

History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in

PROLEGOMENA TO
ANY FUTURE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF
CULTURES AND CIVILIZATIONS

Prolegomena to any Future Historiography of
Cultures and Civilizations

DAYA KRISHNA

THIRUPUR
Centre for Studies in Civilizations

History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in
Indian Civilization

General Editor D.P. Chattopadhyaya

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Cultures and Civilizations

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PHISPC

Centre for Studies in Civilizations

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To

PROFESSOR D.P. CHATTOPADHYAYA

*Whose gentle, but persistent, insistence
drew me into this prolonged reflection on
the Historiography of Civilizations*

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Preface

The historiography of civilizations is not in fashion these days. In fact, it is regarded as an enterprise which can never, in principle, achieve the status of a cognitive discipline worthy of being called 'scientific'. This perhaps is the effect of the positivistic view of scientific knowledge which was powerfully propounded at a certain time by philosophers of science and the so-called verifiability and falsifiability principles. And though the heady excitement leading to the banishment of everything else as metaphysical is long past, particularly after the advent of post-modernism, its effects still linger in recesses of cognitive domains whose practitioners have yet to be touched by the new winds that are blowing in the domain of the philosophy of science these days.

History seems to be such a discipline as not only is the historiography of civilizations at a discount but macro-history in general seems to be out of favour of those in the discipline who proclaim themselves to be strictly scientific. The good respectable, average historian works only in a limited field and confines himself to a time-span not covering more than twenty or thirty years. Gone are the days of a Gibbon or a Mommsen, not to speak of a Toynbee, a Spengler or a Sorokin. One wonders what the present establishment of historians would think of them had they lived today. If Bernard Cohn, the author of *An Anthropologist among Historians*, is to be believed, the historian not only dresses differently but also prides himself on the fact that he strictly confines himself to the narrow domain of space and time which alone can be handled scientifically, all the rest being only fancy and imagination. Yet as every-

body knows, the stretch of space and time which the average historian deals with is embedded in the larger context of the civilizational enterprise of which it is a part and from which it cannot be detached even for purposes of understanding except in terms of the desire to reestablish its relationship with that from which it has been abstracted only for a short while, and that too for pragmatic purposes alone. Any thinking which forgets the wider context of man's enterprises can only do injustice even to the little bit that it tries to hold in focus and understand. As Professor Saran has recently reminded us, a thinking that forgets the question of 'origins' cannot be 'original', even if it may claim to be so.

The historiography of civilizations, however, is an enterprise of a very different kind and calls for sustained reflection on the problem of what humanity has been trying to achieve since it appeared on this planet. The present work is a step in this direction and it is hoped that it will induce others to engage in the same enterprise so that the study of civilizations may again become a legitimate concern of historical understanding.

My own involvement in this prolonged reflection was the result of an invitation by Professor D.P. Chattopadhyaya to participate in his new enterprise relating to the History of Science, Technology, Philosophy and Culture of India. Normally, such a reflection is not undertaken by practicing historians as they do not consider it necessary to the practice of their craft. But as I, who was not only not a practicing historian but considered it irrelevant to the enterprise of thinking in any domain whatsoever, was almost forced into this reflection as I considered it a necessary preliminary to the task involved in the understanding of the history of Indian civilization in its diverse aspects relating to science, technology, philosophy and culture.

This reflection has resulted in a new understanding of man in terms of *śilpa*, *śāstra*, *samskāra*, *puruṣārtha*, *smṛti*,

svapna and *vāsanā*, concepts derived from the Indian tradition but applicable to all civilizations which as human enterprises are not alien to comprehension through them. One of the important concepts to emerge from this reflection is that of the empirical *a priori* which normally is supposed to be a contradiction in terms in the analytic philosophical tradition dominant in western philosophy. But, however questionable it may seem to those trained in the tradition, I think it is crucial for historical understanding if it aspires to be true to the material it seeks to comprehend. Similarly, perhaps, is the case with the idea of a transcendental or structural illusion which I have used in places but which needs an independent study and exposition to be seen as both viable and relevant for understanding all human enterprises, including the one of human living, itself. So also, is the distinction between culture and civilization elaborated in the last chapter.

A 'Prolegomena', however, is only a prolegomena and unless it is concretised in an actual study of any particular civilization, it will, at best, be only a blueprint for such studies. But, as the ideas explored in this prolonged reflection lead in multiple directions and suggest alternative ways in which the enterprise of understanding civilizations may be approached, it is hoped that any one desirous of engaging in this enterprise will find at least some of them useful for his purpose. Also, the unfinished task of the building of civilizations by man may itself be shaped to some marginal extent by a reflection on the enterprise of the building of civilizations in which he or she is engaged. Man and civilization are coeval and only if man himself ceases to be, either through his own fault or because of some external calamity, the enterprise of the building of civilizations will go on along with the attempts to understand them.

DAYA KRISHNA

Preface to the Second Edition

The present edition carries the thought about the issues explored in the First edition further. 'Thinking' about civilizations is thinking about man itself; it 'sees' man as the 'creator-builder' of civilizations through a vast collective effort lasting over millennia, carried from generation to generation over 'space' and 'time' that knows no definite limitation and has no set boundaries to them. In this process he 'creates' and 'builds' itself also. The fact that he changes and transforms himself both 'internally' and 'externally' through this vast collective effort is not generally 'seen' or 'noticed' is in part due to the 'present-centric' nature of consciousness which 'lives' and 'feels' always in that which 'is', and not in that which 'was' or 'will be'. 'Remembering' and 'desiring' are always there, but only fitfully, and that two as 'shifting shadows' cast by the 'moving' present that never stays still.

Memory, however, provides the base and desire the dynamics of this movement both at the individual and the collective level. But the two are so different, radically different, that it is difficult to imagine how the two are ever 'bridged'. It is the devising of institutions, the creative act of creatively self-conscious beings who try to provide objectively visible stability to the collectivity so that the individual may 'see' and 'feel' itself as belonging to a larger human reality which is 'his' or 'hers' as it constitutes him, and yet is 'dependent' on him in the deepest sense that it cannot be maintained without minimal support and effort on his part.

The 'naturally' built institutions of society and culture undergo a radical transformation through the development of self-consciousness and increasing intervention on its part in the way they function before its intervention. The diverse functioning that was already there in society as a half-natural product like the one found in the birds and the bees, now gets differentiated and institutionalized for the achievement of 'purposes' under the ever-watchful scrutiny of self-consciousness.

The 'formal' nature of the institutionalized structures generated by self-consciousness to give some 'objective stability' to the pursuit of diverse purposes and values in a society, however, creates the illusion that the realization of these purposes and values is now ensured for ever. But this just is not so, and cannot be so as the experiments with values, their apprehension and realization have to be engaged in ever anew. Gandhi's "Experiments with Truth" never ceased, nor did anybody else's as the history of man ever attests.

The article on *History, Historiography and the Problem of Man's Identity and Truth* explores these issues in detail and the discussion of the ideas elaborated in the earlier chapters carried further.

The last chapter brings the discussion to contemporary times when Reason has taken over and 'instrumental' rationality in the service of power and wealth rules supreme and the relations between economy and polity take precedence over everything else, and science and technology 'bent' to suit their purposes.

What should 'history-writing' do in the face of these 'disturbing' challenges is the unanswered question left to the practising historian in the hope that he will lift his eyes from the 'craft' he is engaged in and look at the emerging 'horizons' of the future in the present.

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Space, Time, Desire and the Transcendental Seeking of Man:

The Immanent A Priori in the
Understanding of Civilizations

The history of any culture or civilization is the history of man himself. As the understanding of man is difficult, both in its temporality and immediacy, the understanding of the history of what he collectively creates is also difficult to understand or articulate. The view of history will thus depend, on the one hand, on the view that we have of man, and on the other, on the idea one entertains about time. However, as man himself cannot be understood in terms of any one of the dimensions he displays, so also the history of any culture or civilization cannot be understood in terms of the primacy of only one dimension in which it is found to have developed till now.

