

**SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE EMERGING SECURITY  
DISCOURSE – A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF  
US AND INDIA**

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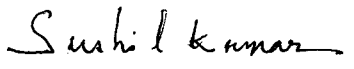
### **CERTIFICATE**

Certified that the dissertation entitled '**Social Issues in the Emerging Security Discourse – A Comparative Study of US and India**', submitted by **Ms. Dhriti Bannerjee**, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.)** of this University,

This dissertation has not been submitted wholly or partially for the award of any other degree of this or of any other University.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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## INTRODUCTION

The new millenium approaches and we find ourselves in a world in which boundaries are rapidly shifting - boundaries of self, nation, society, and even the world itself. It is characterised by a wide diversity of extra - institutional challenges, only a portion of which are embraced by the most widely studied new social movements. Recognising the variability in the way that oppositional, anti-establishment, anti-hegemonic, and liberationist identities may be linked with pressing, everyday grievances and translated into concerted, collective action against the state opens a horizon of phenomena that in the past had been defined as anomalies in the study of political challenge.

With the end of the cold war, and the breakup of the Soviet Union, national security is being viewed anew. US Defence Secretary, Richard Cheney redefined the security problem when he said that "The likelihood in the future of a threat from the Soviet Union may turn more on their inability to control events inside the Soviet Union than its will on their ability to project power outside the borders."

The failure of communist regimes to subordinate ethnic to class identities has demonstrated the enduring pull of ethnic ties in the contemporary world. It is now more widely understood that modernization, by threatening cultural identities stimulates their resurgence, and that the growth of religiosity demonstrates the powerful attraction of

transcendental sentiments as an ordering element in human relations and as a way of explaining collective misfortune.

We are now witnessing a fundamental change in the relationship between peoples and states. This new relationship is taking an extraordinary variety of forms: the demands for secession and the subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union and the creation of a Commonwealth of Independent States; the disintegration of Yugoslavia; the quest for autonomy by the Kurds; secessionist movements among the Kashmiris, Sikhs, Timorese, Eritreans and many other peoples; concerns over multiculturalism in the USA; anxieties over relations between nationals and the new migrants from North Africa and the Middle East in western Europe; and debates over migration and refugee policies in all advanced industrial countries and in much of the Third World.

'Peoples' - however they identify themselves, by race, religion, language, tribe or shared history - want new political institutions or new relationships within existing institutions. When these arrangements are not satisfactory or their demands are met with force they may resist or flee across regional and national boundaries. Throughout the world government leaders now watch with concern the ethnic and religious conflicts within neighbouring states, recognising how quickly these conflicts can threaten their own internal security.

It would be interesting to watch such a state of emergence, contingency and flux in two of the largest democracies of the world - United States and India.

"Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness": in the wake of cold war and hot battle, America's goals in the Declaration of Independence now seem ascendant around the globe. America's security- traditionally defined as preserving the United States as a free nation with it's fundamental institutions and values intact - has seldom seemed more certain.

Yet as America approaches it's third postwar transition this century, security needs to be redefined. For forty years America knew what national security meant: protection against the overarching threat of the Soviet Union and Communist expansion was priority number one. Now, with the demise of communism and the rise of democracy, the United States finds itself at a moment of re-creation, to paraphrase Dean Acheson, similar to that facing Americans a half century ago.<sup>1</sup>

Today the question whether America's security begins at home cries out more loudly than it has for forty years. More than three decades ago Dwight D. Eisenhower pointed out the folly of undermining from within what one is seeking to protect from without. Is the nation consuming it's inheritance when it should be investing in it's future?

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<sup>1</sup> Graham Allison and Gregory F. Treverton, *Rethinking America's Security* (New York : W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), p.16.



Is securing the 'blessings of liberty.... for its posterity" more at risk from what is happening within America's borders than from anything outside them?

One is in fact, struck by the emergence of a series of powerful domestically generated trends that increasingly seem to pose direct and indirect threats to it's fundamental institutions and values. These include, education, poverty, the underclass, and economic expectations.

Further, in recent years the American-political system has pushed pluralism to extremes. In step with the declining capacity of political parties to mediate among diverse interests and forge a more unified coalitions, every group has become an entrepreneur for it's own private advancement. Deep loyalties have often developed around single social issues - clean air, women's rights, the nuclear freeze, racial discrimination, food labeling and the like.

In India, nearly two generations have passed since the tumultuous events surrounding the most important organizing principle of the Indian polity occurred in 1947.

However, as mass euphoria in the wake of Independence and the subsequent engagement in nation-building activities in the early fifties, receded into collective memory and as the economic front began to stagnate, exacerbating the problems of unemployment, poverty, corruption in public life, tenacious illiteracy, population explosion etc., centrifugal and

disruptive forces reoccupied the centre-stage with unprecedented vehemence. Nationalism, instead of giving birth to one national society, seems to have delivered a whole litter of communities divided from one another in terms of language, religion, region, or caste.

That the pan-Indian polity no longer attracts the allegiance of the majority of the masses and is increasingly being replaced by smaller entities is clear from the emergence and struggle of nationalities often denigrated through charges of regionalism, linguistic chauvinism and separatism. Communalism and communal violence is spreading to newer areas with increased intensity, becoming more frequent and engulfing more sections of people. India seems to have become, instead of a nation-state, one powerful state system, comprised of multiple warring communities. The only way out of this impasse appears to be Hindu communal nationalism, for more and more fence-sitters, secularists and even leftists are being drawn irresistably into this whirlpool. The fact that this is nothing but a whirlpool leading to an early demise of the nation-state itself is indicated in the contradictory nature of it's ideology. It is a communal nationalism in a double sense; it is communal not only vis-a-vis other religious communities but equally so vis-à-vis the large mass of lower castes within the Hindu fold. It is therefore more appropriately termed uppercaste Brahminic nationalism.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> G. Aloysius, *Nationalism Without A Nation In India* (Delhi : Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), p.2.

The state is, thus no more an uncomplicated space of uncoerced human association and of relational networks - formed for the sake of family, faith, interest, and ideology that fill this space. The state is a deeply fraught space with hidden and explicit dangers that lurk there in the garb of national, religious and ethnic identities.

Given the afore-mentioned state of turbulence in the two countries- US and India, national security needs to be redefined and this induces one to review the theoretical perspectives on Security.

## CHAPTER - I

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SECURITY

Security, or national security, is arguably one of the least understood and most contested concepts to enter the lexicon and discourse of international relations.

In the early 1960s, the British historian, Michael Howard, bemoaned "the appallingly crude conceptual standards"<sup>1</sup> which applied to national security, while a decade earlier, the American academic, Arnold Wolfers, thought that the concept might 'not have any precise meaning at all.'<sup>2</sup>

The etymological roots of security are clear enough. Security originates from the Latin *securus*, meaning free from danger, safe. These two elements, the notion of danger or threat, and the desire for protection against danger, are central to virtually all definitions of security. But there consensus ends. The first major point of contention is between those who believe that the primary object or referent point of security should be the state, and those who believe that it should be the individual or humanity at large.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Howard, 'Military Power and International Order', *International Affairs*, vol.40 (3), 1964, p.407.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold Wolfers, 'National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol.LXVII, no. 4, December 1952, p.481.

## **CLASSICAL REALISM**

One first needs to understand why the security orthodoxy of the Cold War years privileged its military dimension and enshrined the state as the primary object of security. The principle answer to this important question lies in the way the tenets of classical realism have shaped and influenced thinking about international society and security since the basic structure of the contemporary state system was first laid down at the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Realists trace their philosophical roots back to the writings of the European political theorists, Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes, and before them to the Greek sage and historian Thucydides. They hold a fundamentally pessimistic view of human nature and conceive of international politics as an arena of conflict, where anarchy is the ordering principle and sovereign states the central actors, engaged in an unending and brutal struggle for supremacy. The basic driving force of this anarchical society of states is the 'concept of interest defined as power'. Power is also sometimes ordered to be an end in itself.<sup>3</sup>

The objective is survival, or national security, but this is often implied rather than specifically articulated.<sup>4</sup> The principle systemic concern

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<sup>3</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York : Alfred Knopf, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, 1973), p.5. Other prominent realist thinkers of the present century are E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crises : 1919-1939* (New York, 1964); Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society : A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1977).

<sup>4</sup> Alan Dupont, 'New Dimensions of Security' in Denny Roy (ed.) *The New Security Agenda in the Asia - Pacific Region* (London : Macmillan Press, 1997), p.33.

of realists is how to maintain a stable balance of power among the competing states.

The origins of modern realism can be traced to the breakdown in the post- First World War order in the 1930s, but the longevity of it's ideational reign cannot be explained by the consequences of this breakdown alone.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most important reason for the strength of realist thinking in the following decades was the advent of the Cold War, which heralded an era of unprecedented global competition between the two dominant states of the period, the former Soviet Union and the United States. Although the contest between Moscow and Washington was played out on a multidimensional stage, including in the economic and ideological domains, the enduring images of that contest were essentially military and political. In an era symbolised by the familiar, if disturbing, mushroom cloud signature of thermo-nuclear detonations, and the physical realities of the Berlin Wall, the realist logic of security through military strength seemed apt and unassailable.

Thus, according to Muhammed Ayoob, the term "security", as it has been traditionally used in international relations literature is based on two major assumptions: one, that threats to a state's security principally arise from outside it's borders, and two, that these threats are primarily, if not

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<sup>5</sup> William Wohlforth, 'Realism and the End of the Cold War', *International Security*, vol.19(3), Winter 1994-95.

exclusively, military in nature and usually need a military response if the security of the target state is to be preserved.

These assumptions were best summed up in Walter Lippman's celebrated statement that "a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such a war."<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the earliest of the twentieth - century proponents of international security - the "idealists" of the first three decades - refused to distinguish the security of the parts from that of the system as a whole.

The post- Second World War breed of system - centred scholars has been more discriminating than it's predecessors. They have argued from the assumption that the various segments of the international system are interlinked to such an extent that their security and welfare are dependant upon each other. While much of the initial impetus for this line of argument came from the awesome concentration of nuclear weaponry in the hands of the two superpowers and the periodic crises in their relations from the Berlin blockade of 1948 to the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

What is most interesting is that both these dominant strands of security thinking (in their many variations) defined the concept of security

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<sup>6</sup> Walter Lippman, *U.S. Foreign Policy : Shield of the Republic* (Boston : Little Brown, 1943), cited in Lloyd Pettiford, 'Changing Conceptions of Security in the Third World', *Third World Quarterly*, vol.17(2), June 1991, p.292.

in external or outward-directed terms, that is, as external to the commonly accepted unit of analysis in international relations: the state.

This definition and the process by which it was reached were understandable because both reflected a particular trajectory of historical development that could be traced back atleast to the Peace of Westphalia, if not earlier.

Between 1648 (to use it as a symbolic date) and 1945, the evolution of the European system of states and its interaction with the domestic political processes of state- building and national consolidation within the major European powers led to the legitimation both of the system and of the individual participants.<sup>7</sup> These two trends - of interaction among sovereign states and of greater identification of individuals with their respective states - strengthened each other and in doing so firmly laid the foundations of the intellectual tradition in which, atleast in terms of the literature on diplomatic history and international relations, security became synonymous with the protection of a state's vital interests and core values from external threats.

Developments since 1945 strengthened the traditional western notions about security. In dividing the Western world (that is, Europe and its offshoots) into two halves and in stabilizing that division until recently by means of a mutual balance of terror, the cold war (and its later

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<sup>7</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, 'The Security Problematic of the Third World', *World Politics*, vol.43(2), January 1991.



manifestation, détente) froze the predominant Western connotation of security in a bipolar mould. The concept of alliance security was, therefore, superimposed on the concept of state security, while its essential, externally directed thrust remained unchanged.

The Cold War also encouraged the development of a sub - discipline of international relations which we know today as Strategic Studies. Strategic Studies reinforced the realist bias towards the military aspects of national security.

It was not until the late 1970s that academics and practitioners began to explore alternative ways of thinking about security which challenged the statist, militarised, balance of power prescriptions of realism.

By the 1980s, the decline of military-political security issues at the centre of security concerns was visible in the growing awareness that war was disappearing as an option in relations amongst a substantial group of states. This change in thinking coincided with the passing of the shrill confrontational early phase of the Cold War and the establishment of an uneasy détente between the two rival superpowers and their coalitions of lesser powers.

After the Vietnam war, there was also an increasing tendency in the West to question whether war was a cost-effective method for achieving a wide range of political and economic objectives. If war was fading away

as a possibility amongst many of the leading powers in the system, then realist assumptions about the primacy of military security became questionable. Adding to this shift was the increasing securitization of two issues that had traditionally been thought of as low politics: the international economy and the environment.

