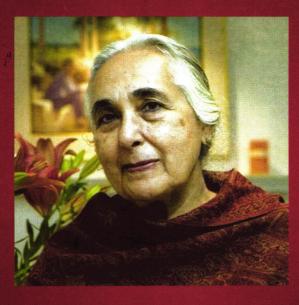# 11th Neelan Tiruchelvam Memorial Lecture

OF HISTORIES AND IDENTITIES

by

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Of Histories and Identities

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I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust and the International Centre for Ethnic Studies for inviting me to deliver this lecture. I feel immensely privileged. I am also grateful for this opportunity to express my admiration and regard for Neelan, and for his insistent upholding of the rights that make for a just society. My attempt in this lecture is to suggest that historical explanations can assist in this latter quest. May I add that as a historian of India my work has been on Indian material but I believe that what I have to say would be, with some modification, relevant to other societies of South Asia, and this would include Sri Lanka.

The mid-twentieth century was a dramatic turning point in the histories of the countries of South Asia. It was the time of liberation from colonial rule which in many ways had unraveled the earlier past and left us somewhat bewildered about the future. There was the intoxication of freedom – the release from being a colony – but there was also the apprehension of having to define the nation-state that subsequently emerged. I can recall my final year in school when on the 15 August 1947 I was asked to hoist the flag of independent India. I gave my first public speech and it was inevitably on the anticipation of becoming a nation holding promise of a coming utopia.

Gradually the reality became more visible. How were we as citizens of a new nation to define ourselves? All of us in South Asia, not to mention other ex-colonies, have faced the same questions. And among them was the question of identity or identities. We in India thought the answer was simple – it was the single identity of being Indian. But the reality on the ground has turned it into a complex question without a simple answer because even a single identity can subsume others. The utopias that we wished for have retreated in the face of identities in conflict.

Let me clarify that I am not using the word 'identity' with reference to the individual self, but rather as it is used currently to refer to how a collective of people or a community labels itself. And further, I am concerned with those identities where the label claims to have an accepted historical and cultural origin. I would like to assess the validity of this connection by re-examining these historical claims. An identity has a genealogy and knowing it would help us understand why it came into existence.

History as we were taught it in school and even later was a representation of the past based on information that had been put together by colonial scholarship. But when identities relevant to the present claimed roots in the past it became necessary for us historians to unpack the past. In this process of unpacking one realized that the past registers changes which could change its representation. The past does not remain static.

In examining the construction of the past which we had inherited from colonial scholarship we found that it was further inter-twined with the reactions of nationalist thinking towards this legacy. Nationalism, also born from a historical condition, builds itself of necessity on a single, focused identity that aspires to be inclusive of the entire society. But it can sometimes be more limited when it represents elites or majoritarian groups

seeking dominance. Inclusiveness is problematic since every society since early times has overlooked the need for equality and has registered the dominance of some and the subordination of others. Inequality is thus predictable and results in multiple identities.

In our present post-colonial times in South Asia, the multiple identities of the period before nationalism begin to surface but do so in a changed historical context. Each demands priority for its single identity which is treated as exclusive and this becomes an agency for mobilization. The multiplicity and inclusiveness of earlier times is set aside. In claiming legitimacy from the past that past itself is converted into an assemblage of what is most desired in the present.

Among our current identities in South Asia the more prominent ones go back to colonial times and were usually constructed with links to pre-modern history. Examples of this are identities of race and language, caste and tribe, religion and a permanent economic poverty and inequality, as the heritage of large segments of the population. Interestingly these were issues widely discussed in Europe in the nineteenth century. They became the prisms through which Europe viewed the past of South Asia. The history of the colony was of prime concern in order to understand its alien culture, to govern its strange peoples and to exploit its wealth. Some of this concern resulted in path-breaking work on deciphering scripts, revealing tangible history through excavations and investigating language through philology – analyzing its linguistic components.

But at the same time it was argued that there was an absence of historical writing in South Asian cultures. Therefore a history had to be constructed for the region by colonial scholars. The subsequent nationalist historians tended to accept the positive assessments in this construction but rejected the negative. However, what were missing were alternate explanations where there was disagreement with the colonial construction.

Let me turn to some identities that emerged from these studies and are now being questioned in current historical work. I shall be speaking about what I know best, namely issues in early Indian history. Possibly there will be parallels in other parts of South Asia or possibly not. I'll leave you to judge that. But comparative histories of the larger region might well be insightful.