The problem of the inter-relationships between different dimensions, facets, or aspects in which we try to understand man and his creations is fraught with even more difficulties than the understanding of one dimension or aspect. The problem is further complicated if the interrelationships are conceived in either a linear or circular manner. Or even if we conceive of the relationships in structural terms where each is related to all the others simultaneously in a manner that contributes to the building of the whole as being conceived or apprehended in different ways. Beyond all this, there is the deeper problem of ap-

prehending the lived feel of a culture or civilization and the forms in which it embodies itself. To the external observer, the primary thing is that in which the lived consciousness has embodied itself, while for the living person or persons what is perhaps most important is the way it was existentially lived through and experienced. However, the successive embodiments in which the living consciousness articulated itself provide a clue not only to the meaning or to the value or the purpose which is evidenced in them and through them but, along with this and through it, to the seeking which is expressed through the successive evidences of that in which it has embodied itself. There is, thus, a visible and invisible history to be captured and articulated at both these levels.

A culture or civilization is not a natural entity. It cannot maintain or reproduce or modify and grow as do most natural processes, including those found in living beings. They have to be continuously preserved, maintained and passed on to successive generations in order that they may survive and not die out through forgetfulness or loss of knowledge regarding what they meant and how they can be reproduced. The undeciphered languages of the past are perhaps the clearest indication of this, but beyond these lies the obvious fact that unless something is taught and passed on to the next generation, it will soon vanish as a cultural or civilizational fact. The first thing one has to look for in the history of any culture or civilization is what may be called its techniques of maintenance and transmission. The second is that this process of maintenance and transmission is symbolic in character and is concerned with the understanding and interpretation of the symbols in which it is embodied. A symbol is primarily the relation of what may be a natural object to the consciousness about what it represents. The deepest understanding of any culture or civilization relates to the role of consciousness in the maintenance, reproduction, and transmission of the symbols gen-

erated by it for conveying to other consciousnesses what it considers worthwhile and important, so that these may be transformed and tempered by an encounter with the understanding of what the symbol is supposed to represent or refer to.

A cultural fact therefore presents a double challenge to the consciousness that encounters it. The first is its recognition as a cultural fact, that is, as a product of some consciousness and hence as conveying a message different from what it would have conveyed if it were treated as purely an object of nature. A natural object is also embedded in a causal nexus and hence can always provide information about the past of which it is the result. But the past of a cultural object is radically different from the past which may also be constructed or read or inferred from any natural object when we see it as the result of a process which has produced it. The cultural object does not lie in a causal nexus alone but gets meaning either through the purpose for which it was created and/or the meaning which it was supposed to embody. However, as the cultural object is also a natural object, though every natural object is not a cultural object, it simultaneously displays these two different dimensions at the crossroads of which it exists. It has to be understood both in terms of the causal processes which it presupposes and the purpose for which it was created as well as the meaning which it embodies.

The causal, the teleological and the valuational dimensions thus intersect in it and it demands an interpretation in all these dimensions simultaneously. Furthermore, as a cultural object does not exist in isolation but only in relation to other cultural objects which display the same characteristics, it has a structural and inter-relational component which radically modifies its understanding from the one which occurs when it is seen in its own terms and in isolation from others. The causal understanding is a function of the causal information that we possess and hence

the same cultural object in its natural aspect will provide different information as our causal understanding about nature changes over a period of time. The purpose and meaning, on the other hand, are a matter of postulation and divination which are basically a projection of the way we understand our own purposes and meanings and the life that the interpreter lives and observes around him in the living present. However, while the causal knowledge is fairly objective and uniform at a given moment of time, at least among those who are supposed to be knowledgeable in the field, the apprehension of purposes and meaning is neither so objective nor uniform and varies from interpreter to interpreter in a far more radical sense than the former.

There is, in fact, yet another problem with respect to the teleological and the valuational dimensions of a cultural object and their understanding by an interpreter in terms of his own knowledge of these in his own experience. Normally one not only always gives the benefit of doubt to oneself and denies it to others, but almost always tends to interpret one's own purposes and meanings more nobly than those of others. The valuational hierarchy that is intrinsically in-built around purposes, meanings and values always creates a dilemma as to how to interpret a cultural object, for it can always be interpreted in terms of purposes that are low, mean and selfish or their opposites. The structural relationship of a cultural object to other such objects tends to remedy this tendency to some extent but perhaps the solution may lie in interpreting cultural objects simultaneously in both ways and by the alert awareness regarding one's own biases.

The chronological dimension of succession, where something precedes and something else succeeds in a sequence, gives rise to a problem of a different kind than the one discussed above. The latter may either be seen as necessarily an improvement of the earlier or as a decline and de-

generation from it, or as sometimes the one and, at other times, the other. The linear succession gives rise to one of the strangest illusions in the writing of history. It continuously distances the past from the present and makes us feel that we are moving towards something in the future. However, as the historian is not much concerned with action in the present, he sees the past as receding from himself and thus he sees all that is in the past as either nearer to him or farther from him. His is the determining location which determines the 'pastness' of the past. Conversely, he sees the whole past as *leading* to the present in which he is situated and thus he builds a sequence where each event is seen and understood not in terms of itself or even in relation to others with which it may be said to be co-present, but rather in terms of that from which it has arisen and that which it gives rise to. Generally, it is the second perspective which prevails and the past is significant and meaningful only to the extent that it is seen as giving rise to the present.

The present, however, in which the historian is situated, is not a uniform present for all the historians who may be said to be contemporaneous to one another. Divided as they are by the societies, cultures and politics in which they happen to be situated and of which they are active members and with which they identify themselves, this cannot but shape the perspective which they have on the past as it will be seen in terms of their own present rather than that of someone else who also is situated in the same time which though chronologically simultaneous, is culturally and politically different from those of others. Moreover, as the past of these presently located societies, cultures and politics is not monastic or isolated in nature, their own interrelationships with the present and the past tend to make a substantive difference to the way the past itself is perceived and constructed.

The problem of understanding other cultures has been discussed in social and cultural anthropology and many of

the difficulties in understanding the 'other' have been articulated and discussed. But the similarity of the problem with respect to the understanding of its past by a present civilization or culture has not been noticed. The historian's dilemma is perhaps the same as that of the cultural anthropologist, except that he does not observe or try to understand something that is alive and functioning before him, but rather tries to reconstruct on the basis of evidence left behind. The difference is between reconstructing a past life on the basis of available evidence and in delineating the present life as it is being lived.

The problem of linear temporality in which all history is embedded and which provides the scaffolding for all historical construction, as usually discussed, forgets that the linearity of time is itself a function of shorter and longer cyclical time-processes. We all know that a day, which is measured in twenty-four hours, is the time taken by the earth to complete its journey around the sun. Even at the socio-cultural level, we repetitively perform the same actions and have the same cycle of seasons and festivals and through these try to achieve something which is non-cyclical and linear. The cycles, of course, can be shorter or longer and, like the movement of a wheel on which the chariot or the carriage moves, results in the movement of something else in a linear fashion. At a deeper level, the distinction between linearity and sphericity may be said to lessen as the sphere becomes larger and larger in size. There is the well-known problem with respect to space as to whether it is spherical or linear in character. But, as is well known, the larger the radius of the circle, the lesser the curvature of the circumference and for short distances, it almost approximates a straight line. That is of course one reason why it is only at very large astronomical distances that the question arises as to whether space is essentially Euclidean or non-Euclidean in character. The interesting point, however, is that normally the historian does

not see the interaction between the linear and the cyclical in his view of the past, but rather sees it primarily as a case of linear succession alone.

There are of course exceptions, and Toynbee is perhaps the most famous example amongst them. But he was too obsessed by the rise and fall of civilizations and treated this as the paradigm of the cyclical element in history, while progress in religion for him was what this cyclical movement produced in terms of linear progression. Even here he was hampered by his own rootedness in Christianity and preference for it. If he had been true to his own insight, he would have seen that the cyclical movement of history, in terms of the rise and fall of civilizations, would make humanity progressively realize higher and higher religions in an unending temporal manner. There is perhaps a hidden insight in what Toynbee was trying to do, but the insight, if any, would have to be disentangled from both the paradigm of cyclicity that he chose, that is the rise and fall of civilizations and the centrality of religion which he considered as the exemplar of that which the cyclical movement of history progressively realizes.

