

## WHOSE GLOBE IS IT, ANYWAY!

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*It is said that a generation ago when astronauts first beamed pictures of the earth back home, the image of a life-sustaining planet floating in infinite space inspired social movements to work to save the world from environmental destruction. Today, that stunning portrait of the earth has also become the icon for what seems its unenviable destiny: globalization.*

### Part 1

#### **What is Globalization? And Whose Globe is it Anyway?**

“The most common or core sense of economic globalization refers to the observation that in recent years a quickly rising share of economic activity in the world seems to be taking place between people who live in different countries (rather than in the same country).”[1]

The philosophical basis on which this edifice stands has at its core the orthodox economic (Ambirajan: 2000) reasoning of the neo-classical variety, which believes in the following fundamental principles: a) the way economies behave is dependent on the actions of individual economic agents who make decisions independently. B) The individual is a rational actor making decisions carefully with self-interest in mind and c) The actions of individual economic agents tend toward equilibrium, which bring benefits to everyone. The institution of unfettered markets enables the achievement of this desirable outcome because it is where uncoordinated but fully informed individuals lead the economy to adjust at a desirable level.

Real life is very different from this artificial construct. Individuals cannot always make decisions solely in their own interest because of informational barriers and institutional compulsions. More often than not, key decisions are taken to suit not individuals but groups defined by varied criteria such as religion, caste, community, locality and gender. Freedom to make decisions is not evenly distributed, but determined by those who have political power. Often, individuals and groups become helpless spectators when key decisions are taken “willy-nilly”. Markets, embedded in a social milieu, are seldom unfettered. Despite the talk about vanishing national boundaries, they are guarded as zealously as ever and nations have not shown any intention to give up power over their citizens. What has happened is that people have started losing faith in their government’s ability to provide for basic needs and social rights or protect against such phenomena as spiraling inflation, degraded environment, increased crime, or prime locations and key institutions being bought up by citizens of another country.

Another important factor questioning the assumptions of economic theorists, which is often ignored, is the reality that individual, and group unconscious operate beyond what is usually termed as rationality. Rationality is at best a social construct, a set of related assumptions that are seldom explored against data associated with deep-seated emotions. For instance, as a consultant to a group of managers in Australia, one of the authors worked on two cases. One was a university where the counseling center’s task was defined as assisting students with problems related to their academic performance. However, with the bulk of government subsidy withdrawn due to the South Asian economic melt down, this university shifted focus from teaching excellence to “producing” excellent students who would become living advertisements for the excellence of the university and thus recruit more students to the university. Its impact on the counseling service in the university in question was counseling those who needed the least assistance in order to help them raise their academic standards from good to excellent. This left the most needy to fend for themselves and the counselors harboring frustration and guilt. The second case was that of a government owned industrial unit heading toward privatization. In such cases there were intervening periods when the unit would gradually shift toward complete change of ownership. In this case, the

productivity of the unit dropped significantly for no apparent reason. In-depth work surfaced the unconscious assumption that if the productivity dropped significantly, dragging down profitability with it, perhaps the private buyer would wash its hands of the deal. The reason for such an assumption was fear that the kind of job security enjoyed as part of the public sector would be gone once the unit was privatised. Increasing levels of anxiety, due to globalization, leads to irrational decision-making and a sense of vanishing national boundaries, which has been discussed by Miller (1993).

### **The view from the top is not the view from the bottom:**

Globalization is usually debated from the privileged location of the Developed Nations and its economic basis and impacts are mostly highlighted, exalting it over other human values and even above the basic conditions of human beings themselves. As a result, the social and political dimensions of these phenomena have been masked. Defined as the rise of market capitalism around the world, globalization is seen to be a natural consequence of the disillusionment with socialism and its policies of public ownership, central planning and regulatory controls. These were seen to be stunting innovation and growth. While globalization was pushed by technology, the end of the cold war, and East Asia's then seemingly miraculous success, there is the realization that market liberalization by itself does not "lift all boats" and, in some cases, has caused severe damage to poor nations (Nayar: 2001). A special report on Global Capitalism by *Business Week* (November, 2000) admits that one size does not fit all and that a reassessment is badly due. From 1990 to 1996 only 33 countries have managed to sustain 3 percent annual growth and 59 countries saw their economies contract. Foreign Direct Investment (a key factor in globalization) has shot up seven fold to about US \$400 billion yearly. But 80 percent of it goes to only ten countries while 100 nations average just 100 million in FDI each year. Poverty is still widespread with the percentage of population making under \$1 a day still hovering around 40 to 50 percent (about 1.3 billion people) in South Asia and sub Saharan Africa.

Chattopadhyay (1998a) examined the unconscious relationship between Developing and Developed Nations. He highlighted some probable unconscious processes that have established certain forms of destructive interrelationships that are fantasized as constructive despite evidence to the contrary. These processes include the dumping of many medicines, insecticides and pesticides, as well as many other toxic products like paints that have been banned in their countries of origin. Another process, which is seen as helpful, is called aid by Developed Nations. Actually, this aid is a form of usury, which may benefit the giver far more than the receiver. In fact, it "aids" the receiving countries in remaining in poverty through the payment of interest, which in polite terms are called "servicing aid". While those processes mostly damage the Developing Nations, they also damage the Developed Nations. His hypotheses point towards the high probability that those processes are allowed to continue unabated so that the citizens of various nations can defend themselves from examining their contributions to continued violence and savagery, both overt and covert, within their own countries. What is pertinent to note here is that since globalization means far greater permeability of national boundaries, the probability of the Developing Nations getting a greater amount of the taste of the wrong end of the deal becomes higher.

