Rethinking civil society

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Abstract

Civil society today is a globally valorized discourse but its contemporary valorization makes it an ally of the market, the liberated and liberalized non-state public sphere where there exists rule of law so that people can exercise their "freedom of choice." Thus propagation of civil society through the package of market gains currency in popular consciousness when the agents of market capitalism such as the World Bank today are also the votaries of civil society. They are vocal in their disenchantment with State and turn to the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) as actors of civil society for service delivery and other functions. But the contemporary reduction of civil society to the space of market exchange needs to be interrogated especially as such a reduction is part of the contemporary valorization of capital which gives primacy to profit over human need, intimacy and the intersubjective foundations of a dignified society. In this context, civil society needs to be rethought as a terrain of socio-political revolution and spiritual transformations for realizing human freedom and a dignified social order which gives an appropriate institutional form to market and state but are not governed by these. The present article is an attempt to rethink civil society as a space of critical reflection and creative transformations and strives to widen its universe of discourse from its modernist over-determination of politics towards self-transformation of individuals and spiritual transformation of societies.

Rethinking Civil Society

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The tradition of civil society is..first and foremost an ethical edifice. From Shaftsbury's Characterestics of *Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) through Frances Hutchenson's Inquiry into the Origins of *Beauty and Virtue* (1725), Adam Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767)...it is concerned with positing the moral sense or a "universal determination to benevolence in mankind" as a fundamental given of human nature. It was this moral sense which assured mutuality, compassion and empathy, that is, a basis for human interaction beyond the calculus of pure exchange.

> Adam B. Seligman (1995), *"Animadversions Upon Civil Society and Civic Virtue in the Last Decade of the Twentieth Century,"* p. 205.

Civil societies are defined by the practices of their inhabitants. These practices may lead to the sphere becoming a captive of state, equally the sphere may realize its potential for mounting a powerful challenge to state-oriented practices. The presence of civil society is a crucial, but not an adequate precondition for ensuring state accountability. Whether the state can be made accountable depends on the self-consciousness, the vibrancy, and the political vision of civil society.

> Neera Chandhoke (1995), *State and Civil Society: Explorations in Political Theory,* p. 10.

The priest and the prince, whenever they rule together, either through a state-established religion or a religion-established state, are the enemies of civil society. xxx. the co-existence, dialogue and exchange of aspects among religions are typical of humanity and civil society, and by no means exceptions in history xx For it is a law of religion and society, and not only for the Christian martyrs, that whosoever tries to save his self shall surely lose it, but the one who will lose himself for the sake of truth, God, other human beings or nature, shall find his true self in love of the other.

> J.P.S. Uberoi (1996), *Religion, Civil Society and the State: A Study of Sikhism,* p. x, ix.

The Problem:

Civil society today is a globally valorized discourse which is part of the trinity of the globalising discursive field constituted of two other elements: market and democracy. The contemporary valorization of civil society makes it an ally of the market, the liberated and liberalized non-state public sphere where there exists rule of law so that people can exercise their "freedom of choice." Thus propagation of civil society through the package of market gains currency in popular consciousness when the agents of market capitalism such as the World Bank today are also the votaries of civil society. They are vocal in their disenchantment with State and turn to the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) as actors of civil society for service delivery and other functions. But the contemporary reduction of civil society to the space of market exchange needs to be interrogated especially as such a reduction is part of the contemporary valorization of capital which gives primacy to profit over human need, intimacy and the intersubjective foundations of a dignified society. In this context, civil society needs to be rethought as a terrain of political mobilization and socio-political revolution for realizing human freedom and a dignified social order which gives an appropriate institutional form to market but is not governed by it.

Though not much work has been done in the public sphere and at the popular level either in the West or in India to dispel the popular perception and the hegemonic propagation of the reduction of civil society to a sphere

of free market exchange, scholars in the academy have worked hard to dispel such a mis-conception. In the Indian context, the work of Neera Chandhoke (1995) is a remarkable example of such an endeavour. Chandhoke, building on three centuries of political interpretation of the idea of civil society, not only provides a strong political interpretation of the project of civil society but also urges us to realize its revolutionary aspirations. Chandhoke's is a welcome counter to the marketization of the market view of civil society and even to the reconstructive agenda of civil society of advocates such as Jurgen Habermas (1996), Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato (1992) for whom the project of civil society today is destined to be reformist and it can not go beyond constitutionalism. But the turn to the political in the project of civil society, though a welcome move and has behind it three centuries of discursive deliberations, socio-political movements and constitutional state-making, is not adequate for realising the possibilities of civil society as a space of and for self-realization, intersubjective intimacy and creativity, and critiqe of the logic of the market and the state. In fact, the problem with the idea of civil society is that it is too much determined by the modernist view of power and politics and this over-determination of the political in the constitution of the discourse and practice of civil society needs as much a foundational interrogation as its reduction to market exchange, or even to the Hegelian "system of needs." Though at the surface level, the project of civil society looks as if it is a project of non-politics and outside the sphere of state, in its deep structure it is guided by the same logic of power which constitutes the realm of politics in the state. In this context the challenge before us is to rethink civil society and transcend the primacy of the political in thinking about it and being part of it. Those who inhabit civil society are not only rights-bearing, juridical beings but are also spiritually integral beings and unless civil society is animated and enriched by their sadhana of self-transformation and the tapashya of unconditional ethical obligation of the self to the other and society, then it can not perform its creative and critical functions. It shall cease to be a reflective space where the logic of money and power of society is shown its proper place and is given a transformative direction.

In this paper, I am interested to widen the discourse of civil society from its over-determination of politics towards self-transformation of individuals and spiritual transformation of societies. I do this through a dialogue with some selected constructions and reconstructions of civil society, classical and modern. I first describe their work at great length and then show how their work lacks but implicitly points to a moral and spiritual direction which now needs urgent retrieval, attention and emphasis. Then I make an attempt to show how the discourse and practice of civil society can be supplemented by the spiritual project of self-transformation and social transformation through a dialogue with works such as J.P.S Uberoi's whose re-interpretation of Gandhism and Sikhism as projects of creating a spiritual civil society is a remarkable example in this field.

The Idea of Civil Society

But as a prelude to this rethinking, interrogation, and dialogue it is helpful to have some idea of the idea of civil society and the historical context of its contemporary revival. The idea of civil society has a long history. Though many would like to confine it within modern western thought, it can be traced far back both within the western tradition and outside it. For example, Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato (1992) in their comprehensive treatise on civil society—the history of this idea, its various critiques as well as contemporary articulations—tell us that in the western context, it can be traced as far back to Aristotle. They write: "The first version of the concept of civil society appear in Aristotle under the heading of political society / community" (Cohen and Arato 1992 : 84). But this idea of political community was different from the modernist idea of politics and political society. "Political Koinonia was defined as a public-ethical community of free and equal citizens under a legally defined system of rules. Law itself, however, was seen as the expression of an ethics, a common set of norms and values defining not only political procedures but also a substantive form of life based on a developed catalogue of preferred virtues and forms of interaction" (ibid). As we can note, this idea of civil society concerned with virtues and substantive goodness is different from the modernist idea of civil society as the space of mediation between family and state, individual and state which did not pay enough attention to cultivation of virtues in the life of individuals. On the otherhand, any talk of virtue in the modernist discourse gets immediately associated either with collectivist asumptions or with heroic politics (Gupta 1997; Seligman 1995). In this context, the Aristotelian focus on virtue not only as an idiosyncratic attribute of the individual but also as a seeker "of a single objective account of the human good, of human flourishing" (cf. Nussbaum 1993: 243) can revitalize the modernist account of civil society.

