

Out of India: Classical Values for Today and Tomorrow

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INTRODUCTION

It is a platitude to reiterate that the 19/20th century can be regarded as Euro-American centuries. This trend is now reinforced by the still increasing use of English all over the globe and by the inherent modernist and globalizing tendencies of instant communication and ever-expanding network of the global economy. Marshall McLuhan's Global Village has become a reality some 30 years after he first prophesied it.

Not that this somewhat naively optimistic, "progress"-oriented (American) view of the world goes without its critics. Inside the European civilization itself, critics have for long seen the dangers inherent here (even since Nietzsche, Spengler, etc.).

However, the Euro-American civilization - luckily - still has its counterpoint and competitors in various parts of the world, and our symposium represents a sizeable chunk of the ancient and of the still living counter-proposals, from the Near Eastern countries to China and Japan.

We may therefore ask:

Which (non-western) views of humanity are possible and practicable in this new century and beyond?

Which aspects of humanity should be developed that are underestimated/not stressed in modern western civilization?

Since I have studied India and South Asia for more than 3 decades now and since I have lived in some 5 countries on 3 continents, among which for

some 7 years in South Asia, mostly in Nepal (1972-8), I hope I can contribute both textual data and personal observations and perspectives from South Asia (in the sequel, for short: "India"), and also a few pertinent observations from Europe, America and Japan, imperfect as my ad hoc interpretation may be.

In proposing such items, I think, the stress should be on the 'best' pan-human aspects, showing the range of possibilities, while choice among them should be presented as an individual one, as important for one's own development, as well as that for society as a whole (but not as restricted by traditional local society).

The study of civilizations

In order to evaluate the possible contributions of a particular non-Euro-American civilizations to such an endeavor, we must study the values of an individual "whole civilization" such as the Indian one.

Important values of particular civilizations, such as the sanctity of life, the honoring of elders, primordial sin, the pursuit of happiness etc., are based on foundational accounts, myths and beliefs of the civilization in question (see Witzel 1998 in the first colloquium)*. We must study the world view, the weltanschauung that drives a particular civilization, that "makes it thick".

We have to isolate such foundational accounts that have lasted over millennia within a particular civilization and have shaped it. Such accounts give meaning

* M. Witzel, 'Classical Studies and Indology', in *Reconstitution of Classical Studies*, Vol.3, Kobe, 1999, pp.16 - 36.

to our lives, even if we do not always recognize it, due to childhood socialization and while having grown up with the culture in question. We will investigate that point in some detail, as we go on.

The Euro-American civilization

Beginning with my own, the western or Euro-American one, this civilization is, according to Enrique Dussel, characterized by the western / Christian myth of superiority, just obtained after defeating the Muslims in the Iberian peninsula. While this is perhaps modeled too closely on his major topic, the colonization by the Iberian peoples, especially the Spanish, of Central and South America, we must also take into account a host of other foundational features,

I do not need to remind you or stress that some are Judaeo-Christian in origin (Hebrew with a Pauline/Augustine overlay of Graeco-Roman thought): linear time, creation of humans in the image of God, secondary position of women, primordial fall/sin, chosen people, personal relation to God, a primordial order to humans to conquer the world, nature as submitted to humans, later on also: success as a measure of God's Pleasure (Calvinistic, American) of the chosen ones.

Others salient points are an outcome of this view under influence of Renaissance and Enlightenment: stress of rationality, practicality in action (instrumental rationality), in dealing with other humans, nature and the world in general, and a continuous linear progress in technology, with comparative neglect of other aspects of the human nature; extension of this attitude to social engineering (Socialism, Communism, also Nazism, etc.), while looking for a paradise on earth in various forms.

The epitome now is, after the post-Vietnam slump, the present, post-Soviet Union, triumphalist American assertion as the "only superpower" and the naive export of its 'values' globally, as the only possible means leading to human amelioration and happiness.

These trends have been counterbalanced, however, especially since the Renaissance, by an ever increasing, swift change of cultural fashions that sometime stress the more emotional and spiritual aspects of

humans (Baroque 'vale of tears', Sturm und Drang, emotional and religious Romanticism, New Age, Cults etc.) And, the religious and societal backlashes against too much of technological innovation (Weavers unrest, 3rd Reich, New age/Religious revival). Or, consider the noble (often just theoretical!) sentiments of the Enlightenment, the French and American Revolutions: human liberty, equality and dignity and human brotherhood.

In other words: if one thing has been constant in western thought, it has been its constant change, some may say, fashion-bound nature.*

As the American form of Euro-American civilization is the presently dominant one, I will mention American (counter-)examples in comparison with Indian ones throughout my talk, --- as I am daily exposed to this civilization and view it from a European (and Asian) point of view.

Its dominant role in language, media, films, pop-culture, etc., not to speak of the economy and corporate multi-nationals, indicates exactly the influences it exports on the rest of the world, --- especially now in the age of global internet and satellite TV. Its influence has already begun to destroy traditional societies and will further exert its influence, even if some countries in Europe (France) or Asia (China) try to resort, in various ways and with various political backgrounds, to counteract its influence.

Its dominance is so severe or felt so severely that a thoughtful Indian critic (Paranjpe) wrote that India can teach America nothing -- except for (ritual) spirituality. Which shows that we are all bound by our personal māyā (illusion) and that he just cannot recognize how much he is, well ... an Indian, for all of his decades-long studies of America. (I will list other possible contributions of India in the main part of my talk). He cannot discern the typical features of his own civilization, -- just as I missed out on "Bildung" in German civilization before I read L Dumont (see the 1998 conference)** ...

* cf. M. Witzel, 'Autochthonous Aryans? The Evidence from Indian and Iranian Text's.' *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies*, 7 - 3. 2001.

** Op. cit., above p.12, note.

Much of such characterization is hidden to members of the Euro-American civilization but it becomes obvious to analysts, especially so when we explore how one civilization views another.

This is comparatively little done and should be a focus of our discussions. We then will discover the same kind of prejudices (“Middle country, madhyadesa”, barbarians etc.) as in the standard European analysis of India or the “Orient”.

We have, by now, come to recognize: there is no simple binary oppositions of Euro-American civilization as ‘materialistic’ and of the Indian as ‘spiritual’, of East/West, or we have noticed that the myth of European rationality carries only that far, based as it is on an ultimately Judaeo-Christian foundation and the appropriation of Greek thought.

Both stereotypes need to be overcome, the Euro-American (Eurocentric) one and the other culture-specific ones (about which more in a moment). Such myths were perhaps once necessary, in Neolithic and Classical times, as to define oneself against the Other, the “uncivilized outsider”, the barbaroi, who were threatening at the gates. But no longer in a global age.

The exo-endo approach

In order to achieve such a balanced point of view, we have to use the exo-endo approach which I have discussed to some extent in our meeting of 1998, which I will try to emulate here. As I said, having lived on 3 continents and being in constant discussion in our trilingual, multicultural household, helps. For, I am of course suffering, as much as I may try to escape the fetters of my local upbringing, from my own “personal māyā” (illusion).

While theoretical Indian attitudes towards the west are perhaps overstressing the point, we all (East and West) are aware of a crisis in all of our civilizations; we are not content without traditional values, either due to influx of outside ideas, or due to beginning doubt about our own civilizational values.

How should we then look at possible contributions from other cultures, in my case especially India?

For those centered on India, we may look at Indian reactions to Euro-Americanism and to possible Indian contributions to be distilled from a (western) analysis of Indian civilization. We already have seen that a prominent Indian critic does not see anything important in his culture but spirituality. That, however, has not fed anybody yet. Man does not live of bread alone, but he also does not live of Yoga (some spiritual entrepreneurs of course excluded).

I think it is better to start with a “common sense” approach in trying to ferret out the possible contributions of the Indian civilization. After trying out several listings, I found that it is perhaps most advantageous -- and appropriate -- to start with indigenous categories that have been gradually developed over the past 2000 years or so.

These are the well-known concepts of

- 4 aims of life (puruṣārtha)
- 4 stages in life (caturāśrama).

The four aims in life are dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa, which can roughly be translated as “religion” (more about that in a moment!), “material success”, “sexual desire”, “emancipation (from this world)”. The four stages in life are: brahmacārin, gr̥hastha, vānaprastha, sannyāsin, roughly translated as “student, householder, retiree, renouncer/ascetic”.