### **The other side of the coin: "Grassroots Globalization":**

Images of riot policemen clubbing anti-globalization protestors at the World Trade Organization meeting at Seattle still live in public memory. Initially, the response was to dismiss these protests as anarchist and sporadic. The consistency, obduracy and force with which the protests were replicated subsequently at IMF-World Bank Meetings, the World Economic Forum, the European Union and the world over have forced these large institutions to acknowledge that there may be another side to the story. It is true that these disparate groups of protestors are unlikely to make a significant impact on the massive trade and investment that sweep across the world with a momentum of its own. However, they are a symbol of the growing sense of unease, dismay and anger at the faceless force of globalization running uncontrolled. The protests are also about the uncertainty caused by globalization; the bitterness about the unwavering pursuit of private profit and against the international economy herded by institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO whose processes are a mockery of processes of democracy, transparency and accountability. Further, the protests have brought to the fore that the interests of the people of developing countries may not coincide with the interests of these nations' own governments.

These protests also symbolize another form of globalization, what is now termed as “grassroots globalization” – that is coming from below. Popular movements (environmental, women’s, anti-nuclear and human rights struggles, peasants and farmers movements, workers and trade unions) are part of this globalization-from-below and their attempt is to add a democratic dimension to the debates about globalization-from-above. They serve the purpose of bringing globalization down from the rarefied atmosphere of corporate boardrooms to the daily realities of life. Grass roots globalization processes recognize that the market, the corner stone of globalization, is an efficient instrument of resource allocation. But it is not a strategic instrument. It does not invest in the future. It has a very narrow and short-term view. A globalizing marketplace has no space or time for the poor.

Arif Dirlik (1998) argues that the dominant modes of thinking about and defining globalization are biased against both place and locality. Thus, the global is equated with “capital, space, history and the power to transform” while the local is equated with “place, labor, tradition and, not infrequently, women, peasants and others who are ‘still attached to place’”. The implication is that the latter are marginal to the discourses on globalization; their knowledge is unhelpful in a global world.

In a related argument Mathur (2000) points out in terms of, as he puts it, “Pictures in the mind and how spaces we relate to connect with spaces we inhabit”. The picture of the world-in-the mind is based on the centrality of Greenwich, a historical legacy from the primacy of Imperial Britain, and the significance of Western European powers suggests that there is an ocean to the West across which close by is North America as well as the “near east”, “middle east” and “far east” regions. Mathur goes on to show how children in Canada and the U.S.A., the Arab-Muslim world, and the “Middle Kingdom” grow up to develop their region based picture of the world-in-the-mind.

## **Part 2:**

### **Case Studies of Globalization from the top and the bottom**

In Part 2 we attempt to understand the dynamics of organizations that are impacted both by globalization from the top and by the responses that grassroots globalization efforts are making. Both are part of the global reality. We detail three case studies of organizational change in the period 1996-2000. First, a software development firm in India’s Information Technology capital Bangalore. Second, a software development firm located in eastern India, both making the most from the globalization process. Third, an emerging network of not-for-profit organizations in South India that is trying to ensure that Dalits[2], a section of the most marginalized people, are not pushed beyond the periphery of globalization. Same period, same country, but very different ends of the wealth spectrum.

#### **Some of the questions that we asked are:**

What is the picture of the global economy-in-the-mind? Given that organizational processes mirror global processes (since the society-in-the-mind influences the institution-in-the-mind), we wanted to examine how the understanding of the globalization process influences relatedness in the organization. Given the definitions of globalization noted in Part 1, some of the values that underlie dominant or mainstream globalization are: (a) Trickle down benefits; (b) Survival of the fittest; (c) Free markets; (d) Choice and (e) individualism. In contrast, the principles that govern grassroots globalization are: (i) Democratic processes; (ii) Shared Power and Leadership; (iii) Justice; (iv) Accountability; (v) Voice; (vi) Dignity; (vii) Equity; (viii) New forms of personal authority and (ix) Community forms of collective based organization. Given these principles what were the processes set off in these organizations? What were the consequences on the relationships between individuals in the organizations? How did they manage the kinds of anxieties that these processes brought in?

#### **CASE 1**

The burgeoning software industry is a good example of globalization. Bangalore, in south India, has transformed from a city hosting large public sector institutions (defense research, electronics, heavy machinery and aeronautics, all edifices of Nehruvian[3] socialism) into the glitzy software capital of India

where young millionaires anxiously check the current value of their Employee Stock Option Plans several times a day on the Internet. It is a city where 20 years ago obtaining a job in a government or public sector enterprise was the ultimate dream and meant settling down for the next 30-35 years until retirement. Today, it is a place where after two years in a job it is time to move on. [4]

The ambivalence of being global in a very local setting also shows. A software company that one of the authors consulted with was started as a privately owned subsidiary of an American software products and consulting company. Established in 1994 as a captive software development center, it produced products that were designed and sold by the parent company. Like most other software firms, it was set up in Bangalore because of the price advantage. Hiring Indian software developers and shipping the finished product was simply cheaper than establishing an equivalent U.S. operation.