Among the more prevalent identities has been that of being Aryan. The notion of an Aryan race has held the stage for almost two centuries. It was rooted in philology and focused on Sanskrit thereby discovering its affinity with Old Iranian and some early European languages. An ancestral language was reconstructed and called Indo-European, the South Asian component being Indo-Aryan.

As far as language analysis went this was a useful exercise. But it did not rest there. It was then argued that all those who spoke the same language belonged to the same race. The slippage between race and language simplified classification since languages were easily differentiated. It is obvious to us now that the equation of language with race has no validity. Race, if at all it exists, is a biological entity entailing birth within a specified group whereas language is a cultural entity and can be used by anyone belonging to any group. The late nineteenth century in Europe was the high point of the new 'race science' as it was called. Its generalizations were adopted without adequate verification.

Insisting on a hierarchy among races predictably placed the speakers of Indo-European languages at the top. The Aryan or Indo-Aryan language was named after those who called themselves *aryas* in the *Vedas*. They were described as Sanskrit speakers belonging to the Aryan race, although no mention is made of race in the texts.

These were not racial identities but were language labels. However, the confusion once introduced, continued. Even Max Mueller who warned against mixing language with race contributed to the confusion. For example, he described an eminent Bengali intellectual as belonging to the Bengali race. Soon every language of the sub-continent became a race – Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Burman, and so on. Among these, importance was given to the group of Dravidian language speakers.

The notion of two separate Aryan and Dravidian racial identities had no basis in history but became axiomatic wherever local populations were believed to have descended from one of the two. There was talk then – and it hasn't stopped even today – of north-western India as the homeland of the pristine Aryan, an idea supported by movements like the Arya Samaj, eulogizing Vedic culture and prescribing a return to it, and by some leading Theosophists. This would locate the homeland in what is today northern Pakistan.

The origins of the Dravidian race were traced back imaginatively to the mythical continent of Lemuria where Tamil culture was said to have had its locus. Among the linchpins in these discussions were the ideas of the colourful Madame Blavatsky who enthralled both Indians and Sri Lankans. Each of the two so-called races made exaggerated claims to having founded world civilization. But unfortunately the antagonism that grew out of such contested but virtually make-believe origins have been the burning embers for a variety of largely political ignitions.

Other identities also came to be subsumed under the label of race. There continue to be references to Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh races not to mention Pathan, Punjabi, Maratha, Bengali and what have you, races. This is a misuse of the term particularly now that the very concept of race has

been questioned. Nevertheless although the term is virtually meaningless, it can be thrown around to create misleading identities.

Let's look at what the texts tell us about *arya*. The land where the Indo-Aryan language is first recorded (in the *Rigveda*) was the north-west of the sub-continent and dates to about 1400 BC. A few centuries later the core area of the language had shifted to the western Ganges plain. By the Christian era it was familiar to all of northern India and spreading south. The language underwent change travelling into new areas and used by a variety of people, not to mention the normal linguistic change that occurs in a language over many generations.

Two points are worth noticing. Existing populations in northern India were using other languages when the speakers of Indo-Aryan settled in their midst. A text of about the seventh century BC, the *Shatapatha Brahmana*, makes fun of those who could not pronounce Sanskrit correctly and replaced the 'r' sound with the 'l' sound. Instead of *ari* they said *ali*. Because they could not speak the language correctly they are called *mleccha*, or barbarians. Language was the demarcation between 'us' and 'them'. Secondly, Sanskrit was more often the language of Vedic ritual and was spoken by *brahmans* and the learned few. The majority of the people spoke a variety of Prakrits, which were more simple languages but akin to Sanskrit. The edicts of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka of the third century BC which are spread over a major part of the sub-continent are written in variants of Prakrit and not in Sanskrit.

Interestingly, the replacement of 'r' by 'l' is also characteristic of those Ashokan inscriptions that are located in the Ganges plain in the heart of the Mauryan Empire. The word *raja* is rendered as *laja*. Such changes are likely because of the presence of other languages that contributed to the making of Prakrits. Even the language of a dominant group tends to soak up linguistic

elements from populations whose languages are different. And from a strictly brahmanical perspective these were all *mleccha* peoples, impure barbarians! So who were the Aryans?