### **CHALLENGES TO REALIST THINKING**

The first real challenge to the realist paradigm of security came from a reinvigorated liberalism where a new generation of scholars began to write about the emerging phenomenon of globalization, later to be given the label of interdependence.

Although the notion of interdependence was not conceived as a security construct, it nevertheless struck at the core of the realist understanding of security in three critical areas.

First, interdependence challenged the pre-eminence of the state because it postulated that there were multiple channels connecting societies, many of which were outside the prerogative of national governments.

Second, it argued that military aspects of security should not dominate the agenda of interstate relations because states have to deal with multiple issues which are not arranged in a clear hierarchy.

Third, it questioned the utility of military force as an effective instrument for achieving security in a world increasingly characterised by

widening circles of interlocking economic interests and political integration.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, as the Soviet Union first withdrew its military and ideological challenge, and then imploded, the political-military rationale of the Cold War security system evaporated. With the ideological confrontation consigned to history, nuclear forces suddenly had little to deter, and conventional forces little to contain. But offsetting this positive development was the loss of the common interest that had kept the capitalist economies together despite their rivalry.

The one image of a new international system that dispenses entirely with the centrality of nation-state and traditional measurements of national power and interest is the "zones of power" versus "zones of turmoil" dichotomy popularised by Max Singer and the late Aaron Wildavsky in *THE REAL WORLD ORDER*.<sup>9</sup>

"Zones of turmoil", by definition, are by comparison poor, overpopulated, disaster-prone, and virtually ungovernable. In the dire forecast of world-travelling author Robert D. Kaplan, entitled, "The Coming Anarchy", he sets out to show "how scarcity, crime, overpopulation,

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<sup>8</sup> Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (Illinois : Scott Foresman & Co., 1989), cited in Alan Dupont, n.4, p.34.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Harkavy, 'Images of the Coming International System', *Orbis*, vol. 41 (4), Fall 1997, p.582.

tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet."<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the main points of Kaplan's work are that national and international borders are being eroded, and that private armies, transnational terrorist groups, and drug cartels are rising to challenge the authority of traditional states and international law. He notes Huntington's thesis about a coming "clash of civilizations", but adds to it a thesis of a more disaggregated world steeped in tribal as well as civilizational conflict. What is in fact dawning, he warns, is "an epoch of themeless juxtapositions, in which the classificatory grid of nation-states is going to be replaced by a jagged-glass pattern of city-states, shanty-states, nebulous and anarchic regionalisms."<sup>11</sup>

The burden of the chaos theory, rather, is that the wealthy, peaceful nations will increasingly become gilded ghettos- or armed camps - in the midst of a sea of violent, suffering humanity, unable to help the "zone of turmoil" and ultimately unable to remain unaffected by it. The image of a 'new world disorder' has begun to dominate perceptions of the future, bringing with it a new security agenda.

Further, since the winding down of the cold war, the theoretical literature on Security Studies has become notably active. One feature of this revival has been a fragmentation of the debate into three schools:

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<sup>10</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, 'The Coming Anarchy', *Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 1994, p.46.

<sup>11</sup> Harkavy, n.9, p.584.

traditionalists, who want to retain a largely military focus; wideners, who want to extend the range of issues on the security agenda; and the recently launched Critical Security Studies, whose proponents want to cultivate a more questioning attitude to the whole framework in which security is conceptualised.

Those arguing explicitly for widening include Ullman(1983), Nye and Lynne-Jones(1988), Mathews(1989), Nye(1989), Brown(1989), Crawford(1991), Tickner(1992), most of them taking off from the urgency of new, often non- military sources of threat. Buzan (1991,1983), is a widener but has been sceptical about the prospects for coherent conceptualization of security in the economic and environmental sectors. He has argued for retaining a distinctively military sub-field of strategic studies within a wider Security Studies.<sup>12</sup> Buzan and Ullman have specifically widened the definition of threat away from a more general formulation.

Most traditionalists insist on military conflict as the defining key to security, while being prepared to loosen their state centrism. As Chipman put it:

"The structuring elements of strategic analysis must be the possible use of force.... Non-military aspects of security may occupy more of the strategist's time, but the need for peoples, nations, states or alliances to procure, deploy

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<sup>12</sup> Barry Buzan, 'Rethinking Security After the Cold War', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 1997, vol.32 (1), p.9.

engage or withdraw military forces must remain a primary purpose of the strategic analyst's inquiries."<sup>13</sup>

Stephen Walt gives probably the strongest statement of the traditionalist position. He argues that Security Studies is about the phenomenon of war and it can be defined as 'the study of the threat, use, and control of military force'. Against those who want to widen the agenda outside this strictly military domain, he argues that this:

"runs the risk of expanding 'security studies' excessively; by this logic, issues such as pollution, disease, child abuse, or economic recessions- could all be viewed as threats to 'security'. Defining the field in this way would destroy its intellectual coherence and make it more difficult to devise solution to any of these important problems."<sup>14</sup>

The traditionalists' criticism of the wideners that they risk intellectual incoherence can be a powerful point. The wider agenda certainly does extend the range of knowledge and understanding necessary to pursue Security Studies. More worryingly, it also does two other things.

First, given the political function of the world security, it extends the call for state mobilization to a wide range of issues. This may be undesirable and counterproductive in the environmental sector, and this argument could easily be extended into other sectors.

Second, the wider agenda tends, often unthinkingly, to elevate 'security' into a kind of universal good thing - the desired condition-

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<sup>13</sup> John Chippman, 'The Future of Strategic Studies; Beyond Grand Strategy', *Survival*, 1992, vol.34(1), p.109.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen M. Walt, 'The Renaissance of Security Studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 35 (2), 1991, p.212.

towards which all relations should be moved. But, this is a dangerously blinkered view.

Liberals, for example, argue that too much economic security is destructive to the workings of a market economy. Security should not too easily be thought of always a good thing. Better, as Waever argues, is to aim for desecuritization : the shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining processes of the political sphere.

Thus, what can be clearly observed is that the state is less important in the new security agenda than in the old one. It still remains central, but no longer dominates either as the exclusive referent object or as the principle embodiment of threat in the way it did previously . A range of new referent objects for security and sources of threat is being set up above, below and alongside the state. Above the state one finds being elevated to the status of referent objects of security such things as the set of rules, regimes and institutions that constitute the liberal international economic order; the global climate; and the various regimes that attempt to control the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (the NPT, CWC, MTCR, etc.).

Alongside the state, nations and religions have emerged as distinct referent objects. Below it, the rising focus on human rights supports claims to give individuals more standing as the ultimate referent object for security.

The Copenhagen School framework comes down on the side of the wideners in terms of keeping the security agenda open to many different types of threats. It argues against the view that the core of Security Studies is war and force, and that other issues are relevant only if they relate to that. Instead, it constructs a more radical view of Security Studies by exploring threats to referent objects, and the securitization of these threats, that are non-military as well as military.

Threats and vulnerabilities can arise in many different areas, military and non-military, but in order to count as security issues they have to meet strictly defined criteria that distinguish them from the normal run of the merely political.

They have to be staged as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor who thereby generates endorsement for emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind.<sup>15</sup>

If we place the survival of collective units and/or principles - the politics of existential threat - as the defining core of Security Studies, then we have the basis for applying security analysis to a variety of sectors without losing the essential quality of the concept.

In the military sector, the referent object is usually the state, though it may also be other kinds of political entity.

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<sup>15</sup> Barry Buzan, n.12, p.13.



In the political sector, existential threats are traditionally defined in terms of the constituting principle - sovereignty, but sometimes also ideology - of the state. Sovereignty can be existentially threatened by things that question recognition, legitimacy, or governing authority.

In the societal sector, as we have defined it, the referent object is large-scale collective identities that can function independently of the state, such as nations and religions. Given the peculiar nature of this type of referent object it is extremely difficult to establish hard boundaries that differentiate existential from lesser threats. Collective identities naturally evolve and change in response to internal and external developments.

Such changes may be seen as invasive or heretical, and their sources pointed to as existential threats or they may be accepted as part of the evolution of identity.

Given the conservative nature of 'identity', it is always possible to paint challenges and changes as threats to identity, because 'we will no longer be us', no longer the way we were, or the way we ought to be to be true to our identity'.

The ability to maintain and reproduce a language, a set of behavioural customs, or a conception of ethnic purity can all be cast in terms of survival.


In this context, Critical Security Studies (CSS) views the system very much in constructivist terms. It wants to challenge both traditionalists

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and widens by applying post-positivist perspectives, such as Critical theory and post - structuralism.<sup>16</sup> Much of their work, deals with the social construction of security, but CSS mostly has the purpose to show that change is possible because things are socially constituted. If states dominate the arena, this is a feat of power politics repressing other dimensions of reality that could potentially replace the states if an emancipatory praxis could - with the help of Critical theory - empower other subjectivities than those who dominate at present. The social world does not exhibit any iron laws, all regularities can be broken.

As part of the argumentation against established discourses of security, CSS will often try to mobilize other security problems - environmental problems, poverty, unemployment - as more important, more threatening and thereby relativizing conventional wisdom.

According to Alexander Wendt, the problem lies not with statism but with two other commitments that inform contemporary understandings of structural theory : realism and rationalism. The essence of the former is materialism, not a willingness to confront the ugliness of world politics as its proponents would have it. If system structure is reduced to a distribution of material power, structural change can mean nothing more

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<sup>16</sup> Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, *From Strategy to Security: Foundations of Critical Security Studies* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp.35-43.



than shifts in polarity that will not end the dreary history of conflict and despair over the millenia.<sup>17</sup>

The essence of rationalism, in contrast, is that the identities and interests that constitute games are exogenous and constant. Rationalism has many uses and virtues, but its conceptual tool kit is not designed to explain identities and interests, the reproduction and/or transformation of which is a key determinant of structural change. One should not let one's admiration for rationalist methodology dictate the substantive scope of systemic international relations theory.

Scholars should not ignore the state as they grapple with explaining structural change in the late twentieth century, but for their part, statist should recognize that when states interact, much more is going on than realism and rationalism admit. Yes, international politics is in part about acting on material incentives in given anarchic worlds. However, it is also about the reproduction and transformation - by intersubjective dynamics at both the domestic and systemic levels - of the identities and interests through which those incentives and worlds are created.<sup>18</sup>

In "Security and Sovereign States : What is at Stake in Taking Feminism Seriously?" Peterson explores contemporary meanings of

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<sup>17</sup> Alexander Wendt, 'Collective Identity Formation and The International State', *American Political Science Review*, June 1994, vol.88 (2), p.394.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.394.

in/security, and possibilities for "world security" through a post - positivist feminist lens on states and their interactive structural dynamics.

According to him, in the modern era, objectivist science, masculinism and liberal capitalism converge in mystifying the structural violence constituted by sovereign state systems, i.e. women's systemic 'insecurity' is revealed as an internal as well as external dimension of state systems.

Peterson states that structural insecurities internal to states - constituted by gendered (and other) divisions of labour, resources, and identities - as well as androcratic politics generally must be recognised and critically examined. One must understand how extensive and systemic current insecurities are and how particular identities produce, and are produced by, this structural violence; one can understand neither without attention to gender.

Feminist antiliberal, antistate analysis is similar to already established Marxist criticism of the state but with added attention to gender.<sup>19</sup> States are not only instruments of class interest but also of patriarchy. They perpetuate not only class conflict and violence but also gender conflict and violence. And liberal systems that supposedly democratize power and wealth simply mask the underlying fact of elite rule. Where can this

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<sup>19</sup> Mona Harrington, 'What Exactly is Wrong with the Liberal State as an Agent of Change?' in V. Spike Peterson, (ed.) *Gendered States*, (London : Lynne-Reinner Publishers, 1992), p.65.

analysis lead but to a call for deconstructing the present sovereign state system?

Harrington was writing in the winter of 1990 -91 with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe decommunized, the Cold War over - other calls for deconstructing nation - states also in the air. The loss of national cohesion took less dramatic but still unmistakable form in the deep splits in the US electorate over the Bush administration's preparations for war against Iraq. A NEW YORK TIMES/CBS NEWS poll in early December, 1990 revealed a large gender gap on the question whether the United States should start military action if Iraq were to fail to withdraw from Kuwait by the deadline set in a Security Council resolution. The overall percentage of Americans favouring war if the deadline was ignored was 45 percent, but this included 53 percent of the men and only 37 percent of the women polled. Even more remarkable was the breakdown by race, with 48 percent of the whites for war and only 23 percent of the blacks against it.