The idea of civil society in modernity whose master interlocutor is G.W.F. Hegel has many critiques as well: from Hannah Arendt to Michael Foucault (Cohen and Arato 1992). We shall encounter tangentially some of these enunciations and critiques in the course of our following dialogue and exploration. But now let us straightaway go to some of the definitions of civil society. By civil society Cohen and Arato refer to "a normative model of a societal realm different from the state and the economy and having the following components: (1) plurality: families, informal groups, and voluntary associations whose plurality and autonomy allow for a variety of forms of life; (2) publicity: institutions of culture and communication; (3) Privacy: a domain of individual self-development and moral choice; and (4) Legality: structures of general laws and basic rights needed to demarcate plurality, privacy, and publicity from at least the State and, tendentially, the economy" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 346). This depiction of civil society is comprehensive and it draws our attention to its four important charcteristics: plurality, publicity, privacy and legality. But in the modernist construction of civil society, while the issues of publicity and legality have got enough attention, the issues of plurality and privacy, i.e., "self-development and moral choice" have neither received equally engaged reflection nor been accompanied by creative collective actions. Co-existence of varieties of forms of life requires mutual penetration between the self and other but Euro-American culture and civil society is in a very fundamental sense deeply monological and it does not have the ontological resources to practise tolertion as an ontological and intersubjective project rather than to talk on this discursively as a political project alone (Cf. Giri 1998a).

Coming back to having a clearer view of the meaning of civil society, Cohen and Arato tell us: "We postulate the differentiation of civil society not only from the State but also from the economy. Our concept is neither state-centered, as was Hegel's, however ambiguously, nor eonomy-centred, as was Marx's. Ours is a society-centered project" (ibid: 411). So, the project of civil society is a societal project but what is the conception of society in this discourse? Society is a society of rights-bearing individuals. As Chandhoke helps us understand it: "In the eyes of the state and the law, the individual is the citizen, in the eyes of inhabitants of civil society he is recognizable as the bearer of rights. Rights flowing from the states of citizen, thus constitute the individual of civil soceity" (1995: 183). But in rethinkig civil society there is a need to move from the discourse of rights tó a practice of obligation and thinking of society as a field of such obligations.

In our effort to have clarity of the terms of discourse as a prelude to our conversation, let us have a little more time with Chandhoke. Chandhoke (1995: 9) tells us: "The values of civil society are those of political participation, state accountability, and publicity of politics... The institutions of civil society are associational and representative forums, a free press and social associations." But as stated earlier Chandhoke deploys a much more revolutionary notion of politics than Hegel, Habermas and others and writes: "...politics as articulatory practices which mediate between the experiential and expressive are not only about controls and boundaries. They are about transgressions of these boundaries and about the reconstitution of the political. The site at which these mediations and contestations take place; the site at which society enters into a relationship with the State can be defined as civil society" (ibid). Thus Chandhoke's concern with the reconstitution of the political has a positive appeal eventhough this reconstitutive desire lacks an Aristotelian concern with virtues. Chandhoke further writes which is important from the point of view of our project of rethinking: "But instead of seeing civil society per se as the solution to all problems, I problematize the sphere itself. *Civil society by itself has no teleological virtue unless it is accompanied both by an interrogation of the sphere itself and* a project for democratizing civil society" (ibid: 40; emphases added). But how-does Chandhoke want to interrogate civil society? She wants to do it only from the point of view of state, as she herself writes: "The interrogation of civil society has to be carried out with the State as a constant reference point" (ibid: 39). This is an instance of the primacy of the political which is in need of rethinking and trnscendence today. Chandhoke does not interrogate civil society from the reference point of self—both the opportunity for self-realisation that civil society provides or does not provide as well as from the point of view of a self or a community of selves which considers and finds both state and civil society tyrannical and wants to create a dignified society which has its props in both political mobilisation and self-transformation. Chandhoke speaks about "self-consciousness of civil society" but does not explore its various dimensions, especially its ontology and spiritual sources (Cf. Giri 1998; Taylor 1986).

In coming to terms with civil society, another issue that is helpful to get clear about is the link between civil society and social movements. As Cohen and Arato tell us: "We inherit the concept of civil society from

two sources: the history of concepts and theories, and the self-understanding of social movements. The ideologists of social movements seem to confirm that a rich tradition of interpretation has not been exhausted, that it remains an adequate basis for the symbolic orientation of comtemporary actions" (1992: 299). In fact, the contemporary revival of civil societies has much to do with social movements in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa, North America and Western Europe. Social movements, starting from Marxism to post-Marxist moves such as Poland's Solidarity, have continuously striven to widen the discourse of civil society. The new social movements in both the North and the South have been important agents of this broadening of civil society as a domain of expanding rights (Giri 1997; Visvanathan 1995; Wignaraj 1993) and are, in fact, important constituents of civil society. The contemporary revival of civil society also embodies a quest for alternative to the marketization of the human condition inasmuch as in different social movements and voluntary associations people relate to each other not through the medium of market alone but through reciprocity and human intimacy (see Offe & Heinze 1992).

But in talking about the project of civil society as it is constituted of voluntary associations and social movements, there is a need to make a distinction between those social movements which are absolutist and fundamentalist i.e., those who close their doors to any dialogue and conversation and those who present themselves for dialogue and conversation. In this context, Chandhoke urges us to "distinguish between counter-civil society movements such as religious fundamentalism from associational life based on voluntary and revocable membership" (ibid: 28). For Chandhoke, the so-called people's movement for destroying Babri Masjid is not part of the project of civil society where as the Narmada Bachao Andolan is. She urges us to conceptualize civil society "as a conglomeration of protest movements which challenge the unjust and inequitable Indian State" (ibid: 29). Chandhoke also provides two criteria for evaluating whether collective actions can be part of civil society or not: first they should be committed to equality, second they should be committed to freedom. Eventhough Chandhoke does not rethink these ideas and ideals of equality and liberty in the light of contemporary transformations and does not explore the preparation that is required at the level of self—what Pantham (1995) calls "experimental subjectivity"—(an exercise I have been preliminarily engaged in some of my earlier writings on exclusion, inequality and institutions—Please see Giri 1996a, 1996b, 1997a & 1997b), this is still a helpful move of differentiating between initiatives which celebrate human dignity and initiatives which butcher it in the sphere of civil society. Similarly, Jurgen Habermas provides us differentiating criteria to understand different collective actions in the sphere of civil society and this is whether they are willing to participte in communicative interaction and conversation or not.