I will discuss these as far as they are applicable to our task today.

Dharma

Dharma is perhaps the most obvious point to start with, as it encompasses virtually all of the spiritual aspects of Indian culture, the Ueberbau to use Marx’s term. Often translated ‘religion’, it really defies all translation (see 1998 conference) as it covers everything from customs and incidental and general beliefs to rituals, societal set-up and duties, court procedures, and to the laws that govern the actions of the forces of nature, the gods and the universe. All of this obviously is interconnected. Such a term, that cannot be translated into any European language, or Japanese for that matter, but which comes close to O. Egyptian ma’at, and per-

haps Chinese li / Japanese ri, certainly is not meant for “export”, as it would mean to adopt the whole of the Indian world view. Nevertheless, even the mentioning of this term stresses that we have to deal with the whole culture, not just the superficial civilizational or technological aspects of it.

However, it also subsumes the following items that may be taken into account for adaptation.

A construct such as that of Dharma, mentioned above, provides a “feeling at home” in a fixed, ordered universe and society, the rules of which are spelled out at great length in the receptive texts (Dharmasūtra) -- not a “Geworfenheit”. Dharma thus includes a home for us in many ways, both in nature and culture/society. The first certainly is an aspect of Indian civilization that is much more prominent in India (and Japan) and in Europe/America.

Nature: There is a close connection of humans with nature. We are part of nature, whether we are Hindus, Buddhist or Jainas. Unlike in Judaeo-Christian thought, humans are not different from nature but an integral part, they are not destined to ‘govern’ and dominate’ it but to live in it as harmonious part. This is nothing new to a Japanese audience, but it may still strike Euro-Americans as overly ‘romantic’.

However, with dwindling supplies of raw materials and impending global climate change, we now come to appreciate this point much more than our ancestors in the past two centuries did. The present American fascination with “the Earth” is, at least in part, paralleled and fueled by an understanding of Native American (Amerindian) attitudes towards nature -- attitudes that are not Judaeo-Christian.

Related is the problem of sustainable growth. While we have seen, until just about now, a ‘theory’, if not an irrational belief in the theory of continuing growth that was only nipped slightly during the 1974 oil crisis, other cultures do not see or stress the continuing process of growth in the same way. While in the west, the ‘pursuit of happiness’ seems closely linked to material progress and creation of wealth, there are attitudes that do not stress this in the same way.

I remember well how my Turkish High School teacher told us, to our surprise that in his Anatolian home town, shop keepers or artisans would close their shop for the day if they felt they had earned “enough

for today” and would send on prospective customers to their neighbors who dealt in the same products. This distance from the pressure to increase profits and from the general rat race needs to be evaluated along with the rule of some Islamic banks to charge zero % interest. Once it is realized that our resources are limited, we have to make use of such experiences and attitudes to find new avenues to sustainable economy and growth areas that do not permanently damage our remaining resources and environment.

Another important point of Indian world view is that of our being born with a primordial obligations or guilt, as seen in several cultures. This influences our behavior towards the world and society from the very start. If we assume, as in the Judaeo-Christian tradition that our life is governed by a primordial fall from grace, or that we are, as in India, born with three obligations (ṛṇa), those towards the gods, ancestors and primordial poets, sometime extended to our teachers, we have a completely different outlook. Christians must strive to overcome that primordial guilt even though they may believe that they have been remedied by Christ’s death. “Sin” always looms large and people are susceptible to fall back into sin. Their outlook towards life is governed by expectations towards death and life after death.

Indians do not have that kind of problem. Though they are bound by the ‘three obligations’, they can service them, as they see fit, within certain ritual boundaries. They do not have feel to be guilty and can freely choose and pursue the three or four aims in life about which I will speak presently. There is no Pope and no built in guilt complex to guide them; they can even give up rituals altogether and choose to become renouncers.

In Japan, too, there is no primordial guilt as the primordial misdeed of our ancestors, in case the divine “Adam and Eve”, Izanagi and Izanami, has resulted in a misbirth that was abandoned, Moses-like on a reed float. The creation of the other gods and the human descendants does not suffer from the Christian guilt complex. What a spiritual relief! (Of course, Japanese society has a way to overrate other obligations, but they are human-made and one can escape them, as in India, by becoming hermit or monk). There is an always present, latent freedom in this.

Closely related to this attitude is the Buddhist, Chinese (and German) attitude of “keep striving!” during one’s lifetime. We have the prospect of perfecting us until old age, always being on the way to learn more or reach highest spiritual levels. That this similar goal exist in there entirely different societies is in itself remarkable.

The details of course differ a lot: the Buddhist one aims at spiritual perfection the release from the recurrent rebirths in this world, the Confucian one as acquiring old age wisdom, the German one strives for “Bildung”, a well-formedness inspired by Goethian classical attitudes that looks for a balance of mind and soul, of intellect, learning, art, emotion, etc.

The concept of ‘keep striving’ captures, I believe, an important, if not one of the most important human traits: our curiosity for ever new, better (and more spiritual) experiences. This trait is not equally encouraged in all cultures we deal with in this project.

It sometimes takes other expressions, such as, the classical Indian, or Japanese and Greek attitudes towards beauty and purely cultural refinement, such as the Indian ideal of a sahrdaya who can ‘feel with’ the concepts and emotions (rasa) embodied in classical drama and art, or the Greek striving for beauty, or the Japanese attitude towards complex art forms such as No (or the tea ceremony) - which is in itself very similar in concept to that of medieval India (Abhinavagupta).

Perfection takes another from in the Japanese concept of excelling in one’s work, whether it is a hobby or one’s job. This is of course diametrically opposed to the American quick buck attitude of ‘hands-on’ training and so-called customer service, which means dialing through a maze of computerized phone numbers for minutes on end, until one reaches a human. We can no longer learn such perfection from India, where one artisan explained to me when we pointed out a fault in his product: “a machine makes no mistakes, humans do.” Well, one would not sell such product in Japan, a concept he could not grasp. To him, perfection is not an aim, but simply to survive and to make money.

There still is another important attitude that shapes our perspectives towards daily life, that of re-

petitive action and ritual. Without going into details of the benefits of any repetitive action and recitation for humans (H. Benson) and certain animals (K. Lorenz), it may be said that the structuring of our daily, monthly and yearly life by rituals has a particular soothing effect on us, and that it also binds us socially.

India is of course famous for being, as Indians say, a ‘ritual-ridden’ society. I found that even more strongly developed in the Newar society of the Kathmandu Valley, where almost everything from morning till evening and from birth to death is accompanied by minor rites and some major rituals. One cannot get up without already having to perform certain morning rituals, to be followed by what we in the west facetiously call morning rituals (washing, shaving, etc.) In some cases, such as that of some Tantric priest I knew, this continued from early morning, at 5 am., till about 10 a. m., when the man finally came down from his ritual chamber to his ‘living room’, stretched and relaxed and asked me for my reason to see him.

If we do not have these religious rituals, we invent others. I was surprised to see how much ritualistic Holland was, when I lived and taught there. Again, we see a proliferation of ritual, from the mid-morning coffee brake to bringing certain cakes to the office after childbirth, to elaborate Ph.D. ceremonies and a tendency to install even more of such ceremonies for every new degree invented by the bureaucracy.

Other such “rituals” include the Newar communal meals of the joint family and of a group of worshippers, and many festivals that punctuate each month and the year. Most of this is entirely missing in America: there is no family lunch, hardly a dinner, and there also is no communal office lunch that may cement the identity of this group; instead, one disappears to “grab a bite” and to continue working. Our West German colleagues who had moved to former East Germany were shocked to see, Americanized as they are, how East Germans celebrated their lunch: putting away things, spreading the table cloth, unpacking their lunch, eating together, -- while the Western secretary quickly ate a sandwich sitting at her computer... I do not even begin to describe the elaborate French or Italian lunches and siestas. When we eat together in the US, it is for a “business breakfast / lunch”.