The underlying resentment of being the cheaper option, and therefore the suspicion of being shortchanged, that the Indian subsidiary held showed up in different ways in its transactions with the American parent company. The dilemma was also something about an Indian mind living in an American body. On the face of it, the relationship between the parent company and the Indian software company was that of client-supplier, with the mandate to produce a world-class product. The Indian operations experienced the American parent company less like a client and more like a benevolent yet autocratic patriarch. Processes of communication were top down: the development center in Bangalore was handed information on a need to know basis leading the parent company to be experienced as arbitrary and secretive. Long-term plans were rarely revealed and sudden changes in the direction of the product were expected to be complied with. The rationale was that this style of management was inevitable in the competitive business environment in which the products company operated in, and that uncertainty and flexibility were givens if one was to succeed. Being privately held, the turnover figures were not shared and resulted in amplification of feeling shortchanged. These were issues that many members of the Indian operations held as grudges and the American operations did not see why so much was made about issues that were none of their business anyway.

While the interdependence in terms of task was two-way the experience was of dependency – a hierarchy where white owners were on the top. A kind of caste-system-in-the-mind was experienced where the black Indians “ought to be grateful and should know their place.” This experience is in somewhat ironic as the actual individuals involved in the Indian operations would be the privileged upper castes in Indian society. The software industry, like most leading edge businesses is clearly upper caste in its constitution. Being Dalitised [5] was a new and disturbing experience for them.

The Country Head of the Indian Operations had the reverse dilemma of being expected to have an American mind in an Indian body. Being the linking pin between the two operations, the Country Head had the task of handling two sets of expectations and two pictures in the mind by becoming unconsciously the receptacle for these conflicting but coexisting sets of feelings. The role of the Country Head was to explain one side to the other. At times he protected, by withholding feelings, with anxiety that if the other side “knew”, matters would only get worse. The ability of the two sides to develop skills of understanding and managing the differences more directly decreased as everything was channeled through the Country Head. The process of negotiating a more collaborative-partnership role took several rounds of building credibility.

One of the ways that the system chose unconsciously to deal with the dilemma of differences and the perceived “caste system” was to reduce people to bodies or sets of skills (a kind of split between the person’s skills and emotions). If these could be disassociated then one could deal with the more rational and knowable skills and the emotions, irrationalities and aspirations need not be addressed. The task of leadership is circumscribed to managing objects and not people, who are now reduced to being objects and thus more “manageable”. In fact, the software industry has come up with a unique set of terms that denote this process of alienation or dissociation. For example “body shopping” denotes the export of software professionals to do contract based assignments abroad. Terms like head hunting, head count, human capital metrics etc., dehumanize the human resources. The average software professional has also introjected this notion of oneself as a set of skills sold to the highest bidder.

In recruitment interviews, candidates would be asked to say something about themselves and they would start enumerating the software languages and technologies they knew as if that was the only part of their self that mattered. That there could be any other aspect of self that could have any interest to the potential employer seemed difficult to fathom. Similarly, in annual performance reviews, when people filled out self-appraisal forms, the one question that would consistently draw the most insipid responses was what they had learned. Learning was about acquiring technical information but much less about non-technical skills. Thus, gaining greater competence in interpersonal, managerial and leadership skills or greater self-awareness were seldom recognized or acknowledged as learning.

The impact of “being in demand” resulted in these professionals introjecting a “super being” self-image and identity as an unconscious justification of their suddenly acquiring these haloes. The idea of self as superior seemed to justify this sense of guilt in the demand (near obscene salaries when compared with the average Indian income), which they did not want to admit as market factors. Therefore, they could not relate as normal people with pluses and minuses like any other. Some middle class software professionals talked about the sense of inner conflict they experience earning salaries as college graduates, which exceeded what their father would be getting at the end of his career.

The super-being theory led to an inability to be in touch with realities about the self. This led to defensiveness about negative feedback; if it were accepted, the myth about the super being would be exposed and they would no longer be in demand. Negatives were pushed into external spaces. Two favorite receptacles for negative self-feelings were the annual appraisal meetings or when somebody quit. Both of these turned out to be emotionally charged experiences where individuals projected bad feelings on to the organization and protected themselves against the anxiety that there could be anything that they had to change about themselves. So, while people were complaining about the lunch, air-conditioning, variety of the biscuits served in the office at their appraisal meetings, they had almost nothing to say identifying areas of growth or change. Any negative feedback that the appraisers gave met with resistance and defensiveness, until at a point, project leaders did not want to be bearers of bad news and watered down all negative feedback.

At an unconscious level, the software engineers had regressed and become something like infant geniuses who could permit themselves also to simultaneously become *infant terrible*. As a way to work with this abdication, the consultants involved them in a process of evolving an appraisal system where employees were rated on certain characteristics seen as having relevance to their current role. While this did help team members get specific data-based feedback in the year that this was introduced, the disaffection the following year about low ratings ended in most employees being rated as excellent, while privately team leaders thought the person was average. This year the system of rating employees numerically was scrapped altogether as leaders were not able to cope with disgruntled team members who received low ratings.

