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Encounters Between Civilizations: The Question of the Centre and the Periphery*

IT IS ALWAYS A PLEASURE to be in Calcutta because, I have been associated with this city and its intellectual life since 1961. And "What a city"! Every time I come here, it fills me with joy and pleasure. I meet old friends and make new ones. It is a city vibrant and intellectually alive. I sometimes wish that the Calcutta people were a bit more self-conscious of their achievements, their past and future though this is not the occasion to talk about it.

Today, friends, I want to talk to you about something which I am afraid very few people in India are even vaguely or marginally aware of, that is, the issue relating to what may be called "Encounters between Civilizations". In fact, the issue concerns civilizations themselves. Some of you, I am sure, would recall those days when any discussion about civilizations was not academically fashionable. Those were the days when people used to talk about civilization, mostly, of course, in terms of the West. There was a book which was quite well known at one time and discussed by many people in this country. It was written by Clive Bell and published in the Popular Pelican Series entitled *Civilization*. I wonder how many of you would recall it today. There was, of course, the massive study of history by Toynbee who classified all known civilizations and formulated his own theory regarding the origin, growth and decline

of most of them. However, gradually the study of civilizations faded from the historian's horizon and only micro-history dominated his concerns. But recently there has once again been a return to a concern with civilizations in a guise and a garb which I think is dangerous. I do not know how many of you are aware of an article that appeared in *Foreign Affairs* some time at the end of 1993. This was written by a well-known political scientist, Samuel P. Huntington, who had earlier written a well-known book entitled *Political Order and Political Decay*. In fact, it was an accidental encounter with this book that led me to write a full-length work entitled *Political Development: A Critical Perspective*. This article that he wrote in *Foreign Affairs* was titled "The Clash Between Civilizations". After about a year later the *London Economist* published an editorial entitled "The International Order" which was even more disturbing to me. There had been a debate on the *Foreign Affairs* article in *Foreign Affairs* itself but even after that debate this editorial appeared in London and I will just give you a brief summary or an idea of what it contained. May I remind you of the historical situation in which these two pieces were written. The Soviet Union had collapsed, and the Cold War had ended with the complete victory of the western world. One would naturally expect that this would be the time for the western intellectual to relax and feel "safe" in the world. But this did not happen. The article opens almost with a dream-like reality as

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if we were in a situation of war, sitting in a trench, where one does not know what is happening around one. The article begins with an analysis of NATO and slogans for war, analyzing the situation we are in, what we want to achieve and how we should go about achieving it.

Imagine a western intellectual talking about a clash of civilizations at a time when the western civilization had triumphed almost completely and had hardly any rival left in the world. Imagine one of the most prestigious journals of England talking of a war-like situation between civilizations! What could be more disturbing than this? In fact, if one goes through the works of western intellectuals, one is surprised at their "parochiality"; they have so deeply identified themselves with western civilization and its fortunes that they have even begun to warn their own colleagues and friends that their future is bound with the future of western civilization and that western civilization is in danger. Imagine this perception in the factual situation as it obtains is that it is the non-western civilizations which are endangered by the West.

In fact, all non-western civilizations have been put on the defensive for at least the last 300 years, if not more, and the West is today both politically and economically dominant all over the globe. There is no doubt that it uses the mechanics of the United Nations for the achievement of its own ends. Huntington has just brought out a book entitled *The New World Order* which was reviewed in the *New York Review of Books* recently. While there is an emerging global situation in which we talk of global culture and civilization, it is clear that the intellectuals of the West are unable to cope with the real universality of the situation.

I would not like to enlarge upon the challenge to the non-western intellectual which the situation poses, but at least one thing is clear to me that unless intellectuals in the non-western world, including those in India, become aware

of this situation and respond to it, things are going to get worse as the emerging world will then be completely shaped by the western perception of what the global situation ought to be.