The connotation of the term *arya* is ambiguous because it changes through history. In the *Rigveda* the composers of the hymns describe themselves as *aryas* and by definition the honourable ones. Opposed to the *arya* is the *dasa* which connotes all that the *arya* is not. The *dasa* is unable to speak the Aryan language correctly, worships alien deities, and is associated with evil and darkness. Above all the *dasa* is enviably wealthy and therefore subject to raids.

But a few centuries later the emphasis in the definition changed. Now the *aryas* were more frequently those who commanded respect in society irrespective of their ethnic origins or the language they spoke. *Arya* was used as an honorific. Buddhist and Jaina monks were addressed as *arya /ayya* by their lay-followers, despite the fact that they came from various castes including those ranked low by the *brahmans*. Buddhist texts also use *arya* as meaning the best, the highest, the most noble and therefore as an epithet for the teachings of the Buddha. The word is not used in any racist sense. As a mark of respect *arya* was frequently attached to terms for parents and grand-parents. Sons of royalty and well-to-do families, are referred to as *aryaputra,* the son of an *arya,* irrespective of caste, and even the *rakshasa* Ravana is called thus by his wife.

This in part accounts for another turn in the meaning of the word. This time the reference is linked to the classification of Indian society into four *varnas* or castes in the social codes – the famous *Dharma-shastras.* By the early centuries AD the word *arya* referred specifically to those of the three upper castes (*brahman, kshatriya, vaishya*) in these codes. The fourth caste of *shudras* was that of non-*aryas.* It states that all those not included in the three upper castes were to be treated as

non-*aryas,* irrespective of the language they speak. Language is no longer a marker of the *arya*. Even more interesting is the reference to children born of mixed *arya* and non-*arya* parents and the problem of defining their status. There were many permutations and combinations. The children of an *arya* father and a non-*arya* mother had *arya* status and presumably the caste of the father. Evidently such marriages were frequent enough to demand attention from the authors of the social codes. Caste rules would have to be adjusted when new groups were incorporated requiring a new definition of *arya* in caste terms.

For the historian then, the identity of 'Aryan' changes radically from a supposed race to language to status to caste. This is not surprising because identities change with historical change as also do the choice of identities. But colonial scholarship treated them as static. It was argued that each caste was a separate race and that this was the most effective way of segregating races. Herbert Risley went round measuring cephalic index and nasal width in order to prove the connection. This was perhaps a fore-runner of the attempt to prove segregation by ascertaining the genetic pattern of the four castes.

The normative codes describing the four castes were earlier taken at face-value and thought to be descriptions of how society actually functioned even if such a scheme seemed much too rigid. Historical records naturally show obvious discrepancies. Each caste has its own hierarchy which allows of some flexibility and provides a mechanism sometimes for incorporating those regarded as low born into the lower levels of the top castes. This may explain why some *brahmans* are either specifically excluded from or else limited to, participating in certain rituals. Why this was so is not always clear. Or there is the curious reference in the *Kaushitaki Brahmana* to the *dasi-putra brahman*, literally a *brahman* who is the son of a non-*arya, dasa* women. The term is

something of an oxymoron. Such persons were initially treated with contempt but when they demonstrated their supernatural power they were accepted as *brahmans.*

The second caste that of *kshatriyas* was the one that was supposed to provide the dynasties. However political activities were relatively open and persons of other castes bid for power as well. The Mauryas appear to be included among the *shudra* dynasties in brahmanical literature perhaps because they patronized heterodox sects such as the Buddhist and Jaina. Some dynasties of obscure origin supported their claim to being *kshatriyas* by having genealogies fabricated for them linking them to the epic heroes of old. Such claims became quite fashionable after the sixth century AD when mention is made of making what are called 'new *kshatriyas*'.

It was presumed that the pattern of the four castes was uniform in the sub-continent. But in fact it differed from region to region and occupational castes were often prominent. Thus in the Punjab the dominant caste has not been that of *brahmans* but of *khatris* or traders. In medieval times they had problems with the peasant castes aspiring to high status. Dominant castes may formally claim a higher caste status but in fact their dominance came and comes from land and wealth. An on-going debate among historians of south India concerns the *vellalas* as a dominant caste at various times which is doubtless of interest to Sri Lankan historians as well.

Colonial scholarship saw the connection between caste and religion but this did not lead to the recognition that religions in South Asia followed a pattern different from the Judeo-Christian; nor did they observe distinct, monolithic identities at the popular level. They are better viewed as juxtaposed sects that formed a mosaic. Harmony or discord between them, both of which feature in early texts, referred itself to sects and communities rather than to an over-arching religious identity of

Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim or Christian. Conflicts therefore were localized, were on a smaller scale and were easier to resolve.

