

Foundation Day Lecture

March 30, 2009

The Historical Unfolding of
Freedom and Equality in India

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Democracy and the values it entails have been studied in India in many different ways. Its evolution since the coming of colonial rule, as a legacy of the Freedom Movement, changes in its working under the impact of party competitiveness, its imperfections and infirmities, and so on have been the ways in which it has often been seen. While all these have been the source of important insights yet I believe, and strongly so, that the insights of these studies have missed out on something of vital importance to what democracy has *come to be* in India. Democracy is, whatever else, freedom and equality and dignity and self respect, in its essence. The point I want to raise, first, has to do with the shape these are acquiring in India, both in terms of form and content; that in other words mean the substantive content of democracy in India. Though radically different from where it came from to the Indian soil or USA or France and so on, why is it as a general idea it is as good a democracy, I deeply believe, as anywhere else in the West? This is important for comparative references in their normative sense. Equally important I want to try to identify, secondly, how these values entailed in democracy are taking roots in Indian society, in other words, becoming the needs internal to the requirements of our life; this, I assume, is the criterion by which we can say if X or Y are an authentic presence in that society. What follows in this essay revolves around these two axes and their intersection.

— I —

What can, methodologically speaking, be the best way to study the consequences of the contact of democracy with the specificities of Indian communitarian consolidation?¹ I would like to suggest here that rather than look at the evolution of Indian democracy,² as has been the case, it would be more revealing if we were to look at the manner in which the *democratic universals* are getting *transcribed* in their engagement with the Indian *particularities*. Among many others, there are two types of types of democratic universals or values that are important in this regard. There are, one, those like liberty, equality, dignity, etc. which translate into policies in the course of being actualised. For instance, equality as a value requires, among other things, policies directed towards income distribution for becoming a feature of society. Or, freedom requires that inherited ritual practices that degrade people and make them unfree are eradicated through legislative and popular interventions. And, two, there are the other type of values, like those of universal franchise, representation, rule of law, etc. which get embodied as institutions when these are given a workable shape. For instance, rule of law requires legal institutions like courts to be effectual. The effective difference between these two types of values is in the way these take concrete shape.

Particularities which are specifically Indian like *jatis*, various ritualistic practices, structures of family sentiments which entails (something akin to) obligations, community codes both social and morals, regional cultural practices, forms of religious commitment, and so on impact on and interpenetrate the democratic universal as these go on to take roots in Indian society, this is what I imply by: getting *transcribed*.

This is a process quite dissimilar to the one in which democracy alters the articulation of the social structure. The structure may continue to exist, like caste for instance, but the entire mode of its expression in the political sphere may so change that it may look something entirely different than what it may have been 20 years ago³. It is a rather interesting but different story what democracy has done to the Indian social structure or Indian society in general⁴. What I am referring to here is rather how this social structure under alteration is shaping the actualisation of the values pointed to above. What does equality come to mean to certain communities in India. It can change its meaning as it crosses the different community boundaries.

Let us take the case of *equality*, something for which entire communities left behind in relation to others are clamouring insistently. Its prime focus may not, like in the West, be making all the individuals of comparable capabilities in using opportunities for well-being and, say, pursuit of individual worth. The way the backward communities are fighting for equality may seem curious to someone in Europe where individualism has become the feature of the society. Equality is being measured rather in terms of how many graduates or gainfully employed people are there, for instance, among the Yadavs or Thevars as against Kurmis or Vaaniyars, other spatially adjacent backward communities. It does matter very little if there is a large number of unemployed (and therefore lacking in well-being) persons within one's own community so long as the numbers of those on measures the community is interested in tallies with that of the other community one likes to compare with. So the struggle is to seek community based profiles of equality in comparison to other communities. Individuals per se do not count for much. Such also is the case with other forms of representations in politics and social life. The insistence today is for self-representation; every community and social group

wants to be represented by leaders belonging to one's own community. Gone are the days when any enlightened person could represent any and every section of society. This is where the entire battle for "empowerment" or "social equity", two main self-identified areas of concern for backward communities, is focused on. One can go on and take other values like liberty and disentangle the exciting new connotations and nuance the word can come to have, unsurprising for us here but something that can baffle the uninitiated from the west where these words with their modern meaning first made the appearance.

