

Blinded By The Light Of "World History"
Re-Centering India In The Mandala Of Eurasian Civilizations

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I. Introduction: The Blindness of World History

Much has been written over the past decade on the subject of Indian historiography and the inadequacy of past historiographic paradigms. It is probably not necessary to review these in length, as most of the participants in this seminar are likely to be familiar with them.¹ To succinctly characterize the thrust of Colonial era historiography, it hinges, somewhat amazingly, on the claim that India, properly speaking, lacks history. This claim was made explicitly by Hegel, who wrote:

If we had formerly the satisfaction of believing in the antiquity of the Indian wisdom and holding it in respect, we now have ascertained through being acquainted with the great astronomical works of the Indians, the inaccuracy of all figures quoted. Nothing can be more confused, nothing more imperfect than the chronology of the Indians; no people which attained to culture in astronomy, mathematics, &c., is as incapable for history; in it they have neither stability nor coherence. It was believed that such was to be had at the time of Wikramaditya, who was supposed to have lived about 50 B.C., and under whose reign the poet Kalidasa, author of Sakontala, lived. But further research discovered half a dozen Wikramadityas and careful investigation has placed this epoch in our eleventh

¹ I would recommend, first and foremost, Ronald Inden's (1990) *Imagining India*. Also worthy of serious consideration is Ranajit Guha's (1997) *Dominance without Hegemony*.

century. The Indians have lines of kings and an enormous quantity of names, but everything is vague.²

A more reflective scholar might have considered that such vagueness was an attribute of his own understanding, rather than of the object of study itself. Hegel, however, saw the flawed state of European understanding of the colonized Other as a sign of the Other's flaw, and hence the inferiority of the colonized to the colonizers. This allowed him to concoct his theory of "World-History," which was based upon a notion of the "progress of history," metaphorically described as the march of the "Spirit" from East to West. Historical agency thence became an attribute of the modern West, leaving India and the "Far East" in a state of perpetual infancy and cultural dependence.

There is no need to dwell on the fact that this historiography was ideological, implicitly justifying the otherwise unjustifiable violent exploitation of one civilization by another. Indeed, as Ranajit Guha has noted, Hegel's project was "to legitimate existing reality by conceiving it philosophically."³ This "World History" paradigm not only fails to promote a sound understanding of the colonized Other,⁴ but also fails to even provide an

² Hegel 1995, vol. 1, pp. 125-126.

³ Guha 2002, p. 44.

⁴ This was, of course, a major point made by Said in his 1978 *magnum opus*. According to Nigel Crook, colonialist knowledge tended to strive for breadth at the expense of critical depth. Information was amassed under the assumption that "India's remoteness could thus, in some way, be encompassed. It was a 'representational view' intended both to impress and encourage the commercial adventurer, the civil servant and the subjects of the British crown in general. What it failed to do was to adequately equip the same with a critical understanding, as those that actually ventured out found to their cost. It was reinforced by a literature that...was as racist as it was dysfunctional. By characterizing Indians as being without critical competence as a race, it once again denied the British themselves, as colonial rulers, the critical competence that could result

adequate account of Europe's rise to prominence in the early modern era, insofar as it is unable to articulate Europe's dependence upon the Colonial Other.⁵

The lynchpin of this historiographic portrayal is the negation of India's cultural and historical agency. As Ronald Inden wrote,

To have represented the kingdoms of India as relatively autonomous agents, as complex, inter-related polities that could unite through pacts as well as 'force' within a single imperial formation and create new centres not determined by a fixed military topography, would have undermined this whole orientalist project. (1990:188)

The inaccuracy of the claim that India lacks history has been demonstrated both by Inden as well as by Michael Witzel, who shows that the Indian historiographic tradition has been largely, but not entirely effaced by centuries of invasions and neglect.⁶ Excellent progress has in fact been made recently in the recovery of indigenous Indian historical narrative traditions.⁷

In this paper I will seek to complement such initiatives in an attempt to contribute to the efforts to restore India's historical and cultural agency. I will do so by arguing that Europe was not unique in its development of a sophisticated and influential civilization, and

from treating their teachers as if they had something to teach. By assuming otherwise, they would not even interact with Indian intelligence." (Crook 1996:14)

⁵ According to Robert Young, "Orientalism did not just misrepresent the Orient, but also articulated an internal dislocation within Western culture, a culture which consistently fantasizes itself as constituting some kind of integral totality, at the same time as endlessly deploring its own impending dissolution.... Orientalism represents the West's own internal dislocation, misrepresented as an external dualism between East and West." (1990:139-40).

⁶ See Witzel 1990.

⁷ See, for example, Inden, Walters and Ali's (2000) *Querying the Medieval*.

that India, during the first millennium of the common era, achieved without violence an influence in Asia at least as great as that achieved by Europeans through violence during the colonial era. Specifically, in section two, drawing upon the work of Norbert Elias, I will argue that India underwent a "civilizing process" during the last half of the first millennium BCE, analogous to that experienced in Europe over a thousand years later. In section three, I will conclude by arguing that India, in turn, provided a powerful and influential model that was selectively adopted and adapted by other Asian polities as they embarked in state formation.

In so doing I will simply be sketching a hypothesis with an outline of possible lines of further inquiry. This is intended to be a working paper and not a definitive argument. Indeed, to achieve this one would need to undertake a work comparable to Elias', that is, an extensively documented monograph.

II. India as a Civilizing Center

At first glance my suggestion that a comparison of social and political conditions in ancient India and late medieval/early modern Europe may be fruitful appears counterintuitive, if for no other reason than the fact that it runs against the Colonial era myth of progress and the implicit (explicit in the case of Hegel) association of progress with

the colonizer West.⁸ In applying Elias' insights to India, I reject the implicit Eurocentricity that informs his work. I refer to his repeated statements to the effect that the *civilizing* process he describes is unique to Europe⁹ and his statement that the process of "Westernization" of non-Western societies observable during the twentieth century was an extension of this uniquely European process to the non-European world. He wrote, "the incipient transformation of Oriental or African people in the direction of Western standards represents the last wave of the continuing civilizing movement that we are able to observe." (2000:386) I would argue, to the contrary, that this claim represents a lingering residue of colonial ideology. By conflating the process of colonization with the *civilizing* process Elias is, I fear, simply reproducing Eurocentric imperial ideology.

That said, I will argue that within non-Western societies, such as India, there occurred analogous but independent *civilizing* processes, each of which is "unique" in the sense of arising from distinct socio-historical contexts, but which are analogous in the sense that they proceeded via comparable social processes. In order to support this thesis it is necessary to show that there were *comparable* processes of social change in both Western and non-Western contexts. I reject the claim to "uniqueness" as an adequate obstacle to the

⁸ Note that it is important not to paint with too broad a brush, labeling, for example, all of the West "colonizers." For many European peoples had little or nothing to do with the colonial enterprise. It could and has been argued some, such as the Catholic Irish, were subject to an intra-European colonization that rivaled in brutality that undertaken in non-European regions.