The contemporary revival of civil society has arisen in new historical constellations of various social movements but these movements soon become preoccupied only with the issue of capture of power; they degenerate themselves into actors only of political society. Cohen and Arato tell us that this is, at least, the experience in Eastern Europe and Latin Amrica. They urge us to reflect: "What will happen to the value of democracy as the sphere of civil society shrinks to the benefit of political society?" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 57). This shrinkage urges us to rethink and reconstruct civil society as a space of reflection, creativity, criticism and struggle in the contemporary context. The reflective space of civil society must maintain its autonomy both from the incoroporation of the state and the market which are only too eager to capture it. But while civil society must maintain its autonomy both from the state and the market, its reflective deliberations and preferences nevertheless must influence the actors of both the state and the market. In fact, the reflective ground of civil society must also be the constitutive ground of both the market and the state. Thus the space that civil society occupies in a democratic society is not of the same order as that of market and state. While market and state can be looked at as the bounded sub-systems of a society, civil society does not occupy any bounded space as its ground and horizon of unbound reflection transgresses the boundaries between society and the market, and society and state. At the same time, while dealing with power in both state and market the reflective actors of civil society must be aware that they are dealing with two kinds of power. While the power of the state, especially its tyrannical form, is easily visible and can be targetted the power of the market is largely invisible and it presents itself with a sweet smile as the facilitator of actors' "freedom of choice," and this power calls for an ability within the actors to make a distinction between need and greed, illusion and bondage.1

Civil Society and the Over-Determination of the Political: A Dialogue

G.W. F. Hegel is the master interlocutor of the discourse of civil society in modernity who has left a profound legacy in the subsequent reflections on it in the last 150 years.2 His idea of civil society reflects both an instance of the over-determination of the political as well as a realization of the limits of politics inasmuch as he looks at civil society as a sphere of ethics. As Jeffrey Alexander (1997: 121) tells us: "For Hegel, civil society is not only the world of economic needs but also the sphere of ethics. It is a moral realm differentiated from family life, which Hegel portrayed as fully concrete and particularistic, and from the State. What is important is that, along side the world of needs, Hegel emphasized other intermediate groups and forms, like law and what today we would call voluntary organizations." As we shall see, by ethics Hegel does not mean only societal customs but refers to what Habermas (1990) later calls the "post-conventional" moral development of individuals.

Civil society in Hegel is the mediating ground between family and state consisting of corporations, political associations and voluntary organizations. It attends to all the following three things: system of needs, the administration of justice and the police and corporation (Inwood 1992: 92). Hegel differentiates civil society both from the family and the state. In family, Hegel writes: "I relate to other human beings with a view of their, rather than my interets in mind" but in civil society, "I treat everybody as a means to my own ends [and I even use] the felt need of the other as a means to my own ends" (Dallmayr 1993: 118). Thus one aspect of the Hegelian discourse of civil society is that "civil society is the sphere of universal egoism, where I treat everybody as a means to my own ends" (Chandhoke 1995: 94). But it must be noted that "If Hegel's concept of civil society is a narrative of greed and egoism, his narrative of a desired civil society is one of how these limitations can be overcome" (ibid: 25). This could be overcome both by developing belongingness to state3 as well as by developing one's own inner conscience and morality. Unfortunately, it is the statist dimension of Hegel's discourse of civil society which has dominated our thought and practice and his attentiveness to the development of inner conscience in overcoming one's egotism in civil society has not received much attention and is now in need of an epochal retrieval and re-articulation.

In recent Indian scholarship on civil society, Dipankar Gupta (1995) is an uncritical champion of the Hegelian agenda of state in thinking about civil society. He asserts that tradition is the store house of customs and customary laws which has no regard for human dignity and hence cannot and should not enter into the domain of civil society. Gupta finds it problematic that "the concept of civil society in India draws its intellectual charge as a cultural critique of the Indian State" (Gupta 1997: 128). Gupta further states: "For Hegel, the civil society cannot be seen as something external to the state... For a civil society to function, it needs ethical sanction which cannot come from a collection of customary laws but from a developed modern state where individual freedom is enshrined not as a virtue, or a morality (what ought to be), but in ethics where particulars are satisfied through the general" (Gupta 1997: 138). Furthermore, "To think of a civil society is to think of the ethical idea which is the guarantor of freedom" (ibid: 139). Gupta cautions us "..if tradition is allowed to gain the upperhand then it is not civil society and with it the concomitant growth of freedom that develops. It is worth recalling that for Hegel the family was still not civil society or it was an early, immediate, and immature manifestation of the ethical idea" (ibid: 141).

Gupta's assertions have a number of implications of which the most dangerous is the wholesale condemnation of tradition as the store house of human slavery and celebration of the modern state as a guarantor of freedom, as a source of the ethics of freedom. But in his assertions on tradition, Gupta might be making a score with Ashish Nandy whose arguments he criticizes without a fair exposition but even Nandy's global packaging of tradition is deeply aware of its manifold faces and makes a distinction between utopia and dystopia in thinking about both tradition and modernity (Nandy 1987; Also see Giri 1995). But Gupta does not extend the spirit of his critique of tradition to the critique of modern state. Gupta does not realize that the logic of the modern state has led to the annihilation of human freedom as well. To assert that modern state has been an ethical guarantor of freedom seems incomprehensible in a society such as India where state has continuously trampled upon human rights. One does not have to be a Foucauldian to have this as a perspective that "modern civil society is not equivalent to its principles of freedom, equality, democracy, justice, rights, autonomy, and solidarity" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 297). But Gupta takes the emancipatory enunciations of both modern civil society and modern state at face value which is not accidental since even in his earlier work

on ethnic violence and the modern nation-state he celebrates the hegemony that modern nation-state conscioussness has attained in India in the last 50 years (Gupta 1996).

Gupta's stance on civil society is an instance of the primacy of the political where the political is an adjunct of the state and this is in urgent need of a rethinking now. In discussing the potential for formation of civil society that the social mobilisation of Bharatiya Kisan Union of Mahendra Singh Tikait of UP offers, Gupta has the following comments regarding its anti-liquor campaign: "When it comes to the laudable objective of curbing liquor and drug addiction, here too methods are traditional and repressive. Even if the government gives some one the legitimate contract to vend liquor, the outlet should be forcicbly closed. In addition the person who rents his property for such purposes should also be socially boycotted" (ibid : 145). But Gupta does not look into the repressive desire of the state in flooding UP villages with liquor and the ethical foundation of the so-called legitimate contract itself. Nor does he consider the calamities and destruction that liquour brings to families and individual lives.

Gupta looks at the emergence of civil society in terms of a transition from "objective to subjective epistemologies" but civil society is not only a question of epistemology, it requries an appropriate ontology as well.4 In the presentation of self in Gupta's public sphere of subjective epistemology, what is the scope for cultivation of an appropriate subjectivity? While talking about Mahendra singh Tikait, Gupta writes the following, among others: "..many of his followers have told me that on several occasions the BKU chief leaves a meeting and goes to his prayer room where he is not to be disturbed" (Gupta 1997: 60). But Gupta does not ask Tikait what significance prayer has in his personal life as well as in his conduct in the public sphere. Tikait's immersion in prayer in the midst of political meetings is an instance of the limits of the political and an epistemological approach to thinking about subjectivity and civil society and draws our attention to the issue of cultivation of self.