Let me return to the theme of this lecture. During the last four years, by accident, I have been interested in history. Most of you know about Professor D.P. Chattopadhyaya's project on the History of Science, Technology, Philosophy and Culture of India. This has led me gradually into the question of what civilization is and specifically what exactly has been the enterprise of the Indian Civilization in its millennia long past. What has it been seeking for the last 5000 years? In fact, I gave a lecture recently in Delhi entitled "India's Civilizational Enterprises in the third Millennium A.D.: Maintenance, Renewal and New Directions." The moment one becomes aware of the civilization's enterprises in the long millennial past, one realizes that it has also a long millennial destiny in the future that is still to unfold in time. The little span of a few centuries then ceases to matter. What one reads in the papers in the morning does not matter when one sees it in terms of the great civilizational enterprise into which the civilization entered sometime in 3000 or 2500 B.C., depending upon the date of the Harappan civilization.

However, what we are generally aware of is not this long enduring quest of a civilization, but only of little bits of it that occur in the present that we accidentally happen to occupy. But we do not realize that to live in the perceptual reality of the present is to live in a total abstraction. It is true that we act in the present but unless that action is informed not merely by the exigencies of the perceptual present, and by the awareness of the past penetrating deeply into the consciousness of the present and shaping its direction of the future, it is bound to be accidental and marginal in character.

Civilizations are the most complex creations of man, and yet the methodology of understanding them does not exist. All cognitive

enterprises are domain or field themselves. But in its totality a entirely different

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enterprises are confined to the specificity of the domain or field which they have demarcated for themselves. But to see a civilizational enterprise in its totality and to try to understand it is an entirely different task altogether.

To return to the theme I began with, what we call power and wealth, economics and politics, are irrelevant to the enterprises of a civilization. It is an illusion that is engendered by those who occupy seats of political and economic power, that they are the centre, that they determine the unfoldment of reality. The civilizational reality does not cease to unfold as political centres shift and vast changes take place, or trade routes change, as wealth accumulates here and disappears after a certain time, and as cities grow and decline. This is not where the heart of a civilization lies. This is the one lesson one learns when one goes back to the understanding of the enterprises of a civilization. Where was the Mauryan Empire? Where were the Guptas? This story of an empire is the story of decline and fall. The story of centres of economic wealth is a story where new centres in place of old have always arisen and flourished for a time and then disappeared.

I want to suggest therefore, that to understand civilizations is to move one's attention away from power and wealth or from polity and economy. But where does one move it to? It is one of the perennial dilemmas in thought and action that in the present the persons who matter are only those who wield power or have wealth because they command resources, or give patronage and because they are at the centres of the causal manipulation of things. Hence, we tend to think that they are the most important; but the moment they disappear from the scene, what remains? Only the chronicles. What begins to dominate one's attention is not the politician or even the statesman, the men of wealth are hardly remembered and if they are remembered at all, they are only remembered because they were connected with some great spiritual or intellectual movement. I think this is an impor-

tant point because when the political and economic centres cease to occupy one's attention, what comes into focus are those who have contributed to or have pursued some other values such as those of knowledge or spirit or beauty in the realms of thought, religion or art. When one thinks of the past, what dominates our minds is a Plato, or a Socrates or an Aristotle, or the hundreds of persons in India such as the Buddha and Mahavira. It is seldom persons who had political power or wealth that we remember.

The western thinker today has an obsessive concern with power and wealth which has blinded him to civilizational concerns. If you accept my thesis, even provisionally, you may legitimately ask how there could be a clash between civilizations in such a perspective. The very notion of a clash between civilizations seems a contradiction in terms. There is an encounter between civilizations, yes, but a clash between civilizations? Clashes are in the realm of military encounters or in the field of trade. Sometimes we are told that clashes occur because of religion; there have been religious wars, but there have seldom been wars in the realm of knowledge or in seeking for knowledge.