The most fundamental cycle on which all other cycles are based is the life cycle which man shares with all living beings. However, the first task of every culture has been to transform this cycle, rooted in biology, into a cultural cycle and that is why in all cultures birth and death are not just biological phenomena but profound cultural events associated with a lot of ritual and ceremonies which transform the biological into the cultural. This is also the reason why marriage ceremonies hold such a pivotal role in all cultures. The very idea of setting up a household is itself a cultural phenomenon entailing all the duties and responsibilities of a householder towards not only the elders in the family, namely, parents and other elderly relatives, but also to other members of the kinship group and to other members of the society.

In the Indian context, the responsibility of the householder extends even to those who have formally renounced all society, such as the mendicant and also to those who have not yet entered the social realm formally, for example, the *brahmacārins* or the student community and, interestingly, both the *sanyāsī*, including the *bhikṣus* belonging to the Buddhist and the Jain traditions, and the students usually known as *brahmacārins* had a right to seek alms from the householder whose duty it was to support them by responding positively to their request for alms. '*Bhavati bhikṣām dehi*' was the identical formula used by both in this connection. It may be noted that it was the woman of the household who was asked for alms and that there was no privileged position for one's own children. In fact as all children were supposed to reside with some teacher or other and were all supposed to ask for food from the householders in the vicinity, one's own child was as demanding for the right to be given food from another household as the children of others from one's own household.

However, in the context of cultural continuity, the basic cycle is not the biological one, but something imposed on it. And thus the biological cycle itself becomes the basis of what may be called the fundamental cultural cycle on which all other cycles are based. The biological cycle itself has two distinctive aspects, which though interrelated, leads to different directions. The individual cycle from birth to death is intimately entwined with what may be called the reproductive cycle, that is, bringing a human being into existence with the cooperation of the opposite sex. The individual life cycle thus is completely intermixed with persons in the family for bringing children into being and rearing them over a long period of time. The human child is perhaps the most helpless of all living beings at the moment of birth and requires a long time for its growth and maturity. The biological cycle of the individual is therefore necessarily enmeshed not only with the biological cycle

of another human being of the opposite sex but also with the growth and development of the children for whom one is responsible. Conversely, the life cycle of the children inevitably develops in relation to that of their parents and of their siblings along with those of their own age group in the neighbourhood and the elders who surround them. Family is thus the basic unit in which the diverse biological cycles are co-present in an interactive manner giving rise to its basic character as the cultural unit on which, and through which, most other cultural cycles are imposed.

In fact, the beginning of the cultural cycle may be seen either from the beginning of the birth of the human being or even from the moment of conception or from the marriage of two individuals who jointly give birth to someone. It may be interesting to note in this context that the Indian social scientist dealing with the essential issue of socialization and acculturation starts with the central fact of marriage as the cultural pivot on which everything revolves and treats the processes leading to the birth and development of a child on the path of biological and cultural maturity as subservient and consequent to it in the cultural context.

The transformation of the biological into the cultural is done through the superimposition of a ritual that is specific to each crucial occasion in the cycle of the biological process and the invocation of the sacred and the transcendent which infuses a transnatural dimension into a natural phenomenon, thus giving it a different character from that seen by the natural, objective, behaviouristic eye. The ritual has two purposes: to superimpose a non-natural causality on a causal nexus which is natural in character and to give the whole thing a symbolic character which gives its meaning a significance which no natural process can possess if it is only seen in its own terms. Beyond these two essential functions of all rituals, there is a third one of relating the symbolic character of the transformation to the world of

the transcendent, which itself may be conceived of in diverse ways. The distinction between the 'sacred' and the 'transcendent', on the one hand, and between the 'sacred' and the 'significant', on the other, is necessary, as meaning and significance need not consist of the sacred and the transcendent alone.

One of the interesting consequences of this distinction between the meaningful and the significant dimension of ritual from that of the sacred and the transcendent might be to explore the shift in the function of ritual from the one aspect to the other in the history of cultures and civilizations. The other, and equally important characterization of cultures may be sought in the types of the sacred and the transcendent which the ritual primarily indicates in a particular culture and the shift over a period of time from one form of it to the other. The changes in the forms in which the sacred and the transcendent are conceived are as important as the changes in what is regarded as meaningful and significant. Furthermore, as rituals have always an aesthetic aspect to them, the changes in aesthetic taste and sensibility are also reflected in changes in the form of the ritual that take place in a society over a period of time.

There is another aspect to the performance of ritual which generally has not been taken into account. This is its relationship to the sense of temporality and the attitude to time which itself changes over time in the history of civilizations. In fact, if space and time are the fundamental forms of sensibility, as Kant thought, the attitudes to space and time and the forms of their sacralization would be one of the most important clues to the understanding of the changes taking place in a society over a period of time. Time, in Kant, is the form of inner sensibility and thus, indirectly, is the form of everything else. The idea of the sacralization of time, then, to a certain extent, would involve the sacralization of consciousness also.

One may, of course, not accept Kant's formulation of the problem but the question of the basic attitudes to space and time and their transformation through ritual activities, along with their relation to consciousness, remains central to all investigation of human societies, cultures and civilizations. It might be interesting to develop a typology of attitudes to space and time and characterize cultures and civilizations in their terms to see the changes occurring over a period of time by any evidence which could possibly be related to them. Everything has a spatial organization or, in other words, it is not only located in space but structured in spatial terms also. Temporality, of course, is not visible in the evidence left behind by cultures except in terms of sequences and layers in which archaeological data are found. But wherever literary records exist, they may be viewed not only in terms of their treatment of time within the texts themselves but also in terms of the immanent time-frame of the texts. Even such things as paintings may reveal an internal time sense in the way they are organized. Scrolls, for example, which have to be unrolled vertically, reveal a different time sense from those which have to be unrolled horizontally. Similarly, the different sequence of events given in different parts of the same painting reveal a time sense which is different from the one in which they are shown successively. The organization of space in a painting may also offer clues to the way space was apprehended and responded to in a culture. Architecture is perhaps the most classic example of an art form in which space and time are simultaneously blended. The latter is there in an intangible form as it is related to the movement that a person is supposed to perform to apprehend a complex architectural form. Time becomes more evident in such art forms as dance, drama and music, as also in the way the epics are written and other texts composed.

The theme is too vast and we are not interested in explaining it in depth here. What is important, however, is

to become-aware that any writing of history which ignores the changing sensibility to space and time and their relation to ritual as well as to leisure, ignores the most fundamental fact of biological, social and cultural living. The biological rhythms themselves have a cyclical temporality and a spatiality which is related to the human body as a central measure in terms of which everything else is seen. The distinctions of the right and the left, of the above and the below are distinctions in terms of the human body and so are distinctions of the large and the small. Similar are the rhythms not only of waking and sleeping, but also of attention, its span and intensity and at a still deeper level of the psychic cycle of outward movement and inward withdrawal along with rhythms of enthusiasm and alienation.

The spread of a civilization inevitably affects its perception both of space and time, particularly as it encounters other peoples, cultures and sometimes even civilizations with their own specific perceptions of space and time. Such changes, however, have hardly been the subject of attention by historians, specially as they related to changes in the way these were apprehended by the civilization. The movement of a civilization in time is, of course, paid attention to by historians, but not in relation to the way time itself is apprehended by the civilization and the changes that occur therein. The intertwining of biological temporality with cultural temporality, on the one hand, and geographical space with cultural space, on the other, provide an interaction between two different realms whose understanding requires cognitive discourses of different kinds. The expansive spread of a civilization over space itself introduces changes and modifications which are different from those that inevitably occur through the temporal dimensions of the transmission of a culture over generations. The latter would occur even if there were to be no expansion or spread of the outward movement into space, while the former would not take place without such an occurrence.

There is of course another dimension to the outward movement of a civilization, as its carriers ultimately are human beings who chose or are forced by circumstances to move outside or beyond the settled frontiers of their original habitat. These persons may usually be regarded as more enterprising, innovative and daring than those who prefer to stay in the familiar environment and the settled life in which they are located and to which they are accustomed. One may therefore expect that the outward movement of a civilization is also accompanied by changes and innovation not only because the persons who move beyond the settled frontiers are adventurous, daring, and innovative, but also because they are less inhibited and constrained by their cultural environment. There is, of course, the problem of the frontier which itself is generally nebulous and arbitrary. Beyond the frontier, there may be other cultures and civilizations.

