
GLOBALIZATION AND THE MOTHER INDIA SYNDROME -PSYCHO ANALYTIC CONSIDERATIONS

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The present world economic order is maliciously intended to hold firmly the rulers and the ruled in each one's position as the mother hen keeps the small ones under her wings. Globalization is another name for the cleverly designed thantra of keeping the status quo by which a tiny minority of the privileged nations, corporations and individuals makes the rest of the world subservient to its own well defined interests and priorities.

With Globalization India is caught in a double bind. Understood in this context primarily as an expansion of cross border economic activities and the consequent interdependence between countries, covering increased trade, technology transfer, labour exchange and capital inflows, globalization can also mean in non-economic terms, erosion of local control autonomy and self identity in political, social and cultural life. While the main stream economists and super-powered politicians extol its virtues as a welcome change in equalizing the wealth of nations, many others perceive it as a loop-line along the downward spiral of man-made calamities. Thus globalization brings along with it immense hopes for some, while it instills paranoic fears in many others. For some it is the magic elixir for practically all the problems faced by humanity today. For some others, it is the latest dirty trick played by the imperialist capitalism for furthering its own narcissism.

Caught on the horns of the globalized economy, India as a nation is currently hovering over the poles of hope and despair. It is true that a handful of Indian corporates are

all set to take off immediately for multinational operations abroad. However, at the same time, a staggering number of not less than 300 millions of Indians who are condemned to live a life that is quite undignified, due to material poverty are looking for support to keep themselves above the flood waters.

It is here that the so called Mother India Syndrome assumes its significance. In psychological terms, mother is an archetype and a universal symbol for security, protection, support, affection and all that every human being looks forward to, especially in times of pain and despair. No wonder, economic globalization is projected as a panacea - the hope of the future, sometimes as the only hope for mankind's survival.

THE ADVOCATES

The process of global economic integration gained momentum in the 1970s with the development of capital markets. It influences economic as well as social relations within and across countries. It increases competition

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internally and externally, leads to structural changes in the economy, alters consumer preferences, life styles and demands of citizens. Its most striking aspect has been the integration of financial markets, which is made possible by modern electronic communication. Thus the 20th century saw unparalleled economic growth. Global per capita GDP increased almost five fold (1). The gap between lifestyle and life is becoming thinner day by day.

The inter-war era of the past century confirms this fact. During this period the world turned its back on internationalism and countries retreated into closed economies, protectionism and pervasive capital controls. The per capita income growth fell to less than 1 percent during 1913 - 1915. On the flipside, it is quite encouraging to see how some countries, especially in Asia move quite quickly in their per capita income growth since 1970s, almost paralleling the growth levels of the industrialized nations.

In short, globalization has helped basically in the following directions:

1. Trade: developing countries as a whole have increased their share of world trade from 19% in 1971 to 29% in 1999.
2. Capital movements: private capital flows to developing countries increased sharply during the 1990s.
3. Movement of people: between 1965 and 1990 foreign born labour forces increased by about one half and most migration occurs between developing countries.
4. Spread of knowledge and technology: knowledge about production methods, management techniques, export markets, economic policies are all available at a very low cost, a very valuable resource for the developing countries(2)

A recent analysis of Pew Global Attitudes data (3) indicate that countries with better attitudes towards globalization attract more FDI, obtain better debt ratings and exhibit more local entrepreneurship.

THE ATTACKERS

Globalization is an easy target for arrows of attackers who include eminent economists, social activists and politicians. Here is a summarized list of their arguments:

1. Globalization has engendered economic crises and instability, especially in developing countries by

sharply increasing inequality of income distribution and poverty. It has a negative impact even on the developed countries: "Global interdependence today means that economic disasters in developing countries could create a backlash on developed countries".

2. It has created an international no man's land. "Globalization is a double edged sword. It is a controversial process that assaults national sovereignty, erodes local culture and tradition and threatens economic and social stability."(4)
3. Economic estimates indicate that the gap between the rural and the urban areas in India, which had decreased in the 70s and the 80s increased considerably during the 90s (5).