Such non-religious rituals, to which we may also

add such performances as the tea ceremony, obviously fulfill a need in humans for repetitive, regulated action with an assumed attached “higher” meaning. Maybe this is what we need in this age of post-individual/com-munal religion where every one chooses, new age-like, what suits him or her best. (We now also see a tempo-rary resurgence of religion in various cultures, from the US to the Mid-East to the Falun Gong and to Japanese sects. Such reactions against enlightenment, positivism, ‘endless’ progress, computerization which has created a new class of shamans, have occurred before; they are generally to be seen as a sign of individual weakness: the new complexity of life lets certain people take refuge in old certainties...)

But which of the cultural values discussed so far is to be recommended? All of them are a way of looking for fulfillment in ones’ life. And, we can learn from all of them. They help to overcome the boredom of the daily job, the rat race, the repetitiveness of daily, monthly, yearly chores.

In sum, what these few examples, based on or connected with Dharma, already indicate is that Indian as well as several other civilizations look for balance, for a well-roundedness in the development of human beings, not for the current over-specialization (Fachidioten), and also not of the extremes and constantly changing moods and fashions, or even the left-right, cerebral-emotional, etc. extremes that we have so frequently seen in Euro-American cultures.

What, then, should we look for in the value systems of other civilization? A new “Classicism” (like Goethe’s balance of soul and intellect), between individual and society, between family, local community and the state, and finally between smaller and larger states?

THE INDIVIDUAL

Returning now to the values taught by Indian Civilization about the Individual, and the indigenous expression that this takes, we must notice that this is expressed by the terms, already mentioned, of the four aims in life and the four stage in life (aims of life, purusārtha, stages in life, caturāśrama). The four stages in life obviously should begin with childhood - but here we draw a

blank. It is not counted, and for a good (Indian) reason.

Childhood

Children before school, are not yet real members of society as boys (not girls) at age 7 get initiated into Hinduism. I leave aside the other aspects of childhood: the preference for boys and their being totally dependent on and completely spoiled by their indulgent mothers, while girls have to work from early on, take care of their siblings, etc. Traditionally, there is no education for girls. All these are aspects not to be emulated, and thus not important for our survey. One important outcome of this system, is, that children are automatically taken care of by their elder siblings and by other members of the extended family. There is no isolation and no need for pre-school, Kindergarten, but there also is little contact with children from other sections of society, other castes, -- relations that are so important for early socialization, something that is established, with us, in pre-School.

Study

When it comes to initiation and entering school, boys are supposed to follow the “brahmacharin” ideal of study, that means they have to be sexually abstinent until they leave school, and concentrate only on their studies for the next 12 years or so.

Even when reaching puberty, they traditionally do not study or interact with girls of their age, which has certain advantages as far as study is concerned. In the US, in fact, some are discussing now whether separation the sexes in school, at least during puberty, is not a better way to follow. “Traditionally” in America, these years of “middle school” are regarded as basically lost for study, “while the hormones play themselves out.”

However, initially at least, the emotional side of boys and teenagers was not neglected: There was the institution of Vraatya, when the students were out of school for about half a year and were roaming the country side, banding together with an elected leader and some promiscuous young women, and put pressure

on settled people, and thus gathered cattle for themselves, as to have a start capital when they would marry.

Obviously this reminds of some of the hooligans and youth gangs of our times. Apparently there is a need for young men to explore and discover themselves in this fashion. However, there is no “institution” now for this that is recognized by society. In Euro-American societies, certainly, precisely this is the attraction of such groups which are anti-nomian. The problem is that parents, school etc., frequently try to suppress such expressions (with rules of behavior, dress code, as the case may be) and do not recognize that this is a passing phase in boys’ development. In Japan, as you are aware, boys and girls play out such urges during the weekends in tolerated gatherings in public parks etc. My feeling, watching my son growing up in the American system, was that they have taken out the fun of growing up, going against established authority etc. inside the system (such as school), by overregulation.

In the traditional Indian systems, however, there is a strong respect for one’s teacher, the guru, a respect that is also seen in other Asian countries, especially those influenced by the ultimately Indian religion, Buddhism. A guru is more than a (badly) paid school teacher; he has the role of both an ersatz father and absolute authority in scholarly and spiritual matters; he thus combines the role of the Greek mentor and the actual teacher. While his influence is overly strong in Asia, Euro-American civilization certainly is in need of a reconstitution some of the teacher’s status and respect. In the US this is totally lacking: teaching is just a (not well paid) job like any other, and professors are at best known for the likelihood to blow up their labs.

A teacher, of course, takes care of our children, the future of our nation, and thus of our own. This is not understood, instead, there is a general malaise of the school system. In College and University one does not get a broad-based education either, but studies a few token subjects (e.g., in the Harvard Core system) and then, specialized knowledge. All of this is “pumped in” to a useless, great and detailed amount, --similar to the Indian system of learning by rote-- both in High School as well as in College, where everyone only learns for the exams. The joy of discovery just is not there. The best one can expect from such a system is Fachidioten, not well-rounded persons. Even at Univer-

sities, there is continuous “dumbing down”. What is missing is the realization that simple learning of information means very little: it is the insight into the structure of scholarship, its methods and its critique that matters. This is at best taught in graduate school, not in High School and hardly in College. But, it is this process of inquiry and critique that allows to develop simple information into insight and understanding. In sum, we see mechanical assimilation of data transmitted by teachers on auto-pilot, by equally robotized students.

Further there is no giri-ninjo. To my amusement, students here talk to us of “I have respect for you” but, as so often in the US, this is just for show: they do not practice it. Instead, the ideal is an impersonal relationship, based on cold numbers derived from interminable ‘tests’ and “quizzes”. That means, one can be ‘objective’. Few ask what these tests are about: more detailed, but useless knowledge that is soon forgotten. Have numbers, will judge. No attention is paid to the emotional and spiritual upbringing of the student, just to rote type learning and to regurgitating such knowledge at the push of a button -- until the next test.

Much of this is also seen in India and some of it in Japan with its famous pressures of the exam system. (The redeeming factor in the US is, that, due to the general mobility in location and in jobs, one always has another chance, one can redo one’s study in a different context, school or University).

Typically, as we shall see, the items described, like many aspects of the now much imitated American system, go against any personal relationship; instead one talks of ‘professionalism’. This is stressed at all levels, from school to university to work! It is just a code word for leaving all emotions by the side and act according to a pre-set code of abstract and practical rules. There is no judgment of relations or persons, no friendship, just ‘professionalism’. We will return to that then again several times.

In sum, a reevaluation of the Indian guru system would do western civilization a lot of good. It would lead to balanced, more rounded young people than the products of the much touted and imitated American system.

There is another aspect of study that escapes us altogether these days. In India, whether you go to a Hindu or a Buddhist teacher, he has to teach for free.

One may give a gift at the end of study but not a regular payment. While this is not practicable today - no teacher has possession of farm land that takes care of his income - the spirit behind this is something we have to ponder.

Transfer of knowledge, and education in general, should be free for members of a certain society, as it is the duty of that society to take care of its youth that will sustain it in the future. In the now spreading American system, it is not society (the state) but the parents who have to pay for their children's education - and that cost is rising by the year. It has well surpassed \$100,000 for a general college education by now, and scholarships are not as plenty as one may think. In sum, it is a parent-enslaving system.

In Europe and elsewhere things still are much different. In Austria, it cost one of our students \$50 per year for health insurance and study, that is less than a decade ago; and the German supreme court just has defeated a move to let students pay for anything that exceeds 8 or 9 semesters of study. The 'new' American model simply contradicts a basic human right, that of education, and as it is based on the ability to pay, it also defeats the basic American (or traditional Chinese) idea of meritocracy. It is, in fact, a curious mixture of influence peddling (alumni), parent's money, and scholarly merit (scholarships). In other words, it perpetuates the present crude capitalist set up.

In sum, we have to find a way back to the ideals of learning for all well prepared and talented students and let them develop --free of financial constraints-- to the best of their individual ability as to achieve true social equity, free of gender, race, economic and other constraints, for all members of a given society.

In our emerging knowledge-based society, learning is becoming life long, continuous learning which is now spreading as "continuing education" world wide, again at often extra-ordinary costs. The curious thing is that the cost of transmitting information and knowledge in modern technological fashion has continued to decrease (by several hundred percent) during the past two decades. However, not unexpectedly, some universities have tried to restrict their professors and others have begun to cash in on that "new market". However, there is some hope (such as in the recent MIT move to open internet classes) that all will have an access to internet

information and learning.