The struggle for equality of the oppressed communities leads invariably to struggle for affirmative action and the main form this takes in India is the demand for reservations or the fixation of quotas in jobs and admissions. In a stagnant job market, the established middle classes largely belonging to the upper castes feel threatened and vehemently oppose this demand. The society is therefore also a warring camp of different caste formations and alliances. But the point here is that words like equality would mean something quite different to the established middle classes. It would mean something like individual right to equal opportunity and equal juristic standing, etc. something that the constitution already guarantees. Everybody must compete, they insist, on these conditions in terms of merit.

Coming from where it does, merit itself becomes a contentious word. The meaning of *merit* also like the other words changes as it crosses the community boundaries. It becomes the weapon of the strong in India. The weak avoid using it but are compelled to say something about it. They just about fumble and create a political din, a justifiable act in face of their verbal inadequacies. To the established middle classes or upper castes merit is not an inherent advantage like belonging to upper caste itself but the worth that

the individual by sheer hard work acquires, an accomplishment. Merit is something of an established fact, incontestably identifiable and measurable, as if it comes with the growth of our bodies. What never crosses their mind is that accomplishment requires a background and a long period of tending to the potential; merit is not like the faculty of speech which one picks up even in conditions of extreme deprivation.

What is suppressed is the fact that in a society of wide spread community centered deprivations, the insistence on merit abstracted from its context, is a route to the establishment of an *oligarchy of the privileged*. In a situation like ours, blind folded application of merit not only weeds out deeply dormant potential that is with everyone but more specifically also talent, which is struggling upwards through great effort among the deprived. Merit as abstraction is the means of keeping the door shut for those not being able to compete in favour of our progeny.

When words change meaning as they cross the community boundaries, it makes communication across the society that much more difficult. When meanings become properties of the communities, messages do not have an unhindered flow but are obstructed and gets altered as they reach the very differently placed communities in mortal combat. What we get is a *fragmented public sphere*, that is, a political context without the underlying social unification characteristic of civil society in a liberal democracy. That is how democracy came to be in the western societies with background features facilitative for a certain mode of articulation of emerging modern values. The point of reference was always the individual who was also always in incognito conversation with other individuals about values and claims and interests to further. Here with us some of the cultures of the communities are mutually incompatible and it is difficult to find a space within the public sphere

where the upper caste middle class and the hitherto dominated oppressed castes can share equally in terms of symbols and values and idioms, in other words, the relations become one of non-communication. That is the sense in which the underlying social unification, mentioned above, is lacking thus making the civil society a constricted space.

This development of democracy in the West took place, furthermore, in the face of the dissolution of pre-modern communities; that is to say, the pre-capitalist past became archival. (Archival is not the loss of the past but the loss of something as a presence with us.) In contrast to this, the pre-modern world is a living presence in India. In the case of Europe if I want to know how people worked, for example, in the guilds or how they spent their leisure, I have to go to some or other archive. That is why at some point in the first half of 19th. Century words like kinship or guild quietly disappeared from the political vocabulary, to be replaced by class and industry; this loss and replacement of such key term can be, in fact, a substantiation of my claim above. Whereas in India, I do not have to travel even a hundred miles to get to know that these ways of working and living are not only alive but also vibrant. And this holds true for much else to do with ritual and kinship and status. To use Hannah Arendt⁵ in an altered way, the "past" with us here is not even a past. It presses for recognition. As she observes for another situation, we do not live in tenses as a continuum but simultaneously. All this deeply impinges in the way the *democratic universals* get embodied in democratic practices in India.

The antagonism we live in is vastly different than any society "living with modernity"⁶ in the West ever experienced. The rapid dissolution of pre-modern communities of work and status with the rise of capitalism and the emergence of an individuated, autonomous person viewed as self determining is also the making of western modernity. Here in our societies the "past" is always push

ing modernity. In this situation, in the spaces that democracy provides, what are entailed in modernity as universal values like rationality or secularism or rule of law do not any more remain "universals" but become claims which have to compete with other incommensurable claims from tradition for being accepted in society.⁷

The ordinary Indian therefore lives also absorbed in all kinds of traditional inheritances. In fact she is under constant pressure to uncritically affirm her allegiance to the social and moral codes of the community. The communities speak for the individual and attempt to force them into silence in face of assertions contrary to the community's codes. These communities in a sense act like *collective personalities*, which do not allow the individuals any meaningful private space within their boundaries or like them to become different. They do not allow for the person the right to exit, to be *different* and *distant* from the community. What is lacking is the notion of the *integrity of self*, a value condition so essential for *freedom* to flourish or for the personal self-determination of one's own life; self-determination of the self is the correlate of freedom as autonomy.