The expansion of cultures and civilization may, however, have an adverse effect on other cultures and civilizations forcing them to recede in spatial terms to their former niche. It can take many forms and has many interesting variants which we will explore a little later. The receding of a culture into its inner shell is, however, a more interesting phenomenon as it is generally not noticed and also because it is the defensive response of a culture to maintain its identity under adverse circumstances. This normally takes place when an alien people politically conquer and rule a civilization with a long history of its own and an identity deeply rooted in the psyche of the people. The culture withdraws into its shell and tries to preserve what it can in such circumstances. The historian interested in only political events misses the significance of these responses and fails to understand what the protagonists of the culture are really trying to do under an alien political domination. The history of India is perhaps a classic example of such a situation. Being a civilization which for millennia had explored

its own *puruṣārthas* in various fields, it has had the singular situation of being under the political domination of alien rulers in different parts for long periods of time. The successive responses and strategies adopted by the carriers of the civilization in such circumstances have neither been understood nor articulated by most historians who have written the history of this long enduring culture and civilization.

Perhaps one of the most interesting phenomena which the Indian civilization has experienced in the context of political domination by an alien people is that the domination has seldom, perhaps never, covered the whole of the geographical and cultural area which is formed by the natural frontiers of this civilization. Even the British, who after 1857 are supposed to have ruled the whole of India and unified it under a single political and administrative system, left large parts of the country governed internally by the different states with which they had entered into all sorts of treaties. These states, though politically under the suzerainty of the British, were fairly autonomous in the way they carried on the internal affairs in their various states. A comparative study of the way the different states functioned, particularly with respect to the task of carrying on a large and varied cultural tradition of India both in terms of its maintenance and development has yet to be studied. The important point, however, in this context is that at no time in its long history was the political rule of an alien people extended to the whole of the subcontinent; moreover, some regions were always outside the centres of political power which have fascinated historians, particularly during the last one thousand years of India's history.

The external expansion of a culture or civilization may be stopped or cut short in different ways. It may lose its momentum or it may meet resistance to its spread from cultures other than its own. But in every case there is the problem of preserving the identity or the continuity with

which it had started from. Those who move forward look back and remember what they had departed from while those who stayed behind remember the situation very differently. In a sense it is a question of diverse forms of cultural memory which shapes cultural identity and its continuity. How does a culture preserve this memory and through what processes does it renew its identity with that which is not only long past but is also separated by vast spaces? The situation becomes even more complex when one is cut off from the peoples belonging to one's own culture by natural obstacles such as the oceans or the mountains, or by intervening spaces occupied by cultures of a different kind. All migrant populations which live in far off islands, continents or places have this problem and they respond to it in a way which is very different from those who continue to occupy the same space in which the civilization was born and flourished for a long time.

The intersection of the past and the future as well as that of the here and the beyond, provides thus a matrix within which the history of any civilization or culture may be apprehended. All past evidence therefore has to be interpreted as if it existed at a confluence of the perspectives occupied by its creators in terms of their own 'past' and 'future' and their own 'here' and 'beyond', in the ways they apprehended it.

The point is that while to the historian everything is past, it was not so to those who were living in those times and left the record on the basis of which he tries to articulate and reconstruct the so-called past. Similarly, the so-called spatial location of the creators of the evidence, though located at a particular place, was not just that as they always related it to something beyond which was an active component in their consciousness. The horizons of space and time have to be seen as necessary in-built ingredients to all evidence which a historian uses for the construction of history.

But what is this construction? What is this act which a historian performs consciously or unconsciously all the time? Are there any transcendental *a priori* forms of this construction? Or, if one does not prefer the Kantian terminology, are there any necessary conditions which cognitive construction of the past has to fulfill? Or, are there always alternative histories and the building of one an act of choice itself determined by considerations which may not be cognitive in nature?

Yet, whatever be the factors determining the choice that a historian may make, or that the writing of history itself may necessarily involve, there are some *a priori* conditions which any historical construction has to fulfill and unless we become aware of them would not see the formal constraints that the historical enterprise itself involves. The point is that even if one grants that there are, and inevitably must be, alternative historical constructions from the same data, even then a certain commonalty has to be granted in order that the alternative pictures or constructions may be regarded as 'pictures' or 'constructions'. The first and foremost condition that any historical writing has to fulfill is that it has to be a dramatic narrative which unfolds in a process of time, where there are protagonists who are in conflict and whose actions are determined by motives easily intelligible in terms of common human experience leading to consequences which they themselves cannot foretell. The closest genre to the writing of history, therefore, would be the novel or drama, except for the requirement that there has to be independent and verifiable evidence both for the characters who are part of the story or the play and of the actions which they are supposed to have performed as well as the consequences that followed from these actions or the lack of it. Besides this the historian, unlike the novelist or the dramatist, is bound by the objective locations of space and time in which the events he is describing have unfolded. He cannot choose the place

and the time, or the characters, or the evidence, or the consequences. These are given to him and he has to build a credible story out of it. It may then be asked as to what the difference is between a historical novel or a historical play and a piece of writing which is formally designated as history. The only difference which the two designations imply is that certain questions cannot be asked from one which can relevantly be asked in response to the other. Anything that is designated as a historical novel or a historical play need not be necessarily true in respect to the 'facts' it describes, while, in the case of any writing which claims to be history, these questions can always be relevantly asked, and in case they are answered in the negative, it loses its claim to be a legitimate history. The historical imagination, therefore, has a function totally different from the imagination exercised in the field of literary arts even when it claims to be historical in nature.

It might be interesting to compare the writing of history, say, to the painting of a landscape or the painting of a portrait, where imagination and truthfulness to what is observed go hand in hand and create the possibility of diverse creations about the same thing. Painting, however, has a constraint of its own, that is, the organization of pictorial space and the creation of three-dimensional effects on a two dimensional surface and also the relations between colours and the way they interact and modify each other. One is not quite sure if there are any analogues to these types of constraints in literary writing where it is the words alone that possibly perform the analogous function.

There is of course always the problem as to how historical writing achieves its effect. Is it the skill and the style of the writing that produces conviction in the reader of the historical truth, an impression that may have little to do with the truth of the evidence on which the writing claims itself to be based? Recently this issue has been raised by Clifford Geertz regarding the writings of eminent anthro-

pologists and he has argued that the authority of the great anthropologists derives not so much from the factual basis that their interpretation of the culture is based on, but rather by the style of their writing; so much so, that even when it is known that the so-called facts on the basis of which the pictures of those cultures were created are untrue, the picture continues to be authentic.

The difference between cultural anthropology and history lies in the fact that while the anthropologist claims to be an eyewitness and a participant observer in the society and culture he is objectively describing, a historian, by definition, is neither an eyewitness nor a participant observer of anything he describes as history. He reconstructs events relying on eyewitness accounts of others and documents left by those who were actively involved in the events themselves. He is, thus, a second-hand or a second-level anthropologist generally studying cultures which themselves are literate and record their own events and activities. However, both have to present a convincing and coherent picture that has to give a lived feeling of objectivity and truth, and in this the style of presentation is as important as the multifarious evidence on which it is based. Just as *The Golden Bough* of Fraser is not an ideal anthropological work in spite of the wealth of detail that it gives, similarly the material collected in the archives of the world are not history but only the raw material out of which history is created.

The great historians like Gibbon, Mommsen or Trevelyan are, therefore, as much distinguished by the style of their writing and the vision that informs their work as the anthropologists whom Geertz discusses. In fact, it is not the cold facts documented in abundance and referred to in the footnotes or in the appendices that makes the classic work of a Marx or a Hegel important as history, but the passion and the drama which pulsates through every page of what they have written. For Marx, it is the rage against

injustice and exploitation and the vision of a society and polity free from all exploitation which provides the structure for his work, just as for Hegel it is the concretization of the absolute spirit in time and its unfoldment through a dialectics of its own that gives the sustaining and living structure to the whole of his historical work. For Weber, who is not generally regarded as a historian, the impulse is the story of reason in a different sense than in Hegel. It is corporate rationality that ultimately manifests itself and the impersonal rationality of the bureaucrats and the interplay between charisma and the routinization of charisma that provides the life blood not only to his study of capitalism but also to his study of world religions.