With the rapid expansion of the industry, a situation of increased choice faced software professionals. If one was competent, the likelihood of getting a lucrative offer from competition made it difficult for people to ground themselves in their jobs. Dealing with too much choice in a country where job seekers face no choice resulted in an unconscious kind of choicelessness that many acted out. This was often done in the form of denying personal authority when any employee quit. While the actual process was the employee weighing alternatives as an attractive option presented itself, and taking personal authority for his or her decision, what they did at the point of resignation was to heap a hoard of negatives onto the organization. This created a situation of apparent choicelessness as if one were forced to leave on the sudden discovery that the organization was all bad. If this process were confronted, it would lead to denial of the use of one’s personal choice, with the rest of the system also tending to collude in sympathy with the person who quit.

This organizational boundary was a place of heightened anxiety and therefore a point at which the maximum erosion of personal values and integrity took place. It seemed as if these were “twilight zones” of self-hood in which they ceased to experience themselves as people and became objects not subject to their own moral scrutiny. This was the point at which blatant lies, facades and rage were displayed. For example, a young engineer working with the organization as a trainee for eight months, was offered a job by another organization that promised to soon send him to the US. He was in the midst of an important product development commitment and, because he was quite competent, had been assigned a critical role in

the project. Having gotten the new offer, he wanted to quit without the contractual notice period of one month. An attempt was made to negotiate his staying on for two weeks to bring his project into shape so he could hand it over to someone else and then leave. He would therefore have to miss some of the training in the new organization but it was hoped that he would be professional enough not to walk out on the job. Pushing the negotiators to allow him to go, he was told that leaving was his decision. His anxiety against taking responsibility for his decisions and their consequences was so high that he created a story about the project manager shouting at him and asked him to “get out”. While others knew that this story was untrue, there was a massive collusion and the story became the truth. There was a wave of sympathy for the engineer who was so badly treated by the organization. Creating a new reality was more comfortable than accepting that the engineer walked out of his own volition because it suited him.

It is at these same boundaries that the organization’s own ethical values have also been put to the test under the anxiety of keeping pace with competition. The company had initially stayed away from employee referral schemes that rewarded workers for referring friends as potential employees. The belief was that if employees enjoyed working in the organization, referring others would be a natural process. This has changed and today when an employee refers someone it may be for a fee and not necessarily because he or she believes it is a great place to work. The relationship between employee and organization has narrowed to a series of monetary transactions.

The primary task of the Human Resources Development group thus gradually shifted from “creating conditions for the development of its human resources” to “attracting and retaining people at any cost”. The fantasy was that people were happy when the two conditions, being paid lots of money and never hearing anything negative about themselves, were fulfilled. This resulted in an anxiety about “keeping people happy” even at the cost of the company’s primary task, which was to develop and sell world-class software. The process of infantilising adult professionals resulted in the HR Department dreaming up entertainment, picnics and parties. This resulted in “work is fun” shifting to “work has to be compensated for by fun” and linking rewards with cash incentives because, “if we don’t do it they will go to other companies that do”. [6]

The organization had real dilemmas about creating a workspace that defied the mainstream understanding of a software development work culture. Unlike many other software companies it was small and had plans to remain that way by creating a flexible, non-hierarchical work environment that trusted people. It believed in unconventional ways of recruiting. Instead of recruiting a set of skills it looked for attitude and potential. It believed in developing people; given the right environment and challenge, they will give their best and enjoy their work. Learning, contributing and taking on responsibilities were seen as motivators. The organization desisted from designations as it felt that the designations fixed people into hierarchies and did not allow them to move flexibly into opportunities and roles.

The demand for people with skills far exceeding the supply led to intense recruitment competition among software firms. What firms tried to portray was their uniqueness but in reality they ended up offering what everyone else offered. As this organization grew, it came up against the pressures of succumbing to “what everyone else does:” which was what led to “success”. It has therefore now abandoned as idealistic and unviable, all forms of non-mainstream cultural symbols that set it apart in the first place, and homogenized its identity in a kind of Mac Donaldisation process.

## CASE 2

This is the case of a software company registered in the United State of America with its subsidiary located in eastern India. In this case the situation was an Indian living in America and trying to become a software tycoon. As though to unconsciously balance this process, he chose an Indian to be the head of the operation who was picked from a large Indian enterprise well known for its patriarchal culture. Following the model set up by the erstwhile Indian operations head, the rest of the top management team acted as benevolent autocrats. This resulted in three processes. First, was a lack of transparency resulting in poor communication and coordination between various top managers. Their interactions were limited with the Indian head or within their respective domains. Second, the personnel down the line became dependent on the top managers, which resulted in decreasing further skill development and managerial skills in

particular. Third, so long as globalization for the company meant making profit in the foreign market, the projects ran smoothly. As soon as the international competition became stiff and the company began to feel a financial crunch, two negative processes began. One was a high degree of suspicion about the finance people whenever a project had to wait for some time before getting access to funds. Second, the top management team began to fall apart as each vied for quicker access to funds. This made the role of the head of Indian operations one of becoming the receptacle of not only negative feelings about the CEO in the USA, but also negative feelings of the top team about their colleagues.

At this juncture the authors, along with the company's long-term Indian consultant, got involved in a consultancy project. In this project, the top management team in India, along with the US based CEO and his wife (one of the Directors), were involved in exploring the nature of authority and leadership in the company. This was followed up by one of the authors, along with the long term consultant, running several hours of role analysis for the CEO and his top management team (excepting for the erstwhile Indian head, who had resigned and joined another company after having realized how he had become the receptacle of various feelings that actually belonged either to the US based CEO or to some of the Indian management team members). For example, during the first session of a social dreaming matrix the very first dream presented was about freshly laundered and well-folded clothes that remained a bit dirty. This dream got associated with the feeling of guilt about earning "too much", which was also the case with young managers in Case 1 described above.