So the first point that I would like to make today is that thinking about civilizations and civilizational encounters has to be disengaged, has to be completely separated from considerations of military and economic encounters. If this is accepted, then I will suggest a new direction for thinking about civilizations. A civilization that looks at its past is stuck in what may be called an obsessive concern with the past. It is stuck by the achievements of the past great persons; we may have a Plato or an Aristotle, a Kant or a Hegel, or we may have a Shankar or a Ramanuja or a Gangesh; for example, one may continuously return to the task of understanding and perpetuating their thought as if they had achieved a finality in the philosophical enterprise of a civilization. Or, a civilization may consider itself to be paradigmatically represented by a Buddha, a

Mahavira or a Gandhi or a Vivekanand or an Aurobindo. But we are stuck at the points which these names represent because we have forgotten to see the civilizational enterprise as an enterprise in which the Buddha and the Mahavira were merely what may be called stopping places or markers in the march of civilization, in an enterprise which was unfolding. The whole panorama of a civilization begins to take a new shape and a new meaning in one's consciousness the moment one sees it as a process, a process of seeking something which may be termed as the *purushartha* of a civilization. But, what is the *purushartha* of a civilization? Well, the *purushartha* of a civilization is never clear as it is unfolded gradually by a series of successive generations of masters who appear on the scene. If civilizations are seen in this way, then the encounter between them will be of a different order. It will be an encounter between the *purusharthas* of civilizations, between the *shastras* of civilizations. What is the relation between a *purushartha* and a *shastra*? I think a *shastra* gives a static form to a dynamic scene; in a sense, it is an 'enemy' of the *purushartha*.

Take Gautama, for example; he wrote the *Nyaya Sutra* and we are stuck with it. Then some one writes a *bhashya* on it and so on. Thus even though thinking itself is an infinite process it does not appear to be so to one who is stuck in the thought of the past thinkers of civilization. Similarly the realization of a *purushartha* is an infinite seeking. But when it takes the form of a *shastra*, it seems to have a finality in it like the way Aristotle was at one time seen in western civilization and from which it took almost a millennium for it to free itself. We in India, however, have never consciously tried to free ourselves from the past as the West has done. On the contrary, we have tried to retain and accept every past master as a 'God' to be worshipped, cherished and imitated as far as possible. This itself may be seen in a different way as some sort of a double process in the movement of our civilization. This double pro-

cess consists firstly in the attempt to build a continuum. We have to build at every step on what has gone before. There is also a necessity, to take stock of what has happened before taking the next step and moving once again. Now this is a double movement which consists of seemingly static points, a staying for a little while, and then, moving again. But if we see the succession of *shastras* in this way, we will see them as steps in a movement, seemingly static steps in a dynamic motion. Once we begin to see civilizations in this manner, then the question arises as to how we shall conceive of and understand the encounters between civilizations.

Some of you may recall Edward Shils; he was a good friend of many of us. He tried to answer this question in a certain way and that may provide a point of departure for our thought in this connection. He had come to India and after his visit wrote a book entitled *Between Tradition and Modernity: The Case of the Indian Intellectual*. Shils did not know at that time that modernity itself would be in question and that the post-modernist would appear on the scene and the whole notion of modernity itself would be seen as *passé*, something that was already over. He had talked about the question of the centre and the periphery. Not only he, almost all western intellectuals have returned to the theme again and again, assuming that they are in the centre and the rest of the world at the periphery. The whole idea of what is called colonial intellectuals, colonial arts, all the usual terms that one uses, presuppose that there is a centre and there is a periphery. In fact, the whole mentality of being on the periphery has so deeply become a part of the psyche of many intellectuals of the non-western world, that they think that the centre of knowledge lies somewhere else, at Harvard or Cambridge or Oxford or Paris. It is not in Calcutta; it is not in Delhi, it is nowhere in the non-western world. Surprisingly, even the Japanese do not see themselves as being in the centre, even though they are "developed" by all western standards. To give

