational terrorist organizations. On another 11 September, in 2001, some of the most prominent icons of American society were attacked by one such terrorist group, using radicalized religious beliefs as a weapon of mass killing. Although acts of terrorism were not new by then, yet the scale and techniques of these attacks were unprecedented. In the following one and half decades we have almost become accustomed to the daily dose of news and scenes of suicide bombings, lone-wolf attacks, brutal killings of abducted innocent people, and the exodus of helpless masses from the war-torn

² *Ibid*, p 4

³ *Ibid*, p 4

regions. There is also an alarming rise in incidents of state-sponsored atrocities against vulnerable sections of society in the pretext of maintaining order and providing security, resulting in a conspicuous growth of fear-psychosis across the communities. Even today's unprecedented access to the social media and other channels of communication has failed to break the psychological barriers caused by the rise in the instances of intolerance in both private and public spheres.

Intolerance does not merely imply religious dogmatism anymore. It indicates now the general unwillingness to endure any differing opinion, whether religious, social, political or otherwise. It impacts almost everyone in varied ways as it seeks to denounce all sorts of difference, deviation, divergence in the name of order, security and homogeneity. It can create havoc for the people on the margin in any system, particularly when it is backed by the organized forces of politics, economy and society. Whether in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan or France, Germany or the United States, ordinary people in their daily lives are being harassed, humiliated, intimidated, and even killed, just for being 'different' from the majority, in terms of their colour, faith, race, ethnicity, language, nationality, gender, lifestyle

or ideological affiliation.

Some may argue that the recent rise in instances of intolerance worldwide is due to the global economic recession. Others may locate its origin squarely in the hierarchically ordered 'binary project' of the Western modernity. Some others would attribute them to the deeper socio-cultural complexities of identity politics. In any case, its impact on today's politics and society is overwhelming. Interestingly, at times, intolerance can be used positively as well. When it comes to facing the challenges of social evils like domination, exploitation, poverty, illiteracy, corruption, child abuse or violence against women and acts of terrorism, we cannot but be intolerant. We may recall here Sri Ramakrishna's intolerance towards 'lust and gold' and untruthfulness, or Gandhi's intolerance of violence and untouchability. Therefore, intolerance now seems to be an intriguing and multifaceted trait of our social psyche; and accordingly, it is imperative for us, more than ever, to study this significant aspect of our times, carefully and critically.

To facilitate this, in this seminar we wanted to focus on the origin, evolution, meanings, nature, traits and types of intolerance, the various instances of its manifestation, its uses and abuses, and also to

explore the feasibilities of engaging with the potential consequences of intolerance in a more sensible way. In other words, we have tried to have a better understanding of this dominant and ubiquitous psycho-social phenomenon by raising some pertinent questions and initiating a collaborative effort to find their answers. In that sense this seminar sought to cross the boundaries of a dispassionate intellectual deliberation.

Conditioned by the very nature of the subject concerned, our approach was obviously multi-disciplinary, involving various branches of social science, like sociology, political science, philosophy, psychology, legal and media studies and so on. Bearing this in mind, we have had some of the critically acclaimed scholars in these fields of study to guide us in exploring various fascinating aspects of the theme and to ignite our inquisitive minds.

May this effort motivate us to move beyond the confines of our opinionated world and cultivate a pluralistic spirit in every sphere of life. As nature creates the rainbow on the backdrop of a dark gloomy sky, to remind us of the diversity of colours, likewise at this intolerant time, let us celebrate life in its full magnitude.

Interrogating Intolerance: Some Observations

Radharaman Chakrabarti

We cannot possibly think of a more intriguing subject for a seminar. Also we cannot certainly find a better and safer venue for the purpose if we wanted an untrammelled deliberation. Elsewhere perhaps there could be no certainty of the situation not turning unseemly. That itself testifies to the need of an ambience where no intolerance would be evinced either by the speakers or by the audience. One can lecture in praise of tolerance or in defence of intolerance; in neither case you need to call for a group of sensible participants to advance your cause. There will at the most be spoilers or cheer leaders. Obviously, this hallowed place and the variously gifted organisers make us on this side of the auditorium feel fully comfortable and go unhesitatingly ahead with the presentation of our thoughts. We have been granted a freedom which is so very precious. May I say that a considerable amount of the same freedom is also provided by our state and society but there is little realisation that this free expression of

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thought is meant for creative and constructive use and not to push up some narrow political agenda or some sectional interests in total disregard for communitarian well being. Freedom of expression presupposes differences of position, outlook and tradition. It is there not to blow up those differences but to try one's best to narrow them down as far as practicable. If maintenance of diversity is a value so also is every positive effort to bring out the underlying unity that makes a nation what it is. Cohesion need not be confused with homogenisation. Diversities flourish in quality when they seek to come closer, and not stay closeted in isolation. There is, therefore, no reason to suppose that any ideology that works for cohesion and co-mingling acts contrary to the autonomy of the distinctive entities. It is as much a political game to insist on uniformity *per se* as it is to coax the diverse groups into a false sense of autonomy as separatist autonomy. A failure to appreciate this is what plagues the present day discourses in this country on intolerance.

As a result misuse of freedom of expression (which has become a common occurrence these days) cannot be stopped or at least curbed for fear of letting loose a spate of violent protests against whoever tries to counsel patience and sensible

conduct. The intolerance debate in this country thus gets mired in a babel of unsophisticated exchanges. A bizarre civic culture seems to have seized the public consciousness so much so that to talk critically about misuse of free speech has itself become vulnerable to intolerant verbal outpour from the free wheelers. No doubt that eminently fits into the designs of those not interested in the nation's overall well being or enhanced strength. Indeed the very expression "nationalism" (once an inspirational armour of freedom fighters) has become a target of derisive frown by a section of the intelligentsia. Are they still wedded to the "imagined nation" syndrome (of Andersonian origin) or are they longing for this very real State of today (which includes both Bharat and India) to get denuded of nationalism and dissolve into a deconstructionist model of "non-national state"?

Since the present speaker is not used to such absurdity, it would be perhaps sensible to recall how Swami Vivekananda wanted us to conceptualise asymmetrical group behaviour. To that prophet who viewed nationalism as equivalent of patriotism, mere tolerance was not enough as an antidote to inter-group intolerance. Rather, there has to be a more pro-active stance founded on acceptance of and

respect for the “other.” Nearly a century later the same sensible approach was articulated by Jacques Derrida when he spoke of “*le hospitallite*” before the Kolkata Book Fair audience. That is admittedly the necessary and sufficient condition for winning the hearts of the “other”.

For us, however, the issue is not one of practising magnanimity but engaging in a rational enquiry into the phenomenon of intolerance as it has gone nearly viral in India today. Its genesis, its manifestations, its ramifications, its containment and, concomitantly also the possibility of its reversal – all demand serious attention. As a behavioural phenomenon intolerance in human species is manifest externally though it is rooted deep in the irrationalities in one’s cognitive and discretionary faculty. But it has to be situated only in a socially bound group formation – as individuals in a family or an association, as entrenched interest groups in politics or economics, as communally organised entities, or even as sporadic formations originating in a passing but charged atmosphere. In all these situations the culpability of the political class can be expected in varying measures and may not be far to seek.

Evidently it will not take us far if we simply try to oppose or condemn intolerance. A sentence

or two will be sufficient to do that and the curtain could drop down on the debate. Interestingly that is not what normally happens. The very critical positioning in the first instance creates its spiralling effects and the debate turns into an indeterminate blame game. The first thing to check in such a condition is to see if we are not being selectively tolerant, that is, not being even handed towards whoever disrupts the existing modicum of neutrality. For, intolerance is by definition a partisan feeling, a parochial fault finding, a self adulatory audacity. To be judgemental, therefore, one needs to be extremely careful. We must contest any manifestly untenable position but only after arming ourselves with decisive counter arguments. We must make sure whether the exercise is meant to rationalize or trivialize a serious issue or deliberately magnify small matters. It is imperative to see if there is an attempt to intentionally misrepresent things. If we are convinced on these points then only it becomes an ethical imperative to oppose. And not to oppose when persuasions have failed will necessarily be seen as diffidence at its worst.

To look at the other side of the coin, we should not want genuine expressions of public grievance to be silenced. To do so will be divesting ourselves of the

very democratic right to defend the essentials of one's case. For some there may have been a gentle urge, if not a temptation, to believe in glorifying silence as a noble form of protest. But realistically speaking, provocateurs regularly taking advantage of liberal dispensations of a democratic system must not be given the impression that they can go on doing evil to others with impunity. Every system has to have its defensive mechanism to fend off the habitual disruptionists and must provide ample confidence to the generally tolerant and compromising lot so that no one suffers just because she or he has been gentle and patient.

In other words, our task becomes meaningful if we do not get bogged down in a critique of intolerance in the abstract but examine intolerance that is contextualised socially. Taken in the abstract, intolerance means no more than a stubborn resistance to tolerate anything and everything that does not quite agree with one's internal genetic order. In specific social context it takes the form of refusal, *stubborn as well as subtle* (the latter especially in the case of the intellectually empowered), to consider, far less accept, anything that does not fall in line with one's own acquired attitude, ideological commitments, belief systems or cultural preferences.

Human beings become conditioned before they get stubborn about these affectations.

Underlying all these indicators there is always the supreme factor of one's material interests. On the surface it may appear to be a matter of hyper psycho-cognitive disorder but deep down there is a conflictual calculation of objective interests. And, it would be simplistic to suppose that this calculus of conflicting interests can always be reduced to the undifferentiated notion of class conflict which has flattened the originally nuanced view taken by Marxism. In being antagonistic to others humans may not be consciously driven by the collective identity denoted by their class. Class consciousness is a product of seasoned and networked exchange of people's objective experiences of being or not exploited. In ordinary day to day context what matters is the immediacy of their sensitivity to some perceived interests having come under threat and hence they necessarily react. This reaction stems from the dual characteristics of reason and passion both of which are present in every person in some proportion or other. The crux occurs when there is a surge of the irrational – not entirely of itself or by itself but prodded by the social structuration to which individuals are tied by default. It is through

the social route that individual intolerance gets aggregated and severely impacts the existing intra-social balance. That is why what starts as a flicker of impatience, a slight indiscrete comment or an unpremeditated ruckus can ignite the embers of intolerance singeing deep in the recesses of collective psyche. One or two illustrations will suffice.

First comes the phenomenon of collective memory and its manipulability. This can and does act as a major agent of recycling intolerance. Otherwise why should certain people have to rake up the unpleasant memories of the Sikh pogrom or the Babari Masjid demolition or the Godhra atrocities. Strikingly this does not happen in respect of gruesome murders of helpless women who are victims of gang rape or on a larger plane, the Mumbai serial blasts or the terrorist attack on democracy's sacred citadel, the Parliament. Even persons dabbling in colonial history seldom bother about remembering Jalianwalla Bagh massacre. And for those impulsively crying hoarse over US imperialism so often Vietnam has become a faded memory. Clearly, some design always works behind such selective manipulation of people's collective memory.

Second, another deliberate act to foment intolerance calls for attention for which responsibility

must be borne by certain sections of the intelligentsia, both on the right and the left. I am referring to attempts at rewriting history, while actually distorting, slicing and suppressing facts. Frankly speaking we are yet to have an authentic history of the freedom struggle. The real martyrs are yet to get their due while self-seeking machinations that bought freedom at the cost of Partition continues to be underplayed.

The moment a tailored product is presented as history, those who are either scissored out or are wrongly and clumsily depicted will, sooner or later, pick up their *casus belli* and commission a contrary version of history to their own satisfaction. If historians have to construct Truth rather than faithfully report it, let them also take every responsibility for any untoward consequence that might result from that attempt. Or else a sound advice will be: please do not disturb the hornet's nest. If in their view academic freedom permits them to take any great amount of liberty, that liberty has to be subject to peer group scrutiny and, if necessary, must accord the courtesy to listen to contrary constructions. Or else, academic freedom might incite intolerance and vitiate public mood on and off campus.

Third, in the contemporary context, disturbing

developments aided by media hype result in situations where it would be nearly impossible to counsel passivity or promote a neutral milieu for public opinion. Thus a pious attitude of tolerance could easily get rebuffed when reports reach of minority persecution and ethnic cleansing in a neighbouring country. Similarly the plight of internally displaced persons forced to court the privations of living in refugee camps owing to militant uprising going on in their homeland cannot long remain frozen in public memory just because the governing clique decides to look the other way. Again, when the conciliatory verdict of the apex court to resolve inter-state water dispute is followed by inaction by either of the state parties, the very constitutional climate of governance by accommodation gets vitiated. Public lawlessness, though in no way defensible, then becomes inavertible. The tendency of opposition to draw political mileage in each such case and prevarications of the government to provide any relief to the victims can be held equally responsible for fuelling public intolerance for want of a sense of direction.

Fourth, a festering sore on the body politic left by the politics of job reservation, (“Mondolisation” in common parlance) that is justified on grounds of “reverse discrimination” has created an increasingly

visible fissure in respect of public appointments and public education. Had it been purely a matter of rational sharing of scarce resources public sentiments would not have gone awry the way they have. The root cause is the indefinite perpetuation of a purely transitional relief offered in the Constitution, thereby causing a fragmented identity among public servants and giving rise to creamy layers sticking fast to this unearned benevolence across the generations. It would not be entirely wrong if a parallel were drawn between this unsatisfactory practice and the subsidised distribution of cooking gas, the latter having nearly come to a zero thanks to the persuasive proddings of the present Prime Minister. Good sense has not vanished totally from society and it only needs a proper strategizing of public policies. Or else, intolerance of the deprived though qualified may erupt sooner or later with the size of the cake diminishing every year. One is not sure how in this context accommodation of the “sons of the soil” entreaty improves the picture anyway. As pointed out earlier in this analysis, the class phenomenon here is eminently open to a reductionist construction.

To sum up, in the larger context of democratic politics in this country over the last seven decades, one can unhesitatingly point to two unmistakable

trends, namely, (a) precious little effort to promote national reconciliation where gaps and fissures have appeared and have gone on widening – a classic case of false diversification. And (b), utter disregard for consensus-based politics where the common interests of the nation must be articulated in one voice and defended in no uncertain terms. In both these trends the immaturity and vulnerability of India's democratic polity is written large. Here populism gets the better of a sensible dialogue between the political class on one hand and the common man at the other end, the one recent exception being that of a monthly TV/Radio session religiously held by the Prime Minister without much display of affected glory in his plain speaking conversation. Hopefully, leaders of other parties would do well to emulate and could perhaps do a better job of it.

Since the political class in India is not going to change their predisposition (witness the proposal to have one-third of MPs coming from the women), one may turn to the NGOs (not the tainted ones making a fortune out of foreign funds), some of whom have really been giving yeomen's service for uplift of the marginalised and capable of speaking upfront for an enlightened civil-society approach to questions of good governance. No ruling party

can tackle single handed the myriad imbalances in society that are giving rise to intolerance in some form or the other. A mere cadre-based approach could easily back fire while there is not much of hope from a play-safe bureaucracy either. For making any meaningful beginning even now when it is already too late (seven decades of silting and salination of “democratic” politics create a big salvage problem), the civil society stands in need of reinvigoration and being given a sense of direction by a leadership that swears by *national interest*. The last two words in italics have been used in full awareness of the present day aberrations that cultivate a disparaging attitude, especially among the young generations, towards the very mention of nationalism. So, the old question comes back: are today’s Indians going to set a unique precedent of working out the model of a State that is no longer seen as a nation in the sense the other nearly two hundred members of the international comity are still quite at ease to be?

Uses of Intolerance

Prasanta Ray

Writing about Interrogating Intolerance, one may as well begin by pointing out the quintessential connection between interrogating and intolerance. This is because intolerance provokes interrogation which may be initially incipient; and, interrogation signifies intolerance whatever is the issue. About the forms [of interrogation] and the issues [provoking intolerance], the poser here today is silent, thereby indulging in creative ambiguity and inviting the expositors to fill in with historical and contemporary narratives of interrogation of intolerance. Doing that [i.e., filling in with historical and contemporary narratives of interrogation of intolerance] is one level at which an exposition may take place [which requires command of data at least of the iconic incidence of interrogation of intolerance]. Another level is just being argumentative hoping that a listener would connect with her/his experience. This presentation chooses the second way.

The title of this presentation might provoke some readers to think that this celebrates intolerance. Uses might suggest to some people a vindication of
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intolerance. That it does, but it also conceives of a necessary threshold of tolerance of intolerance. The threshold however varies along the coordinates of time, space, contingency and culture. We need to remember that both Thomas Hobbes, the English political philosopher and our Gandhi conceded that there could be violence under certain circumstances could be a desperate but necessary response to some grave contingencies.

The central issue is why despite so much of cost of intolerance, so much legal restraints on expressions of intolerance and so much of espousal of universal brotherhood, intolerance both as an attitude and as an intervention is undying. Inquisition and burning at the stakes, wars and violent conflicts, exterminations and excommunications, forced exiles and forced migrations, apartheid and class structuring of urban space, banter songs and limericks, stigma words and cartoons – are all expressions intolerance. That takes us to its uses in settings of inequality and a tactics to force a re-distribution of socially valued resources like money, power and status. Fundamentally, intolerance is not due to psycho-pathology of an individual or a group; it originates in structures of inequalities pointing to socio-genesis of intolerance. It has uses for the victims of discrimination as they

use it establish its claim and for the beneficiaries of a prevailing discriminatory order as they try to prevent a re-distribution which will undermine their life-chances. We need to remember that intolerance is a part of everyday life process as its interrogations, muted or violent. Its micro sites are homes and neighbourhood. Intolerance as well as its interrogation finds expression in momentous events, too. This is usually a result of historical injustice to a community. If we think deeply, we can perceive organic connections between the everyday experience of intolerance and interrogation, as well as its momentous expressions.

The answer to the question why it is difficult to eradicate both is the fact that both interrogation and intolerance are partisan acts, felt necessary by victims of discrimination. These are built around social dividers along ascriptive identities [race, religion, language, ethnicity, nationality] and acquired identities [class, party]. The incremental collective feeling of discrimination in access to socially valued life chances creates the seedbed of intolerance and resulting acts of interrogation. Some major provocation, some opportunities, some leadership of an aggrieved community, we have an unseemly outburst of anger. This is the moment when such

a victimized community and some empathetic bystanders take the intolerant mode. They think that intolerance of privilege and prerogative is rightful indulgence by the victims of structural inequalities. So, moral reform of the intolerant by itself will not resolve the problem of expressions of intolerance. This requires establishment of rules of fairness.

Reviewing Secularism and Tolerance in Indian Polity: A Political Sociological Approach

Surajit C Mukhopadhyay

We write and speak in times of great intolerance, outright hostility and violence in India and the world. There is a madness that is gripping state and society, a heartless and malevolent spirit that threatens to usurp and destroy the very idea of living together. Some say that this is the era of alternate truths and that a new nationalism is being forged on the debris of the old. The New Right is ascendant and seems powerful to break any resistance that may be offered. Democracies are under severe threat and concepts of justice, equality and welfare seem to lie in tatters.

The ambience of intolerance is now a global phenomenon that seems to have the potential to usurp age old democratic practices and conventions in Europe, the USA and parts of the Asia-Pacific region. In that sense the emergence of a politics of intolerance in India is in sync with this global political phenomenon. Casteism in India, racism in the other parts of the globe and a general atmosphere

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of xenophobia seem to be back in political currency. Concurrently the organised Left and parties espousing concern for the poor, marginalised and disadvantaged sections of the society are on the back foot as it were. In India the rise of the Right under the stewardship of the ultra-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party is a particularly interesting coalition of upper caste and upper class combination that is now increasingly capturing the political imagination of the 'majority' community. This political and social climate one can argue is the rightful culmination of the last twenty-five years of 'economic liberalisation' and the consequent tryst with market loveliness. This has led to the rise of another type of intolerance, an intolerance that is fuelled by class consciousness and the coming home to roost of the idea of the 'survival of the fittest'.

For social science scholars studying the politics of India this is an old phenomenon with certain critical but new characteristics. It is old because a part of this intolerance has its provenance in our past political history – the history of India's independence, partition and the consequent emergence of India and Pakistan as two nations from the erstwhile British India. The Indian polity has all along carried with it the undercurrent of intolerance given the genocide that accompanied this partition. The partition soured

and broke asunder centuries old societal mosaic that emerged in India over the ages. The modern nations that emerged had as its underpinning a whole new set of politico-social criterion that were borrowed from the West and the discourses of modern polity. The idea that a nation-state is the natural outcome of a consolidation of a single language, religion and culture was in some manner or the other imported into the fabric of India's body politic.

This import of political modernity through the colonial political lenses glossed over the tapestry that India had woven through the close living of different religious denominations and the intermingling of different cultures and languages. Identity was forged in a different manner altogether and in keeping with the grammar of politics that had emerged in Europe post-Renaissance. And yet, it must be noted that to complicate the matter it cannot be claimed that the incorporation of this new way of looking at identity erased the traditional markers of caste and sectarian thinking. In fact what emerged post independence was a state that was in search of a nation. The new India that emerged in 1947 was marked by two competing and contradictory strands of socio-political markers with reference to tolerance and the politics of toleration. One was democratic spirit and its explicit provisions in the newly written

Constitution that supported tolerance and inclusion and the other was the emergence and the slow and steady consolidation of religion based identity politics in South Asia. The founding fathers of the Constitution knew that if the latter came to take centre-stage then the dream of independence from want and misery (apart from the political freedom) would be shattered. The debates in the Constituent Assembly bears testimony to the political wisdom that envisaged, despite the bloody partition and communal riots, a country that would celebrate its diversity and rich plural codes of living. However, the danger of a narrow chauvinist religiously propelled nationalism was always present as an alternative discourse to the Constitutional position on the matter. Seventy years on, the fear is all but true. It seems that the time is propitious for the emergence of a narrow, sectarian, violence filled intolerant India. Under the circumstances, a thorough and critical analysis of secularism, nationalism and the socio-economic condition leading up to this political position would have to be undertaken. This article is written not as a mere scholarly ‘unbiased’ exercise on this critical subject but as a ‘partisan’ on the side of secularism and ‘tolerance’.

Before we go further it would be good to pause and ask a simple and fundamental question – what is

tolerance? The immediate and obvious answer would be ‘the ability or willingness to tolerate opinions or behaviour that is not of my own liking’. To tolerate therefore would be to ‘not prohibit the existence or practice of something or some idea without interference’. It is in this sense that tolerance as a word is inextricably linked with the idea of democracy and freedom. Democracy is the political template upon which the discourse of tolerance is built. If there is no democracy then there is no need for tolerance for the simple reason that polities that are non-democratic need not provide the formally sanctioned space in which views, opinions and practices different from the ‘mainstream’ are accepted as valid.

But tolerance has another sense hidden amongst the layers of meaning that everyday usage has created. If we follow the etymological trail of the word we see that the word emerges in the 15th century from the Latin ‘tolerantia’ and in old French (tolerans) as meaning to bear or endure or to have fortitude. It is much later, around circa 1765, that tolerance came to signify the individual who is free from bigotry or severity in judging others’. In other words the march of democracy and the shift in the meaning of tolerance are co-terminal as also the emergence of the individual as an agent. However, in both senses of the word, the aspect that is least talked about is the

elasticity inherent in the meaning of the word itself. When one 'tolerates' a view point, a person or an ideology, one is doing so not in perpetuity. Tolerance comes with the sense that there is a limit that is salient and that the limit is a constraining factor. 'I tolerate you' is also to say that I bear with your presence and that you are being accepted so long as I wish your presence as acceptable. In other words if we pay close attention to the nuances of toleration then we can justifiably conclude that the one who is at the receiving end of 'toleration' is subjected to the benevolence of the one who is 'tolerating'. If this benevolence for any reason of contingency becomes un-available then the receiver is bereft of its support and may be subjected to intolerance.

It is also clear from this reading of tolerance that this is not valid in terms of the law and is entirely non-justiciable. One cannot go to court to argue that 'x' is no longer tolerant of 'y' and that therefore the court may please pass a judgement asking for the return of tolerance between the two actors. Clearly then the idea of tolerance is dependent on the good wishes of the agent, the spatio-temporal ambience and the belief that tolerance as a social value has great moral appeal. All these are highly precarious and fragile ways in which tolerance as a discourse is constructed. The moot point is this – can such a vulnerable idea

and discourse bind the society together? Or is it that we need a stronger grounding of tolerance, not merely as a societal construct dependent on the good wishes of a moral society but as a law or a right that is enshrined in the Constitution? I would argue that the latter needs be the case. The idea of tolerance must be buttressed by a far stronger will that shapes the state and society and translates the voluntariness inherent in tolerance as an idea to one that is solid and enshrined as a principle of living an everyday life. It is here that we turn to the Constitution of India, brief mention of which we had made in passing above. The idea behind reading the intolerance debate into the Indian Constitution flows from the manner in which we perceive the opposite of tolerance, namely intolerance.

The essence of intolerance is to be found specifically in the suppression of free expression of opinions. These opinions may be political, economic or social but they are critical to the social discourse in which the citizen finds herself. The sure sign of intolerance is to be found when people are afraid of expressing their views on these matters and when discussion in the public space becomes a taboo.

But this fear is detrimental to democracy as we have mentioned in passing above. A democracy must institutionally guarantee, through political

charters or constitutions the availability of a public space for discourses which may be critical of the ruling establishment and its ruling ideas. Democracy then becomes more than just one vote one person and instead gestures to and signifies a political milieu in which intolerance is banished and tolerance celebrated. To my mind the intolerance/tolerance question is not simply that of the person. It is inextricably linked to a sense of what can be called the wider societal good, where the idea of consensus and agreement is preceded by a healthy and open debate and discussion involving stakeholders. In this manner tolerance becomes the first step in crystallising the very basis of democracy. It is a necessary step in the consolidation of rights but not a sufficient condition for the creation of the space in which a dialogue would be possible.

