Introduction: Six Notes on a Partly Understood Phenomenon

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1

'EUROPEAN'/'WESTERN' MODERNITY?

In January 1939, after spending 10 years in Europe, a young Bengali gentleman named Sudhir Sen, inspired by his British friend Leonard K. Elmhirst, came back to Bengal to join Rabindranath Tagore's Institute of Rural Reconstruction at Sriniketan. A few days after his arrival, when he heard that Tagore had come to Sriniketan, Sen decided to meet him. 'It was quite early in the morning when I walked up the stairs to make my first call on the Poet. He was already up as usual and was quietly drinking tea with some delicacies.' Tagore welcomed him and invited him to breakfast.

After pouring him a cup of tea and making some small talk, Tagore 'sank into a pensive mood' and asked Sen: 'I wonder what happened to the Renaissance movement in India?' This movement, Tagore explained, was first seen in Italy, then spread all over Europe and hit the shores of India during the nineteenth century. It made substantial progress for about half a century, generating an intellectual ferment within the country. 'Then, suddenly, it came to a halt and began to move backwards' (Sen 1991: 4–5).

This anecdote reflects a widely believed myth—that there is a space (cultural/geographical/civilizational) called 'Europe' from where certain progressive ideas (variously described as Renaissance/Enlightenment/Modernity) came to India, struck root and thus

enabled the country to progress although in the end they did not quite achieve the kind of changes they were supposed to. Hence there is also a blame-game involved—Tagore, in the conversation mentioned in the previous paragraph, blamed Vivekananda; a long tradition of scholarship has blamed colonialism; while some have added the Indian elite to the list. Consider the concluding passage of Sumit Sarkar's well-known textbook, *Modern India*:

> The six decades of India's history that we have surveyed thus find meaning and relevance if considered as a complex process of change through struggle which is still far from complete. Perhaps the reflections of a British socialist writer on history and its contradictions can serve as an appropriate epitaph: ' . . . pondered how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name' (William Morris, *A Dream of John Ball*, 1887 in Sarkar 1993: 454).

Implicit within this story is the image of a certain flower called modernity that came to full bloom only in the 'advanced', 'developed', 'industrialized' 'West' or 'Europe' whereas the colonized 'third world' was witness to a partial, if not distorted, blossom. Opinion about this varies as it does about who is to be blamed for it. What remains almost unquestioned is the idea of 'Europe' as the only fertile soil on which the flower of modernity could bloom, driving into the historical archive all remnants of the 'medieval' or the 'feudal', something that 'developing' societies have so far failed to do.

Thus the story of modernity is supposedly divided into two parts—one of a modernity that has reached a position of fulfilment (even though its agenda may be unfinished) and the other of a modernity that is inferior (thanks to colonialism and/or other factors). It is in this second part that one tends to associate uneasy pre-modern or non-modern forms such as caste, religious fundamentalism, poverty, ethnic violence, lack of education, corruption, flagrant violation of the law, lack of freedom for women, and so on and so forth. In short, all those evils that need to be eradicated through development aid.

Yet, a close look at the history of 'Europe' and 'America' over the last three centuries reveals disturbing incongruities. It does not require deep historical knowledge to recall the horrors of Nazism and Fascism or the racist violence by the Ku Klux Klan or the support that was received by the South African white regime from Britain and USA. Despite popular conceptions that the Church declined with the end of the medieval period, the influence of the Church remains a very powerful one even today. Royal families continue to be important in Europe. Sexual violence against women and children continues along with liberation movements and the production of academic papers on gender in universities.[1] Brutal violence remains the steady diet of Hollywood films and wrestling shows on popular television. The list can go on. But even this small list is probably enough to disturb the beautiful image of a modern, developed world of hyperreal 'Europe' (West) that is enlightened, efficient, developed and rational.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, one can safely say that as far as modern technological innovation is concerned, Japan has outsmarted many parts of USA and Europe for the first time in the last three centuries; the world's manufacturing hub is China and, as more and more software jobs get 'Bangalored', it is clear that Indian brains are as good as American ones in providing telecommunication services. It is also quite clear that the superiority of the American economy today rests not on superior absorption of modern economic thought but on the artificial maintenance of the dollar hegemony thanks to the brute force of the American war machine. The trading superiority of the 'developed' Big Brother is not based on the principles laid down by Adam Smith but on the principles of arm-twisting that have been practised by empires since ancient times.