⁹See, for example, Elias 2000 pp. 379 ff.

comparative process.¹⁰ While I acknowledge that the two regions in these different time periods were different in many ways, I will argue that they both experienced a *comparable* civilizing process during these periods.¹¹

The object of my comparison are the social consequences of two processes of political and economic centralization leading to the establishment of an imperial formation. Elias' object of study, the development of the French absolute monarchy from the thirteenth through seventeenth centuries of the common era, will be compared to the process which occurred in the region of Magadha leading to the development of the Mauryan state.

Due to space and time constraints I will not be able to go into any detail concerning these developments as they occurred in late medieval/early modern France, which thus limits here the comparative process. While this is a desideratum, and essential for a more extensive study, here I will only provide a synopsis of the characteristic elements of the *civilizing process*

¹⁰ Regarding the common recourse to the concept of uniqueness as a defensive and apologetic strategy see Smith's "On Comparison" (1990:36-53).

¹¹ Naturally, to support this thesis it is not necessary to prove the *identity* of the objects of comparison. In discussing this issue Smith quoted F. J. P. Poole, who wrote: "Comparison does not deal with phenomena *in toto* or in the round, but only with an aspectual characteristic of them. Analytic control over the framework of comparison involves theoretically focused selection of significant aspects of the phenomena and a bracketing of the endeavor by strategic *ceteris paribus* assumptions The comparability of phenomena always depends both on the purpose of comparison and on a theoretically informed analysis. Neither phenomenologically whole entities nor their local meanings are preserved in comparison. What matters in comparison are certain variables that are posited by and cohere in theories and that are aligned with aspects of the phenomena to be compared through some sort of correspondence rules." (from Poole, "Metaphors and Maps: Towards Comparison in the Anthropology of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54 (1986), pp. 414,5, *op. cit.* Smith 1990, p. 53. Smith comments here that "Comparison, as seen from such a view, is an active, at times even a playful, enterprise of deconstruction and reconstitution which, kaleidoscope-like, gives the scholar a shifting set of characteristics with which to negotiate the relations between his or her theoretical interests and the date stipulated as exemplary." (1990:53)

as described by Elias. Those desiring a more thorough explanation should proceed directly to Elias' *oeuvre*.

In my analysis, Elias hypothesized the following three broad characteristics for the *civilizing* process as it occurred in late medieval/early modern France:

1. An overall increase in specialization in the labor force, with a corresponding increase in interdependence among social groups; these developments being inextricably connected with the rise of urbanization.
2. Development of a centralized imperial formation with significant monopolization of power and economic resources, and with a monopolization of the use of force.
3. Tendency toward *rationality* and *behavioral restraint*, characterized by increasing pressure for the individual to internally constrain his or her behavior and develop a greater degrees of "self-mastery," with a concomitant rise in self-awareness.

I will address these three characteristics with regard to India during the period of the rise and consolidation of power of the Magadhan state, i.e., c. 500-200 BCE., in the following three sections.

1. Economic Specialization, Social Interdependence and Urbanization

The rise to power of the centralized Mauryan state, was, like that of the centralized French state described by Elias, dependent upon urbanization and concomitant socio-

economic changes. The founding of Mauryan empire by Candragupta Maurya in 322 BCE¹² was preceded by roughly three centuries of urbanization in the Gaṅgā basin region.¹³ The rise of urban centers in the Gaṅgā valley was dependent upon agricultural and technological innovations (i.e. rice cultivation and iron technologies), as well as trade linking essential resource centers. It is no coincidence that early urban centers such as Śrāvastī and Rājagṛha arose along the North-South trade routes linking the fertile alluvial plains with the iron-rich highlands to the south.¹⁴

Urban centers grow in dependence upon an increasingly diversified economic system. In addition to commodity producers in rural areas there are artisans in urban centers, and traders who conduct inter- and intra-regional trade. Textual evidence from the period suggests that both types of trade increased significantly.¹⁵ Increase in trade also made necessary the use of coinage and writing, both of which came into widespread use in North India during these centuries (i.e., 600-300 BCE).¹⁶ This in turn led to further economic specialization, creating a demand for individuals with skill in accounting and literacy. These

¹² For a survey of data concerning the founding of the Mauryan dynasty see Mookerji 1966.

¹³Thakur 1981, p. 66. Rājagṛha, in particular, was located at a very strategic site. It has access to the rich agricultural areas to the north as well as the mineral rich Chhotanagpur plateau. It was also the terminal point of a trade route linking the Gaṅgā valley with the Deccan. See Chakrabarti 1999, p. 325. These early advantages may account for Magadha's rise to power and formation of an imperial state.

¹⁴ See Thapar 1984, pp. 94-96.

¹⁵ Thakur 1981, p. 69.

¹⁶ Thakur 1981, p. 70.

developments also had significant social ramifications, despite the fact that they were largely limited to an urban elite. According to Thapar,

the introduction of coined metallic money, even if only in the urban markets, extended the geographical reach of trade and also the range of items traded and led increasingly to the computation of wealth in the form of coined money. Those who were wealthy were accorded a higher status in urban life, which weakened the role of ritual status, and, to a lesser extent, the monopoly of land ownership as a criteria of social rank. (1984:102)

As trade increased so did specialization, even in previously rural areas. Buddhist texts from this period, for example, record the existence of entire villages devoted to the production a single product or commodity, such as read-making (*halakāra*) or salt-production (*loṇakāra*).¹⁷ Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* attests to numerous artisan occupational categories,¹⁸ and the *Arthasāstra*, in its section on revenue sources, indicates a diverse economy based upon both agricultural and industrial production.¹⁹ These are textual descriptions are generally corroborated by the observations of the Selucid ambassador Megasthenes, who lived for many years at Pātaliputra at the turn of the fourth and third centuries BCE.²⁰

The increase in socio-economic specialization is indicated by the marked increase in social differentiation, i.e., of the *jāti* occupational categories. With urbanization their was an increased demand for the products of skilled artisans; as cities grew in size and as demand in turn increased, artisans organized into guilds. As Thapar wrote:

¹⁷ See Thakur 1981, p. 95.

¹⁸ cf. Thakur 1981, p. 99.

¹⁹ See Book 2 ch. 6, in Kangle 1986 vol. 1, pp. 41-42, and vol. 2, pp. 75-80.