Not only the purchasing power of the rural poor but also the per capita rural income in real terms, has sharply decelerated during this period.

4. Globalization is built on, and nurtured by a culture of conspicuous consumption and materialism. Humans are no more defined on the basis of the nature given dignity but on one's consumption. As a result, countries of the world and people are divided into just two classes, the haves and the have nots, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak.
5. The rise of globalization is thus linked to a cancerous growth of class conflict. Tribals, Daliths and other ethnic groups remain the most backward and the voiceless sections of the society. This state of affairs provokes aggression and breeds terrorism.
6. Globalization takes the world down the road to non-sustainability. Social activist, Vandana Shiva writes: "What the world needs to feed a growing population sustainably is biodiversity intensification, not chemical intensification or the intensification of genetic engineering... In spite of all empirical evidence showing that genetic engineering does not produce more food and in fact often leads to a yield decline, it is constantly promoted as the only alternative available for feeding the hungry." (6). In addition, global claims on the food chain are destroying, slowly but surely, the diversity of local food cultures and food economies. A global monoculture is being forced on people by defining everything that is fresh, local and handmade as a health hazard.

- 7 In the name of recycling waste products, the least developed countries are being converted into a dustbin of developed countries, for dumping industrial wastes, including radioactive pollutants.
- 8 The wealth of the poor nations is being violently misappropriated through cleverly designed means like patents and intellectual property rights. "The knowledge of the poor is being converted into the property of global corporations, creating a situation where the poor will have to pay for the seeds and medicines they have evolved and have used to meet their own needs for nutrition and healthcare."(7). Basmati, neem, pepper, bitter gourd, turmeric- the list is long, practically every aspect of the innovation embedded in our indigenous food and medical systems is now being pirated and patented. Theft is defined as creation, sharing and exchange-crime.
- 9 Globalization is the process through which MNCs are taking over more and more of the local economies. All over the world the MNCs have got some stranglehold at some part of the production process so much so that small scale farmers, entrepreneurs and retailers are being eliminated slowly, but smartly.
10. Globalization is almost synonymous with corporate colonialism. In India it all started with the East India Company. The British Company had control over land, labour, production and market. Today the same trend is continued by MNCs. India is already the largest call office of the world taking upon herself large chunks of labour intensive back office operations. And the big surpluses produced are repatriated into home countries of the MNCs in the name of patents, copyrights etc. India's IT sector functions almost up to 95% for export today. And where does the profit go ?
11. Globalization equals Westernization. During the colonial times countries of Asia and Africa were written away as irrelevant to the world economy, but at the same time they were used for their natural and human resources, to the point of being plundered. MNCs follow the same strategy today. In addition, they are able to export to the developing countries not only finished products and services at exorbitant charges but also surreptitiously replace native values and local cultures.

QUALITY OF LIFE, THE BONE OF CONTENTION

Surprisingly both the ardent defenders and the relentless opponents of globalization have the same target to argue for and fight against. Both sides look at the fate of the poor, the illiterate and the underprivileged with compassion. Both want to improve their condition. The advocates see globalization as the only hope for the poor in the changing world scenario, while its attackers perceive in a globalized system, the greatest danger to the well being of the under-privileged.

An IMF statement reads: "Globalization offers extensive opportunities for truly worldwide development.....in the 1970's and 1980's when many countries in Latin America and Africa pursued inward oriented policies, their economies stagnated or declined, poverty increased and high inflation became the norm".(8).

On the other hand, addressing the 58th session of the UN assembly in September 2003, Sri.A.B.Vajpayee, the former Prime Minister of India declared: "International economic relations continue to be characterized by inequities and inequalities. Globalization has helped sections of international economy including some developing countries. However, large communities have been left outside its pale. It has engendered economic crisis and instability in several developing countries, which have sharply increased poverty". Proceeding along the same lines, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh insisted on strong democratic institutions, suitable national policies and helpful international environment for reaping the benefits of globalization, as he was addressing the UN in September 2004.