In a polity recognizing disparate and conflicting interests based on sex, race and class, lack of national unity would not be startling. It would be assumed. National unity, in the former Soviet Union, in the United States, in most modern states, has to a large extent taken the material form of military hardware - in the richest states, extravagant contraptions exploding underground, blasting through space, dug into silos, creeping along the ocean floors. But the varied classes and races and the two sexes

paying for these tokens of national purpose have not benefitted equally from their making, nor would they from their use.

No nation starting with the question, how can the diverse interests of our people be best served? could possibly arrive at massive investment in the military as an answer. In other words, the security may lie in the logic of its pluralism, its fragmentation, not in its generalizing of social interest.

## CHAPTER - II

### BLACK AND DALIT MOVEMENTS – A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

#### BLACK NATIONALISM

After four decades of the cold war, failure to make progress on a "domestic agenda" now threatens America's long - term national security more than the external military threats that have traditionally preoccupied security and foreign policy. While the world remains a dangerous place requiring us to maintain military strength, America's failure to invest in productive capacity, research and development (R & D), and infrastructure; the crisis in American education; the exploding underclass, and other domestic problems may have greater direct impact on "the United States as a free society with its fundamental institutions and values intact"<sup>1</sup> than the threats from abroad, such as the possibility of Soviet nuclear attack, which have traditionally preoccupied the national security community. Moreover, continued failure to address these domestic priorities may entail a progressive loss both of political will and economic capacity to take actions abroad that promote American real national security interests.

The words of Daniel Yankelovich, public opinion researcher and social commentator, bear repeating :

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<sup>1</sup> Graham Allison and Gregory F. Treverton, (ed.) *Rethinking America's Security* (New York : W.W. Norton & Co., 1992) p.16.

"This situation is a formula for social and political instability. The history of this century shows that there is no more potent negative political force than downward mobility. If the American Dream becomes a mockery for tens of millions of vigorous young Americans.... The nation can expect rising levels of violence, crime, drug addiction, rioting, sabotage and social instability. The surge of racial tension between young whites and blacks is already an expression of it . We will be lucky if this is the worst of it."

Long before notions of biological inferiority came on stream at the end of the nineteenth century, it was argued that Africans were heathen and uncivilized, and this was used to give more legitimacy to slavery. The repudiation of scientific racism - the idea that blacks were innately inferior - has paradoxically given new life to the theory that culture, not genes, explains black subordination.

This theory has gone through a series of iterations, beginning with the "cultural deprivation" school in the 1950s, the "culture-of-poverty" theorists in the 1960s and 1970s, and the enormous "underclass" discourse in the 1980s. In recent years yet another cultural theory has come on stream, this time with a left twist. Influenced by such theorists as Pierre Bordieu and Paul Willis, it is now argued that the poor develop an "oppositional culture", born out of "resistance" to their oppression.<sup>2</sup>

These cultural theorists hold that oppositional culture has its origins in political economy. They go on to argue that oppositional culture assumes "a life of its own", both exacerbating and perpetuating

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<sup>2</sup> Steinberg, Stephen, 'America's Jobless Ghettos', Review of William Julius Wilson's *'When Work Disappears : The World of the New Urban Poor'* (San Francisco: Alfred A. Knopf), *Business and Society Review*, Nov. 98 Quarterly.



marginality. In this way the poor become implicated in the reproduction of inequality.

The dangers of this theoretical position become apparent when it is appropriated by the likes of Dinesh D' Souza, who concedes that "black culture emerged out of the crucible of racism and historical oppression directed specifically at blacks."<sup>3</sup>

Like Oscar Lewis and other cultural theorists, D'Souza goes on to argue that the adaptations of one generation become the entrenched culture of the next, and "what we have now is a downward spiral produced by dysfunctional cultural orientations and destructive social policies." According to D'Souza, most of the problems that confront black America can be traced to the cultural pathology that has reached the stage of "a civilizational crisis". The remedy, as was trumpeted by the Million Man March as well, is for blacks to get their own cultural house in order.

The failure to deal in any satisfactory way with race has been the primal curse of American politics, a curse that still has the potential to destroy both liberalism and democracy.

In 1944, in his monumental study of what he called the "American Dilemma", Gunnar Myrdal argued that "the American Negro problem is a problem in the heart of the American." By that he meant that the conflict was fundamentally a clash between the generally egalitarian tenets of the

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<sup>3</sup> See Dinesh D'Souza, *End of Racism*, in Stephen Steinberg, n.2, p.69.

"American Creed" and a set of lower - order values that sanctioned the wide range of discriminatory behaviour common then and, all too often, today.

Twenty years later, Charles Silverman argued that the Whites in the United States were not in a state of internal conflict because of the gap between their ideals and their behaviour. At most they were upset because the domestic tranquility had been shattered, rather than because justice was not being done.<sup>4</sup>

Another twenty years later, it was possible for Jennifer Hochschild to argue that, in effect, Silverman was closer to the truth than Myrdal - racial discrimination existed because there was a symbiotic relationship between it and the perceived needs of whites. In other words, whites believed themselves to benefit from the existence of a despised other.<sup>5</sup>

In 1992, it was still plausible for Andrew Hacker to conclude that the warning of the Kerner Commission of 1968 was correct.<sup>6</sup>

We are, Hacker proclaims in the title of his study, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, and Unequal*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Silverman, cited in James P. Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, (Westview Press, 1996), p.204.

<sup>5</sup> Hochschild, Jennifer, cited in *ibid*, p.204.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations : Black and White, Separate, Hostile and Unequal*, *ibid.*, p.204.

It is true that one can document social and economic progress on the part of American blacks. But inspite of forty years of Supreme Court decisions, inspite of the achievements of the civil rights movement, inspite of a spate of government programs, even inspite of the emergence of a significant black middle class, the problem of race continues to gnaw at the vitals of American society.

According to W.E.B Dubois, perhaps the most profound of black thinkers, the Negro wanted neither to Africanize America nor to bleach his skin. "He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. This, then, is the end of his striving : to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation."<sup>8</sup>

The early essays of James Baldwin also explored this territory with rare sensitivity and eloquence. Baldwin saw the situation as desperate. Things were so grim that they forced Baldwin to raise a question that shook white liberals to the core : "Do I really *want* to be integrated into a burning house?"<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> James P. Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, (Westview Press, 1996), p.205.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205.

And the available alternatives seemed stark. At one pole was the Negro student movement, at the other pole was the separatist ideology of the Black Muslims, today more commonly known as the Nation of Islam.

The black student movement made fantastic demands on its followers. Led by Martin Luther King, Jr., the movement was deeply rooted in the universalist principles of the liberal theory of rights. They asked, in effect, what Lincoln had asked - the reenactment of the Declaration of Independence. That partly accounts for the resonance of the civil rights movement, not only among liberal reformers, but in much of the nation. The principle at stake were too deeply ingrained in America to be denied with any degree of intellectual respectability, though, of course, the gap between rhetoric and practice remained large.

As the campaign soared to the north, it began to collide with the intractable realities of the urban ghettos. Those realities could not be addressed by legislation to reverse the overt denial of civil rights that legalized segregation had fostered. As somebody rightly remarked, nonviolent protest could easily be seen by ghetto blacks as a way of making white liberals feel comfortable; it was to those ghetto blacks that Malcolm X gave voice.

*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* was the saga of the pimp, street hustler, and common criminal who gave up his ways when he discovered the teachings of Elijah Muhammad's Black Muslim movement.

A basic muslim teaching was that whites were "devils", that white society was beyond redemption, and that separate of the races was the only way out.

Separation, however, according to the Black Muslims, had to be accompanied by giving up crime, alcohol, drugs, and developing a set of behaviours that had an eerie similarity to the ascetic discipline of the Puritan communities of the seventeenth century.

The national leaders contend that the Negroes must become consciously aware of their identity as a group in America; they must realize their degradation and strive by individual and collective effort to redeem their communities and regain their human dignity.

The history of the alienation of Africans from their homeland and of their subsequent subordination and humiliation in the New World for over two centuries is well known. Equally familiar is the contribution of slavery to family disintegration and to cultural disorientation. The result is that Negroes have acquired what appears to be an appalling sense of inferiority and even of hatred for their "Negro-ness".<sup>10</sup> This heritage of slavery, as well as their continuing subjection to abuse and indignity, must be fully recognized and appreciated before the problem which black nationalism seeks to resolve can be understood.

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<sup>10</sup> E.U. Esseien - Udom, *Black nationalism - A Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1962) p.9.

Compelled by segregation, discrimination, poverty, and ignorance to remain on the periphery of white society and to live and die within the subculture of the Negro ghettos, the Negro masses have had to disassociate themselves from white society. At the same time, however, they are compulsively attracted to it, since power, status, security, even beauty remain white priorities, white possessions. This conflict in Negro thinking is further disturbed by the demand of white society that the Negroes conform to its material, cultural, and moral standards, while denying them the economic and social resources for so doing. Thus, the burden of a final irony is added to the Negro's dilemma.

Although black nationalism shares some characteristics of all nationalisms, it must be considered a unique type of separatist seeking an actual physical and political withdrawal from existing society.

Instead of perceiving themselves as Americans who "happened to be black", black nationalism often viewed themselves as Africans who happened to reside in the United States. Also central to black nationalism was the insight that an oppressed people could survive in a hostile environment only if they constructed their own institutions and enterprises.

Because it symbolises the oppression of the Negro, the white culture's political and religious basis is rejected : the Muslims do not vote in local or national elections; they resist induction into the United States military services; and they categorically reject Christianity as the "graveyard" of the Negro people.

October 16, 1995, the largest public gatherings of African Americans in history took place in Washington, D.C. The participants had come together under the slogan the Million Man March, with an agenda emphasizing racial pride, personal responsibility, and patriarchal family relations. The African American who initiated this demonstration had been vilified in the national media for more than a decade as racist and anti-semitic. Yet this leader (Louis Farrakhan, leader of Nation of Islam) had the political insight to recognize and respond to the deep sense of social crisis within this community, the levels of rage, social alienation, and violence that were destroying an entire population of young African American males.

The political logic behind this was relatively clear. Reaganism, the growing ideological conservatism of both major parties constituted a retreat from the program of the civil rights movement. White liberals and liberalism had virtually ceased to exist, affirmative action policies were widely denounced as "reverse discrimination".<sup>11</sup> To most of the African Americans men who responded to Farrakhan's call to Washington, it seemed that black people had little alternative but to turn inward. If white society could not be transformed democratically to include racial minorities, African Americans on their own had to employ their resources and skills for the survival and uplift of their race. In the language of an

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<sup>11</sup> Manning Marable, 'Black Fundamentalism' *Dissent*, Spring 1998, p.69.

earlier racial conservative, Booker T. Washington, blacks had to "cast down their buckets where they are."

On the first anniversary of the march, 50,000 to 100,000 people gathered before the United Nations to mark the "World Day of Atonement." According to the *NEW FEDERALIST*, the demonstration's major themes were "Atonement, Reconciliation, and Responsibility".

The US witnessed another, a "Million Youth March" in September 1998. Unlike the two previous events, the Million Youth March was not a single event. It got divided into two. On September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1998, the ousted Nation of Islam activist, Khalid Muhammad, led the March in New York. And the second one was held at Atlanta on September 7<sup>th</sup>.<sup>12</sup>

An interesting point to be noted is an article published in *DALIT VOICE*, Feb, 16 - 28, 1999, which read as follows -

"In India, though the black untouchables are much, much bigger in population compared to the American Black population, we have not held any such march. Not only that. The world outside does not even know that India has such a huge chunk of slaves enjoying their slavery. Even the American Blacks do not know it.

We have to learn a lot from each other. Hence the need for education. If any Black publishing house is interested in a linkup with *DALIT VOICE*, we can exchange information and then be the harbingers of a revolutionary 'media centre' of the future."

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<sup>12</sup> Anon., *Dalit Voice*, vol.18 (6), Feb.16-28, 1999, p.16.



This brings us to an assessment of the Dalit movement said to have the potential to demystify the Indian nation-state.<sup>13</sup>

## **DALIT MOVEMENT**

As India approaches the end of the century, what then are the principal threats to its security and how is it gearing up to cope with them? India faces myriad internal security threats. As political awareness and mobilization proceeded apace, various regional parties sought to voice the real and imagined grievances of local populations and ethnic groups.

An increased sense of political efficacy has also raised fears among these ethnic minorities that their distinctive cultural practices and traits will be effaced over time. Consequently, their demands have frequently been expressed in terms of the preservation of group rights and privileges.

We are in the middle of a new debate on the age - old issue of caste in a radically changed historical setting both at home and globally. It is a setting of growing human iniquity and widening social chasms within and across nations.<sup>14</sup> But, more pertinently, it has been gradually dawning on us that the various ideological models of dealing with oppression of the poor and discriminated sections of society, protecting their freedom and dignity and their sheer survival as human beings and communities, have

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<sup>13</sup> A. Gajendran, 'Transforming Dalit Politics', *Seminar* 471, Nov.1998, p.24.