The consulting project ended in 2000 with the company restructuring itself to bring a balance between responsibility and authority in relation to task so that the culture could transform from a centralized patriarchal one into a more democratic one where people could grow in their respective jobs. However, at this point the head of personnel resigned. Our hypothesis is that he found it extremely difficult to come to terms with his loss of power. This power was quite unrelated to his authority based on tasks, since during the role analysis sessions it was seen how he worked almost as a referee in the "game" of competing for funds by the top team managers.

### CASE 3

The third case study is about a not-for-profit organization in south India forming a collective to work for Dalit empowerment. The term Dalit was introduced and popularized by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a revered leader of the untouchables and a statesman and politician of the freedom struggle. The name Dalit means the oppressed or broken people and is the name the untouchables have taken to signify the process of radical transformation they have chosen for themselves rather than the path of upliftment that the state systems designed for them. Dalits constitute about 15% of India's population and if one includes those converted to other faiths like Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, they make a total of about 19% of the population, which comes to about a 190 million people (roughly two thirds of the population of the United States!). Historically, the four fold Varna system was created in the sub-continent many millennia ago in order to have a kind of socio-economic umbrella, by the Vedic people, to bring to its fold diverse groups living in the sub-continent. This system was based on occupational skill and had nothing to do with purity or status ascribed by birth. However, for various reasons (discussed by Bose, 1976) this system became corrupted and gave rise to what is now known as the caste system. The outcastes in the caste system of Hinduism, the Dalits, have been treated as untouchable for centuries; restricted to menial tasks including scavenging, clearing carcasses, digging graves, leather work and labor intensive agricultural tasks. In spite of liberal provisions, 55 years after independence the situation of the Dalits have improved only marginally; so strong have been the caste based structures that have maintained the status quo.[7] Efforts by the Indian legislatures at the Center and State levels to provide opportunities for socio-economic upliftment and access to various national resources were offset by organized moves by the upper castes to safeguard their access to those very resources, of which they have gotten used to taking the lion's share. [8]

It would be absurd to claim that globalization has created inequality. Inequality and discrimination unfortunately existed long before globalization was recognized as a distinct phenomenon . What is increasingly clear is that globalization has caused conditions of inequality to worsen. While corporate globalization favors skilled workers, life for millions in the informal sector becomes more precarious as their skills are mismatched with present opportunities. In the context of globalization, the Dalits have

begun to feel completely excluded. With the liberalization of the economy, the state has systematically withdrawn from its social welfare and social justice roles. Drinking water, health care, education and environmental protection are being privatized. These basic necessities are beyond the reach of the poor and the process is making them even more unreachable. The evidence so far is that privatization is quickly followed by price increases. Protests from those who are desperate have been snuffed out by violence and repression as the state is committed to market forces.

In India, voluntary social work organizations are known as NGOs or Non-Government Organizations (see Chattopadhyay, 1996) and a number of these organizations are active in assisting the most underprivileged sections of the society. A group of NGO's working with Dalit communities in the south saw the urgent need to define a strategy of providing a space for these subaltern (Guha, 1982) groups to survive by forcing the markets to have a human face (concern not just with the survival of the fittest but also with equity and with more sustainable forms of development). On critiquing their own roles they felt that what was needed was a more radical shift to political action, which would safeguard the existing rights of people from violation and the muzzling of democracy. (See in this connection Collective: 1997). The only way to achieve this was that the Dalits themselves take primary responsibility for the politics of their development and not have the NGO's run it.

That would mean the rise of autonomous community based organizations that focused on rights (a trade union) and livelihood (thrift and credit cooperatives). It was felt that if they formed a collective, they would move up from individual NGO's working in one or two *mandals* [10], to cut across jurisdictions and federate across the state. These bodies would then integrate political processes of governance [11] from the village to the state level, and capture political power.

From 1997 onwards, the process of forming a collective of 100 small and medium sized NGO's committed to Dalit empowerment, began. The formation of the collective was a very complex process of negotiating, making deals and persuading different groups to subsume their individual identities for a larger collective process. The politics of representation was also a part of the strategy; a conscious decision to ensure that Dalit leadership, and particularly Dalit women, represent these bodies. To build leadership among the Dalits various structures that were community based, decentralized, transparent and accountable needed to be built.

While there was this rather edifying objective of larger Dalit empowerment, there was also the shadow of threat that informed this process. Donor agencies in the Developed Nations, who funded NGO's in the Developing Nations, were beginning to face globalization forces themselves. The pressure on them to become more efficient, due to reduction in funds, was forcing them to restructure and downsize. Coping with increasing demands on a shrinking pool of resources resulted in many donor agencies preferring not to fund small NGO's (as the administrative burden was disproportionate to the size of the funds deployed). Ease of administration rather than need – (the same market principles) – began to define their policies too. This meant that emerging NGOs working in a defined area on basic issues of community organization or small developmental programs would be wiped off the donor map. Forming a collective with a common goal, which could then access a pool of funds, became a survival necessity. Thus many of the small NGOs were left with the choice of striking out alone, retaining their identity and risking annihilation, or joining in with the larger but ambiguous process of a Dalit collective.