The Indian Constitution is a document forged in the smithy of a great struggle for independence and freedom. Further, the partition of India on the basis of the two nation theory made the makers of the Constitution sensitive to the creation, institutionalisation and execution of tolerance as a state policy. It was in this backdrop that the idea of secularism as a state policy developed and became institutionalised. The Preamble enshrines the idea of secularism and is part of what is known in

Constitutional Law as part of the basic structure of the Constitution. The judges of the Supreme Court of India are worth quoting in detail on this matter.

Justice P. Jaganmohan Reddy stated that “there is nothing vague or unascertainable in the Preamble.... The elements of the basic structure are indicated in the Preamble and translated in the various provisions of the Constitution. The edifice of our Constitution is built upon and stands on several props, remove any one of them, the Constitution collapses.”

Justice Reddy then listed out what he considered as part of the basic structure (emphasis added) of the Constitution. They were:

- Sovereign Democratic Republic
- Justice – social, economic and political
- Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship
- Equality of status and opportunity.

“Each one of these is important and collectively they assure a way of life to the people of India which the Constitution guarantees. To withdraw any one of the above elements the structure will not survive and it will not be the same Constitution...”¹

So what exactly constitutes the basic structure of our Constitution? Justice Shelat of the Supreme Court of India listed the features that are constitutive of the basic structure.

- The supremacy of the Constitution
- Republican and democratic form of government and sovereignty of the country
- Secular and federal character of the Constitution
- Demarcation of power between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary
- The dignity of the individual secured by various freedoms and basic rights in Part III and the mandate to build a welfare state contained in Part IV
- The unity and integrity of the nation.²

The list above contains the very essence of tolerance and admits it as an inviolable right of the citizen of India. If we read the ‘secular and federal character of the Constitution’ along with the proviso of ‘the dignity of the individual secured by various freedoms and basic rights...’ as constitutive of the core Constitutional position on the matter, then we may rightfully argue that the judges of the Supreme Court of India were indeed aware of the transient nature of ‘tolerance’ and were trying to institutionalise it by providing it the solidity of a right.

We have to appreciate that the idea of living happily and well is not merely an economic act. Wealth by itself does not guarantee a socio-political system where the individual flourishes and becomes an agent or a subject. In the context of India, this is clearly evident from the manner in which the

caste system has influenced and shaped the milieu in which the growth of the individual to his or her potential is stunted by the intricacies of stratification. BR Ambedkar describes in his book *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) the manner in which the caste system discriminated against the so called lower castes.

Under the rule of the Peshwas in the Maratha country, the Untouchable was not allowed to use the public streets if a Hindu was coming along, lest he should pollute the Hindu by his shadow. The Untouchable was required to have a black thread either on his wrist or around his neck, as a sign or a mark to prevent the Hindus from getting themselves polluted by his touch by mistake.

In Poona, the capital of the Peshwa, the Untouchable was required to carry, strung from his waist, a broom to sweep away from behind himself the dust he trod on, lest a Hindu walking on the same dust should be polluted. In Poona the Untouchable was required to carry an earthen pot hung around his neck wherever he went – for holding his spit, lest his spit falling on the earth should pollute a Hindu who might unknowingly happen to tread on it.³

These as we know are typical of the hostility that caste generates. It confines a large number of people into spaces that are ‘meant for them’⁴, a sequestering of people that is symptomatic of the intolerance that

the hierarchy creates. Yet, one can discern from the passages quoted above a peculiar and perverted sense of toleration in existence. As long as the 'untouchable' adheres to and conforms to the caste rules scripted by the upper castes, the 'untouchable' is 'tolerated'. Intolerance in this case takes place only when the boundaries, real and ritualistic, are breached. What if the Dalit, the political untouchable of modern India, were to claim from history all that was denied to them as a caste? How would the call for equality before the upper castes by the Dalit be taken? The consequences of the challenge of the 'untouchable' to the deeply entrenched ideas and practices of caste in India have been ghastly. We are witness to horrifying episodes of gross violation of human dignity, loss of life and limb and atrocities on women and children in the name of caste hostility, mention of which would run into thousands of pages. These instances prove the point that we are trying to argue here – tolerance has an inbuilt limit that is built into it. It is itself a fragile concept because it rests on the assumption that the subject's agency would be always on the side of a 'moral political' plane that would mitigate and help resolve the problems that agitate the socio-political milieu. However this idea of toleration has failed the 'untouchable' or the Dalit for behind this idea of a tolerant culture lies, and not buried too

deep as well, a vicious violent prone system that is well established. The very idea of the caste system is an example of the failure of a moral politics for at the end of the day the system that produces such extremities of hate and hurt is maintained by several strategies of violence.

Ambedkar himself took on this idea of toleration and the propagation of the system of inequalities and tried to provide an answer to this vexed question. In his *Annihilation of Caste* he states:

Why have the mass of people *tolerated*⁵ the social evils to which they have been subjected? There have been social revolutions in other countries of the world. Why have there not been social revolutions in India, is a question that has incessantly troubled me. There is only one answer which I can give, and it is that the lower classes of Hindus⁶ have been completely disabled for direct action on account of this wretched caste system. They could not bear arms and without arms they could not rebel. They were all ploughmen – or rather condemned to be ploughmen – and they never were allowed to convert their ploughshares into swords. They had no bayonets, and therefore everyone who chose, could and did sit upon them. On account of the caste system they could receive no education. They could not think out or know the way to their salvation. They were

condemned to be lowly; and not knowing the way of escape, and not having the means of escape, they became reconciled to eternal servitude⁷, which they accepted as their inescapable fate.

The toleration of the caste system can therefore be looked at from two viewpoints – one that is of the upper caste and then that of the ‘untouchable’. The upper caste view point with reference to toleration is one which is closely linked to the appropriation of labour. So long as the ‘ploughman’ worked the field and provided labour to create wealth for the landed and as long as this labour comes gratis or at depressed wage rates, the rituals of castes allow for toleration to be shown. Toleration from the upper caste’s point of view becomes a matter of allowing such people to exist as long as they are not demanding equality of status, decent wages and are non-rebellious. In other words so long as the ‘untouchable’ is not aspiring to access the same resources that are accessed by the upper castes and so long as the inequalities hold, ‘tolerance’ can be shown. From the point of view of the ‘untouchable’ this tolerance that Ambedkar is drawing our attention to, is a matter of non-choice. It is a situation where the coercion of the system (and in most cases backed by the state and its powerful agents) and the palpable latent violence within, forces the ‘untouchable’ to be ‘tolerant’ to the powers

that be. The first is the tolerance of those who are powerful and the latter is the toleration of the poor and the marginal. There is a sea of difference in the two, though both can by a cruel turn of phrase be seen to be 'tolerating'. The tolerance discourse by the powerful is different in another sense. If the powerful withdraw their tolerance then the impact of that withdrawal is likely to wreak havoc on the marginal. This is exactly why the intolerance of the majority is far more dangerous for it can endanger those who do not have demographic strength. On the other hand the weak cannot afford to be intolerant of the wishes of the majority, simply because their survival is at stake. Ambedkar is gesturing to this difference in diagnosing the ills that the 'untouchable' has to suffer.

It is in order to offset this inherent play of power within the discursive field of tolerance that we need to move on to a state of secularism. For secularism enjoins us to create an institutionalised space in which 'tolerance' is not dependent on the whims and fancies of any one group or community. In a plural society secularism for all its fallibilities is, I would argue, the only manner of engagement with multiple codes of living in a shared space. The idea has several strands and has generated a rich literature on the subject that is diverse. In the context of India,

secularism must be seen as a conscious effort to banish the ill will that intolerance creates. It is in effect a socio-political construct and arguably part of 'civitas' and therefore not something that is 'natural'. This mechanism of secularism flows from the idea of public good and addresses concerns of tolerance and intolerance within a framework that encourages reasoned debates and discussions.

Secularism or secularisation more accurately is intricately linked to the separation of the world into two conceptually different spaces. Secularism essentially carved out a space from the theological and religious domains of living. It placed notions of morality in the domain of civic life and the public realm and provided an alternative to looking at good life anchoring reason as the lynchpin on which people would be judged. The manner in which reason was privileged by Enlightenment was to reallocate the spaces that religion and non-religion occupied. The gradual shrinkage of religion as the fulcrum of all that a society values and shifting religion to the domain of 'faith as private' is the process of secularisation. This implied a reorganising of the principles of ordinary living and the very meaning of being human and civilised. For one, the principles of secularism despite the multiplicity of meanings ascribed to it ensured that public strife witnessed

between Church and State or between religions that historically debilitated much of social life had a buffer where the two could be kept within bounds of civility.

It is well nigh impossible then, logically speaking, to have a long term idea of toleration without the active support of the state. Institutionalising tolerance into the principle of secularism is the work of the state. Yet, the impulse for such a move must also emanate from civil society. Civil society must act as a reservoir of ideas and activism in order to bring about change. Changes, one can argue can be brought about in two ways. One is through the world of ideas and intellectual tradition and the other by taking actions in face of great social and moral crises. Our debates and discussions on secularism within the domain of civil society has for far too long delved and dwelled in the realm of the former, while the actual political impulse and motor force has been a series of contingencies – the partition being the most glaring instance. Every tragedy involving sectarian strife in the sub-continent and the threat to ‘tolerance’ has created the space in which the practice of ‘tolerance’ can be furthered. Indeed it may be even argued that the despite the provenance of secularism being ‘modernity’ and notwithstanding the post-colonial argument of this modernity being an imported

concept, the rise of a politics of secularism springs from practice itself. In other words the 'lexis' is here an outcome of 'praxis' and the 'intolerance' that we witness today is direct outcome of the decline of this synergy. Intolerance in India today is an effort to deny both in practice and in theory the requirement of this synergy that has been generated over decades nay centuries.⁸

But the question one may raise here is as to why this space of toleration, institutionalised as 'secularism' can be so easily assaulted. One theory could be that the concept (secularism) sits thinly on the fundamentals of a caste ridden, inherently violent and volatile society. It may be even extended to show that this thin layer of an imported Western concept being challenged by more in-grained and differently shaped discourses is a phenomenon that is applicable to other nations of the South. Large swathes of Africa exemplify this struggle between a 'modern' and formal structure of government that has many commonalities with Western liberal edifices but are underpinned by tribal customs and rituals whose grammar and syntax of politics and society are cut from a different cloth. We may recall here the wonderment and helplessness of Okonkwo, a member of the Ibo tribe of Nigeria and a customary chief, as he battles the arrival of British colonialism.⁹

The wonderment was however a mutual affair. The white colonial officials were equally struck by the difference in societal mores and norms that the locals displayed. However the advantage that the colonial official had was of political power. And political power easily translated into the power of writing the history of a people who were pre-literate. Thus, through official anthropology and ethnology, this clash of foreign-ness could be easily written down as the ‘intolerance’ of the ‘primitive’ to matters of modernity. In Achebe’s book, when the white official does not fully comprehend the customary ritual of death and funerary rights of Okonkwo’s tribe, he promises to write a book based on his experiences in the Niger delta. The title would be, determines the official “after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*”.¹⁰

The point is this: much of our intolerance and our antipathy to ‘others’ springs from our education and training, where such intolerance and incomprehension of the people different in culture and history are written down as the gospel truth. The written word is obviously more powerful than the oral tradition and once prescribed as textual reading becomes sacrosanct and determining. We therefore unknowingly imbibe through pedagogy and training ‘intolerance’ and see nothing wrong

in following such a path. This 'normalisation' of hatred and intolerance, ignorance and arrogance of the powerful calls for a separate discussion. Suffice it say that what comes to most of us daily as 'normal' knowledge becomes lexical with the result that most instances of disharmony and inherent bias against a community, ethnic or a class is seen as part of one's social repertoire that allows her to negotiate the world on an everyday basis. Thus intolerance becomes hidden and even rational for the subject as it reproduces at the level of ideas and becomes part of one's cultural values. At the same time this embedded discourse of intolerance disguised as 'normal' prohibits a critical look at biases.

This normalisation of intolerance as rational creates a hierarchical notion of culture. The common refrain is that (for example) we are 'better' because we do not eat beef or pork or we are better as we 'dress modestly', while the other does not. This evaluative cultural discourse lends itself to a hegemonic dominant cultural point of view thereby creating a normative benchmark that rests its case on the denial of plurality. Denial of the plural leads to the denial of equal treatment to the perceived 'other'. This then lends itself to gross injustices and calls for a moral politics that rises above such narrow and sectarian world views. The question here that is

pertinent is this: Can we expect in this era of neo-liberalism a society that would be just and whose referents morally sound?

A short answer to this is in the negative. We live in an age where the idea of plural living as co-equals is being daily challenged by another dangerous and insidious hierarchy, namely the hierarchy that is created by an economy and supportive politics where, to quote a famous pop Western, the ‘winner takes it all.’ Neo-liberalism with its emphasis on market loveliness creates a space that exhorts us to be non-reflexive and satiated by the here and now. It reproduces alienation even as it emphasises high consumption, ostentatious living, asset and resource maximisation. The discourses that it engenders tears asunder all that is social and co-operative and instils into each and every one a narrow sense of the self, a self that perforce must pretend to be at the very centre of the universe. This space that is created for the self is that of a ‘cocoon’, where *consumption qua consumption* is the order of the day. Alanis Obomsawin, an Abenaki from the Odank reserve (Canadian First Nation) aptly summed up this cocoon like space where the idea of consumption is king. “Canada”, he said, “the most affluent of countries, operates on a depletion economy which leaves destruction in its wake. Your people are

driven by a terrible sense of deficiency. When the last tree is cut, the last fish is caught, and the last river is polluted; when to breathe the air is sickening, you will realise, too late, that wealth is not in bank accounts and that you can't eat money.”¹¹

Yet we are painfully aware that the seductive power of capitalism that creates this aura around wealth and a lifestyle of plenty would win in its battle against the sage advice of Alanis Obomsawin and his ilk. Acquisitions mark the arrival of the man in the capitalist world, a kind of rites of passage sociologically speaking and anything less than possession of these goods must represent the failure of the person.¹² This creates an intolerance of 'failure', strictly gauged by economic parameters of wealth accumulation and consumption leading to polarisation of class positions. How can one expect in this climate of severe inequalities and self aggrandisement a modicum of tolerance? I would therefore like to submit that without a change in the values that we have come to profess as sacrosanct and as normal, it is well nigh impossible to move away from the culture of intolerance that has come to bind us well and truly. A system that is built on inequality, be that of caste or class, is built on the idea of intolerance.

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- ¹ AIR-1973-SC-1462, para 1171
- ² AIR-1973-SC-1461, para 599
- ³ Ambedkar, p 213
- ⁴ This has been exemplified in apartheid South Africa. The ‘blacks’ were sought to be confined in spaces ‘meant for them’ and in continuation of this degrading policy, Bantu homelands were created. Thus the intolerable presence of the majority community in the eyes of the white supremacist minority was managed by this racist governance mechanism.
- ⁵ Emphasis added, see para 17.5 of AoC
- ⁶ Highlighted words read in *Annihilation of Caste* (AoC) 1936 as “similar” (for social), “occurred to” (troubled), “have been able to” (can), and “masses” (lower classes)

respectively.

7 In AoC 1936, this sentence ends with “the fate of eternal servitude”

8 This is apparent from the manner in which all syncretic and harmonising discourses have been severely attacked in the recent past of India’s political history.

9 The story of Okonkwo is immortalised in Chinua Achebe’s celebrated novel, *Things Fall Apart*.

10 Achebe, p 183

11 Accessed from <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2011/10.20/last-tree-cut/>

12 I have elsewhere analysed this advent of neo-liberalism from an eco-sociological point of view. See Mukhopadhyay (2017)

Tolerance and Intolerance: The Left Legacy

Sobhanlal Datta Gupta

I

It is an irony of history that, while the Left has always been critical of totalitarian and conservative ideologies for their avowed intolerance towards other ideologies, the Left's own legacy on the question of tolerance/intolerance is not also quite praiseworthy. In fact, ontologically speaking, ideologies per se are intolerant and thereby exclusionary, since all ideologies are self-justificatory on absolute terms. The question, then, is not of tolerance vs intolerance in regard to ideologies. Rather the more pertinent question is: how is this intolerance manifest? On what terms and to what extent intolerance expresses itself? Totalitarian ideologies like fascism follow the annihilatory strategy of physical liquidation of its opponents, while non-totalitarian ideologies like liberalism express their intolerance towards its rivals, i.e. communism, on the level of verbal duel in the political arena. While fascism does not allow space to any rival ideology, liberalism allows that space,

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notwithstanding its intolerance of other illiberal ideologies.

Keeping this background in mind, let us now consider the Left legacy. The Left tradition, as we see today, originated in Europe in 1875 with the formation of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the subsequent formation of the Second International (1889-1914). Eventually, under the impact of the Russian Revolution and the formation of the Third International in 1919, the Left got divided in two rather opposed streams. One stream, represented by Bernstein, Kautsky and their followers subscribed to the official position of the SPD, while the more militant wing went over to Bolshevism, although both espoused Marxism to be their ideology. But intolerance surfaced soon, as the Menshevik and the Bolsheviks, following the approach of the Russian Revolution, became aggressively intolerant towards each other. In Germany, on the eve of the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, the SPD and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) were so bitterly intolerant towards each other that they could never unite and stop Hitler's coming to power, which, ironically, led to the fierce persecution of both the SPD and the KPD.

There is, however, a general understanding

shared by the liberals that the track record of the communist parties shows that, as distinct from the Social Democrats, intolerance to the extent of physical extermination of the opponents of communists in the name of revolution and socialism has been an endemic feature of communist practice. While this question needs careful scrutiny, it requires to be mentioned that it was the German Social Democratic regime which was in power when the German Revolution that took place in 1919 was slaughtered in blood, its two legendary martyrs being Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, who had founded the KPD a month ago.

II

The legacy of the Marxist Left on the question of tolerance/intolerance needs to be considered on two levels. On one level the practice of mainstream Marxism has shown that after the Russian Revolution when the Bolsheviks assumed power in circumstances that were extremely complex and difficult, intolerance towards the opponents of the Bolsheviks, engineered by the police, army and the Party, was, indeed, the feature of the new regime. This was particularly evident in the period of War Communism when post-revolutionary Russia was

engaged in a bitter war against the white guards and the interventionists propped up by the West, the latter's declared objective being the destruction of the young Soviet state, since it was impossible for the liberal West to tolerate the emergence of this new order, which constituted a mortal threat to capitalism. So the question that arises in this context is: is it that intolerance of the West towards revolutionary Russia bred a kind of counter intolerance of the Bolsheviks towards its opponents who were critical of the Bolshevik seizure of power or is it that intolerance was immanent in Bolshevism itself?

It needs to be kept in mind that Bolshevism emerged in pre-revolutionary Russia in conditions of backwardness and in a country which lacked the tradition of pluralist democracy. Consequently, the Bolshevik Party, which was reflective of Lenin's model of an ultra-centralized party working underground in conditions of terror and repression that characterized Tsarist Russia, was historically inclined towards cultivation of intolerance. But within the Party Lenin always encouraged free and frank inner-party debates on all issue and, consequently, even in underground conditions, inner-party democracy was there. The tirade against the opponents of Bolshevism was launched in post-

revolutionary Russia in the wake of the assault of the West against the new Soviet regime. It is necessary to point out in this context that although the Bolshevik Party became the model of communist parties across the world, in 1922 in the Fourth Congress of the Communist International Lenin had given the warning that it would be wrong to universalize the Bolshevik model, since, while it was appropriate in Russian conditions, it was not right thinking that this model would work in countries which operated in altogether different conditions.

On another level the issue of intolerance assumed an altogether new meaning after Lenin's death in 1924, when Stalinism became the order of the day. The crucial difference between the Lenin era and the Stalin era was that in Lenin's Russia intolerance was directed primarily against the ideological opponents of the Bolsheviks, while in the Stalin era it is the members of the Bolshevik Party who became the primary targets of persecution and, most, importantly, targets of physical liquidation. Intolerance thus reached a new height as it became associated with the annihilatory strategy of extermination of the "enemies of the people". From Trotsky to Bukharin – the liquidation of the old guard of the Bolshevik Party was justified on the

ground that within the Bolshevik party conspirators were active for dismantling the soviet regime and so they had to be executed. While the infamous Moscow trial bears testimony to it, it needs to be kept in mind that this level of intolerance stemmed from an individual's naked lust for power, which by its own logic cannot sustain itself by tolerating the presence of the 'other'. Consequently, as the Bolshevik Party by the beginning of the 1940s was bereft of its finest resources, mediocrity and sycophancy gripped the Party, reducing it to a caricature in the years that followed.

III

This, however, is one side of the story in the sense that, as distinct from the mainstream tradition, it is necessary to locate another tradition which very much belongs to the Left legacy but which has remained always marginalized vis-à-vis the mainstream tradition. This refers to the voice of the so-called dissident Marxists who were not inclined towards acceptance of the Marxist practice in this spirit of intolerance. What they called for was democratization of the practice of Marxism, recognition of multiple voices within the Marxist discourse and dialogue among them. This was a trajectory which was radically different from

the Stalinist discourse of extreme intolerance. Thus, in *The Russian Revolution* (1918) Rosa Luxemburg, while championing the cause of the Bolshevik revolution, warned against the undemocratic practices indulged in by Lenin and Trotsky in the aftermath of October, when they disbanded the Constituent Assembly and prepared the ground for silencing the voice of the opposition. Gramsci, when he was not yet arrested, did not endorse Stalin's treatment of Trotsky within the Bolshevik Party, the way he was cornered and isolated in the Party. The 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (1956) was the first salvo officially fired from within the Russian party against Stalinism, although it was not an exercise in pluralism at all. But this was the first official critique of Stalinist intolerance and intransigence. In early 1970s the advent of Eurocommunism was a major intervention which championed the cause of tolerance, pluralism and democracy. The advocates of this doctrine, associated with Enrico Berlinguer (Italian Communist Party), Georges Marchais (French Communist Party) and Santiago Carrillo (Spanish Communist Party), also pleaded for a kind of socialism and a party which was a major departure from the established Soviet model. Finally, in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachyev's

programme of perestroika and glasnost provided afresh booster to the spirit of tolerance which was otherwise missing in the established Soviet model and mainstream communist practice. That there could be other versions of Marxism different from the orthodox Bolshevik version, that there were multiple voices like those of Western Marxism in the Marxist discourse cannot be justified and recognized unless this alternative trajectory is kept in mind. Rosa Luxemburg's iconic statement in her text on the Russian Revolution that freedom means always the freedom to think differently or Gorbachev's notion of "socialist pluralism" was reflective of this spirit of tolerance in the Left legacy.

Addressing the question of tolerance/intolerance with reference to the legacy of the Left thus brings into focus a larger question. Is the Marxist tradition synonymous with the grand narrative of mainstream Marxism, as epitomized by the Bolshevik model, or is it that the Marxist discourse has within it multiple voices and shades, tolerant of each other? If the Left has to survive and move forward, it has to respond to this question in a convincing manner.

Intolerance: Understanding Social Psyche

Miratun Nahar

Each individual mind is a battlefield for a constant conflict between certain higher and constructive mental states or processes and a large number of destructive lower instincts. The owner of this battlefield has to put in a continuous effort towards controlling the latter with the former and in the process become a well-rounded and successful human being. Among the mental states of the former kind one of the most important is goodwill and among the latter the most harmful is intolerance. Goodwill is, as German philosopher Kant says, good-in-itself. On the other hand, intolerance is harmful in both ways – it obviously harms the victim of intolerance, and is also dangerously harmful for those who indulge in it. Intolerance is absence of tolerance, that tolerance which is a primary quality required for human survival. Hence, the Bengali proverb goes: “*Je soy se roy*”. On the other hand, intolerance makes a human being inhuman. Intolerance hampers the ultimate goal of human life, that is, happiness and

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breeds restlessness in human mind. Intolerance is a primary obstruction for character-building of a human being while tolerance is a human quality that helps in building his character. If intolerance acquires the dominant place in the individual human mind, then it also diffuses into the social psyche which is constituted by the sum-total of those minds, which ultimately contributes to the process of destroying the society as well as the whole country.

This trend can unfortunately be observed in case of the contemporary Indian society which is a cause of severe anxiety today. Intolerance transmitted at various levels – the individual, family and at the societal level is an evident reality today. The state and religion should have a positive role in preventing the spread of intolerance which has taken a firm grip of the social psyche. Instead what we can find is that they have in fact contributed positively in ripping off tolerance out of social psyche, leading to the deplorable state of affairs in the entire country.

However, it is important to discern the fundamental reasons for which intolerance is gripping a peace-loving country like ours where the people are used to unbelievable deprivation and hardship. Some of the important reasons, which all are of course external factors having powerful control

over the human instincts, seem to be the following:

1. materialistic outlook of individual minds,
2. spreading of consumerism at the societal level,
3. excessively technology-driven life and lifestyle,
4. the ill-effect of economic globalization and big corporate business on a developing country like ours,
5. the failure of educational institutions to help in character-building of future countrymen,
6. the role of family in this respect is also discouraging.

Let us now explain in short the chief factors causing intolerance in social psyche:

First, today the majority of the people comprising the Indian society are guided by the materialistic outlook in their everyday living. They are interested mostly in securing their worldly pursuit of profit and loss. As a result they are oblivious towards their social and moral responsibilities to their fellow beings at large as also towards family and society. The normal human relations are almost at the point of extinction and consequently intolerance is gradually striking roots in the social psyche.

Secondly, consumerism is rapidly spreading its tentacles in the social psyche. The social psyche today is characterized by an inclination towards enjoyment rather than sacrifice, uninterrupted

seeking of pleasure rather than capacity for bearing sufferings. The social psyche thus formed remains unhappy where intolerance finds its haven.