What the person in pre-modern communities (more pronouncedly in India) lack is personal autonomy and therefore the important enlightened virtue of being able to, when required; distance oneself from inheritances so as to be able to take a *view from nowhere*. It is in this condition of being grounded in and surrounded by pre-modern inheritances that the individuals search for freedom and equality & recognition⁸ and agency. But this often gets pushed into the background by the community's struggles for equality and right to a way of life that gets precedence in face of individual demands. This goes against the grain of all western (liberal) understanding of modern democratic politics. Moreover the ordi

nary Indian person lives his life with inadequate education and means of livelihood surrounded by widespread poverty and illiteracy and the crippling of future due to the unmet daily needs for a respectful life. It is universally assumed, ever since J.S. Mills, that the poor and the illiterate cannot become part of the democratic deliberation or sustain democratic institutions. "Universal teaching", Mill averred in *Representative Government*, "must precede universal enfranchisement". Democracy works and has gone on for long in spite of this widely held understanding bequeathed to us by Mills.

In view of these two features, absence of personal autonomy and universal teaching, democracy in India presents paradoxes in relation to received (western) theories of Democracy but I would like to argue not in relation to its own history.

Paradox one lies in the persistence of widespread poverty and mass illiteracy along with the *consistency of commitment* on the part of these people for democracy. This is contrary to Mill's understanding. Given how the poor and the illiterate live, democracy survives and lives without the adequate spread of the foundations of civil society. Rather enigmatically, the main lobbies for democracy are ascriptive communities, and herein lay paradox two, and not the civic bodies. Indian democracy manages, herein lays its distinctiveness, its paradoxes without drawing on earlier western democratic experience. In fact at the root of the expansion and legitimation of democracy in India, lies the differentiation and consolidation of *continuous* communities in India and their deep commitment for what they understand to be democracy and this gives a peculiar flavour to the democratic process in India. The vibrancy of democracy in India is in the processes (which have acquired certain autonomy from the institutional sphere) that sustain it and all its infirmities are in the mode of working within the institutional domain and in the disregard to the norms that inform their functioning. Yet the institutions perform the func-

tions for which they are there⁹. Both these features are the result of the interaction between the nature of Indian communitarian articulation noted above and the values and norms seen to be integral to democracy. Hence the lamentation about the decline of democracy in India by the *privilegensia*.

I want to assert here that for a long time to come, how long nobody can say, Indian democracy is going to remain in a state of pronounced "rule/norm" deficit. Because what we are positing as the norm or the rule is the evolved practice of the West. And what evolved, as a practice in the West was itself based on what became the philosophical anthropology of those societies; that is, those *attributes*, which came to define what it means to be a person. The *person* is presumed to be an individual, living with strong hedges from any communal pressure, capable of distancing himself from whatever surrounds him, and therefore with rational choices (such choices are always individually arrived at), and so on. "Inheritances" do not become a load on such a person. In sharp contrast to this, inheritances of a *pre-modern kind* embodied in communities of ritual and belief are constitutive of what makes, in varying degrees, people what they are in India. In such a situation to expect the "normative" scaffoldings of democracy of an individualised West from a communitarian India, as described above, is to ask for moon, which is what commentators on Indian democracy have been doing. Democracy to be understood for whatever it is worth in our societies has to be seen, first, in terms of the *functions it performs to keep alive an open political process and, secondly, for the continuing erosion of the power of the social structure which has been the source of collective unfreedom¹⁰ and hierarchic degrading of people¹¹*. If we look at the Indian democracy in terms of the criteria set forth above, then its rating will surely go up. Moreover, in the process of doing so we will get out of the bad habit, epistemically speaking, of making judgement of the social and political process *only in terms of the standards which arose in the West*. In terms of such processes as noted above

judgements can also be made in terms of democracy's relation with the history of its own society and what democracy is doing to that history. This, I presume, will give us deeper insight and be more enlightening.