It is one of the ironies of recent South Asian scholarship that Dipesh Chakrabarty in an attempt to 'provincialize Europe' has ended up making it far more superior than it actually is. Consider the following passage:

> . . . I am aware that an entity called the 'the European intellectual tradition' stretching back to the ancient Greeks is a fabrication of relatively recent European history. Martin Bernal, Samir Amin, and others have justly criticized the claim of European thinkers that such an unbroken tradition ever existed

or that it could even properly be called 'European'. The point, however, is that, fabrication or not, this is the genealogy of thought in which social scientists find themselves inserted. Faced with the task of analyzing developments or social practices in modern India, few if any Indian social scientists or social scientists of India would argue seriously with, say, the thirteenth-century logician Gangesa or with the grammarian and linguistic philosopher Bartrihari (fifth to sixth centuries), or with the tenth- or eleventh-century aesthetician Abhinavagupta. Sad though it is, one result of European colonial rule in South Asia is that the intellectual traditions once unbroken and alive in Sanskrit or Persian or Arabic are now only matters for historical research for most—perhaps all—modern social scientists in the region (Chakrabarty 2000: 5–6).

The point that Chakrabarty makes with a note of despair is that nothing but the 'European intellectual tradition' exists today; everything else is dead. This is fortunately not the case—there is a strong (though not dominant) counter-current that he has somehow ignored. In the field of sustainable agriculture, for example, the thoughts of Masanobu Fukuyoka have had the impact of a gospel. The work of Muhammad Yunus in microfinance has created a new development strategy that the whole world has borrowed from. The thoughts of Amartya Sen are strongly influenced by his background in South Asia and have in turn influenced the policies of leading donor agencies. E. F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* (1973) developed a critique of the dominant discourse of economics through ideas borrowed from Buddhism. The Gandhian philosophy of non-violence has influenced political struggles all over the world, especially the anti-racist campaigns of Martin Luther King. Japanese management principles are now part of the global knowledge of management. Mao's adaptation of Marxism has had as much influence as that of Marx. The idea of nationalism has been so powerful in non-European countries precisely because it has been interwoven with older, non-European ideas. Pan-Islamic thought is powerful enough today to challenge Christian/European hegemony in the post-communist era. The thoughts of Dalai Lama have more and more takers in the West. Yoga

and Ayurveda have successfully survived the onslaught of European ideas of health and have achieved a presence even in the 'developed' countries. The educational thoughts of J. Krishnamurti, Rabindranath Tagore and Paulo Friere are now part of a global heritage. Indian music and Indian cinema now have a global presence. Indeed, the attention that has been received by postcolonial thinkers like Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak or Dipesh Chakrabarty himself shows that there is a strong demand for voices that are not bred by the 'West'.

Chakrabarty is right in the fact that it is mostly the intellectual tools developed in 'Western' academic institutions and by 'Western' thinkers that are used within the academic world rather than those developed in the erstwhile colonized countries. But I prefer to see this as a source of strength rather than a sign of inferiority. If students growing up in countries which have a GDP of less than one-tenth of the developed countries can understand and use theories developed by Einstein or Weber, then that is something to be proud of.[2] Chakrabarty, in his book, could easily have given space to a strong tradition of scholarship in the academic world that has struggled hard to be more attentive towards the knowledge systems and cultural products of the formerly colonized world. Scholars dedicated to the history, languages, culture and intellectual traditions of societies outside of Europe and America are by no means a small number. They have played a crucial role in keeping the voice of formerly colonized societies alive, even if that voice may not be the dominant one.