Certain commodities ... such as the finer textiles and more delicate ivory work among others are associated with skilled craftsmen in urban centers. Such artisans initially worked on their own, but gradually with the expansion of trade came to be organized into corporate bodies, the most commonly referred to being the *śreni* and the *pūga*, both names taken from the corporate assemblies associated with the *gaṇa-saṅgha* system. Included in the *śreni* were the artisans, and if the guild prospered then not only were assistants (*antevasika*) employed but also [hired laborers,] *dāsa-bhṛtaka* ... The *śreni* was gradually to evolve into a professional group bound by contractual ties. Its professional identity encouraged its evolution into a *jāti* and these were among the large number of occupational *jātis* which were to be allotted a *śūdra* status in the *varṇa* system.²¹

This proliferation of occupational categories during this period is a major indicator of the economic development connected to urbanization. Some of the *dharmasūtras* and *śāstras*, which were composed during this period (the latter half of the first millennium BCE),²² address these new occupational categories (*jāti*). They expend significant commentatorial creativity in an attempt to harmonize the increasingly complex social system with the canonical "four class" (*caturvarṇa*) system of the *Vedas*.²³ This system was, by the rise of the Mauryan dynasty, completely ideological, although it may have reflected an earlier stage of Indian social organization.²⁴

Such increased specialization in turn accelerated urbanization, and the rise of growth of centralized government and standing armies. Book two of the *Arthasāstra* describes a very

²⁰ Chakrabarti 1999, p. 277.

²¹ Thapar 1984, p. 100. Bracketed insert is mine.

²² On the dating of the *dharmasūtras* see Olivelle 1999, pp. xxv-xxxiv.

²³ See the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* ch. 18 (Olivelle 1999:298,9) and the *Mānavadharmasāstra* ch. 10 (Doniger and Smith 1991:234-50).

²⁴ For an analysis of these texts see Tambiah 1985.

elaborate civilian bureaucracy.²⁵ With regard to the military, according to Greek sources the kingdom of Magadha under Nandas, the dynasty prior to the Mauryas, had a standing army consisting of over 220,000 professional soldiers.²⁶ This growth led to the consolidation of power and the eventual rise of imperial formations, a process which was already underway during the lifetime of the Buddha, when King Ajātaśatru (493-61 BCE) united Magadha through the elimination and absorption of rival polities, such as the Kingdom of Kosala and the Vṛjji confederacy. This expansion led Ajātaśatru to shift the capital from Rājagṛha, located inland along an intraregional trade route, to the newly established Pataliputra on the Gaṅgā, which thus controlled the major east-west, riverine, interregional trade.²⁷

Increasing economic specialization naturally results in greater social interdependence. Merchants and artisans relied upon others for their food production, and food producers would in exchange receive industrial products necessary for iron-age agriculture, as well as other goods. This social interdependence may very well be reflected in the increasing assertions regarding the interconnection of all living beings in Indian religious philosophy.²⁸

²⁵ See Kangle 1986, vol. 1 pp. 55-189, vol. 2 pp. 32-95.

²⁶ Thapar 1966, pp. 57,8.

²⁷ Thapar 1966, p. 56.

²⁸ I certainly would not wish to overemphasize this point, and do not wish to propound a reductionist account of the development of Indian philosophy. Urbanization and economic interdependence may have been a condition underlying the trend of increased emphasis on the interdependence of living beings. Example from literature composed during this period are numerous. A few examples should suffice here. The later verse *Upaniṣads*, which according to Olivelle were probably composed in the last few centuries BCE (1996:xxxvii) contain numerous examples, such as *īśā* v. 6: "He who sees all beings in his self and his self in all beings, will thence feel no revulsion." (Radhakrishnan 1953, p. 572: *yas tu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmany evānupaśyati / sarvabhūteṣu cātmanaṃ tato na vijugupsate //*) Likewise the *Bhagavad Gīta* (which is also dateable to the late

Likewise, the need to restrain the violent passions is equally important for those living in a more urban, economically interdependent fashion.²⁹ Such an emphasis is particularly characteristic of the religious traditions that developed during this period, namely Buddhism and Jainism, although it is by no means limited to them, as it is a central feature of Hindu renunciant movements as well. This emphasis, it should be noted, is in stark contrast to the more agonistic rites of the Vedas,³⁰ with their competitive and violent aspects, which were in fact soundly critiqued by many of the religious figures of this period.³¹ These protest traditions were particularly associated with the mercantile communities. It thus should be of little surprise that they advanced the values of these communities.³²

Archeological evidence demonstrates that there was a tremendous growth in Buddhist monastic institutions from about 300 BCE, and that these sites were generally located in the

centuries BCE) 6.29: "He who is intent upon union (*yoga*) sees the self in all beings and all beings in the self, regarding everything with equanimity." (Radhakrishnan 1948, p. 203: *sarvabhūtaṣṭam ātmānaṁ sarvabhūtāni cātmani / ikṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ //*). The *Mānavadharmasāstra*, most likely also composed during this period (Doniger and Smith 1991:xvii) expresses similar sentiments (eg. 12.91). Mahāyāna Buddhism, which also developed during the final centuries BCE, particularly emphasizes interdependency and compassion. But note that these ideas are also found in the prose Upanisads which significantly predate this period.

²⁹ This latter point will be discussed in section II.2 below.

³⁰ Regarding the agonistic and competitive nature of Vedic ritualism see Heesterman's essay "Brahmin, Ritual, and Renouncer" in Heesterman 1985, pp. 26-44. For a more in depth examination see Heesterman 1993.

³¹ There are numerous instances of critique of sacrificial violence in the Buddhist and Jain scriptures. See, for example, the Buddhist *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 5, in Walshe 1995, pp. 133-41) and the Jain *Ākārāṅga Sūtra* 1.1.6 (in Jacobi 1884, pp. 11-13).

³² According to Thapar, the money economy resulted in the creation of "a new set of impersonal professional ties not necessarily based on kinship nor subservient to the requirements of the ritual status of the *varṇa* hierarchy. Buddhist sources on the other hand endorse the status of the financier and carry no hint of disapproval of usury. The *setṭhigahapatis* are highly respected and frequently the more important patrons of the

vicinity of urban areas or along the trade routes that connected them.³³ This growth was tied to the patronage received from urban communities in general, which were in turn made possible through the process of state formation. The first spurt in growth, starting in 300 BCE, was in the middle Gangetic basin, the heartland of the Mauryan dynasty. Heitzman concluded that

from one standpoint, Buddhist diffusion was closely dependent on the patronage of urban elites; Buddhist monasticism appears as an appendage to centralized organizations in the early historical period. On the other hand, the simultaneous spread of religious establishments alongside political and mercantile organizations suggests the necessity for the symbolic ordering performed by Buddhism in the successful operation of early South Asian urban institutions. (1984:133)

Kosambi has suggested that the Buddhist monasteries served as a civilizing influence,³⁴ and that the monasteries located along the trade routes may have played an important economic role in this trade.³⁵ Economic, political, social and religious changes seem to have occurred interdependently during this period.