—II—

The rupture or the divide between norm and the function in Indian democracy while palpable is not easily explicable. An explanation is therefore necessary. It has often been seen as being caused by the unreasonable and pig-headedness of the Indian political class and their propensity to drag people into politically and morally objectionable or undesirable form of behaviour, for reasons of power and gain. On a surface view this seems to be true in view of what has been called the "phebianisation" of politics, that is, the shift of power within representative institutions and political parties from the highly educated, western oriented political leadership towards those who are much less educated and come from lower caste and social orders. The causes of the rupture are much deeper and require a detailed analysis to gain a discerning perspective on the working of democracy in India.

Analytically, decoding the history and theory of liberal democracy as well as the history of this theory can best do this. Liberal democracy is a conjunction of two analytically separable historical processes. We have already noted, earlier in this essay, the dissolution of pre-modern communities with the development of capitalism in Europe. Capitalism did so by a simple yet effective process of, what Marx called, the "dissociation of the labourer from the means of labour", that is by depriving the peasant and the artisan from the instrument of production. Marx referred to this process also as primitive accumulation in the last chapter of *Capital*. The disposed working people were spatially also made to move from place to place in search of work facing strangers every time they moved. This is how we get a society of, to use a power

ful descriptive term from Hobbes, "dissociated individuals." Today what we call a liberal society is made up of, at its rock bottom, the aggregation of such dissociated individuals. Social or society in liberal understanding is not an entity prior to, as for Greeks, the individuals but a willing congregation of individuated persons. An individualised person is not encumbered by social inheritances handed down by tradition as is a person living in pre-modern communities. This is how modernity, as a consequence of this process, defines a person as "disengaged", constantly making and re-making himself solely by his reason. Such a person is, in the philosophical visions of modernity, an autonomous being — self-determining — and becomes a responsible agent because being endowed with reason does not allow his freedom to become a license. This morally responsible agent as a creature of capitalism at the same time is an interest maximising person but within the rules set by the market. This is what we know of as a modern man in liberal society — an amalgam of contradictory attributes, a result of processes in 17th and 18th century with the beginning of mercantile capitalism.

What has come down to us as modern democracy, as mass participatory form, as distinct from its ancient forms in Greece and elsewhere, is a much later development beginning in 19th century through protracted struggles of ordinary and working people and later on joined by women's movements for enfranchisement. Earlier to the mid - 19th century, ordinary people with no property or education were barred from electoral and other decision-making spheres. So what the term liberal-democracy stands for today is a conjunction which firms up effectively only in later part of 19th century and the early part of 20th century. The liberal capitalist by creating a man theorised in philosophical visions of modernity propels the movements for democracy, for this new women can thrive and fulfil only in a democratic ethos, of becoming what one wants to be in terms actualising one's potential, that is, self-determining.

In countries like India, neither the liberal society emerged nor could the norms of what is called liberal could historically take root, this remains largely true even today. But under colonialism for a variety of reason, various forms of mass participatory political activities took shape, mainly as anti-feudal and anti-governmental struggles. All these developed into a national movement for freedom and emancipation. India saw unprecedented mass participation against colonial domination. It was not the individuated person (though the leadership came out of this stratum) who became the means of expression of participation but large communities of peasants and artisans and other toiling people. This mode of community based collectivised activity took root as democratised practice in India.

At the time of Independence and the making of Constitution, the universal adult franchise was not just an act of faith as is made out to be but much rather a recognition of what had already become a fact of democratic practice in India. So enfranchisement was not a slow enlargement in India as in the West but recognition of what already existed in other participatory forms. And the mode of participation is still largely a function of pre-existing communities of ritual and belief whether as peasants or artisans or whatever else. Even in working classes, remnants of community consciousness still survive as a resilient power. This remains the case as individuation of persons (and of interests) is moving on, as we will soon look at it.

The entire history of the development of democracy in India in the conspicuous absence of a liberal society and its ethos is at the root of what I have referred to as the rupture between the norms and functions of democracy in India. This rupture is undoubtedly an unpleasant spectacle of democracy in India but not something only to lament about. How norms take root and in what form is a matter of patient expectation. The trend, in view of the developments of the last two decades, indicates that democracy is taking

deeper roots in India without the tidiness of the processes, as determined by liberal norms, as seen in the European heartland of democracy. For the sake of flourishing of democracy we have to learn to live with this rupture, for how long I do not know but also go on struggling for a norm based society.