Finally, returning to the spiritual side of study, it is perhaps well-known by now that old Greek ideal of 'know yourself' has been at the forefront of Indian imagination, perception and philosophy for more than 2500 years, since about the time of the Buddha. It has taken many forms and shapes, but it can be said that, with Paranjpe:

"The technologies of self-realization have been perfected in India over a period of thousands of years. These traditions are not merely ossified, confined to sacred texts or esoteric manuals, but are living and vibrant even today. They provide basic orientations on life's most important questions: Who are we? Where do we come from? What is the purpose of life? And where are we going, not only as individuals or groups, nations or cultures, but also as a species?"

What he does not say, is of course that this effort has for the same time been closely tied to the spiritual quest of leaving the endless cycle of rebirths. Those who do not believe in this Indian construct, we can still make use of the ideas, line of questioning, and techniques developed in India over these millennia. Obviously, much of it has been exported, via Buddhism to the rest of Asia, and more recently as Yoga and similar techniques to the west. Whatever its physiological basis (Herbert Benson, Mind and Body Inst. of Harvard), this old technique, which may even go back to the Indus civilization of 2600-1900 BCE, has been adapted in the West in a locally appealing and tolerated way. We can however, agree with Paranjpe when he says;

"selfhood that comes from self-knowledge. It is not just a product, but a process that involves a continuous effort at autocreations,"

but this can as well just involve us as beings existing here for just a short time. He has adapted his question from western philosophy (Kant), just as we may use some of the Indian (or Zen) techniques. They all help in achieving the goals of a more balanced and well-rounded person. Certainly, medieval Europe, too, had some techniques of meditation, had its mystics, and had a lot of prayer -- still much practiced in America. But all of them, prayer excepted, were not prominent in Euro-American civilization. Their introduction is due to the influence of Indian civilization exerted during the colonial period and later.

It must be realized, however, that for all of its popularity in the west, Yoga and similar techniques are not necessarily a sign of a growing spirituality or a striving for balance. Frequently, they are just another health fad, just as the other presently popular means such as jogging, aerobics etc. At least, they remind us of the Roman principle *mens sana in corpore sano*. We may thus evaluate the current trend as both somatically and spiritually healthy.

Artha : Wealth

Turning now to the second prominent aim in life, Artha or wealth, it must be stressed that it 'logically' follows that of studentship, as Indian boys were supposed to marry soon after the end of school, at age 19 (or earlier for non-Brahmins).

Wealth has been espoused by Indian civilization from its very beginnings (a great number of cows, then), --unashamedly, we would perhaps say in East Asia, from a Confucian frame of mind. And, from an Indian one, the stress on wealth is perhaps surprising, too, as it seems to contradict the spiritual outlook stressed so far. However, to each his own. One may elect to pursue the aim of wealth alone, if it suits one better than other pursuits in life. There is that much of freedom built into system (just as that of choice of gods on wishes to worship: *iṣṭadevatā*)

The unabashed search for 'riches' and their praise would sound very much like capitalism but it is not, as it is ultimately tempered by some religious constraints (see below), such as the duty to give back to one's dependents (the king to his subjects, the landlord to employees, etc.) And even with single-minded pursuit of wealth the other aims in life loom in the background, to be taken up at a later time, if one so wishes. This therefore is not, the Euro-American unlimited and unhindered 'pursuit of happiness', that is only hemmed in by the rights of others (such as neighbors), or in the US, frequently only by law suits. The western system works well for the upper and middle class people, but what about the others and their access to food, clothing, housing, education etc. These are not enshrined as basic rights in (Euro-)American consciousness, though some of them are actually practiced in Europe. Not so in

America, where there is no such right in society to have food, cloth, housing. On the contrary, each person is supposed to have been responsible for his/her own status (somewhat like the outcome of an Indian re-birth!), though this clearly is not always the case, especially when one comes from underprivileged areas and classes. Yet, the ultimately Calvinistic and Puritan thinking of "god was good to me" and "god's own country" still pervades everything in America. Only widows and orphans could be legitimately poor... After all, as one of the presidents (Harding?) around 1920 said, "America's Business is business." Like most aspects of American civilization this kind of attitude goes against personal relations: the homeless must be taken care of by "social care specialists" in a "professional" way. It does not matter what their individual story is. Another "case."

Again, we may ask whether this model of pursuit of wealth and supposedly, of happiness, is a model to be followed by the rest of the world, as it is now preached. Or, whether we cannot learn from the equally unashamedly business- and wealth-oriented Indian approach that other things in life also must play a role. In addition, there are of course other, more socially oriented models such as the tempered capitalism of Europe and Japan, with its greater attention to social concerns, the general good of the people, provision of a safety net with general health insurance, old age pension, etc. These are items that still are not a right in America, in fact several ten out of 280 millions are not covered at all.

One may also think of other alternative models, such as the zero percent loans in some Islamic states, or of the attitude of just necessary gains ("I have earned enough for today"). Or, when facing the problems of limited natural resources and a still growing world population, we may ponder the propagated constant growth as compared to a more restrained, technologically driven improvement. India did not have to face these questions in ancient times and during the classical period as there always was enough new land to clear and as its economy otherwise depended very much on exchange and profit-oriented long distance trade. Today, however, we may reflect whether a non-growth policy is not better for the future, or perhaps one with a different kind of growth, in areas that have been neglected so

far, such as repair of ecological damage and prevention of further damage. Traditional knowledge in various developing societies may show the way to solve some of the local problems.

Kāma: Sexual Desire

The next major item in life in the Indian scheme is that of kāma 'sexual desire'. One may wonder, nowadays, whether it is a legitimate or sustainable aim in life just to follow that path -- but then there have been such persons in our living memory: *sono mille e tre*. I am glad to be able to report a not so recent Harvard Ph.D. in Sanskrit, who has publicly claimed that in the *New Yorker*. Maybe it was his psychological inclination that sent him forth and kept him studying...

Seriously speaking, the pursuit of sex has been regarded as just another aim in life, for some just limited to the stage of life following marriage, for others much less limited. There is after all, a classical text such as the *Kāmasūtra* (and others) that teaches everything that a hetaira or a man about town (or a king) had to know, from music and poetry to sexual compatibility of various types of men and women, to the technicalities of various types of kisses and love bites, and I keep to polite discourse here.

In other words, this important part of our nature is not excluded or subdued as it so often was in the European history of the past 2000 years. Even after the so-called sexual revolution of the Sixties, Christian morale, if no longer of the Victorian type, still is prevalent. We usually overlook the fact that pre-modern India (or Japan) had standards that were quite different from what now is regarded as the bourgeois norm (and that of the state). In India, people now frequently deny that the extremely erotic carving on some of their temples mean just what they are, and instead invent all sorts of esoteric meanings. The same is true for (religious) texts that describe elaborate sexual practices or use such imagery: it all has to be 'symbolical' now, while one still can meet Tantric person, say, in Kathmandu, who practice what the texts tell.

In short, Christian morale, and its Victorian influence still is felt across the globe, in new acculturated forms. We certainly would do go to get away from

such narrow views of the human being, but, at the same time, also from Hollywood style permissiveness. Again, what we have to look for is a new classical balance. Perhaps one somewhat similar to that seen in Old Greece, where all we taken care for (except for the sequestered housewives!), from a (homosexual) relationship between teacher/student -- now impossible to imagine and forbidden by law -- to permissiveness before and after marriage, a well established system of -- frequently well educated - Hetairas as in old India or Edo time Japan. Certainly, it is time to get the church and/or the state out of this private business, and let society as such decide what it can tolerate and what not.

This incidentally, has been the actual practice in India, in spite of some strict proscriptive 'law books' such as the famous *Manu-Smriti*. For example, a Kashmiri king in c. 850 CE forbade a particular Tantric sect when people objected against their naked adherents that were covered by just one blue cloak. The decision made, after long debate, by local priests and pandits was: "traditional religion is what the people think it is."

Though the Indian classical period was characterized by much general permissiveness, similar to Heian or Edo Japan, many details are not that encouraging: marriage was and still is deceived just be the will of the parents who select the partners, with the added 'help' of astrologers, and while following strict caste relationships. (Some guidance by parents, strange as it sounds today, probably would not be a bad thing in Euro-American culture, though. The divorce rate is now above 50% in the US. But then, who wants to listen?) Curiously enough these marriages usually are very stable, and my friends tell me that, after a while, real love develops between the partners. You may have heard similar accounts from Japan.