The anthropologist, however, suffers from a limitation which the historian normally does not have. The former sees and describes a culture primarily in static terms, and this is so even when he or she seeks to articulate it in terms of the values that are exhibited therein and which distinguish it from other cultures. By the very nature of his/her preoccupation, s/he cannot depict or describe societies or cultures as involved in an exploration of values and trying to realize and embody them to the extent they are capable of. There is a snapshot picture of a culture even when it is a video snapshot or even a video film. The historian may also impose this limitation on himself, or succumb to it unconsciously if he confines himself to a period or a particular space-time region which he tries to 'understand' through the documents and the evidence left behind.

The dialectical relationship between a value apprehension and a value realization has seldom been the subject of either philosophical or historical investigation. Normally, a value when actualized or realized does not seem to be the same as when it was apprehended imaginatively or intuitively; rather it shows deficiencies which one had never imagined to be there. Justice, for example, or equality, or liberty, when actualized reveal grave deficiencies which

again demand to be remedied by a more collective effort on the part of individuals, which at least is partially determined by a more sophisticated and differentiated apprehension of the same value as compared to the way it was grasped earlier. Hegel had called the earlier apprehension as abstract and the later as concrete, but in this he was deeply mistaken, for it is the abstract which provides the ground for the criticism of the concrete from an evaluative perspective. But, though profoundly mistaken, he realized that unless one tries to actualize a value, one would not know the limitations of one's own apprehension. Hegel's mistake was that he seemed to have thought that the limitation lay in the abstractness of the value apprehended and not in the apprehending act itself. The continuous interaction between the abstract apprehension and the concrete realization provides one of the ways in which history may be said to overcome the limitation of anthropological description, as it sees societies and cultures in a changing temporal perspective and not as timeless activities reproducing themselves perennially by repeating the processes cyclically and indefinitely. In the historical perspective, it is the dissatisfaction with the present in terms of the abstract ideals that are apprehended which provides the basis for a dynamic change in the situation, giving the temporal dimension of man a meaning and significance which it would otherwise lack.

This, however, would imply that human history itself has to be seen as a struggle for the realization of values and the difficulties encountered in the realization as well as the inadequacies and limitations revealed in their apprehension by the attempt at their actualization. The votaries of the abstract apprehension generally place the blame for the deficiencies of actualization either on human nature or on some other external circumstances which had somehow distorted the actualization of the value. This is the usual plea made by all traditional upholders of the origi-

nal valuational vision embedded in a foundational text or in the sayings of a prophet. Both sacred and secular religions have had their defenders blame something else for the failures of the value realization and not the original valuational vision itself.

The history of the value apprehension and the value realization of man may thus be written in two forms. One, the successive attempts by the orthodox to continue to try to implement the logic of the original apprehension rigorously even if they find that the attempt at its realization reveals increasing deficiencies and even positive negativities which they themselves regard as such. On the other hand, the history may take the form of a delineation of successive modifications in the value apprehension in the light of the negativities revealed in the course of its actualization and implementation. As a matter of historical fact, both tendencies have been present and there has sometimes been a domination of the one or the other. There may also sometimes be an interaction between the two and the accommodation of one by the other.

Beyond this, however, is the story of a new value apprehension or the extension of an old value to new domains or the rising into dominance of a value which played only a marginal role in the culture or civilization whose history one is attempting to write. Moreover, as values are always in the plural and as they are not always harmonious or complementary in their relationship, any history that is centered on what has been called the *puruṣārtha* in the Indian tradition, would have to see their mutual relationships, both conflicting and complementary, in the history of that culture or civilization.

But, even if the drama about the valuational seeking of man is made central in the writing of history, it cannot be forgotten that for the actualization of values one needs both the knowledge of causality and the building of technology for effecting that causal knowledge. Thus technology and

value apprehension are closely related to each other, for without technology one cannot attempt to actualize any value whatsoever. Thus *śilpa* and *puruṣārtha* are the key concepts in terms of which any history ought to be written. The concept of *śilpa* or technology both presupposes some sort of a knowledge of causality and the transformation of that causal knowledge into an effective instrument for the utilization of that knowledge. Knowledge itself may be either at the level of a practiced skill where one knows that if one does this and this, then, most likely this would happen. Most of the practical skills are of this kind and whenever one wants to do anything, one depends on such skills which one has acquired over a period of time. The knowledge on which the skills are based, or which itself is displayed and embodied in the skills may however be itself organized as a systematic body of self-conscious knowledge. There may be, what is usually called, a *Śāstra* or an organized body of knowledge.

The formation of a *śāstra* out of preceding skills in certain areas results in both an advantage and disadvantage. The advantage obviously is that the knowledge is organized, codified and assumes a self-conscious form which is primarily intellectual in character and conceptual in nature. It also treats the so-called skill in terms of 'knowing' rather than 'doing'. It is thus the cognitive aspect that comes to be emphasized rather than the performative aspect in which the skill was solely embodied earlier. This, however, gives it a fixity of a very different kind from the one that was there at the level of the skill which was continuously modified not only in the process of transmission and training but also because of the challenges which the changing situation exercised or imposed on it. The *śāstric* knowledge also generated problems of its own which have little to do with the actual performance of the skill or the exercise of that knowledge. The intellectual problems generated by the *śāstric* formulation are almost al-

ways of a conceptual nature, concerned with what was really meant and whether what was being said was coherent or not and whether it was sufficiently justified in terms of the evidence and the argument given in support of it. It was always bedevilled by an increasing concern with the problems of meaning, justification and validation giving rise on one side to *śāstras* or the sciences of linguistics, grammar and hermeneutics and, on the other, to what has been called the *pramāṇaśāstra* in the Indian tradition, or the sciences concerning logic, epistemology and philosophy of science, *vyākaraṇa*, *mīmāṃsā* and *nyāya* which emerged as independent disciplines becoming the foundation for the study of all *śāstras* as they deal with problems of meaning, interpretation and validation. The mind thus gets involved in problems of a different sort than those with which the exercise of a skill is concerned. The problem of coherence or validation or interpretation or meaning does not enter the realm of skills at all. The skills are either successful or unsuccessful, in so far as they do or do not achieve their purpose. Skills, of course, are sometimes subservient to a larger purpose, as in the arts where what one tries to achieve is something that transcends the skill. Normally this is conveyed by the term 'beautiful' or 'significant' or 'meaningful' which try to describe this extra element which supervenes on the exercise of the skill and which is supposed to be defeated or even negated by the exercise of the skill for its own sake. Sometimes the exercise of a skill for the sheer joy of it is its own justification. But even playfulness has to have an aesthetic element in it in order to be satisfying and enjoyable at least to a discriminating beholder or spectator. One may enjoy one's playfulness oneself, but whether others do also is a different matter. One may, of course, arouse wonder or amazement by the exercise of the skill, but whether they are also aesthetic in character is difficult to say. It will be interesting to ask as to what the basic

difference in these emotions is when they form part of a feeling of sublimity and awe in respect to a great work of art.

There is perhaps a radical distinction between those arts where skill is always expected to be subservient to an end beyond itself and where it is not. In many forms of crafts and gymnastics skill seems to be the only thing whose display is the end of such activity. In fact, even in the sphere of *śāstric* learning there is an exercise of intellectual skills of argumentation which many a time are exercised for their own sake. Argument for the sake of argument is not supposed to be a bad thing in the field of *śāstric* learning, but even there one always prefers it to be in the service of truth or enlightenment.

The basic point is that when skills in any field are grounded in the self-conscious formulation of a systematic body of knowledge known as *śāstra* or *śāstric*, then it gives rise to a relatively autonomous set of problems which begin to have a parallel life of their own. Thus, the development of *śāstras* and the development of *śilpa* in a particular tradition become independent of each other, and though the two sometimes interact and influence each other, this happens only sporadically and accidentally. The developments in grammar and linguistics do not ensure a skill in using language, nor does, for that matter, the development which in India has been called the *Kāvya Śāstra* or the science of poetics, help in creating great works of poetry or literature.