In interpreting civil society as a sphere of ethics, Gupta as we have seen, distinguishes ethics both from virtue and from morality. Virtue is intimately tied, for Gupta, with elitism, heroism and hence not democratic. But Gupta does not realize, even after MacIntyre (1981), Nussbaum (1993) and Sri Aurobindo (1950), that virtue is not a quality of a few supermen as Nietzche would have us believe but a "voice in the self contending with other voices" (cf. Connolly 1991: 187)—voices of unreflective5 fulfillment of needs, egotism and statism. Morevoer can one be ethical if one does not develop an appropriate moral consciousness as without development of moral consciousness, ethical life can degenerate even in modern civil societies into an apology for the existing institutions of society, institutions which are houses of "problematic justice" (Habermas 1990)?

What is helpful is that Hegel himself does not make a sharp distinction between ethics and morality probably realizing that without moral courage and moral conscience, ethical life under even modern civil society and state can be customary, no different from the customary laws of tradition. Hegel urges us to realize that the ethical life of a society should always have a supplement in the morality of individuals as he tells us : "the cultivated member of a modern state does not... unreflectively accept the norms and institutions of his society" (Inwood 1992: 93). Hegel tells us that morality is developed by one's "reason, conscience or feelings" (Inwood 1992: 92). In fact, for Hegel, as Dallmayr helps us to understand, conscience is the "deepest inward solitude with oneself where every external restriction has disappeared—in this complete withdrawal into oneself, man is no longer shackled by the aims of particularity, in attempting that position he has risen to higher ground, the ground of the modern world which for the first time has attained this consciousness.." (Dallmayr 1993: 116). What is to be noted here is that even despite Hegel's celebration of the modern moment in the attainment of the high ground of conscience, conscience can not be understood nor can it be cultivated with the categories of state, politics, and positive law alone It also requires prayer as a mode of being, a mode which surprises a Hegelian such as Gupta but does not inspire him for further exploratation and dialogue (Please note the previous discussion about Gupta's reactions to Tikait's immersion in prayers).

In fact, ethical life is an ideal for Hegel which is not to be confused that it either exists in the modern civil society or the state. If this has not adequately developed in the sphere of family, as Gupta argues, it has also not adequately developed in the sphere of civil society as Hegel himself describes civil society as "the stage of appearance" or as the "appearing world of ethical life" (Dallmayr 1993: 122). The ideal of ethical life is an ideal of reconciliation, reconciliation between societal ethics and individual morality. As Dallmayr (1993: 117) interprets the Hegelian agenda for us:

On the level of morality, goodnes confronts subjective will as a postulate or demand addressed at inner conscience; objective standard and inward intention are correlated only in the mode of diremption, that is the mode of conflictual opposition. This diremption is overcome on the plane of ethical life where objective goodness becomes the concrete aim and content of will. xxx By weilding together inward will and objective goodness ethical life cancels or sublates diremption, thereby fulfilling the task of reconciliation

Civil society, Hegel urges us, has to perform a pedagogic function and its highest pedagogic challenge is the education of this ideal of reconciliation

It has to be noted here that the reconciliation between ethics and morality requires a transcendence from societal categories of thinking about morality. While many of the interpreters of civil society inevitably refer to the indomitable and indisputably significant Hegelian legacy, we may also take note of another tradition of thinking about civil society, i.e. the tradition of Scottish Englightenment which is not so much concerned with state but with the development of individual moral conscience. In this tradition represented by Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith and others: "the idea of civil society came to rest on the notion of autonomous and moral individual as standing at the foundation of social order" (Seligman 1995: 215). What is important to realize is that morality in this tradition is not an appendage of society, even a civil society, and a Durkheimian collective conscience. What Seligman tells us about the emphasis on individual morality in this tradition of thinking about civil society deserves a careful consideration from us, especialy from the point of view of our rethinking:

...in revising the sixth (1790) edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith abandoned his idea of a harmonious society in which public opinion can be seen as a guide to moral action and proposed instead a psychological mechanism for the development of an internal conscience. xxx In the move from the first to the sixth edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, the impartial spectator is internalized, removed from any facile identification with public opinion, and virtue casts off its moorings in the public sphere. *While men are, in this reading, still social beings, what permits sociability is not the dissolution of self in any general will but the constitution of self through that higher morality imparted by the impartial, internal spectator*—higher that is than the mere motive of recognition and approval on the part of 'high society,' a motive that Smith was to view with increasing apprehension through the closing decades of the eighteenth century (Seligman 1995: 209; emphases added).

The above tells us clearly the significance of moral conscience for civil society. Thus there is more to Hegel's views on state, ethics and civil society than comes out in an interpretation such as Gupta's. In fact, as Chandhoke who is certainly not a great votary of Hegel tells us: "Hegel mourns the fact that modern society has lost its capacity to realize ethical life" (Chandhoke 1995: 119).6 Hegel's discussion of ethical life (Sittlichkeit) "involves a greater stress on its production and reproduction throuh self-conscious action" (Cohen and Arato 1992:94).7 However the dominant tradition of the discourse and practice of civil society has not paid enough attention to nurturing self-conscious action of individuals and has not gone beyond the primacy of the political in thinking about its cultivation and reflective mobilization.

From the above dialogue with statism in the Hegelian legacy on thinking about civil society, we can now come to a critique of the notion of the public and publicity in the Hegelian agenda. And here Hannah Arendt's normative critique of civil society helps us in its rethinking. Arendt argues that civil society as an appendage of state and modern mass society has obstructed the "enrichment of the private sphere as a sphere of intimacy" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 178). But it is important to preserve and cultivate the sphere of intimacy in order that civil society does not degenerate into mass society. For Arendt, "On the level of a small circle of interpersonal relations, intimacy involves a tremendous deepening of the private sphere, in the sense of an intensification and enrichment of 'subjective notions and private feelings'" (Cohen & Arato 1992: 189). For Arendt, "The Hegelian attempt to mediate private and public sphere through intermediary social-political bodies thus winds up reducing the space for public freedom within the structure of the state. The situation is made all the worse because the decline of the *public does not benefit the private; the social tends to destroy the private sphere as well*" (ibid; emphases added).

In her critique of civil society, Arendt deploys a different notion of power. For her, power is "acting in concert, on the basis of making and keeping promises, mutually binding one another, covenanting" (ibid : 178). Her concept of power points to "action oriented to normative principles that derive their force from the depth-structure of a form of communication based on mutual recognition and solidarity" (ibid: 179) and she conceives of polis as "the organization of people as it arises out of speaking and acting together" (ibid: 178).

Civil Society and the Play of Communicative Power:
Habermas, Public Sphere and Beyond

Arendt's foregrounding of intimacy and conception of power as "covenanting" is an important step in transcending the primacy of the political in rethinking civil society. Power here is not an intsrument of domination but arises out of human conversation and mutual recognition. Such a notion of power can be a first step in transcending the primacy of political in the modernist discourse of civil society and Jurgen Habermas presents us such an agenda of rethinking and reconsturction. Habermas himself writes: "In contrast to Weber, who sees the fundamental phenomenon of power as the probability that in a social relationship one can assert one's own will against opposition, Arendt views power as the potential of a common will formed in noncoercive communication" (1996: 147). For Habermas, communicative power can develop "only in undeformed public spheres; it can issue only from structures of undamaged intersubjetivity found in nondistorted communication" (ibid: 148). Communicative power emerges from the communicative reason of the actors and Habermas (1996: 3-4) portrays communicative reason thus: "Communicative reason differs from practical reason first and forememost in that it is no longer ascribed to the individual actor or to a macrosubject at the level of the State or the whole of society. Rather, what makes communicative reason possible is the linguistic medium through which interactions are woven together and forms of life are structured. This rationality is inscribed in the linguistic telos of mutual undertanding and forms an ensemble of conditions that both enable and limit."

