

seriously. It is also a wonderful opportunity for them to see seminal works of art such as this painting by Juran, ca. 975 AD.

Studying the art of a people, like studying their literature, opens up a whole world of different ideas, beliefs and values. A visual vocabulary is learned, whereby the semiotic inference of sign which is implicit in iconography forms the basis for an understanding of most Asian imagery. To use but one example: to be able to distinguish between an image of the Buddha and a bodhisattva is fundamental, and should be known by anyone who pretends to a knowledge of Asia.

Note: Students enrolled in my courses have access to my Intranet sites, wherein most of the slides that I show during lectures can be seen, including multiple close-ups for details. Also all the Study Guides, reading materials, and assignments are posted on the Intranet.

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India's Globalization Experience

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Editors' note: This is one of the three presentations on globalization by UBCHEA scholars. The others will be published at a later date.

Livelihood, life forms and sustainable environments are local phenomena. Free market capitalism, deregulation and opportunism are global phenomena. Is there a process by which the local may be subsumed into the global, without becoming dysfunctional? Or does the idea of globalization argue a case for diffusionist dimensions? Globalization entails movement, whether of ideas, humans, human rights, goods, livestock, money, images or information. The movement may even be identified as a metaphor of flow, as Mary Louis Pratt seems to argue, suggesting horizontal movement in accordance to laws of gravity, creating a sense of leveling. However, in reality, the direction of the flow appears vertical, and rather than level, creating displacement. Pratt cites drug trafficking, flesh trade, mass labor migration, and the tourism industry as examples (Pratt, 2001). Pratt's observation serves to endorse an unintended consequence of globalization: that segments of the population cannot remain invisible anymore. This inclusive perspective, as it were, has come to inform

much of the world's experience of globalization, and has served to draw attention to increasing categories of people who, because they have neither the selling power nor the buying power, fail to claim occupancy in this new world.

Bhanwari Devi lives in Rajasthan, India. She works the potter's wheel for a living. However, the community has frozen her selling power, as a token of punishment. Bhanwari Devi had lived an indifferent life. She was inducted into domestic life as a child bride. She never thought much, she never objected. In 1985 she found a job as a grassroots worker. Her assignment was to report on child brides. Her reports were forwarded to the police. The community issued her warnings, they ostracized her, and as a final step, in 1992, five upper caste men gang raped her. She reported the crime and pressed for justice. In 1994 the rapists offered her compensation in return for withdrawing the case. She responded, "Tell our village elders you raped me, restore my dignity" (Sharma, 2001). In 1995 the accused were vindicated. A political party organized a victory rally; among the celebrants were women. Bhanwari Devi has appealed; her case is pending in the high court. Her story has been made into a film, *Bawander* (Sandstorm), which, while it parleys with the Indian censor board, has been screened at international film festivals. Bhanwari Devi stands as a witness to cross-border movement and the subsequent impact on policy when the local calls for beyond-the-border scrutiny. Her narrative has made it possible for women activists in Delhi to take up the issue of sexual harassment in the work place and follow it through legally.

The earthquake in Gujarat in January of 2001 has brought into focus a group of highly organized women from Kutch (Sharma, 2001). They are illiterate construction workers who also produce handicrafts and fabrics that have found a world market. These women have been able to save what is a significant sum in their small-world economy. With access to both buying power and selling power, they have gained a

capacity that remains elusive for people who live without entitlement. After the earthquake, when the job of reconstruction, particularly of strengthening and repairing houses, began, they sensed that both the young, gifted engineers from the government, and their menfolk who were providing most of the labor, were on the wrong track. They were planning reinforced concrete structures, rather than trying to understand how best to build, at minimal cost, structures that could take both horizontal stress, and provide spaces that women in desert homes required to store water and food, and when the need arose, to provide shelter for their cattle. The Swayam Shiksha Prayog, the NGO involved in galvanizing women's groups in villages, provided the space for these women to come into their own. In no time the women had fashioned appropriate and often cheaper techniques for repair, began to relay the information they were processing to other communities, and insisted on reasonable levels of transparency in the allocated spending. Both government and relief agencies found themselves acknowledging basic strategies of listening to people, while reassessing their own policies. This story from Kutch sets up narrative as means to construct the world abject subjects may choose to live in.

While these narratives may read like parables in agency, they serve to underscore the nightmares that begin to reduplicate when a man, woman or child, a community, or a nation for that matter, comes to be excluded from the benefits of an overarching system that practices selective distribution policies. The fallout is plain: the subject watches his or her history being erased over and over again; the backlash is just as plain: the subject resists the erasure. The predicament of Indian women may be argued as a case in point. Globalization has made it possible for big companies to identify low-wage countries as sites for production. Labor markets for sweatshops and electronic components are expanding. Tourism, emerging as an industry enjoying special benefits, opens up myriad possibilities both in terms of employment and lifestyle. India offers no insurance against unemployment. The majority of Indian women are already employed in unorganized labor sectors of that remain non-unionized. The wages are meager and the working conditions harrowing. There is neither job security nor legal protection.