<sup>14</sup> Rajni Kothari, 'Rise of the Dalits and the Renewed Debate on Caste', *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 25, 1994, p.1589.

proved not just inadequate but by and large irrelevant. Meanwhile, the new thinking on economic development is going to exacerbate the situation.

Acts of brutality and terror continue to be part of the atrocities perpetuated on the dalits and other lower classes, the more so the more they become conscious of their rights and begin to assert themselves.

Further, with the entry of the democratic political process the pluralistic micro perspective took precedence over the polarising macro attempt that was carried over by some from pre - partition day and in the meanwhile the diverse micro processes added up to a new macro structure of society - politics interaction - until the old macro view reverberated with a bang after the challenge thrown to it by the Mandal phenomenon.

Although nearly all 'new social movements have emerged as correctives to new maladies - environmental degradation, violation of the status of women, destruction of tribal cultures and the undermining of human rights - none of which are in and by themselves transformative of the social order. Their basic weakness lies in their being so heavily fragmented. Add to this state of fragmentation a high degree of passivity - cum - quiescence - cum - confirmity on the part of large sections of the people, and the result is a virtual state of sterility and stupor which is however riven with deep tension, distress and multiple polarities.

It is against this growing irrelevance of various grassroots movements that the new 'dalit' movement in India is emerging, or it

seems like emerging. It is based on an attempted though by no means still realised solidarity of the poor and the discriminated classes of the people, long held back and frustrated, its leadership divided and bought over, distanced from the masses and co-opted within the mainstream and in establishment structures and positions.

Were it not for a systematic and continuing onslaught by the rural upper castes and the real and deadly fear of a political kind held out by the emergent brahminic party and its arrogant cultural expression in the form of the VHP which in turn allowed a gradual alignment and realignment with major minorities (the muslims, in particular), the dalit phenomenon would not have emerged with the power and confidence that it did in 1993.

The Dalit movement has not fared much better in the histories of modern India by Indian historians, who generally relegate Dalits to chapters on social reform and portray them as passive victims, recipients and beneficiaries rather than as active participants in their struggles. The one paragraph that Majumdar devotes to Dalits describes them as objects of philanthropic and social work conducted by others.<sup>15</sup>

Beginning with the pioneering work of Eleanor Zelliott in 1969, a growing number of historical monographs have recently offered a necessary corrective. These provide ample evidence of a Dalit movement prior to the enactment of 1919 Constitution, growing in size and political

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<sup>15</sup> R.C. Majumdar, *et al. An Advanced History of India : Modern India*, Part III (London : Macmillan and Co., 1956).

significance through the 1920s and 1930s. Dalits may not have had a single organization parallel to the Muslim League or the Hindu Mahasabha, but they did have grassroots organizations; a recognized leadership, pre - eminent among whom was B.R. Ambedkar; and a common demand for political recognition for their own political representation as well as for dignity, equality and justice.

Atul Chandra Pradhan, divides the Depressed Classes into two categories : the separatists, such as B.R. Ambedkar and R. Srinivasan, and the nationalists, among whom the relative late - comer Jagjivan Ram was the most consistent.<sup>16</sup> Whereas the former sought recognition through separate electorates, the latter sought to become 'an unsegregated and unquarantined part of Hindu society.'

The most recent monograph on the Dalit movement is by Gail Omvedt. Omvedt treats the Dalit movement as a part, in many ways the leading part, of a broader anti-caste movement which included non - Brahmin movements as well. Omvedt argues that the Dalit movement in particular and anti - caste movements in general should be seen as anti - systemic rather than basically reformist in nature.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Atul Chandra Pradhan, *The Emergence of the Depressed Classes*, (Bhubaneswar : Bookland International, 1986) cited in John C.B. Webster, 'Understanding the Modern Dalit Movement', *Sociological Bulletin*, 45(2), September 1996, p.193.

<sup>17</sup> Gail Omvedt, "Dalits and the Democratic Revolution : Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit movement in Colonial India" (New Delhi : Sage Publications, 1994) cited in *ibid.*, p.197.

Historically, the Dalit movement has questioned both the assumptions. On the one hand, it has seen caste (in both its occupational and purity - pollution dimensions) as exploitative and on the other it has questioned the meaning and identity of 'the nation' when such hierarchical divisions exist within it. Omvedt thus sets her study within a framework that is both Marxist and 'Phule - Ambedkarite'.<sup>18</sup>

Amidst all the plethora of micro - studies, one might ask, how is the history of the Dalit 'movement' best understood? Two approaches seem to predominate. One attempts to classify the variety of recent Dalit activity. Nandu Ram, for example, differentiates the following three types of Dalit activism : movements against socio - economic exploitation and numerous types of atrocities on the Dalits; movements for better access to the opportunities and for realization of goals of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice; and movements for gaining self - respect and dignified social identity.<sup>19</sup>

A second approach seeks an underlying unity beneath this diversity. Highlighting this aspect, Rajni Kothari wrote in a recent article on the Dalits.

"The Dalit's expectation and strategy seems to be designed to challenge the dominant castes by means of education, employment and special rights, in short a struggle against the

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<sup>18</sup> John C.B. Webster, "Understanding the Modern Dalit Movement"; *Sociological Bulletin*, 45(2), September, 1996, p.198.

<sup>19</sup> For a critical appreciation of the schematic division of dalit movements refer Nandu Ram, *Beyond Ambedkar : Essays on Dalits in India* (New Delhi : Haranand Publications, 1995) p.181.

system that begins with challenging injustices within it, thinking of the struggle against imperialism and other such things as of second order importance."<sup>20</sup>

When one explores the historicity of dalits, their ethno-linguistic heterogeneity is manifested in all their socio - cultural features - festivals, religion, music dance, food habits, medicine system and so on. Prof. Gajendran adds that many dalit communities seem to have accepted Buddhist values and incorporated them in their respective regional cultural features, "thereby challenging the conventional understanding of a homogenised process which uprooted all dalit communities from their cultural milieu and accomodated them within a sub - continental boundary called Hindu India." However, the 'imposed historicity' of the 'other' (caste Hindus) has forced us to view Dalits only within Hindu homogeneity and not beyond; it viewed Dalits as 'objects' not as 'subjects', as a 'subordinated' category at the sub-continental level, especially after the arrival of the British and the freedom movement. The dalit cultural traditions and religious interpretations increasingly reveal their rational and non - dogmatic approach to material and religious life. Such a fundamental cultural divide between the dalits and the caste Hindus "prevents the recovery of the 'self' vis-a-vis its emasculation by the 'other'."

But the unfolding myriad dalit ideologies and movements seem to point towards an essentially 'transformatory' philosophy which is 'liberatory' not merely of the 'self' but of the 'other' as well.

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<sup>20</sup> Rajni Kothari, 'Rise of the Dalits and Renewed Debate on Caste', *Economic and political Weekly*, 25 June, p.1592.

There are adequate reasons, currently, such as the caste Hindus celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> year of their independence with the Jehanabad killings of dalits; the media, controlled by caste Hindus, ridiculing the demands and politics of the dalits through cartoons and headlines; the present political structure continuing to favour caste Hindus for political and administrative positions against dalits and so on, for dalits to react with as 'exclusivist' an ideology as their tormentors hold.

The invention of categories such as bahujan or dalit - bahujan, usher in the plausibility of a progressive agenda of transforming Indian society as a whole (including dalits).

While accepting the prevalence of a caste order it sought to subvert the benefits accruing perpetually to the top rungs by uniting the lower rungs. It aimed to conscientise the non - caste Hindus, subsumed within the hindu social structure degradingly as backwards, scheduled castes or adivasis, into a conglomeration of the 'sufferers', hence advocating the need to come together. The mere numerical strength of these victims, per se, was sought to be made use of to question the predominance of a miniscule minority like the Brahmins.

If the dalits can ally with the backwards and other religious groups who have been victims of Hindutva under the umbrella of bahujan, we may witness a major transformation in India's political economy. For the category creates avenues for those marginalised to share the political

space, unseen so far by the diverse movements, including the much celebrated national movement.

Infact, now, in a significant new interpretive study of Indian nationalism, G. Aloysius reverses the usual tendency to see the high caste - led independence movement as the 'nationalist' movement, the core of Indian peoples' struggles during colonial rule, and instead analyses it as mainly a high - caste movement with a dual purpose, achieving independence and maintaining the basic structures of a society which they ruled. In contrast, the social movement of the low castes was, according to Aloysius, truly nationalist not simply because it sought to create the "social feeling.... A corporate sentiment of oneness which make those who are charged with it feel they are kith and kin" (in Ambedkar's definition) that nearly all agree is at the core of nationalism.

Ambedkar and Phule and others before him, went beyond this accepted definition of 'nation - building' to argue that the foundation of this sentiment of oneness could only be provided by a destruction of caste hierarchies and elite exclusiveness. Thus, what others are now describing as a 'dalit - bahun movement' was, in Aloysius' terms, the true political nationalism.

Suggesting the vivacity and strength of the dalit movement, Kancha Illaiah ('The Chundur Carnage : The Struggle of Dalits') narrates the struggle (1991) of the dalits of Chundur village in Andhra Pradesh. The fact that dalits of this village fought back the designs of the upper castes



is seen by Illaiah as a pointer to the existence of a militant dalit movement in the state.

D.A. Mane ('Dalit Movement in Karnataka') has discussed the Dalit Sangharsh Samiti (DSS) of Karnataka. From the brief discussion of DSS, it emerges that DSS did take many issues but it lacked the organisational skill required for continuing the struggles.

On a different plane, even amongst the Dalits unlike the Pariar Dalits in the northern districts of Tamil Nadu, the Pallar Dalits in the South have gained little from the reservation system.

On the social platform, the Dalit groups on the fringe have been fighting for participation in temple festivals, equality in tea shops and the right of passage for funeral processions through village roads. Politically, these fringe groups are non - entities, and the Pallars have at different times served as the vote - bank of the Congress (I) and the AIADMK.

The social and political spheres of the Pallars have thus remained separate. The community leaders, with a limited local agenda, do not make any political impact. And their political party leaders do not count the localised issues in their list of priorities.

It is this situation that the newly - formed Puthiya Tamilagam (New Tamil Land), headed by the physician - turned politician, Dr. K.Krishnasamy, intends to change. "We don't want to give up our social space while we are fighting for political power and we don't want to

sacrifice our political identity while we are intervening in social issues", he says.<sup>21</sup>

The Puthiyan Tamilagam leader says that caste conflicts are now taking a violent form because the Pallars are no longer willing to remain docile and suffer injustice in silence.

"The Dalits want political power. We are bringing all Dalits under one banner", he says.

The Puthiya Tamilagam works in close coordination with the Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam, which likewise gives great importance to social intervention. There is now an effort to bring Christian church - based organisations into the fold.

However, there is a tension between being in the forefront of anti - establishment struggles and being a participant in electoral politics. Shantaram Pandere ('Patterns of Dalit Militancy'), criticizes the Republican movement for "joining hands with the Congress" and brings out the dilemma of joining electoral politics. Infact the electoral game tends to divide the dalit elites. The splintering of the Republican Party is a good example of this.

The absence of a strong agitational dimension seems to have produced yet another trends that worries sympathisers of the dalit

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<sup>21</sup> *The Hindu*, Sunday, October 11, 1998.

movement. This trend is two - fold : a 'Hinduist misappropriation of Ambedkar' and attempts to communalise the dalit masses.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps a strong mobilisational base and ideological grounding alone, will save dalit unity.

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<sup>22</sup> Suhas Palshikar, "Assessing Dalit Movement" (review of Sandeep Pendse's (ed.) "At Crossroads : Dalit Movement Today", Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, Bombay, 1994) *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 10, 1995, p.1371.

## CHAPTER - III

### GENDER ISSUES AND WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

"The security of states dominates our understanding of what security can be, and who it can be for, not because conflict between states is inevitable, but because other forms of political community have been rendered almost unthinkable. The claims of states to a monopoly legitimate authority in a particular territory have succeeded in marginalizing and even erasing other expressions of political identity - other answers to questions about who we are."<sup>1</sup>

This chapter argues that "national security" is particularly and profoundly contradictory for women. The state is a "bearer of gender" by reference to male domination of the top personnel of states and to the cult of masculinity among these personnel. Similarly, gender differentiation is evident in the disproportionate number of men in the coercive apparatus of the state (military, police, prisons) and in infrastructural services (railways, power, construction), while women overwhelmingly sustain the service sectors (teaching, health and welfare services, clerical support) and are found disproportionately in part - time, non-salaried positions.