The idea of public sphere is central to Habermas's reconstruction of civil society but it is important to note that Habermas himself writes: "...within the boundaries of the public sphere, or at least of a liberal public sphere, *actors can acquire influence, not political power*" (ibid: 371; emphases added). Therefore actors in civil society have to learn how to speak to each other, persuade each other and gain the authority of influence through a process of deliberation and dialogue. Such moral influence can control "the public authority of the modern state" (Cohen and Arato 1997: 216) rather than becoming an appendage of state or an instrument in the capture of political power. For Habermas, the public sphere is a "network for communicating information and points of view...; the streams of communication are in the process filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions" (ibid: 360). But for Habermas, the public sphere must not only "detect and identify problems but also convincingly and influentially thematize them, furnish them with possible solutions, and dramatize them in such a way that they are taken up and dealt with by parliamentary complexes" (ibid: 359).

Habermas goes beyond a strict sociologism in his conception of public sphere which helps us to rethink civil society as well. The public sphere is not a social order, nor is it a social institution and "certainly not an organisation" (ibid: 341). "It is not even a framework of norms with differentiated competences and roles, membership regulations and so on.." (ibid). It is a space for mutual conversation between actors where they constitute each other rather than just observe each other from the outside. In the evocative words of Habermas: "Unlike success-oriented actors who mutually observe each other as one observes something in the objective world, persons acting communicatively encounter each other in a situation they at the same time constitute with their co-operatively negotiated interpretations" (ibid: 361).8

If Habermas does not reduce public sphere to social institution, he does not reduce it to the political public sphere either. In his discussion on the rise of public sphere in modern Europe, he has discussed, at great length, the rise of the literary public sphere (Habermas 1989). Habermas urges us to understand the wider significance of it as literature transgresses the boundary between the public and private and urges us to realize that "problems voiced in the public sphere first become visible when they are mirrorred in personal life experiences" (Habermas 1996: 365). Furthermore, "To the extent these experiences find their concise expression in the languages of religion, art, and literature, the `literary' public sphere in the broader sense, which is

specialized for the articulation of values and world disclosure, is intertwined with the political public sphere" (ibid).

Habermas urges us to realize that contemporary societies are increasingly subjected to the logic of various systems and sub-systems and to think about civil society today is to rescue it from their systemic incorporations. Systems and sub-systems have their own specific codes and languages and in order to defend and recreate civil society as a space of autonomy, criticism and creativity we need to go beyond these specialized and alienating languages and to use the "metalanguage" (Habermas 1996) inherent in ordinary language and conversation.9

Cohen and Arato who provide a creative interpretation of the Habermasian agenda urge us to understand the link between civil societies and the quest for democratization. For them, "a modern civil society not only logically and (historically) faciliates the emergence of representative democracy but also makes historically possible the democratisation of representative democracy" (1992: 414). From the point of view of our rethinking, they urge us to realize that "democracy can go much further on the level of civil society than on the level of political or economic society" (ibid: 417). But they do not look into the self-transformation that is required of actors for realizing the project of democracy (Giri 1996b; Warren 1992).

The utopia of civil society, Habermas argues, is a utopia of differentiation as against the all-consuming agenda of market and society. But for Habermas as well as for Cohen and Arato, this utopia is anti-revolutionary as they believe that revolutions are no longer possible. It is civil disobedience which keeps "the utopian horizons of a democratic and just civil society alive" (ibid: 566). Civil disobedience is not for just the defense and protection of individual rights but is a crucial component of change "within a constitutional democracy" and a source of "creation of new rights" (ibid: 587). Though anti-revolutionary in the scheme of Habermas, Cohen and Arato, the project of civil disobedience is still animated by a realisation that at any given time neither the project of democracy nor constitution is a fully realized one. In the words of Habermas (1996: 384):

Every historical example of a democratic constitution has a double temporal reference: as a historic document, it recalls the foundational act that it interprets—it marks a beginning in time. At the same time, its normative character means that the task of interpreting and elaborating the system of rights poses itself anew for each generation; as the project of a just society, a constitution articulates the horizon of expectation opening on an ever-present future.

But at the same time, Habermas writes: "..democratic movements emerging from civil society, must give up holistic aspirations to a self-organizing society, aspirations that also undergirded Marxist ideas of social revolution" (1996: 372). Habermas wants to put civil society in its place and have less grander goals: "..civil society can directly transform only itself, and it can have at most an indirect effect on the self-transformation of the political systems; generally, it has an influence only on the personal programming of this system" (ibid). But this is a limited programme of reconsturction which does not have the desire to radically interrogate the system itself. This is a reflection of what Manoranjan Mohanty (1983; also see, 1997a, 1997b) calls "acquiescent politics." We can not for sure predict that any revolutionary re-arrangement of system would not take place. To a historically minded scholar such as Habermas one hardly needs to remind that history is full of surprises and these surprises may as well spring from the space of civil society and the public sphere.

Another problem with the Habermasian reconstruction of civil society is its uncritical bondage to a rational model of human life and his consistent refusal to broaden its agenda to a supra-rational and spiritual reconstruction of self, culture and society. I have discussed this at great length elsewhere and I shall not go into this critique here again (Giri 1994a; 1998b). For Habermas, "..a robust civil society xx can blossom only in an already rationalized life-world" (Habermas 1996: 371). But the preparation of self that is required to take part in public sphere such as capacity for otherness, self-sacrifice, widening of self, devotion to collective well-being, and capacity for criticism and creativity both at the level of self and society is not ensured only by rationalization even under the aegis of what Habermas calls "communicative reason." It also requires a spiritualization of life. It must be noted that Habermas himself speaks of the necessity of proceeding with a "weak transcendental" idealization in communicative interactions and conversations (Habermas 1996: 4). For him, communicatively acting individuals "must undertake certain idealizations—for example, ascribe identical meanings to expressions,

connect utterances with context-transcending validity claims, etc." (ibid). But he considers such idealizations only "unavoidable" and is reluctant to explore the depth and height of such idealizations. He is reluctant to. admit that supra-rational modes of being can enrich both the ground and practice of such idealizations.