Another difference was that all religions - indigenous or immigrant - internalized caste. Those who converted to religions promising social equality ended up by carrying the baggage of caste with them. An entire village may convert, as for example in recent years when Dalits converted to the neo-Buddhism advocated by Ambedkar, nevertheless caste hierarchies continue to be observed.

The litmus test of the centrality of caste shows up in having to conform to the caste rules of marriage circles. This means having to follow the rules of which groups can intermarry and which cannot. The rules are still generally observed. The essential requirement in this was to ensure control over women. Matrimonial columns in the newspapers with requests for a Brahman Christian bride can be puzzling. Or take the case of Islam where Muslim society was also fragmented. The Muslims claiming ancestry from west Asia are of a higher caste than the local converts. Despite both being Muslims there is a distinction in caste. Muslims who came from elsewhere and settled in South Asia and married into local communities adapted local belief to Islam. Local custom and practice could take precedence over Islamic law of Shar'ia. Such communities would have had problems with a monolithic Islam. At the lowest level were the Dalit Muslims who like their Hindu counterparts were denied entry into the more sacred mosques and burial in the Muslim graveyards. Similarly, places of worship built and managed by Mazhabi Sikhs regarded as untouchable tend to be avoided by upper caste Sikhs.

Converting Dalits into a separate community where they could only marry among themselves meant that they were Dalits by birth and remained so all through life. Using them in the meanest occupations was a mechanism of ensuring a

permanent supply of labour. What remains unclear even for the modern scholar is why particular groups were degraded in this manner; or why religions claiming to be non-segregated and inclusive still exclude some groups as untouchable?

There were nevertheless contestations of the Brahmanical code as in the social ethics taught by the Buddhists and Jainas and by dissident Hindu sects. However, an astonishing reversal of roles also occurs in the *Mahabharata*. A story is narrated that there had been a twelve-year famine and there was nothing left to eat. The desperately hungry *brahman* sage Vishvamitra wandering through the land arrived at the hut of a Chandala, an untouchable. Here he saw a butchered dog whose hind legs he wanted to eat. Dog-meat was considered the worst food and fit only for the untouchable. The Chandala argued with him and tried to dissuade him from breaking the dietary rules of the code for *brahmans* but was unsuccessful. The irony of the story is self-evident.

For obvious reasons neither the Brahmanical codes nor the construction of caste in the nineteenth century captured the functioning of castes on the ground. This is also applicable to the way religion was projected as an identity.

The construction of religious identities emerged from the textual bias of Orientalist scholarship. Since the texts were in Sanskrit and Arabic the scholars were tutored by the *brahmans* and the *ulema*. The *brahmans* highlighted the *Vedas* and the *Dharmashastras*, the others highlighted the *Qur'an* and the *Shari'a*. There was little discussion of other texts or other religious groups that questioned these. Buddhism and Jainism were treated as sub-sects of Hinduism as they still are by some scholars. Popular religion was part of the oral tradition or was recorded in languages that were thought not to be on par with Sanskrit such as Prakrit, or Tamil and other regional languages. That religious practices did not always follow the texts was

barely noticed. Recording practices was the domain of the ethnographers and the authors of District Gazetteers. There was little recognition that in complex societies there are multiple voices and they all have to be heard.

From the colonial perspective Hinduism and Islam were two separate monolithic religions and all Hindus and Muslims observed the rules of formal religion. This may have been applicable to sections of the elite, such as court circles and heads of religious institutions. However, for the vast majority of people religion was an open-ended experience – a mixing, merging, overlapping, borrowing or rejecting of forms and ideas beyond the formal labels. Religion for the larger population lay in forms of personal devotion, in the worship of the spirits within trees and mountains, *nagas*, *yakshis* and ancillary deities of local cult shrines, in listening to the words of the *bhikkhus* and the *nayanars* and *alvars*, the *bhakti* and *sufi* teachers, to the stories retold from the epics and the *Puranas*, and to the conversations of those that congregated around gurus, *faqirs*, *pirs*, and other 'holy men', agreeing or disagreeing on the essentials of understanding the purpose of life and the meaning of death. Visits to the grand temples and *stupas* were special occasions. Ritual and belief because they were a mix of caste practices and the norms of one's sect differed among communities. It is these that we should be studying in seeking the histories of religion.