Buddhist *saṅgha*. The Buddhist sources depict the *gahapatis* in trade as an economic asset treated with respect by those in political authority." (1984:103)

³³ Heitzman 1984, p. 124. See also Heitzman 1980.

³⁴ See Kosambi 1955, p. 229.

³⁵ See Kosambi 1965 pp. 182-85.

2. Centralization and Monopolization of Power

According to Elias, an essential step in the civilizing process in France was the formation of the centralized state with significant monopolization of force and economic resources, which had the effect of displacing the military aristocracy, which was eventually transformed into a court nobility with urbane social values. A similar process occurred, I believe, in India with the formation of the Mauryan state.

There is no doubt that the Mauryas established an imperial formation that had no precedent in Indian history. This required the formation of a centralized state with a bureaucracy sufficiently sophisticated for its administration. The *Arthaśāstra* provides what is presumably an outline of this bureaucracy; while it paints a picture of complex administrative apparatus, it is vague with regard to many details concerning actual administration. It does, however, clearly call for *monopolization* of force, i.e., direct government control over the military, as well as monopolization of several important aspects of the economy, such as mining and salt production.³⁶ It likewise calls for the appointment of a "Mint Master" to oversee the standardized production of coinage;³⁷ this reform was in fact implemented, as the numismatic record indicates. There is, however, considerable

³⁶ See section 2.12, in Kangle 1986, vol. 1 pp. 55-58 and vol. 2 pp. 105-10.

³⁷ See 2.12.24-25, in Kangle 1986, vol. 1 p. 57 and vol. 2 pp. 108,9.

uncertainty regarding the actual extent of Mauryan power and the degree to which its administration mirrored that described in the *Arthaśāstra*.

Regarding the former point, the extent of territory under at least nominal Mauryan control can be sketched from archeological evidence. It indicates that Magadha under the Nandas had achieved a significant East-West expansion from Aṅga (in east Bihar) west to Avanti (western Malwa in Madhya Pradesh), with slight expansion southeast into the Mahanadi delta (in Orissa). The Mauryas consolidated their hold over central India and expanded Northwest to the Oxus-Indus stretch, gaining control over the Indus valley, Kashmir and much of what is now southern Afghanistan.³⁸ Their control over the Northwest was solidified by Candragupta Maurya's defeat of Seleucus Nikator, and the signing of a treaty between them fixing their borders in 305 CE.³⁹ His son, Bindusara, who reigned from 301 to 269 BCE, extended Mauryan power south into the Deccan region.⁴⁰

The Aśokan pillar edicts likewise delimit the extent of the empire, being largely located on the periphery, rather than in the center, of Mauryan domains. Mauryan rhetoric, as preserved in the edicts, are certainly imperial in that they are addressed to the "empire" or "world" (*jambudvīpa*). There is little mention of other competing polities, except the Greeks, with whom the Mauryans had concluded a marriage alliance. One rock edict mentions neighboring states, namely the Greeks (to the Northwest) and the Cholas, the Pandyas (to

³⁸ Chakrabarti 1999, pp. 274-5.

the South),⁴¹ which seems to indicate that the Mauryan imperial formation subsumed most but not all of the subcontinent at its peak in the third century BCE. But the actual territory ruled directly by the Mauryans, rather than by the tributary states which composed the outer rings of the imperial “maṇḍala” (to use the terminology of the *Arthaśāstra*) was probably much smaller. In one inscription Aśoka is given the title “King of Magadha,” which suggests that he may not have exerted direct control over territory beyond the bounds of Magadha or territory conquered by it.⁴² Other inscriptions mention undefeated “neighbors” (*avijita*) and forest tribes (*atavi*) within the empire as dangerous rivals.⁴³

While we have no way of knowing what percentage of the *Arthaśāstra*'s policy recommendations were actually implemented, and to what extent and with what degree of efficacy they were implemented, there is independent evidence confirming that some in fact were. The Aśokan edicts are themselves proof of implementation, since the erection of

³⁹ Wolpert 1997, p. 59.

⁴⁰ Thapar 1966, p. 71.

⁴¹ The relevant section of Rock Edict 13 occurs as follows: “Now it is conquest by Dhamma that Beloved-of-the-Gods considers to be the best conquest.[27] And it (conquest by Dhamma) has been won here, on the borders, even six hundred yojanas away, where the Greek king Antiochos rules, beyond there where the four kings named Ptolemy, Antigonos, Magas and Alexander rule, likewise in the south among the Cholas, the Pandyas, and as far as Tamraparni.[28] Here in the king's domain among the Greeks, the Kambojas, the Nabhakas, the Nabhapamkits, the Bhojas, the Pitinikas, the Andhras and the Palidas, everywhere people are following Beloved-of-the-Gods' instructions in Dhamma. Even where Beloved-of-the-Gods' envoys have not been, these people too, having heard of the practice of Dhamma and the ordinances and instructions in Dhamma given by Beloved-of-the-Gods, are following it and will continue to do so. This conquest has been won everywhere, and it gives great joy -- the joy which only conquest by Dhamma can give.” Text available at <http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/ashoka.html#FOURTEEN> and also Dhammika 1993.

⁴² Minor Rock Edict 3; the Kalinga rock edicts suggest that Aśoka did establish direct administrative control over this region of Southeast India, which was conquered by him. See <http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/ashoka.html#FOURTEEN> and also Dhammika 1993.

edicts is in fact recommended in the *Arthaśāstra*;⁴⁴ this is clearly a recommendation which was earnestly implemented by Aśoka himself. Megasthenes' account confirms on many points the *Arthaśāstra*'s details concerning the economy and bureaucracy, as noted above. He also confirms other points, such as the use of spies and the recommendations regarding fortification contained in the text.⁴⁵ The use of high officials, the *mahāmātras*, for the administration of conquered territory, which plays an important role in the *Arthaśāstra*'s bureaucracy, is confirmed both by the Kalinga Rock edicts and also Megasthenes.⁴⁶

However, André Wink may be correct in his assessment that the Mauryan centralized imperial administration did not extend far beyond their original base in Magadha.⁴⁷ And while the edicts and Megasthenes confirms the use of high officials in the administration of far-flung territories, it is far from certain that they uniformly enforced imperial policy. Megasthenes, in fact reported that under the Mauryans many Indian cities "adopted the democratic form of government,"⁴⁸ which probably indicates the republican *janapadas* absorbed into the empire maintained a good deal of autonomy, and that the territories under Mauryan rule were not administered in a uniform fashion.

⁴³ Kulke and Rothermund 1998, p. 66.