In 2000, one of the authors was invited to help this Collective understand its own formation and growth and to help them evolve appropriate systems and processes. One of the support organizations envisaged for the Collective was a cell that would focus specifically on Human Resource Development (HRD) within the Collective. The author currently works as a consultant to this cell which functions as an internal consultant group to the entire Collective. The author, along with a team of four others and the HRD cell, was involved in a process of mid-term review of the development and impact of the Collective.

From 1997-2000, the Collective has emerged quite clearly from an idea to a reality and now has about 80 small-to-medium sized NGOs working together. The agricultural union is a registered trade union and has worked on issues of land reform, human rights and social discrimination. It has joined with other movements nationally and internationally, addressing some of these issues. Women's cooperatives for

micro credit have been registered as independent bodies. The process of the Collective's formation is ongoing. Its achievements notwithstanding, we attempt to unravel some of the unconscious dynamics in its formation and growth - the psychodynamics that a complex organizational process can generate particularly when it is trying to deal with two even more complex processes, social transformation and globalization. However the anxiety shared alike by NGO leaders and the donors is that the Collective is too ambitious a venture; that cannot be successful. What then seemed to ensue is a set of processes many of which are unconscious that may serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy to ensure that the Collective is not successful.

One unconscious dynamic, which mirrors societal process, is that of "Dalit audacity" in terms of trying to transform their lot within a recognizably short span of time. Time and again, people other than the Dalits have talked about the need for a "more pragmatic approach"; that something of this scale is not possible and should be an "organic process" evolving slowly over time.

This idea that Dalits should take a more pragmatic approach appears to be a phenomenon of projective identification. The Constitution of India in two of its Schedules have spelt out reservation of benefits for certain communities, which include Dalits. Yet, after more than half a century of applying those reservations the Dalits have reaped next to no socio-economic benefits. Therefore "a more pragmatic approach" based on "audacious thinking" rather than copying some Western countries in "reserving benefits" for the economically backward communities seems to be what is needed to be taken by the Establishment. Since the Establishment is not prepared to acknowledge their failure based on their decades old thinking and switch over to more pragmatic thinking, they are pushing the idea of "more pragmatic thinking" instead of taking "audacious decisions" into the unconscious of the Dalits. The Dalits in their turn seem to have introjected this notion of Dalit audacity and doubt their ability to pull this off. That this is an introjected notion comes from the fact that instead of working on systems, processes, and building skills to succeed, they have become de-skilled and in turn question the pragmatism of this approach.

One example of this phenomenon of deskilling themselves is gross mismanagement of their resources despite having enough managerial and leadership capacity among them. The evidence of their capacity to manage and lead lie in the creation of many Dalit organisations with membership running into thousands. But by dwelling on their anger towards the Establishment, which for them consist of not only the ministers and government bureaucracy, but also political leaders and industrial managers, they seem to have given up their capacity for managing objectives and tasks. They also have unconsciously split leadership from the roles that they have chosen in lieu of that of managers. These roles are "Convenor" and "Activist". Neither of these two convey any idea of providing and maintaining boundary conditions within which every one can engage with the primary task. Further, the primary task of creating effective Dalit organisations to utilise whatever economic resources they have for improving their condition has been corrupted and changed into organizing and staging dramas, ballets, musical soirees etc. all over the place that highlight their poverty. These activities in effect serve the task of appealing to the Establishment to take a more pragmatic approach in trying to help the Dalits improve their socio-economic condition. Thus, apart from mismanaging resources, they have also firmly handed over leadership to the Establishment.

Further, many critical negotiations, norms, and policies related to the formation of the Collective were discussed in informal spaces (people's homes, personal chats, etc.) and did not receive the mandate of formal management structures. Many of the anxieties and emotions were not explored in formal spaces. The Collective became an inefficient container brimming with anxieties and unable to access its own skills to deal with these anxieties. It is as if the fear that it should turn out successful is so high that the very same people who wish it success are unconsciously sabotaging the management of the process. The unstated but acted-out premise is that as Dalits, they do not "deserve" success.

Access to socio-economic resources by Dalits has an impact on the wealthy sections of the rural community. The more the Dalits become empowered [12], the stronger their movement for adequate compensation for serving the rich peasantry becomes and the more violent the backlash. The latter's reaction has been violence in various forms including the formation of private, completely illegal armies (funded by money and arms thanks to globalization process which makes these easily accessible) whose action to subdue this Dalit "audacity" match those of the Ku Klux Klan. One of the reasons for this unconscious sabotage may be rooted in avoidance of looking at increasing violence and the need to get

organized to do something about it. The fear may be that, in the final analysis, the only choice left would be to also form their own illegal army.

However, where would they get the funds to feed and equip such an army? Today's reality is that on many occasions the law and order system "seems" to get information about atrocities committed by the private armies too late to either stop the carnage or apprehend the culprits. Would the government continue to get information about atrocities committed by the private armies so late that the countryside becomes some kind of a battlefield for years to come? Are there any other peaceful strategies that can be set to work within the legal framework of the Indian Constitution? Is the belief that the *varna* and the caste systems are still so strong that at the end of the day the state machinery will tilt in favor of the rich peasantry who form the middle to upper caste section of the society?