Contrast this again with certain American attitudes that are astonishing even to Europeans. Again, for all of the romantic love evoked by Hollywood, marriage or even simply living together is a temporally limited option that seems to work as long as "business" interests coincide. People "invest" in their relationship; the girl friend maybe a "high maintenance" person, that is someone who requires a lot of time, effort and money. People "build up" something together, an apartment, a house, etc. It all is very materialistic and business-like, just as so many other aspects of the

present American civilization. This attitude is nicely shown in the initial “negotiations” that precede any (more or less) permanent relationship: one has to negotiate and agree on a “date”, where the man has to “buy a dinner” for his prospective girl friend. What kind of exchange value inherent in this dinner? Hollywood films will show you. Finally, marriage may follow if the combined (financial) “net worth” of the man is up to expectation. In short, we should not joke too much about the pecuniary negotiations underlying arranged marriage in India (or elsewhere).

Further, in India it is regarded as the duty of parents to produce at least one son to continue the lineage (for ancestor rituals, ever since pre-Buddhist Vedic times.) Daughters are seen as a financial liability because of the exorbitant dowries that have to be paid now. Many female embryos are detected now by modern scanning technology and are simply aborted. In India and China combined some 20 million women are missing, as reported by my colleague A. Sen on the simple basis of statistics. --- All these are items that we do not want to imitate.

Due to the stress on producing a son, logically, homosexuality is not seen as morally bad -- just as “useless” as one ancient texts says: “because there is no production” (Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa), an attitude that differs remarkably from that of the Euro-American and other cultures.

A few words, finally about the role of women. As we could see already, the attitudes towards them are vary a lot within Indian culture. On the one hand, we have or rather had, highly regarded Hetairas, one the other, women are said by Manu to be ‘protected’: as daughters by their fathers, as wives by their husbands, and even as widows by their sons. In other words, they are controlled throughout their lives, and they are mostly shut up at home, where they take care of the children. Shut up, as all women are seen as sexually fickle and potentially dangerous.

While western society has often worshipped women, since the High Middle ages, Indian civilization, however, has a high regard of them only in their role as mothers. To quote a recent speech by the Indian Vice-President: “The best symbol of female values that has been created by nature is in the form of ‘mother’. Mother is ‘creativity’ and ‘innovation’ personified in

solving human problems in the family. She represents excellence, morality, equality not in material terms but as a living cultural symbol practicing these values ... It is more specific than the word culture itself. ” Indian men love, are fixated and overdependent on their mothers, but she is also feared (like the goddess Kālī) and she does take charge (like Mrs. Gandhi who 17 years after her death still is regarded by 41% as the best prime Minister of India). In Japanese terms: she is Kannon and Fudoo at the same time.

The actual role of mothers differs much across cultures; in many modern societies they play a major role in the (supervision of the) education of the children, managing the family, etc. I do not want to go into all the problems involving work by both husband and wife but perhaps a closer look at how Indian women manage their families, within the limits they still have to work in, would do our society some good. We begin to see, it seems, a trend now ‘back to the family’ and to there role as wives and mothers. Japan, of course so far hardly had this kind of problem to contend with. Which balance do we have to look out for the future?

Mokṣa : Release/Emancipation

Within the given Indian framework, the striving for release from the fetters of this world, the threat of recurrent rebirth, plays a great role, though this is sometimes overrated when it comes to the beliefs of the common people who merely want “to go to Heaven.” Release from this world and from rebirth, mokṣa, still is a major factor in people’s imagination and outlook on life, as the see renouncers such as yogis and sannyasis all around them.

As mentioned, it is one outstanding feature of Indian civilization, that everyone has the perfect freedom to pursue one’s spirituality, irrespective of local religions, sects, the opinion of priests and even of society at large. One only is required to a certain type of behavior, such as not killing cows or not touching someone else’s food, one may dress as a monk or yogi -- or not at all, one may perform odd rituals or ascetic practices almost everywhere, and one may certainly pursue one’s spiritual goal as one sees fit. One may believe in one god, many, or none whatsoever, one may

worship and pray to them or not at all, and one may discuss such beliefs in public. As mentioned, there are few restrictions, such as the Kashmiri case discussed earlier where society decided what it could tolerate and what not.

Therefore, if a person feels that he or she has done her share to perpetuate society, to bring up the children, they may 'retire', basically in two traditional ways, either as a an ascetic couple, or singly, as total renouncers.

The first, the *Vānapraṣṭha* or 'forest hermit' stage is regarded as the third stage in one's life ever since the middle ages. It is, after marriage, a voluntary stage where a couple would retire to a nearby wood or copse and live simply, while still performing the generally required daily and yearly rituals of Hinduism. While simple retirement has always being an option, this stage is more of a construct and has never been very popular. Usually older people retire within their own family and just hand over the handling of daily affairs to their children, -- if at all.

The existence of this stage, however opens the question, now frequently put in modern civilizations, of retirement. In the traditional joint family, such retirement is made easy as the grandparent's generation is taken care of by their sons and daughters-in-law, even if they choose to live apart. As this system has long broken down in Euro-American civilization and is now weakened in Japan, it must be asked how to take care of one's old people. They cannot just be shunted in to old people's homes that are often mismanaged, cruel and, anyhow, prohibitively expensive. A new role for grandparents is now being deliberated, preferably one that gives them fulfillment though continuing involvement with their sons/daughter's families -- or if they rather wish to do so, in a new, mutually interdependent way with other people, older or younger as they case may be.

The problem of a growing senior population also opens up the question that of age groups in general. Some other societies have institutionalized such age groups to a much larger degree than the Indian civilization, for example the Maasai. One has to pass from one stage to the other by certain rituals and tests and trials. Much of Eurasian (Laurasian) mythology actually personifies it by its recurrent myths of the four ages of the

world (as a living body, Witzel: *Mother Tongue* 2001). In Euro-American civilization we have by and large lost the sense of age groups, though some are classified in popular speech as such : seniors (and various circumlocutions and euphemisms: "golden years, the elderly" ...)

In fact, it is very hard in America to grow old: people usual do not want to do so and try to avoid its signs by all means -- though it is of course unavoidable. They try to circumvent it in speech, with plastic surgery, dress, behavior, etc. to a degree that lets even Europeans shake their head, not to speak of other cultures. There is a virtual cult of youth. One reason is that there is no respect for elderly and old people. They are slow in traffic, in the way, -- and remind one of one's own old age and death. And that is a taboo word: nobody dies; one 'passes on,' gets the big "C" and there is 'transition', etc. The ancient Greeks may have feared old age because it incapacitated them, spoiled their sense of beauty and balance, here, the fear is a very visceral one.

Yet, people have to learn how to age, how to grow old with dignity. This is much less a problem in Europe and in other cultures, but due to the spread of American "ideas" and "ideals" by film and television, this new attitude will have an increasing effect abroad as well. As we all will live much longer now, well into our eighties, it is time to think about the role of the old generation and a fulfilled life for them. Obviously, westerners do not want to retire to Walden Pond or old people's homes if they can avoid it. What then? How to help them to lead a fulfilled life in old age?

The second option open to old people in the Indian civilization is that of a world renouncer, a *sannyāsin*.

The ideal of a *sannyāsin*, as ascetic or monk is found in many Asian countries, in all Hindu and all Buddhist societies and in the institution of Taoist recluses. In the west we may compare the related phenomenon of Christian monks and some Islamic monastic orders. Though they all have different spiritual backgrounds, the idea of retirement from daily life is common to all. However, the idea of *moksa* or release from the cycle of rebirth is tied to Hinduism and Buddhism alone and is, of course based on the very idea of the close link between rebirth and karma (the force of

one's actions in this world that will effect one's next life). This is a philosophical and religious construct that developed within older Indian religion as the outcome of Vedic thought only about 500 BCE. It has been underlying all of subsequent Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism ever since.