⁴⁴ See *Arthaśāstra* section 2.10, in Kangle 1986, vol. 1 pp. 48-51 and vol. 2 pp. 92-96.

⁴⁵ Kulke and Rothermund 1998, pp. 59-60.

⁴⁶ Kulke and Rothermund 1998, pp. 65.

⁴⁷ Wink 1986, p. 21.

⁴⁸ Sircar 1974, p. 241.

Heesterman argues that, potentially at least, the *mahāmātras* constituted a serious potential centrifugal force, equivalent to regional lords.⁴⁹ If the *Asokāvadāna* can be accepted as a historical source, ministerial misconduct may have been behind a rebellion at Takṣaśilā during Bindusāra's reign, which was evidently of such great import that he sent the prince to quell it.⁵⁰ Evidently the administration of provinces was conducted by "princes of royal blood assisted by the Mahāmātras who were members of the nobility,"⁵¹ which seems to be a recipe for rebellion.

This was also a problem faced by the French state, which was plagued by attempts by noble provincial rulers, who themselves were typically descended from the ruling house, to assert independence from the crown. This was resolved under Louis XIV through the enforced residency of the military aristocracy at the court, transforming them into aristocratic courtiers. The *Arthasāstra's* remedy to this problem was the extensive employment of spies, which according Megasthenes was put into practice by the Mauryans, as noted above.

On the other hand, according to traditional Indian conceptions of kingship, which may derive in part from what was *actually* achieved by (in part, rather than wholly) by the Mauryas, the king has monopoly power over the use of force (*daṇḍa*). Several texts, including the *Mānava* and *Nāradaḍharmaśāstras*, attribute to the king absolute power.

⁴⁹ See Heesterman's essay "Kaṭilya and the Ancient Indian State" (1986:128-40).

According to Robert Lingat, for the authors of these texts “the king possesses an unlimited power on the temporal plane, and ... he can do whatever he wishes. ‘Whatever the king does,’ says Nārada (XVIII.21), ‘is justified: such is the rule’.”⁵² Indeed, Megasthenes reported that the Mauryans attempted to disarm the public, and thus sought to reserve to itself the use of force.⁵³

While we cannot gauge with any precision the extent to which the Mauryans achieved a monopolization of power, it seems that they achieved a sufficient degree to catalyze significant social change. The expansion of Magadha’s power clearly came at the expense of the neighboring states, and limited the power of the military aristocracy that governed them. As Thapar suggests, many of the *kshatriya* became a landed gentry, others land-owners who lived in the towns and cities, joining in effect the urban elite.⁵⁴ Still others may have opted for another lifestyle altogether; it is probably not a coincidence that the founders of Buddhism and Jainism came from military aristocratic families that were being displaced by the consolidation of power in the vicinity of Magadha.

While entry into these renunciant traditions was technically open to all, they seem to have primarily recruited from elite groups, both members of the rural elite who were suffering displacement (brahmins and kshatriya), as well as members of the new urban elite

⁵⁰ See Strong 1983, p. 208.

⁵¹ Sircar 1974:240.

⁵² *yad eva kurute rājā tat pramāṇam iti sthitiḥ*. Lingat 1973, pp. 214-5.

⁵³ Thapar 1979, p. 191.

(merchants and artisans), who were the most important benefactors of the traditions. This was noted by Weber, who emphasized the *cultured* nature of the renunciant orders, their connection to an urban "Kshatriya" patrician class, and their concern with decorum and etiquette.⁵⁵

It was this urbane class which would play an essential role in the civilizing process, both in India as in France, as Elias argued. And while in both Mauryan India and Bourbon France this elite was numerically a tiny minority among a vast agrarian majority, their values had a disproportionately powerful effect on society as a whole. It is the nature of these values that will be examined in the next section of this essay below.

3. Rationality and Behavioral Restraint

Elias argues that a characteristic feature of the civilizing process is the dissemination of courtier values. These include, most notably, an overall increase in "self-mastery," characterized by heightened self-awareness leading to an increase in rational, critical thought patterns as well as behavioral restraint. He sees this as occurring in response to the state's

⁵⁴ Thapar 1975, p. 121.

⁵⁵ See Weber 1958, ch. 6, esp. pp. 226-7. This point will be explored in greater depth in section II.3 below.

monopolization of force and the transformation of the military aristocracy into a courtier culture.

This process has an analogue, I believe, in Mauryan era India. There was in fact a marked increase in rational and critical thought during this period, in many different spheres. Rational thought is clearly evident, as India also experienced an intellectual renaissance at this time. This period saw, for example, the composition of Pāṇini's grammar, which remains one of the world's great intellectual achievements, and truly is a cornerstone in the edifice of the science of linguistics.⁵⁶ There were likewise developments in other areas such as mathematics, metallurgy, architecture, and so forth.⁵⁷

Quite significant as well is the rise of rational patterns of thought in the political sphere, which, while not supplanting mythic thought patterns, clearly challenged them. For example, as Heesterman has noted, the *Arthaśāstra* is silent on any sort of theory of sacral kingship. Kauṭilya, while disdaining such ideas, cynically adds that they can be of use for controlling the populace when skillfully disseminated by spies.⁵⁸ "But as a source of legitimation, they are completely indifferent to Kauṭilya. In fact it would seem that Kauṭilya

⁵⁶ On the significance of this see Staal 1965.

⁵⁷ Regarding early Indian advances in fields such as mathematics and metallurgy, for example, see Seidenburg 1978 and Fitzgerald 2000, respectively.

⁵⁸ See *Arthaśāstra* section 1.13, in Kangle 1986, vol. 1 pp. 16,17 and vol. 2 pp. 28,29.

would prefer his king to break away from the sacrality or divinity of kingship as a basis of the state.”⁵⁹

What then qualifies a king for such an exalted role, over and above any other citizen of the state? According to Kauṭilya it is a mastery of the self, described as follows:

Mastery of the senses (*indriyajaya*), the cause of which is scientific education (*vidyāvinaya*), is effected through the abandonment of lust, wrath, greed, arrogance, intoxication and excitation.⁶⁰

Kauṭilya previously (at 1.2.1) listed the sciences in which the king was to be trained; it is of great interest that the first of these is critical inquiry (*ānvīkṣikī*).⁶¹

This spirit of critical inquiry was not present uniformly throughout Indian society at the time, just as it was not so present in Europe during the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, or any other period, for that matter. Kauṭilya most likely manifests it because he was a reformer seeking to change the system, in his case from within it. A similar spirit is also found amongst some of those who were working from without, namely members of the “heterodox” protest traditions, i.e., Buddhism and Jainism.