— III —

Situated as I am in the third world I would like to look now at the historical process and search for the features in terms of which democratic universals or values are both spreading and taking deeper roots in societies, their infirmities in process of actualisation, as discussed above, notwithstanding. Freedom or equality and many other such terms are no longer terms of western import. It is therefore important to find the routes and itineraries through which this is coming about. In other words, we move out of the world of ideas into that of history where larger processes are taking place. It is obvious that there are many new features taking shape in the societies here, which are rooted, in the historical sociology of our society. Out of many of these, I would take *Individuation*, a process immanent to our history, as the point of origination of the claims that go to make a person "modern". The process of individuation — to form into *distinct* persons, individuals, and therefore also becoming somewhat *different* one from the other — is the historical moment where the persons who are becoming individuals make multiple new claims. A feeling of being equal to others, a sense that one cannot be forced to submit to unsolicited monitoring as happens in our pre-modern communities etc. are what begins to emerge within us leading to continuous alteration of the personal make-up. This *quest* to be is the beginning of the making of modern identity as distinct from traditional identities, which get defined entirely in terms of inheritances. Such a person, the individual (in the making), then seeks sanctuaries or refuges to protect oneself from invasions into his world and therefore also indemnities (these go to make up what

are Rights) for the self, and hence new and different expectations from others as individuals or emerging modern groups of people. Once this process gains historical groundings, I do not think that we are far from witnessing the spread of claims for privacy, freedom to be, rights, self-respect, and so on in the society.

This is how, I believe, our modern life is being constituted. This is happening through a *process* that is a source of many new ideas but not by any *pre-conceived idea*, such as autonomy or rationality, the foundational ideas as the constitutive point of origin, as was the case in Europe. I am arguing for moving out of the ideational frame of references because these per force keep sending us to Europe for searching for the sense of the terms, the modern attribute we associate with persons or society.

It is in this, the historical sociology that something like the philosophical anthropology of modernity is taking shape amongst us. But the way the baggage called modernity is being filled is so very different that it marks a sharp distinction from the history we read from Europe. Only one difference I will like to highlight here. The "diremption" caused by the "exodus" of people from the communities, as Hegel had put it, is not happening here. While individuation as a process moves on, the communities of ritual and belief not only survive but re-discover themselves and challenge us with a new kind of resilience. What is happening here is an attempt at Exit without quitting the communities. The contestation or struggle for whatever we stand for out of the baggage of the modern therefore has, of necessity, to be context specific. This simply means that it has to be engaged and there cannot be any a priori demand to treat any of these as (abstract) universal entities as the West demands from, for instance, Iran or China or whoever else. What I am asking for is to knock the *foundational(ism)* out of theoretic consideration. What I am suggesting is not to shun theory but seek theoretical grounding in History, that is, not outside of time but in the *immanence of processes within history*. We.

ought to be seeking to democratise knowledge and its dissemination. This is a dimension of freedom to which very little attention has been paid by those standing for democracy.⁷

Barring a few, the person as an individual is not allowed, in our societies to be fully an individual. She is under constant pressure from a variety of forces that are the sources of bonding and belonging in our society. He every now and then either gives in or is forced to succumb to the collective personality of the communities. This is a source also of enormous tensions for the individual person. As an aside, reversion into communal politics also has one of its sources in this. These psychic tensions are sought to be overcome or compensated by immersion into the artificial political community, the communal formation. Nevertheless individuation as a process goes on.

What I am trying to get at is, as I look at it, quite consequential. Given the whole range of transformation, in short, capitalist modernisation – bourgeois property, capital accumulation, economic differentiation, urban life, secular education, and what not – individuation is inevitable and unstoppable. But it moves with strong internal tensions. I earlier pointed out how the ordinary people are becoming distinct and therefore also different. They are no more completely absorbed within the communities, of which they remain a part, what we have is a kind of *exit without quitting the community*. This exiting without quitting is something that is happening on a regular basis in our part of the world. This is something that never happened in the west. There the exit was an exodus. The exit became an exodus, to borrow a term from Hegel, because as pointed out in the beginning, communities with the onset of capitalism dissolved rapidly. People want to make their choices, different from what the pressures of the community may be. But the pre-capitalist communities, of whatever kind, demand

un-critical absorption of the person within the moral and the social codes of the community. These communities try to stand over the individual person as a collective personality, an unsolicited monitor. This is a source of ineradicable tension for the person and deep-rooted consequences for the social process of change as hinted above.