Those not belonging to this religious tradition have little to relate to it. They will see no reason to be released from a cycle of rebirths if they believe in just one life on earth or perhaps a life here followed by a stay in the Christian/Muslim heaven. The Indo-centric view of a cycle of rebirths (saṃsāra) thus will have to be overcome by a more global perspective. (Indeed, in the literature of American Buddhists, one finds little reference to rebirth; the stress is on this life time). Nevertheless, the idea of a temporal or permanent retreat from Society is appealing even in Euro-American civilization.

But, how can we leave society behind in the west if we do not want to become Christian monks? It is even difficult in a credit card society where everyone has a tax number. At best, one can imagine a hermit in the woods, without the (respectful) social support so typical of Asia. (As one retired county official in S. India once told me, he wanted to become a sannyāsin to "have proper respect"). In the west, dropouts, who are not monks, have no respect; they are regarded as 'hippies', useless, parasites or worse. Certainly, we have large number of homeless people who drift from place to place.

Occasionally a hermit will gain the respect of a local community, such as one who lived in a wooded area in my own town, but this is rare. There are some real hermits, such as Vietnam veterans who have chosen to live in the forest of the northwestern US, but such recluses are often viewed as strange, 'loners' and as potentially dangerous (as some are indeed). At any rate, there is no support system for such people. Citizens are just not willing to sustain such "useless" people: in truly Puritan spirit, it will be said that they "should work".

In sum, how can the institution of recluses be 'exported' to non-Asian civilizations? Apart from Christian monks and nuns, not until western civilization accepts the spiritual value of single, extra-societal life. In the meantime those who do not want the part of society

merely can form their own 'support groups', communes, hippie-like communities with all of their own inherent dynamics and problems.

In Euro-American societies, one would perhaps rather have to ask how to balance Asian mokṣa, release from this present life and the cycle of rebirths, with a strictly temporal progression, from young adult to family life to old age, as typically seen in India and the ideal of a constant self-improvement (Germany, China) within this world, this society and even within a family?

Finally, even as recluse, we in the west still would have to learn not just how to grow old but also how to die. I remember the case of the father of a friend, a late field marshal of Nepal, who went to the sacred river bank at the Pasupatinath temple of Katmandu and waited for his death, receiving all his friends, saying good bye, telling them to see them soon in the other world... This could, of course, also be the description of a Christian person, but perhaps for the majority of Euro-Americans now, death has another meaning: it is just the end of life, and that they cannot accept. One cannot even talk about it, except when one is, e.g. the president of Soka Gakkai, who gave exactly that talk at Harvard University in the Nineties.

The last few items discussed obviously are quite individualistic, viewed from the rather selfish point of view of self-emancipation, release of just oneself from rebirth. The very institution of mokṣa and sannyāsin reveals one of the typical contradictions of Indian mind: on the one hand, a stress on an all-pervading influence of family and society on the individual, from school through retirement, then, on the other hand suddenly an absolute freedom of choice of what to do with the rest of one's life. In fact, the rather anti-social fact of leaving one's wife and family behind, just to follow up one's own personal goal of 'emancipation', suddenly does no longer count as directed against the joint family who, after proper ritual, will accept this decision. Of course, it also means that one 'officially' leaves society behind, is ritually 'dead' and cannot return home any longer (that is without being 'reborn, initiated again etc.)

It really is only in this last stage of life (which one actually can choose at any moment, even as a young boy) that the individual asserts itself in Indian

civilization It typically is for the sake of self-redemption. (albeit with the help of a guru or of the Buddha).

This has been quite different, from Zarathustra's views onwards, in Zoroastrianism, Jewish, Christian and Islamic religions where individual and personal responsibility and morale first appeared. Ever since Zarathustra, one had to decide constantly between 'good' and 'evil'; that point of view has informed most of Western civilization.

Since the stress in the past few sections has been on the individual, it is appropriate to take a brief look at the society in the concluding section.

SOCIETY

As we have seen, an Indian individual is closely "guarded" or rather bound by her or his relationships within the joint family and caste. To begin with, it must be stressed that there is little if none of the concept of privacy so stressed in Euro-American civilization: People get born and die in public, and they often die in full view of strangers on river banks (to reach heaven). Early in the morning, people defecate in public view, in a row, along railway lines or in specially 'designated' streets.

There always is someone around to watch. As one Japanese colleague once told me: people constantly look at you with big eyes. Well, and they even enter, as happened to me, while I was sleeping in my room in a guest house, because they had to do some worship there at 6 a.m. Letters will be taken from your hand "What does it say?" And on and so forth. What about the American teenager, shutting his/her private(!) room in front of father or mother, saying "I need my privacy"? Well, there isn't any. One does not have any private space within the family. The only privacy there may be that of the married couple in their bedroom, but then, they usually sleep with their small children in between them. In this kind of situation strict rules of behavior are expected: even a married couple is not allowed to hold hands in public view, even that of just their own family.

In this respect, an Indian joint family is much more obtrusive for the individual than the family and

society-oriented East Asian one. And these kind of values obviously are not attractive to East Asian or Euro-American societies at all.

This intrusiveness extends to other aspects of one's life as well. It is the joint family that will make the decisions about one's study, choice of job, marriage, foreign travel, etc. Younger people often complain about this, even in the US, but are ultimately too weak to make their own decisions: "We had to give in to our parents."

While these more intrusive aspects of the Indian concept of the joint family obviously are not attractive and will not (be able to) be emulated elsewhere.

However, there are certain other aspects that are worth of thinking about, such as the actual cooperation of 3-4 generations in a joint family, their mutual interdependence and the automatic "life insurance" they provide for workless or old people. As mentioned, the Indian transgenerational contract even includes, much as in traditional China or Japan, the ancestors who are worshipped and "fed," and they certainly are a source for continuing traditions.

The same mentality regulates the relationships between husband and wife, patron (*jajmān*) and client, employer and employee, King and subjects, between the government and the people. There is no concept of 'thankfulness', just obligation, duty (*ṛṇa*).

The whole social set-up is well characterized by a few lines in a late Vedic, thus pre-Buddhist text of c. 500 BCE that still is frequently quoted today:

"Speak the truth, behave according to customs, carry out the (ritual) actions, do not neglect your recitations. After you have given a gift to your teacher, do not cut off your family line.... Treat your mother, father, teacher, guests like a god... (TU 1.11: *satyam vada, dharma cara, ... māṛḍevo bhava*....) This sums up the parameters of an Indian (male) person: to carry out rituals, produce (male) children, there is respect for elders and teachers. This includes, as a matter of course, taking care of them in their old age, which is, as we have seen, a problem for modern technology-based societies. The role of this kind of trans-generational contract between us and our parents and ancestors in Indian, Chinese as well as in Japanese civilization certainly is worth of more detailed study by this project. Our ques-

tion then would be, how to balance the view of a Euro-American or Near Eastern individual with this kind of South or East Asian family- or society-based point of view. Especially to an American it may sound impossible.

Another point that was mentioned in the lists of societal duties was that of guests who have to be honored. This was already common as the old Indo-European concept of guest friendship. This leads to the concept of friendship as such. Guest friendship is based on exchange and often hereditary, as in old Greece. However, there also are voluntarily friendships, established between any two individuals. Even in modern Nepal they can still do so in a formal way by undergoing a ceremony of becoming 'blood brother' (mith). As in oldest India, it is the worst offense if they ever betray each other. This forms a welcome contrast to what we experience in American Civilization, with its horror of no lasting friendship and the lack of feeling of obligation which are so typical: Why is it so? American culture simply does not know of the concept of friendship (the term just means 'acquaintance', and these you can drop, tripp up as you please and as local 'politics' demand.

In short, we have to look at the positive aspect of binding two individuals together by voluntary decision and to their keeping this kind of trust ... for life. In South and in East Asian civilizations (Confucian or not), as well as in larger parts of Europe, friendship based on mutual acceptance and trust belong to the truly humane aspects of civilization, which we should emulate.

In the same vein, there are traditional Indian socio-religious associations (*goṣṭhika*, *guthi*) that are especially well preserved in the Newar society of the Kathmandu Valley. They are, in a way, similar to our professional associations, but they go much beyond: the local society simply cannot function without them. They create a web of interlinking connection that a person is 'woven' into, and which give him or her a 'home' and status. Our modern associations are of course of a different kind. As we use(d) to joke in Germany, it is a country of associations (*Vereine*): where someone may be president of the local 'rabbit breeding society.' However, as a matter of fact, in villages we have quite a number of such associations, from voluntary firefighters to Christian associations, and one may

observe similar groups among the Italian immigrants of the Boston North End.