The new expanding markets capitalize on and aggravate deprivation which the nation has opted to gloss over. In addition there are new onslaughts and new deals. The World Trade Organization (WTO) can privilege Chinese garlic over Indian garlic and New Zealand apples over native Kulu apples. It can transfer the ownership of seeds and life organisms, patent herbs and medicines indigenous communities had nurtured, and encourage methods and technologies people have no knowledge about, and no desire for. Tradition, which had endorsed the role and function of women in indigenous medicine and subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry, becomes identified as the enemy in the progress of a nation. New discourses replace older ones. Hegemonies come to be established, enabling the thinking that can permit biopiracy to manipulate the Council on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and

International Property Rights (IPR) agreements. Third world countries violating trade codes are threatened with sanctions and credit freezes. Recommodification of labor, in which the worker's only right is to sell his or her labor in a market that has already been flooded, is accompanied by furious and untenable expansions of improvised suburbs. Alien and competitive environments replace older and kinder settings.

Women are almost always among the first to feel the brunt of subsequent fluctuations and reversals, because their lives are inextricably intertwined with the welfare of their families, which in turn is determined by the quality of health care, by the toxins in the environment, by the toxins in their reproductive systems, by the education their children can access, by the morale of their men, by the credit available to them, by the government levy on liquor, and by the violence in domestic and community life. Female infanticide, dowry death, domestic violence, abuse and rape form part of their story. Revised figures from the 1991 census corroborate the reading:

- Women form 48.1% of the total population.
- Sex ratio shows a steady decline, 7 points, over the years: 927 women for every 1000 men. (Kerala alone is an exception: 1036: 1000)
- 67.83% of the female population remains illiterate.
- Every year approximately 100,000 crimes/accidents against women by husbands or other relatives are reported.

In recent years there has been a proliferation of analyses of third world women's lives, because not only do they represent communities who lead voiceless lives on the fringes of the world economy, but they also signify that as long as they experience humiliation, global markets have violated respect for human rights. Organizations such as Banyan, Manushi, Cry, Sisters of Charity, and the Ramakrishna Mission, to mention a few, have provided relief, comfort, legal aid, education, and alternate lifestyles to abandoned men and women, to the homeless and the dying, to abused women, street children, and children employed in restaurants and in the production, in particular, of firecrackers and handlooms. Sex workers have become unionized and maintain some semblance of recourse to rights. These efforts may be seen as a networking of collaborations among similar groups across regions, harnessing the consciousness of the world as a whole.

In leftist states such as Kerala, women contribute to the floriculture export industry, working from their homes, using cuttings and know-how provided by the state, and in return selling their flowers, even if it is a single stalk of orchid or anthurium. Women such as these have turned around their positions in order to become subjective bodies of resistance. They have backed Medha Patkar in the revolution to save the Narmada. Their protests have forced a fierce public debate on both environment and equity. Their struggles have only begun, but they have ensured their presence can neither be ignored nor erased from contemporary India. Vandana Shiva has returned impoverished communities of women to subsistence agriculture, reassuring them that traditional

modes of harvesting seeds and maintaining biodiversity form integral parts of their livelihood. These women make it possible for the average citizen to challenge the idea of terminator seed technology in a country where the rural population constitutes 72.6% of the total population of one billion. These women make viable the concept of solidarity.

Globalization is also about representation and the consequences of challenging abject positions. The Bengal famine of 1943 was a demonstration of colonial power. In the absence of entitlement, surplus food alone could not provide security against famine (Sen, 1981). The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995 identified gender equality and gender inclusiveness, poverty reduction, full employment and income equality as significant objectives.

The industrial and agricultural sectors are strong in India today. So are defense and information technology. India did not succumb to the recent Asian financial crisis. The country attracts foreign investment. India has efficient and well-run hospitals. Cipla, a major pharmaceutical company, has offered the AIDS triple-drug cocktail to Doctors Without Borders for use in Africa at \$350 a year per patient. The move challenges the ethics of large pharmaceutical companies monopolizing life-saving drugs. India, Brazil and South Africa face the WTO court because these countries permit laws that allow pharmaceutical companies to produce low-cost medicines. Yet vast sections of the population remain below the poverty line, suffer and die from malnutrition and tuberculosis. Poverty and unemployment are endemic. Who must the country demitize: globalization, the government of India or the people?

The pertinent question to address is not whether to participate in a global economy, but the exact terms on which participation will be based. Thomas L Friedman, in his explorations on globalization, is quick to argue that Jody Williams won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for her contribution to the international ban on landmines in the face of opposition from the major powers. She used the Internet, which Friedman identifies as one of the defining technologies of globalization, to organize a thousand different human rights and arms control groups from six different continents. Friedman contends that because the world is wired into networks, the individual wields the power to act directly on the world stage without going through traditional mediation bodies such as governments or institutions (Friedman, 1999, 13).