But the scope for a spiritualization of civil society is suggested in the following lines of Cohen and Arato as they interpret the Habermasian agenda: "The forms of cultural modernity have played an important role in the emergence of civil societies. Nevertheless, we shall argue that the full potential of these forms has never been realized anywhere. On the contrary, modernization in the West has proceeded according to patterns that have distorted the institutions of civil society and the potentials of a modernized life-world" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 442). Realizing this potential requires going beyond the Habermasian agenda of "rationalization of lifeworld" (ibid: 445). Again it must be noted that Habermas and the Habermasians such as Cohen and Arato look at the calling of cultural transformation only in a half-hearted manner and do not realize that without continued self-transformation culture fails to become a resource for "the enrichment of everyday communicative practice" (ibid: 455) and the ideal of cultural transformation remains only a chimera.10

The noted political theorist Fred Dallmayr had told us long ago that "in his stress on performative competence Habermas consistently privileges speaking over hearing or listening" (Dallmayr 1991: 24). Though in his latest work, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, Habermas seems to be reluctantly departing from his preoccupation with argumentation to a field of intersubjective conversation, still he does not address the issue of self-preparation and cultivation of self vis-a-vis hearing or listening. Listening requires silence as a mode of being which may not be naturally available to participants of discourse except as imposed on them by the power of discourse or the discourse of power. Genuine listening begins with a devoted open-endedness without any apriori bias and is always eager to arrive at an emergent mid-point. Civil society is not only a space for speaking but also a space for hearing and listening as well as sharing of reflections on life as they emerge not only from discourse but also from deep silence.

Elsewhere, Habermas has written: "I think all of us feel that one must be ready to recognize the interests of others even when they run counter to our own, but the person who does that does not really sacrifice himself, but becomes a larger self" (Habermas 1987: 94). This raises the isue of self-sacrifie which is only hinted at in Habermas but for a fuller exploration of its significance for rethinking civil society and its revitalization, we shall now turn to J.P.S Uberoi's reflections on self-sacrifice and civil society.

Self-Sacrifice and Civil Society:
Martyrdom as a Mode of Being

The noted Indian social theorist J.P.S. Uberoi (1996) in his recent insightful study of Sikhism and Gandhism argues that the renewal, revitalization and transformation of civil societies requires martyrs as their bearers, creators and transformers. Without the "loving self-sacrifice" of the martyrs and their courage to say "no" to the logic of power, the project of civil society cannot really hold itself. Uberoi does not mean that all of us have to be continuously stung by either a death instinct or an instinct for immortality in order to act as martyrs for the cause of civil society which is a cause of truth, societal autonomy and human dignity. Martyrdom should be a part of our being so that we are not afraid to sacrifice ourselves for the cause of the freedom of civil society and the creativity and dignity of self when we are called for it. In the entire discourse of civil society, there is very little dicussion on the sacrifice that self or a community of selves has to make for protecting the autonomy of civil society and the dignity of individuals. Interlocutors such as Habermas take for granted that self-sacrifice would always be a part of the painless process of self-enlargement. But Uberoi brings the issue of self-sacrifice to the center of the discourse and practice of civil society.

In his reflections on civil society, Uberoi is not within the modernist trap. He neither considers civil society as a product of the modernist transition in history (though he would not discount its significance in understanding the contour that civil society has taken in the modern past and the present) nor does he look at it through the over-determinant logic of power. For Uberoi, civil society has a universal foundation because it is a creative and critical encounter with the logic of power and power is a universal feature of all societies. Uberoi starts his book with an evocative picture in which a young prince stands in a modest attitude in front of

a faqir seated on a platform in a wilderness.11 This demonstrates the humility of power in front of wisdom and the lack of interest in the acquisition of power on the part of the saints and faqirs. One lesson we can draw for our project of contemporary rethinking and renewal is that civil society has to have souls and community of souls who are not governed by the logic and desire of power (understood in the sense of Weberian domination) and have the moral and spiritual authority to provide transformative direction to the holders of power.12

The space of civil society is enriched and given new life by the thought and work of the martyrs. For Uberoi, it is the martyrs, rather than either the heroes or the victims, who constitute the universal foundation of civil society. In their struggle against the power of the state the martyrs show that "no power on earth can make the self do anything against its nature, except indirectly confer martyrdom on it" (Uberoi 1996: 88). For Uberoi, the elementary structure of martyrdom is "manifestly the non-dualism13 of loving self-sacrifice...but equally it is the responsibility of 'arising to bear witness' on the duality of the true and false, religion and irreligion, liberation and bondage" (ibid: 130). Furthermore, "The martyr is one who must love his enemy in some sense since he or she is the perfect witness (saheed-ul-kamil) that God, who at this time takes an interest in history and politics, does not want his servant to suppose, as the dualist would, that Satanism has any true independent existence, and so dharmayudhya, the righteous war, can be transformed into satyagraha" (ibid: 124). What Uberoi writes about Antigone, the first martyr of the world, deserves our careful attention as it is linked with the project of martyrdom in both Gandhism and Sikhism:

> I think that perhaps the world's first martyr of truth and non-violence was a Greek, Antigone, a European and a woman, best known to us as depicted by Sophocles, c.500 B.C. Antigone, who preceded both Socrates and Jesus, wanted the integration of religion and society to be upheld by her freedom of conscience and immemorial usage, the custom of civil society, while Creon, the King, wished his reasons of state to be separate from, and to override, both religion and society. I will not attempt to decide which of the two points of view is modern for Europe, but it is Antigone's that is closest to Sikhism and Indian modernity. She had established the truth that no power on earth can make the self do anything against its nature, except indirectly confer martyrdom on it, which is also the basis of Gandhism in politics (1996: 88).

Uberoi looks at Sikhism as a transformative project from within the space of civil society to go beyond the dead end of medievalism. He, in fact, looks at Sikhism as the first attempt towards an Indian modernity which transcended the dualism between religion and politics which finds its completion in the project of Gandhi (also see Madan 1997). Uberoi tells us: "Probably the first modern martyr of India—i.e., rather than hero—was Guru Arjun (d.1606), fifth Guru of Sikhs, who in his mature years steadily and calmly provoked the arrogance of man and the state to reform itself to kill him, thus establishing an unending line of men and women martyrs for the faith, who are twice daily recalled by all Sikhs in the liturgy (ardas), morning and evening. By the example of his life, work and non-violent self-sacrifice or martyrdom, the fifth guru folded up, as it were, the structure of the medieval regime and its intersecting dualisms of status and power, the collective and individual..." (ibid: 89). Uberoi further tells us: "Sikhism is not a tradition handed down at all but an experiment [Please note here that contra-Gupta what we conceive of as tradition can also be looked at as experiments with truth] in the sense of Gandhi's autobiography, The story of my experiments with truth, the conjoint experiment of Guru, Granth and Panth. Perhaps this method of non-dualism is the secret level of motion within Indian culture, history and society as well as the self of religion" (ibid: 150).