There are passages in the Buddhist canon, for example, that have a distinctly critical, even “modern” tone. Ranajit Guha has argued that there are two factors which need to be present to make possible the critique of “feudal” discourse. The first is rationalism, which

⁵⁹ Heesterman 1985, p. 131.

⁶⁰ 1.6.1: vidyāvinayahetur indriyajayaḥ kāmakrodhalobhamānamadaharṣatyāgāt kāryaḥ (Kangle 1986, vol. 1 p. 7. Trans. is mine; cf. Kangle 1986, vol. 2 p. 12.

⁶¹ Regarding this see Heesterman 1985, pp. 131,2.

points out the inevitable absurdities and inconsistencies of totalizing ideologies, and the second is a humanism which opposes the attempt to limit human agency, and which insists that the individual is, potentially at least, "the maker of his own history and master of his own destiny".⁶² Both of these factors are present, I believe, in the *Aggañña Sutta*,⁶³ which challenges the Brahmins' attempt to legitimate their superior social status via recourse to myth, a variant of that contained in the *puruṣasūkta* hymn (*Rg-Veda* 10.90).

This *Sutta* begins with a discussion between the Buddha and two monks who were formerly brahmins. The Buddha asks them if since they have left the life of a householder if they were reviled by the brahmins. One of them replies:

Lord, what the Brahmins say is this: "The Brahmin caste is the highest caste, other castes are base; the Brahmin caste is fair, other castes are dark; Brahmins are purified, non-Brahmins are not.; the Brahmins are the true children of Brahmā, born from his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā. And you, you have deserted the highest caste and gone over to the base caste of shaveling petty ascetics, servants, dark fellows born of Brahmā's foot! It's not right, it's not proper for you to mix with such people!" That is the way the Brahmins abuse us, Lord. (Walshe 1987:407)

The Buddha replied:

Then, Vāseṭṭha, the Brahmins have forgotten their ancient tradition when they say that. Because we can see Brahmin women, the wives of Brahmins, who menstruate and become pregnant, have babies and give suck. And yet these womb-born Brahmins talk about being born from Brahmā's mouth....These Brahmins misrepresent Brahmā, tell lies and earn much demerit. (Walshe 1987:408)

⁶² See Guha 1997, p. 12.

⁶³ *Dīgha Nikāya* 27, trans. in Walshe 1987, pp. 407-15.

The Buddha⁶⁴ is represented as arguing that no social class has a monopoly on moral virtue and wisdom, and that these qualities are distributed throughout persons of all social classes.

He thus concludes that there is no basis for speaking of a supreme "class", as follows:

Now, since both dark and bright qualities, which are blamed and praised by the wise, are scattered indiscriminately among the four castes, the wise do not recognize the claim about the Brahmin caste being the highest. Why is that? Because, Vāseṭṭha, anyone from the four castes who becomes a monk, an Arhant who has destroyed the corruptions, who has lived the life, who has done what has to be done, laid down the burden, reached the highest goal, destroyed the fetter of becoming, and become emancipated through super-knowledge – he is proclaimed supreme by virtue of Dhamma and not of non-Dhamma. (Walshe 1987:408)

The Buddhist rhetorical strategy here is two-fold. First, they appeal to reason to dispel the brahmins' claim to privileged, mythic origin, by pointing to the prosaic, biological origin which they share with all other humans and mammalian animals. In another text, the *Assalāyana Sutta*,⁶⁵ the Buddha challenges the claim that the *varṇa* taxonomy is universal, by means of the observations that other peoples, such as the Ionian Greeks (*yona*) and the Kamboja, observe only one social distinction, that of masters and slaves.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ The text naturally portrays itself as originating in an actual discourse of the Buddha. We do not know when or by whom the text was composed, but it is possible that it originated as an oral discourse composed during the latter half of the first millennium BCE. See Collins 1990 pp. 95-6, concerning the development of the Pāli canon; it is usually thought that the canon was put down into written form during the first century BCE, although Collins argues that the process of canonization was not completed until the 5th century CE.

⁶⁵ *Majjhima Nikāya* 93, trans. in Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, pp. 763-74.

⁶⁶ The mention of the Greeks dates this text, or at least this portion of it, to no earlier than the late fourth century BCE.

The Buddhists, secondly, propound a "humanism" insofar as they attack stratification and the assumption that humans are determined through their station of birth. It is important to note that they were not attacking social hierarchy per se. Rather, they attacked a justification for it based upon mythic thought. Contra this, they argued more "rationally" that superior status should be the product of moral virtue and wisdom which are not monopolized by any one social group, or acquired simply through privileged birth.

Elias notes that there was similar critique of the social order in Europe during the eighteenth century. G. E. Lessing, for example wrote in his *Briefe aus dem zweiten Teil der Schriften*⁶⁷ that "This hateful distinction which men have made between themselves is not known to nature. She parcels out the qualities of the heart without any preference for the nobles and the rich."⁶⁸ Elias comments here that "the literary movement of the second half of the eighteenth century was not a political one, but in the fullest sense of the word it was the expression of a social movement, a transformation of society." (2000:17) The same comment could be made, I think concerning the Buddhist critique. As Thapar has pointed out the "dissent" of groups such as the Buddhists and Jains during this period was not political per se.⁶⁹ It is, however, certainly an "expression of a social movement," perhaps indicative of "a transformation of society."

⁶⁷ Göshen, 1753.

⁶⁸ Elias 2000, pp. 16, 17.

⁶⁹ See Thapar 1975 and 1979.

How was society transformed in India as a consequence of the Mauryan political consolidation? As argued previously, the primary manifestations of this change were increases in social differentiation and interdependence arising from factors such as urbanization and economic growth. How might such socio-economic changes affect human behavior? According to Elias,

The denser the web of interdependence becomes in which the individual is enmeshed with the advancing divisions of functions, the larger the social spaces over which this network extends and which becomes integrated into functional or institutional units—the more threatened is the social existence of the individual who gives way to spontaneous impulses and emotions, the greater is the social advantage of those able to moderate their affects, and the more strongly is each individual constrained from an early age to take account of the effects of his or her own or other people's actions on a whole series of links in the social chain. The moderation of spontaneous emotions, the tempering of affects, the extension of mental space beyond the moment into the past and future, the habit of connecting events in terms of chains of cause and effect—all these are different aspects of the same transformation of conduct which necessarily takes place with the monopolization of physical violence, and the lengthening of the chains of cause and effect—all these are different aspects of the same transformation of conduct which necessarily takes place with the monopolization of physical violence, and the lengthening of the chains of social action and interdependence. It is a 'civilizing' change of behavior." (2000:370)