It is also equally important to remember that only a microscopic percentage of the world's population is part of the knowledge system of the academic world. There are strong currents of intellectual thought that have absolutely nothing to do with the 'Western intellectual tradition'. We may or may not agree with such ideas but religious beliefs, customs and values have a strong influence on the mind of the people. Today, perhaps, more people, at least in South Asia, swear by the ideas of a Ramakrishna or an Ambedkar than a Weber or a Foucault.

What Chakrabarty could have easily argued but somehow did not is that while certain European (Western) scholars have claimed for themselves a fabricated genealogy stretching right back to Plato, there

is no need for non-Europeans to believe in this claim. They can easily use Plato as and when necessary without getting an inferiority complex about the fact that he is 'European' or foreign. Such fabricated claims, especially after the research done by scholars like Bernal and Amin, need not be taken seriously at all. The challenge before 'Europe', then, becomes twofold: to come up with an alternative genealogy that will survive serious scrutiny; and to show that it is actually 'European' and not of a particular European region/nation-state.

As far as the latter is concerned, let us take the case of 'civil society' as a category. Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani, in their introduction to a collection of essays on civil society, write '[I]f the European tradition of thinking about "civil society" is desegregated it reveals at least three different strands, with individual thinkers imparting subtle and distinct inflexions to the theoretical use of the concept' (2002: 3).[3] The three strands are: Scottish Enlightenment, French Enlightenment and German thought from Marx to Hegel. If one is to be historically accurate, then it is better to talk about only these three types of intellectual thought (in three different languages, one may add) without necessarily seeing them as part of a *unified European tradition*. There is no reason why French Enlightenment cannot be seen as a part of the world's heritage rather than only as European heritage. After all, the French Revolution was enthusiastically supported by Raja Rammohun Roy in Calcutta at a time when the British were dead against it and saw in it only a threat to their ways of thinking (C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914*, 2004, cited in Sen 2005: 32).[4]

2
'OUR' MODERNITY?

In his short but significant essay 'Our Modernity', Partha Chatterjee notes:

My argument is that because of the way in which the history of our modernity has been intertwined with the history of colonialism, we have never quite been able to believe that there exists a universal domain of free discourse, unfettered by differences of race or nationality. Somehow, from the very begin-

ning, we have made a shrewd guess that given the close com-
plicity between modern knowledges and modern regimes of
power, we would forever remain consumers of universal moder-
nity; never would we be taken seriously as its producers. It is for
this reason that we have tried, for over hundred years, to take
our eyes away from the chimera of universal modernity and
clear up a space where we might be creators of our own moder-
nity (1998).

I am not concerned here with the historical accuracy of
Chatterjee's observation. But let us take the central assumption that
underlies the passage—there is an 'us' (formerly colonized, underde-
veloped/developing, poor, non-Western) and there is a 'them' (the col-
onizers, the developed, the rich, the Western). It follows that what is
considered 'universal modernity' is actually theirs and not ours, and
we must not live under the illusion of being part of that modernity.

Over the last decade and a half, the division of modernity into two
exclusive circles—the 'West' and the 'colonial'—seems to have become
an academic orthodoxy. Consider, for example, the following com-
ment by Sudipta Kaviraj:

> The history of colonial societies is ridden by contradictions in
> particularly fundamental ways. The puzzlements of the colo-
> nial intellectuals arose from the unmerciful way history
> offered them the gift of modernity, in a way it was inextricably
> linked to a destiny of subjection. Unlike as in Europe, moder-
> nity came to India as a primarily external proposal as a theo-
> ry and an external agenda as practice. The enlightenment, for
> all its complexities, had begun with a 'happy' history in
> Europe. Its authors were happy writers, for its protagonists
> saw the process of modernity as one which spread liberty
> across social life. The historical situation of the colonial writer
> was tragic because of the unjustness of the choices facing him.
> If he chose modernity he had to choose subjection as its con-
> dition, or so it appeared to him. If he chose autonomy, he had
> modernity as a necessary price. These two positions developed
> into two separate discourses, which made exchanges across
> their boundaries increasingly difficult (1995: 167).