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you one example, I received a magazine from Japan that was published in English. I felt excited; I said, let me find out what the Japanese intellectuals are thinking. I opened it and read the editorial. You can imagine my shock when I found that the editor was complaining that the Japanese intellectuals did not know anything about Foucault. Imagine a country which is economically so powerful, technologically so advanced and innovative and its intellectuals complain that people there did not know about Foucault. Why should they know about Foucault? Nobody in Paris or France or England or America or Germany every complains that their philosophers do not know about K.C. Bhattacharya. Why not? Can you imagine that even when one of their not very great philosophers, but a good philosopher from Columbia University, Arthur Danto, referred to K.C. Bhattacharya as a philosopher of world class, little known outside his country, no one bothered to read K.C. Bhattacharya! K.C. Bhattacharya is, of course, only a symbol, an example. The point is that no western intellectual ever feels "embarrassed" about not "knowing" about any thinker, any intellectual of the non-western world, however great he may be; while on the other hand, people in the non-western world are always "embarrassed" if some one points out their ignorance of a second-rate thinker of the western world. This is because we have accepted the notion of a centre and the periphery in our souls, in our minds. But there are exceptions. I want you to think about the reason as to why there are exceptions. Supposing I ask each one of you what great, spiritual personality has been produced in West in the last four hundred years? Can you give me a name? You are not embarrassed about not knowing it, because you are quite confident that the norms and the standards for judging what a spiritual personality consists in are located in our own tradition. We have had not one, not two, not three, not four, but at least a dozen outstanding spiritual personalities in this coun-

try within the last one hundred and fifty years. Is it not amazing that India has creativity in certain fields where it does not look outside for recognition? This means that there is a centre within this civilization which the persons in this civilization accept. In such an area they do not look outward for recognition. But this is not the only area where we unquestioningly accept that the centre lies here and not elsewhere. Take music for example. This is the city where Amir Khan, a great vocalist, an innovator, and a master died in an accident. Did we ever go to the West to discover whether Amir Khan was a great singer or not? Does anybody go and ask for the western recognition of Kelucharan Mahapatra, the great dancer? I am sure most of you must have seen his dance, those of you who have not, should. When I first saw him, I found it an experience which I can never forget. He was dancing with a young, beautiful girl, his student, Madhavi Mudgal. Though he was above sixty with wrinkles on his face and she was a young, beautiful girl, no one could take their eyes off of him. That is art; that is genius.

The point is that in music and dance and spirituality we have our own standards. We do not need certificates from outside. We tend to use the term "classical" in the realm of music and dance but even the term "classical" has different meanings when used for different arts in the western tradition. In sculpture, for example, it usually connotes what was created in Greece, but in music and dance where does it start? It does not start from Greece. In which century were Bach or Beethoven or Mozart? As for classical ballet, when does it start? Classical western dance does not start from Greece or Rome or the Middle Ages. The term "classical" therefore does not mean the same in the context of all the realms of creativity. While in India we still have a tradition of music and dance which is continuous with the past tradition. In the fields of painting, architecture and sculpture, there seems to be no such continuity. Here we have become part of a global tradition and have

no standards with which to judge our creative productions in these domains, and hence inevitably have to import those standards by which we may judge our own work.

The situation, as we said earlier, is radically different in the fields of music and dance. As for spirituality, the creativity and continuity in the tradition seems so alive that it has even become an export item in our culture because of its demand in the West. Transcendental meditation has been made a credit course of American campuses. The Hare Krishna movement of Swami Bhakti Vedantanand has made people dance on the streets of New York, London, Paris and Moscow. It has made them shave their heads and turn vegetarians. The traditions of India's spiritual seeking go back to the earliest times of which we do not have any record and this may be one of the reasons why in the field of matters relating to spiritual seeking, we still enjoy an autonomy which is unrivalled. It has not generally been noticed that spiritual seeking in India has been independent of any dogmatic theological or metaphysical belief and, unlike other religions, God has played a very insignificant role at least in the beginnings of that tradition. In the field of music and dance, there is, perhaps, a similar story though with obvious differences. The tradition of reflection on music and dance go back to the earliest Vedic times when both *Sama* and *Gandharva* were not only objects of cultivation but also theoretical reflection. In this connection Dr Mukund Lath has drawn my attention to a story that occurs in one of the earliest *brahmana* texts and I cannot resist the temptation of repeating it to you. The story is of the battle between *Suras* and *Asuras* in which the *Suras* were always defeated and died. They went to Brahma who told them to go and sing *Sama* but still they did not win and were again defeated in battle. They went once more to Brahma and complained to him about the fact that inspite of singing *Sama* they had not won the battle; then Brahma said to them. "Look you have been singing *Rig* and not pure *Sama*, for

pure music is without words and unless you throw the words away, you cannot have pure *Sama*". This is of course all *Arthavada*. What the story conveys is that pure music is just *alap* with no words whatsoever.