The relations between *śilpa* and *śāstra*, on the one hand, and of both of these to the *puruṣārthas*, on the other, should be a matter of investigation. It is equally necessary that one does not see it as a one-way movement where the *puruṣārthas* determine the *śilpa* and the *śilpa* gives rise to *śāstras*, as the *śāstras* may themselves give rise to new *puruṣārthas*, or at least bring a radical transformation in our understanding of the *puruṣārtha* by making that possible whose very possi-

bility could not have been conceived of before for the lack of adequate conceptualization or technology to achieve it. Similarly, *śāstric* formulations not only bring the whole differentiated world of intellect and reason into existence but also provide a new *puruṣārtha* of intellectual or rational knowledge for man which is absent if they are not developed or only marginally developed in a culture. The development of new *puruṣārthas* in the history of a culture or civilization would perhaps be one of the more important ways of looking at man's history as it will emphasize ways of making his life significant in the pursuit of new ends of a different kind. The drama of human history is that of man's pursuit of diverse ends which he considers worth pursuing and which normally have been provided by the culture he has been born in. Thus, the emergence of any new *puruṣārtha* on the horizon of human consciousness should be seen as a breakthrough in human history, providing the possibility of a new kind of pursuit not available earlier. The difference between diverse civilizations may be viewed in terms of diversities in the dominant *puruṣārthas* which they pursued over a long period of time and which they explored in depth and articulated and embodied in the products they left behind. A mapping of the *puruṣārthas* and their self-conscious formulation in a particular civilization is thus a prime desideratum for attempting any history of that civilization or culture. Yet, as one's own language seems to be the most natural for a human being born in the group in which it is naturally spoken, so also do the *puruṣārthas* as articulated in one's culture. It is only when one encounters a different formulation that one begins to apprehend the contingency and the parochiality of what one had unconsciously accepted as the only possible formulation of the ends worth pursuing and the means for their pursuit.

The triad of *śilpa*, *śāstra* and *puruṣārtha*, however, has to be supplemented by another dimension without which

neither human beings nor their history may be understood, as human history is only the history of man. One has to ask how human history has differed from all non-human history, that is, the history of living beings, and that of inanimate matter. The idea of evolution is not confined to human history alone. In fact, the idea was first applied in the field of geology and later in the field of biology in the context of the origin of species. Only later on it was transferred to the humanistic disciplines. But all living phenomena at non-human levels do not, and perhaps in principle cannot, display any distinction between the natural and the non-natural, and between the secular and the sacred. In contrast, all human phenomena try to distinguish themselves from the world of nature by imposing another aspect on it which they call cultural, and within the culture itself they distinguish between the sacred and the non-sacred. It should be understood that the non-sacred aspects of culture are not regarded by it as natural and that any of them can be sacralized by a prescribed ritual or even by a change in attitude towards it. The world of nature itself can be seen as sacred by an attitudinal change towards it. In fact, the distinction between the natural, the cultural and the sacred is ultimately rooted in the attitude that views an object or an event in these perspectives. However, the process of transforming something natural or something that is pre-given as an object to man into something cultural is very much akin to that which transforms the cultural into the sacred. In both cases a ritual element is involved along with a transformation of dominant meaning and the psychic attitude towards it. The world of nature, when it is seen and treated as primarily natural, is governed by mere causality or seen as pure happenings without any ulterior purpose or end in view. The world of non-human living beings, though embedded in inanimate nature, displays characteristics which cannot but be described in terms of quasi-purposes about which man can never be sure

whether there is any genuine purposive activities involved in it or whether it only appears to be so. In the case of human beings, however, the category of purpose no longer remains quasi and seems to describe the distinguishing character of human action which *uses* the causal relationships which are found in nature, both at the level of inanimate matter and that of living beings, for his own distinctive goals of which he is self-consciously aware and which he can easily tell anyone if asked about them.

The teleological transformation of the causal, however, is not the only thing that occurs at the human level. The purpose itself is transformed into the meaningful and the significant dimensions which are totally absent at the level of non-human living reality. There is not even quasi-meaningfulness or quasi-significance displayed by non-human living beings in their behaviour, even though it seems at least quasi-purposive in character. This transformation of the purposive beyond the biological into the meaningful and the significant, which operates at all levels of human consciousness, is achieved by the process of symbolization and ritualization whose collective name in the Indian tradition is *samskāra*. The term *samskāra* of course has other meanings also, but its crucial meaning, particularly when it is used in its verb forms, refers to the procedures by which the natural is transformed into the cultural.

The process starts from the biological moment of conception to the whole life cycle which ends in the death of the individual. At each crucial moment what is biological or natural is not treated as just that but is imbued with significance by taking up the event into a whole set of ceremonies which give it a meaning beyond the biological fact and which is shared by all other living beings also. Birth is not merely birth and death is not merely death, though seen as natural events they cannot be considered as anything else. The whole *Samskāra Kāṇḍa* of the *Dharmakoṣa* which runs into six volumes is primarily concerned with

the ceremonies performed at different stages and periods of one's life. It may normally be thought that the ritualistic cycle of the transformation of the natural into the cultural will start at the point of birth or at the point of the conception of the human being, but the *Dharmakośa* chooses to start not at the moment of birth or conception but rather with marriage as it is the ritualistic consecration of marriage that provides the occasion and the legitimization of the conception or the bringing into being of the human person who is not conceived of as merely a biological entity but something radically different from it. The whole notion of marriage lies thus at the centre of the transformation of the natural into the cultural through a ritual that makes something biological into a cultural phenomenon.

We have, therefore, to add *saṃskāra* to the other three dimensions in which we have suggested that human history ought to be viewed. *Śilpa*, *śāstra*, *saṃskāra* and *puruṣārtha* thus form the four dimensions through which all human history has to be understood and for every human activity we have to ask questions about all these aspects if it is to be fully comprehended.

But even if we take all these into account and forget the central fact of the living, self-conscious continuity between the past, the present and the future, there can be little doubt that no understanding of history will be possible without the continuity involved in the notion of the preservation of the memory of the past in the present and its prolongation and perpetuation into the indefinite future. The history of a culture, therefore, has to be seen in terms of what it continuously tries to preserve and pass to successive generations, and in terms of which it prides itself or tries to build a positive image of itself. This is what a culture recounts in numerous ways just as a human individual tells and retells one's own achievements to give one's life a sense of worthwhileness and meaningfulness. As the personal

memory continually edits what really happened in the past and forgets and suppresses what it considers irrelevant or that of which it is ashamed, so does a culture edit and repress the memories of its own past. The history of a culture, therefore, has to take into account not only that which is preserved and transmitted and of which one sings in myriad forms, but also that which has been left behind or ignored or suppressed from explicit consciousness. However, as it is well known, that which is suppressed does not cease to be active or influence the manifest content of consciousness, whether it be at the level of knowledge, feelings or actions. And that which is forgotten can always be recalled and remembered if the present circumstances require it. There are, of course, circumstances when one may suffer from amnesia or where things are beyond recall for other reasons.

The idea of the 'return of the repressed' or of 'civilizational amnesia', or of the repression resulting in diverse neurotic and psychotic formations deserves to be explored in the context of civilizations and cultures. In fact, all the defence mechanisms that psychoanalysis has elaborated in the case of the individual psyche, and the relations between the ego and the superego, on the one hand, and between the ego and the id, on the other, can be meaningfully extended to the study of the history of civilizations and cultures. Civilizations may in fact be characterized in terms of the dominant defence mechanisms that they use to suppress the memory of an inconvenient past and the guilty conscience they suffer from because of having done what a new value apprehension tells them that they ought not to have done in the past. The retroactive negative judgement and the guilt following from it have hardly been investigated either by psychoanalysts or the historians of cultures and civilizations. But it is one of the most important phenomenon determining one's relationship to the past both at the individual and the collective level. The whole task of colo-

nialism, for example, or of the 'immorality' of conquest and war, or of the enslavement of peoples other than one's own which are such a dominant feature of contemporary consciousness have radically transformed the perception of their past on the part of many of the contemporary cultures and civilizations. It was not long ago when the Ministries of Defence were called Ministries of War and when to be imperial was considered a matter of pride by a nation. Not only this, it was considered the duty of a king to enlarge his territories and conquer other people. The same is the case with the new values of egalitarianism which demand that all be treated equally irrespective of their race, caste, gender or profession. This has never obtained in human history, but, retroactively, all living civilizations today feel embarrassed, if not positively guilty, about what they did in these respects in the past.