American society, too, has a number of such organizations, though they play a comparatively minor role in the larger cities: there is nothing such as a an association connected with the festival of a local Shinto shrine in Japan, but only some marching bands for occasion such a 4th of July. In sum, many of the citizens of even the smaller and certainly of the large cities, where there is very little sense of neighborhood, or of *communitas* (Turner) are deprived of such social contact and re-assurance, and isolation is spreading. Instead it is, as always, instructive to see how 'community' is used in America. During the last few years, we have heard of such items as the "Harvard community" (of ten thousand people who do not know each other?) or even of the 'intelligence community' (CIA, FBI, etc.). What kind of 'communities' are these and which interpersonal links do they establish? One may as well call them 'corporations', but the euphemism, as is typical, is used instead.

On the other hand, a beneficial aspect of all this anonymity is that newcomers are easily accepted in America, something that cannot be imagined in caste-ridden India, the region- and dialect-based Europe or the village/town ward based Japanese society. Local and culture-centric bias is fairly easily overcome by this attitude; the ideology, actually professed by common people is: "we are all immigrants". Present day Europe and even Japan, with their growing number of immigrants, certainly can learn something from this particular attitude.

Local Communities everywhere are 'centered', as it were, not only the type of associations just mentioned but especially by local festivals. Many of them, certainly in India, are religiously based and connected with local temples. The same is true with Catholic Christian and Shinto festivals. Such events have many functions, among which a division of time into small segments that are repeated year by year. In the older civilizations, about every other month we have a major festival (many of them concentrated, certainly, after the harvest when one has more time at one's hands). They provide a rhythm to the year and alleviate the boredom of daily chores. Apart from their originally religious as-

pects, one has something to look for, and will meet old and new friends and relatives. In Nepal I counted some 100 festivals in the relatively small valley of Kathmandu (some 20 by 30 km square): that means, somewhere in the valley, every third day something is ‘happening’.

Again, fairly little of this is left in America: only a few festivals such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year, 4th of July survive and are celebrated. The rest of the time people are ‘hard’ at work, with hardly a Sunday off or a just a yearly one-week vacation.

Since many or most of the elements listed so far are now missing in the US, there is an increasing breakdown, of the family, of neighborhoods, and of associations, relating in increasing loneliness and isolation of the individual. Typically, we no longer find conversation but an exchange of monologues, and not just in films that highlight this trait, but also in actual daily contact. On the other hand, people desperately feel the need for contact and talk to you on the subway, uninvited and unrestrictedly: within five minutes you will know their whole life story, including their latest illness, divorce or job loss. Then, you part as if you would never have met... The same happens, of course, on the internet.

Clearly, in our modern technological society, with its increasing isolation in front of the computer screen, some sense of community is important enough to be (re-)established, or if it is not yet lost, such as in Japanese neighborhoods, it has to be maintained before they disintegrate into total anonymity.

A last, important point in a study of Indian and other societies is that of cooperation versus competition. It has become clear that Indian castes cement loyalty and social compliance within their ultimately occupation-based groups. Basically everyone seeks to make his living within the group they belong to. There is some competition, and envy, of who has the highest status. One can achieve that by financing important festivals or temples. On the other hand, there is strong cohesion towards outsiders and anything that is regarded as threat to one’s community.

Compare this with the principle of unbridled social competition built into the American system that is now exported as the latest gospel around the world.

This spirit is instilled already at school. We have competitive elections for class president, and courses in leadership right from the beginning, and the same extends to learning and grades, and even to sports or an “art form” called cheer leading. (Occasionally we even hear about crime in this connection!) There is fierce competition for all such top positions and the best spots as this will allow to get scholarships and entry into the better colleges.

In my high school, on the contrary, we still helped each other in our preparations for our final exams; however, due to Americanization of the German education system, much less so in the giant school complexes that were introduced in the Seventies.

In American schools, cheating is rampant as everyone has to appear or at last style him/herself as ‘the best.’ And, so is the mendacity of teachers who write recommendations. There seems to be nothing below “one of my two best students in the past 10 years or so.” This is (no longer) a merit-based society but one built one unbridled competition with all the means (officially) allowed and artfully employed. Of course, the same plays out in business and even in research (occasionally, with fake data reported). Personal advancement is more important, in the last case, than healing patients. The opposite of successful persons (“winners”) are the “losers”, a term of abuse. They often acquire additional epithets such as “loner, nerd” etc.

Obviously, this kind of societal set-up is not a social-minded one but one simply based on ruthless personal advancement and profit. When it comes to the methods and techniques that this sort of mentality generates in the business world, we have the raw capitalism that is now propagated as the panacea of globalization.

There is no concern for the employees, only when they are scarce and must be attracted, or when they create a big publicity problem. Similarly, and there is no need any longer to further specify this, there is no concern at all for the local community, environment or the global effects, such as those on global climate. When representatives of such business interests run a whole country, we can only expect the worst. Unbridled competition cannot be the only model for the 21st century.

With these general remarks I have entered the realm of the overarching community, that of the state.

STATE

For India, the foundational texts talk little of the state, simply as it was not yet in existence: at that time we merely had tribal communities with occasional tribal confederations and elected kings. Though already by the time of emperor Asoka (c. 250 BCE) an elaborate administration with internal checks and balances, an elaborate spy system and detailed rules for officials and subjects existed, this is even now not really reflected in general consciousness. People still regard the king, just as the local landlord, as superior who has to be given presents (in kind) and who has the duty to give back (pratidāna). This cycle of exchanges keeps village society going and is substituted by similar exchanges between guilds and local government in towns. Everything is very much decentralized even now. As the Moghul proverb of 350 years ago went “Dilli dūr ast” (Delhi is far away). There was until just now, little or no national consciousness, at best a regional one of people speaking the same language (of which we have 17 official ones!). This obviously is different for East Asia or Europe and America. It is precisely in these countries that we also witness a rather intrusive role of the State; in India things still are very local or regional. In addition, at village and town ward/ guild level, we have traditionally had local self-administration by notables (Panchayat). If they come into conflict with the higher levels of administration there always was the means of peaceful (ahimsā type) protest, for example by public fasting or by Gandhi’s preferred method of civil disobedience. (It evokes violence from the other side, the state, which then is morally defeated).

In our modern technology-based societies this is something we can learn from. Local interest always takes precedence before regional and national one. If one can enthuse people locally, they may be willing to invest time and effort beyond that as well. The old Japanese institution of village/ward and kuni (han) may very well be a model. Some of the larger centralized countries indeed think of decentralization now, and Europe it seems, is going that way too: keeping much

of its regional identities intact. In that way, people can better relate, and do not feel as anonymous cogs/wheels in a machine. In this sense, America is well organized into (small) towns, states and central government. People can actively influence at least the local conditions, from traffic rules and zoning to setting standards for local taxes or the local high school (which as its own disadvantages). Some of these experiences need to be learned by the centralized states.

Finally, when it comes to the role of the state vs. the individual, the Euro-American countries usually stress the points of universal human rights, such as freedom of thought, speech - also in print or electronically - of religion, beliefs, of peaceful public assembly, of settlement and movement, also across borders, and so on. Some East Asian countries, typically those based on or influenced by the tradition of a social theory such as Confucianism and Moism, have objected that basic human rights should also include those of food, clothing and housing, and education. As I have mentioned before, they have a point.

The matter was nicely summed up by the Seventies/Eighties joke then heard in Nepal: “In India you can run off your mouth as much as you like but you have nothing to fill it; in China you can fill it but you have to shut up; in Nepal -- neither nor.” Well, things have changed since. Yet, the basic problem remains. In American system there is no right for food, clothing and housing, and education: though one may get food stamps, the rest is not guaranteed. In Europe with its capitalism much tempered by socialist attitudes, virtually all of this was guaranteed by the state since we all are regarded (tax paying) members of our respective societies, -- that is, until some countries began with cut-backs under the influence of the triumphalist American system.

In short, we should not see an antagonism, as often portrayed, between the more society-oriented East Asian set of values (“Asian values”) and those of “personal freedom” championed by the Euro-American civilizations. Both have value and must be complimentary.

