

SECTION 2 - FUTURES RIDE (PAPERS)

Sarkar's Contribution to Macrohistory and Futures Imaginations

By **Sohail INAYATULLAH**

I enjoyed reading Larry TAUB'S essay *Sex, Age, and Caste: the grandest narrative of all*. I am quite sympathetic to his overall project particularly that of contextualizing trends in the broader patterns of macrohistory as well as in using theory to enlist support in creating a more gender partnership-oriented society.

I am also pleased that his work is gaining traction in Japan and elsewhere, and wish him the utmost success in his work as a futurist.

CLARIFICATIONS

I would, however, like to clarify the part of his work linked to SARKAR in general and to macrohistory in particular (1). First, I do have a problem with the construction of caste as "Hindu". A historical reading is important. The caste structure developed with the Aryan invasion of India (2). The indigenous population, who generally followed Shiva and Tantric practices, were vanquished and became the lower caste. The Aryans imposed their structure of warrior, trader and priest on the local population and made them the workers, the shudras. Overtime, this structure became solidified in Indian society. While there remain some Indian thinkers who believe it gives some necessary discipline to a chaotic society, most would assert that it is the single most violent system in the world, thus the paradox of India - a civilization that places individual non-violence as primary, yet its deeper structure is foundational and systemically violent.

This is important to raise here as SARKAR'S work was not just focused on change in individual behaviour but social behaviour as well ... in the Indian context this was and continues to be the ending of caste.

Second, it is important to note that Hindu is a recent category, invented by Muslims (over a century plus ago) and now recently has gained legitimacy with the conservative right wing in India. Traditionally, as Ashis NANDY (3) has pointed out, there were endless gods and gurus vying for attraction, vying for loyalty – epistemological pluralism had been historically built into the psyche of Indian civilization. The conservative elements in Indian politics have sought to invent an institutionalized Hindu identity (one god, one people, one nation) as a wedge politics against other religions particularly Muslims. The genocide in Gujarat as Garda GHISTA (4) has written is one result of this strategy.

An alternative tack is that of seeing many eclectic traditions in Indian history, even as the overall project is similar. The overall project beginning with Tantra thousands of year ago to modernist India today remains: the understanding of the self as central; knowledge as additive not exclusionary; epistemology as pluralistic, instead of the division of wrong or right knowledge, generally a softer depth and shallow approach is taken; and inner bliss as the overall goal (eupsychia).

Third, TAUB argues that SARKAR'S four stage model is in fact a three stage model. SARKAR was very clear on this: the worker stage is a real and pivotal stage but it is short lived, not absent. Additionally, the theory of the social cycle is based on evolutionary theory informed by dynamic models of general systems theory. That is, the future to some extent remains open, humans have agency – the future is not a fixed railway. Thus, it could be as workers are more informed by the peer-to-peer revolution, as the skills revolution continues, and if we enter a post-capitalist system, the workers era may last longer. But generally, this force is more chaotic, revolutionary, seeing to redress imbalances, often and unfortunately in violent ways. After the workers era, the system undergoes a pendulum shift as the structure and order of the warrior episteme enters.

Fourth, this raises the issue of cyclicity and linearity. As Prout scholars have argued extensively elsewhere, SARKAR includes a cyclical dimension (the social cycle of the four ages, epistemes) and a linear dimension. This is his theory of evolution, which has three aspects: physical clash (or survival of the fittest, mutation), intellectual clash (memetic evolution, new ideas) and the attraction of the Great, or bliss. In this sense, bliss functions as a strange attractor guiding humanity forward. We can of course become personally and conceptually lost in the physical battle or intellectual battle but it is this move toward inner and outer bliss that brings in direction that is decisive in creating the future. Purpose is not lost in evolution. This bliss however does not – as in many religious views or via Hegel – enter the nation, it cannot be owned by any particular person or civilization. Indeed, as SARKAR has argued in his work on neo-humanism, it goes beyond humanism as well, to include plants and animals (5). And I have argued, neohumanism can and will most likely extend to include artificial intelligence as robots become more sentient (the rights of robots, if you will).

Fifth, the spiral emerges from the sadvipra. She/he is not just the pure intellectual but rather has managed to integrate and balance the different aspects of personality, i.e. knows how to serve others, can use ideas for the collective good, can use matter and ideas to create wealth and can protect others. By integrating these different paradigms of self, the sadvipra leader attempts to ensure that no one varna stays in power too long. He or she creates the appropriate transformative momentum to ensure that if the intellectuals are disowning money and the market, an economic paradigm shift is required; if the trader disowns the other, nature, gender, equity, then they bring on a social revolution. Using his or futurist and macrohistorical hat, the sadvipra leader keeps the cycle moving. This movement is not just to the next stage but it is to a synthetic advanced level wherein there is more neohumanism (i.e. less nationalism, religiousism, etc.) toward bliss – the spiral. As well, the speed of the cycles can be increased (500 years of capitalism is enough!).

And this is crucial, the future cannot be precisely or accurately predicted – the universe is open and is being co-created even though there are evolutionary derived patterns of history that structure reality. Part of the role of the sadvipra is to facilitate, to be a hand-maiden for this new possible future.