The problem of a new value apprehension retrospectively changing one's judgement about what happened in the past and making one feel happy or guilty about it creates a problematic for historical consciousness which has seldom engaged the attention of the past or present practicing historians. If, for example, a new value apprehension in the present can transform our apprehension of the past, then surely the new value apprehensions that occurred in the past would have transformed their own apprehension of what then was the past to them. The history of a culture and civilization may itself therefore be seen as consisting of successive acts of new value apprehensions which have transformed the apprehensions of the past and the way it has been preserved and transmitted to successive generations in the light of this transformed evaluation of itself.

Seen in this perspective, the history of civilizations gets a new twist which is normally absent from the history of human individuals. Normally, the theory of repression postulates an event which occurred in the past because of a feeling of guilt regarding what one had done or thought

or felt. It is never supposed to be a retroactive action of the present consciousness of the past which itself is now seen in a different way because of something that has occurred in the present and which influences and transforms our judgement of the past. The need for the repression of the past occurs because of the changed judgement about it in the present and not because it was judged to be such when it had occurred in the past. This, however, raises a radical problem of a different kind, i.e., if, retroactively, a change in the present judgement of the past can lead to its suppression from the historical consciousness then can a future change in the judgement about it release it from its repression or obliterate the effects of that regression?

Once the past is evaluated in terms of the value apprehensions of the present, the history of a civilization itself begins to demand to be seen in terms of the successive value apprehensions that it has had in its historical career and the way its own '*smṛti*' or memory has been transformed by these emerging value apprehensions. A new value apprehension, however, does not merely affect the apprehension of the past but also demands the actualization of that value in the concrete circumstances of the society in which such a value apprehension has occurred. Thus the history of a civilization would be a history of its more or less successful attempts at actualizing the value so apprehended. However, the attempt at the concretization of the value which has been apprehended not only spreads from one domain to another and thus permeates the whole culture, but also gets transformed in the process and thus changes, at least to some extent, the nature of the value apprehended earlier. It may be presumed therefore that a value apprehension is changed to some extent by the attempt at its actualization and so the history of a civilization may be seen in terms of the successive changes in its value apprehension by the attempts at their actualization. However, as this change itself will result in a different articulation of the

value concerned and in its own turn demand an actualization, the cycle will be repeated once more. The history would therefore consist of an articulation of the modification of the transformation in the value apprehended over a period of historical time through its successive articulations at both the level of concept and image, along with its interactive relationship with the history of events and institutions which will be more concretely reflected in the legal, social and political texts and events of the civilization. The philosophical and the religious texts of a culture articulate the value apprehension at a conceptual level, while works of art and literature embody it more at the level of image and feeling. The two together would thus provide a clue to the changes that have taken place in the value apprehension over a period of time. The texts dealing with law, politics and society and the chronicle of actual events and life histories as recorded would provide the concrete commentary on those very values by disclosing how they were actually embodied in the life of the people. The two, however, should be seen not as being isolated from each other but rather as interacting with one another at various levels, just as they do in the life of an individual. The demand for a close-knit correspondence, however, may be mistaken as in these matters there can only be a tendency towards some sort of approximation and given the nature of life as it is lived, even large discrepancies may be expected to obtain. There would however be attempts to lessen the discrepancies as without some such attempt the very notion of the unity of a civilization would have to be given up at its foundations.

While the words remain the same their meaning changes radically, giving the illusion of continuity even when there is little or no continuity whatsoever. On the other hand, the extension may merely develop what was already implicit in the concept and not attended to or focused upon earlier. At a deeper level the key concept or cluster of concepts

which were supposed to embody the value apprehension earlier may be seen as only particular specificities which neither exhausted the meaning of the value concerned nor articulated it adequately. The dramatic story of civilization and culture thus may be seen in terms of the successive transformations in the apprehension of the same value over a period of time or of a number of values mutually influencing each other's apprehension as evidenced and displayed in the conceptual, artistic, legal, social and political history of a civilization.

A value, however, is only a possibility whose actualization is limited by the biological framework of human living and the technological knowledge available to man at a particular moment of history. There is thus a double constraint on the actualization of the value apprehended, one deriving from the constant given structure of what man is as a biological creature, the other being a variable depending on the nature of knowledge and skills available at a particular time. Both knowledge and skill are extremely varied and while some of the knowledge results in the creation of technology which enables its use in the service of the actualization of a value, others do not do so directly, except in the sense that the pursuit of those kinds of knowledge and their refinement and development over a period of time by successive generations itself becomes a value. Skills, on the other hand, are traditionally learnt and passed on to others from those who have them, being modified in the process of transmission and being changed due to changing circumstances. The possibility inherent in the situation is thus the product of three different factors, two of which are relatively more constant over a period of time while the third varies over time. Man's biological situation is a given constant in which even the possibility of any change could not be conceived of till very recent times and even in the perspectives opened by the new devices of genetic engineering, artificial insemination, test tube babies,

foetus development outside the womb, voluntary sex-change, brain and memory transplantation along with transplantation of other organs in the body, it is not quite clear how these would affect the basic biological structure in which human beings have lived until now. It is difficult to imagine how the cycle from birth to death would be affected in any radical sense by all these changes or the structure of human consciousness which is confined to the present and functions with memory and hope or fear in relation to the past and the future. Nor is it clear how human relations which are the major cause of joy and sorrow in the world and in the matrix in which one lives, could possibly be affected by any of these changes, some of which have already taken place and others which are on the cards and are bound to be widely prevalent within the next few decades.

The value apprehension also seems equally constant over a long period of time though there can be little doubt that new values emerge in human consciousness and, as we have already pointed out, older values get new dimensions and meanings added to them both in the light of new values apprehended and the successive attempts at their own realization. The values of equality, justice and freedom, for example, have undergone a radical transformation in their content in recent times, just as the ideal of international relations between states, societies and peoples has achieved a mutation which never existed before.

But even so, though the value apprehension does not seem to be as constant as the biological nature of man, it is still far more constant than the knowledge and skills he has which seem to inevitably change by their very process of transmission over generations. These continuous changes thus pose a challenge to enlarge the realm of possibility with respect to the actualization of values in the life of the human individual and the society in which those values have been institutionalized.

As against the biological structure of man and the values that he apprehends, the dimension of knowledge and skills has a cumulative character and shows a continuous change by the very logic of the way it is acquired and transmitted. There are of course occasional lapses, particularly in times when either because of sudden climatological changes or large-scale epidemics which decimate a substantial portion of the population, or of wars and political upheavals, substantive discontinuities occur in their preservation and transmission. And though these have not been infrequent in history, there have been numerous instances to substantiate that what was lost had been recovered later at least to a large extent and built upon in order to carry the knowledge further.

The case of skills is a little different from that of knowledge as they are far more intimately related to the specificities and exigencies of the situation in which they are exercised. Their very exercise leads to relative modification so that they may become better suited to the context in which they are being applied and towards a more efficient performance of what they are supposed to achieve. And, as the needs of men and the circumstances in which they are sought to be fulfilled do not change very substantially over large periods of time, the skills which are required for living at various levels do not get lost but rather show a significant improvement with the passage of time. However, if new needs come into being replacing the old or the physical and the social circumstances alter radically, old skills may become obsolescent and new ones take over. But, even in such a situation, what generally happens is that there is not a complete loss of old skills; but rather their relative enfeeblement and attenuation in a culture where fewer people know how to exercise them or find occasions and opportunities for their actual exercise. In fact, normally if a demand for the exercise of such skills arises due to any reason, there generally are found persons who can perform them.

The knowledge and the skill dimension of cultures thus provides that dynamic motive power which produces a continuous change in the history of civilizations, changing the ways in which the basic biological needs are satisfied and the way values apprehended by a culture are actualized. Knowledge and technology, however, play not just an instrumental role where the goals for them are set by the values apprehended along with the biological structure of living. On the contrary, they themselves bring new possibilities into the horizon of human consciousness and give not only a concrete content to the values apprehended but also make men aware of the valuational possibilities implicitly inherent in the earlier value apprehension. The role of knowledge in this respect is far more positive and integral as it provides both a critical and a creative dimension to man in his apprehension of causal knowledge, on the one hand and of the values that he apprehends, on the other. The critical self-consciousness operates not only with respect to the values and purposes that are apprehended and thought worth realizing, but knowledge itself has an immanent ideal of its own and a self-conscious reflection on it leads to the question of the relationship between the ideal immanent in knowledge to the other ideals that man also pursues.

