

*evolve: Pawan, I would like to start the first question with you, because I know that you are someone who thought a lot about the impact of western dominance and particular English dominance in India. For you, as a thinker and educator in India, what is your perspective on globalization and the Westernization of the southern hemisphere, particular India?*

Pawan Gupta: In India I feel that there is a kind of hangover from colonization and now globalization. They are not very different, I see them as a continuum. What colonization did, it is still continuing in a different form. Psychologically speaking the impact it has on our people, especially the ones who consider themselves to be educated, is that they feel a little self-conscious. They feel somewhere deep within them that they still have to be someone else, they still have to be somehow more western, to be up to the mark. That consciousness by and large exists within the educated even now after 70 years of independence. Also because of this onslaught of globalization in which the markets have been floated by western influence, also in the media or through the internet, I see that people are extremely self-conscious that their culture is not good enough and these wounds are quite deep. I don't know how they will be healed. It is a matter of confidence, but how this confidence can be regained – I have very little answer to this.

Terry Patten: I am touched by what you are saying, because it's not a merely theoretical or historical summary of observations. It's a report about the actual real people who somehow are displaced from their own authority. And that is new data for me. I haven't heard someone say this in this way about a whole culture. In integral philosophy there is a discussion of structures of mind, traditional, modern and post-modern structures of mind. One of the things that I have observed in this context is, that colonialism tends to be conflated with modernism, because colonialism started in the beginnings of modern rational thought, so the enlightenment, the scientific revolution and the industrial revolution were imported. The history of colonialism was conflated with the fact that modernism first arose in Europe and so the European countries that conquered the world brought with them modernist ideas. But some modernist ideas are very beautiful and true, like the idea of equality and universal human rights. So I'm afraid that there would be a backlash against the healthy dimensions of modernity, because they have been experienced as the religion of the conquerors or oppressors being forced upon people.

But what you are describing here is different. It has to do with cultural trauma and collective shadow. There is collective trauma on the colonized people. And there is a collective shadow that is carried by the colonizing cultures. We all are imprinted by all the damage that was done to those who were exploited by our forefathers – a fact for which we have no deep understanding. We don't have a deep understanding about the price that was paid by people in the colonized world. But for us to have a real meeting, it has to be a meeting of the human experience on the other side of this history. We can't create justice, we can't undo the injustices in the past, but we can be together humanly, caring about the humanity of one another, understanding the experience of one another and intending another kind of brother- and sisterhood on the other side of our traumatic past.

PG: Absolutely. I think a lot of empathy is required. The educated classes in India have a certain frame through which they even see their own people. The Western categories are dominating the Indian intelligentsia. So, the way you perceive the world, your own people and your own problems are perceived through the categories of the western social sciences.

I worked for forty years in Indian villages and I slowly started to understand, that the way the ordinary Indian uneducated person sees things is very different. His categories are very different from the educated Indian or a western person. For instance the word Dharma. This concept doesn't exist in the western mind. But the ordinary uneducated Indian person is doing a lot of actions throughout the day, because he believes that this is his or her Dharma. This is the way things should be done. He doesn't think of monetary or economic benefit, he doesn't think how the others will look at him, because he thinks this is the right thing to do. When another person is observing this person acting, he will see it related to the modern concept of equality, equity and justice, but is unable to perceive the real motive. So, basically the categories through which an ordinary Indian is acting, have become completely alien to the categories of educated Indians. There is a complete divide between the two and that becomes a huge issue, because these so-called uneducated Indians are unable to articulate their issues. They are also very shy, they don't know English, they get intimidated by this other class. So there is hardly any communication between these people and us, the educated.

Our educated people are no longer wanting to speak their own languages, the dialects are dying very fast in this country. I think in a year, around 20 dialects are dying, disappearing, because the young people no longer want to speak them. And along with this a lot of local knowledge is disappearing – knowledge about weather conditions, farming practices, food, health –, because this knowledge is embedded in phrases and the idioms, folk stories and folk tales of that language or dialect. When the dialect goes away, the language goes away and all this traditional knowledge also disappears. That is happening at a very very rapid rate and I don't see a consciousness for the importance of this issue. Because we are completely influenced by this idea of development, of trying to catch up, like if we are still backward and have to catch up with China and with the West. In this light all the issues I talked about seem very insignificant, but if we want to restore the health of our culture, these issues of language, of categories, of local knowledge have to be seen with a lot of sensitivity. Then perhaps a bridge can be made, between the modern and folk, the modern and the traditional people.

*e. Pawan, you seem to say that by losing the language and the categories Indian culture also loses its own soul in a way. Also a certain wisdom through the centuries in India that is held in traditional thinking and traditional language, which is not even seen by people who mainly think in a thinking-system that comes from Europe or the US. As I heard you, you think a possible healing process between these modern categories and the wisdom of the Indian culture implies first to even recognize that something is dying here. May I pass it on to Terry and just hear from your perspective. As you say Terry, from an integral point of view, there is also something that we call the dignity of modernity, the values of equality, diversity of opinion, the democratic process. But maybe we see only our western way of modernity. From this background, how would you respond to Pawans concerns?*

TP: I think that our legacies of injustice and traumas are so deep that we can never untie the whole tangle of karmas and traumas. It's too much to deal with, but I do think that if we have grown to a point where we can have real care, respect and esteem for one another, there is a ground for a different kind of meeting. We can't remedy the injustices of the past fully, because there are just so many layers and the struggles over reaching a common understanding are only going to create additional divisions.