Elias argues that, in Europe, these changes began in the context of the court. Likewise in India—the king was not the only one who was to master his self and senses. Such mastery was a prerequisite for all courtiers, in Mauryan India as in Bourbon France. Elias cites the increasing need for self-mastery in the context of the court, where there developed specific

codes of civilized behavior which thence spread into society at large. He cites the following example from La Bruyère's *Caractères*, "De la cour":

A man who knows the court is master of his gestures, of his eyes and his expression; he is deep, impenetrable. He dissimulates the bad turns he does, smiles at his enemies, suppresses his ill temper, disguises his passions, disavows his heart, acts against his feelings.⁷⁰

We might compare this with the following passage in the *Arthaśāstra*, regarding the conduct appropriate for a courtier:

And he should observe his gestures and expressions. For a wise man shows, with his gestures and expressions, a reversal of the pairs [of feelings, namely] desire and hatred, delight and depression, resoluteness and fear, for concealing his secret counsel.⁷¹

We might take the focus toward "self-mastery"—inward contemplation and control coupled with ethical conduct—which we find in the meditative traditions as religious manifestations of what may have been a larger cultural trend in India during the last half of the first millennium BCE, a trend which had both "secular" and "spiritual" manifestations. Regarding the former, Aśoka, who may have himself undertaken training in the "technologies of the self"⁷² as recommended in the *Arthaśāstra*, commends the same to his subjects, and seems to claim that such self-mastery is requirement for the adepts of all religious traditions in Rock Edict 7:

⁷⁰ La Bruyère, *Oeuvres* (Paris: Hachette, 1922), vol. 2, p. 211, no. 2; *op. cit.* Elias 2000 p. 399.

⁷¹ *Arthaśāstra* 5.5.5,6. Trans. in Kangle 1986, vol. 2, p. 308, with emendations by me. Text edited by Kangle as follows: *inḡitākārau cāsyā lakṣayet kāmadvēṣaharṣadainyavyavasāyabhayadvandvaviparyāsam inḡitākārābhyām hi mantrasamvaraṇārtham ācarati prājñāḥ* (Kangle 1986, vol. 1., p. 160).

⁷² Regarding this term used by Foucault, see Martin et al. 1988. It is also used in a comparative context in Kapstein 1996.

Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, desires that all religions should reside everywhere, for all of them desire self-control and purity of heart. But people have various desires and various passions, and they may practice all of what they should or only a part of it. But one who receives great gifts yet is lacking in self-control, purity of heart, gratitude and firm devotion, such a person is mean.⁷³

We find similar sentiments in the *śāstric* literature as well. *Mānavadharmasāstra* claims that

A man is said to have a 'triple rod' if he has established in his consciousness the rod that enforces the mind-and-heart, the rod that enforces speech, and the rod that enforces the body. The man who wields this triple rod among all living beings and thoroughly suppresses his lust and anger thereby achieves success.⁷⁴

The term "triple rod" (*tridaṇḍa*) here is particularly interesting. It immediately evokes the concept of "force," which in the external sense is the monopoly of the king. But the text uses the term in an internal sense as a "three-fold restraint" to be applied by each and every person, and not only ascetics, some of whom literally carry a "triple rod" as one of their insignia. Other text, such as the *Bhagavad Gītā*, likewise seek to popularize and extend to a wider range of society the self-discipline ordinary associated with renunciants, and does so by internalizing the very notion of renunciation. The ideal *yogin*, who is not necessarily a renunciant,⁷⁵ is described as follows:

When a man disciplines his diet and diversions, his physical actions, his sleeping and waking, discipline destroys his sorrow. When his controlled thought alone

⁷³ S. Dhammika, trans. Text available at <http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/ashoka.html#FOURTEEN> and also Dhammika 1993.

⁷⁴ 12.10-11, in Doniger and Smith 1991, p. 279.

⁷⁵ That the *yoga* described by Kṛṣṇa in ch. 6 is not solely intended for renunciants is indicated in v. 46, where he commands, "Therefore become a *yogī*, Arjuna!" (*tasmād yogī bhavārjuna*, Radhakrishnan 1948, p. 210).

rests within the self alone, without craving objects of desire, he is said to be disciplined.⁷⁶

Such internalization would not be possible, according to Elias, without the monopolization of violence by the state, and the spread of the *civilizing* ethos of internalized self-restraint.

If it was a desideratum for householders to cultivate self-control and self-awareness, it was an absolute necessity for any person engaged in a spiritual discipline. It is surely not coincidental that the first two steps of classical *aṣṭāṅga yoga*, based on Patañjali's *Yogasūtras* which was composed during or somewhat after this period,⁷⁷ deals with behavioral restraint (*yama*) and admonitions to cultivate ethically sound behavioral patterns (*niyama*). While this path appears to be geared toward the renunciant *yogin* engaged in a serious spiritual discipline (*sādhana*), later Hindu religious literature expanded this discipline, making it accessible to all, the renunciants and laity alike.

The renunciant traditions of Jainism and Buddhism are extremely vocal concerning the need for self-mastery. Regarding the former, the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, for example, describes the spiritual adept as follows:

Master (of his senses) and avoiding wrong, he should do no harm to anybody, neither by thoughts, nor words, nor acts. A wise man who restrains his senses and possesses great knowledge, should accept such things as are freely given him, being

⁷⁶ Trans. in Miller 1986, p. 65. 6.17,18: (17) yuktāhārahārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasau / yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhaḥ // (18) yadā viniyataṃ cittam ātmany evāvatiṣṭhate / niḥspṛhaḥ sarvakāmebhyo yukta ity ucyate tadā // (Radhakrishnan 1948:199).

⁷⁷ The *Yoga Sūtras* have been dated between the second century BCE and the fifth century CE, with current scholarly consensus inclining toward the later end of this spectrum for the composition of the text, while recognizing that it likely incorporates material that is significantly older. See Whicher 1998, p. 42.

always circumspect with regard to the accepting of alms, and abstaining from what he is forbidden to accept.⁷⁸

The doctrine of non-violence (*ahiṃsa*), which was most consistently forwarded by the Jains, is probably the most consistent application of the civilizing ethic of self-restraint, far exceeding anything accomplished by the Europeans, when one considers the violence and rapine in which the Europeans were engaged in the colonies, in spite of the *civilité* they may have been able to muster at home.

There also numerous Buddhist texts which advocate mindful self-awareness and restraint.⁷⁹ A more general call for mastery of the self, directed particularly at the laity, occurs in the *Sakkasamyutta* as follows:

When a person supports his parents, and respects the family elders;
When his speech is gentle and courteous, and he refrains from divisive words;
When he strives to remove meanness, is truthful, and vanquishes anger,
The Tāvatiṃsa devas call him truly a superior person.⁸⁰

Buddhists also show a strong concern with decorum and propriety, as Weber has noted.