These communities are pulling you back all the time in the sense that they are forcing you, compelling you, to be what you always have been. It is precisely here that the whole new dialectics of the process of becoming modern is working out in our society. The communities cannot stop or control the process of individuation or the capitalist modernisation of which individuation is the result. What they try in practice to do is to control the consequences of the process that of the individual persons try to move their own way in life.

It is here that the process of individuation establishes an immediate link with democracy. Democracy cannot wish away the plurality of particularities embodied within the communities, which compel the individual persons from what they want to become. It at this point the struggle is joined with the conservative forces in the society. The Left, the secular, the "modern" have to combine to defend the individual to be what she wants to be. And to defend the individual to be what he wants to be, it is also simultaneously a struggle both for the democratisation of the state power and the erosion of the hold of inherited social structure. And this makes for a different flavour for democratic universals in our society than it had in the west. And this is precisely because of democracy where it struggles to win its battles, modernity has to recognize and contest those claims of that plurality of particularities which is what Indian society is. In other words, modernity or its rationality is without the power to override the claims of par

ticularities specific to our societies. Modernity has to win its claim to be legitimate and what it entails to be universal in the arena of democratic contestations and struggles. These contestations and struggles in the domain of popular are the equivalent what in the realm of ideas is the critique.

Hence the flavour, the specificities, the peculiarities in the modes of manifestation and of articulation of the democratic universals¹³ like the freedom or equality as well as their imperfections and the consequent infirmities of democracy in the social ethos of India.¹⁴

Notes and References

1. The course of the development of democracy in India in the last two decades has been deeply conditioned by the way communitarianism has taken shape in India. There are strong unitarian tendencies in the various communities of ritual and belief and a strong assertion by these politicised communities for equality and dignity and recognition. This has led to a pronounced expansion of democracy, seen as the enfranchisement of Dalits, the empowerment of oppressed castes, the assertion of women and the deepening of the popular commitments for the ideas and potentialities of democracy. Together with this, various infirmities have also crept into it like the denials of rights of individual person who disregard community injunctions, retaliatory politics in relation to those below you in ritual status, the humiliation of Dalits and women who defy community norms, lack of decorum and so on. These two developments have gone together and make up a package of contradictory features. We can say that the widespread and sweeping changes in Indian democracy are taking place in a pronouncedly *untidy manner*; this is so in the sense that there is a pronounced rule-deficit in the structuring of the political process. This contradictory nature is the crux that needs to be kept in mind.

2. I do not want to understate the importance of looking at sequential changes in Indian democracy. One very useful study here is Yogender Yadav, "Electoral Politics in the Time of Change - India's Third Electoral System", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXIV, 1999.

3. See D.L. Sheth, "Secularisation of Caste and Making of New Middle Class", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21-28 August 1999; and M.N. Srinivas, "An Obituary on Caste as a System", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1-7 February 2003. See also Javeed Alam, "Is Caste Appeal Casteism: Oppressed Castes in Politics", *EPW*, 27 March 1999; see also my "Caste, Class and

Social Consciousness:", in K.L. Sharma, ed. *Caste and Class in India*, (Rawat, Jaipur, 1994); see also my recent article "Emerging Class Formation among the Oppressed Castes and its Political Implications", *Social Scientist*, No.426-427, November-December, 2008 which is a re-look at my argument on caste in *Is Caste Appeal Casteism:*

4. My understanding of these changes can be seen in my book *Who Wants Democracy?* (Tracts for the Time 15, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 2004. For a different account see Bhanu Pratap Mehta, *Burden of Democracy* (New Delhi, Penguin, 2004).

5. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, (London, Penguin Books, first published 1956, enlarged edition 1968.)

6. From the title of my book *India: Living With Modernity*, (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999) where many of these things are discussed.

7. The *alleged* contradiction between Modernity and Democracy that I am contesting is best theoretically grounded in some of the writing of Partha Chatterjee collected in the volume *Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, (New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2004).

8. Recognition is, as Hegel would tell us, an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects. A call for recognition is therefore also a call for equality, which ought not to negate my difference with the other. So being recognised and recognising the other constitute me as a subject and gives me a sense of self. It therefore follows that the denial of recognition is detrimental to subjecthood. Hegel here is suggesting that the making of an Identity is a dialogical process in society.