Further, women are the objects of masculinist social control not only through direct violence (murder, rape, battering, incest), but also through

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<sup>1</sup> R.B.J. Walker, 'Sovereignty, security, and the challenge of World Politics', *Alternatives*, 15(1), p.6.

ideological constructs, such as "women's work" and the cult of motherhood, that justify structural violence - inadequate healthcare, sexual harassment, and sex-segregated wages, rights and resources. The state is implicated in all of these.

According to Peterson, the state is complicit "directly" through its selective sanctioning of non-state violence, particularly in its policy of "non-intervention" in domestic violence. It is complicit "indirectly" through its promotion of masculinist, heterosexist and classicist ideologies - expressed, for example, in public education models, media images, the militarism of culture, welfare policies, and patriarchal law.

It is with this background that I start an enumeration of the Second wave of Feminist movement in the United States of America.

The contemporary feminist movement that emerged in the mid-1960s had dual origins : liberal women's rights organizations that pursued legislative and judicial reforms, and a radical movement based in numerous small local groups.

The liberal women's rights movement, began with the founding of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966 and grew rapidly over the next ten years as many other groups, such as the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL,1968) and the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC,1971), were formed.

The other branch, the radical feminist, or women's liberation movement, was emerging at the same time and was based in numerous local groups spontaneously created in cities all around the country by women formerly active in New Left groups or the African American civil rights movement.

A primary tenet of liberal feminism is that women should be included in the mainstream of American life and should enjoy all the rights and privileges of citizenship on an equal basis with men. In general, this branch has concentrated on eliminating sex discrimination through the traditional channels of legislative and judicial reforms.

The local groups of the women's liberation, in contrast, had no national structure, no set of written bylaws or principles, nor even, in many cases, a distinctive name.

Committed to a radical vision of a new society and to non-hierarchical, egalitarian organizations, liberation groups frequently fell victim to a "tyranny of structurelessness", which prevented a policy agenda from being developed for its advancement.

In refutation of Touraine's observation that "once relations become institutionalized, social movements degenerate into political pressure",<sup>2</sup> the modern women's movement is not one monolithic structure but instead consists of a number of separate and relatively autonomous groups that

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<sup>2</sup> Alaine Touraine, *The Voice and the Eye : An Analysis of Social Movements*, (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.98-103.

differ on some goals, priorities, strategies and tactics. Each consists of members from varying racial and class backgrounds and different ideologies that dictate shifting coalitions by issue.

Such organizational characteristics as a formal bureaucratic structure, a permanent staff, a well - developed communications system, and a cohesive and mobilized membership are considered assets for lobby groups. Recent studies of national women's groups agree that they are exceptionally activist and highly mobilized. In addition, the decision to become a lobby meant that women's rights groups would have formal leaders and hierarchy. Increasingly, the national women's rights organizations have become professional social movement organizations that rely primarily on paid leaders and expert staff to maintain the organization and attract foundation and governmental support.

In order to maximise effectiveness, the pragmatic leaders of the women's movement have often sought incremental policy changes and have focussed on only a few issues - initially, those dealing with legal equality.

In recent years, women's rights groups have concentrated on issues of women and poverty while professional women's caucuses have continued to track the implementation of equal education opportunity.

Occupational groups, with their greater resources, have tended to pursue more issues, particularly child care.<sup>3</sup>

Recent observers of the women's movement argue that there are now relatively few internal ideological disputes among women's groups. Whether because of the opportunity for goal achievement provided by the perceived gender gap or the crisis of the rise of the New Right - with the failure of the ERA and the threat to legalized abortion - the women's policy network exhibited a new cohesiveness and a heightened level of mobilization during the 1980s.

Beginning in 1985, the Council of Presidents has grown to include more than 40 groups, with 10 million members, and is currently pressing a consensual and ambitious multi-issue platform, termed the Women's Agenda.

Although not yet a formal coalition organization, several indicators of incipient institutionalization are present : regular meetings, organized media campaigns, annual conventions, paid consultants, and conferences with the president of the United States and congressional leaders. Significantly, this new coalition agrees not only on legislative priorities but also on the essential, noncompromisable components of an acceptable bill in each policy area.

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<sup>3</sup> Janet K. Boles, 'From Follows Function : The Evolution of Feminist Strategies', *Annals AAPSS*, 514, March 1991, p.43.



As the 1990s begin, few feminists subscribe to the popular wisdom that the women's movement is dead. Yet, one also realizes that the public face of the feminist movement is not the same. Marches, protests, and demonstrations are now infrequent, press coverage is decreased, much of the drama is gone. Yet consciousness of continued gender inequalities has not abated. Abortion rights, sexual harassment, date rape, battering, pay inequities, women's double shift, the feminization of poverty, child care, and the burden that falls on women who care for ageing parents are all issues that continue to generate public debate and private conversation.

However, over the last decade the consciousness - raising functions of street politics and pressure - group activity have been succeeded by a process of what might be termed 'unobtrusive mobilization' inside institutions.<sup>4</sup> Occurring inside institutions of higher education, foundations, the social services, the media, the professions, the armed forces, the churches - inside the core institutions of American society and the American state - unobtrusive mobilization by women now drives second - wave feminism ahead into the 1990s.

In part, the proliferation of gender consciousness is an outgrowth of ongoing societal changes. Structural shifts in family composition and career patterns - declining fertility, rising divorce rates, the entry of women into the paid labor force - are critical to the emergence and endurance of a

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, 'Feminism within Institutions : Unobtrusive Mobilization in the 1980s', *Signs : Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 16 (1),1990, p.27.

feminist as well as an antifeminist consciousness. Society - focussed theories, however, underplay the importance of politics in naming, coalescing, and transmitting experiential learning.

The kind of politics that creates a gender consciousness is not just the politics of elections, litigation, and legislation, or the headline-gaining politics of protests and demonstrations - although all these forms of political mobilization are important. The framing of gender - consciousness, Katzenstein contends, also emerges out of--other modes of political activism.

There are two other forms of women's activism that have long been in existence. One of these is the politics of everyday resistance, the gossip, pilfering, sabotage, absenteeism, insubordination, feigned ignorance, joking, and humour, all of which express sometimes individual, sometimes collective resistance to the status quo.

A second form of politics in which women have engaged but which has not been studied with sufficient attention to its collective importance for contemporary feminism has been the voluntary association, small organization, caucus, or interest group.

One may not get a numerical count of the decentralized, dispersed form of associational politics that now operates outside the national political area. However, one knows simply by the reach, specificity, and diversity of the groups of women they represent that they are prolific.

To name a few, Women's Caucus for Art, Women in Scholarly Publishing (WISP, the caucus of women employed by academic presses), Women's Computer Networks, Sisters in Crime, which was started when a woman mystery writer drew attention to the fact that mystery writers of America had failed to award a woman the prize for best novel any time in the previous fifteen years, Coal Mining Women's Support Team in Virginia, the just - recognized Clerical union at Harvard, and many more.

What was new in the 1970s and proliferated in the 1980s is the mobilization of women inside institutions 'that have long been male dominated'. Indeed their presence in law firms, coeducational institutions of higher learning, businesses, and the military is still something of a novelty.

The Catholic Church and the American military afford particularly good case examples if only because these institutions are major constituents of organizational life in the United States. They are also of interest as "total institutions" - institutions that are in many ways insulated from their social environment.

Women in both the military and the Catholic church face prevailing institutional doctrines that justify the different institutional roles of men and women by citing the imperatives of divine decree or its secular twin, the requirements of national security. The structural constraints are no less daunting. Institutional rules stipulate obedience and conformity not only in workplace conduct but also in family and personal relations, sexual

behaviour, and, in extreme cases, in the specific details of diet and dress. That women in the church and the military have despite these constants developed strategies and organizations that foster and sustain a consciousness in opposition to the patriarchal institutions of which they are a part constitutes a dramatic segment of the story of unobtrusive mobilization in the 1980s.

Virtually all constituent groups of Women - Church (The umbrella organization Women - Church Convergence includes such groups as the National Association of Women Religious (NAWR); THE National Coalition of American Nuns (NCAN); Las Hermanas; the National Black Sisters Conference; and Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)), although in very different ways, have involved themselves in mobilizational work, like running shelters for homeless women; organizing in the sanctuary movement; joining in protests against U.S. intervention in Central America; running empowerment workshops, etc.

Correspondingly, the strategic choices of women activists in the armed forces are very different from those of their church counterparts.

There are, nevertheless, networks of women who have been at the feminist "front" within the military. One such organization is DACOWITS, a Department of Defence (DOD) acronym that stands for the Defence Advisory Committee on Women in the Services. This committee was established in 1951 during the Korean War to promote the DOD's efforts to recruit women.

Located in the Pentagon, DACOWITS is now constituted by political appointees selected by the secretary of defence and military women representing the different services. There are widely diverging views about whose agenda and interests the committee serves. Phyllis Schlafly terms DACOWITS the "feminist thought - control brigade of the US military." Cynthia Enloe credits DACOWITS with the effort to persuade the military of the connections between sexual harassment of military women and prostitution on foreign bases.

Operating outside the arena of conventional politics or social organizing, groups of women have established a presence in the constituent institutions of the American state and of society.

Mary Fainsod Katzenstein has argued that much of feminism's organizational strength now lies in the major institutions of American socio-political life.

## **THE INDIAN CONTEXT**

According to Hindu mythology and other scriptures women were given a pride of place in our society. A Tamil poet says : 'Mother and Father are the true deities'. Lord Shankar is believed to have offered half of his body to Shakti and appears in the form of an 'ardhanareeshwar'.

A man who worships his mother need not worship any other god or goddess. But, inspite of all this women were not being treated at par with men from time immemorial and there is not much improvement in their

status in the society even today when we are going to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Feminists in India are theorising on women's oppression and the possible ways to overcome them.

Gail Omvedt, American by birth, but active in grassroots level organising in India, for many years, has been theorising on questions of women's oppression for a long time. In the late 1970s, she worked with the Lal Nishan Party, a regional left party working mainly in urban and some rural parts of Maharashtra. Later she has worked with Mahila Mukti, a women's group in Maharashtra. Presently, she is working with Shetkari Sangathana, one of the biggest and strongest farmers' organisations in India, which also has an active women's group.

Omvedt in 1978 argued that poor rural working women, belonging to the category of agricultural labourers and poor peasants, form the base of women's movement in India. She substantiates her claim by using two interrelated concepts, viz., work participation by women and the changing mode of production.

In her more recent theorisation, she argues that especially after 1985, "The emergence of new women's organisations linked to mass organisations of the new social movements unleashed a new dynamic." <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Gail Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution : New Social Movements and Socialist Tradition in India* (London : M.E. Sharpe, 1993), cited in Supriya Akrekar, 'Theory and Practice of Women's Movement in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 29, 1995, p. ws-16.

She also states that, at its base, much of the new activity is among rural women and that it was the Chandwad women's conference of Shetkari Sangathana in 1986 that signalled the opening of the new period. She states that Chandwad heralded the birth of a new international women's decade, a decade of rural women. She then states that similar new feminist trends were coming up elsewhere in the country with the formulations of women's organisations linked to new movements or mass organisations. She thus argues that a new perspective was emerging in the women's movement, which posed challenges to "traditional Marxism" and "traditional feminism" in ways that went beyond simple posing of "class and caste" or "class" and "gender". Notions such as the "feminine principle" and "stri shakti" which were increasingly being debated..... The notion of Stri Shakti similarly implied not so much a separate women's movement as the leading role of women in various popular movements.(p.226).

Vandana Shiva, a physicist by profession grew disenchanted with the practice of science and started questioning nuclear physics when she realised how dangerously it could be misappropriated . This realisation led her to women and Chipko movement in India.

Shiva argues that science and development are not universal categories of progress but special projects of modern western patriarchy.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Vandana Shiva, *Women Ecology and Development* (New Delhi : Zed Books, Kali for Women, 1988), p.xiv.

She points to the threats to survival, the destruction of eco diversity, the death of nature and its effects on marginalisation of women who depend on nature for sustenance.

Shiva argues that Indian women as victims of this violence have risen to protect nature and preserve their survival and sustenance and in the process challenged the most fundamental categories of western patriarchy, viz., its concepts of nature and women and of science and development (p - xvii - xviii).

She further states that in the process women are creating "a feminist ideology that transcends gender and a political practice which is humanly inclusive,.... They are challenging the dominant concept of power as violence with the alternative concept of non - violence as power." (p - xviii)

Nandita Gandhi and Nandita Shah, members of Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW), an autonomous women's group located in Bombay identify themselves with the strand of socialist feminism within India.