India has similar stories to tell. Medha Patkar's agitation brought pressure on the World Bank, from 900 organizations from 37 countries, to cancel funding on the Narmada project (Brecher, 2000). Vandana Shiva remains at the forefront of the country's decision to challenge transnational patents on biodiversity. The USDA and WR Grace patent on neem has been revoked. These wonderful stories demand that people be given tools to understand processes around them. If a human being can decode diffusion, he or she may decolonize the system and renegotiate the capacity to bargain. For example, dams must be built because they provide energy; they also irrigate cash crops; they lead to prosperity.

The diffusionist dimension becomes visible only after the dams have been built, when the land on which people live and cultivate becomes inundated, when they become forcibly resettled in areas not fit for habitation, when the configuration appears that the beneficiaries seem to be the powerful sugar lobby. The simple folk resisting the further raising of dam heights would rather die in the waters that will flood their homes than live without dignity or honor in infested marshlands, deprived of environments that will sustain them, and which they in turn can sustain. This is where globalization forces human rights on the agenda, because in a world grown small, everybody can see everybody else. The flow of human rights valorizes individual rights to pursue separate agendas. Citizen groups who are resolved to take control over their lives can resource the phenomenal technological development in information and communication systems that globalization has opened to the world. They have the power to use these technologies to raise environmental standards, to access information about oil spills, sewage in drinking water, radiation levels and the petrified psyches of inhabitants around Pokhran in Rajasthan, India's site for nuclear testing, and more than ever, to reject packages and demand a quality of life of their choice. In short, to enjoy both the Lexus and olive trees!

Public discourses require open spaces and freedom from fear because they ensure democratic possibilities and ethical codes within which humans retain the right to influence decisions that affect them. Public discourses often disappear when the balance is upset between democracy, human welfare, economic progress, and the natural world. Globalization can create and destroy public discourse, depending on levels of resistance. Seattle and alternate conventions have changed forever the perspective on policymaking and negotiations; so have Green Peace and Doctors Without Borders. They have served to re-endorse realities such as non-partisanship, equity, balance, honor and peaceful coexistence. They are representative of the resurgence in social movements crisscrossing the local and the global.

India has its fair share of movements, and if public interest litigation is anything to go by, public discourse continues to take place, however downsized the scale may be. India also had success stories of movements long before villages had access to telecommunications. In 1970, a group of simple dairy farmers in Gujarat, numbering six million, fought the dairy sector monopoly and set up India's largest dairy cooperative. The movement, shaped by V. Kurien, and referred to as Operation Flood, increased milk production and distribution through a national milk grid, increased rural incomes, and made the farmers self-reliant. Mass movements have come to be regarded as viable strategies in third world planning, essentially because they force public debate.

Globalization builds on technology and education. People require tools to understand and to produce. The government of India subsidizes higher education; access to education has become a possibility. However, the system of education remains untenable in its total inability to impart life-sustaining skills that the learner uses to critique the social

reality that either cripples or empowers people. The information, in terms of knowledge transference, that the Indian learner acquires is on a truly remarkable scale—pure valence, devoid of ethical language, following foreign models that may not be viable in terms of relevance, student numbers and infrastructure.

Where, then, does the uninitiated learn to negotiate? What is the language of inequity, whether of race, gender, class or caste? What is the balance between personal identity and state policy, homogenization and genocide, welfare and opportunism? What is the cumulative effect on women educators who have a huge representation in the teaching industry? Has the globalization of education erased women's experiences that may have been valorized and interpreted as representative of any marginalized group? Does education in the country understand local needs? Analysts like Amartya Sen identify education, health care and democratic rights as critical to the development of a nation. The interrelation between lack of knowledge and lack of entitlement, between poverty and deprivation, is well established.

Education seems to hold the key to the essential thinking that can allow or disallow entitlement. Education can also inform movements with the very technology globalization appropriates, to create operative centers and to reassemble and to recuperate so that human beings can live with choices and not be overwhelmed by monopolies. Globalization per se is neither good nor bad. It is a system that has evolved, like any other system. It has opened up the world, created technologies, and expanded people's rights to access these overwhelming intelligences. It has opened up deals, negotiations and pacts, and also the means to exclusionary/inclusionary tactics that already existed in capitalist/communist/democratic/totalitarian ideologies. Nations turn selfless during calamities such as earthquakes and also perform a complete roundabout in monologues on nuclear proliferation, rogue countries, patenting life forms pertaining to cells, genes, genomes, or viruses. How India chooses to negotiate, consider options and prioritize issues and communities will decide the contours of globalization that are going to prevail. Fundamental to the process is a question of faith—the belief in self-determination. Without options there can be no counterpoise. In the final analysis impacts are created by choices. Friedman's rhetoric, "Imperialism is when you physically occupy another people and force your ways upon them. Global arrogance is when your culture and economic clout are so powerful and widely diffused that you know that you don't need to occupy other people to influence their lives" (Friedman, 312), could remain a literary convention, if India can look towards her masses rather than self-destruct in the irreversible deals of foreign exchange, defense, and trade.

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