Religions in South Asia were generally flexible enough to allow people to worship in each other's sacred places when there was a wish to do so. My first experience of religion was when I was visiting my grandmother at the age of four. She was a devout worshipper of Krishna yet she took me one morning to the grave of a locally venerated Muslim holy man, a *pir*, and taught me how to offer flowers and seek blessings in my own way. The imprint has remained. Religion is the person, her relationship with the world around her and if she is a believer,

then her relationship with the supernatural. Today we insist on impermeable boundaries and this is true of most of South Asia including Sri Lanka.

It is perhaps as well to remember that there was no label earlier for all that was placed together beneath the umbrella of what later came to be called Hinduism. It can be better described as a mosaic of sectarian belief and worship rather than a single system with a linear history.

People identified themselves by their sects. It was as late as the eleventh century that the term Hindu was first used in Arabic and referred to the people living across the Indus river in al-Hind. In the fourteenth century it referred to those that were not Muslim and this brought the mosaic under one awning. The single identity was also inapplicable to the Muslims who by now had fragmented into many communities differentiated by the imprint of local culture. Buddhism too became variegated over time, ranging from Theravada to the complexities of Ge-lugs-pa. The internalization of religion in South Asia was not the same as that of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The nineteenth century experience of religion in these parts became something of a mutation from its earlier fluidity at the popular level into a defined pattern with indelible boundaries. This facilitated its mobilization on a large scale as and when required, as has been apparent in recent times. Having established two monolithic religions as the major religious contribution of the Indian past, the census data was added in. There followed the theory of the majority religion of Hinduism creating a majority community and the minority religion of Islam creating a minority community each given a religious identity. It was then erroneously argued that the separation of the two communities was rooted in history. This reduced the incidence of people getting together across religious boundaries focusing on issues of wider concern.

Religion became fundamental to the interpretation of history. The colonial version of Indian history narrated it as moving through three periods - the Hindu, the Muslim and the British. The Hindu period began with the *Vedas* roughly 1400 BC and continued for twenty-five centuries remaining unchanged until the time of what are called the Muslim invasions in about AD 1000; and the Muslim period ended with the arrival of the British. These were arbitrary divisions supposedly based on the religion of the dynasties. Religious identities have varied and changed within the same religion over time and from one social segment to another. Periodisation based on religion as a single criterion of historical activity is a negation of history. It has now been discarded by historians. However, it remains central to the creed of extreme religious nationalists, Hindu and Muslim, still drawing legitimation from colonial theories.

Colonial scholars argued that the Hindus and Muslims belonged to two entirely separate cultures with little in common; that the relationship was always one of extreme antagonism; that Muslim rule tyrannized the Hindus to the extent that they were grateful when British rule replaced Muslim rule and the tyranny was terminated. History became the foundation of establishing a Hindu and a Muslim identity and defining the two accordingly. These identities were based on misunderstanding the nature of religion in the sub-continent. It was not these identities alone that brought about the subsequent fractures in the sub-continent but they were used to legitimize the political mobilizations that led to the break-up. The pattern is almost a blue-print for colonial policy elsewhere as well.

And then there was the insistence that poverty had been endemic to South Asia. It was attributed to the political system of Oriental Despotism said to characterize pre-modern Asia and which left little alternative. In contesting this view Indian opinion argued that poverty was recent and resulted from

wealth was being drained away to fuel British industry. We seem to have come round full circle. The globalized market economy has been described as a form of neo-colonialism. The wealth produced in the developing world goes to enrich the national and multinational corporates. It cannot therefore stem the increasing impoverishment in the developing world.

Let me consider two identities associated with poverty that were not created by colonial writing but were re-iterated by the colonial perspective. These were the Dalits and the forest dwelling tribes both dating back to more than two millennia. Colonial scholarship generally ignored the first but the second was reinforced through the dichotomy of the civilized and the primitive. The two were classified as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The British Census differentiated between tribe and caste but Indian ethnography preferred a continuum from tribe to caste arguing that some tribes evolved into castes. What then has been the identity of these forest tribes? In historical records they were the *mleccha*, the primitive 'Other', the alternate to the civilized. A brahmanical myth of origin makes this clear. It tells of Vena, the ruler who having stopped performing brahmanical rituals was killed by the *brahmans*. But a ruler was necessary. So they churned the left thigh of Vena and a short, ugly, dark man with blood-shot eyes emerged and they called him Nishad. He was banished to the forest and became ancestor to the Pulinda, Shabara, Bhil and other forest dwellers and also the *rakshasas*, the demons. They then churned the right arm of the dead Vena and up sprang a handsome young man whom they named Prithu. Significantly he was the one who introduced settled agriculture and animal breeding and observed all the rituals. And the earth in gratitude took his name as Prithivi. There is a parallel to this in Sri Lanka where the Sabaragamuv in historical sources designate hunting groups and the Veddas are a survival.