As for dance, the earliest analysis is by Tandu. It is again told in the form of a beautiful story. When Bharata had completed his treatise on *Natya* he went to Shiva and showed him the text and asked if there was anything wrong with it. The Lord said everything is alright except that you have not included dance in it. But as he did not know much about dance he asked Tandu to find out about it and Tandu went to Shiva to see him perform so that he may understand what it consisted of. He saw Shiva dancing and analysed his dance into its basic elements the combination of which resulted in the different dances that Shiva performed for him. Imagine a tradition where the God himself dances and where even the words of the Vedic hymns are discarded to achieve pure music. It is due to such foundational reflection where pure music and pure dance occupied the attention of those who reflected on the arts in the tradition that perhaps we still enjoy a civilizational autonomy in these areas as we do in the tradition of spiritual seeking. But while the practice in all these fields continues to be autonomous, the intellectual reflection on them can hardly be considered to be so. Our current habits of intellectual reflection have, in fact, an intrinsically ambivalent and ambiguous character as they derive from two different traditions which have only a marginal interaction between them. In the field of philosophy, for example, most of us are rooted primarily in the western tradition: We have been trained in western philosophy right from Descartes, to Kant and Hegel to the modern period and we have also a sneaking suspicion that there may be something in Indian philosophy, though we have only a vague acquaintance with it. But we are rooted in neither. We are like amphibious creatures between two intellectual traditions of philosophizing. Even

people like King in English tradition. They are creating creatively. Sanskritists with their traditions they have been traitors for example, Anantakrishna Desika's well-known work titled *Shatbhus* he titled *Shatbhus* work written by Jayatirtha in *Nyayasudha* and thus the *Dvait* of the fourteenth century to be given an autonomy had made of that that he only I sufficiently aware varies such as whose work *Advaitatattvash* skritic tradition been creative creative original to both the traditions the last, say, since something really

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people like K.C. Bhattacharya have been writing in English though they are rooted in their tradition. They are in both traditions and thinking creatively. On the other hand, there are pure Sanskritists who still philosophize in the older traditions they have inherited and in which they have been trained. In this very city of Calcutta, for example, there was a scholar called Anantakrishna Shastri who wrote a reply to a text which was written in the fourteenth century. He wrote a book published from Calcutta entitled *Shatbhusani* which was a reply to Vedanta Desika's well-known attack on *Advaita* which he titled *Shatdusani*. He also replied to another work written in the fourteenth century by Jayatirtha in the Madhva School entitled *Nyayasudha* and called it *Advaitatattavasudha*. Thus the *Dvaita* and the *Visistadvaita* thinkers of the fourteenth century were sufficiently alive to be given an answer to the criticism that they had made of the *Advaita* position. But it is not that he only lived in the past. He was also sufficiently aware of the work of his contemporaries such as Vasudeva Sastri Abhayankar to whose work *Advaitamoda* he replied in his work *Advaitatattvashuddhi*. Thus in the pure Sanskrit tradition of philosophizing, there has been creative originality. There has also been creative originality among thinkers who belong to both the traditions who have written during the last, say, sixty years and have contributed something really worthwhile.

However, while in music, dance and spirituality, it is not only the centre which is in India, but also our mode of apprehending and judging them are completely internal. But, this is not true of our intellectual enterprises including even those in the field of philosophy where we had a very strong internal tradition going back to more than two millennia of recorded history. This has happened perhaps because as far as the intellectual traditions are concerned, most of us are more rooted in the western traditions of knowledge in these domains and think primarily in the context of the traditions as they developed