But I do believe that we need rational discourse, we need some of the tools that were given to us by modernity. The dignity by modernity is to have a basis for dialoguing in a common language. Modern rational discourses can enable us to bridge our different cultural experiences and hear one another and account for the differences of our experience. So, I have

tremendous ambivalence in that I realize it is modern science and technology that has brought us to the brink of ecological catastrophe, but on the other hand the dignity of modernity, the value of development, of Post-modernity and an integral perspective are essential to the way I see the world. So, I think we have to have a very capacious consciousness that has room for multiple different levels of reality and compassion for our meeting of one another in the midst of it.

PG: I find that the whole idea of modern science has given many educated people a deep sense of arrogance. The person doesn't have to be a scientist, I'm speaking of someone who is educated and has got this great faith, almost blind faith in science. And anything which is not called scientific he doesn't perceive as real, as not good enough, as superstitious, as bad. However humble the person may be, when he goes and has a conversation with a common person in India, he is hardly able to talk, because he finds that the words are so different. It took me a long time to understand that the ordinary Indian has a different way of conversing. He doesn't converse in the interview transactional style, in which I ask your name and you give a reply and say your name. Or I ask, where do you come from? And he says, This is the village or this is the town I come from. He doesn't have this form of conversation. His world consists more of storytelling, relating one thing with the other, connecting things, finding a pattern, it's more poetic.

When I say these two worlds are very different, even the conversational style is very different. Even the way the images form in his brain when he is looking at something are perhaps very different from the way we look at it. I can give you a couple of examples from traditional believe-systems. Our farmers believe that if the crow makes a nest in February/March in the middle of the tree, then in June/July, when we have monsoon, we are going to have a good rainfall. But if the crow is going to make the nest in a particular area on the top of the tree, where there are very few leaves, then this year will be a very squinty or no rain. So this belief we have tested in our schools. We have made a note of it and saw whether the monsoon was good or bad in this particular year and we found a huge correlation. A modern scientific mind will look at this and say: But why, how? Whereas the farmer has probably seen the relationship between the two events, which to our modern mind look very disjointed and unconnected. To that traditional person they look connected and he has seen this as a pattern and lives his life accordingly.

TP: We live in a world in which the more linear western scientific ways of knowing is the dominant mode of our politics and economics and there is a marginalization of the more primal village way of knowing that you are describing, Pawan. And I think that westerners can come to respect and develop capacities within themselves that are informed by that sort of understanding of the world. But they will still appreciate it, based on a western logic. So, I have no way to inhabit the metaphoric villager mind and participate in a way of knowing that is not informed by linear rationality. There is an unbridgeable gap between me and that villager, even though I can appreciate that there is something valuable in his perspective. I notice more possibility in the kind of dialogue I can have with you as an English speaking educated person, who can enter my meaning-making. There are a lot of bridges for us to build, there are aspects of your experience and the hangover from colonialism that I would be interested to dialogue about.

One of the things that I see going on in America is that the grievance over America's enslavement of African Americans and our genocide of Native Americans is tending to create a sense of an irredeemable sin, a gulf that cannot be bridged. And yet in this moment in this time it's just us here, three human beings, interested to meet and genuinely caring for the

humanity of one another. We could go on forever trying to find a remedy for all different layers of injustice going back generation after generation. But I think we have to somehow cut through the karma and find our way into brotherhood, in which our caring response to one another's humanity releases us to apprehend more of reality in similar terms. And accounting for enough of reality that we can find common course and be allies to one another as a force for healing the fragmentation of our cultures, our societies and our economies and bringing an intuition of wholeness back into our relations. That is a huge job and it can seem overwhelming, given how much work it is to even establish a basis for beginning this enormous task.

*e: Thank you Terry. You just made a bridge towards the last question I wanted to ask: How can we bridge this gaps and heal these wounds? Pawan, from your perspective, what is your response to what Terry just brought into the conversation?*

PG: I think of something, which can perhaps come from a deep spiritual practice. It is developing a genuine humility, that there are different ways of looking at the same reality. With this comes a respect for the other. Also, in modernity individual freedom has been given a lot of meaning and sometimes it's been over evaluated. I am not against individual freedom, but I find that somewhere between the well-being of a community and individual freedom these two are sometimes in conflict with each other. In traditional communities they don't look at individual freedom the way as we do. They have their own ways of dealing with this whole issue of freedom. But if you apply the same lens of individual freedom and look at them, you may find that they don't come up to the mark.

Perhaps we need to look at what value ultimately is. Do values come from outside or are values intrinsic to human beings? Sometimes I get the feeling that all human beings are build in the same way. And ultimately all the values are part of us. They don't come through education. In some way they do come through culture, but if you really go deep into meditation, you may find, that values can be brought out, because they are there, they are part of every human being. If we could do something in education so that this aspect of human beings can be brought out, then we could perhaps find the common ground between the modern individual and the traditional person.

TP: It seems to me that you are saying, what is most valuable is inherent. Also there are things that have value that can be achieved through education, work and creativity. We don't want to sweep them away, but they tend to obscure our *inherent* value, the value intrinsic to our humanity.

What I love about what you have said is that you are bearing witness, a compassionate and humble witness, to values that do not defend themselves against the onslaught of the market place and the scientific way of knowing and dialoguing. By having spent time in the villages and with those people you come to respect and value them. Your respect for them is being communicated in a more sophisticated language than they would speak. Then you are reaching out to me as an American, and providing a bridge through your compassion, so that my compassion can extend to people I even can't share the language with.

I think that in this lies the potential of a continuous softening. There is an interpersonal field alive here—a "we". And in this We I am resonating with your compassion and respect for the villagers in India. And I hope that my openness also feels palpable to you. There is something about that meeting itself, that is an expression of wholeness and healing in itself. Maybe a drop of goodness, a basic acknowledgement that can begin a process of meeting and healing.