The myth colours other texts. The forest dwellers are said to be hostile and to attack the armies that march through their forests. This was a classic case of the settlement encroaching on the forest and resenting the forest dwellers resisting the encroachment. Very occasionally the encroachment resulted in a reversal of identity. A person given a huge grant of forested land would establish himself in the area, perhaps marry into the tribal chief's family and gradually build up an independent base. Such a royal family would need a carefully crafted genealogy claiming royal status as is evident from those of the Raj Gonds and the Nagabansis of central India.

With an increase in lands granted by kings in the period after about AD 1000, the encroachments became more common. Slowly the tribal peoples began losing their land, their forests and rivers, their animal and mineral wealth. In medieval times traders were attracted by this wealth and set up the monetary market with inevitably, money-lending. Acquisition of tribal land by British administration further reduced whatever rights remained. The latest predators are the corporates demanding huge areas for mining and timber. They claim to be introducing the benefits of civilization but the identity of the forest dwellers remains that of the 'Primitive Other'. The past for them is not a shared history but a remembered exploitation carried out by the representatives of civilization. These tribes are now among the most impoverished peoples.

The permanence of poverty has been assumed and until recently has raised little alarm. But poverty was not what they were identified with in earlier times. Where forest produce was available to them and where land could be used for shifting cultivation, life had a different quality. The forest was contrasted with the settlement as an alternate way of life, with its own cultural values that were sometimes even romanticized.

Today both groups have forced themselves into the consciousness of the societies where they are present. Dalits associated with Hinduism are receiving some benefits from reservations in educational institutions and state employment. Other Dalits are quite rightly demanding the same benefits. Predictably the resentment of the upper castes is expressed in outbursts of violence against the Dalits. By contrast the rights of the forest tribes having been reduced to a minimum they are now caught in a condition of continuous violence. The Naxals or Maoists claiming to speak for the tribes are battling it out with government administration in the forest habitats.

I have been trying to question some of the identities with which we live and which some regard as historically valid. I have tried to argue that those that condition our lives in South Asia should be re-assessed to ascertain their validity. There is a need for recognizing that some may not be rooted in history but are based on other extraneous factors. If the premises of the identity are no longer viable, can we continue to use the same label? Such monitoring involves a dialogue among historians and scholars but also and importantly, between them and citizens.

This would not merely be an exercise in historical research but would help us understand why an identity was initially constructed and how it was subsequently used. Ostensibly it may relate to race or religion, or whatever, but implicitly may be connected with other intentions such as access to power or aspirations to status. Is the identity then a mask to hide disparities, disaffections, inequities, encouraging a deviation from facing actuality? An identity is not created accidentally nor is it altogether innocent of intention.

Analyses of identities are pertinent also to the extensive and vocal South Asian diaspora. Nationals settled in distant lands often nurture identities that may well be historically untenable and outdated in the culture of the home country. But they are a

source of solace to the migrant in an alien culture and underline a claim to connectedness. Such identities frequently deny the plurality of South Asian civilization and the intersections within it. The replacement of these becomes a problem of transnationalism.

Beyond this we might consider what the premise should be if we are to encourage the emergence of other identities given that the context of our times is not what it was a century or two ago. A nation needs identities that are broad, inclusive and that support its essential requirements of democracy, secularity, equality, rights to the institutions of welfare and to social justice. If we continue to make identities of colonial origin a part of our thinking they will continue to be the quicksand that prevents us from even aspiring to, leave alone reaching, the utopias we had once visualized.

It might help if we searched for more diverse identities where none can be coercive or hegemonic and where their validity is transparent. This would require us to move away from the earlier closed and barred representations of culture and community that control our present lives. And that in turn might enable us to engage openly with, and ultimately overcome, our current inequities.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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