Another unconscious dynamic arises from fear of being responsible to a collective system. Ideologically, the Collective is seen as a response to globalizing forces, which are by nature fragmenting and individualistic [13]. The reality of their experience is that most of the medium sized NGO leaders are unwilling to throw their lot into the process of Collectivization. The expectation that they will "reposition" themselves from erstwhile NGO heads into servants of the Collective, has proved unrealistic with "leaders" divided into two camps (idealists and realists), and the Collective facing already splintering of its forces.

The basis of the Collective is also a need to establish and work with a collective identity and the politics of identity as a strategy. The actual dynamics, however, are of individual identities feeling threatened as if belonging to the collective will annihilate their individual selves. There is also the divisive discourse of sub-caste identities [14] and the importance given to each within the collective. While managing differences is the task, a process is unconsciously started in which a series of splits or divisions occur rather than a focus on consolidation. Given this, one wonders if the unconscious dynamic is that the Collective is not a symbol of Dalit identity, but rather a front for the real upper class agenda of "divide and rule". By ensuring that they constantly set up fights amongst themselves, the Dalits collude with these unconscious wishes. This is how they act out the internalized upper-castes' desire for Dalits to be "kept in their place" and the Collective never becomes a strong reality.

Further evidence of an unconscious deskilling is the debate on whether non-Dalits can be in positions of leadership within the Collective. There was a broad policy decision in which a goal of the Collective would be developing Dalit leadership. It was also understood that a process of grooming people for positions and skill building would be involved. As a fight erupted over non-Dalits' holding critical positions within the collective, a knee-jerk reaction of replacing them with Dalits was taken. Many non-Dalit sympathizers, found themselves "outcaste" by a system that is akin to a use and throw away consumerist society. What seems to be an unwillingness to recognize the reality of many non-Dalits clearly possessing higher skill levels in their roles, is actually a process of the system denying itself access to learn from a resource. This is further evidence of self-sabotage based on the Dalit's internalizing the "audacity" phenomenon. One wonders if identification with the aggressor is so strong that all conscious efforts to form strategies for Dalit empowerment will be sabotaged by the Dalit decision-makers until the unconscious dynamics can be surfaced.

Ironically, many of the processes in the Collective are beginning to mirror the very globalization processes that it is organized to combat. What is not being dealt with is the oppressor within, which shows up in failure to define and negotiate boundaries (the Dalit and non-Dalit, sub-caste and management boundaries), the avoidance of the basic task of collective leadership organization, and the lack of stable systems and structures so that those who need to engage and work within these structures can develop the skills to do so. What lies ahead is an exploration of these processes and awareness of unconscious anxieties within the self. This includes the inherited pain endured through centuries of being a Dalit and the process of regaining dignity in ways that are constructive but also engage with introjected anger of the external social system.

#### **A Brief Review of the Processes at Work:**

In Case 1, the software personnel appear to have three unconscious assumptions. One is that they are

commodities rather than people. This assumption seems to be based on the fact that the parent company has chosen India because here, like many Developing Nations, the salaries are lower and workers have better skills. The person is not important for the company; the idea is not to create a growth-oriented company but to use the Indian unit as a source for churning out quality products at a low cost. This is further cause for the employees to feel like objects.

Two, the salaries that are offered to the employees are very high by Indian standards. This becomes ground for guilt rather than pride. Many of these employees know how much more their American counterparts get for doing similar work, making many employees envious. At the same time expressing envy becomes next to impossible when their own salaries are much higher than what other Indians earn. Third, having a mixture of envy and guilt, they tend to regress to such an extent that having fun becomes a component of employment rather than of job or task. These feelings are acted out because in the absence of an appropriate container where they might be worked through, they are bottled up in the Head of the Indian unit.

In Case 2, the company is owned by Indians, and globalization for them means capturing foreign markets and bringing some of its fruits back to India. To that extent, the Indian personnel are very clear about the commodity in question being software and they are proud as Indians for being able to sell it at a comparatively high price outside India. Then again, the software experts do not have any American counterparts because the U.S. unit does the marketing. The pressure the Indian unit members have to deal with is the demands made by the chief executive, an Indian living in the U.S.A. who has gradually lost touch with Indian work reality. It is also true that the Indian head bottled up anger that the Indian personnel were feeling as a result of what they perceived as absurd demands by the CEO. However, being an Indian the CEO did perceive some problems and appointed Indian consultants to help him diagnose the problems and assist in their solutions. The consultants focused on the authority distribution, hub-wheel syndrome that ended up making the Indian unit's head behave as the same role holder in Case 1. Further, various departmental heads had set themselves up as parent figures as a defense against acknowledging the departmental demands and as a means of spawning an informal organization to deal with the worst effects of those demands. This focus led to several changes very quickly- changing the authority structure to create a collegial organization rather than one based on the fantasy of parents and children.

In Case 3, globalization is experienced by the already marginalized Dalit community as furthering marginalization and the ultimate betrayal. Globalization, with its mantra of "there is no alternative", is experienced as neo-Brahminism. Centuries of acceptance of a paradigm based on social hierarchy have resulted in oppression of untold magnitude. The only way out is getting in touch with one's own skills, accessing one's humanity and introducing a new, alternative vision of equality and dignity. Such accessing of personal authority by a community denied personhood was indeed "audacity". This would require the skills to learn, and trust in collective leadership. The anxiety in the larger society of this collective opportunity of assuming personal authority is great. Since it is not dealt with adequately, it is projected on to the Dalits who introject this sense of Dalit audacity and systematically sabotage their own emancipation.