Now what, as Ashis Nandy has warned us of, avoids the tyranny of the future, that is what ensures escape-ways built in to any theory of everything. These in my view are: first, the importance of spiritual practice in this endeavour ...that is, seeing the social cycle not just as an external reality but as part of the inner make up. That is to say, within one's politics of the self, which varna is dominant? Is my trader self dominant (negotiating value between sub-personalities), my worker (serve other selves), my warrior (protecting my other selves or ...). Second, comes from the tantric tradition – namely, what is, is not wrong or right but there are levels of reality. Third, there is no way anyone can be anointed a sadvipra ...it is a bottom-up, grassroots revolution – leaders are noticed by what they do, not what they say they do! Fourth, learning comes from doing, from experimenting.

I raise the fourth as I find macrohistory not just of interest because of its broad sweep of understanding but for its utility in organizational strategy. In over a hundred workshops, I have found that organizations can use SARKAR'S work to discern which varna or episteme is dominant. What do they need to do to transform? How can violence (physical, emotional and structural) be avoided? How can they create value oriented leaders who are balanced and dynamic? Peter HAYWARD and Joe VOROS' work is instructive. They have taken macrohistory and made it organizationally relevant via the SARKAR Game. In this game, individuals in an organization play out the different varnas and then analyze the role of each varna concluding with the centrality of foresight oriented situational leadership (knowing when to play which role)(6).

PURPOSE

The purpose for SARKAR was never to describe the world to be clever but to give resources for analysis so that the world could be changed, so that cycles could be transformed, so that individually and collectively more bliss could be realized. SARKAR'S theories of macrohistory, thus, I

believe should be seen as new categories which expand on MARX'S class. They reframe past and potential futures. I would prefer not to get lost in the "prediction" game; rather, the purpose of macrohistory is to help us see new patterns, to frame questions and strategies, and most importantly to help create new futures. Within the predictive game, I find using many macrohistorians in an eclectic way can be quite powerful for scenario generation (i.e. the pendulum of SOROKIN with the linearity of SMITH with the spiral of SARKAR, for example). That said, there are a good number of books, particularly by Ravi BATRA, which use SARKAR to make bold forecasts (7). The most important aspect of these contributions is to use foresight to avoid certain default futures and instead choose more balanced blissful pathways. Accuracy of prediction does not prove a theory as other factors could explain correlation, including luck. Finally, theories themselves exist at different levels – macro (broad, through space and time), meso (organizational) and micro (day to day understandings).

As to TAUB'S last point the determined future, I am not sure if SARKAR believed a society of sadvipras was inevitable, but he remained positive all along foreseeing a world where communism, capitalism and religiousism would disappear. This foreseeing was based on understanding the factors of history but also on inspiring others to invent and create an alternative future. Inevitability as strategy is intelligible, inevitability as theory is hazardous since structure will then reign over agency.

Futures Studies, as I see it, even while understanding structure (patterns of macrohistory, trends, inner frameworks) transforms us by making agency attractive, not by giving hope (8) but by pointing us toward possibility, which then can become reality.

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(1) I do this in the context of having authored two books on Sarkar (Understanding Sarkar: the indian episteme, macrohistory and transformative knowledge. Brill, Leiden, 2002; Situating Sarkar: tantra, macrohistory and alternative futures. Maleny, Gurukul, 1999) and edited two books on Sarkar/macrohistory (Macrohistory and Macrohistorians. Westport, Praeger, 1987, with Johan Galtung; Transcending Boundaries: Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar's Theories of Individual and Social Transformation. Maleny, Gurukul, 1999 with Jennifer Fitzgerald) as well articles in Futures, the Routledge Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy, Development etc on Sarkar and his social movement, Prout. For more on prout, see, www.proutcollege.org, www.proutinstitute.org, www.priven.org/, www.worldproutassembly.org/

(2) See Romila Thapar, A History of India. Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1966. See Rajni Kothari, Caste in Indian Politics. New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1970.

(3) Ashis Nandy, Traditions, Tyrannys and Utopias. Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1987.

(4) Garda Ghista, The Gujarat Genocide. Bloomington, Indiana, Authorhouse, 2006.

(5) See Sohail Inayatullah, Marcus Bussey and Ivana Milojevic, eds., Neohumanist Educational Futures. Tamsui, Tamkang University, 2006.

(6) See Peter Hayward and Joesph Voros, "Playing the neohumanist game, " in Neohumanist Educational Futures: Liberating the pedagogical intellect. Tamsui, Tamkang University, 2006, pages, 283-296.

(7) See Ravi Batra, Muslim Civilization the Crisis in Iran. Dallas, Venus Books, 1980. Ravi Batra, The Downfall of Capitalism and Communism. London, Macmillan, 1978. Ravi Batra, The Great Depression of 1990. New York, Bantam, 1988. Ravi Batra, The New Golden Age. London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. www.ravibatra.com

(8) As John Cleese tells it in the movie Clockwork: Despair I can handle, it is hope I can't stand.