Thirdly, excessive dependence on technology is preventing a human being from becoming a human being which results in making him a mechanical individual. Consequently the goodwill to build up human relationship with fellow human beings is gradually getting lost and the nature of social psyche is being changed by the deleterious effects of intolerance.

Fourthly, all matters of development within our developing economy are being governed by the big corporate houses. This coupled with the expanding world trade are totally changing the nature of our social psyche. They are flooding the market with newer and newer products and gadgets and thus infusing our social psyche with a gross desire to acquire them. As a result our social psyche is unable to accept our usual life of deprivation and thus becoming more intolerant.

Fifthly, the educational institutions of today do not care to impart character-building lessons to the students. There too, education is regarded more as a business transaction. In that educational market place the people of all levels of our society are used to

accept education as a commodity and thereby veer towards intolerance, thus losing the valuable quality of tolerance.

Sixthly, guardians of families now-a-days themselves have lost their ability to show the right path to their juniors in the daily life and are thus driving them towards losing all ideals. Children, adolescents, young members of the family under the guidance of their elders, who themselves in large numbers have lost all ideals decide to enter the rat race to achieve the material goods of the world. And to achieve that there is no place for tolerance. As a result we only hear the roar of intolerance from those who are thus trained to form a society.

The spectacular achievement of intolerance has thus pushed aside love and all delicate human feelings and has filled the social psyche with rage and violence. In order to relieve the social psyche of intolerance it is necessary to look towards love and compassion because the power of love is infinite. Love builds and intolerance destroys.

On apparent considerations one might think that the present times are times of destruction and disarray caused by intolerance. But the truth is that at all times destruction and construction move side by side and the present time is no exception to that.

Finally, at a time when everything is science and technology-driven, it is important to adopt a scientific outlook and remove the aforementioned causes for the spread of intolerance. It should be our commitment to shake up a society, which is in a state of slumber, lacking awareness, dazed by the strong grip of intolerance. If the goodwill of the society finds its due prominence, evil power such as intolerance would automatically be driven away.

Intolerance-free social psyche will then be instrumental in removing intolerance-bred violence from individual psyche, leading them towards the path of peace. As a consequence the country-men will tread towards peace and happiness eradicating all propensities for violence.

Democracy, Intolerance and the Media: A Contemporary Perspective

Anjan Bandopadhyay

Until recently, we used to think that about a thousand years back everyone spent the days of their lives happily and peacefully. But it was not the reality. Actually there was extreme intolerance, dispute, wars and also an irresistible greed and an inclination of one to defeat another. And the sole objective behind these was to capture power. To capture power, one village devoured another village. There was no adequate reason behind that. It was always a hidden interest of a village behind its propensity to defeat and plunder another village. Here we have planted the seed of intolerance illogically and sub-consciously. Then why are we discussing about intolerance?

We did not get the description of all the murders by Chandashoka. The only information we get is the description of Dharmashoka and Harshavardhana. Harshavardhana donated his last garment for his irresistible desire for publicity. The role of media at that time was like a single way traffic. That is why the tyranny of Harshavardhana did not come into

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prominence. Media, in that period, described only the good qualities of the rulers for the sake of these interests. And, here is the reason why people do not know anything about the intolerance of that era.

People came to know about intolerance after independence, when the democratic society was formed, where the voices of different people must be heeded without which democracy is not possible. For the existence of different voices of the people, a structure must be formed. That is why we dignified the leader of the opposition as a minister. In fact we oppose, even beat him, create some hindrances on his way to the hospital. But when he is entering the Legislature, he is bearing the honour of a minister and passing the bill in the legislative assembly. We are bound to obey the structure which is given by democracy and which was unavailable before the formation of democracy. From here, people get the opportunity to express their voices. So, after a certain period of time, we learned about what is right and what is wrong. We started to listen to the different reasonings of different voices.

If we had tolerated everything, then what would happen to the Bolshevik revolution? It is true that there would still exist different voices of people, but was it possible to settle everything through peaceful

discussion? So, there is a positive side of intolerance. The earlier administrations did not consider the strong opinions of the people against intolerance. Therefore, the battle is against intolerance through intolerance.

In the present scenario, people started strongly criticizing the views of Donald Trump, the American President – his views regarding prohibiting the Muslims to enter USA, building up the wall in the Mexican border etc. When Trump, before the election, gave his speech, he did say that he would take all these actions if he became the President. Then why did the millions of people elect him as the American President? Did they think that Trump would not keep his words? They thought that if Trump could really take those actions, then it would be great. In the present condition will the people who had voted for Trump stand in front of the mirror instead of blaming him?

We all talk a lot about intolerance. But when we are driving on the road, and when a vehicle overtakes us, we show our annoyance to that particular driver. It is only a matter of some seconds. Both of us, in the end, will reach our destination. Then why do we become intolerant? It happens in the same way if we overtake another vehicle. So, we are becoming

further intolerant through intolerance.

In the phase of globalization, we can sense a feeling of unification and common culture. Then why did Brexit occur? What factors worked behind the victory of Donald Trump or Narendra Modi in the elections?

In this situation, we point out to the various administrations. But do we point out at ourselves before pointing out to them? Are we tolerant enough? In this matter, the role of the media comes up strongly. For example, most of the people complain that they have to start their mornings with negative news of the newspapers. People complain about the discussions of the media when it becomes chaotic. But these chaotic situations increase the TRP level of the channels. If the media channels discuss any topic in a peaceful manner, then their level of TRP will be zero. Then how will the channels survive?

The media tries to explore the concept of democracy and intolerance by three posers:

1. How is intolerance stressful on the media?
2. How is media using intolerance as a weapon or being used by intolerance while trying to use it?
3. How is the social media, which is not controlled by any institutional media, slowly indulging intolerance?

After Donald Trump's election, in a press conference, a journalist in an East-European accents spoke and Trump's reply was: "just get out of my country". This exemplifies starkly a kind of intolerance on media, that too from the President of USA!

The social media is not considered to be more effective as a communication medium in both state and national levels. Media is manipulated, just like the way the ruling dispensation wants it to be. We are a part of society, but if society gets intolerant, then one can not trace the solution to ills of that particular society. That is why the media's presentation of the news is not always authentic. That is why the manipulative force of the media is so strong. This has been increasing these days.

When the media takes up the role of a director or the role of the judiciary, then we witness a dangerous tendency.

The media should stand in front of the mirror to introspect, then only democracy will survive and truth will prevail.

Section II

Interrogating Intolerance: An Overview of Views

Indrashis Banerjee

Being human is being tolerant. Such a sentence is so short, so simple. A very fundamental exercise on disaggregation brings to the fore just five words: 'Being', 'human', 'is', 'being' and 'tolerant'. In trying to understand what each of them mean, however, one is slowly, but surely sucked into a vortex that subsumes oneself, dragging one into the labyrinth of ambiguity, confusion and often, utter bewilderment. 'Being' is a state of existence, put grossly; but it implies a process, a continuous urge of the mind to not just be, but, become, and as associated with the 'human', goes on to encompass a near-unfathomable quest for achieving something that is desirable, often defined as an ideal. 'Human' refers to certain attributes, such that these, when present, sets a person apart from non-humans. Now, it follows that a 'human' is not just a bundle of physical attributes, as defined by, for instance, considerations of biology alone: it is embedded in a subtler, deeply aesthetic journey of 'being', of trying to realise certain ends that are for

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'human' beings alone in the entire animal world. Not just attributes, it has to do with qualities. Thus, as has been oft-repeated down the ages and across societies and peoples, human beings are born as members of the animal-world, but whereas members of other species and classes in the biological sense give birth to their offspring which are born as their kind and remain so, it is in the instance of human beings alone that one is born as a human being in so far as particular physical characteristics and attributes are concerned, but must be brought up conditioned over perhaps one's entire lifespan to behave and live life on the basis of certain codes of conduct in the category into which one is born.

'Being', therefore, is the essence and the basic nature of a person not just to be, but *become*. Now, at this juncture, in understanding as to what constitutes the ideal or the desirable, and how and by what means such ends may be sought to be achieved, there may be a large number of differences in the worldview of the particular societies of which individuals and groups are constituent members. From this rootedness arises the core sense of belongingness of its people, evident in terms of identities that are ascriptive, often primordial and beyond. Thus, there may be differences based upon race and ethnicity,

language, region and religion, sex, class, caste and so on. The conditioning, or, in social science parlance, socialisation, is intrinsic to any society. One is born into a family, goes to a school and to institutions of higher learning, plays with a group of friends and acquaintances and prays in a place of worship, earns one's bread in an environment where one associates with colleagues and co-workers and so on. Each of these institutions have an agentic role in socialising the person, thereby shaping one's attitude, outlook, orientation, belief, faith and ideology. These are the very institutions that, while in many instances are different from others in their outlook and style of functioning from other such institutions in other settings, communities and peoples, these are the very institutions that set them apart as different because of their belief and adherence to a set of values that are at variance from another's. Such values, when perceived to be different, are also hinged upon value judgement, that is to say, that, for instance, Person X starts with making a statement: "I base my food habit on eating Item A. You (Person Y) base it on Item B". Till this point, the difference is largely value neutral, till Person X says to Person Y: "My food habit is better than yours", which is to mean, "Yours is worse", and further on, "Mine is superior"

and “yours is inferior”. Each of the identities associated with human beings in the entire animal kingdom of which human beings are a part as such may be the basis for cooperation, but each of them may also be the very plank of competition, which, *per se* is acceptable, often desirable, provided it is in consonance with accepted codes of conduct as a human being and qualifies as being civil and healthy, but it can also be the plane for conflict. Thus, any mode of interaction amongst individuals or groups of human beings is often the potential ground for unwelcome exchanges if the differences are not accepted as differences, but are judged on a superior-inferior scale. The views presented by scholars in the following section address some of these core issues that shapes the minds of human beings and are not just fundamental to their identities, but are their identities.

The larger framework for traversing the course of any meaningful deliberation rests upon conceptual and definitional addressing of issues. ‘Intolerance: A Definitional And Politico-Sociological Exploration’ is such a presentation, where the author Binoy Halder begins by treating ‘intolerance’ as a human behavioural trait that itself is a threat for peaceful human co-existence. Delving into the meaning of

‘intolerance’ and the role played by various dynamic politico-social variables, like identity and other means of political socialization in fostering ‘intolerance’, it is sought to be comprehended from politico-sociological perspectives, and going on to formulate responses that address the roots of ‘intolerance’ rather than responding to its expression. Haldar examines identity and intolerance, cultural identity, social identity and moves on to analyse political-socialization agencies and their role in breeding and nurturing intolerance. Identifying Intolerance as a menace, the author ruefully ponders over the question, will intolerance end anyway? The answer lies in upholding values like liberal democracy, rule of law, human rights and with these, revolution in science and technology, in communication systems coupled with holding dear the value of sacrifice and above all, the primacy of politics in making the world a better place sans intolerance for all.

‘Social Capital and Dialogic Democracy’, exploring their dimension and relationship with Tolerance and Humanity, is a study undertaken by Sibtossh Bandyopadhyay to stress the need for dialogic democracy, defined as a system of governance through which a political system would be more relevant for the lives that people live, being based

on , above everything else, tolerance and veneration of pluralism. It implies systematic management dedicated to nursing of grassroots levels democratic institutions. Governance which hinges on mutual understanding, a strong public sphere marked by rationality, trust and mutual benefit and sustainable development is actually the components of what has been termed social capital. Referring to Robert Putnam and his path breaking work, *Making Local Democracy Work: Civic Tradition in Modern Italy* (1995), Bandyopadhyay notes that corruption, violence and religious antagonism are more feasible in areas which lack a stock of social capital. Trust deficit is the core area that needs to be addressed and only a society that is based upon shared values of democracy and pluralism can effectively confront and contain the menace of intolerance.

Dipak Kumar Bandyopadhyay's paper 'Politicization of Intolerance and Intolerant Politics' hinges upon the strengthening a democratic system as a condition for ushering in of the process of development, where public way of thinking, of people's involvement and social justice of a politically conscious and empowered citizenry can improve the tasks of nation building. The challenges that a democratic nation faces makes it mature, effective,

accountable and sustainable. The ideal of tolerance remains fundamental to such understanding. Dialogic practices are essential, but these call for an ambience of tolerance, which unfortunately, the author laments, is wanting.

The author of 'Speaking of a Tolerant Man and of an 'Intolerant Century': Revisiting Rammohun Roy's Idea of Tolerance', Parikshit Thakur examines intolerance in nineteenth century Bengal in a society marked by religion that meant mechanical adherence to dated creeds and practices that debased human nature against which Raja Rammohun Roy, the progressive *par excellence*, wrote vociferously in his early publication in Persian *Tuhfat-al-Muwahhidin* (1805), passionately arguing in favour of monotheism which ultimately, as Roy emphasised, help the people to come out of inhuman practices in the name of religion.

Titled 'On the Seventieth Anniversary of the Partition of India – Rethinking Intolerance in a Diverse Country', Sucharita Sen's observations in the contemporary Indian context where intolerance runs rampant in a society which is characterised by its unique diversity and pluralism tapers down to examining primarily the twin concepts of Patriarchal and religious intolerance. A country

born alongside brutal intolerance showed the courage and maturity to become a nation with an accommodative tolerant spirit, its essence being diversity. However, intolerance in various forms run counter and derogatory to this ideal of India. Tracing the roots of intolerance and its manifestations in contemporary India the author invokes Tagore, Swami Vivekanada and others to help confront intolerance in the country. At this juncture, it becomes imperative to curb intolerance in any form to ensure the harmonious ideal of India and uphold the unity and integrity of the nation.

In ‘Questioning the Gender Bias in the Hindu Marriage: Some Instances’, Upamanyu Basu, while flagging off that marriage is a universal institution that defines human society, saving it from promiscuity and randomness, ponders over its setting in Hindu society and culture. He goes on to locate, making use of a number of specific practices, such as *Kanyadan*, *Kashiyatra*, *Haldi*, *Manglik Dosha* and the strict ban of the groom’s mother to accompany her son on his journey to the bride’s home, the prevalence of utmost “sexism” or gender bias when we start analyzing the base of all the customs and practices that surround this structure of marriage.

Tolerance, begins Pratip Chattopadhyay, in 'Tolerance Redefined: Understanding West Bengal between 2011 and 2016' is a prominent feature in Indian civilization and the West Bengal experience exhibits an accommodative political culture which a Left Front government for three decades has institutionalized. The first tenure of the TMC, being the focus of this paper, is seen in two phases, first, the period from 2011 to 2014 and second, from 2014 to 2016. In the first phase, unsettled in government corridors, TMC showed intolerance towards any critical interrogation of its policies. In the second phase after having a settled political landscape post 2014 national elections, TMC showed reflected tolerance in a new way in its political and administrative capacity. This is the new tolerance, which is to mean, as the author notes, 'emotive tolerance' that this paper addresses. Intolerance is not happening in West Bengal presently because emotive tolerance has achieved a hegemonic status in the public space. The emotive nexus between political, social, cultural and economic space, creates a situation today in West Bengal when there is no need to curb other voices because views of these voices are rendered meaningless. This is how the 'cunning of unreason', Chattopadhyay contends, has

won the democratic space by redefining tolerance in West Bengal.

‘Interrogating the Construct of Islamophobia: A Western Deviser?’ locates religio-racial intolerance as the arena where systematic doctoring of the mind of the masses through the media and swathes of the intellectual categories to suit stereotypical images of a whole people and their culture results in a perceived fear of the different other, in this instance the adherents of Islam as a faith. The authors Sanchari Chakraborty and Arghya Bose go on to interrogate this intolerance on the part of the Occident for which this is a construct, a tool for hegemony perpetuation, sustenance, consolidation and legitimisation over the other. This hegemony of the Euro-American combine, posit the authors, is essentially based upon a bias that is prejudiced, and a premeditated mechanism for bolstering the rightist agenda of securing themselves against the other, which is fearful, and must be killed before it kills.

Sampurna Goswami begins with the Dictionary definition of Intolerance as something that/who cannot be endured in that, on the main, there remains certain values, views, characteristics, beliefs and faiths which are different from another’s. This difference, in the context of particular groups,

goes on to shape, often seal, the fate of those communities, those individuals, those sections of the world community that are perceived to be “intolerable”. Such communities are subject to marginalisation, Human Rights violations and aptly titled ‘The Rohingyas: Homeless in their Homeland’, the issue points to a human tragedy of catastrophic proportions rooted in British colonial policies and perpetuated through contemporary statecraft, often brutal, of South Asian nations in general, including criminal indifference from supposedly responsible players in the comity of nations.

Sumita Chattopadhyay and Madhusudan Nandan in ‘Understanding Tolerance: The Context of Gandhi’ assert that intolerance is undemocratic. While bringing to the fore Gandhi’s passion for the cultivation of a true spirit of democracy, the authors point out that one cannot afford to be intolerant. Appreciation of dissent, strengthening of plurality, the spirit epitomised by the dictum agree to disagree is steadily disappearing from both the public and private domains, and this itself is violence. People living in isolation in a consumerism world perceive any entity other than their own as being the source of insecurity, and hence must be neutralized. The state agencies are seen to be immersed in narrow

political interests of the dispensation, whose moot end is maximization of political dividends. This institutionalizes violence and spawns a never-ending cycle of violence that goes on, in the ultimate count, to become a culture of violence. Quoting Gandhi, the authors emphasise that only through fearlessness can *Ahimsa* be practiced, thereby putting an end to the abhorable culture of violence.

The critical theorist Herbert Marcuse, as the authors relate, observed in his *One Dimensional Man* that the advanced Western economy is based upon instrumental reason and mass culture. Instrumental reason being only obsessed with means rather than the ends make a fetishism of efficiency, rationality and of conspicuous consumption sans social conscience. It can create a mass society bereft of thinking capacity and moral positions. The contemporary world is a replication of this. Invoking Gandhi, the paper sums that the crass consumerist Western culture that defies commoditification and ever-hunger for material goods must be countered with self-criticism, non-judgemental orientations and respect for the opponent's views.

In trying to understand the contemporary American administration in the light of the Enlightenment, Souradeep Sen emphasizes that the

control over human beings and their world of ideas by scientific knowledge has been a hallmark of the Enlightenment's lasting legacy in the West and the agenda of making America Great Again are pointers to the exclusivity, intolerance, standardization, racism and sexism which are characteristic of the dark side of the enlightenment. Taking a leaf from Horkheimer and Adorno and critical theorists, Sen, in his 'Goethe's Oak: Questioning Intolerance of the Present American Administration by the Dialectic of Enlightenment' highlights the expressions of instrumental rationality as being in an unaccountable bureaucracy in a totally administered society where the natural outcome is that, society is engineered to become too fearful of difference, asymmetry and deviance. The present administration in the USA under President Donald J. Trump is not, points out the author, a product of an abstract historical process, but, the continuation of the Enlightenment project's relentless standardization, its intolerance towards, and persecution of, the 'other'.

The tolerance-intolerance context is not something that has suddenly surfaced in contemporary times. Nor is it the handiwork of a particular person, a group or an association, or the result of machinations of particular

administrations. While persons and administrations are nonetheless important, their roles may be seen as instrumental rather than discretionist. The overarching understanding lies in civilizational progression, socialization processes, shared practices over generations in the realms of culture, politics, economics and philosophy and shaping and sharing of orientations, approaches, outlooks, beliefs, convictions and worldviews. It becomes important to take into account the big picture of relations between and amongst individuals and groups, of peoples and societies, of, simply stated, human beings with each other, where, the basic identity is one: that all human beings are first and foremost, human beings. With each distinctiveness of individuals and peoples being fundamental to human beings as their identity, and where such identities are multiple identities, differences are but natural: what is of utmost import is to not just be, but *become*, a human being, and this is a journey, where the quest is one fraught with often insurmountable perils, but one which may be looked forward to as being a celebratory journey, a celebration of differences, a celebration of diversities, a celebration of pluralism.

Politicization of Intolerance and Intolerant Politics

Dipak Kumar Bandyopadhyay

Tolerance is crucial both fundamentally and instrumentally, whether in fighting repression and unfairness, in keeping governments accountable, in forming inclusive norms and values or in understanding human needs, rights and duties. In Amartya Sen's words: "Developing and strengthening a democratic system is an essential component of the process of development." Therefore, we may not and should not ignore the critical role of public way of thinking, of people's involvement and social justice in the functioning of democracy. Only a citizenry that is aware of rights and duties, is politically conscious and empowered can improve the tasks of nation building.

The framers of our Constitution made Indian democracy meaningful by making it answerable to the people. As an integral part of the ideal of democracy, tolerance is a daily plebiscite. It is only by constant questioning of the challenges and a tolerant resolution of those challenges that

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a democratic nation matures, becomes effective, remains accountable and sustainable. But indeed, in the present situation it seems that the ideal of tolerance remains just that a far-flung, utopian ideal even after many decades of hard-won struggles. There is widespread and profound discontent with the way Indian democracy functions, because the way politics has been constructed around political parties and vote banks, one would imagine there are no citizens left except the supporters of fundamentalism or the so-called true nationalism and the like. It is the failure of Indian nation-building process to address the pressing issues of education, health care, malnourishment, environment conservation and so on which require urgent public attention.

There is a yawning gap between tolerance as a democratic ideal and its practice. In this context the present paper proposes to focus on the development of intolerant politics in India in relation to the process of politicization of intolerance which ultimately impacts the nature of Indian society and culture. It is a micro study about the socio-economic political and cultural intolerance within a greater society. The objective of this paper is to highlight the process through which intolerant politics has launched vociferous demands and formulated the strategy to

make skilful use of religious, cultural and ethnic consideration to fulfil certain vested interests. Along with this objective the paper is also interested to explore the tension and anguish which are brewing up centering around the identity of Indians.

Contemporary India does not suffer from lack of complaints and protests. But what is important to assess is whether the vocally strong and politically powerful protests adequately reflect the deprivations and injustices from which the underprivileged Indians persistently suffer. In this regard it is often found that the so-called nationalists tend to serve as a barrier to the attention that the voice of the true nationalists actually deserve. This occurrence in turn leads to a pervasive disregard for the interests of Indian pluralist culture. Multidimensional intolerance tends to generate the means for its own perpetuation, particularly through the distortion of public debates and media coverage.

The big social divisions carries with it massive intolerance in the voice and power of different groups, and in addition, it helps to obscure the intense nature of the Indian tradition and culture through biases in media coverage and in public discussion, which primarily seem to cater to the interests and engagements of nation building. In

this and other ways, the politicization of intolerance makes it much harder to use the normal tools of democracy, including the use of vocal discontent, to confront the disagreement involved.

Hence the politicization of intolerance during the last few decades resulted in aggressive campaigns and violent incidences. The mechanisms of politicization of intolerance were fuelled by the structural changes in Indian state and civil society. Thus a new era of state-civil society relations began in India.

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Intolerance: A Definitional and Politico-Sociological Exploration

Binoy Halder

Introduction

‘Intolerance’, as a certain human behavioural trait, is a serious politico-social issue across the world and a threat for peaceful human co-existence. It gets huge media attention in recent times specifically in India and the USA. The concept of ‘intolerance’ is not new to us, it has been viewed as a major disruptive trait of human society as long as recorded history has gone. But in recent times many purported events of intolerance in India and in the USA too have compelled us to focus our attention on the subject. The purpose of this article is to comprehend the meaning of ‘intolerance’ and the role played by various dynamic politico-social variables, like identity and other means of political socialization in fostering ‘intolerance’. It should be mentioned over here that there are other ways to analyze the menace of ‘intolerance’, like 1. psychopathology, 2. ‘Intolerance’ as criminal and anti-social behaviour etc. To deal effectively with the problem of

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‘intolerance’, it is essential to attempt to understand ‘intolerance’ from politico-sociological perspectives. It is important to formulate responses that address the roots of ‘intolerance’ rather than responding to its expression. Identification of the politico-social roots of ‘intolerance’ will help immensely in those formulations.

Problems with the Definitions of Intolerance

The term ‘intolerance’ is value laden, but still we must try to understand and analyze its meanings. Let us find out what some authoritative English dictionaries have to say about the term.

1. *The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*¹ says: intolerance, noun, ‘(disapproving) the fact of not being willing to accept ideas or ways of behaving that are different from your own’,
2. *The Merriam Webster Dictionary*² says: intolerance, noun, i. the quality or state of being intolerant, ii. lack of an ability to endure (medical dictionary),
3. *Collins English Dictionary*³ says: intolerance, uncountable noun, i. intolerance is unwillingness to let other people act in a different way or hold different opinions from you, ii. lack of tolerance, esp. of others’ opinions, beliefs, etc.; bigotry (American

English).

4. According to “psychology.wikia.com”⁴ intolerance is the lack of ability or willingness to tolerate something.

These above definitions of ‘intolerance’ are inconclusive, incomplete and to some extent unjust in nature, because: 1. These definitions want to make a person responsible for being tolerant to everything she hears, sees or confronts with, whatever may be the nature of the incidents. 2. Can any person be tolerant if she is confronted with extremely hostile situation? These definitions do not have answer to this. 3. Shall any person be tolerant at all when her physical, mental as well as spiritual wellbeings are harmed or in danger by the activities of others? Though this question may be replied by the clichéd answer that if we all become tolerant to each other, then such a situation will not be there to confront with.

But history of the human species speaks something different. Human history shows that social progress or evolution of the human society is based not only on human co-operations (as functionalism and structuralism would argue for) but on human competitions and conflicts too (as argued by Marxism, Weberian conflict theory and Feminism).