Both Chatterjee and Kaviraj assume two different circles of modernity—that of the West and that of the colonial world. This assumption also informs the writings of Bhabha (1994), Prakash (1998) and Chakrabarty (2000). In my view, such a distinction is not only historically inaccurate but also politically dangerous. If we divide modernity into two different blocks, 'theirs' and 'ours', then the 'developing', formerly colonial societies would have to give up the claims on modern knowledge; perhaps some day even pay a fee for using Newton's laws of motion as they are the intellectual property of the 'West'. By making this division, scholars such as Chatterjee or Kaviraj are making the knowledge, intellectual tools and cultural expressions developed within the territorial boundaries of colonizing nation-states 'foreign' to themselves. 'Our modernity' would then not include the scientific revolutions in quantum physics or cinema as an artistic form.

There can, on the other hand, be a different strategy, one which I prefer: that of ensuring that modernity remains universal and global and not the property of 'them' alone. This is indeed what intellectuals like Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay or Rabindranath Tagore did—they wrote novels (a form borrowed from Europe), but to understand and interrogate problems in their own society. They took full advantage of the communication revolution that produced the global character of modernity and made that modernity 'ours' without necessarily trying to carve out a separate 'our modernity'. They were able to acknowledge the advantages of a universal modernity while at the same time attacking the barbarism of colonial rule.

Throughout Chatterjee's essay, and indeed built to the postcolonial perspective, is a sense of gloom and defeat—that of being colonized, of being rendered inferior. A certain amount of 'mimicry' does not alter the fundamental sense of powerlessness and despair. While the sentiment may be appreciated and does reflect one part of the story, what one fails to understand is why the other side is forgotten—that of a prolonged struggle against colonial rule and victory against the colonial masters. The most crucial element of this victorious struggle has been not the rejection of modernity but the creative adaptation of it—in literature, in politics, in science, in economics, in warfare, in

the social sciences, in building bridges and railway networks. Had this creative adaptation not been possible, had colonized societies not been able to produce engineers, professionals, academicians, painters, writers, doctors to match the best in the world, then de-colonization would have been a superficial act. The very fact that 'English' was mastered but 'Indian' languages were not forgotten in the process shows how profound the process of adaptation has been. There is no doubt that superficial consumption has been one of the features of modernity in colonized societies, but that is only part of the story. Not to recognize its other side—that of creative adaptation—would be historically inaccurate and politically dangerous.

The division of modernity into two blocks is untenable because of two other factors: it ignores the significant contribution made by people who actually belonged to both blocks, but perhaps remained marginal in both; and that the concept of 'our' modernity has the possibility of imposing the experience of the male middle class on the experience of all other sections of the colonized society. This volume of essays repeatedly brings out the role played by people who belonged yet at the same time did not belong. They produced complex subjectivities and transformed the world around them in manifold ways.

3

A COMPLICATED SENSE OF NOT/BELONGING

One of the themes running through the essays that follow is the search for a sense of belonging within a larger universe. The impact of capitalism and colonialism in South Asia destroyed the sense of unity that existed during Mughal times. The moment of capital broke up old certainties, transformed the physical space through new forms of technology, led to the migration of people from one continent to another as well as within the geographical boundaries of South Asia, which in turn led to confrontations with new faces, new cultures, new habits. This created a sense of what I can only describe as 'not/belonging' in an attempt to capture the two faces of the experience—that of belonging, finding a stable constellation for oneself, but at the same time feeling the world around one to be unstable, feeling that one belongs neither here nor there, that indeed the space one belongs to needs to

be altered into something else—it should not be the way it is. Like looking at the mirror and saying: 'You are not what you are.' In his essay on Madhusudan Dutt, William Radice says at one point:

> Maybe in my case, this does have something to do with my exiled Italian heritage, an element in my make-up that I have tended to ignore until now. The Radices have become English, but not quite. Our stubborn loyalty to the legacy of Evasio Radice, 'the Patriot' [*il patriota*], as he is known in the family, is reflected in the fact that we have clung to a quasi-Italian pronunciation of the name—'Ra-dee-chay'—whereas, I gather, Radices in France became 'Radice' (to rhyme with 'Patrice') long ago.
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> We don't quite fit in, not into the English class system, not into the worlds of English academia or the civil service where we have worked. That's probably why I feel in Michael Madhusudan Dutt, who never fitted in anywhere, such a kindred spirit [].