In their book (1991) they differentiate between three waves of Indian women's movement and document the present and third wave of this movement. According to them the three main issues are violence, health and work as political, emotional and intellectual experiences.

According to them :



"The third phase of IWM was a collective, emotional and militant response against sexual violence on women. It emerged spontaneously, like a voice unfettered by fear, theoretical constraints or strategic considerations. It was far from the usual politically calculated, mechanical protest against the state....Violence against women encompasses issues of rape, dowry, murder, wife battering, sexual harrassment and portrayal of women in the media. The grossness of sexual atrocities and the visual humiliation of women are still issues within the movement."<sup>7</sup>

Gabriele Dietrich is a German by birth, but has taken Indian citizenship today after 17 years of stay and fourteen years of activism in India. She works with "Pennurimai Iyakkam", a women's organisation working with slum women of Madurai.

One of the main concerns articulated by Dietrich is the rising communalism in India. Whilst acknowledging the difficulties involved in building anticommunalist allianc, she concludes optimistically,

"There are no easy answers, but indications are that the perspectives on secularism, religious reform and a pluralistic humanist culture are deepening within women's movement. If the challenge is taken

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<sup>7</sup> Nandita Gandhi and Nandita Shah, *The Issues at Stake : Theory and Practice in the Contemporary Women's Movement in India* (New Delhi : Kali for Women, 1991), p.32-33.

up, women will be able to make the most crucial contribution towards building a truly humanist secular state."<sup>8</sup>

The secular views held by Dietrich are shared by many women activists in the struggle, who feel that the rising communalism and violence (from the rightist as well as some far left forces) in India should be treated as the most acute problem, having deeply negative implications for (all) women's emancipation.

One concrete example of women playing an active role in India, is the launching of the Women's Charter on Food Rights, by some 40 - odd organisations and individuals in the Capital. Initiated by environmentalist Ms. Vandana Shiva, of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology (RFSTE), the Charter suggests that "gender - just food and agriculture policy based in the equal and fundamental right to food for all irrespective of gender, class and age", making women the focus of any policy adopted to secure the food - safety of the population.

Ms. Rosie Mathews, general secretary of the YWCA, New Delhi, demands "handing over of the public distribution system (PDS) to women, now that the men have made a mess of things." YWCA is working in the area of woman's empowerment, and it regards the then prevailing food situation (soaring food prices and onion shortages in Oct - Dec 1998) as a focal point of the movement to empower women, and force an

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<sup>8</sup> Gabriele Dietrich, *Reflections on the Women's Movement in India : Religion, Ecology, Development* (New Delhi : Horizon India Books, 1992), p.34.

acknowledgement of women's inputs in ensuring food security and their unrecognised responsibilities in terms of their role in the economy.

Greenpeace and organisations such as Action India and All India Democratic Women's Association were at the forefront of a campaign last October (1998), where RFSTE had defiantly distributed mustard seeds to people near the Super Bazaar, defying a ban during the dropsy epidemic. The campaign sought to highlight the place accorded to mustard in the ethos and culture of the people.

Ms. Vandana Shiva, who argues for a gender - just agriculture policy as well as food policy, points out that more than one - third poor rural families in India are female - headed.

"The refusal of the Government to even recognise their special needs means that they have to single - handedly bear the burden of rising prices", Ms. Shiva said.<sup>9</sup>

Various institutions and groups are lending the weight of their work with the most affected sections of society to the campaign, while the research back - up from the RFSTE and the like institutions will formulate strategies that will surmount the problems arising from the "skewed policies of economic liberalisation".

Interestingly, the Women's Food Rights Campaign is a spin - off from the Global Diverse Women for Diversity Movement, which was born

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<sup>9</sup> Anon., "Making Women focus of food policy", *Hindu*, Nov. 9, 1998.

in Bratislava in Slovakia, making women the focus of any future initiatives in global food security and the environment.

At this point, it would be appropriate to emphasize Sheila Rowbotham's instance that the consciousness of women about themselves does not develop in the same way at every place or for every class. Women perceive themselves differently depending upon the social, political, economic, cultural and historical context. Women's consciousness does not necessarily and automatically translate into feminist consciousness or revolutionary consciousness. Ideas travel and women learn from each other in the process of struggle. Interaction serves to raise further questions. Theories and ideas which develop in this fashion can be used by feminist and other women's movements to articulate their own experiences and concerns. The existence of women's movements also affects men. Since the women's movement is a very complex process, there is no fixed 'sacred' theory or path for it to follow. But the goal is clear, to create a humane, free and just society, and this goal should be the guiding principle in developing theories for women's movement as well as for society as a whole.

The recent massive growth of multinational companies and their impact on women's conditions, the migration of women from former colonies, and the emergence of movements amongst the 'Third World' women within the 'First' as well as in the 'Third World' have brought into focus a new dimension of the women's question. Mere talking of individual

'identities' and 'differences' amongst the 'First' and 'Third World' women will not help the cause of women's emancipation in either world.

Instead we should start looking for linkages between different groups of women without undermining their specific histories or the distinctions of nation, race, gender, caste and class. The world can come closer to being a better place to live in if women take initiative to create bridges and refuse to play into the hands of imperialist economic, cultural and political forces.

## CHAPTER - IV

### SOCIAL ISSUES AND THE STATE RESPONSE

The state, for Bentham, is primarily a law - making body, a group of persons organised for the promotion and maintenance of happiness. Its great task is to reconcile interests - "so to regulate the motive of self - interest that it shall operate, even against its will, towards the production of the greatest happiness."<sup>1</sup>

However, just a few years later, Tocqueville published in 1840, his *DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA*, the most brilliant and penetrating study of America ever written. The coming of democracy, De Tocqueville regarded as inevitable, but he believed that it rested with man to make it a good or an evil thing . Democracy in America, he found, safeguarded the interests of the majority and greatly developed the faculties of the people; but it produced a tyranny of the majority which, in Mill's words, did not "take the shape of tyrannical laws, but that of a dispensing power over all laws."

To assess the response of the state to the issues highlighted in the Second and Third chapters, it would be convenient to divide the state response into *Ameliorative* and *Repressive*.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century unquestionably witnessed remarkable advances in the area of civil rights. When the century opened, "separate but equal", by

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<sup>1</sup> Bentham quoted in C.L.Wayper, *Political Thought*, (Delhi : B.I. Publications Ltd., 1989) p.95.

virtue of the Supreme Courts' decision in *Plessey vs. Ferguson*, was the "law of the land" and legally remained so for the next 54 years, rendering the admittedly incomplete promises of the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments and post- Civil War Rights Acts null.

Viewed against this backdrop, the political, legal, and social changes wrought by the various civil rights movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are monumental. Most remarkable among the victories of these movements are the host of federal, state, and local laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, sex, religion and disability. Much, however, still remains to be done - and increasingly undone.

After emancipation and reconstruction, the era of greatest African - American optimism commenced with the rise of Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration and terminated with Richard M. Nixon's. The highpoint of this period was Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, for it was Johnson who decided that the federal government should take affirmative action to design and implement social policies directed toward improving the life chances of African - Americans.

The ascendancy of Reaganism in 1980, however, and the increasing hegemony of conservative ideas and policies have reinforced the perception that African - American advancement is a notion that has come and gone. Based on a minimalist philosophy of national government, the Reagan administration's social policy priorities - a shift from federal to state and local governments, a greater reliance on the private sector and on market

mechanisms, and a narrower targeting of benefits to individuals - are such that concern for society's historically dispossessed, regardless of race and ethnicity, appears to be somewhere near the bottom of the agenda.<sup>2</sup>

### **STATE RESPONSE-AMELIORATIVE**

As a part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society legislation, the Self - Determination Act of 1968 called for the creation of Community Development Corporation (CDCs) to improve the quality of life for the poor. Improved housing, employment, and social services were to result from government initiated programs to strengthen existing businesses, initiate new businesses, improve the community's infrastructure, and create joint ventures between the private sector and poverty stricken neighbourhoods.

However, many CDCs failed to transform black inner - city neighbourhoods into liveable and self - sustaining communities. The social mission of the CDCs was not achievable because their overall focus became increasingly entrepreneurial. Many CDCs soon succumbed to the profit - making ethos that was intrinsic to the capitalist environment in which they operated.

The depth of the dilemmas that black communities face requires strategies that focus on the entire group and the total problem, that is, the collection of factors that constitute the quality of life of a community.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> F.W. Hayes III, 'The Political Economy, Reaganomics and Blacks', *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 6, 1982, pp.89-97.

<sup>3</sup> John W. Handy, 'Community Economic Development : Some Critical Issues', *Review of Black Political Economy*, 21, Winter 1993, pp.65-72.



Capitalistic schemes have only scratched the surface and relieved a few of the symptoms of pressing social problems and generally have benefitted a select few.

A "category" of people has suffered long - term, debilitating discrimination such as 350 years of slavery and Jim Crow. When discrimination is no longer the law of the land, does the damage from past discrimination still get passed from generation to generation?

If yes, then society must offer "special help" so that victims of past discrimination can eventually compete as individuals on merit alone.

John Kennedy first used the term affirmative action in a 1961 executive order exhorting federal contractors to ensure nondiscrimination. In the second half of the decade, the term came to mean special help : outreach to victims of past discrimination, specialized training, and - most controversial - preferential treatment in hiring, job promotions, awarding of government contracts, and admission to institutions of higher education.

More recently, the emergence of General Colin Powell, the first black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the American military, in the political arena as a prospective presidential candidate can be seen as a crucial factor in the shift in the political atmosphere since the turbulent 1960s.

Blacks were recruited during the civil war by the Union Army and it is estimated that several thousands donned army uniforms, half of them saw action on the battlefield. But, they were segregated.

Black recruits in the American defence forces today enjoy not only the relative lack of discrimination compared to other segments of the society, but they also benefit from a special form of social welfare benefits granted to soldiers, such as health coverage, pension, financial aid for education and possibility of economic mobility through defence - related establishments.

### **THE INDIAN CONTEXT**

At the very outset after independence India resolved to bring into existence a new social order characterized by justice - social, economic and political - equality of status and opportunity, liberty and fraternity in place of the highly inegalitarian and unjust set - up in the country. The state was assigned the task of making special provision for the benefit of the weaker sections, especially the SCs/STs, as a matter of policy under the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution.

The policy of reservation was made a matter of right for the SCs/STs and the socially and educationally backward sections (OBCs) by getting placed under the section on Fundamental Rights of the Constitution. So, the policy of reservation could be said to be both a matter of right in India.

Policies promoting social justice and reservations have evoked strong protest and resistance initially during the freedom struggle, later in the Constituent Assembly and more recently after the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report in August 1990. Several communities, therefore, have become more conscious of discrimination and denial of social, political

and economic opportunities on religious grounds. A case in point is the issue of reservation for the Dalit Christians, a demand strongly and repeatedly put forward by the Christian community since the beginning of the nineties.

It was a nine Bench Judge Majority Judgement of the Supreme Court in the Mandal Commission that stated that :

"... To deny them (Scheduled Castes) the Constitutional protection of reservation solely of change of faith or religion is to endanger the very concept of Secularism."<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, a year later in 1993, the Madras High Court Judge stated :

"What baffles me to how a person is socially categorised as belonging to the Scheduled Caste and entitled to the benefits of the Constitutional protection and reservation could be deprived of such benefits for the sin of changing his religious faith. What has religion to do with social backwardness and ostracism practiced against certain groups of people for a long number of years..."

As a result of these, and a few more, in less than a decade, the Church and its leadership was forced to change its position and accept caste practices as a reality in the Christian community of India. This also brought the Church to the conclusion that there was a need to take up the issue of reservation for the Dalit Christians with the government.

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<sup>4</sup> Raj et al, *Judgement Today*, 1992, p.21.

However, assessing the status in the early 90s, the Eighth Five - Year Plan observed : "A very large number of SCs and STs continue to be socially and educationally backward and are languishing at the bottom of the social and economic pyramid".

## **GENDER ISSUES**

Prior to the emergence of a gender gap in the 1980 elections, partisan divisions had little to do with the way the United States government handled women's issues. Infact, until the 1960s, the parties approached national policy toward women in very different ways, both mirroring and continuing a philosophical split that had existed between organized women's groups since the sufferage movement.

The question that divided them was whether women would fare better in society if they had the same legal rights and responsibilities as men or whether the biological and social differences between men and women were sufficient to require laws tailored to meet the special needs of each. Support or opposition to an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution became the touchstone for joining one camp or the other.

After Kennedy's narrow electoral victory in the 1960 election, one of his earliest acts as president was to consult with advisors about ways to increase his support among women and women's groups. Kennedy authorized a strategy that would combine the passage of legislation to advance women's rights with the appointment of a presidential commission on women's status.