there. To give but one example from the field of philosophy, we may take the case of K.C. Bhattacharya whom I have mentioned before. We all know that he was a great thinker, at least everybody in India accepts this. But somehow our response to him even when we accept his greatness is radically different than say, to Bhimsen Joshi. Where does this difference lie? I suggest that the difference arises from the fact that in the field of philosophy my sensibility is shaped by my acquaintance with the long philosophical tradition of the West from Plato right upto modern times. I philosophically live in this world and feel myself intellectually to be a part of it. On the contrary, the vast, complex and varied tradition of western music is mostly something "external" to me, even though I may have enjoyed occasionally some great pieces of it now and then. But it has not shaped my musical sensibility in any profound way and hence when I listen to Bhimsen Joshi my response happens to be radically different from the one I make to K.C. Bhattacharya. In the field of music and dance the student carries the creativity of the master forward. Why does this not happen in the field of philosophy? It can, and it should and the only way it can be done is to immerse ourselves once again in the philosophical issues and questions that engaged the attention of thinkers in the past and the present. In fact our deep acquaintance with the intellectual traditions of India and the West should help us in "freeing" ourselves from the stereotyped movements of thought in both the traditions in order to strike out in new directions.

To return to the theme of the "Encounter between Civilizations, the question of the Centre and the Periphery", I want to make a few points before I close. Firstly, encounters between civilization have occurred in the past. They occur all the time. What a civilization takes from other civilizations depends on its own weaknesses and strengths. In what fields does it feel sure of itself? In what field does it create? It can borrow; it can assimilate; it can

modify; it can reject. The situation changes when the encounter between civilizations occurs in the context of a military imbalance. Take for instance, the whole story of the encounter between the Indian civilization and the Islamic civilization during the middle ages. Why is it, for example, that in the field of philosophy in India, there is no influence at all of Islamic philosophy? There was, at least in the north, a continuous Islamic rule of three to four hundred years and yet there is no influence of it on the philosophical thought of this country. If one reads only the Sanskrit texts of those times one would not know that there was such a thing as an Islamic political rule in this country. There was an influence in medicine, in astronomy, some in mathematics, but not in the field of philosophy.

In contrast with this, in our encounter with the West the situation just seems the opposite. There is hardly any field of knowledge which is untouched by western influence. One reason for this is that the West is cognitively dynamic in almost all fields of study. The creativity of the West in the field of the natural sciences is absolutely undeniable and it would be foolish to think that we can go back to the past traditions in these fields in our country. But it need not be so in the Social Sciences and Humanities. The Social Sciences are not so objectively scientific as is generally claimed. The Humanities, of course, are more culture-specific than even the social sciences. In these fields we can take hold of the conceptual structures of the past intellectual traditions as they evolve in the encounters with different civilizations and develop them further in the contemporary context.

We have already seen that the realms of power and wealth are irrelevant to the enterprises of a civilization, except indirectly. They can corrupt. Normally one talks only of power in this connection but wealth is as much corrupting as power, though people have hardly talked of it in this way. They both give patronage; they can foster certain things, hinder certain other

things, but these are passing phenomena in the context of the millennial enterprise of a civilization. Once our attention shifts from the centres of political and economic power where does it rest? It rests on centres of cognitive, spiritual and artistic creativity. Only in the cognitive domain can a strict claim be made for objectivity and universality. In the field of arts and spirituality, diversity is the heart of the matter. Plurality is not merely encouraged but valued. A person who repeats what the master did is no artist at all. And even in the realm of philosophy if one only repeats what the masters did or the great thinkers said, one is no philosopher. Even in the sciences where there is objectivity and universality, one must move forward and point out the imperfections, or the mistakes of earlier scientists, or move to a new field of enquiry.

Now, if we see the cognitive enterprises in this way, there can be no such thing as fixed centres for all times. Take for example, the West itself. Political power has shifted from Europe to America. Even in the field of knowledge, you can see the shift within the last fifty years. It is amazing how the centre of the cognitive enterprise even in the natural sciences has shifted from Germany and France and England to America, or to people who are located in America. So, the centres even within one's civilization do not remain static.

I would suggest therefore, that we must give up thinking in terms of the centre and the periphery. There are no centres, but there are different centres in diverse fields. In certain fields, centres continue to be in the civilization where they occurred or arose in the first place. Take for example, flower arrangement in Japan or the Japanese garden. Where is the centre for the Japanese garden? The West had copied the Japanese garden but the centre of creativity within that domain still lies in the Japan. Others merely copy what happens there. Similarly, there are certain domains in which the centre still lies within India, not outside and where others copy what we do. They are other fields

where the situation is ambiguous. There are other centres outside providing an opportunity not going to be

In conclusion, intellectual enterprises and forms should not be imposed on ourselves. We should try to develop intellectual enterprises and forms worthwhile in their own right.