I would like to read these words and indeed the entire narrative of 'not fitting anywhere' (of Michael Madhusudan Dutt, of Evasio Radice, even his own) as an expression of this sense of 'not/belonging'. Madhusudan Dutt—a bhadralok, a babu, a convert to Christianity, an admirer of Dante, the first poet in Bengali to experiment with sonnet-writing and blank verse, intense reader of the Ramayana—lived a life that almost epitomizes the experience I am trying to grasp.

The essay by Sharmadip Basu takes us to the late eighteenth century, when colonialism as a structure was not quite in place, and recounts the encounter between white migrant officers of the East India Company and the 'nautch girls' they went to meet every evening. Although Basu does not directly write about it, I would like to read into it a story of lonely white men in a strange land meeting women who existed on the margins of society. This created a space for the interplay of sexuality/curiosity/intimacy/musicality that produced what Basu claims to be one of the earliest examples of 'fusion' music in the subcontinent. What is important to remember is that this happened not as a direct consequence of the colonial enterprise of empire-building (indeed, the project of empire-building soon disci-

plined such amusements) but as something that perhaps should not have happened at all—this was not exactly what the Company had in mind while sending its troops to the subcontinent. What I have found striking about the narrative is that, at a certain point of time, the lonely white men were dislocated from the disciplined regime of their 'British' culture and pushed into an unknown musical space. As they underwent the experience, thereby also becoming part of a new kind of music, where did they end up belonging?

In Sumanta Banerjee's essay, we visit nineteenth-century Calcutta and its 'underworld'. While noting the evolution of Calcutta as a colonial metropolis and the emergence of a cosmopolitan underworld in the city, he says: '. . . it was the "subalterns" of the European armed forces who were the first to serve as catalytic agents to bring together the Bengali outlaws of the Black Town and the European adventurers from the White Town, in the form of an organized underworld.'

While the colonial state was creating its own penal and policing system, certain white male 'outlaws' became famous for pushing that system to its limits and transforming the world of crime. The case studies of two *sahib chors*—Warner and Healy—reveal a complex narrative of not/belonging to either Europe or India.

My essay on three narratives of colonial Calcutta during the early twentieth century explores the theme of not/belonging in the case of a scholar/lawyer, H. E. A. Cotton. Son of a distinguished civil servant in India, Cotton chose to practise law at the Calcutta High Court, fell in love with the city and wrote a monumental descriptive handbook on Calcutta as a modern city. Although he did not become an 'Indian', he did not become a British imperialist either.

I see the theme of not/belonging flowing through Parimal Ghosh's essay in a different way, in which the reader will be able to see how the bhadralok has repeatedly developed a critique of own modernist agenda which, in Ghosh's view, is also a way of maintaining his hegemony. It is in Sibram Chakrabarty, a writer known primarily for his comic works, that Ghosh sees a successful undermining of the (fake?) modernist agenda of the bhadralok. What intrigues me, however, is Sibram's position within this modernist agenda. He was definitely a part of bhadralok society; and yet, it was this very location—a situation

of fluctuation between belonging and not/belonging—that made his intervention possible. He was never completely out of it, nor was he wholly part of it. His position is different from that of being at the 'margin', because he was not always a marginal person. Besides, being 'marginal' implies a somewhat consistent, static position, whereas I am trying to indicate a certain to-and-fro movement.