Among the approximately two hundred and fifty monastic *prātimokṣa* vows, a full seventy-five, the *Sekhiyā Dhamma*, deal with matters such as dress, posture, decorum in walking and

⁷⁸ 1.11.12-13; trans. in Jacobi 1895, p. 311.

⁷⁹ For example, a brief passage occurs as follows in the *Sekha Sutta*: “When a noble disciple has thus become one who is possessed of virtue, who guards the doors of his sense faculties, who is moderate in eating, who is devoted to wakefulness ... he is called one in higher training who has entered upon the way.” *Majjhima Nikāya* 53, in Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, p. 463.

⁸⁰ *Samyutta Nikāya* 11, in Bodhi 2000, vol. 1 p. 329.

preaching, good manners in eating, and propriety in urination and excretion.⁸¹ The importance of these rules is manifest in a later (eighth century CE) text, Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, which begins its fifth chapter on "Guarding Introspection" (*saṃprajanyarakṣaṇa*) with an exposition on the importance of cultivating and maintaining mindfulness, and ends with a long list of proper conduct and decorum.⁸² The idea seems to be that one's conduct is an outward, visible manifestation of one's inner mastery.

Such mindful attendance to the smallest facets of human behavior, aspects which would receive little or no attention in a less complex society, is characteristic of the *civilizing* process, and Elias demonstrates in his lengthy exposition on the transformation of European manners and rules of conduct.⁸³ This civilizing process occurs, according to Elias,

wherever, under competitive pressures, the division of functions makes large numbers of people dependent upon one another, wherever a monopolization of physical force permits and imposes a co-operation less charged with emotion, wherever functions are established that demand constant hindsight and foresight in interpreting the actions and intentions of others. What determines the nature and degree of such civilizing spurts is always the extent of interdependencies, the level of the division of functions, and within it, the structure of these functions themselves. (2000:378,9)

And the *civilizing* process as it occurred in India is as deserving of study as is the analogous process that occurred roughly two thousand years later in Europe. This is because the influence of the Indian civilizing model was as important in classical Asia as the Euro-American model is currently throughout the world. Moreover, the spread of the Indian

⁸¹ See Rhys Davids and Oldenburg 1881, pp. 59-67.

model was achieved in an almost entirely non-violent manner,⁸⁴ unlike the hegemony of the West, which was based upon the violent process of colonization, and which to this day perpetuates its unstable global dominance through violence and the threat of violence. A pattern of civilization which spread in a non-violent fashion may therefore be a useful comparative object of study.

III. India in the Maṇḍala of Eurasian Civilizations

From a certain perspective the foregoing comparison is somewhat superficial, which is perhaps inevitable given its brevity. It has, I hope, accomplished its stated aim of showing that, from a comparative perspective and via Elias' criteria, India by the beginning of the "common era" was generally "civilized." If this is accepted then there is little difficulty in understanding how India was in fact able to reach such a high degree of culture, excelling in many of the civilized arts and sciences such as art, architecture, linguistics, literature, mathematics, politics, philosophy, psychology and so forth.

⁸² See Wallace and Wallace 1997, pp, 47-60.

⁸³ See Elias 200 vol. 1 p. 2, pp. 47-182.

⁸⁴ The transmission of Indian culture to Europe, West, Central, East and Southeast Asia was largely conducted non-violently, by merchants, monks, etc. over trade routes. A possible exception could be the spread of Indian culture to Southeast Asia. An earlier generation of Indian nationalist scholars such as R. C. Majumdar claimed was initiated by Indian conquest and colonization. This theory, however, is unsubstantiated and has been generally refuted. Current scholarly consensus seems to focus on commercial links instead. See Mabbett 1977.

A further point which has not been addressed is the very real cultural diversity that exists within the somewhat artificial, complex entity designated by the rubric "India." In this paper I have looked at Indian history through a relatively narrow time frame, making use of a narrow range of date (textual and inscriptional, with reference to archeological findings), but yet with a relatively broad "macrohistorical" perspective. Should one expand or alter the range of data considered yet focus on a narrower region or polity, one would certainly discover significant variation concerning the "civilizing" process, so much so that as we gain greater precision it will be essential to speak of multiple patterns of cultural development within India.

Yet there is a real sense, I believe, in which we can speak of an "Indian civilization," despite the very real cultural diversity that exists within the sub-continent. This manifested politically as described by Inden above, as the typical political situation in which "India" was divided into relatively autonomous yet "inter-related polities that could unite through pacts as well as 'force' within a single imperial formation and create new centres." (1990:188)

From this perspective, the Mauryan imperial formation was atypical insofar as a unified and uncontested imperial formation was achieved. To whatever extent it was achieved, it certainly would not have been *uncontested*. Yet it did create a model toward which the creators of later imperial formations, in India and elsewhere, may have aspired.

The very real cultural achievements attained by Indians of various ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups during the Mauryan period and afterward perhaps can be taken to collectively constitute an "Indian civilization" which was greater than the sum of its various parts. Certainly it was viewed as such by observers from outside, such as the Tibetans, who saw Indian civilization as a very desirable pattern to be emulated, even if such emulation and the resulting cultural transmission is always selective and never complete. It is not difficult to understand how India came to constitute a center of civilization, given its cultural achievements and the relatively early date at which many occurred. Its role as a "center" was purely relational, dependent upon its recognition as a cultural center by its neighbors. And many of its neighbors in Central and Southeast Asia did turn to India as they in turn engaged in state formation and the concomitant civilizing process.

Of course, there is a limit to the process of comparison, a point at which we must acknowledge that the process is no longer fruitful. In the case of India and Europe examined here, we run into this limit rather quickly. The comparison is useful, I believe, in that it aids us in acknowledging and understanding the cultural renaissances which each region experienced—here the comparative process is quite useful, I believe. But beyond, this we must also acknowledge that the manifestations and consequences of renaissance occurred quite differently in Europe and India. A promising subject for further study would be an exploration of cultural *difference*, looking at the different trajectories taken by these

civilizations via a detailed examination of the actual socializing disciplines which in each respective culture yields a *civilized* person. As Bourdieu points out,

If all societies ... that seek to produce a new man through a process of 'deculturation' and 'reculturation' set such store on the seemingly most insignificant details of *dress, bearing*, physical and verbal *manners*, the reason is that, treating the body as memory, they entrust to it in abbreviated and practical, i.e. mnemonic, form the fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of culture. The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and, therefore, more precious, than the values given body, *made* body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling an entire cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy, through injunctions as insignificant as 'stand up straight' or 'don't hold your knife in your left hand.'" (Bourdieu 1977: 94)

One might explore how the socializing disciplines of different societies yield not only different conceptions of the person but also different *constitutions* of the person. This, of course, is a desideratum that will have to be undertaken in elsewhere, through a far more detailed process of comparison.

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