Human species can think and most interestingly they try to teach themselves to be a thinking animal and this ability of thinking, unavoidably, leads human species, among other things, to be organized politically. From the very beginning of the political life of human species they were busy with the struggle for land, water, food. With the evolution of time and experiences of political life there emerged new and complex problems like: 1. Just or unjust distribution of power with or without equity and processes of conflict management; 2. Safeguarding and establishing primacy of individual and groups' identity, dignity, rights and various kinds of beliefs over others; not only this, 3. Interestingly even people of a certain group who follow certain religious belief are now required to fight with other groups for the supremacy of their GOD and the particular religious belief. These are the issues that breed 'intolerance'. We know that these politico-social issues are being discussed, questioned, legitimized and opposed by politico-social variables. The nature of these variables and discourses they are producing on politico-social issues determine the level of tolerance or 'intolerance' of a polity. Among many of those politico-social variables a few are being discussed below.

Identity and Intolerance

Various authors have suggested that cultural and social identity processes may cause intolerance. For example, according to Huntington's popular and influential book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*⁵, identity is referenced on 39% (119 of 302) of the pages of primary text. However, this article adopts the position that not only all two of these identity dimensions may be associated with intolerance, but we further want to know if it is the interaction among specific cultural, social, and personal identity configurations that plays the greatest role in determining the likelihood of intolerance.

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity represents the specific cultural values a person or a particular group of persons incorporates throughout their life as guiding principles for behaviour, such as collectivism, absolutism or liberalism in belief. Narrow collectivism, absolutism, dogmatism, 'US and THEM' feeling and staunch religious feelings are a few of the cultural elements which can create a conducive environment for emergence of an intolerant mind-set.

Social Identity

Social identity represents the self-imposed significance attached to the social groups to which one belongs and with which one interacts directly, along with the feelings associated with participation in these groups' activities. Social identity also reflects the beliefs and feelings about those groups that are perceived as standing in opposition to the groups with which one is affiliated, that is, groups that are "not us." These social identity dynamics form an important topic of conversation within the family and peer group, they are inculcated through school curricula, and they may be incorporated into religious prayers, sermons, and religiously sponsored cultural activities. We have frequently seen, in non-Western societies, for example, fundamentalist social, cultural and religious groups and organizations often regarding the pervasive spread of Western culture as a threat to their way of life, on the contrary, in the Western societies similar groups spread racism and xenophobia. It causes intolerance.

Agent Political Socialization and Intolerance

Along with the identity, political socialization processes are hugely significant in making the very nature of the political culture of a particular polity. Hence,

the role of the agents political socialization requires considerable amount of attention. The following section therefore explores a range of relevant agents such as education, peers, media, family, religious institutions and political parties.

Education

Education as socializing agency has got, a great impact on the tender as well as adult minds, to imbue them with particular skill and values of society and politics, and all the problems related to them. Modern and liberal education empowers people to ask uneasy questions to the powerful elites and ultimately empowers democracy; on the contrary religion dogmatism imparted as education can put a society or humankind in danger. Today the worldwide assumed notion is that the most notorious dogmatic educational agencies associated with intolerance are the Madrassas. The dramatic growth of these religious schools across Muslim societies and communities has contributed to the rise of Muslim fundamentalism. Within many schools across the world 'jihad', the abode of war and martyrdom has been repositioned as a central pillar of faith; other religions and weaker Muslim interpretations are regularly denounced as immoral and are condemned as apostate.

Media

The media is often a tool for indoctrination and is integral to contemporary forms of communication, unintentionally or intentionally helping social-political groups to achieve their aims. We might not forget how Indian electronic media had helped those who were in the forefront of the movement against intolerance in recent times and should not forget too to mention the role they played during the last general election (in 2014) by vociferously campaigning against a particular political party of India. And the US media did the same thing in the last presidential election (in 2016). On the other hand the advent of an internet has also provided the alternative channel of communication to those who want to mobilize people in a certain way. Now the internet is being used as a platform for hate campaign.

Peers

A peer group is found to socialize its members by motivating or pressurizing them to conform to the culture, norms, attitudes or behaviours which are accepted by their group. Factors condition the relationship in a peer group include homogenous identities like class, caste, religion, ethnicity and any other sub-national identity along with income,

education etc. According to a study by Sageman⁶ that pre-existing friendships were important in 68% of cases of individuals joining terror organizations. For instance, the Hamburg cell that was integral in the September 2001 attack on America was radicalized in Germany. Simi, Bajrang Dal are some of the Indian examples. The notorious Nirvaya gang rape case in Delhi is also an instance of peer pressure acting on the mind on the perpetrators.

Family

The family a one of the important agents plays a pivotal role in the socialization process of a child. A child's attitude to all political and social problems, and the skills to solve them are more or less conditioned by the values she got from her family. Families can be authoritarian, conservative, democratic, participatory and liberal and can accordingly nurture future citizens. We can cite example from the recent explosion at Khagraghar in Burdwan on 2 October, 2014, on how members of many Muslim families were involved in that nasty event.

Religious Institutions

Religious institutions have been a controversial agent in the formation of mind-sets of social and

political groups and in individual radicalization. The Church and the missionaries were found to play an instrumental role in shaping and designing the political attitude and still they are at play in the USA itself. At the present, Islam is doing the same thing specifically in the Middle-East and in Pakistan as it is associated with terrorism and radicalization. The mosque has become integral to the perceptions of processes of radicalization and brain-washing.

Political Parties

Political parties are the chief proponents who play the most important role in socializing a major section of the society and thereby inculcate their political values, norms, cultures and ideologies in the mind of the common people. The already fragmented Indian society is a hot breeding ground of intolerance. This is used by all the political parties of India to mobilize and garner votes in favour of themselves just to be in power. In the USA too social fragmentations are used to mobilize votes, as we can see two main political parties of the USA, the Republican as well as the Democrats have their own political 'vote-banks'. These are only the trends that show the fragility of democracy.

Conclusion

As humankind is facing the menace of intolerance from the very beginning of its existence, the moot question remains, will intolerance end anyway? Every sound mind would pray for the positive, but the answer is in the negative. As this article has discussed substantively the issue of intolerance and its politico-social linkages and bases. Human identity creates on one hand subtle and complex mental feelings and on the other it reflects the status of her entity. Human beings carry their social, cultural, moral, religious values with their identities. Multiplicity and diversity, superior inferior feeling, mutual antagonism are a few fundamental features of these values. Traditional political socialization agents as discussed above have been the machineries that inculcate human beings with fragmented and biased values. In this way they actually widen the hiatus among the human species. In other words we may say that the traditional socio-cultural agencies based on identities, like, religion, caste, language, and creed, in reality separate people from each other and have been precarious for them for peaceful co-existence. On the other hand the advent of modernity and the emergence of values like liberal democracy, rule of law, human rights and with these, revolution in science and technology, in

communication systems have helped people to be nearer and familial, but these too have almost failed to inculcate fellow feeling among us. For peaceful collective co-existence mankind needs to learn, first the foremost the value of sacrifice and the second one is the importance of politics.

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Speaking of a Tolerant Man and of an 'Intolerant Century': Revisiting Rammohun Roy's Idea of Tolerance

Parikshit Thakur

A noted British historian in one of his celebrated works regarded the twentieth century as the 'century of extremism'.¹ One wonders, the series of incidents that took place on the eve of the twenty first century India and the world might insist him to describe the twenty first century as a 'century of intolerant ultra-extremism'. Two major reasons behind the growth of 'intolerant ultra-extremism' are as follows:

First, the rise and growth of the rightist forces from developing to developed democracies in different parts of the globe in the first one and half decades of the present century which resulted in emergence of a feeling of insecurity among common people across the world.

Second, the expansion of religious fundamental forces coupled with massacre, and abuse of humanity which horrified human civilization. Even the finest human intellect was being employed for the

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destruction of civilization starting from the Middle-East to the European continent and South Asia. Being one of the oldest contributors to the human civilization India, too, is not an exception.

In India, many forms of intolerance exist since time immemorial and religious intolerance is the longstanding one. Post-independent India as a political entity is a 'state-nation' rather than a 'nation state' with 'great diversity' and 'asymmetric federalism'.² Religion, ethnicity, language and caste are some of the major constituting elements of modern India. Among them religion is the most sensitive one. The 'makers of modern India' were well aware of the fact and they decided to make it a secular one so that diversified people could live in peace and harmony. Some of the major influential religions of modern India are Hinduism, Islam and Christianity.

The basic precept of every religion is the wellbeing of humanity. Unfortunately, almost in every age, most of the religions were either being misinterpreted by the small group of priests and other opportunists for their own protection and vested interests. As the majority of the Indian people in 'god's own country' are illiterate, therefore, the general perception about religion among those people is basically nothing but

a set of ritualistic practices and summation of mis-interpreted quotes of a few 'sacred religious texts'. The common people could hardly have access to those complex texts due to their lack of knowledge and are unable to understand the proper meaning and message of religion which in a way paved the scope for mis-interpretation and perversion.

In the last few years there has been a persistent intolerant environment in India and its close neighbours like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The intolerant attitude is expressed in provocative comments, irrational dialogue and debates. Sometimes centres for intellectual and academic excellence are also becoming the frequent targets of such intolerant and ideologically blind people.

Intolerant mobs were attacking soft targets like teachers, bloggers, students and sometimes common innocent people, even bright professionals. The manifestation of the intolerance has been taking place in brutal and inhuman ways. In protest against such irrational behaviour, a number of public intellectuals including film makers, artists, scholars and scientists wrote protest letters to the political authority, organized rallies and candle light walk in the streets in different places. But the civic voice was

not so strong which could suppress the message of intolerance against the continuous and systematic acts of atrocities by such violent and ill-mannered people. There are historical evidences of intolerance in India, at the same time there has been a continued legacy of rational 'argumentative Indian' and public intellectuals who in the past had fostered the long tradition of interrogating intolerance. Therefore, 'interrogating intolerance' in the realm of academia is the need of the hour which should be properly discussed, understood and taken care of for deepening the democratic values in the twenty first century.

The deeper understanding of the meaning of intolerance reveals that intolerance by nature of its genealogical origin has a negative connotation because it is an oppositional category. Intolerance is the absence of humanism and presence of irrational, blind, and personal or sectarian motive guided inhuman acts that sometimes misleads a person. A person narrowly understands his/her surroundings only when he/she is unable to realize the existence of a broader world around him/her.

One might think that progressive ideas alone would be sufficient for the realization of the self and the broader world. Starting from the ancient to the

modern age there was no single instance of complete absence of intolerance at a particular point of time. Rather the degree of intolerance varied widely with the ages. In a single sentence, tolerance and intolerance are the two sides of the same coin.

For example, the nineteenth century could be considered as one of the progressive centuries in the history of India and the world; at the same time it could also be well-known for intolerant ideas and inhuman practices such as Sati in the name of religion. Similarly, it was the century when the champion of tolerant ideas appeared in India who not only interrogated intolerance but also showed people the path of tolerance and in a way helped in sustenance of humanity. A number of erudite people protested and interrogated intolerance but Raja Rammohun Roy was the first progressive person who protested the act of intolerance whether social, religious or moral or any other form starting from the incident of Bhagalpur till he breathed last in Bristol.

The central theme of this paper is to focus on how Rammohun employed his tolerant and humanistic appeal while interrogating intolerance. Even in the twenty first century digital India, acts of intolerance are being met with the same filthy language that resulted in the emergence of the

culture of inhumanity and a vicious cycle of social and political instability worldwide. In this context, if one carefully goes through the works of Rammohun Roy, then that person would learn how tolerance can be used as a defensive and effective tool against intolerance. It is impossible to present the overall picture of Rammohun's idea of tolerance in a single paper, therefore, the thrust of this paper is to map his arguments against intolerance from the publication of *Tuhfat-Ul-Muwahhidin* (1805) to the publication of *Precepts of Jesus* (1820). But before looking at the overview of Rammohun's ideas, it is essential to present a brief account of how intolerant ideas in the nineteenth century subjugated humanity.

Socio-Political situation of late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century India:

It has been mentioned earlier that, late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, often characterised as a 'century of progress' is at the same time an intolerant age too. Intolerance, basically had forms of manifestation which could spread social and political instability and unrest.

Rammohun was born after one and half decades of the battle of Plassey (1757). Amiya Kumar Sen³ has described the time Rammohun belonged to in the following words:

Religion which laid emphasis on mechanical adherence to outworn creeds; religious practices and observances which debased human nature instead of elevating it; social traditions which thought more rules of diet than personal integrity; social ideals which held women in contempt and allowed them no opportunities to develop their potentialities; landlord who exploited the peasantry and wasted their wealth in extravagant expenses; a tenantry, oppressed and downtrodden, which struggled hopelessly against abject poverty; an administration chaotic in the extreme; such was Bengal as Rammohun saw it.

The making and unmaking of nawabs between 1757 and 1765 brought to the Company and its servants a large sum which was calculated at £5,666,16664 exclusive of Clive's *jagir*. From 1757, the Company exported billions to China in silver export. The investment did not bring in exchange any import to Bengal, rather it resulted in a huge drain of wealth to England via China which resulted in the Bengal famine and ultimately made the life of the common people miserable. Introduction of the Permanent Settlement Act (1793) gave rise to a new propertied class⁵ and that landed gentry had hardly any connection with either cultivation or the land.

Colonial North India including Bengal had a rigid pre-existing caste system which divided the entire society into different sub-groups of *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Baiisyas* and *Sudras* based on their

power in the social hierarchy. The Aryan system recognized these groups as constituting full-fledged *Varnas* and separated them from each other. There were many *upa-varnas* which were strictly guided by the ritualistic practices and devoid of any sense of humanity. At that point of time in the Bengali society inter-caste marriage was strictly forbidden (*anulom* and *protilom bibaha*) and even there were restrictions about the inter-caste dining and drinking. The lower caste people were also denied the access to basic minimum education. The *Brahmins* were the predominant caste in the existing social system of the nineteenth century Bengal.

In pre-colonial Bengal idol worship was very popular. Deities such as of *Dharma*, *Charak*, *Samasancari Shiva*, local or popular gods, *dhwajas* and trees were considered as the integral part of popular religious practices. Performance of *yatras*, the observance of *bratas* and *utsabs*, rites, rituals and ceremonies and the practice of *yagyans* were accepted as different modes of religious celebration. The *brahmins* also encouraged the above mentioned as it brought some material prosperity and comfort to them. Therefore, even some *Brahmins* were being aware of the 'nature of purer mode of divine worship' but instead of attacking it they 'advanced

and encouraged it to the utmost of their power by keeping knowledge of their scriptures concealed from the rest of the people'.⁶ It was believed that the human activities were determined by the doctrine of *karma*, theory of transmigration of souls, the concept of *other* world, belief in spirit, oblation of waters etc. Rammohun himself acknowledged in the preface to his translation of the *Ishopanishad'* (1816) that many learned *Brahmins* of this country "are perfectly aware of the absurdity of idolatry, and are well informed of the nature of the purer mode of divine worship...".

The position of nineteenth century Bengali women in society was subjugated. The existing social system considered women as the mere instruments for bearing and rearing children. To them, the sole mission of the women's life was to live humbly behind the curtains, performing the household work and attending to their fathers, brothers, husbands, sons and other male members of their families. The existing system also denied them any independent status or rights. Women were "kept void of education and acquirements".⁸ In spite of religious injunctions on lower castes, *Brahmins* and *Kayasthas* of high caste, "far from spending money on the marriage of their daughters and sisters received considerable sums and generally bestowed them in marriage of their

daughters and sisters in marriage to those who could pay most”.⁹ Their daughters and sisters were very often forced to marry to persons who were sick or infirm or had some natural disability. Hence, women either became widows soon after their marriage or led a miserable life for no fault of their own. Many *kulin Brahmins* had fifteen or twenty wives for their material prosperity, sometimes the number rose to fifty or more. After getting married, most of these women “without even seeing or receiving any support from their husbands”¹⁰ had to depend on their fathers and brothers for their subsistence.

Rammohun – the Interrogator of Intolerance and Propagator of Humanity:

Born in a devout *Vaishnava Brahmin* family at Radhnanagar in Hooghly of Bengal on 22 May, 1772, he was interested in studying various religions since his childhood. Frustrated with ritualistic intolerant religious practices he was eager to know about the real nature of true religion and whether it was really intolerant to humanity at all. He also had learnt a number of languages such as Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Greek and Latin.

Rammohun started his career as an employee of the East India Company in the capacity of a writer and gradually became the manager to the

officials of the East India Company. While he was in Murshidabad, he published his first essay which was a lengthy rationalistic appeal for monotheism written in Persian the *Tuhfat-Ul-Muwahhidin*¹¹ (A Gift to Monotheism) in 1805, which he completed between 1803-04. But he became a popular cosmopolitan figure when he published one of his celebrated works *Precepts of Jesus, The Guide to Peace and Happiness* extracted from the *Books of the New Testament*, ascribed to the *Four Evangelists* with translation into Sanskrit and Bengali (1820). Rammohun's views on intolerance can be best understood in the light of these two major publications. In *Tuhfat* he criticised irrationality and in *Precepts of Jesus* he argued against the intolerant attitude of the Christian Missionaries towards other religions and their reluctant attitude in acknowledging the self contradictions of Christianity. Rammohun openly criticised the irrational practices of Christianity such as doctrine of trinity, deity, atonement and miracles with his rational logical arguments like the English and American Unitarians which lay at the root of intolerance. Since 1818, he had regular exchange of views with his English Unitarian friends and from 1821 with the American Unitarian circle. After publication of his *Translation of an Abridgement of the Vedanta* (1817), he became

a transnational celebrity¹² and many regarded him as initiator of 'Hindoo Reformation'.¹³

Questions may arise as to why Rammhon dealt so much with the question of irrationality and intolerance. It is because he was the first modern personality who realised that religion was the subset of the whole social system and both were inter-related. That kind of modern attitude had never been taken up before Rammohun by any other Indian. In the words of notable Rammohun scholar Ajit Kumar Chakrabarty :

No wise saints or religious leaders before Rammohun had been able to realize the close inter-connection between religion, sociology and law. It is probably because of that the religious leaders did not try directly to interfere in the matters of society. They kept the society aside and talked much about spiritual development. Rammohun not only tried his best to eradicate the irrational and intolerant elements of society but also took active endeavour in bridging the existing wide gap between religion and society.¹⁴

Being a farsighted man Rammohun was ahead of his time and realized the demand of his hour and understood that to keep pace with the progressive age, socio-cultural practices should be modified. He understood that to bring desirable changes to the existing social order, reform of the age-old ritualistic religious practices was a must. Contrary to Western materialistic life, the cornerstone of the day to day

life of India was deeply rooted in religion. Therefore, in his first publication he strongly criticised the age-old brutal practices in the name of religion of India. He opined that¹⁵:

... the Brahmins have the tradition from God that they have strict orders from God to observe their ceremonies and hold their faith forever. There are many injunctions about this from the Divine Authority in the Sanskrit language, and I, the humblest creature of God, having been born amongst them, have learnt the language and got those injunctions by heart and this nation (the Brahmins) having confidence in such divine injunctions cannot give them up although they have been subjected to many troubles and persecution and were threatened to be put to death by the followers of Islam.

Rammohun's rationalism was not entirely derived from the knowledge of western progressive culture. It was evident from Digby's testimony that when he wrote *Tuhfat* his command over English was still imperfect¹⁶.

It his illuminating study A. K. Mazumder¹⁷ described Rammohun as follows:

For several thousands of years, India has produced seers and saints, men of God. Rammohun did not belong to this category; he was an astute man of affairs, who knew how to grasp opportunities of enriching himself amidst the turmoils of a transitional period. He could move in any society at ease, and carry a delicate diplomatic mission with the dignity due to an ambassador or descendant of Akbar the Great. Yet above all this, he was deeply religious.

As a logical man, he interpreted religion within

the frame of rationalism and scientific outlook. He realized that the worldly religions were creations of human beings and no religion could be devoid of humanity. Hence, he questioned as to how people could become religious and intolerant at the same time. Rammohun repeatedly emphasised on two factors : a) self control and b) respect for other religions. Rammohun fearlessly declared that:

I am therefore anxious to support them even at the risk of my life. I rely much on the force of truth, which will ultimately prevail.¹⁸

Rammohun, himself did not explain the meaning of the word *Muwahhidin*, which can be translated generally, as a believer of unity of God or a monotheist. In this pamphlet, Rammohun stated that every individual essentially consisted of two self contradictory aspects: one was his natural instinct and another was the sentiments of his sects, clans and creed. In between these two aspects of life, the individual should have to choose a natural path for determination of the true religion which was to him the integral part of self-development. Rammohun noticed that almost each and every religious leader claimed that he was leading followers in the right direction. Unfortunately, the reality was mostly the opposite.

Rammohun's relationship with Christianity

was not smooth also because of his impartial attitude to every religion. He started to learn English in 1796 and after almost two decades his *Translation of an Abridgement of the Vedanta* appeared and transmitted to the overseas readers. Rammohun was a Vedantin by orientation and was in favour of any logical rational tradition. Hence, the Sufi Mutazila monotheist tradition and Unitarianism rationalism both attracted him. After three years of publication of *Abridgement of Vedanta* he published *Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to peace and Happiness; Extracted from the Books of the new Testament ascribed to the Four Evangelists* (1820). It's a simple text with a brief preface with selections from four gospels and without any critical note. Like other Unitarians (such as Priestley) Rammohun was not interested in chronological matters, but 'it was the recorded words of Jesus which intrigued him'¹⁹.

The publication of *Precepts* resulted in controversy between Rammohun and the orthodox Christian missionaries like Joshua Marshman and including some of Rammohun's good old friends, whom he had helped. Rammohun defended his argument by his authority over Latin and Greek and criticised them in Unitarian tune. In its preface Rammohun expressed his views on difference of

opinion from where intolerance starts its journey. He stated that :

A conviction in the mind of its total ignorance of the nature and of specific attributes of the Godhead, and a sense of doubt respecting the real essence of soul, give rise to the feelings of great dissatisfaction with our limited powers, as well as with all human acquirements which fail to inform us on these interesting points.... This essential characteristic of the Christian religion I was for long time unable to distinguish as such, amidst the various doctrines I found insisted upon in the writings of Christian Authors and in the conversation of those teachers of Christianity with whom I have had honour of holding communications. Amongst those opinions, the most prevalent seems to be, that no one is justly entitled to the appellation of Christian who does not believe in the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Ghost as well as the divine nature of God, the Father of all created beings. Many allow a much greater latitude to the term Christian, and consider it as comprehending all who acknowledge the Bible to contain the revealed will of God, however they may differ from others in their interpretation of particular passage or scripture; whilst some require from him who claims the title of Christian, only an adherence to the doctrine of Christ as taught by himself.... That they were so is obvious from the several instances of difference of opinion amongst the Apostles recorded in the Acts and Epistles.²⁰

In this context Rammohun raised the question of intra-faith tolerance of different schools of Christianity. A critical review of *Precepts of Jesus* appeared in the *Friend of India* by a Christian Missionary Deocar Schmidt, who feared that such publication might

'greatly injure the cause of truth'. Even Marshman argued that Rammohun as 'an intelligent Heathen, whose mind is as yet completely opposed to the grand design of the Saviour's becoming incarnate'.²¹ This kind of comment hurt Rammohun's feelings and he replied with publication of *An Appeal to the Christian Public in Defence of the Precepts of Jesus by a Friend of Truth*. In that book he strongly defended his argument from the selections from the word of Christ himself and thereafter he pointed out about the unfortunate results of the missionary methods of preaching Christianity. In reply to his first appeal Marshman replied that he refused to call any one Christian who does not believe in "the Divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ and the divine authority of the whole of holy Scriptures".²² That argument was the best example to show the intolerant attitude of missionaries on Rammohun's rational argument. In reply to Marshman, Rammohun wrote *Second Appeal* in 1821 which was six times of length of the *First Appeal*. There he repudiates any desire to challenge the credibility of the miracles recorded in the New Testament, or to put them on level with the marvels of Hindu mythology. He also successfully rejected Marshman's attempt to prove the doctrine of trinity from the *Old Testament* but with logical argument

and without any personal attack to Marshman.²³ Rammohun's sole mission was to establish unity of God which ultimately eradicates all possibilities of indolence and irrationality

Rammohun showed that for the sake of worldly power, possession and wealth most of the religious leaders influenced the common people with attractive words, with a dose of some mysterious and supernatural activities and claim their religions as the best religion of the world. That ultimately misguided the common people. The seeds of intolerance lie on the misperception about the nature of true religion among common people. In every religious place, all kinds of religious mal-practices had been done in the name of God. But if a person really goes through the original scripture, then he will be able to realise the original meaning of the religion. Rammohun quoted from Hafiz that, 'internal quarrel' of different religious groups should be taken in a merciful mood as the person who are quarrelling about religion actually fail to realize the true meaning of religion'. He tried to emancipate the true religion from the ritualistic malpractices and established the scientific and logical base of true religion which fosters in the cosmopolitan tradition of India through ages. When his contemporary self-claimed religious *gurus*

vehemently attacked him, he firmly stated that:

As to the satire and abuse; neither my education permits any return by means of similar languages nor does the system of my religion admits a desire of unbecoming retaliation : situated as I am, I must bear them tranquillity.²⁴

Rammohun said that an intelligent person should need to justify the *bilapasdari* (authenticity of religion)²⁵ and testify the religion which he or she believed to be true. But common people generally had a general conception of an accepted form of religion due to their limited knowledge and sense of rationality which they hardly are able to overcome. He prayed to almighty so that common people could realize the difference between *adat* (religious customs) and *tabiyat* (true human nature).²⁶ He realised that the true meaning of every religion is same. The difference is in the *kadam-e-din* (religious instructions) given by religious leader and *gurus* time to time which ultimately made the people hostile towards each other.