Markus Daechsel explores the experience of modernity in early twentieth-century Punjab through the detective fiction that emerged during this period. His essay shows how a new middle class was emerging, which in turn generated the demand for a new kind of fiction. The detective fiction that emerged during this time in Punjab showed a desire for the 'modern'—both in terms of the celebration of modern technology as well as through the celebration of the individual detective. In a sense, therefore, the taste for detective fiction reflected a desire to belong to a literary aesthetic field that was global. At the same time, this desire to belong was contradicted by a sense of being different from the logical/scientific detective of the West. What I find particularly interesting, however, is that the taste for this new fiction also reflected a certain distancing from traditional Punjabi literary forms and the values they expressed. The sense of not/belonging cut both ways.

4
THE PROXIMITY OF DANGER

Modernity in the South Asian context, as has been shown in the papers by Markus Daechsel, Parimal Ghosh, Sumanta Banerjee and myself, involved the evolution of a metropolitan life—in terms of a physical transformation of space, the emergence of the machine and electricity as a signifier, the emergence of new social elements and new articulations of social change that bore a lot of similarity with the metropolitan world of Europe. However, modernity in South Asia cannot be understood without also taking into account the simultaneous labelling of spaces and people as 'dangerous'—that which existed as an anomaly of the world of the university, the factory, the metalled roads and electric lights. So the discourse on citizenship cannot be understood without comparing it with the discourse on 'criminal

tribes' and *goondas*; the vivid description of Dalhousie Square in Calcutta has to be matched with the creation of dangerous places like Assam. Bodhisattva Kar presents a detailed case study of how a disease called kala-azar came to be described in colonial medical discourse as 'Assam Fever' and how the 'identity of the disease' created the 'diseases of an identity' that Assam was condemned to live with.

The theme of danger emerges again and again in the essays of this volume. In my paper on the turn-of-the-century Calcutta one of the narrators, H. E. A. Cotton, finds Calcutta to be a 'queen of two faces': on the one hand a city of electricity, stock exchange, university; on the other, the sound of howling jackals resounding at night. Daechsel's essay reveals modern Urdu detective fiction's paradoxical fascination for both the *daku* (dacoit) as well as modern mechanical gadgetry. Banerjee's study of the underworld of nineteenth-century Calcutta brings out the emergence of a cosmopolitan 'underworld'. But such narratives also need to be understood by contrasting them with the narratives one associates with that of the famous bandits of the Chambal valley.

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5

THE ANXIETY FOR AUTHENTICITY

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Three essays explore another theme that defines the modern experience of South Asia—the search for a location of one's self within a larger universe. This takes many forms—as 'Indian nationalist', as a postcolonial thinker finding oneself belonging and not belonging to a 'Western' academic world, a liberal Muslim trying to give definition to 'nation' within a Islamic tradition, or a creator of comic strips trying to instill the heritage of India in a fast-changing, cosmopolitan, Indian middle class.

In his essay, Benjamin Zachariah probes the link between two meta narratives—the nationalist urge for an 'authentic' Indian identity and the anxiety of the postcolonial intellectual of Indian origin for a similar 'authentic' claim to an Indian past. At the core of both is a certain sense of anxiety that I consider peculiarly modern. The historical experience of modernization and colonialism destroyed older certainties about the world one inhabits, creating a state of permanent

flux and a search for a larger imagined community within which to belong. For the nationalist intellectual of the colonial era as well the postcolonial intellectual trying to find a place in global academics, the intimidating presence of the conqueror/white/resourceful 'Europe' remains a constant source of anxiety.

The anxiety to find an imaginary community is the theme of Kingshuk Chatterjee's essay on Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: he shows how Sir Syed attempted to create a 'Muslim' national identity through the concept of *muttahida qaumiyaat* [united nationalism]. Chatterjee describes how the certainties of the Mughal period were destroyed by the onset of colonial rule and how Syed Ahmad had to maintain a tightrope between the conservative Muslims, the colonial state and what he perceived as the educated babus.

Aryak Guha's essay takes us into postcolonial India. The context that he explores is that of the rapidly changing middle-class society of the 1970s. A man in Bombay, Ananat Pai, produced a series of comic books because of his anxiety that the new generation of Indians are losing touch with their cultural heritage—in other words, becoming unauthentic. Guha takes up the case of the mythological figure of Gandhari, the mother of the Kauravas in the epic Mahabharata, to explore the depiction of an ideal woman at a time when middle-class Indian women were shedding their 'traditional' image, developing professional identities, becoming open about their sexuality and experimenting with 'Western' attire. Even Hindi cinema reflected this change through the emergence of sexually bold heroines such as Zeenat Aman.