Besides knowledge and skills, the one other factor which lies at the roots of change in any civilization is what is generally known as imagination. It may be seen in its dual aspects, the one being dissatisfaction with the present as it obtains and the second consisting of an image of the desirable which one would like to occur in its place. The dissatisfaction and the idea of the desirable, though closely related, are also relatively independent of each other as even when one is not dissatisfied one might imagine other desirable possibilities which one might like to actualize. On the other hand, even while being dissatisfied with the situation in the present, the direction of its removal may be

different with different persons or even with the same person at different times. In fact, imagination is continuously present in all activities of man, but as it plays a subsidiary role, it is not explicitly evident all the time. In the cognitive enterprises, it occurs at the level of the formulation of hypotheses and these days even more explicitly in the building of models and ideal types for the understanding of phenomena. At the level of feelings, it occurs both at the level of desire and at the level of dreams, including day-dreaming. Day-dreaming is a constant feature of human life, yet it is almost totally ignored as a significant activity of the human personality. In the context of action, it functions in terms of projects and purposes which one attempts to actualize. However beyond all these, the realm of imagination *par excellence*, where it comes into its own and is there in the forefront for everyone to see, is in the world of art and literature wherein man explicitly emerges as a creative being and wishes to be recognised as such. The relation of art and literature to the world of feelings and emotions is well known, but its relation both to knowledge and action, has usually been neglected or underplayed. Works of art and literature provide models both for understanding human life as it is lived by people and provides ideals to be emulated and translated into life. The point is that works of art and literature perform simultaneously a double function; they provide a cognitive understanding of life as it is existentially lived and provide norms in terms of which the life of feeling and behaviour of individuals may be ordered and organized. A great work of visual art, whether in the field of architecture or painting, teaches one to look in a new way while new forms of music and dance teach one to be sensitive to new rhythms and kinds of dynamic, spatial and temporal organizations. Literary creations continuously provide new models for human relationship and shades and nuances of feelings and emotions that one may possibly feel, live through and enjoy. They also present types

of behavioural worlds which one may create in one's own life along with an awareness of what language can do to create moods and shades of feeling which one could not have imagined on one's own. There is, in fact, an interesting relationship between music and certain forms of literary creations, particularly poetry. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the two which perhaps has not been sufficiently noticed. The world of feelings, emotions and moods created by literature is so much entwined with the meanings of words that the world so created has a transparent intelligibility or an intelligible transparency which the dumb world created by music totally lacks. Moreover, the world created by music seems to be a succession of feelings, moods and emotions which, though satisfying in themselves, may not and generally do not, create a coherent world of feelings. A literary creation, on the other hand, normally produces a far more coherent world than the world created by a particular musical creation. One reason for this perhaps may lie in the necessary linkage of a literary creation with the world of meanings which, if it were to be incoherent, would fail in its purpose altogether.

The relation of cultures and civilizations to imagination has been seldom explored. Imagination, however, does not only give rise to art, but also is the source of desires and dreams in which men dwell and which they carry in the innermost recesses of their heart. But if this is so, then no adequate history of any culture or civilization is possible unless one takes the world of desires and dreams seriously and sees it to be as much an integral part of man as the other dimensions talked about earlier. To understand a culture or civilization, therefore, we have to ask, besides the other questions relating to what we have called *śilpa*, *śāstra*, *saṃskāra*, *puruṣārtha* and *smṛti*, about desires and dreams which underlie half-hidden in the creations of a culture. It may be noted in this connection that desires and dreams are different from the realm of ideals, values

and purposes which we have called *puruṣārtha* and which man also seeks. This would become clearer if we see the relation of desire to dreams, both day-dreams and dreams that occur in the night when one is half asleep. This world normally does not express itself in ordinary day-to-day behaviour and hence has generally not been the subject of historical investigation. It is expressed more through works of art and literature and through those special festivals, where man takes a holiday from his day-to-day-life and enacts a world closer to his desires and dreams. However, even the world of art, literature and Dionysian festivals expresses this world in a modified form, for even in these realms, constraints of another sort continue to operate. There is the demand for aesthetic beauty and artistic form as well as for social paradigms of celebrating the festival. One would thus have to intuit the realm of desires and dreams which is displayed in them through the successive changes that occur in these domains over a long period of time. Normally, it is assumed that the realm of desire and dream, rooted as it is in the unconscious, is as unchanging as the unconscious itself, but it would not be correct to assume this as both the notions of the unconscious, whether personal or social, are themselves a construct inferred from such phenomena as dreams, memories, mental illnesses, slips of pen and tongue, jokes, and so on and hence cannot be given as a ground for their unchanging character. Their rate of change may of course be slower but there seems no *a priori* reason for assuming that they do not change at all. At least, it should be treated as an empirical matter subject to investigation and not assumed as has been done until now.

Imagination, however, plays an active role in almost all human activities, including those that relate to desiring and dreaming. Its role in cognition is as important as in the realm of feeling and action. It apprehends a possibility and may or may not try to change it into an actuality or em-

body it in a form that may be apprehended objectively in an inter-subjective or inter-personal manner. In the realm of desire and dream, imagination is satisfied by the activity of imagining itself and is not interested in either embodying itself in an objective medium or in transforming the actual according to it. Being perhaps the most subjective of all activities, it would be interesting to find the differences in it across cultures and civilizations and the changes in it, if any, over a period of time. The idea of a collective or racial unconscious resulting in similarities of myths and symbols across cultures and civilizations has fascinated a number of thinkers, but it is not quite clear if there really are myths or symbols belonging to mankind as such, or to which men in all cultures and civilizations respond uniformly. It seems to be true that most people's responses are limited to the myth and symbols they have inherited in their culture. There is always a possibility of widening the horizon to include those of other cultures and civilizations, but such a possibility remains secondary to one's own psyche, except perhaps in very special circumstances.

The relations between desire, dream and imagination are then far more complex than may be thought of at first sight. Their relationship to the more objective and easily identifiable pursuits of man in the realm of cognition are not so easily discernible, but their silent shaping presence can always be visible underneath the surface of things to a discerning eye if it is sensitive to them. The vocabulary for these in a culture or civilization will themselves be an interesting indication of the fact, indicating how it has perceived this dimension of the human situation and its historicity. The Indian tradition seems to have no clear-cut term to indicate what is usually conveyed by the terms 'desire' and 'dream' in the English language, at least in the sense in which we have been using them in the discussion. The closest terms are *vāsanā*, *bhāvanā*, *swapna* and *kāma* or *kāmanā*, which themselves have resonances of a different

order. There is the notion of an *anādi vāsanā* or beginningless desire rooted in *avidyā* or primal ignorance, supposed to be the cause of the creation with its temporality and plurality. It may be overcome only by overcoming desire and the dream world or worlds it creates. The idea of a world coming into being through the force of desire, as the ordinary dream-world manifestly does, is interesting in itself, particularly as it makes one ask what the desire is which is the root of a particular world and which is sustained by it. It also draws attention to the fact that the world will collapse if the desire which creates it ceases to operate, or if another desire takes its place. The difference between the ordinary dream-world and the other worlds in which man also lives is generally supposed to be in the fact that those other worlds have an inter-personal or inter-subjective character shared by many persons. The analogy with the dream-world created by a purely personal desire would, or should, lead us to postulate a common world of desire among persons who share that world and who have thus jointly created it. It is the commonality of desire, therefore, that, in this perspective, is the root of the commonality of the world; if one, for some reason or the other, gives up that desire or withdraws from it, then one ceases to be a member of that world or, in other words, the world ceases to be the world for that person. This may seem a little too complicated but it only reflects the simple fact that when one ceases to be interested in a particular domain it ceases to exist for him. The whole world of knowledge and scholarship, for example, does not literally exist for anyone who is not interested in it. Nor, for that matter, does the world of the stock market or high finance or politics or the world of the military exist for anyone who is not in it. There is of course a common world which all these worlds presupposes and which most men share at least to some extent, but then that is not the world in which one lives *in a meaningful sense*. The world which has significance and meaning for one is