Black attorney Pauli Murray proposed that the commission urge the U.S. Supreme Court to begin to interpret the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, guaranteeing all citizens "equal protection" under the law, as granting women constitutional equality. Although it was almost 10 years until the Supreme Court, in the case *Reed vs Reed*(1971),<sup>5</sup> took the first step towards making this interpretation of official doctrine.

Esther Peterson, head of the Women's Bureau, lobbied successfully to pass the Equal Pay Act of 1963.

During his first presidential campaign, Ronald Reagan promised to eliminate discriminatory statutes in state and federal laws. When he became president, he set up the Task Force on Legal Equality for women to identify federal laws that were discriminatory and the Fifty States Project for women to do the same with state laws. Controversy surrounded these efforts from the beginning as feminists branded them "meaningless and cosmetic".

In the 1990s, competition over Women's issues and women's votes has acquired a new shape.

Although the parties are again divided over women's issues, party division has accompanied debate and/or passage of new policies on child care, parental leave, women's combat exclusion in the military, and prenatal care.

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<sup>5</sup> Anne N. Costain, 'After Reagan : New Party Attitudes Towards Gender', *Annals AAPSS*, 515, May 1991.

In electoral politics, women's issues and women candidates are increasingly playing a leading role.

The elections of Douglas Wilder as governor of Virginia and James Florio as governor of New Jersey in 1989 have shown the power of the abortion issue to dominate electoral debate.

As Secretary Albright remarked on July 11, 1998, at the National Women's Hall of Fame, Seneca Falls, New York,<sup>6</sup>

"They must be - and I am proud to say - they have become a part of the mainstream of the foreign policy of the United States. Helping women to move ahead is the right thing to do for America; it is also the smart thing. For as we approach the new century, we know that despite the great strides made in recent decades, women remain an undervalued and underdeveloped human resource."

## **IN INDIA**

Keeping in view the shabby treatment meted out to women, our Constitution - makers included provisions in the Constitution conferring equality of status on women so that they could not be discriminated against in any manner vis - a - vis men.

Under Article 15(3), the state reserves the right to make special provisions for women and children. Article 16(2) provides that 'no citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of any employment or office under the state.'

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<sup>6</sup> 'Advancing the Status of Women in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', *US Deptt. Of State Despatch*, August 1998, p.11.

Notwithstanding all these constitutional guarantees it cannot be said that women are treated at par with men in all spheres of life by our society. Crimes against women are on the increase.

Realising the fact that an all round development of women and children constitutes an important component in the country's efforts to develop human resources, a separate Department of Women and Child Development has been added to the Human Resource Development Ministry, which is charged with the responsibility of functioning as the nodal agency to guide, coordinate, promote and review both governmental and non - governmental efforts in the area of women and child development. The efforts of the Department of Women and Child Development are directed toward raising the overall status - social, economic, legal and political - of women for bringing it at par with men so that women can enter the mainstream of national development.

In January 1992, the Government set up a Statutory National Commission for Women with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided to women, review the existing legislations to suggest amendments wherever necessary and look into the complaints involving deprivation of their rights.

A few years back, a Rashtriya Mahila Kosh was set up to reach the poorest and assetless women who need credit but could not approach normal banking institutions or credit ventures. This would help develop a

national network of credit services for women in the informal sector and boost their self-employment ventures.

Another initiative taken by the Government to raise the economic status of women is the launching of the Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October 2, 1993 to enable rural women to exercise greater control over their own household resources.

Steps have been also taken to improve women's representation and the policy of reservation for women has been incorporated in the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments. Reservation of seats for women in the Panchayati Raj institutions and municipal bodies will provide them with an opportunity to ventilate their grievances and to take active part in the formal political arena which deals with social and economic problems.

#### **STATE RESPONSE-REPRESSIVE**

The fight to end racism, sexism, heterosexism, and the other "isms" that divide society is far from over.

Redevelopment policies in post - industrial American cities have uniformly confirmed the importance of race as a defining variable in American politics and social development. The American approach to redevelopment has been one that has emphasized gentrification in the interest of affluent white citizens and white - led corporations. Invariably, low - income black communities have been compelled to absorb the economic and physical sacrifices required to satisfy the rapacious appetites of white - dominated urban growth coalitions. The volume by Daniel J.



Monti, *Race, Redevelopment and the New Company Town*, is based on the premise that corporate redevelopment and black community development are not incompatible objectives.<sup>7</sup>

Although Monti makes a valiant effort to give a positive spin to the St. Louis redevelopment experience, his data show that patterns of racial discrimination and exploitation have been central to the St. Louis redevelopment process. This process, has been a top - down one involving a virtual monopoly over redevelopment decision-making by public officials and private corporate interests. The consequences for the Black community have been predictable. Low - income black workers have been insulated from employment opportunities spawned by redevelopment activities, and the quality of housing for black citizens has continued to deteriorate despite the expenditure of huge sums of public and private dollars on the construction and rehabilitation of housing in the target areas.

Moreover, whenever there is any sign of affirmative action infringing on individual rights, the courts in America generally rule against affirmative action. For example, the court upheld the petition that the Regents of California University had filed against race - based quotas in the-famous Steve Bakke case. Subsequently, there have been whole slews of legal decisions that have stopped all considerations of quota in their tracks in America. These include landmark judgements such as *City of Richmond vs. Croon* in 1989, and *Miller vs. Johnson* in 1995.

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<sup>7</sup> William E. Nelson (Jr.), Book Review Essay, 'Race and Realism in American Politics', *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, Vol. 29 (4), June 1994, p.643.

To cite a notorious example of the more than decades long assaults on the victories 50s, 60s and '70s, California's Proposition 209 has almost closed the doors of higher education to African Americans and Latinos in the state.

Approved by voters in 1996, Proposition 209 bans all affirmative action in the state's public sector by outlawing any consideration of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public employment, contracting, or education.

When Proposition 209 went into effect, the number of Blacks admitted to the University of California's selective Berkeley campus plunged 57 percent; the drop was 43 percent at UCLA.

In 1996, a circuit court banned affirmative action at the University of Texas Law School; in 1997, the combined number of entering blacks and Mexican Americans sank by about 60 percent.<sup>8</sup>

Instead of "preferential affirmative action", Glenn Loury proposes "development affirmative action." He'd like to break the inheritance pattern of social capital. For example, fewer black students go into science and math. Instead of lowering standards, one should fund summer workshops, curriculum development at historically black colleges, and research assistantships for promising black graduate students. Black students might get provisional admission to a state university with the stipulation that they

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<sup>8</sup> Joanne Barkan, 'Affirmative Action : Second Thoughts', *Dissent*, Summer 1998, p.6.

spend one or two years at a local community college, raising their scores to competitive levels.

In America the presumption behind affirmative action is somewhat different. Preferential policy in this case is to combat prejudice that disallows otherwise qualified black people from occupying their rightful positions. This is why in America the principle of compensation animates affirmative action.

In India, on the other hand, it is not so much compensation but the 'extirpation' of the caste system which is emphasized.<sup>9</sup>

However the state action proves to the contrary. The protests by the Dalits in Maharashtra in 1997, was a culmination of several incidents and actions of the government resulting in the humiliation and marginalisation of the dalits in the last few years. The coalition government has used different social sites to repress the Dalits, particularly Mahars and neo - Buddhists.

Withdrawal of cases lodged under the 1989 SC/ST Anti - Atrocity Act during the agitation over the renaming of Marathwada university after Ambedkar, was the Sena - BJP government's first step to undermine the morale of the dalits.

The government also went on record that it had issued orders to the police not to file cases under the above act.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Dipankar Gupta, 'A question of Quotas', *Seminar* 471, Nov. 1998, p.61.

<sup>10</sup> *Anubhav*, Marathi Monthly, Mumbai, March 1996 cited in Ambrose Pinto 'Emerging Social Tensions Among Dalits' *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 26, 1997, p.1876.

Thus an institutional structure meant to give security and confidence to dalits was used to give notice to them that they could expect no support or sympathy from the government.

In November 1995, the Dalit Christians organised a massive rally and a week - long hunger strike in Delhi demanding reservations. As a reaction to this the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Rashtriya Swayam Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and other organizations, carried out a campaign opposing reservations to Dalit Christians.

Hindutva forces agree to concede the demand for reservations if Dalits of other religions join Hinduism as Scheduled Castes.

Secondly, Hinduism as a religion recognizes untouchability. Infact, the fundamental principles of Hindutva ideology are closely related to the concept of Hindu *Rashtra* and the realization of such an ideal.

For our limited purpose, we must take note of the fact that the ideology and perception of Hindu *Rashtra* as argued by Golwalkar consists of five components : "Geographical (country), Racial (race), Religious (religion), Cultural (culture) and Linguistic (language), that loss or destruction of any one of these means the end of the Nation as a Nation".<sup>11</sup> From the above one must relate and understand the basis of opposition by the Hindutva forces vis-a-vis Dalits and those who practice minority religions.

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<sup>11</sup> Qaiser Rizwan, 'Communalism and the Conceptualization of Hindu Rashtra', *Social Action*, vol.44, Jan-March, 1994, p.93.

Given the political scenario and the diminishing employment opportunities in the State sector, the Dalit assertion will have far reaching consequences and this may lead to greater violence and conflict at different levels. For instance, the latest annual report of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes which was submitted to the President, K.R. Narayanan in February 1998 states : "Unless the Government effectively intervenes, the increasing trend of caste riots might lead to the alienation of the Dalits forcing them to resort to militancy."<sup>12</sup>

The continued opposition by the Hindutva forces only exposes their strategy towards the minorities. In a democracy no minority can dictate terms to the majority. The Hindutva forces clearly understand this logic and are determined to maintain their dominance over the minorities and the Dalits. Therefore, they are consistent in their opposition to extending reservation benefits to the minorities and the deprived sections of society. Sadly, this has deeply alienated the minorities and the deprived sections and may lead to unhealthy tendencies in a federal polity.

## **WOMEN'S ISSUES**

For over thirty years, members of the National Organization for Women have worked to inform the public, advocate for legislative and policy reform to end sex discrimination, and organize women and men to become active in the fight for social justice. While significant gains have been made through implementation of laws such as Title VII for equal

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<sup>12</sup> *The Times of India*, New Delhi, Feb. 11, 1998.

opportunity in employment and Title IX for equal opportunity in education, the women's movements seek to make these gains permanent by relating every initiative to the basic principle of women's right to equality.

To see what remains to be done to complete the agenda of the women's rights movement, one has to recall why this movement was and still is needed in the American democracy.

In 1982, state legislators denied ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment within the ten - year time limit cynically imposed by Congress. Without clear constitutional acknowledgement of women's right to equal protection of the law, hard - won laws against sex discrimination do not rest on a firm foundation and standards of review can be as flexible as the occasion requires.

Nothing in the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision, that legalized abortion, prevents the endless passage of discriminatory laws that affect women's lives.<sup>13</sup> The invasiveness of laws governing women's reproductive decisions makes one question the absence of laws to regulate male fertility. During the course of my research, I did not come across any evidence of generous public policy supportive of maternal health and the care and education of children. Further, the lack of response from the work places to the needs of parents during their child caring years, is also a point to be noted.

In India, on the other hand, one may ask what has been the retrospective assessment by women's organisations and activists of the

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<sup>13</sup> Patricia Ireland, 'Women's Rights', *Social Policy*, Spring 1998, p.16.

campaigns they were engaged in? This varies with the perspective with which organisations went into each campaign.

The Anti - dowry movement was a failure, the Muslim women's Bill failed in its immediate task, while despite the anti - sati campaign, sati worship apparently continued. For many activists, failure had been not on their part, but on the part of the state to respond to the demands for social justice.

In fact, since the state is one of the main perpetrators of women's oppression, making demands of it is to ensure that what is sought will not be achieved.<sup>14</sup> As Kishwar has commented (1989), non - implementation of even favourable laws proves that legal reform is a red herring.

Thus, there has been considerable tension in the past few weeks over the 81<sup>st</sup> amendment (right to women's participation in the political process). There was a lot of dismay within political parties about its implications. The National Alliance of Women spearheaded a campaign where women's groups across the length and breadth of the country sent telegrams to leaders of parliamentary parties to issue a whip to party members to vote in favour of the bill.

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<sup>14</sup> Indu Agnihotri and Rajni Palkiwala, 'Tradition, The Family, and the State - Politics of the Contemporary Women's Movement', *Research in Progressive Papers, "History and Society"*, Second Series, No.LXXXV, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Dec. 1993, p.45.

However, the OBC lobby had by then flexed its muscles with members declaring to the press that even if a whip was issued they would disobey it.