In *Tuhfat* and *Precepts* Rammohun essentially tried to find out the basic unity between the Universal religion and its particular, sectoral, dogmatic manifestation through different religious groups. In *Tuhfat* he said,

Although it cannot be denied that social instinct in man demands that every individual of this species should have permanent regulations for the different stages of life and for

living together, but social laws depend on an understanding of each other's meaning (or ideas) and on certain rules which separate the property of one from that of another, and provide for the removal of the pain which one gives to another. Making these the basis, the inhabitants of all the countries, distinct island and lofty mountains have according to their progress and intellectuality, formed words indicative of the meaning and origin of faiths on which at present stand the governments of the world.²⁷

Rammohun put forward the message for the general public to follow the right and rational path which ultimately taught them the lesson of tolerance. In his later writings he emphasised the concept of reason and social utility. It is for that particular reason Rammohun once wrote²⁸:

The ground which I took in all my controversies was, not that of opposition to Brahmanism, but to a perversion of it, and I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahmins was contrary to the practice of their ancestors, and the principles of the ancient books and authorities which they profess to revere and obey.

In *Tuhfat* he tried to conceive religion on a rational social basis and in the *Precepts* the indolent attitude that came out of that irrationality. It should be kept in mind that *Tuhfat* ought not be considered as an anti-Islamic text, which implied that he was a person who had neutral attitude for every religions. But he was not an anti-religious person at all. In that text Rammohun wanted to reveal the reasoned

exposition of the fallacy of dogmatism common to all religions, and may be read even today as the work of a rationalist, deist and Universalist. The *Tuhfat* and *Precepts* were not also considered as the declaration of new faith, but should be treated as a record of Raja's tolerant attitude and conviction.

Rammohun wanted to establish the rational and progressive version of religion of humanity inherent in Indian tradition which was not only confined to scriptural interpretation but had some practical significance in worldly life.

To him, the religious sects and sub-sects emerging out of inter and intra-religious differences which were major obstacles to progress and development. In a letter to his close friend John Digby, Rammohun expressed his concern in this regard. In his argument he sadly stated²⁹:

I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is only well calculated to promote their practical interest. The distinction of caste by introducing innumerable divisions and sub-divisions among them has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise.... It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort.

In another letter to his friend Lt. Colonel

Valentine Blacker (1778 –1823) he said:

I regret only that the followers of Jesus, in general, should have paid much greater attention to enquiries after his nature than to the observance of his commandments, when we are well aware that no human acquirements can ever discover the nature even of the most common and visible things and moreover, that such inquiries are not enjoined by the divine revelation. On this consideration I have compiled several passages of the New Testament which I thought essential to Christianity and published them under the designation of *Precepts of Jesus*, at which the Missionaries of Srirampoor have expressed greatest displeasure, and called me, in their review of tracts, an injurer to the cause of truth. I was, therefore, under the necessity of defending myself in *Appeal to the Christian Public...*³⁰

Rammohun's publication of the *Appeal to the Christian Public* was followed by *A Dialogue between a Missionary and Three Chinese Converts* (1823). In these documents Rammohun again criticised the Christian dogma about the doctrine of trinity.

No scholar doubted Rammohun's tolerant attitude, even if he would be judged by the critical standard liberal yardstick: only in one particular point he was uncompromising. He refused to accept image worship in any shape or in any form. Rammohun concluded *Tuhfat* with a quotation from Hafiz in which the great Persian poet entreats his fellowmen not to injure one another. This is followed by Rammohun's work *Monzaratul Adiyani*

(Discussion with various religions).

The publication of these rationalist tracts and monographs resulted in consternation in the orthodox circle both among the Hindus and the Christians. The Hindu Brahmins threatened with a vigorous assault and changed that Roy roused up the passions of the uncultured masses. Everywhere people talked of Rammohun and his challenge.

In another letter to Digby, Rammohun mentioned about the opposition he felt from his countrymen. He reported to Digby³¹ that:

...several of my countrymen have risen superior to their prejudices ; many are inclined to seek for the truth; and a great member of those who dissented from me have now coincided with me in opinion.

He was a man of tolerance and always supported the cause of humanity which was even admired by great philosophers like Jeremy Bentham. As a man of cosmopolitan ideas, he neither belonged to any particular religious community. Rather he was a man of universal humanity which is basically tolerant to the true faith of every individual irrespective of caste, creed, race and religion. Therefore it is evident from the above discussion that Rammohun's idea of tolerance can not only guide people in interrogating intolerance in a tolerant way but it also left a lesson behind it which can be followed even in the coming

years ahead.

After the demise of Rammohun, *Bristol Mercury* published a long poem to remember the splendid accomplishment of the Indian reformer, who spent his life to awaken his countrymen as his ‘nation sat in great darkness’ of religious superstition, prejudice, illiteracy and ignorance and who tried his best to find out a rational solution. It wrote³²:

The angel of the Lord hath call'd away
His faithful servant, at the evening hour,
While glowing tints still gild the western sky,
Yet though around our hearts dark sorrow lour,
And tears of sad regret must dim the eye,
We mourn not without hope. Thy race is run
Enter the rest! Servant of God – “Well done!”³²

Notes and references :

1. Hobsbawm, Eric; *The Age of Extremes: The Short twentieth Century, 1914-1991*, Abacus, London, 1994
2. To YogendraYadav, nation is not the guiding principle of the South Asian democracy such as India. The binding force of such state nation is asymmetric federalism contrary to symmetric federalism of United States or Canada. Stephan, Alfred; Linz, Juan J. and YogendraYadav; *Crafting State Nation: India and Other Multinational Democracy*, by, John Hopkins University Press, 2011, Baltimore, Introduction
3. Sen, Amiya Kumar; *Raja Rammohun Roy: The Representative Man*, Calcutta Text Book Society, Calcutta; 1967; p-33
4. *The Third Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons*

- on the Nature, State and Condition of East India Company*, London, 1773, pp311-12; J.C. Sinha, *Economic Annals of Bengal*, Macmillan & Co., London, 1927, pp.-41-42
5. Petition to the Parliament against Jury Act. Nov,1826
 6. English works of Raja Rammohun Roy (Panini) Allahabad, 1906: p-66, *Isha Upanishad*, Preface
 7. Mukherjee, Amitabha, *The Brahma Samaj Movement and Its Social Challenge*, in S.P. Sen edited, *Social Contents of Indian Religions Reform Movement*, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, 1978, p-270
 8. *English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy* (Panini), Allahabad,1906, p-360 Second Conference on the Practice of Burning Widows Alive
 9. *Ibid*, "Brief Remarks Regarding the Ancient Rights of Females", p 282
 10. *Ibid*, "A Second Conference on the practice of Burning of Widows Alive". p361
 11. Hatcher, Brian; *Remembering Rammohun: An Essay on (Re-) Emergence of Modern Hinduism*, History of Religion, Vol. 46, No. 1 (August 2006), p-57
 12. Biswas, Dilip; *Rammohun Samiksha*, Swarswata Library, Calcutta, p255. Also See Mazumdar, *Rammohun Roy and the Progressive Movement in India*, pp3-17
 13. Zastoupill, Lynn; *Rammohun Roy and Making of Victorian Britain*, Palgrave Mcmillan, New York, 2010, p-28.
 14. Cited in Dilip Kumar Biswas, Op.cit. p-320. Originally in Ajit Kumar Chakrabarty, *Moharshi Debendranath Thakur*, Allahabd, 1916, *Jibon Chiterer Khosra* (Draft Life Sketch), p-viii.
 15. The father of Modern India, *Commemoration Volume of the Rammohun Roy Centenary Celebrations*, 1900, Compiled and edited by Satish Chandra Chakavarty, Calcutta, 1935, Page references to part 2 of this volume, p-178
 16. In an introduction to an 1817 London reprint of *Two Tracts* of Rammohun, Digby stated that the "Brahmin...when I became acquainted with him, could merely speak it (English) well enough to be understood upon the most common topics of discourse, but could not written it with any degree of correctness." Rammohun

- seems to have had perfect knowledge only after entering service of Digby. They met each other first in 1801, but Rammohun became his *munshi* only in 1805. S.D. Collet, *Life and letters of Raja Rammohun Roy* edited by Biswas and Ganguli (Calcutta, 1962), pp 23-24, pp-37-38
17. Mazumdar, A.K.; *Religion of Rammohun Roy* in V. C Joshi edited, *Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernisation in India*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, Delhi, p-69
 18. Roy, Rammohun *English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy* Volume –I Edited Ghosh, p-6
 19. Zastoupill, like Sugiratharajah, thought that like a literalist like Thomas Jefferson Rammohun believed that recorded words of Jesus were actually spoken by him. Cited in Zastoupill p-30.
 20. Collet, S.D., *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy* (edited by Dilip Kumar Biswas, and Prabhat Chandra Ganguli, Sadharan Brahma Samaj, Calcutta 1988, 4th edn. pp-119-120
 21. Ibid –p124.
 22. *Friend of India*; May, 1820.
 23. Collet; Op.cit, p-126.
 24. Roy, Rammohun, *English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy* Volume –I Edited Ghosh, pp123-124
 25. *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy* with an English translation of *Tuhfat-Ul-Muwahhidin*, published by Panini Office, Allahabad, 1906. (The Introduction to this work was written by Ramananda Chetterji, but not signed) pp. 947, 954
 26. Quoted in Roy, Rammohun; *Rammohun Rochonaboli*, edited by Ajit Kumer Ghosh; Haraf Prakashoni, Kolkata, April, 1973, introduction, p-iii
 27. *Selected Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, Government of India, publication division, New Delhi, 1977, p-296
 28. Kazi Abdul Odood after detailed study of *Tuhfat* opined that, it appears that *Monazaratul Adiyani* was circulated among public either in manuscript or in printed form, *Life and Letters of Rammohun Roy* by Sophia Dobson Collet ed. by Dilip Kumer Biswas and Prabhat Chandra Ganguli, Sadharan Brahma Samaj, Calcutta, 1962 third edition, p-35
 29. Mazumdar, A.K, Opsit. p-80

Speaking of a Tolerant Man and of an 'Intolerant Century'

30. Collet, S.D; Op.cit., p-127
31. Ball, Upomedranath; *Rammohun Roy. A Study of His Life and Works and Thoughts*, Sadharan Brahma Samaj, September, 1933 (Reprint 1995), Calcutta p-53
32. *Bristol Mercury*, October 26, 1833

Understanding Tolerance: The Context of Gandhi

**Sumita Chattopadhyay and
Madhusudan Nandan**

One of the essential ingredients of democratic fabric of any variety is tolerance and we take the liberty to make an assertion that it would not be an exaggeration if we make the statement – intolerance is undemocratic. If this is version acceptable as the point of entry to this paper – it facilitates a greater visibility which otherwise likely to remain invisible. Hence, Gandhi emphatically observed “If we want to cultivate a true spirit of democracy, we cannot afford to be intolerant”¹. The essence of democracy lies in appreciating dissents and this acts as the most crucial means of strengthening the foundation of plurality. This we all generally agree in principle, irrespective of the actual extent of practice in reality. We often tend to ignore our inclination towards compromising the spirit of appreciating any opposing point of view, for the right or wrong reasons claim to justify as natural and just. The justifications of the state appear with greater sanctity, being backed

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by her defining status of enjoying absolute authority of interpreting what is wrong and right in a political context or scenario, mostly for her own political gain, while simultaneously setting the individuals' and the collective's boundary on the issue. The consensus of mass in general, reflect a package that are carefully masked with ideological overtone and manufactured sentiments which further sanctions and persuades the actions of suppressing the descent². And this appears evidently at all levels of interactions in our everyday realities. As a result the culture of disapproving descent marginalizes the spirit of agree to disagree that is steadily disappearing from the socio-political climate and more damagingly from our personal orientations. We learn to live in isolation as alienated self with the imagined dream of convenience and freedom of our own individual choice as primary as instilled by the culture of consumerism. Hence the moral of the story is that our sense of security is directly related to the suppression of other points of view that are different from ours. Gandhi asserted that this tendency of suppression or even marginalization is nothing but a real form of violence³. Hence intolerance is violence.

To Gandhi violence is the trait of the brute which demands application of force to ensure domination either physically or psychologically or both for the persuasion of self-interest or benefit⁴. So intolerance leading to violence always begins its journey with

the identification of other⁵ and revolves around it. If this conflict confines among the individuals or groups, the state may encourage different sides to resolve under the specified provisions of law which in a way justifies the institutionalization of violence as natural and normal. When it manifests among the larger groups such as among communities like caste, religious or linguistic and cultural groups, the state occupies the role of the negotiator/arbitrator often with the ratification of court of law habitually oriented for maximizing political revenue for narrow political interest. Here too both the seeds of violence and the basis of conflict, act as the convenient means of control on the part of the authority. The authority being well aware of the possibility that if victims, may it be individuals or groups, want to retaliate, there will be no end to escape from the violence-trap as this is destined to breed one form of violence to another as natural repercussion. This sense of naturalness would in effect help us to adapt in the culture of violence. Intolerance is only a primary expression of this culture. Being a part of this multifaceted symbolic network of violence-culture, we define our morality and ethics and thereby our worldview with a clear inclination and contribution to the ratification of this culture of violence. In one hand it gets legitimacy with a degree of controlled sanction from the authority structure, while we construct, contribute or even

initiate a series of behavioural pattern reflecting our approval and inclination towards this culture of violence in our daily lives, on the other. And even when we are not exactly approving any such extent of violence or specific incidents, we still contribute to its perpetuation through our indifference, silence and avoidance making our stand ambiguous, as our reactions might cost our convenience or might lead us into a trouble. Gandhi rightly said: “Ahimsa is the extreme limit of forgiveness, but forgiveness is the quality of the brave. Ahimsa is impossible without fearlessness”⁶.

Another corollary of the violence is that it induces permanent sense of insecurity in both the victim and perpetrator. Victims would be inclined to resist the offences of the perpetrator for their basic need for survival, often leading to continuation or repetition of violent incidents while perpetrator may be under constant threat and likely to experience retaliation by another force because of the domination of interactions rooted in brute power as ultimate basis. Hence no form of exhibition of power is good enough to resist or even to control the desire for violence. To Gandhi, the desire of violence itself is potential enough for damaging the democratic fabric, independent of its expressions. He further explained Ahimsa as avoidance of harming anything in thought, word and deed which is not just limited to killing any life out of rage or self-interest⁷. So for eliminating

the inclination towards violence by non-violence can effectively be in practice only when it begins its journey within the perception of the individual. If we are not nonviolent in spirit then nonviolence in action would only be ornamental and the possibility of violent actions would be a matter of minimal slip. In this sense tolerance is not a conditioning of restrained, if not imposed behaviour. It has to be an integral attribute and natural extension of human characteristics. For this he suggested nonviolence is the means of reaching the end Satyagraha as he believed Satyagraha transpired into nonviolent resistance⁸. To Gandhi, Satyagraha is the force which grows out of truth, love and nonviolence; truth is rooted in the basic moral principle and sincerity of purpose⁹. Gandhi always reiterated that tolerance or non-violence or Ahimsa as the ultimate expression of limit of exoneration and to do so one requires tremendous amount of courage and determination. Hence he consciously, emphatically and consistently characterized intolerance and violence under the same bracket and considered them as the true obstacle for democratic milieu. He also pointed out that anger and intolerance are two enemies of correct understanding. Unless we ensure the spirit of nonviolence within our own personality system, our search for finding the causes of intolerance are bound to be futile.

In this context, apparently a benign approach

in our everyday life in today's global society and exploration of the perception of our identities may also appear interesting. Most of us, perhaps unknowingly, are defined by the market, being consumers. We are positioned in society not so much by what we can afford to consume but by what we actually consume. In other words we often consume things irrespective of our need and beyond our affordability. Because we are no longer defining our need by our individual choices or necessities but on the contrary, our preferences are defined by the market forces. Instead of our consumption of any commodity, the commodity consumes us. Our need, our orientation towards consumptions, our inclination for greater costlier consumptions, stretching beyond our affordability, perception of our presentation of social self and many other dimensions are continually defined, shaped, structured and thereby decided by the factors beyond our own control. Our consciousness reflects commodity consciousness. We have transformed our social beings into the self-centred, self-oriented, self-conscious consumers and desperately searching for egoistic gratifications in a meaningless vacuum. Whatever we draw that is extremely temporal and momentary and we run for futile pleasures for our alienated self in our fragmented consciousness. We have lost the sensitivity to differentiate pleasure from the pain and hence inviting miseries in the disguise of

happiness. We cease to have human attributes, being alienated from our real self, being differently masked at different points of time for the conditioning of the market, often beyond our choice and control.

In this backdrop, we may refer to the comments of eminent Critical theorist Herbert Marcuse, one of the most renowned contributors of the Neo-Marxist school, that he observed in his famous book *One Dimensional Man* on analyzing the advance of capital's blitz in the Western economy. He was referring to two important concepts – Instrumental Reason and Mass Culture. Instrumental reasons are the overriding way of thinking in the modern world. It is concerned only with satisfying immediate needs, only with means rather than the ends. Efficiency and rationality are the two most important aspects and there is no room for questioning this efficiency and rationality. There is no room for asking why we are doing this or what it is for. As a result Western capitalist world, in spite of enjoying an affluent standard of living, is continually encouraged to want more, indulging continual conspicuous consumption without any moral guard or social conscience. Instrumental reason has no actual reason; it can only create a mass society bereft of thinking capacity and moral positions¹⁰.

In today's context, the globalized world is not only operating in the field of economy and politics but also on culture, environment and identity. In the

context of economy, various capital forces, compelled by excessive surplus production and desperate desires for increasing profits are desperately trying to ensure greater market share by creating surplus needs through aggressive propaganda and ideological persuasion. This surplus need is, in turn controlling the individual mind and reducing the entire identity into the identity of a consumer with excessive greed for individualistic consumptions and selfcentric worldview. Increasingly new sets of demands are manufactured from outside and hegemonizing the individual mind with the obsession of commodity fetishism. In the midst of this consumerist culture, the unchallenged rule of technology, the harsh market principles without a human face, individuals are responding as rudderless ship. They are bereft of any moral consciousness to restrain themselves for not being trapped by this so-called journey towards progress.

Gandhi could well apprehend that the consumerist culture, the by-products of modern scientific and technological developments would hegemonize the entire society, and man would be enslaved by his own desire¹¹. In *Young India*, Gandhi commented: "I knew that for India to run after Golden Fleece is to court certain death"¹². But Gandhi was optimist enough to rescue us to show us the light from this engulfing all-pervading modern industrial cultural imperialism which is

“poisoning our inner strength, our integrity, our moral character”¹³. He further reiterated “under the new outlook, multiplicity of material wants will not be the aim of life, the aim will be rather their restriction consistently with comfort. We shall cease to think of getting what we can, but we shall decline to receive what all cannot get”¹⁴. It is further argued that exclusive possession is not compatible with love and therefore with Non-violence. Besides possessions necessarily include the seeds of exploitation, and since exploitation is the negation of Non-violence, non-possession is an essential attribute of Non-violence¹⁵. Our unending pursuit and uncontrolled desire for material possessions for the momentary pleasure takes our self away from our own control, and we make ourselves vulnerable to be manipulated by others. In this process we are losing control on our own course of action and hence tend to be violent for chasing our desire endlessly.

Gandhi repeatedly cautioned us to be sensitive about our approach towards others through a dual process of objectivity and subjectivity. We must be careful about applying true subjectivity while trying to understand others’ position and we must attempt to introspect, as truthfully as possible, our own positions without any bias or inclinations. He agreed to the position that rational discussion is a good starting point but he was also very much aware about its limitations. Reason can take us up to a point, but

when the heart is hard and rigid, reason does not work. What one needs is the unity of head and heart. Reason can only appeal to the head – we must find ways of activating somebody’s heart, conscience, his moral universe, so that he is prepared to recognize us as a human being. Only that can generate between us a possibility of a rational discourse¹⁶. In other words, Gandhi asserted that meaningful exchange is possible only in a mutually respectful interaction. In trying to defeat an enemy, we defeat the very vital within ourselves. Hence Gandhi advocated for a dialogue between cultures for trying to understand each other in the best possible way. He believed that other human beings are not “others” or strangers or enemies – they are “us” in a different form as all of us share a common community. According to Gandhi, true dialogue is important because of two reasons – one to understand the discourse that shapes our thought process through which we look at the world and secondly, what can we learn through the dialogue? True dialogue grows out of the desires to grow, to expand one’s horizon and universe and to create the positive possibilities of enriching oneself. Gandhi says through enriching ourselves we recognize our own limitations. To Gandhi, self-criticism is the foundation of a dialogue¹⁷. Gandhi, realizing the heterogeneous nature of a country like India cautioned in clear words and said, “I have clearly observed that no school of thought can claim

a monopoly of right judgement. We all are liable to err and are often obliged to revise our judgements. In a vast country like this, there must be room for all schools of honest thought. And the least, therefore, that we owe to ourselves is to try to understand to opponent's viewpoint and, if we cannot accept it, respect it, as fully as we expect him to respect ours"¹⁸.

Endnotes

1. Young India, February, 1921.
2. As Gandhi observed-“ True democracy or the Swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful or violent means, for simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of the antagonists”. Harijan, May, 1939.
3. Young India, February, 1921.
4. Young India, August, 1920.
5. Gandhi in the 21st Century- Professor Bhikhu Parekh, the Second Fred Blum Memorial Lecture September, 2009.
6. Young India, November, 1926.
7. Harijan, September, 1935.
8. Gandhi Research Foundation, website <http://gandhifoundation.net/about%20gandhi.htm>
9. *ibid*
10. Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 1964.
11. Patha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, 1986.
12. Young India, April 1931
13. *Collected works*, volume 59.
14. M. K. Gandhi, *Democracy; Real and Deceptive*, compiled by R K Prabhu 1961.
15. Nirmal Kr. Bose, *My Days with Gandhi*, 1953
16. For more elaborate discussion is incorporated in Professor Bhikhu Parekh, the Second Fred Blum Memorial Lecture September, 2009.
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18. Young India, April, 1924

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- Gandhi Research Foundation: <http://gandhifoundation.net/about%20gandhi.htm>

On the Seventieth Anniversary of the Partition of India: Rethinking Intolerance in a Diverse Country

Sucharita Sen

*Not forever does the bulbul sing
In the balmy shades of bowers,
Nor forever lasts the spring
Nor ever blossoms the flowers.
Sets the sun on days of bliss,
Friendships not forever last,
They know not life, who know not this.*

– Khushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p 135

The Indian National Anthem is reflective of the country's long tradition and cherished principle of 'Unity in Diversity'. This novel ideal sustained the civilization of Bharatvarsha since ancient times. Pre-colonial India survived massive invasions and violent intrusions, yet ordinary lives never got disrupted. India, a society-oriented civilization, as Tagore upholds, has the unique experience of peaceful

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coexistence with several communities living together.

This tranquillity, with a lost fervour made its absence adequately felt in contemporary India. As growing intolerance swept post-independent Indian society with a renewed vigour, in a gesture of destruction, the hollowness of in-fighting manifested itself, making national integration a distant vision.

The year 2017 brings the 1947 Partition of India to its 70th anniversary. On the eve of India's independence and in the years immediately succeeding it, intolerance coupled with brutal massacre of innocent Indians accompanied the partition of India. As a pencil through the geographical map of India implemented itself, India was doomed to be the site of bloodshed and chaos, the spectre of which was to haunt India for generations. Reflections upon the reasons for intolerance in India today become imperative with India witnessing the repercussions of heightened intolerance, whether manifesting itself in the form of massive communalism or scattered disruptive violence by local activists.

The Indian state was itself born in a frenzy of Partition with communal intolerance coupled with major portions of Indian territory being carved out to form new dominions. Added to those were secessionist and separatist demands among

constituent units in a new-born nation that was in dire need of unity and national integration to rekindle the engine of growth.

The section of the population, most adversely affected were the women in the provinces that were partitioned. As communal violence ensued, male power and victory of a community was manifested in the ugliest manner by the physical violation and subordination of the women belonging to the other 'enemy' religion. Once partition had been effected, on both sides of the newly formed borders, joint initiatives were taken by the governments of the new-born twins, India and Pakistan. These were intended to bring the abducted women back to their home. This relocation of women posed a severe challenge. Hindu women were to be brought back to India and the Muslim women to Pakistan, no matter that might not be corresponding to their real homes. (Butalia, 2006, p. 139). This was a curious paradox for the Indian state which was a rational modern entity, for religion was not its identity, yet the women were defined in terms of their religious identity. (Butalia, 2006, p. 139). This paradox was reiterated in the form of personal laws which the Indian state allowed to be continued despite judicial intervention. While the Hindu Code Bill was enacted, the Muslim Personal

laws were left untouched. Muslim women, in a single blow were denied equal citizenship, defined in terms of their religious spaces, rendered vulnerable and unequal vis-a-vis women of other communities while the notions of Gender Justice seemed a distant dream.

The Indian state is based on a Constitution whose secular character has been reaffirmed by an amendment to its Preamble. (Hasan, 2000, p. 283). However, persisting patriarchal and religious intolerance and lack of state initiative to counter hostile dogmatic forces reveals the widening gap between theory and practice.

Transgressions from the ideas of equality and tolerance entailed patriarchal and religious intolerance, the Partition of India being the epitome of both. The rising trend of communalism and the accompanying violence have created a feeling of insecurity among the religious minorities and ethnic groups. (Ahuja, 2007, p. 119). Nationalism and communalism have been the twin factors at the root of the major crises in the twentieth century Indian politics; Nationalism has been the aspiration and communalism the disease; and both in their own ways have shaped Indian politics. (Mehta, 1988, p. 153).

The polarization of communities in India manifested itself as early as in the 1920s in the form of Savarkar's 'Hindutva' and Jinnah's Two-Nation theory analogous to Gandhi's attempts to forge a tie of cooperation, thereby creating a pan-Indian freedom struggle to liberate the country from the yoke of an alien imperialism. Intolerance is not new in Indian politics. However, the form of radical and violent intolerance as manifested in post-colonial India was not present in the colonial days. However, the seeds of hatred were latent and once struck a blow, igniting a fire would not be difficult. Tracing the roots of Hindu-Muslim antagonism, Tagore asserts that the sense of separation was extreme among the Bengali Hindus and the Bengali Muslims in the sense, that in some parts of Bengal, Bengali Muslims were not allowed to sit on the same mattress with the Bengali Hindus, so much so that after the Muslims left, the water in the hookah was also changed. In "Lokahita", Tagore asserts that at the height of the Swadeshi movement, he found a Hindu Bengali Swadeshi volunteer asking a Muslim Swadeshi volunteer to get down from the verandah of a house, without the slightest hesitation so that he could drink an unpolluted glass of water.