I think this is the opportunity of today. We stand at the crossroads of civilizations where power are distorted. Imaginations would be if all could build something of the civilizations. Yet, at this very time, an opportunity has unfortunately

Minor Poet: I

He had a vast repertoire of Vedantic, devotional, rhythmic tradition. But that was the past. Choose one, if you can. Remember Eliot's "In the room the picture of Michela. Soon after, people talking of T.S. Eliot. In the era of the high he had an excellent. He had never lacked. Now he has no patronage. Like other peerless

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 in the cognitive
 made for objectiv-
 field of arts and
 part of the matter.
 degraded but valued.
 the master did is no
 realm of philosophy
 masters did or the
 philosopher. Even
 is objectivity and
 forward and point
 mistakes of earlier
 field of enquiry.
 tive enterprises in
 such thing as fixed
 example, the West
 lifted from Europe
 of knowledge, you
 past fifty years. It is
 the cognitive enter-
 prises has shifted
 and England to
 where are located. in
 even within one's
 static.
 e, that we must give
 the centre and the
 centres, but there are
 e fields. In certain
 e in the civilization
 se in the first place.
 arrangement in Japan
 here is the centre for
 West had copied the
 centre of creativity
 in the Japan. Others
 as there. Similarly,
 in which the centre
 outside and where
 they are other fields

where the situation is ambiguous, like philoso-
 phy. In some other fields the situation is unam-
 biguous. There is no harm in the centre being
 outside provided that we see that this centre is
 not going to be permanently outside.

In conclusion, I would say that though the
 intellectual in the West is parochial, we our-
 selves should not develop a parochial intellect.
 We should try to build a transcivilizational
 intellect or consciousness which values its own
 enterprises and takes from others what it consid-
 ers worthwhile and assimilates it and gives it a
 form which is specifically its own.

I think this is one of the greatest challenges
 today. We stand at a point in the history of
 civilizations where the centres of economy and
 power are distorting the encounter between civi-
 lizations. Imagine what a beautiful thing it
 would be if all of us learn from each other and
 build something new on the foundations of all
 the civilizations that man has created upto now.
 Yet, at this very moment when such a challeng-
 ing opportunity has arisen, the western intellect
 has unfortunately receded and begun to see

itself not only in strictly western terms but also
 as threatened from all non-western civilizations.
 Huntington is not an isolated example. There are
 hundreds of others who identify themselves
 with the West and see themselves primarily in
 "western" terms. For them "The West is the best
 and they always talk in terms of the West versus
 the rest". Even such intellectual giants as Husserl
 and Heidegger share this view and see the future
 of civilization as bound with the fortunes of
 their own. We cannot have a new world civili-
 zation with such small intellects. But is a
 transcivilizational enterprise possible? Is a world
 civilization possible? I do not know because we
 are all shaped and structured by our own civi-
 lizations. But still it is a challenge to all of us
 so that a better future may possibly be built as
 a result not of a clash of civilizations but of a
 common enterprise of all civilizations in such
 way that each preserves its own identity without
 endangering the new civilization that is still to
 emerge in the future.

■ ■

Minor Poet: India

He had a vast repository of
 Vedantic, devotional and
 rhythmic traditions of poetry.
 But that was the old times's stock.
 Choose one, if you wish.

Remember Eliot's lines,
 "In the room the women come and go
 talking of Michelangelo."
 Soon after, people came and went
 talking of T.S. Eliot.

In the era of the haves and the have-nots
 he had an excellent output.
 He had never lacked in force.

Now he has no palpable peers.
 Like other peerless people, he writes

about a sun, a moon and without
 question.

In the neighbourhood,
 outstretching poverty winks through the
 world bank loan;

And through the cry of suffering,
 the falling values,
 the illiteracy, the chaos in the campus —
 stale facts that arouse
 an unanswerable remorse.

Safe,
 win a prize in a poetry competition,
 recite stories like a woman's ruminations
 or stories as old as the Decameron.

— JAYARAM PANDA

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