The crux of the matter is that if women actually manage to push the legislation through, what is at stake is (a) the political bases of male politicians across the board, and (b) the socio-political hegemonies in the existing social order. Clearly, the problem is not one that mainstream politicians alone face, but one that is endemic to the larger society. And that is what is most disconcerting to the opponents of the 81<sup>st</sup> amendment.

The Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini, an autonomous research and training institution headed by the BJP general secretary, Pramod Mahajan, released a report of a study on the possible impact of the 81<sup>st</sup> amendment.

The head of the research team, a women teacher attached to the Centre for Women's Studies, Shivaji University, felt that the entire struggle over the 81<sup>st</sup> amendment was one between the state and the 'feminists', in which the state was gradually losing ground to the feminists, thus creating the conditions for a male backlash.<sup>15</sup> Today, any move towards pro - women policies/legislations leads to direct confrontations between women and agencies of state.

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<sup>15</sup> Vasanth Kannabiran and Kalpana Kannabiran, 'From Social Action to Political Action, Women and the 81<sup>st</sup> Amendment', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Feb.1, 1997, p.196.



## CONCLUSION

Doubtless every era seems chaotic to the people who live through it and the last decades of the twentieth century are no exception. It is as if spaceship earth daily encounters squalls, downdrafts, and wind shears as it careens into changing and uncharted realms of experience.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the turbulence is furiously evident as thunderclouds of war gather or the lightening of a crisis streaks across the global sky; but often the turbulence is of a clear-air kind, the havoc it wreaks unrecognized until after its challenges have been met or its damage done.

Some of the underlying dynamics out of which daily events and current issues flow, are located at micro-levels where individuals learn and groups cohere; other originate at macro levels, where new technologies are operative and collectivities conflict; and still other derive from clashes between opposing forces at two levels-between continuity and change, between the pulls of the past and the lures of the future, between the requirements of interdependence and the demands for independence, between centralizing and decentralizing tendencies within and among nations.

It could be argued that high complexity and high dynamism are not new to world politics, that global wars, revolutions, and depressions reflect such conditions and accordingly, that change has always been at work in

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<sup>1</sup> James N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics*, Princeton Univs., New Jersey, 1990, p.7.

world politics. According to Rosenau, in order to differentiate the familiar and common place changes from the profound kind of transformations that seen to be occurring today, one other attribute of political turbulence needs to be noted-namely, it involves parametric change.

Three dimensions of world politics are conceptualized as its main parameters. One of these operates at the micro level of individuals, one functions at the macro level of collectivities, and the third involves a mix of the two levels.

The micro parameter consists of the orientations and skills by which citizens of states and members of non-state organisations link themselves to the macro world of global politics. Rosenau has referred to this set of boundary constraints as the orientational or skill parameter.

The macro parameter is here designated the structural parameter, and it refers to the constraints embedded in the distribution of power among and within the collectivities of the global system. The mixed parameter is called the relational one; it focuses on the nature of the authority relations, that prevail between individuals at the micro level and their macro collectivities.

All three of these parameters are judged to be undergoing such a thorough going transformation today as to bring about the first turbulence in world politics since comparable shifts culminated in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.

In the case of the structural parameter, the transformation is marked by a bifurcation in which the state-centric system now coexists with an equally powerful, though more decentralized multi-centric system. Although these two worlds of world politics have overlapping elements and concerns, their norms, structure, and processes tend to be mutually exclusive, thus giving rise to a set of global arrangements that are new and possible enduring, as well as extremely complex and dynamic.

In the case of the relational parameter, the long-standing pattern whereby compliance with authority tends to be unquestioning and automatic is conceived to have been replaced by a more elaborate set of norms that make the successful exercise of authority much more problematic, thus fostering leadership and followership conflicts within and among state and non-state collectivities that can fairly be judged as amounting to a series of authority crises which, in both their pervasiveness and their scale, are new and global in scope. Lastly, at the micro level, the analytic skills of individuals have increased to a point where they now play a different and significant role in world politics, a role which has intensified both the processes of structural bifurcation and the breakdown of authority relations.

It is the simultaneity and interaction of these parametric changes that distinguished the present period from the previous three centuries. By virtue of their newly acquired skills, people are more able and ready to question authority, and in turn the new authority relationships have

facilitated the development of new, more decentralized global structures.

As already mentioned, the current phase is marked by the disintegration of Soviet Union and the consequent disappearance of super power rivalries; the fusion (e.g. Germany) as well as the fission (e.g. Yugoslavia) of states. These transformations indicate that the existing boundaries are contested and that prevailing loyalties are constantly shifting. Generally speaking democracy has become a universal value, the market has triumphed and the state has weakened. Conventional notions such as sovereignty of the state and terminal loyalty to the state are being seriously re-examined. These developments have given birth to new social movements particularly around the role and functions of citizens vis-a-vis the state. And, inspite of all these momentous changes the state remains a basic institution.

More important, conflating state and regime security in the Third World context is analytically unhelpful. In south America, for example, there have been relatively few threats to state boundaries or state institutions (that is, to the legitimacy of the state 'qua' state), but many threats to regimes, most of which have stemmed from their authoritarian or repressive nature. It is not clear what explanatory value is gained by categorizing such cases along with the radically different threats faced by state that possess only low levels of legitimacy qua states, as is the case throughout much of Africa. Further, the prescriptions one might want to make are quite different in each case; regime insecurities can be caused

simply by the behaviour of the regime itself, while 'state' insecurities have deeper, and perhaps irresolvable roots.

For instance, five decades of its survival as a sovereign democratic state have not brought about any substantial change in the periodic assessments about the future of India.

On the eve of and after Independence, it was abundantly clear to the nationalist elite that with the traumatic after effect of partition, problems of acute poverty and a sapped economy, linguistic tensions, insurgencies and invasions, and a host of other problems, much remained to be accomplished to build the nation. The formation of the sovereign state of India was a prerequisite for such a transformation. India was already on a nation-in-the-becoming continuum scale. It will be a grossly erroneous over-simplification of the Indian complexity to suggest that India has crossed this threshold.

However, the Indian polity has given evidence of its 'capacity for the constant creation of democratic space'. Ethno-lingual conflicts and their resolution through a policy of linguistic states and autonomous territorial units within the states; the ethno-tribal insurgencies and their resolution through their incorporation into democratic processes and institutions, again by the establishment of new states which guaranteed the security of their culture and identity; the agrarian class movements and state-responses through agrarian reform; etc., only demonstrate the dialectic of state-society relationships and their outcomes as manifestations of this

capacity of the central state to create 'democratic institutional spaces.'<sup>2</sup>

Further, in the Indian context ethnic identity and Indian national identity are not necessarily mutually antagonistic or exclusive, the former is often a necessary condition for the latter. In a multi-ethnic society like India, it is difficult to conceive of an Indian identity unmediated by ethnic identifications.

Thus, the Dalit movement or the Women's Movements in India are forms of social churning, an endeavour for the restoration of their positive history. From the pariah, an untouchable whose very shadow was considered polluting by orthodox caste Hindus, to the present-day Dalit has been a long journey—troubled, contradictory, painful. For the different communities, juridically encapsulated within the bland and official category of scheduled castes, receiving recognition as an equal citizen of a democratic republic, far less the recovery of self-hood, is a project still waiting to be actualised. The road ahead is bumpy. Nevertheless despite recurrent betrayal by the leadership, the process of Dalit conscientisation continues. A combination of different strategies alongside increased realisation among caste Hindus of the need for reform and tolerance has contributed to a pluralization of the situation. The coming millennium will witness an intensification of this cultural assertion, within the Indian national state. Hopefully it will lead to a more humane future.

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<sup>2</sup> Partha N. Mukherji, "The Indian State in Crisis? Nationalism and Nation-Building", *Sociological Bulletin*, 43 (1), March 1994, p.46.

India is a democratic state which, so far, with all its contradictions, is progressing on its zig-zag course towards crystallization into a nation-state. The appalling theoretical naivete of those who view these movements on the radar screen along with Yugoslavia, Somalia and lots of places in the Soviet Union where there is civil conflict going on, should be quite evident.

On the other hand, throughout the nation's history, African Americans' sentiment has swung back and forth between racial integration and racial separation. The inclination of many African Americans today, even those within the moderate middle class, is in favour of racial separation. Racial integration is not working satisfactorily for the majority of African Americans. On the other hand, full-blown racial separation, is merely a dream that would be problematic even if it could come true. The failure to deal in any satisfactory way with race has been the primal curse of American politics, a curse that still has the potential to destroy both liberalism and democracy.

The simple question is –How does this nation, which has attained the highest standard of living for the largest number of people in the history of mankind, handle the problems of its minority groups and abolish the barriers against individuals' achieving the 'largesse' of that society because of membership in a particular cultural or racial group? The world watches, waits, and will decide. On this decision rides the ultimate resolution of the question of whether the American society can maintain

over time its system of action in consonance with its value system.

It is for these reasons that the minority problem is the majority problem today, begging for understanding, analysis and solution.

The study of minority groups is of international significance not only because most nations are made up of persons drawn from different groups but also because of the great increase in international contact and interdependence.

It is worth noting here that a dozen leading Afro-American writers, artists and historians from the USA visited India in March-April 1999. This was a historic trip because this is for the first time in history a group of socially conscious African Americans toured India in search of the global connections between the Black in the US and the 'Black Untouchables' of India who have a common origin, according to DALIT VOICE. To quote the editor of DALIT VOICE (March 1-15, 1999),

**"We appeal to one family members in India to make the tour a historic event so that the Blacks and the Black Untouchables of India—the World's two most populous and yet the worst persecuted nationalities with a common origin-come together to learn from each other's experience and prepare themselves to over throw this racist White Western imperialism and its more deadly ancestor, the Aryan sanctified racism..."**

One of the most startling differences between the women in Western liberal states and those in the Third world is the extent to which they are directly 'touched by the regulatory power of the state. Women in Third world countries are more removed from the state in all its



manifestations than are western women. This is because the state in the Third world is unable to provide the kind of safety network that the western liberal state does with its welfare provision.

Neither upper-class women nor those of the lower classes fall within the ambit of state functioning. In health, education, child care and employment the upper-class women have traditionally depended on the private sector, and so too have the poorest women—the first group because of access to private, non-state-resources, the latter because the state can provide them with very little support.

Second, most Third World states, can be categorized as 'Weak States', women in these states do not become aware of many areas of state legislation and action. The dissemination of information about new legislation is extremely varied and patchy. Illiteracy and exclusionary social practices further exacerbate this isolation from the processes of the state.

Further, the lack of infrastructural power of the state means that its laws are altogether ignored in many parts of the country. So even though Indian women have constitutional rights of inheritance, divorce, and maintenance for example, the enforcement of these rights is at best patchy.

Thus one of the essential tasks of the women's rights movement today is to look beyond fragmentary reforms grudgingly yielded by

opponents using them to forestall fundamental change. Feminists are strategizing to promote a vigorous grassroots dialogue among women throughout the world, across race and economic class, on the full meaning of equal protection of the law. Their goal is to redefine sex equality from a man-to-man or man-to-woman standard encompassing the range of physical characteristics and situations of both sexes.

Of course, this does not mean that women everywhere, want to be the same. Certainly, not every woman looks to the western model for emulation. It is worth noting, for example that in the west a woman's right to own property is a fairly recent development. Under Islam Law, women have always had that right. And although women have made great political progress in the United States, unlike India, US has not yet had a female head of government.

To quote Secretary Albright, "When we talk about advancing the status of women, we're not trying to force our particular way of doing things or our particular values upon other people. We're trying instead to make progress, toward consensus goals that have been articulated and agreed upon by women everywhere...They include the currents of equality and justice that gathered strength in Beijing. And they are why efforts to advance the status of women can never again be confined to the backwaters or side channels".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Remarks upon Induction into National Women's Hall of Fame, Seneca Falls, New York, July 11, 1998, *US Department of State Despatch*, Aug. 1998.

It is hence, only when issues cross boundaries and establish linkages, that the question of 'security' of the state comes into existence. Since, the collective identities are rarely able successfully to confront intransigent state authorities, they seek external allies. It is in their interests to create international pressure to force their own government to satisfy demands that they are unable to achieve through domestic pressure alone. The increasingly transboundary nature of the problems faced by the States, calls for a redefinition of security in the post-Cold War era.

We can scarcely hope to deal successfully with the difficult problems associated with contact among diverse nations until we have learned better how to handle the simpler problems within the nations. It may be rightly said that the way in which the affiliation or rejection of racial, religious and ethnic minorities is worked out within nations will strongly influence our ability to build a world order in which similarities are not coerced and difference do not divide. We are dealing here with one of the great intellectual and moral questions of the day.

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