A preacher of Hindu-Muslim unity, Jinnah

discarded the initial plan for Pakistan as a ‘childish gimmick’, only to give a concrete shape to the ‘Two-Nation’ theory. This fore-shadowed the Partition of India in 1947. The slogan of Pakistan was first articulated by the Muslim League in Lahore in 1940. Jinnah argued that the partition of India was proposed more than seven hundred years before – in 1192, on the eve of the Battle of Tarain, Muhammad Ghori suggested to Prithviraj Chauhan the partition of India leaving the region of Sirhind, Punjab and Multan with Sultan while retaining the rest of India for himself. Al- Beruni, about 150 years later pointed out the existence of two big groups subscribing to two different religions. Jinnah stated that Hindus and Muslims are two distinct civilizations having different cultures, and different heroes. These two groups could never peacefully coexist.

Different sections of the Muslim population had different perceptions of Pakistan. For the Muslim peasant, it meant freedom from the exploitation of the Hindu Zamindar, for the Muslim business class, it meant freedom from a well-established Hindu-business network, and for the Muslim intelligentsia, it meant better employment opportunities. (Ahuja, 2007, p.124).

The recurrence of communal riots in post

independent India reflects the disharmony and raging religious intolerance in the country. Communalism is considered at present a legitimate means of articulating and realizing sectional interests. (Sikri, 2001, p. 278-279). As Indians grow tolerant towards the intolerance which reigns rampant the nation will be doomed to problems and issues that are liable to give a thundering jolt to the secular fabric of India. Intolerance, holding its sway over the Indian society has become the most serious impediment to India's national integration and secular orientation.

“India is constipated with a lot of humbug. Take religion. For the Hindu, it means little besides caste and cow-protection. For the Muslim, circumcision and kosher meat. For the Sikh, long hair and hatred of the Muslim. For the Christian, Hinduism with a sola topee. For the Parsi, fire-worship and feeding vultures. Ethics, which should be the kernel of a religious code, has been carefully removed.” (Khushwant Singh, *Train To Pakistan*, p. 180).

True religion does not persecute. Ethics and morality is what constitutes the essence of religion. Religion in the Indian connotation means ‘Dharma’. ‘Dharma’ originates from the word ‘Dhri’ which means to carry or to hold. Religion governs the personal life activities of an individual. The crown

of Hinduism is that the Sanatana Dharma sanctions and endorses every form of honest striving after knowledge, it is jealous of no form of truth. (Sister Nivedita, 1952, p.12).

Swami Vivekananda, India's cultural and spiritual ambassador to the West asserts that for our own motherland, a junction of the two great systems – Hinduism and Islam – Vedanta brain and Islam body – is the only hope. (Vivekananda, 1996, p.115). Shri Ramakrishna said “yata mat tatha path” (as many isms, so many ways). In 1936, during the birth centenary of Paramhansa, Tagore honoured him saying “diverse courses of worship have mingled in your meditation”.

In Tagore's *Bharatvarsha*, the shore of the great ocean of mankind is imagined as attracting so many streams of the humankind that flow inexorably to lose their separate identities in its vast waters. (Mukhopadhyay, 2010, p. 187). Thus, throughout the ages, various communities have come to India and have made valuable contribution to the making of Bharatvarsha.

In contemporary India, it becomes imperative to revisit India's past, realize India's true nature in its diversity and tolerance. In a composite culture of India, intolerance is required to be uprooted. This

composite culture needs to be reinforced, the values of equality be augmented, its creative potential be harnessed to lead to the development of a new India – India that boasts of a rich culture and heritage of ancient times, heroic zeal and efficient administration of medieval times and the undaunted bravery of a long drawn freedom struggle.

“Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached” was Swamiji’s message to the Indian youth. With this ideal, the duty falls upon every individual to inculcate a spirit of tolerance in tune with the novel ideals of India’s civilization – the quintessential beauty of which is tolerance for all in an accommodative spirit, to embrace all in a cooperative endeavour and peaceful harmonious coexistence in a peaceful land with a composite culture.

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1. Tagore asserted that in our country, the king waged wars, defended his territory and dispensed justice, but society attended to everything else, from joldaan to *bidyadaan*. In the clearings of our bamboo groves and in the shade of our mango orchards temples and rest houses were built, tanks excavated; the village schoolmaster taught his simple arithmetic; readings from the scriptures never ceased, the Ramayana was chanted in altar-sheds, and village meeting places echoed to the melody of hymns

- to Krishna. See Rabindranath Tagore, *Towards Universal Man*, Bombay, Asia Publishing house, 1961, p. 49.
2. Written in the 1920s, Savarkar gives the criterion of Rashtra, Jati and Sanskriti to be termed as a Hindu. It has been criticised for formulating narrow fundamentalism and chauvinistic dogmatism. See Christophe Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism – A Reader*, Ranikhet, Permanent Black, 2007
 3. Ghastly examples of communalism includes the Godhra massacre, the Ayodhya dispute and demolition of the Babri Masjid, and incidents in riot prone cities like Varanasi, Aligarh, Meerut, Firozabad etc.
 4. Quoted in R. Dasgupta, “Spirit of India II”, *The Statesman*, New Delhi, March 16, 2001.

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Questioning the Gender Bias in the Hindu Marriage: Some Instances

Upamanyu Basu

Let a man be careful to honour his wife, for he owes to her alone all the blessings of his house. – Talmud

Marriage is almost a universal social institution and it defines human society to a great extent by saving it from promiscuity and randomness. Its definition and importance as a practical and logical set-up to function as a seed of family is undeniable. These aspects of marriage are absolute, but what poses itself as a question is its setting in the Hindu society and culture, and its undisputed continuance. We find prevalence of utmost “sexism” or Gender Bias when we start analyzing the base of all the customs and practices that surround this structure of marriage. “Personal is Political” was the idea propounded by the Radical Feminists. While discussing the different ideas that this particular group of feminists had in mind we find a tinge of extremity and vagueness by making feminism, an anti-men ideology. Yet its contribution of highlighting the personal life of women in the sphere of politics is noteworthy. This

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paper discusses the innate subordination of women in three phases surrounding the wedding ceremony. Firstly, the stereotypical sexism when the marriage is about to be fixed, secondly the wedding ceremony which is considered to be the most special night in anyone's life, and finally the position of 21st century women after the marriage, i.e, the general course of married life. It is to be kept in mind that the entire analysis that is put forward is based on the Indian context, and serves as a lesson to everyone of the ground reality of women's subordination in their lives, with special emphasis on the wedding ceremony, which serves to be the initiation of the journey ahead with a man.

Meera, an average Indian girl serves as an example of how during the process of finding an ideal groom, the girl is to face immense amount of discrimination and embarrassment. Lets visualize a scene. Meera walked into the living room. Dressed in a simple salwaar kameez she came and served tea to the guests. She sat down grimly beside her parents while the boy's family continued to stare at her. At last, Meera's mom decided to break the silence and as she started speaking about her daughter it felt as though she was giving the job profile of her maid. "Oh she can cook anything. Indian, Lebanese, Chinese. She is good at household work too. She is...."

“She is an Economics graduate with a post graduation in Business Administration. She is an author of several research papers and has been teaching at the University level for two years.”— finished Meera as she left the room disgusted.

Welcome to 21st Century India. Women are progressing after all. They have six seats ‘reserved’ in public buses. They are leading political parties, multinational corporations, they dance around in movies wearing skimpy clothes without any objection from the Censor Board whatsoever. Ten years into a new era, a woman is no less than a man, she is gritty and brimming with self-confidence. She carries herself with Louis Vutton and smartly conceals that black patch underneath her eye which was a gift from her husband as dinner was not ready when he had come back from work, the night before.

There are thousands of other Meeras who are married off every day to someone they barely know because, ‘their parents know it best’. More often than not, these marriages fail miserably because the very premise of Indian marriages is based on a gender prejudice. Think about it. Why do women alone have to leave their parents house and settle down with her in-laws irrespective of whether they respect her or not? We call it tradition but we never mean it. The younger generation although more aware, still

feels that—“Only westernized families have the luxury of falling in love.” So then is that it, Is it okay to compromise our own happiness for some obtrusive convention we fondly call, “TRADITION.”

With this note let us delve into the premise of Indian marriages. In the way we propose to unravel the various sexist customs which still dominate the wedding ceremony in India.

1. Kanyadaan: A tradition in all Indian weddings without which the wedding is incomplete. The very name Kanyadaan is made up of two words: Kanya and Daan. If taken literally, it means giving the daughter away, according to old Hindu traditions, it means the “gift of virginity” or “gifting a maiden”. It is an age-old tradition and there are many reasons as to why it was brought into existence. One of the most popular ones is that the scriptures stipulated that the eldest son or the ‘son’ of the family was supposed to light the funeral pyre of his parents to absolve them of sins and pass on happily into the afterlife. The patriarchal Hindu society began to thus revere boys and condemn daughters. To salvage the situation, Hindu priests then created the concept of Kanyadaan wherein they said that giving the daughter away was one of the highest honours as it too absolves the parents of sin. After the ritual, the

“duty” of the daughter is passed on from the parents to the groom and she is now his liability. Also, it is always a ‘kanya’ daan and not a ‘stree’ daan which implied that only virgins were allowed to have the honour of absolving the sins of their parents.

While it might have been sensible in ancient times, the treatment of women as property is incorrect in every way. Some traditions are better left buried with time and the tradition of Kanyadaan is one such. Just because the daughter marries off, it does not mean she now has no ties with her family. She has lived in the womb of a woman for nine months. No ritual on Earth can ever break that bond.

Another problem with Kanyadaan is that it is only the father who is allowed to give away the daughter. If the father is absent, another male relative has the honour. The mother is not in the picture at all. If not the tradition itself, even the steps associated with the ritual are chauvinist. Hindu marriage, with its rituals and ceremonies of the Vedic age, was relevant in the social circumstances of those times. Girls were married off before attaining puberty, and hence the ritual “Kanyadaan”. The responsibility of a girl was completely transferred to the family she was married into. A couple used to have many children. Hence, there was a social, moral, and economic balance within families, coupled with an emotional

sensitivity that was of give and take: daughter-in-law for a daughter.

2. Kashiyatra: A popular tradition in South India, Kashi Yatra is today treated as more of a fun event. And yet, it is an inseparable part of Tamil weddings. According to the ritual, the groom gets up from the wedding and refuses to marry the bride, saying he wants to give up worldly pleasures and complete his religious studies. He carries an umbrella, a walking stick and a towel containing lentils (dal) and rice. As he commences this mock pilgrimage, the bride's father stops him and pleads with him. He then tells the groom the benefits of married life versus ascetic life. He promises his daughter to him and that she will aid him through the ups and downs of his life. The groom then returns to the wedding and the wedding continues.

Apparently it seems to be quite innocent and funny. But then, the question arises in the modern world, why is only the groom allowed to embark on a Kashiyatra? Why can't the bride want to study further and decide to get up and leave the marriage hall with her mother-in-law tagging behind her, begging her not to leave the groom? Why is it treated as ambitious only for the groom. In modern days, the bride's life will definitely not end if the groom decides to get up and leave. Rather, she might just

decide to move on in life and get much ahead of the groom in education and career.

3. Haldi for the bride: The tradition of haldi is a beautiful one where a paste of turmeric and other spices is applied on the bodies of the bride and the groom by relatives and friends to cleanse their skin and help them glow. The entire tradition is fun and a time of great bonding for the bride with her family. It also cherishes some of her last moments with her family as an unmarried woman. However, in certain regions, the bridal haldi ceremony can get weird. In Bengali tradition for the pre-wedding haldi, the turmeric paste carried by the groom's family for the bride is the same paste used by the groom or a paste that has touched the groom's body. Leaving the sexist aspect aside, we really wonder how hygienic this tradition is. While it is not practised in many urban areas or among literate people (the groom just touches the haldi with his hand before it is sent to the bride), the custom is meticulously followed in rural areas.

In some Bengali traditions, the bride is made to sit under the elbow of the groom and water is then passed from his elbow on to her. While this tradition is not exactly the haldi tradition and happens after the wedding, turmeric paste is often applied to both to ward off the evil eye.

4. The mother is prohibited from participating in the wedding ceremony: As strange as it sounds, in Bengali weddings, the bride's mother is not allowed to see the wedding. It is believed that the mother witnessing the wedding will bring harm on her daughter. Or the mother possesses the evil eye to harm her daughter's marriage. We have nothing to say on just how wrong and terrible this tradition seems to be.

5. Manglik Dosh: According to some estimates around 43.8% of Indians are Mangliks and the rest Non-Mangliks. We have certainly developed our mentality about this concept of Mangal Dosh that is dependent on the astrological position of Mars when the person is born. In earlier days, in the rural areas Mangliks were considered to be having the evil potential of even causing the death of Non-Manglik groom. Nowadays we have developed our mindset in other way. But we still consider Manglik girls to be non-compatible for Non-Mangliks. Though there is a solution, by which this dosha can be removed. If the bride is married to a peepal tree sometimes to a dog, this dosha can be minimized. But for the men this tradition has transformed itself, by just making Manglik man doing a religious ritual and then his compatibility with the bride is restored.

I would like to present an anecdotal reference of my cousin while describing the failure of education to be the device of awareness against these non-sensible customs. I found my cousin sister crying one day. She shared with me the tragedy that had befallen her. She was a Manglik and the person she wanted to marry was not. She cursed herself repeatedly of being born a Manglik. This is primarily the fault of Balaji Tele-films Daily Soaps and there sound effects when they find Kundli dosha of the heroine of the serial in dark shady place, where a sadhu unravels her kundli's reality. Our entire family Google'd the different remedies one can perform to make this Manglik dosha go away. And it was treated like some dangerous ailing disease. My cousin works as a Software Engineer in a reputed MNC.

Lastly, this paper will end with a brief analysis of how a life of an average 21st Century woman goes after this sexist wedding fiasco. She is independent, she is confident, she has a job, she has a degree, maybe multiple degrees. And in her workplace she is the addresser in the power structure. But when she returns back to her home, her husband, also tired from work – this working, independent 21st century woman gives in to the power structure created by patriarchy. She returns home, and then cooks the

food, prepares her two daughters for bed, while her husband takes a shower and enjoys the India-England match.

Feminism has caused a great amount of awareness about women empowerment in India. But our attention should not get dispersed away from the personal sphere of human relations, where the woman is still in the darker side of the penumbra. The Feminism we see here is selective. This is the intolerance or myopia that the Indian women still face, and today it is an attempt to discuss its spread, to prevent this myopia from ruining the lives of our daughters.

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Interrogating the Construct of Islamophobia: A Western Devise?

Sanchari Chakraborty and Arghya Bose

Introduction

The incidence of intolerance towards other religions or religious doctrines is general and could be traced back to the very history of the evolution of mankind. In the 21st century, prejudice towards Islam can be mapped down to right-wing autocracy, and socio-political dominance orientation of the Western world. This particular attempt concerns itself with the problématique – is the term ‘Islamophobia’ a discourse trustworthy enough to be allowed to order and shape social science studies today? The paper goes on to enumerate on its hypothesis that the metanarrative of Islamophobia is essentially a construct of the Euro-American part of the globe – a deliberately framed bias to ensure the continuing hegemony of the West down from the colonial to neo-colonial times. For realizing the essence of the paper, it is absolutely imperative that an endeavour towards laying down the implications of certain

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terminologies used in the paper is attempted. 'Islamophobia', though lacks a comprehensive definition in social science studies, generally implies a widespread and fear-laden discourse essentializing Islam and Muslims as necessarily incompatible with Euro-Americaness, and thus, a regressive bloc which compulsorily has to be dealt with. Contemporary attempts at defining Islamophobia presupposes a wall between the twin notions of race and religion – failing to take note of the eventualities of a world in whichever religious subjects are often racialised. The term 'West' has been used in this paper in a rather over-simplified sense, homogenizing myriad peoples implying Euro-American parts of the globe.

History in Perspective

It is an evident enterprise of this paper to challenge the construct of Islamophobia by sketching out the conceptual topography in which it took birth. According to Weller, Islamophobia as a narrative is 'rooted in the historical inheritance of a conflictual relationship that has developed over many centuries involving the overlap of religion, politics and warfare'. It is thus, extremely necessary that we dwell on the role of history in shaping the construction of this narrative in order to effectively understand the implications

and manifestation of contemporary Islamophobia - there lay an inextricable interdependence between the both.

Europe's first encounter with Islam was witnessed when it metastasized in a manner so unprecedented that it came to be perceived as an imminent threat to Europe and its Roman Christian traditions. It was not only a religio-social ideology capable of challenging the Christendom but also arrest its expansion. The encounter was clearly between two distant unknowns, leading to the emergence of a supposed notion of threat from this 'Other'. The Crusades were the result of such constructed 'otherness' – but what was more important were the myths, misconceptions and misunderstandings that the Crusaders brought back to Europe. Islam came to be romanticized as the diametric opposite of Europe and its values. This was furthered with the advent of the Renaissance and Western Modernity especially when the philosophes did little but reinforce such fallacies. Thus, if modern Europe stood for progress, rationality and emphasis on the individual, the Muslim world came to be associated with everything dark – violent, barbaric, licentiousness, inferiority, irrationality and a 'regressive' emphasis on the collective through the re-presentations

and re-interpretations of the apparently superior Western intellectual interpretations. The birth of the scientific and industrial revolution stamped European intellectual pursuits as most definitely superior – this laid the foundations of mis-education by the West. Such perceived superiority legitimized imperial growth which had by then embarked on a civilizing mission.

Understandings and accounts of Islam came to be dominated by academic and not so academic enquiries of the West – something that colonialism could easily afford. This variance was furthered by means of systematized Orientalist efforts of vilification in order to perpetuate the global ascendancy and vindicate the civilizing mission of the West. The intention of colonialism was to control, and internalizing the myth of Islam as a murky civilization proved befitting as a tool.

The primary catalysts for the contemporary fear of Muslims and of Islam, for Sardar, is the ‘re-emergence’ of a historical antagonism towards Muslims and Islam. This phenomenon, keeping in perspective the recent Western developments in ‘international relations’, can be regarded as a continuum that extends from before the Crusades to the present day and undoubtedly into the future.

The idea of a supposed collision of civilizations came to be recognized in academics not only in the work of the modernists post-Renaissance but more recently and explicitly in Samuel Huntington's seminal work *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996). What Huntington suggested helped reinforce the western idea that the future would witness civilizational conflicts necessarily between the Muslim and Non-Muslim world. This hypothesis could by no means be considered original – what it did was just to take the lid off what was erstwhile only implicitly hinted at, turning the fear of Muslims into a more encompassing ideology. And, the incorporation of the word 'Islamophobia' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* immediately following this publication, not to mention the hype created by the mass media, only worked towards reinvigorating stereotypical archetypes associated with Islam. The metamorphosis of fiction into fact was thus complete in the academic realm.

What Huntington's efforts achieved in the academic realm, the *Runnymede Report, Islamophobia, A Challenge for us All* (October, 1997) did in the political realm. Recognizing the need to name an increasingly noticeable phenomenon, the report turned up a comprehensive definition of Islamophobia – with its 'closed views' it

merely justified the manifestations of this ‘new’ phenomenon. The report clearly worked towards establishing a single set of conceptions with regard to Islamophobia, heavily rooting itself in Huntington’s theories and constructing Islam as ‘monolithic and static rather than diverse and dynamic, as other and separate rather than similar and interdependent, as inferior not different, as manipulative not as sincere, as an enemy not as a partner’. This necessarily homogenized and essentialized Muslims as either violent ‘terrorists warring against the West, or apologists defending Islam’. Islamophobia as a form of cultural racism is essentially rooted in cultural constructions and variations as justifications for exclusion and expatriation – constructed through the instrument of modernity and capitalism.

Global rightist parties and their propaganda like that of the BNP’s ISLAM as ‘Intolerance, Slaughter, Looting, Arson and Molestation of Women’, the 7/7, 9/11 attacks, the global of al-Qa’ida, ISIS and its associates followed by massive indiscriminate vilification of Muslims in world media, the World conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, (31 August – 8 September 2001, Durban, South Africa). United Nations acknowledged Islamophobia as a global

phenomenon. The recognition of the phenomenon in the UN, wide ranging debates regarding state intervention in secularizing Islam have all had their contributions made to the dissemination of the myth into the realm of international politics.

Striking the meta-narrative back

The 1st half of the paper has already elucidated, by situating Islamophobia in its actual history, how what began as perceived notions of antagonism and myths of otherness came to be a meta-narrative in academics and international politics. It is necessary to understand that central to this attempt of constructing the grand narrative of Islamophobia, especially since the Renaissance is the western effort to paint its own superiority. It has to be understood that the central site of construction of the legitimization of these myths has been the western world itself. This was further internalized with the growth of global imperialism and supervised education in the colonies. If the narrative of Islamophobia served as a potent tool to be drawn whenever necessary so as to justify the civilizing mission of the erstwhile colonial superpowers, the post-cold war era saw the emerging American empire inherit the same tool to make their machinery of neo-colonialism hold

sway globally. It is a tacit colonization of the mind, and it is crucial that dispassionate social sciences order their studies accordingly. The global north in general and America in particular, relentlessly denies their neo-imperialistic intentions as did Britain and France during the colonial period. The new empire in the 21st century is essentially a post-modern one – one where leaders talk about the dissemination of civic virtues, democracies and free markets in the world. Such an empire relies heavily on the subtler politics of knowledge to that of brute force. The world population today is a victim to this politics of knowledge of the post-modern American Empire. It is here that we need to dwell, for a while on Aaron Gresson's "the recovery of white supremacy". Gresson's thesis makes an attempt to depict how erstwhile dominant cultural groups seek to reclaim their intellectual supremacy by portraying themselves as victims of the 'oppressed other'. The depiction of Muslims as waging a war against the West, perfectly fits this attempt, especially post-9/11. This constructed discourse of victimization of Europeans, Christians and whites instigates a popular support for disciplinary action against the Muslims on the part of the American empire. Added to this is the rise of the world right which with

ease overlooks this history of colonialism and neo-colonialism. The rightist organizations and parties especially in America in the post-cold war scenario have essentially and effectively utilized the politics of knowledge in not only painting distorted images of a barbaric and violent Muslim world but have also allowed such biases to infiltrate in major areas of decision making in fields of international diplomacy and relations, foreign policy and education – thus, at a more realistic plane, giving space and further encouraging already existing biases. It could be speculated that with the fall of the ‘evil’ Soviet bloc and the formal end of the Cold War the image of a general Islamic threat and that of the particular Muslim terrorist has come to fill the void of a potent antagonist, that has to be ‘dealt with’, effectively.

The scheme of empirical neutrality is thus a myth – no epistemology is dispassionate and all narratives are produced by individuals fundamentally biased. The West’s view of a distorted Islam is essentially a product of this bias, working towards influencing academic scholarship operating both in the core of the empire and the colonized periphery. The periphery of this empire and indeed any empire is utilized for the geo-political interests of the core. The Western civilization, here the core, has become the

parameter of the entirety of human civilization. It is high time, as elucidated in this paper, that we realize the importance of recognizing the subtler politics of knowledge that works towards legitimizing Western hegemony in global dimensions. It is not by blindly cultivating the constructs of the West and aping its values and narratives, but by questioning and challenging them that the world can hope to become a genuinely more democratic and tolerant place to live in.

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Tolerance Redefined: Understanding West Bengal between 2011 and 2016

Pratip Chattopadhyay

Tolerance requires strong convictions regarding at least one moral principle – freedom. – Frank Furedi (2011: viii)

The real is palatable only in so far as it is filtered by its fantasies, or reality. – Wesley C. Swedblow (2010:2)

Introduction

Tolerance is the basic value that is expected to be imbibed by political parties and to be institutionalized in governance. West Bengal is a state where the electorate seems to be exceedingly tolerant to the prevailing predominant political party and gives it time to settle down and rule. It was true for the Left Front and it is becoming true for the Trinamul Congress (TMC) as well. The paper tries to understand the different meaning of tolerance when looked from a political point of view. Ideally tolerance in political parlance is not only to accept the presence of dissenting voice but also to enter into debate and discussion with it to create a synthesis of shared values for common good as the basis for policy making.

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In West Bengal, the paper argues, social and cultural tolerance prevails, but political tolerance prevails apparently with some underlining strategies. For the Left Front it was the political organization that never gave scope for any dissenting voice to get flamed up and tolerance was achieved through political management. In the case of Trinamul Congress, it is the emotional management of pent up grievance against a 'closed regime' of three decades that tries to bring all opinions within its fold and puts opposition voice and views in a comparative perspective of three decades experience and thereby its actions and behaviour, however intolerant in logical argument, turns to be tolerant in unreason and in emotion.

The Background

It was from the 2006 Singur incident that intolerance against a three decade long Left Front regime seems to be spreading in the air like a fire putting an end one by one to all the fortress of power of the Left Front – the village, the district and finally the state. The general will seem to have been that of intolerance and intolerable approach about the Left Front. The Trinamul Congress was quick to change the intolerance towards party politics into

tolerance towards compassion through its catchy emotive slogans. The vision was that of a tolerant administration and developmental politics beyond the indifferent administration and petty politics of the Left Front decades.