I think, it is important to be clear about the distinction between making of Identity and identity politics; one is necessary for being an autonomous person whereas the other leads to reification of caste/ given collective identities. If Hegel is right, as I presume him to be, then the denial of recognition to the claims for equality of the lower castes in India by the upper castes goes a long way in perverting the values of democracy in India. See his "Lordship and Bondage" in *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

9. See my "Institutional Infirmities and Democratic Resilience", *North East Journal of Social Sciences* (Forthcoming)

10. I use the word collective unfreedom to indicate the collective subservience of the direct producers in India on upper castes. All the direct producers in India belonged to low castes because their work, being manual in nature, was looked down upon. This unfreedom was unlike those of the European serf who was individually under obligations to the lord. Therefore the struggle for freedom also takes on a collective form and that gives a peculiar flavour to Indian communitarianism.

11. Democracy in India therefore has primarily become, over and above the many other definitions that set out its terrain, the sort of politics which the governed take recourse to; to gain a voice, a foothold into something valuable, a sign of status, a measure of effective power and so on. Apart from the modern proletariat, the *governed* in India has been largely made up of the Dalits and OBC's. The category of the governed more or less overlaps with those who have been direct producers in the traditional economy. It needs to be emphasized that among the producers women played a very important role both in the household production and agriculture. Their work was very valuable in the maintenance of family welfare. Moreover in the context of the level of development of the forces of production it was highly skilled and therefore comparable to those of the men in most respects. How the status of women's works changes and its implications for democracy, is an interesting area to explore.

12. I have recently begun to do this exercise with modernity. I am referring to my unpublished note, "Beyond Enlightenment: Democratizing Modernity". Akeel Bilgrami also in his unpublished "Divided Mind and Democratic Culture" speaks of the need of 'cognitive democratization'. These are out of papers presented at the recently held Alam Khundmiri Foundation seminar on *Modernity and Democracy: Legacies and Future of Enlightenment*. Long years ago Hegel in his section on Enlightenment in *Phenomenology of Spirit* had shown that in attempting to undermine *Faith*, the enlightenment project by putting *Reason* outside of time (or history) had by a processes of inversion had itself become a *faith*. We, the above group, are now trying with small beginning to correct this history of the theory.

13. I have used the term *democratic universals* throughout this paper. Let me therefore clarify. Freedom is a democratic universal in the sense that democracy is inconceivable without freedom, in varying doses. That is to

say that it is internal to democracy, that is, entailed in the word democracy. Freedom cannot be taken as universal in the philosophical sense, as having a necessity attached to it. Freedom, like much else, is a claim to be treated or become as such. Freedom is a universal not in the sense of having the attribute of *necessity* but is *indispensable* for democracy. Indispensable is not inevitable. For example, we can without epistemic hesitation say that the 'rule of law' is indispensable. But we can do without it and instead go into a *jungle raj* like the powerful in Bihar and Haryana so often do to keep the vulnerable under their thumb. Using the universal as indispensable simply suggests that we can dispense with it only by damaging that entity within which it is entailed. It is necessary as normative scaffolding. See Javeed Alam "Ethically Speaking, What Should be the Meaning of Separation for Secularism in India" *Social Scientist*, No. 406-407, March–April 2007, for the use of indispensable in relation to its sense for social phenomena.

14. AS far as I am aware of there are no words for freedom or rights with their modern connotation in pre-modern Indian languages in India. Most Indian languages, though not all, now use the word *Adhikar* for rights. This word now in usage is derived from the Sanskrit word *adhikara*, which translates as "a just claim" but one that has been earned by the performance of some duty. Through the performance of the duty 'status' is gained. Rights, on the contrary, per se inhere in the person by the sheer fact of being human. I do not earn it. Even when I am full of moral lapses, I continue to enjoy rights. Now the shift in the meaning of the word both as sense and reference is unmistakable. It now attaches to everyone by the virtue of being human. It is neither earned nor lost for any reason. If we do not have a conception of rights then we cannot have a concept of freedom. Modern notion of freedom needs indemnities and rights are those indemnities. So the word *mukti*, for freedom, will not do because its connotations have a heaviness of spiritual presence to be able to stand for mundane personal self-determination.

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