Therefore, if globalization has to stand the test of time and serve any useful purpose it has to be directly linked to poverty alleviation , not just in terms of calorie intake, but precisely in education , health care, access to natural resources and political participation.

The Indian predicament could serve as the best example. India today is the land of contradictions. She produces top class professionals like scientists, engineers, doctors and managers, but harbours at the same time, 500 million illiterate people. This country has a well established administrative, judicial and even political structure, but she is one of the most corrupt countries of the world .She has the largest number of skilled labour, but is one of the biggest underachievers in the world - a paradox inexplicable but a reality lived.

PSYCHOANALYSIS AS A TOOL OF INTERPRETATION

Sigmund Freud's genius made nations and people realize that there is continuity between childhood and adulthood, waking life and sleeping state, and mental health and pathology. Born into the world as a bundle of needs, instincts, urges and drives, every individual has to go through a process of internal integration and external adaptation. The road to maturity entails a number of inevitable conflicts rooted on what is known as oedipal situation at the age of four to five. A successful resolution of this attachment - rebellion, dichotomy leads to the formation of an ego ideal - the basis of all social interactions. However, much of the aggressive potentials remain dormant in individuals which can be easily awoken in later life at the simplest provocation. Life becomes a ping-pong game in which the individual is mercilessly thrown between Eros and Thanatos, creation and destruction.

There is a parallel between what happens in the growth process of an individual and the goings-on in a group or a nation. In this sense ontogenesis and phylogenesis are comparable. Wherever aggression is inhibited and inward directed, there is immobilization and incapacitation for releasing the energy for productive self-assertion, both in individuals and among nations.

Unsuccessful or incomplete resolution of the oedipal conflict results in what is known as fixation. Individuals and groups fail in such cases to grow into independence and self reliance. Instead they will be fixated on an exaggerated level of dependence, resulting in regression to childhood fantasies. As a result, shared expectations of individuals are easily converted into collective illusions of a nation. Thus like individuals, groups too can get stuck at dysfunctional patterns of behavior. Consequently, nations may become prisoners of their own neurosis, trapped in the vicious circle of collective delusions and national hallucinations.

Irrational thoughts of helplessness and hopelessness among its citizens produce a depressive nation. In an atmosphere of insecurity and unfounded fear such a nation develops what is known as fight-flight culture, characterized by a sense of debilitating inactivity, lack of self confidence, extreme conservatism and insularity from the immediate environment. In an atmosphere of passivity and purposelessness, the only things achieved are those that are pre-programmed, which require no added

initiative from any one. Individuals, groups, societies and political parties thus pursue actions on the basis of unconscious meanings.

Psycho-analysis perceives four distinct characteristics of such a positioning either by the individual, group or a nation. They are :

1. High levels of narcissism-A dream of glory
2. Extreme rivalry -killer instinct activated
3. Abject dependence- mother infant symbiosis
4. Love-hate ambivalence

Wherever these four elements are present, the process of the institutionalization of a fantasy becomes complete. As a result, one can easily abandon reality and live in the world of fiction. The mother-infant matrix will provide energy at every step.

In the face of deprivation it is quite natural that a dream of material wealth and prosperous life presents an aura of perfection, with a flawless concordance of desire and necessity, spontaneity and order. Individual illusions slowly grow into collective delusions. The idea of a Messiah, a redeemer sprouts in the subconscious mind. Communities, political parties and even governments come forward to take up the role of a savior. As the infant cries for help, an affectionate mother stands ready to support. The picture of the Mother India Syndrome appears to be complete at this stage.

THE GAMES GLOBALIZERS PLAY

Poverty alleviation is the oft-repeated mantra chanted by both advocates and attackers of globalization. All agree that the fate of the poor, in fact, several hundred millions of them in India, has to be changed, their quality of life improved.