The First Half of Trinamul Congress: Intolerance towards Criticism

Ambikesh Mahapatra, the Park Street rape case, Shiladitya Chowdhury, reacting to students' question in a talk show and Kamduni indifference were the high points of intolerance during the first half of TMC rule. During this period the slightest of detractions was seen as breaking the popular sense of the 'tolerant regime' by the TMC government. With political power getting settled by the people expressing their legitimacy through votes, the TMC government settled down to find new modes of tolerance. This was expressed in creating a maze of emotive statements, speeches and bonding across the state. A decade back in, 2006 Left the Front Chief Minister after a massive win claimed that the opposition voice particularly that of Trinamul Congress is of insignificance as "we are 236, they are 36" (height of intolerance), in terms of assembly seats won. In 2016 more or less the scenario got reversed but

Trinamul Congress still now has not come out with such harsh snob statements as the 2016 elections have also brought some worries for the TMC leadership as reflected in the scenario that eight of its sitting MLAs got defeated. Trinamul Congress started to become silent and vocal with each passing year so far as the ultimate voice of the Party – from its Chief Minister – is concerned. The shift from “accepting the existence of different views” to “acceptance of different views”, from recognizing other people’s rights to have different beliefs or practices to accepting the different views of other people, is subtle in form, but massive in substance. To accept that a different and opposite position exists and deserves the right to exist is one thing, to accept the position itself means that one is no longer opposing it. The new tolerance suggest that actually accepting another’s position means believing that position is true, or at least as true as your own. (Carson, 2012:3) This new tolerance was far from being learnt by the Trinamul Congress soon after it came to power.

The Second Half of Trinamul Congress: Creating New Forms of Tolerance

Tolerance is seen to be crafted cleverly by the Trinamul

Congress Government. The administrative tolerance includes several important measures taken from the North to South Bengal. Tolerance also means to be attentive to the pressing demands of the people so far administration is concerned and the Trinmaul Congress leadership seems to have been gathering the knowledge of the same slowly as it started spending more time in the corridors of administration. Hate speeches are a form of political intolerance but they were competitive in nature among all political parties with its genesis evolving since late 2005 in the state. To the question “If capitalism is really so much better than socialism, why are our lives still miserable?” it provides a simple answer: it is because we are not yet really in capitalism, for the Communists are still ruling, only now wearing the masks of new owners and managers...” (Zizek, 2010: viii) Slavoj Zizek begins one of his books titled *Living in the End Times* (2010) identifying the above mentioned problem in contemporary society to target the ‘wicked’ as against the ‘good’. The context of West Bengal Assembly elections in 2016 is nicely poised by this answer that the West usually gave to the surmounting criticism against its ideological promise to deliver the best in the age of globalization, democracy and neo-liberal market economy. West Bengal has been an

important state in the Indian federation because of its constant 'passive revolutionary' tendencies to resist the 'ongoing' to make the 'present' more serene, pious and passionate about the people with which it engages. The last five years of the Trinamul Congress government was put before the verdict of the people in the electoral space in West Bengal. Trinamul Congress shrugged off all its administrative failures during the tenure by falling back on the safe haven of anti-communist and anti-CPM feeling that still remain present in the state.

Tolerance is in danger of becoming denuded of its vital freedom affirming meaning and is instead frequently interpreted as a form of polite etiquette that offers its recipient respect and validation. Whereas the classical liberal interpretation of tolerance required conviction and judgement, today it frequently conveys the idea of respectful indifference. The reinterpretation of the term 'tolerance' has been created where the principle is taken far less seriously. The rhetoric of tolerance notwithstanding, contemporary society is afflicted by a powerful sensibility of intolerance. More energy is devoted towards the project of inventing new limits on tolerance than on extending it to new domains of human experience. (Furedi, 2011: vii) Even in the

second phase of its first tenure Trinamul Congress seem to have belittled the theoretical understanding and goal of the term tolerance. Rather they have tried to create new routes for bypassing the established virtues of the idea of tolerance, although strictly within democratic parameters.

Tolerance and Intolerance: Theorising West Bengal

According to John Dunn, “Understanding of politics is nothing more than one small voice in dialogue with the immense range of other voices. We can often hear ourselves exceedingly well but that is largely because we are so ill placed to listen accurately to anyone else.” (Dunn, 2000:4) This is how intolerance can be defined in West Bengal from 2011 – 2016 when applied to the coexistence of opposing political views because “Politics is the balance of conflict and cooperation between human purpose on any scale on which you care to look at it.”(Dunn, 2000: 361)

It is argued that tolerance is situated between two classes of concepts. On the negative side are intolerance and non-tolerance, while full acceptance and regular acceptance are situated on the positive side. The two words suffer more than their share of vagueness. On the negative side intolerance and

non-tolerance it is rarely clear whether a policy adopted by a person or government actually falls on the negative side or represents tolerance. More than enough, vagueness is also found on the positive side. Some policies that are called tolerant are actually backed by an attitude of indifference rather than one of dislike. When people have contrasting emotions it is not easy to say whether they are tolerant or not. In situations which are themselves rich with vagueness and ambiguity, it is no wonder that the t-words are difficult and even perhaps impossible to define. (Moreno-Rianno, 2006: 50) The present period that this paper takes as a case study actually brings home the difficulty in explaining the dividing line between tolerance and intolerance because here happens to be a strong bond between the electorate and the party in power.

According to Frank Furedi, when tolerance is represented as a form of detached indifference or as a polite gesture connoting mechanical acceptance it becomes a vice rather than a virtue. The capacity to tolerate views of which one disapproves is underpinned by the conviction that this virtue provides an opportunity for testing out ideas and confronting ethical dilemmas. Interface with individual beliefs and opinion disrupts the creative

dynamic of intellectual and moral development of society. From this standpoint, tolerance of disapproved-of beliefs is a very small price to pay for society's intellectual and moral development. Reflecting on our differences with others' point of view, letting them know where we stand and what we find disagreeable with their views, is the very stuff of a vibrant democracy. Without it, tolerance turns into shallow indifference, an excuse for switching off when others talk. The TMC experience in West Bengal shows that new statecraft has been arranged for exploring administrative and political tolerance but the very idea of tolerance – to develop the spirit of dialogue and accepting merits of other view points is still far away to be achieved.

Conclusion

“To truly face the real is not such a pleasant experience given that it arrives only as the very loss of reality and its entire attendant supports in fantasy” (Swedblow, 2010:2)

It is very difficult to theorise live events as every passing event creates space for new understanding. Nevertheless the way West Bengal is being governed for long stretches by a particular party over the last forty years shows that the reality if analysed correctly

will give a sordid picture of how tolerance is achieved – more by strategies than by dialogue. The real story of TMC is to win over the masses through emotive management of fantasies of development. To what extent such imaginations and reality matches and the time it takes will define the course of the future political trajectory in the State. Else the intolerance towards the regime can burst up like a volcano any day anytime in the near future.

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The Rohingyas: Homeless in Their Homeland

Sampurna Goswami

There is a huge difference between being tolerant and tolerating intolerance. – Ayaan Ali Hirsi¹

Introduction

The Oxford Dictionary of English Language defines ‘Intolerance’, the noun form of intolerant as something that cannot be endured². ‘Intolerant’ can be defined as a person who cannot endure certain things or group of people with different values and ‘Intolerable’ can be defined as those who cannot be endured because they have certain different values. Thus intolerance can be explained as a psychological pattern amongst individuals where the individual cannot bear a person with different views or characteristics or with different beliefs and faith. Intolerance, today, is no more confined to the personal or social sphere. Politics of intolerance have created worldwide repercussions and have drawn the attention of nations, international organizations and especially the Intergovernmental Organizations

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or the IGOs. What bothers most of the scholars working in the different fields is the fate of those communities, those individuals, those sections of the world community who are suffering from the pain of marginalization because they are “Intolerable”. The repeated Human Rights violations, the genocides that are taking place in various parts of the world especially in Africa and Asia shows that intolerance has an ugly face, that when noticed can lead to devastation. Taking these facts into consideration, this particular paper shall focus on such a marginalized community, the Rohingyas and how these people have been made the prey of intolerance and have been subjected to endless tortures and cruelty. The methodology of this particular paper is mostly based on secondary sources.

Rohingyas

In Burmese language *Rui hang Ja*, or Rohingyas are an ethnic group residing in the Rakhine (Arakan)³ state of Myanmar. The people of Arakan were mainly Hindus and Muslims who were referred as Kula or dark skinned people. The Rohingyas were not given political identity during the British rule and were thus not allowed to participate in any independent negotiations with the British in 1948. As they were

not invited to be signatories to the Union Treaty that was signed by Aung San and other nationalities for formation of Union of Burma, therefore they were denied of political and economic rights. Since then the Muslim Rohingyas started separatist movements and took to arms to establish their rights.⁴ In 1950, after being recognized by U Nu and U Ba Swe, the Rohingyas abandoned their weapons but remained suppressed under the military regime of General Ne Win. The Dragon Operation in 1978 forced these Muslim Rohingyas to flee Myanmar and take shelter in Bangladesh. The Burmese Citizenship Act of 1982 excluded them from 135 national races.⁵ However it is important to understand that races here means the original inhabitants of a particular division in Myanmar. Thus Rohingyas can be considered as an ethnic group and should not be considered as a 'race' in its original sense. From 1989 onwards State Law and Order Restoration Council captured the lands of these people to set military camps without compensating them and since then these people have remained homeless.

In 2012, the Rakhine state of Myanmar witnessed a violent riot between the Buddhists and the Rohingya Muslims where the Muslims were targeted, the riots finally took a violent form

that led to the imposition of emergency in the Rakhine state of Myanmar. As they were Muslims, the Rakhine Buddhists considered Islam as a major threat to Myanmar. As a result of these riots around 140,000 Rohingyas fled with boats mainly to Malaysia, Thailand and other South East Asian nations including India and Bangladesh creating a refugee crisis in the entire South Asian and South East Asian arc. An office of United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established on December 1950, and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was concluded the following year. It is important to be aware that the treatment of refugees is an intensely political issue; international refugee law has been shaped by the perceived security implications of mass movements of people across borders.⁶ According to article 33(1) of the Convention, no contracting party shall expel or return a refugee to the frontiers of territories where their life or freedom would be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, the contracting parties are also not allowed to impose penalties on account of illegal entry or presence, on refugees who are coming directly from a territory where their very existence was threatened.⁷

In 2012, when these Rohingyas who were always designated as Bangladeshi Muslims and alienated from Burma as foreigners fled to Bangladesh for asylum, Bangladesh was not ready to accept them: as a result they were pushed further to India for seeking asylum.⁸ The fact that many Rohingyas have been serving in Taliban and Al Qaeda is now a big question because the perception of the Buddhist-majority Myanmar centres on the belief that Rohingyas will only act as a Jihadist insurgent group. However, after a year has passed since Aung San Syu Ki came to power, tortures on the Rohingyas by the Army and the locals have essentially increased. The military crackdown in October 2016, shows how intolerant and aggressive the government can be. The 2016 persecution of the Rohingyas have drawn huge criticisms from the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Government of Malaysia and the US Department of State. In this context Aung San Syu Ki's reply was most unprecedented and unclear. It may be that being only a de facto leader and the military still sharing a major portion of the power in Myanmar it is becoming difficult for her to take any decision to solve the issue. On the other hand her vow of bringing about peace and national reconciliation without specifically mentioning

about the Rohingyas⁹ essentially shows that the so called democratic and tolerant leader, as the world recognizes her to be so, can be the most intolerant when it is the question of religious superiority and religious inferiority or to be more direct when it is the question of gaining popularity amongst the Buddhist majority of Myanmar.

Rohingyas in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's refusal to accept Rohingyas compelled these homeless people to go back to Burma where their life and property were at stake. The violent conflict in 2012, naturally pushed a huge number of Rohingyas to Bangladesh. Bangladesh at that point of time had shut their doors, refused them declaring that 'they are not our people' and finding no other place of safety, Rohingyas started infiltrating into India. It was only in 1981, that Bangladesh provided refuge to numerous Rohingyas after they were persecuted but Bangladesh returned these people back to Burma within a year declaring that the Rohingyas have no ethnic connections with Bangladesh and are essentially Burmese. Bangladeshi Government disagreed, insisting on classifying the Rohingyas as illegal immigrants and thus these people virtually received no help from the government and have thus

led a sub-human life.¹⁰

In 2016, after the military crackdown in Myanmar, many Rohingyas tried to enter the Cox Bazar district but was stalled by the border forces of Bangladesh. Hence, losing their hope and unable to return to the homeland, numerous Rohingyas were stranded at sea.

Rohingyas in India

UNHCR data bases show that there are estimated 5,500 Muslim Rohingya Refugees in India. Although India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention yet on the basic humanitarian grounds, India has accepted these stateless Rohingyas at the time when other Islamic countries had shut their doors for them. However in West Bengal these refugees were prosecuted under Foreigner's Act of 1946 and were sent to correctional homes.¹¹ From 2014 onwards there has been a steady influx of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh through the borders of West Bengal. With the fact that Bangladesh has closed the door for the world's largest "persecuted minority" declaring that Rohingyas are not Bangladeshi, the Rohingyas had no other option but to enter India via the North East¹² and the borders of West Bengal. Therefore having no

other option Rohingyas have been subjected to endless condemnation and arbitrary detention.¹³ India's ambivalent attitude towards Rohingyas can be explained through the Security and Foreign policy parameters. One basic question and issue of debate regarding these refugees remain whether their presence will be an enhanced threat for India or not out of the fear that they may be prone to Jihadists Radicalisation. The Ministry of Home affairs has been clear in its statement that India will accept them as long as they have a valid visa and a refugee card, without which they can't claim the basic necessities from the government.¹⁴ But a community which never has enjoyed citizenship, national identity and basic amenities cannot really provide any valid documentation of state-centric identity. The recent incident of the Buddhagaya Blast in 2013 and NIA's investigations that claimed Rohingya's connections with Indian Mujahiddin have again become a reason of apprehension for the government.¹⁵ Another major reason behind India's ignorant behaviour can be its objective of counter balancing China by maintaining its friendly relation with Myanmar. It is quite evident from India's recent foreign policy goals where it has actively participated in sketching an all-weather pacifist and cooperative entente with

Myanmar and in no way can let Myanmar go out of India's sphere of influence, essentially as a means to counter China in the region. As a result, embracing an issue which has remained an issue of contestation in the domestic politics of Myanmar, like that of Rohingyas, is considered to be a faulty step for the Indian policy makers. Thus India's position may not be considered to be like that of an intolerant nation but it also cannot be considered to be that of a benevolent one.

Conclusion

Being the prey of intolerance on the part of the states, it is evident that Rohingyas today are homeless. Persecuting a particular community on the basis of their religion is a new trend in global politics. Secular nations today are not ready to accept the "intolerable" on the grounds that it will essentially threaten the national security and greater political interests. Constructivists argue that migration is a threat to society rather than the state, because it threatens the self-identity of the population.¹⁶ The global trend of not accepting the majority of the marginalized sections because a few amongst them is jeopardizing the global security is now evident. The refugee problem in Europe, the sealing of borders

and the recent domestic policies adopted by the developed nations is direct evidence of “intolerance”.

The growing rise of global terrorism is the outcome of such intolerance which the world is not ready to accept. The repeated action of violence on the part of the Rohingya community is the outcome of such intolerance. Their aggressive behaviour is the result of marginalization that they have faced not only in their homeland but also in Bangladesh and a secular country like India since the British left the region. The pictures of destitution, poverty, exploitation that they are facing regularly in countries like Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia shows that once a particular nation marks a particular community as intolerable, they face the same kind of attitude in every other nation where they tend to seek help. Thus the politics of Intolerance have become a cross-border phenomenon. Today, ‘an army of well over million young men’ is being trained by the Taliban and Al Qaeda at the Bangladesh-Myanmar border since 2014¹⁷ and even earlier has become an issue of threat in the region. Burmese population believes that the Rohingyas have connections with Islamic Radicalisation and thus securing a safe territory of operation like India or Bangladesh they can take to arms and continue their movement for a separate

state “Newrosia” that shall be governed under Sharia Law.¹⁸ However it is quite unfortunate that none of the nations today realize that a bit of tolerance and sympathy towards these people can bring about peace not only in Myanmar but also in entire South Asia. Such a policy of tolerance shall not only bring about peace but shall also help in creating a secured and a much more vibrant region. However for a deeper understanding of the Rohingya refugee problem, it is best to make an extensive field trip, visiting the areas will help to make an empirical study through social anthropological methods and participant observation.

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Goethe's Oak: Questioning Intolerance of the Present American Administration by the Dialectic of Enlightenment¹

Souradeep Sen

The seminal work of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), is arguably the first great encounter with European modernity, undertaken from the left. It investigates how scientific or instrumental rationality expels freedom from the historical process and enables reification to penetrate every aspect of society.² The authors not only highlight the limitations of the Enlightenment process, but also insist that the price of progress is too high and that barbarism is embedded within civilization and that the Enlightenment has betrayed its most sacred promise of autonomy and its most revered tool of emancipatory rationality. For the authors, Enlightenment and modernity find their fulfilment in the concentration camp universe of the fascists, run by an unaccountable bureaucracy, fuelled by an instrumental rationality run astray and

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expressed in the unleashing of unfathomable rage.³ Modernity inexorably standardizes individuality and when the modern capitalist society encounters difference and autonomy, it is automatically resentful and violent out of unconscious envy. Horkheimer and Adorno connect the growing dominance of instrumental rationality with the 'totally administered society'. Scientific rationality blends easily with the imperatives of a bureaucratic state; they are all expressions of instrumental rationality, which constitute the core of the Enlightenment.⁴ They turn nature into an object of use, progress into alienation and freedom into control. In the name of liberation, its advocates wound up fostering a rationality of technical domination which leads to the perversion of individual autonomy, being too fearful of difference, asymmetry and deviance.

Anti-Semitism is a product of such resentment. The modern, Western capitalist society – with its relentless attacks on individuality, freedom and variety – too fits into this picture and Western civilization itself is now implicated in the assault on subjectivity. Instrumental reason, the erosion of subjectivity and alienation are intrinsically bound together, the effect of this unholy nexus is in recent times represented by the congregation of majoritarian power in the

United States of America in the form the ascendance of Donald J. Trump to the American Presidency. The present paper questions the modern western society mired in intolerance of every sort, through the lens of this seminal work. It would try to establish the present administration in the USA under president Donald J. Trump as not a product of an abstract historical process, but, the continuation of the Enlightenment project's relentless standardization, its intolerance towards and persecution of the 'other', and its inherent superiority based on a purely instrumental reason which ultimately alienate the minority and breed discontent, thus, providing succor to further resistance and intolerance. In this way, not only the pertinence of this work, but also its remedies with regards to the disease of intolerance bred by the Enlightenment in western societies – by means of a 'negative dialectic' – would also be revisited.⁵

Indictments against the Enlightenment

As the paper questions the intolerance in modern day America following the methods of critical theory, it is imperative to adumbrate some of its methodological tools. Going against the forms of cognitive activity of 'traditional theory' which aim at making self-production more secure and efficient,

Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse claim that there is another kind of cognitive activity – one that is not directed at reproducing society in its present form or assimilating nature more efficiently, but rather is directed at changing the society radically so as to make it more substantially rational. Theory or a form of social activity with a salient cognitive component must be an attempt to do away with those fundamental features of society which preclude individuals from leading a good life.⁶ This cements the relevance of Critical Theory as a method of social criticism, especially applicable while interrogating contemporary political developments.

For the critical theorists, in the ancient world, reason was conceived as objective and normative, as it referred to a structure or order of what ought to be which was inherent in reality itself and which prescribed a certain way of life as objectively rational. Humans were thought to have a subjective faculty which allowed them to perceive and respond to this objective structure of the world and this faculty could also be called reason in a derivative sense. Even when the ancients spoke of reason as a human faculty, their conception of it was 'substantive', as they were thought to be able to use it to determine which ends of human actions were worthy of pursuit. Thus, an

element of morality was always attached to it by the ancients. In the post-Enlightenment world, the 'objective' conception of reason is discarded in favour of an essentially subjective ability to find efficient means to arbitrarily given ends: that is, to whatever ends (moral or otherwise) the agent in question happens to have. The very idea that there could be inherently rational ends is abandoned. Reason becomes subjective, formal and instrumental, more so under the impact of positivism.⁷

For Horkheimer and Adorno, human history is a dialectic of Enlightenment on the one hand and 'myth/barbarism' on the other. Both these concepts have a common origin as reactions to primeval terror. The Enlightenment's way of reacting to fear of the unknown is by separating it strictly from the self and subjecting it to a system of identifying categories to keep track of it and eventually control it. There is rigid fixation on self-preservation as the absolute overriding goal and a paranoid concern to classify everything to be able to subordinate it to the attainment of that goal. Its instrumentally manipulative attitude towards nature tends to extend itself to our relations with our fellow humans. The original substantive ideals of the enlightenment are not themselves exempt from

universal criticism, as it is not possible to argue from the results of the principles of instrumental reason to validate the ideals of individuality and autonomy. Moreover, modern history shows that the increasing technological control over the world and the spread of scientific knowledge do not necessarily make people more autonomous, individuated and happy. Finally, there is a rigidity in the enlightenment project which tries to encompass everything in a single, definitive, closed system of concepts, thereby making it potentially totalitarian.⁸ Such indictments of enlightenment by the critical theorists become even more substantiated when we focus upon the genuine fascist threat looming over an advanced capitalist society in recent times.

The Trump Presidency

The control over humans and their world of ideas by scientific knowledge has been a hallmark of the Enlightenment's lasting legacy in the West. The use of instrumental reason, sans moral standing, has been the starting point of Donald Trump's election campaign. His populist agenda of making 'America Great Again' could be treated as an arbitrarily given end to which his election promises were aimed and the average American voters blatantly conformed.

Trump's election promises, and the policies his administration has been adopting, all reek of the exclusivity, intolerance, standardization, racism and sexism which are characteristic of the dark side of the Enlightenment, or more specifically of Fascism.

To revamp some of Trump's policies, the first which strikes as exclusivist and intolerant to difference is his take on immigration: building a wall along the Mexican border, plans for first detaining and then deporting immigrants deemed 'illegal' by the administration, enhanced penalties for overstaying a visa, requiring companies to hire American workers first irrespective of competence, to increase standards for admission of refugees and a temporary halt on Muslim immigration to ward off threats of terrorism.⁹ Axiomatically, some of these policies are reminiscent of the halcyon days of Fascism; some based on standardization, as not all Muslims are terrorists and not all Mexicans are drug-dealers. His call for 'extreme vetting' procedures and ideological tests, barring anyone arriving from seven Muslim-majority countries, placing a cap on the annual intake of refugees, are exclusivist and conceived as instruments for securing American national interests. The sexism and racism latent in the enlightenment, where women, and the 'coloured' had no place in the

original liberal vision¹⁰, find expression in Trump's policies on immigration, healthcare and abortion. Trump's campaign policy (which was later modified) to make abortions illegal and to punish women who had them, is explicit in his call for defunding 'Planned Parenthood'. In a presidential order he has banned federal funds going to international groups performing or providing information on abortion.¹¹ In short, such policies, to name a few, are only expressions of intolerance in the American society and Trump, manipulating and capitalizing on them could successfully secure the support of the most intolerant section of the American demography – the White, male, blue-collared workers.

Questioning intolerance and the consequent rise of Trump in America, by the methods of the Dialectic of Enlightenment, it could be asserted that liberalism in America is being betrayed by the instrumental framework in which it is embedded. The instrumental use of reason – that of making 'America Great Again' – seems to expel freedom from its society, thereby turning it into a totally administered one, with systematic thinking aimed at the realization of a single preconceived goal devoid of any moral justification. Contemporary America projects the Enlightenment's inherent tendency to

destroy itself. In the ‘Elements of Anti-Semitism’¹², prejudice is interpreted as having its own dynamics and a logic resistant to rational argumentation. This is precisely the case with the present fascist rule based on segregation in America. The hatred towards most non-American races, especially the Hispanics and Muslims could be viewed as an expression of humanity’s ‘second nature’ with anthropological roots – there is always something different about the ‘other’. If modernity increasingly and repressively standardizes individuality, then the encounter with difference and autonomy will logically generate resentment out of unconscious envy and such resentment seems to mark the present American administration. Following the Dialectic, it could be insisted that the linkage between instrumental reason and alienation being crystalized during the Enlightenment, finds expression in modern-day America with the rapid move towards the totally administered society. Like the commodity form and bureaucracy, instrumental rationality has an interest in expanding its dominion and blends easily with the imperatives of capitalism and bureaucracy as is evinced by developments in America. Autonomy has been considered a nuisance and criticism by the free press – or as Trump calls ‘the great danger to our

country⁷ – is a threat.¹³ The real goals of instrumental reason of the Enlightenment are, standardization and control. What occurs in the process is a perversion of autonomy as individuals are seen as incapable of making anything other than technical or emotional judgements. Exercising conscience and imagining the free society become increasingly difficult, which foment the appeal of totalitarianism. Liberalism employed universal principles for its rule of law and individual rights, but the willing surrender of individuality in the name of instrumental needs becomes a logical step within a single logic¹⁴, which is not necessarily moral. Progress under Enlightenment and in modern America, based on the same instrumental logic is no longer the growth of moral conscience; on the contrary, autonomy and ethical norms have been obliterated. Liberalism in America is fast turning into an apologia for existing conditions. Its blindness to excesses and the irrational made liberalism complicit with its rival theories and that explains the continuum which exists between the Age of Enlightenment on the one hand and the contemporary American society on the other. To sum up the ethos of this continuum based on instrumental reason, devoid of moral judgment, “Enlightenment behaves toward things as a dictator toward men. He

knows them, insofar as he can manipulate them”.¹⁵ Liberalism’s subversion of conscience has been made worse by the ideals supposedly justifying its existence. The ‘other’ will always suffer the most; more specifically the non-American races and women in contemporary America as its civilization will brand them either as ‘alien’ or as ‘inferior’ in an intolerant, patriarchal and largely illiberal society.