CONCLUSION

Some may now regard Renaissance, Enlightenment (see above) and all that followed as tainted by Euro-American colonialism and economic dominance. However, is such transitory political, economic and cultural dominance always and completely negative? Euro-American civilization and dominance was, by its very nature, initially Eurocentric when it started out in the 15th and 16th centuries, but the Euro(-American) version of civilization has been criticized for long (Spengler, R. Schwab, etc.), that is by members of this civilization, and by resident members for others civilizations (Said).

But is it totally negative as such? It has liberated Europe and America from the fetters of ecclesiastical constraints, and also from the absolute (royal) Governments of the past centuries. And, it can do so for other civilizations, especially the -- presently -- rather intransigent Islamic one; it also can highlight and critique the more severe fetters that strict Confucianism requires for its subjects, and it certainly can bring relief from the constricting social systems of caste and of other inequalities. Just as it has released Euro-Americans from its 3-class system, the dominance of the (Judaic-) Christian belief system (and its successor ideologies such as Communism and other totalitarian regimes), it can also bring relief from other dominant belief systems, from Islam to the South and East Asian rebirth type belief systems -- always, if members of these societies wish to accept such points of view so different for their own.

Is the "Europeanization" of the world (Halbfass) intrinsically bad? Not so, if one compares some past cases of cultural or political dominance. Obviously, France has survived 400-500 years of Roman colonialization rather well, and Anatolia that of the post-Alexandrian Hellenistic civilization. Or Korea and Vietnam that of hundreds of years of Chinese political and cultural dominance. Spain has overcome, if rather violently, Arab-Islamic colonialization, while Islamic N. Africa, the N. East, and parts of the Indian subcontinent have changed into new civilizations that have traits of the both the older and the new cultures, albeit that the Islamic factor here is dominant. In each case of encoun-

ter, something new has grown out of the clash or interaction of civilizations.

However, the case of Japan (or Thailand) obviously indicates that one does not have to discard one's own culture when voluntarily accepting certain, if not most of the facets of Euro-American civilization. In fact, Japan has succeeded in doing so several times, ever since the Yayoi period, from the acceptance of Buddhism and Chinese culture, to certain Portuguese and Dutch influences, to the voluntary wholesale Europeanization after 1870, and to an increasing Americanization after 1945. However, nobody will mistake Japan as it is now as a version of Europe or America... Other civilizations should ponder this example instead of venturing into blind anti-(Euro-)Americanism.

Such reactions against Euro-American cultural and political dominance are, at present, ongoing in several parts of the globe. They are especially visible in the Arab world and in the Near East including Iran and Afghanistan. In India they are very vocal as far as some intellectuals are concerned and blunt in the case of some conservative politicians, -- but they are little effective: for all the touted revival of Hinduism, the mood of the younger generation seems clearly bent on modernization and westernization, if not, as my colleague Galbraith, a Kennedy time ambassador to India, has called it, a wish to 'be reborn on the banks of the Hudson'. In SE Asia (Singapore, Malaysia) and in East Asia (China) we see some principled opposition of foreign values that are deemed to alien to local cultures -- or politics.

Yet, I do not yet see such rethinking happening on a global basis. So far, too many localized and national battles are being fought. All such movements are underway individually in the various (sub)continents, with little mutual interaction so far. We need to bring the major cultural points to global consciousness and let them interact more than so far done.

Only recently, over the past two years or so, the raw-capitalist / corporate view of the world economy has finally come under attack. A few years ago, the French woke up (see Witzel 1998); so, maybe they have again been at the intellectual forefront and of a social movement. Yet, even they (and the present student activists / anarchist followers) still are focused just on economics. But man does not live by bread alone...

They and their Afro-Asian counterparts overlook

the fact that present Euro-American Civilization does no longer regard itself as exactly superior (American nationalism excluded). A lot of soul-searching has been going on, especially after the two devastating wars of the 20th century, after 1918, 1945 (and even earlier: Nietzsche). There has been a lot of self-doubt, as the constant talk of crisis indicates. In other words, Euro-American civilization is searching for new forms of ideologies, belief and self-expression. Cults are everywhere, and superstition (astrology!) is rampant. All sorts of faddish gurus and centers of 'new religions' make a lot of money of this insecurity.

What still is missing is a new vision of a "new classical age" that encompasses ideals from several constituent parts, that is from Old Europe/modern America (liberalism, cold rationality, practicality, the ideals of personal liberty and freedom), and those from the cultures of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (the hybrid Mexican, Brazilian etc. cultures or even the remnants of the Maya, Aztec, Inca, Guarani cultures), cultures whose special traits and values have been explored here to some extent.

I expect such interaction and mutual influences to take place, during the 21st century, by the increasing interaction of world cultures -- based, as they are, still on their foundational texts. They present them in myth and epic, or they discuss them in philosophy and essay.

In the present project, we can research some of the aspects that a future civilization, a new Classical Age might take. We may do so by carefully reading our Classical texts precisely because they are foundational, they embody the 'soul' of the various civilizations, -- whether they are consciously referred to or not. Only 30% of Europeans maybe Christian now, but many (secularized) Christian tenets, though no longer propagated as such, are subconsciously adhered to as people are exposed to them (in socialization) while they grow up.

The present process of mutual interchange happens so far, for the most part, at the level of pop-culture, fashion and religious movements, all spread by global TV (a potent factor, just as Hollywood films helped in the Americanization of Europe from the Twenties through the Fifties).

However, the "intellectual" part of such interac-

tion still is largely missing. We can supply some of it:

- (1) by studying the salient features and
- (2) the foundational aspects of the major civilizations;
- (3) by comparing them from a contemporaneous point of view, evaluating them as they seem fit (or not) modern contemporaneous life and generally human material, social and spiritual aspirations;
- (4) by proposing changes based on such study and dialogue between representatives of the cultures involved;
- (5) by prominently 'floating' such ideas in Japan (and beyond) for a truly international discussion.

As so often, the people at large -- or just the students now protesting again, after two calm decades, against globalization -- may feel that something is wrong with our present set-up. I believe that we can supply, based on our study of the foundational texts, more comprehensive data, thought, and theories. Due to its two millennia of experience in precisely this field, Japan can lead in this, and show how to reach a new balanced perception of our world, of society and spirituality.

* * *

Certainly, the new civilization will neither be the Euro-American one, based as it is mostly on rationality, practicality and the economy, nor will it be the overly spiritual or mythology-oriented or overly society-oriented village or joint family-based one of some (Afro-)Asian countries. It will be something new, something that we cannot engineer: people will decide. But we can define a few key ingredients that might become important and that will be modified by local conditions and the dominant global economy.

In short, we may expect a new world civilization to rise from the interaction of the presently still dominant Euro-American mode with other cultures: if not a better one, then one that is suited to the mindset and the necessities of the 21st century,

I have often put the question to my (old) colleagues at V. Quine's Wednesday Lunch Table at Harvard: What is really new in art, music, thought, etc. However, the answers I got were such as : in Architecture, each new material brought something new, a new

'style'. But is it a new style? It is just variation of the 20th century experimentation, a clear sign in my view of a loss of direction. We have experimented in art, music, architecture for 100 years now, with minimalist and other exercises: nothing compelling has arisen from it.

Also a purely cerebral definition of a future civilization does not help much, such as Paranjpe's:

"I hope to transcend modern reason not by negating reason as such, but by negating violent, Eurocentric, developmentalist, hegemonic reason.

The worldwide liberation project of transmodernity differs from a universal, univocal project that seeks to impose violently upon the Other the following: European rationality, ... which conflates occidental culture with the human in general.

In transmodernity, the alterity, coessential to modernity, now receives recognition as an equal.

Modernity will come into its fullness ... by surpassing itself through a corealization with its once negated alterity and through a process of mutual, creative fecundation. "

In more straight-forward terms, he too expects that something new will arise from the interaction of Euro-American civilization and the other major cultures of the globe, while we should not exclude unexpected influences from some small, localized traditions that suddenly are adopted world-wide. The "native American" movement of protection of "Mother Earth" is just one of them.

I expect that from the interaction of world cultures -- based, as they still are on their foundational texts, something really new will arise during the 21st century. Which form it will take, I cannot say.

But, I look forward to it.