In this connection, the developed, industrialized countries of the world seem to appeal to a rather simplistic paradigm, namely the dragnet theory of economics. Accordingly, one pulls the centre, and the periphery is automatically pulled together. The favourite slogan used is "trickle down": Multiply the benefits at the centre, they will automatically be shared by all. Extend the size of the national cake, every one will get a good share!

The United States and the Euro countries occupy today the most coveted central position of the world economy. As the main contributors to the world organizations like

the UN, IMF and the World Bank, they decide the terms and conditions, the process and procedures of those international institutions. They share the larger chunk of the world resources in terms of information technology and expertise. Through industrialization the rich countries have reached such a phenomenal level of development that no other nation either individually or collectively can any more compete with them.

No wonder, the Big Brother has turned out to be the Big Mother today, not only offering security and protection to the whole world, but also policing wherever suspected elements are going against her interests. The Big Mother is looked upon not only with awe and expectation by others but also with fear and anxiety. Thus George Bush could recently do the impossible; win the American election with a sizable margin, in spite of his dismal failure at home and abroad as the President of the most powerful nation in the world. For he played "skillfully and cynically on the people's paranoia, and Reason lost". (9)

Consequently the rest of the world sees the globalized economy as a necessary evil thrust upon them. They have already developed a typical love - hate ambivalence towards it.

Today practically all the international meets on economic and trade related issues end up as a show down between the developed and developing countries. Globalization has indeed created an international no man's land, where businesses thrive on commercial practices which no responsible nation can permit.

Vandana Shiva writes: "Since Seattle, a frequently used phrase has been the need for a rule based system. Globalization is the rule of commerce and it has elevated Wall Street to be the only source of value. As a result things that should have high worth - nature, culture, the future are being devalued and destroyed. The rules of globalization are undermining the rules of justice and sustainability, of compassion and sharing. We have to move from market totalitarianism to an earth democracy". (10).

Arundhati Roy adds: " The real tragedy is that most people in the world are trapped between the horror of a putative peace and the terror of war. Those are the two sheer cliffs we're hemmed in by. The question is: How do we climb out of this crevasse?" (11).

Here we are reminded of the Enron debacle. Before its fall Enron was a big globalizer, featuring as the most innovative company in the U S and winning the best company award for global finance. This company vigorously promoted privatization and deregulation of public service in the developing countries. It was the apple of the corporate world's eye for quite some time. And then came the great fall!

CHASING THE MIRAGE

The world economy is currently growing highly skewed in favour of the developed countries and the rich oases of the poor ones, which have already been converted into a profit centre for a handful of MNCs. The US accounts today for 21.1% of the world Gross Domestic Product, and seven out the world's ten largest companies are American. The Big Brother has total control over the world economy. No wonder, the West is sufficiently clear about its mission and vision: "...it is in the interest of the West that it sustains its preeminent position and defends its interests by defining them as the interest of the world community" (12).

The Globalized Westernism of modern times creates a number of myths and illusions in people's mind. It sells an ethnocentric set of values in the name of democracy, free markets, limited government, individualism, efficiency, human rights and rule of law.

Having appropriated quite an inordinate share of world resources, the West promotes an unparalleled lifestyle, which requires an expansion of world resources up to 10 times, in case it is going to be copied by the rest of man. Under the banner of quality of life, it sells conspicuous consumption, which alone can fill the coffers of MNCs. Life saving medicines monopolized, seeds patented and even drinking water commodified, life is made too expensive and beyond reach, all the more, for ordinary people in the underdeveloped countries. Prosperity for some in this case equals poverty for others.

As Arundati Roy put it: The multinationals "are taking over the air we breathe, the ground we stand on, the water we drink, the thoughts we think" (13).