In spite of their cachet of criticism, Horkheimer and Adorno do not reject the Enlightenment outright, which has implications on the present analysis as well. The task of this paper, following the lines of critical thinking would be a plea for furthering the underlying Enlightenment project by enlightening the Enlightenment itself.¹⁶ In order to prevent America from resorting to barbarism, the line of thinking advocated by critical theory could be revamped, whereby the ideals of Enlightenment could be salvaged, at the most in a negative way. In his *Negative Dialectic* (1966), Adorno talks of the demerits of subsuming particulars under general concepts which leads to generalization and thereby totalitarianism. Using an identifying concept in everyday thinking and science is a way of crushing difference and the apt way of resistance to this standardization is to remain aware of ‘non-identity’;

or of the ways in which instances are not identical with the concepts under which they are subsumed. Thus, 'negative dialectics' goes back and forth between concepts and instances and is a cognition of the non-identical which could become fulfilling only if one considers philosophy a 'determinate negation' that cannot be turned into anything positive.¹⁷ In the same way, the realization of the good life, in America, as elsewhere depends not on branding certain individuals as dangerous and subversive, based on a preconceived notion with a supportive, instrumental logic, but to admit to its varieties and difference. Contrary to an instrumental and non-moral reason, each society must be treated as a totality in which each feature is essentially connected with all others and that social reality is partly constituted by the forms of belief, understanding and evaluation that exist within it.

Notes and References:

1. The purpose of this paper, quoting Albert Camus (to compensate for the present author's lack of vocabulary) is "to examine meticulously the arguments" by which logical crime or the reality of today is sustained. It is indeed an "attempt to understand the time I live in". The intent of the paper fits snugly with Camus' assertion that, "...as

soon as a man, through lack of character, *takes refuge in a doctrine*, as soon as he makes his crime reasonable, it multiplies like Reason herself and assumes all the figures of the syllogism.” (Emphasis in original) Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, (UK, Penguin Books, 2013), vii. The self-same ‘reason’ and the intolerance and violence it consecrates in today’s world will be interrogated in this paper, with special reference to the recent political scenario in the USA. During its course, the paper would point at why critical theory has been revisited to enquire into the nature of intolerance in present-day America and how the recent mass-psyche in the country resembles the darker sides of the western Enlightenment and modernity, thereby making it simple for academicians to draw a continuum between the ill-effects of modernity on the one hand and its twenty-first century manifestation in America on the other. As a note on the title, it must be mentioned that following critical theory the Enlightenment has been indicted here for leading humanity to the concentration camp legacy, represented by the image of the Goethe Oak (a fat Oak tree, under which Goethe, the leading proponent of the German Enlightenment, wrote some of his most revered poetry) sitting in the middle of the former concentration camp at Ettersberg, which was renamed Buchenwald by Heinrich Himmler in 1937. For the Nazi’s, the tree legitimized their regime, showed their love for history and German culture and their desire to incorporate Goethe’s world into the Nazi age. For the prisoners, who were tortured and hanged from the tree, the branches offered relief and the reminder of the past that has been imprisoned with them. “Buchenwald

Concentration Camp”, Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team,

www.holocaustresearchproject.com/othercamps/buchenwald.html; “Goethe’s Oak”, BBC, www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00swq96. For the critical theorists, the Goethe Oak stood for the Enlightenment’s destruction of itself with the same weapon it engendered to fight superstition – reason. The use of this ‘reason’ to justify everything under the sun for the realization of a particular end, which might not have any moral grounding, leads, for the critical theorists, to the diminution of logic and consequently to totalitarianism. Stephen Eric Bronner, *Critical Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 2011), 57

2. Stephen E. Bronner, *ibid.* 51

3. *Ibid.* 57

4. *Ibid.* 55

5. The relevance of critical theory becomes entrenched when we study it at the backdrop of the recent moral decadence in America and the genuine fascist threat looming over it. The indictments against Horkheimer and Adorno – such as their inability to explain or forecast a possible fascist threat in the United States or Britain – brought about by Bronner (*Ibid.*, 59-60) get nullified by the instances of intolerance and violence in the west, where the enlightenment mentality still holds sway. Critical theory as a method of social criticism becomes all the more relevant, as we shall see, because of its definition of ‘theory’, its critique of instrumental rationality (as a product of the Enlightenment), and its general remedy

for combatting resentment and intolerance born out of envy toward the 'other'.

6. Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse opine that modern Western societies were turning into closed, totalitarian systems in which all individual autonomy was eliminated, linking this development with the capitalist mode of production. In later accounts, the critical theorists give more prominence to the role of science and technology in modern society and to the purely 'instrumental' conception of reason which denies that there can be any inherently rational ends for human actions and asserts that reason is only concerned with the choice of effective instruments or means of attaining arbitrary, non-moral ends. See Geuss, R. "Critical Theory", in Craig, Edward. (Ed. in Chief) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Vol. 2, (UK, Routledge, 1998), 723-724
7. Against this conception of reason, critical theory come up as a form of resistance to contemporary society, which makes it adaptable as a means of social criticism in modern times. Its basic method is one of 'internal' or 'immanent' criticism. The critical theorists opine that every society must be seen as making a tacit claim to substantive and not instrumental rationality, i.e. making the claim that it allows its members to lead a good life. This claim gives it a standard for criticism which is internal to the society in question. Critical theory demonstrates in what ways contemporary society fails to live up to its own claims. One of the particular difficulties confronting such a venture is the disappearance of traditional substantive conceptions of the good life which serve as the basis for internal criticism, and their replacement with the view

that modern society needs no legitimation beyond simple references to its actual efficient functioning or to its 'instrumental' rationality. See, Geuss, "Critical Theory", *Ibid.* 723 and *passim*. Thus, the concept of instrumental rationality itself becomes a major target for the critical theorists and concomitantly for the present paper, as the recent political developments in America, in its various intolerant, violent and acrimonious manifestations, are taken as products of the same instrumental reason.

8. Geuss, "Critical Theory", *Ibid.* 726
9. All of the Trump Administration's policies have been enumerated very neatly, point by point in PolitiPlatform, "Donald Trump", 2016-2017, <http://www.politiplatform.com/trump>.
10. Even those without property were cast aside from the liberal project, as it was generally recognized that the laws of property were civil and not natural, the result of convention which were liable to change in the interests of the society. Alfred Cobban, *In Search of Humanity: The Role of the Enlightenment in Modern History*, (New York, George Braziller, 1960), 131. Moreover, the way patriarchy was ignored in the universal social contract and thus became integral to the Enlightenment mentality, only to become part and parcel of modernity's bequest to future generations, find place in the groundbreaking study by Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, (Cambridge, Polity, 1988)
11. The Trump Administration's report card for the first 100 days of assuming office could be found in details here, "First 100 days: Where President Trump stands on key issues", BBC News, www.bbc.com/news/election-

- us-2016-37468751. The case in point could be better understood if one focuses on the Presidential Orders with regard to immigration, abortion and the slow dismantling of Obamacare.
12. Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, (California, Stanford University Press, 2002), 137-172
 13. A recent British news report elucidated how President Trump attacked the media at the Conservative Political Action Conference and later on social media, after banning major American news organizations from a White House press briefing calling the media 'fake' and 'dangerous'. See, C. Mortimer, "Donald Trump continues attack on media calling them 'a great danger to our country'", 25 February 2017, Independent, UK, <http://www.google.co.in/amp/www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/donald-trump-media-press-briefing-dangerous-country-enemies-of-the-people-fake-news-cnn-new-york-a7598911.html%3Famp>
 14. In the past that logic was of colonialism; in the United States of today it is that of 'Making America Great Again'. The present American Administration is bent on the realization of this logic, in the same way eighteenth century Europe twisted the Enlightenment's maxims to further colonialism. In the initial days of the Age of Reason, the Enlightenment-Colonialism dialectic was predominant. Yet, the Enlightenment philosophes, more often than not critical of colonialism, could not articulate a strong critique of the latter under the rubric of liberalism. At first sight it may seem that the Enlightenment was axiomatically inimical to colonialism, as a system of

domination involving slavery, expropriation of property etc. which stands in contrast to the basic Enlightenment principle of universality, the individual's capability of reason and self-government. But, the rise of anti-colonial political theory required more than the universalism of Thomism. Given the tension between the abstract universalism of natural law and the actual cultural practices of indigenous peoples, it was easy to interpret difference as evidence of the violation of natural law. This in turn became a justification of exploitation in the name of good governance as according to J. S. Mill, savages could not rule themselves for their excessive love of freedom. Hence, the White man's burden to rule over and expropriate the riches of non-Western world. Mill as a product of Western modernity could not argue against colonialism and ended up finding viable alternatives for making the system more efficient. Alexis de Tocqueville, a leading proponent of French Enlightenment was not critical of France's colonial ambitions, for it benefitted the country. For more on such contradictions, see "Colonialism", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/#LibEmp>. For critical theory's indictment of liberalism, see Stephen E. Bronner, *op. cit.* 56

15. Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno, *op. cit.* 6
16. As the line of argument proffered in the Dialectic of Enlightenment grew in popularity, the 17th century philosophes gradually lost their radical character and became, ironically, symbols of oppression and reaction. In his quest to salvage their reputation and thereby that of the Enlightenment from purely philosophical and

cultural interpretations the critical theory was taken to task in Stephen Eric Bronner, *Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 2004). Bronner claims that the Enlightenment's notion of political engagement keeps democracy fresh and alive by providing a practical foundation for fostering institutional accountability, opposing infringements on individual rights, instilling an enduring commitment to social reform and building a cosmopolitan sensibility. But, such eulogy becomes vague at the backdrop of the Enlightenment's vapid opposition (and sometimes support) of colonialism, as explained above. More importantly, the point Bronner misses is that Horkheimer and Adorno being critical of the Enlightenment, were not necessarily discarding it. By analyzing its inherent tendency towards totalitarianism, they hope to save its ideas (even if only in a negative form) and prevent it from turning itself into a form of myth or barbarism. See also, Geuss, "Critical Theory", op. cit. 727

17. Geuss, "Critical Theory", *ibid.*

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Social Capital and Dialogic Democracy

Sibtosh Bandyopadhyay

I

Dialogic democracy means a system of governance through which a political system would be more relevant for the lives that people live. Actually dialogic democracy generally indicates a related process of political development through which a political system turns into a more humanistic, tolerable and responsible to the existence of different communities. Dialogic democracy does not mean simply an extension of democracy or not simply spread-out of democracy at the grassroots level. Dialogic democracy is a dynamic process which requires a regular or systematic management of nursing of grassroots-level democratic institutions. In other words, dialogic democracy has two dimensions; first is the best practices of democratic institutions and the second is to maintain the culture of democracy.

Two postulates that must engage any quest towards dialogic democracy are (a) working towards

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a better form of governance based on mutual understanding, (b) building a strong public sphere based on rationality, trust and mutual benefit and sustainable development. Several scholars like John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, Joshua Cohen, Boadway and Shah and Amartya Sen have highlighted the issue in different perspectives, however, one thing is clear that stock of social capital has played a crucial role to establish tolerance and humanity and making it relevant and more responsive, efficient and participatory. (Ommen: 2014).

John Rawls (1972) in his famous work, *A Theory of Justice* provides the moral character of democratic society which based on rationality. Rawls used the term 'deliberative rationality'. Rawls's conception on deliberative rationality is based on tolerance and humanity. He argues that a society is well-ordered when it is not only designed to advance the good of its members but when it is also effectively regulated by a public conception of justice. (Rawls J, 1972, pp. 4-5).

On the other hand, social capital means a mutual understanding among the existing members of a civil society which facilitates better understanding of religious confusion.¹ Civic traditions and stock of social capital are necessary ingredients for tolerance.

Putnam argues that “social capital” refers to features of social organization, such as core values and norms (including social trust) and networks that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. (Putnam 1995). Putnam in his path-breaking work, *Making Local Democracy Work: Civic Tradition in Modern Italy* (1995) aptly remarked that corruption, violence and religious antagonism are more feasible in southern part of Italy rather than its counterpart northern Italy, because northern part of Italy has had a better stock of social capital.²

Social capital has three dimensions in its relation with tolerance and humanity: 1. Relation of trust; 2. reciprocity and exchange; 3. convention, norms and understanding and; 4. connectedness in networks and groups. (Pretty & Ward 2008).

This paper partially dealt with the issue of how social capital did perform a significant role in the nation building process which was organized and maintained by the Bengalis in 19th century. To highlight the contribution of Bengalis in the Indian nation-building programme, the present Prime Minister of India in an occasional electoral campaign in the last assembly election at Kolkata repeated Gopal Krishna Gokhale’s famous remark: “what Bengalis think today, India thinks tomorrow”.³

II

Formation of humanism and tolerance in Bengal since 16th century to 19th century Bengal stock of social capital had started its formation since the 16th century under the leadership of Sri Chaitanya under the banner of '*Vaishnavism*' which was successfully carried out by the humanism of Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda (1863 – 1902), Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), and the founder of Indian modernization Rammohun Roy (1774 – 1833). S.N. Dasa aptly remarks that in the 16th Century, the civil society of Bengal was based on 'clientelism', a fragmented society which based on prejudice and ignorance.⁴ A fellow of Bengali middle class Sri Chaitanya Deva (1486 – 1534) popularizing the gospel of social justice, untouchability and promote the philosophy of tolerance. (Dasa, S.N: 1999).

However, a significant changes of his outlook his marked when he meets Ishavara Puri. 'Boiswanbism' was a land mark of inter-religious understanding. Salimullah Khan (b.1958) wrote, "Sixteenth century is the time of Sri Chaitanya Dev, and it is the beginning of modernism in Bengal. The concept of humanity the came into fruition is contemporaneous with that of Europe". Harihar Bhattacharya wrote, about five hundred years ago, when caste restrictions

were becoming more and more rigid in the rest of the India, the system faced a powerful rebellion in the shape of the reform movement of Chaitanya of Bengal who preached the equality of men and the supremacy of the human being in all creation.⁵

The words of Sri Ramakrishna (1836 – 86) opened the door for better understanding the philosophy of religion; who preached “Jato mat tato path”, meaning ‘as many faiths, so many paths’. Though, Bengal has had no experience of genocide but his understanding of religion did establish a platform which was more sympathetic in nature and feasible in practice.⁶

Swami Vivekananda is universally known as the most renowned theorist and also the religious practitioner of truth, love, non-violence, tolerance, freedom and peace. The Ramakrishna Mission founded by him in 1897 is still performing an important role to build up social solidarity, tolerance, to serve humanity and all sections of the society. This institution is very much concerned with the poor, deprived, and the downtrodden communities which are not based upon religion, caste or creed but a common understanding of tolerance to promote the power of self-respect, self-confidence and self-reliance among the people. Vivekananda was very

much optimistic about the role of religion regarding the issue of nation building. He says “*Bohurupe sammukhe tomar, chari kotha khunjicho Iswar, Jibe prem kore jei jon, sei jon sobichne Iswar*”; which means, serving the living being is the only way to serve god.⁷

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838 – 94) was probably the first systematic expounder of relevance of inter-religious understanding. In this regard he emphasized on ‘Anusilan’ and ‘Dharma’. ‘Anusilan’ or his concept of ‘practice’ means knowledge and duties so that an individual may take an active part on nation building programme as well as a form of devotion which helps a community to learn its weaknesses.⁸ He regards ‘Dharma’ as an essential ingredient of national solidarity. Literally speaking, Dharma means a spiritual mode of position which is based on selfless and non-possessive notion of devotion.⁹ The cumulative impact of the twin virtues of ‘Anusilan’ and ‘Dharma’, in Bankim’s view, would be to establish an indelible mark of culture of the Hindu community for nation building. (Tripathi: 1967).

Raja Rammohun Roy was the chief architect of religious forbearance who designed a distinct plan which provokes a better understanding of religious tolerance in colonial India. With the help of Lord

William Bentinck, a Bill was placed in Bengal Regional Assembly on 1828 which was dealt with the protection of Hindu widow from the malevolence of Hindu convention “Sati Daho”. The diabolical custom of ‘Sati’ was abolished by the Regulation of XVII in 4 December, 1829.¹⁰

In the colonial period, a kind of reformism started in Bengal which has seen a kind of quandary in between English educated young group founded by Raja Rammohun Roy and Henry Derozio (1809 – 31) under the banner of ‘Brahmo Samaj’ and ‘Young Bengal Group’ versus the Hindu traditionalists who wanted to develop the Hindu civilization according to classical Hindu dharmashastra as well as to the wave of western modernity.

However, the second group of reformers very much hesitated about the culture of Western civilization and its impact on Indian modernization process. Eventually they formed ‘Dharmasabha’ (1830) founded by Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay (1787 – 1848) and ‘Tattwabodhini Sabha’ (1839) founded by Maharsi Debendranath Tagore (1817 – 1905) both these institutions had played a significant contribution in inter religious understanding and to promote humanity.

In the 19th century, Bengali reformists had

already conceived of the construction of a secular, democratic and welfare nation state. The members of these groups rejected the existing social and religious values and conventions and installed a spectacular religious doctrine, i.e., 'Brahmo Samaj' which was a kind of religion that based upon social solidarity and rejection of racism, exclusion, untouchability and idolatry. These movements were not only redefining the very meaning of inter-religious understanding; they were also redefining development itself.¹¹

III

Problem and prospect of religious tolerance in national politics in India

The present paper is conceptual in nature and intends to understand the facts of inter-religious intolerance. It is observed that only a secular democratic system can increase the social capital. The study further concludes that dialogic democracy is the only way of promoting inter-religious solidarity. Regarding this, some relevant questions are very much concomitant of the present world politics. What will be the appropriate structure of democracy? How should a rational decision be taken? How should a secular representative government behave? And many other similar questions are raised at different places

sometimes academically, sometimes politically. But there is no doubt that the centralization of state power is an inevitable nuisance to tolerance and humanity.

The recent trend in world politics showed a contamination due to unhealthy competition among the different religious and ethnic groups to extend representation in democratic political system. According to the modern political and social thinkers, the expansion of modernization and democratic revolution is pampering the instability in representative democratic politics. Two reasons may be identified in this endeavour; firstly, unprivileged sections of the different religious and ethnic groups are becoming self-conscious. Secondly, by virtue of being liberal democracies, they are claiming their legal position in decision making process in administration. Most of the democratic countries in the third world and even the developed nations in the west are also incapable of satisfying their demands and aspirations; in other words, the inequality or disparity in representation with regards to caste, language, class, religion, and even within the religion are giving rise to provincialism, secession and disintegration in the nation state system.

The Marxists used to believe that tolerance and

humanity are nothing but a bourgeois phenomenon. A class ridden society can never be a symbol of humanity. Revolution or implementation of Socialist mode of economy is the only solution to intolerance and degradation of humanity. Several Marxists scholars have pointed out that if the class struggle or class-based politics is established then the religious or ethnic oriented politics would be abolished. Nevertheless, along with other East-European countries, socialist system failed in Soviet Union also. The world famous scholar of Marxist interpretation of world politics, Hamza Alavi wrote in an occasional writing that the first and foremost solution of class conflict is laying on the solution of ethnic and religious issues.

In our country, the governance of Asoka, Akbar provides a good example of tolerance, humanity and understanding. Next in couple of hundred years, Indian native states gradually lost its glamour and aristocracy. Moreover, one after another, foreign invasion and rule destroyed the Indian values and culture of tolerance went into the 'Dark Age'. However, caste conflict, religious dogmatism, gender obstinacy, ignorance, language politics and prejudices overcast the society. The doctrine 'Din-i-Elahi' which was introduced by Akbar also did not

get any significant place in Indian civil life both in the Hindu and the Muslim community.

In colonial period, for their own necessities the British Government put India into a single administrative unit. Due to this inherited limitation of localism, unawareness, narrow-mindedness, religious fanaticism and communalism in Indian civil life, in post-independence period, except Mahatama Gandhi, no other leader of national politics cared to give importance to include village panchayat in the constitution of independent India.¹² The first Prime Minister of India said, “Let village authority function and let them make a millions of mistakes”.¹³ B.R. Ambedkar was born and brought up in the rural tradition and culture, tremendously against the empowerment of panchayat as a local self-governing administrative body. However, he identified Village Panchayats were the birth place of intolerance and degradation of humanity.¹⁴

The recent trends of religious intolerance in Indian politics may be identified in this venture:¹⁵

- Secularism,
- Religious dogmatism-non communalism,
- Non religious-Communalism,
- Non Religious-Non Communalism.

At the very outset, we may point out that

secularism is a great idea. Peter Berger defines secularism as “the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols”.¹⁶

However, it is observed that 90% of citizen in India are religious but non-communal. The level of religious tolerance and humanity in India is solely dependent on these percentages. However the very meaning of secularism in our country is somewhat distinct. What type of secularism works in India? European scholars have criticized Indian secularism as there cannot be a secular state in India because Indians have an incorrect concept of secularism.¹⁷

In Indian society, Hindu and Muslim, two main religious communities always gave greater importance to religious values than individual liberty. A century old rules and regulations of civil society and more than a centralized undemocratic colonial administration, it was not possible for any political system to provide or to strictly follow the norms or values of modern secular-democratic system. Even after 50 years of Independence those who thinks (particularly a cream segment of civil society) that the Golden Jubilee celebration in Indian Independence does not make any significance, Sudipto Kaviraj does not pay heed to them and said: “our independence

didn't die, so there is no point to celebrate its funeral ceremony".¹⁸

'Religious communalism' is not an uncommon phenomenon. By ideology, I mean religious communalism is an open challenge towards the process of democracy, tolerance and humanity. In this circumstance, religion appeared not as faith but also 'religion as ideology'. However, the most problem area of tolerance is non religious-communalism. The Nazi activities in Germany against Jews and other minority groups, the role of the 'Red Army' against the Buddhist Tibetans and other marginal community's i.e., Muslims in People Republic of China may be identified in this endeavour. The recent evidences of religious intolerance in India are the by product of pseudo-secularism.

The Bengal Experience

The understanding of tolerance in Bengal may be defined in connection with the stock of social capital and radical politics; where the heterogeneities within each culture or religion get an adequate reorganization. The study of tolerance and humanity in West Bengal in post independence period should be viewed from two different angles. At the very outset, it is highly crucial for the ruling party to

frame an effective administrative policy to follow up the norms of the representative democracy, which is laid upon the political hierarchy of diversified caste, creed, class, religion and languages.

Secondly, the compatibility and feasibility of the political decisions along with the administrative measures aiming to satisfy the interest of the elite society of West Bengal in relation to the public demand, preferences and grievances. In Bengal, the government did a hard work to prepare the manifesto with 36 steps of development strategy. The analysis of the manifesto clearly denotes the promise to esteem the religious tolerance such as;

1. Decentralization of the administrative power,
2. The role of people's representatives should be honoured beyond the protocol of bureaucracy.
3. The representation of the backward religious community and women should get the priority.
4. Continuous agitation against the wave of Hindutwa which originate from Middle and Western part of India.
5. Fundamental rights of people must be re-established at any cost.
6. Reframing the social infrastructure through the representatives of all sections of the society and a promise for a permanently functioning government.¹⁹

The ideology of existing government is unlike the left ideology. However, it is observed that Bengal politics was beyond ethnic or religious based politics. It included mutual dependence, trust and above all the basic disciplines of representative democracy. Government should never be a hindrance in religious activity particularly of the minority communities. These entire endeavour is now accessible because Bengal has had a better stock of social capital. Therefore, Bengal may be identified as an 'oasis' of peace, tolerance and humanity amid the surrounding chaos in South-East Asian politics.

Conclusion

In this study, the focus is on an ideal type of community, which is one of the weapons to fight against the problems of differences and diversities. However local governance is an important wing of democracy as well as tolerance. Boadway and Shah sincerely relate the issue of local governance with humanity and tolerance. Both the scholars define how democracy would be more responsive and participatory under the banner of good local governance. In their famous words: good local governance is not just about providing a range of local service but also about providing the life and liberty of residents, creating space for democratic

participation and civic dialogue, supporting market-led and environmentally sustainable local development, and fascinating outcomes that enrich the quality of life of residence. (Boadway and Shah: 2009, 242).

I want to link the issue of the relationship between better stock of social capital, dialogic democracy and tolerance. The recent evidence of religious intolerance in South-East Asia particularly in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia and even the worlds largest democratic state bring out the crisis of responsible government and decline of social capital. Two phenomenon may be identified in this endeavour; initially, the crisis of institutionalization and ultimately, the failure to build up and maintenance social capital which defined by Jurgen Habermas as the crisis of identity. (Habermas. J, 1984; 1991).

In his book, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968), the eminent political scientist of Harvard University Samuel P. Huntington, comes to the clear conclusion that political unrest, civil war, communal riots, strikes etc are the common tendency of third world political system because of the institutionalization process is vulnerable.²⁰

To assess the reason, he mentioned that the course of modernization enhances the desire of

political participation among different peoples. The necessity of political institution arises to act as a mediator for people's ongoing demand of political involvement. However, the improper ratio of number and quality of political organization and people's demand of participation might collapse the stability of political system, and the most frequent form it takes is that of a clash between a radical political process and the rigid infrastructure of democratic institution. However, the Bengal politics since independence period has played a significant contribution to maintain the balance in between and institutionalization of politics and people's involvement in it. The instability of tolerance and humanity in West Bengal politics in transition period (1945-47 and 1967-72) was due to the absence of the balance.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "a civilization is to be judged by its treatment of minorities". The legitimate structure of a democratic government will remain incomplete if it fails to articulate or to protect human rights of different social communities. As intolerance and violation of human rights steps forward, many alternatives are being suggested.

- A cosmopolitan democratic system in this high speed world.

- A global democratic culture of thought.
- Prosperous growth of social security in favour of the universal declaration of human rights.
- A representative popular government in a multi-ethnic political society, which is moving towards greater humanity and tolerance.

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