6
'MODERNITY' OR 'MODERNITIES'?

Given the experience of colonialism, which again is an extremely diverse phenomenon, there is a strong case for seeing the modern in terms of several 'modernities' rather than a single, monolithic 'modernity'. Prakash (1998), for example, describes the experience of India as a 'different modernity' from the modernity of the 'West'/'Europe'. Such a formulation can, of course, be useful in not seeing modernity as essentially a European phenomenon with some export and adaptation

in the colonial world. I would like to argue that although the theory of 'modernities' is better than the 'first-in-Europe-and-then-exported-else-where' model, there are problems with this theory as well.

The first problem is quantitative. How many different modernities can we then think of? If Prakash is finding a 'different modernity' in the case of India, then what about Nepal, Sri Lanka or Burma? Should we believe that every nation-state has a certain modernity of its own? Moreover, it is highly problematic to think of an 'Indian modernity', as the experience of modernity of a high-caste male cannot be the same as that of an adivasi woman.[5]

More importantly, the model of 'modernities' ultimately ignores the fact that modernity was a global phenomenon; indeed, it was this that made it different from all other prior historical experience. It is the limitation of our knowledge-production system that we tend to produce experts on 'Europe', 'Latin America', 'South East Asia' or 'South Asia', creating the illusion that we too can think about moder-nity in terms of blocks of land masses. On the other hand, what made modernity was the circulation of goods and ideas on a global scale. This was made possible by the spread of capitalism around the world and the communication revolution that coincided with it. E-mail, that extraordinary invention without which this volume would not have come together, is the logical culmination of the invention of the tele-graph around the turn of the twentieth century. When we think of modernity, we need to visualize this complex flow of data (be it the data of the stock exchanges or the data of academic research or the data presented by the newspapers) rather than static land masses like 'Europe' or 'India' or 'Africa'.[6]

Notes

1 For a discussion of sexual abuse of children in Sweden, see Nyman and Svenson (1995).

2 For a similar opinion, see Sen (2005: 132–3). According to him:

   First, the so-called 'Western Science' is not a special posses-sion of Europe and America. Certainly, since the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment of the eigh-

teenth century, most of the scientific progress has occurred in the West. But these scientific developments drew substantially on the earlier work in mathematics and science done by the Arabs, the Chinese, the Indians and others. The term 'Western science' is misleading in this respect, and quite misguided in its tendency to establish distance between non-Western peoples and the pursuit of mathematics and science. Second, irrespective of where the discoveries and inventions took place, the methods of reasoning used in science and mathematics give them some independence of local geography and cultural history. In my essay in this volume I have argued that the geography of modernity cannot be understood in terms of conventional categories like 'west'/'east' or 'Europe'/'India'. It has to be understood in terms of the spread of capitalism around the world and the emergence of the network of metropolises around the world. It is this network of metropolises that produced the ideas and socio-political upheavals that mark the history of modernity.

3   The architecture of the book, however, is disappointing: divided into sections like 'theoretical traditions in the West' and 'arguments in the South', it creates two simplistic and neat circles around which the understanding of the concept is framed.

4   C. A. Bayly has recently opined that Rammohun Roy 'independently broached themes that were being simultaneously developed in Europe by Garibaldi and Saint-Simon'.

5   I have to admit that the nation-state-centric model of 'modernities' is a strong one although I do not subscribe to it. It is better than the model proposed by Sivaramakrishnan and Agarwal in *Regional Modernities* (2003). In my view, they have failed to clearly explain what a 'region' is and why it should be considered as the unit of understanding modernity. The nation-state, on the other hand, has been a significant product of, and an agent of, modernization.

6   For a similar view in favour of 'modernity', see Joshi (2001: 172–87).

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