While the modernist discourse of civil society has totally bracketted religion outside its realm, Uberoi urges us to understand the significance of religion, especially the spiritual dimension of religion, for the transformational project of civil society. Religion is a part of civil society, at least, existentially and in the Indian context, mulitple religions are parts of the theatre of civil society and they should exist in harmony. But this harmony and aspired for co-existence among religions cannot be taken for granted as presumed by the secularists but must be an object of conscious striving and sadhana on the part of both self and society. If the actors of civil society do not know about each other's religions and cultivate the reverence for each other's faiths14 then they are destined to be preys of both statism and religious fundamentalism (see Larson 1997; Sharma 1995). One important implication of Uberoi's very profound arguments though he does not make it that explicit is: the project of civil society must have within it a project of learning about each other's religions and delving deeper into these in order to be able to embody the best of all religious traditions. In some ways,

Sikhism has embodied that dialogue among religions as it has embodied the best of Hinduism and Islam. But Uberoi himself makes it clear: "Yet Sikhism is not complete nor self-contained; it needs to be met with pluralism, mediation of the one and the many, in civil society even more than secularism in the state" (ibid: 150). Civil society has to be a space of pluralism where we not only learn about each other's religions and develop a reverence for them but also different ethnicities and create the condition for a dialogical co-existence of different religions and ethnicities which constitute our societies. But we must realize that to speak of pluralism is to speak of the relationship between the self and the other and this relationship requires continued reconciliation15 and dialgoue which is as much ontological as it is political and proceedural. Such an approach to pluralism and civil society is different from the agenda of toleration offered by scholars such as Partha Chatterjee (1994) who only talk about the initiation of democratic representativeness under the aegis of the state (such as the holding of election for the *Shiromoni Gurudwara Prabandhaka Committee* among the Sikhs) and do not supplement these state-oriented democratic reconstructions with any project of dialogue, learning and fusion of horizons at the level of self. Chatterjee is also silent about institutions which we ought to have in civil society so that we can learn about each others' religions and cultivate reverence for them.

Uberoi also argues that instead of politics being the domain of state and state-oriented political parties has to be "taken religiously seriously" (ibid: 110) where spirituality is the heart of religion.16 This is to be done "not through the state but by the self-rule of community under divine guidance and *guru's* example" (ibid). But that does not mean that state itself would be theocratic. Uberoi makes it clear: "The institution of the state itself remains secular within its limits, i.e. without any divine rights of kings, as it always was in the concept of Islam as well as Hinduism in India" (ibid). Uberoi (1996: 110) puts forward an alternative path before religion, civil society and state when he writes: "In the Indian modernity, the state must learn to live and let live under a regime of pluralism, and to even tolerate other sovereignties, free and responsible, besides its own in society. It need not and must not defer to a higher religious authority, as was said of the ancient period, not yet remain partitioned from the sense of the sacred, as under medieval regime."

While Uberoi's plea for bringing martyrdom as a mode of being to the heart of self and civil society is quite refreshing, Uberoi does not provide us with any help to distinguish between martyrdom which is animated by the devotion of loving self-sacrifice and "martyrdom" which sacrifices other people's lives. It is ironical and strange that while talking about relgion, civil society and state in the context of Sikhism Uberoi is totally silent on the recent experience of the use and abuse of religion for political ends both by the Akali Dal as well as by the proponents of Khalisthan though Uberoi (ibid: 110) talks about *Khalsaraj* along with *Ram Rajya*. In this context, how do we place actors such as Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the leader of the movement for Khalisthan? Many Sikhs consider him a martyr eventhough his fight with the state was not accompanied by non-violence (see Das 1995). Further more, Uberoi may note that not only the followers of Panth but also scholars such as Cynthia Kepley-Mahmood (1997) look at Bhindranwale and his followers as martyrs who entitles her essay thus: "Playing the Game of Love: Passion and Martyrdom Among Khalisthani Sikhs." And here we can add that actors who get killed in the process of killing innocent people for the cause of either ethno-national self-determination or the victory of the nation-state are also considered martyrs. In many such cases, offering of one's life does not emanate from one's self-realization and transcendent world-realization but out of ideological indoctrination carried out by the nation-state and the ethnic group. There is nothing wrong in this perse except that it makes us blind to the face of the other (and also one's own face) and experience her pain when we take her life away either for the cause of ethnic self-determination or for the victory of the modern nation-state. Thus the ideology of martyrdom can be misused for the perpetuation of tyrannical collectivities which do not have respect and sympathy for the aspirations of the self.

In order to overcome these difficulties, Felix Wilfred (personal communication) argues that we must look at martyrdom as a product of prophetism. Prophets are those who have realized the Transcendent but are eager to transform the existent world in accordance with this realization. Prophets are prepared to lay their lives for this cause of transformation; they are ever prepared to embrace martyrdom. But while all prophets are potential martyrs, all martyrs are not prophets; all martyrs may not be embodiments of self-realization and transcendent world-realization.17 Thus, for Wilfred, in acts of loving self-sacrifice in society and history, the primary bearers are the prophets, rather than the martyrs.

Another difficulty we have in Uberoi relates to his idea of the *guru*. Uberoi tells us that the project of civil society has to be reconstructed under the divine guidance and the example of the *gurus*. But what preparation we have at the level of both self and society so that *gurus* do not become feudal lords and exploit us? In other words how do *gurus* embody the ideals of radical democracy at the contemporary juncture? The guru-sishya parampara in Indian tradition has not always embodied reverence for the human dignity of the sishyas and the agenda of Indian modernity, as it is inspired by the projects of Sikhism, Bhakti movements, and Gandhism must also embody the ideals of radical democracy.

Yet another issue here is the position of women in this reconstruction and renewal of civil society. Uberoi has very little discussion of it vis-a-vis Sikhism and Gandhism but he has a tangential encounter with it through Ali Shariati, the martyr of Iran, while discussing his reflections on martyrdom (also see, Dallmayr 1998, Dorraj 1997). Shariati argues that martyrdom has two visages: "the first visage, blood; the second visage, message" (Uberoi 1996: 133). While the first mission is that of voluntary self-sacrifice, the second mission is that of delivering the "message of martyrdom to the ear of the world, is to be tongue which speaks" (ibid). Shariati tells us that in Shite revolution in Islam Husayn is the martyr while Zaynaba—his sister—is the messenger. Uberoi quotes Shariati: "To bear witness with his [sister] Zayanab that in the system which rules history, women had to either [a] choose bondage and being toys of the harems or [b] if they were to remain liberated, they must become the leaders of the caravan of the captives and the survivors of martyrs" (ibid). Here Shariati gives leadership to women as well as the role of messengers but does not tell us whether women also could be martyrs. Moreover, speaking of women being leaders of caravans, we need help from Uberoi as to what roles women occupy in Sikh tradition in religion, civil society and state.

Despite these problems, Uberoi's foregrounding of self-sacrifice in the discourse and practice of civil society has a critical universal significance. In recent history, self-sacrifice and suffering have played a key role in the destruction of totalitarianism in East European societies (see, Verdery 1996; Havel 1998). But the greatest significance of Uberoi's work lies in helping us to understand that self-sacrifice is not a matter of an individual self alone; rather it can be practised by a community of selves, a community of martyrs who are embodiments of prophetic self-realization and world-realization.

By the Way of Conclusion

Vaclav Havel, the President of the Czec Republic and one of the pioneers of the formation of civil society in Eastern Europe tells us in a recent article of him: "..you must know I am talking about what is called a civil society that makes room for the richest possible self-structuring and the richest possible participation in public life" (Havel 1998: 45). In this dialogue on civil society, we have seen how reflections on and collective actions for civil society have not paid enough attention to the calling of self-structuring and the cultivation an appropriate self. Rethinking civil society now calls us to realize that the cultivation of an appropriate self is crucial to the revitalization of the public sphere and this cultivation includes the preparation to sacrifice oneself for the sake of human dignity and freedom, autonomy and transformation of self and society. Civil society now has to be rethought and recreated as a space of reflection and for this resources from both modern movements and as well as varieties of spiritual experiments have to be deployed. This rethinking and recreation requires socio-political struggles as well as spiritual strivings of self-realization and self-transformation as part of an integral quest, a quest which is inspired by the ideals of non-violence, radical democracy and a dignified life for all.