However, the developing countries seem to be chasing the mirage, a dream of glory, the American way of life, prosperity and luxury unlimited. Individuals and institutions are easily swayed by the promises of wonders

worked by the economic paradigm shift in the underdeveloped region within a short span of time. Some such poor countries are eagerly waiting for the day when they can simply reap the best fruits of globalization particularly for the benefit of their poor and the worker class. Recently a world commission was instituted on the "Social Dimension of Globalization". Its report concludes: "Globalization is a force for good because it can promote open societies and free exchange of goods, knowledge and ideas" (14).

Nevertheless, the fact remains that Globalization understood as Globalized Westernism can never rise to a magic elixir for all the economic, social and moral problems facing the world. It is not a lasting element but a passing trend which helps the superior economic and political powers fish in the troubled waters of the current human Tsunami. The US, for example, currently spends around \$ 450 billion each year on its military, but less than \$ 15 billion to help the world's poorest countries fight disease, educate their children, and protect the environment

The present world economic order is maliciously intended to hold firmly the rulers and the ruled in each one's position as the mother hen keeps the small ones under her wings. Globalization is another name for the cleverly designed thantra of keeping the status quo by which a tiny minority of the privileged nations, corporations and individuals makes the rest of the world subservient to its own well defined interests and priorities.

HEAD AND SHOULDERS UP

It is time that India as a nation pulls herself out of the smartly laid trap of the Mother India Syndrome. When this analogy was presented as a title of a book by the American journalist, Katherine Mayo in the 1920s, Mahatma Gandhi dismissed it as "the drain inspector's report". A recent report by a British journalist, John Pilger, repeats the same exercise of India bashing, focusing on an India that continues to fail on all fronts (15). Pilger digs deeper into the malady. According to him the 1990's were a "lost decade", when the number of the Indian poor actually increased, malnutrition, discrimination against the dalits and tribals, suicide among agricultural laborers, chronic energy deficiency, debt trap.....the Pilger list is long.

However, in spite of all the refrains on poverty alleviation, growth with equity, sustainable development, prosperity and quality of life, often orchestrated by vested interests, India should learn to give herself credit for what has been already achieved. Our country ceased to exist as a failed nation long ago.

India is not a perfect society either. Many of her failures are mostly historically imposed and politically engineered. Globalization as proposed, understood and practised today could be a political trap, partly intentionally designed and partly subconsciously insinuated. Indians as a population are intelligent enough to pre-empt many of the conscious dangers ahead and to take preventive steps against them. On the other hand, successfully processing the inevitable conflicts arising out of the collective unconscious of this nation is the greatest challenge before every Indian today. For we too are liable to collective delusions by wasting our valuable resources on the futile exercise of attempting to convert impossible dreams into ever enjoyable reality.

It is time that we as a nation come out of our highly narcissistic propensity and purely-self interested inclinations- our "me-first" attitude towards life. It is time that we stop crying for more subsidies, quotas and reverse discrimination and work together as one nation. Equality rooted on human dignity and liberty should be the foundation principle that inspires all our social dealings. Then the maturing process of growth from extreme dependence to interdependence among individuals, groups and communities will be smooth and self-directed. Dependence begets rebellion which in turn leads to a love-hate ambivalence. We should also learn to cleverly pull ourselves out of a political slavery. Politicians need the poor badly so that they can play the messiah and rise into a mother figure, cashing in upon the fears and insecurities of people through which they can get into power again. Hence globalization is just another name of the game played by vested interests nationally and internationally.

Luckily globalizaton is a passing trend rather than a lasting element. However, it can be a double-edged sword, which cuts through either way. It is like fire that gets activated when ignited. Fire can cook food, sterilize equipments and provide warmth. It can also destroy lives and forests instantly. Choosing globalization as a tool for productive purposes, for sustainable prosperity and lasting happiness is a conscious choice before every Indian today. Are we ready for such a giant leap?

The competitive edge for India lies in her own inner strength, in her people, in all of us. The challenge before us is to grow in to a realistic faith in our own capabilities and leave the cushioned lap of an imaginary mother India, who, we think will feed us at every step. Are we ready to grow into national maturity and self-reliance? That is the greatest challenge before us, all the more before corporate India today!

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