ENDNOTES:

1. I owe the arguments in this paragraph to the insights of Professor C.T. Kurien (personal communication).

2. In the words of Cohen and Arato (1992: 116):

    Of course, each interpreter favorable to Hegel tries to interpret him through a specific conception, and even to enlist his alliance. xx While the theory of the system of needs was fruitfully developed by the Marxian tradition, and the theory of bureaucracy became a cornerstone of the works of Weber and his followers, the idea of civil society as the central terrain of social integration and public freedom was to become just as fruitful in a line of theoretical development that had its beginnings in Tocqueville, its continuation in Durkheim, in English, French, and American pluralism, and in Gramsci, and its culmination in Parsons and Habermas.

3. Hegel believes that "this egoism is transcended in the state, which signals 'a mode of relating to a universe of human beings not out of self interests but out of solidarity, out of the will to live with other human beings in a community" (Dallmayr 1993: 122). Inwood also tells us that in Hegel the state has a higher purpose than civil society. "Civil society makes one a Burger (a townsman, a tader); the state makes one a citoyen, a citoyen of France or of Prussia, and not simply a trader" (Inwood 1992: 54). But the resolution of the problem of egotism in civil society in state is full of deep-seated problems which commentators such as Dipankar Gupta fail to realise. As Chandhoke helps us understand this: "The irony is that Hegel starts with civil society as the precondition of the state, but ultimately it is the state which becomes the precondition of civil society. The civility of civil society depends on its being vertically integrated to the state. Thus ultimately civil society is subordinated to the state and the individual to the whole. Consequently, in the Hegelian formulation there can be no interrogation of the state, of its design for universality, or of its rationale" (Chandhoke 1995: 130). Of course, interpretors such as Cohen and Arato provide us a slightly more optimistic view when they interpret the Hegelian agenda thus: "Our recontsruction of Hegel challenges interpretations suggesting that the antinomies of civil society are resolved on the supposedly higher land of the state. Instead, we would argue that it is more (correct) to interpret Hegel's thought as dualistic or antinomic on both levels. What we crucially label as 'statist' 'solidaristic' trends in his thought appear in the analysis of both civil society and state. Accordingly, the doctrine of the state itself can be analyzed in terms of these two trends" (Cohen and Arato 1997: 108-109). But this reconstruction seems deceptive since Cohen and Arato neither show in their reconstruction of Hegel nor in their own work how the statist agenda of the state is critiqued by the solidaristic and the ethico-moral imagination of civil society.

4. Recent social theory has articulated the need for making a move from epistemology to ontology. See, Giddens 1991; Giri 1994b.

5. As Dallmayr writes: "As objects of conscious reflection, needs in civil society are no longer spontaneous but reflectively interpreted needs" (1993: 127).

6. Chandhoke (1995: 121) tells us.

    Civil society is the space where Hegel locates his historical project of reconciling the particular and the universal in an ethical community. Such a community was important for Hegel since his thought was dominated by the need to restore a sense of wholeness and integration to the human personality, and his concern that society should be organized on a harmonious reciprocal basis which was marked by a sense of community.

    Furthermore, For Hegel, "Ethical life is found in a society where the members share certain ideals and where they are united by a morality which prescribes their roles" (ibid: 119).

7. The further questions that Cohen and Arato ask are foundational: "Are the bases of such actions to be found in Sitlichkeit [ethical life] alone, or is Moralitat as well, or at least, for the modern world in a form of ethical life that has incorporated morality, along with the tension between is and right?" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 94).

8. For Habermas, public sphere is an "intersubjective space" where the "participants enter into interpersonal relationships by taking positions on mutual speech-act offers and assuming illocutionary obligations" (1996: 361). Furthermore, "Every encounter in which actors do not just observe each other but take a second-person attitude, reciprocally attributing communicative freedom to each other, unfolds in a linguistically constituted public space. This space stands open, in principle, for potential dialogue partners who are present as bystanders or could come on the scene and join those present" (ibid). However, "founded in communicative action, this spatial structure of simple and episodic encounters can be expanded and rendered more permanent in an abstract form for a larger public of present persons" (ibid). But these larger publics are based on the same intersubjective dialogues as the face-to-face conversations.

9. Cohen and Arato however urge us to put system-theoretic critique in its place while reconstructing civil society. In their words: "And yet the case of critics cannot be so eassily disposed of, for their claim that the very concept of civil society is anachronistic is linked to an analysis of contemporary society as involving a fusion of realms—in particular, those of state and society—that were differentiated in the earlier liberal epoch. To respond to them one must go beyond the effort of hermeneutic recovery" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 299).

10. What Cohen and Arato write clearly shows their half-hearteness in dealing with the challenge of cultural transformation:

   But despite its legal political emphasis, the utopia of civil society understood in terms of the differentiation of a life-world need not break with all conceptions of cultural transformation. xxx. It is precisely colonization, or the penetration of the lifeworld by the logics of money and power, that today promotes a pattern of selective, primarily cognitive-instrumental, feedbacks of cultural potentials (1992: 455).

11. While discussing the meeting between the young prince and the faqir Uberoi writes: "Here the young prince, the infant state, is shown as standing in a modest attitude while being represented by his nurse or nanny, who is unveiled, and may be taken as representing civil society rather than the family." This shows that Uberoi still maintains the duality between family and civil soceity and at the contemporary juncture there may not be any great need and justification for such a separation.

12. Of course, this can be looked at as "soul power," as C.T. Kurien (personal communication) argues but this is different from power understood as domination which is its dominant meaning in modernity.

13. For Uberoi, non-dualism is dialectical.

14. Uberoi tells us what Gandhi had written about Islam: "Islam's distinct contribution to India's national culture is its unadulterated belief in the oneness of God and a practical application of the truth of brotherhood of man for those who are normally within its fold" (1996: 109). It is an important example of reverence for another faith that an individual born into another can have.

15. Uberoi (1996: vi) writes:

   Evenif, by some process, all non-Hindus were to be extruded from the 'heart of Aryavarta'...the problem of relationship of self and the other, or rather of self and the other self, would still remain to be addressed. This problem of humanity, national and international, cannot be solved within a framework of majority and minority, superordination and subordination...It can be solved only by the reconciliation or negotiation of equality and difference...

16. Though it must be noted that there is still a persisting confusion and conflation between religion and spirituality in Uberoi as he does not discuss spirituality independent of religion. But for a commentator such as Kurien (personal communication) it is important not to confine spirituality with religion as religion many a time in history has throttled the voice of spirituality. The heart of spirituality lies in the recognition of the worth of the other and an identity between the self and the other, a recognition which can take place without the mediation of religion (also see Kurien 1997).

17. In this context it must be noted that while Uberoi refers to the Sikh and Islamic tradition, Wilfred draws our attention to the Judaic tradition where the initial act of martyrdom in Babylon was a product of ethnic mobilization rather than prophetic realization. For Wilfred (personal communication), this mobilization is not the same thing as the reflective mobilization of the self and the world of a prophet.

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