In Case 1, the company was not ready to deal with its unconscious assumptions. In Case 2, because the CEO and the top management team were able to acknowledge and deal with a number of unconscious dynamics they could avoid the trap Case 1's company fell into. As for Case 3, the Collective continues to "sit on the fence" when it comes to deciding whether to do the work necessary in surfacing the unconscious dynamics. No wonder! While surfacing the unconscious dynamics the Dalits have to confront the reality of acting out the internalized aggressor of several thousand years. Having infantilized themselves for generations, confronting the flames of guilt in allowing themselves to be dehumanized over untold years and then rising up in an adult transforming social revolution is akin to a Phoenix rising out of its own ashes. That is precisely what is happening now after the Collective decided to go through processes that have begun to surface the unconscious processes within (Chattopadhyay: Forthcoming 2003)

### **Some Concluding Observations:**

We end with two hypotheses: The first is that the processes evident in Case 1 and more so in Case 3, are a reflection of a macro process; a process through which India, as well as numerous Developing Nations, are

unconsciously going. This process is one of surrender to a market force that the global power figures, representing the aggressor-in-the-mind (Chattopadhyay: 1998b) and who in the Indian situation becomes the “invader in the mind” (Chattopadhyay: 1991), have declared as the inevitable aggressor, known as GLOBALIZATION, that is haunting the Developing Nations.

The second hypothesis is obviously related to the first one. This hypothesis is that **the terms** *Developed* and *Developing* coined by Developed Power economists, are the tips of a massive iceberg of projections. The economists, to be sure, are acting out the process on behalf of the cluster of nations which consider themselves to be *developed*. In other words, these terms represent the face of the defense against exploring what the Developed Nations are projecting on the Developing Nations, (i.e. what internal realities of the former are considered by them as bad or even evil, (see Biran & Chattopadhyay, 1997) and therefore to seek relief, those are sought to be projected on the Developing Nations. The basis of this assumption is that it is difficult to define a state which can be called *developed* in the context of any nation because most are continually developing in terms of both culture and technology. If a nation becomes static in terms of its culture and technological achievements, it will be one that is ready to start a downward journey. This is because no culture ever remains static, particularly in today’s world where cultural contact takes place on an unprecedented scale. Further, in a globalized market economy, no nation can make economic progress or even retain its economic standard without continuous technological development. It is therefore hypothesized that the notion of a *developed state* involves *feeling omnipotent in order to repress feelings of impotence*. Perhaps it is about achieving a state of total hegemony over the rest of the world. The process of globalization may well be considered as a tool for establishing more control over the economically weaker nations in a first step towards establishing permanent worldwide hegemony.

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#### NOTES:

[1] “What is Globalization?”, Prepared by PREM Economic Policy Group and Development Economics Group, The World Bank Group: Globalization and Poverty Online Debate. Over 5,000 people around the world subscribed to this on-line debate on Globalization and Poverty, initiated by the World Bank Development Forum and co-moderated by the Development forum and Panos through the month of May 2000.

[2] The caste ridden Hindu society in India, the influence of which has created caste-like society among many Moslem and Christian communities as well, has for millennia kept the lowest castes as either untouchables or as people from whose hands the upper caste people would not accept any kind of food or drink. Various socio-political leaders have from time to time taken up their cause and in various ways have tried to assist them in gaining a dignified and economically viable status. One of the great such leaders had emerged in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century from amongst these people, whose name was B.R. Ambedkar and it was he who had coined the term Dalit, meaning “Trodden Upon” or the “Broken People”

[3] It was Jawharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, who called them the temples of modern India.

[4] With the economic slowdown in the US in 2001, the impact on the Indian software industry has been obvious – sending shivers of realism down its spine. While many smaller firms were forced to downsize or even close, the basic nature of the industry has not changed.

[5] Brahmins are the highest caste in the four-fold *Varna* system. They form the priestly class- learning and teaching of the scriptures was their prerogative and their hegemony. Dalits are the outcastes-so low that they did not find place within the four-fold system.

[6] A recent report in one of the major national dailies, *Times of India*, in its Bangalore edition of 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2001, mentions that a medical transcription company has actually designated one of their HR Managers as the CFO (Chief Fun Officer) to supposedly “spearhead an array of activities to upkeep (sic) the tempo of the otherwise impatient employees of the industry”.

[7] While many states have on paper prioritized land reforms and other affirmative action measures, the stranglehold of caste and social power structures have largely rendered these ineffective.

[8] Reports of violence over water have broken out in several states in India. In Andhra Pradesh the privation of electricity distribution has sparked a popular movement. The World Bank which has loaned the government \$1 billion for the reform process has imposed conditions like elimination of cross subsidies, complete privatization of distribution by 2007 and a progressive reduction of government subsidies. The consequent rise in power tariff will push a sizeable percentage of the population out of electricity consumption. The peoples movement against this in Andhra Pradesh was countered by unprecedented police brutality. Nearly 5000 people were arrested and 2000 criminal cases were filed against the protestors. On 28<sup>th</sup>, August 2000 following 3 months of struggle against the “reforms” a

peaceful protest was held in Hyderabad, attended by over 35,000 people. Police firing killed 2 people and hundreds were injured in the brutal charge that followed.

[9] “Dalit Assertion in Political Economy: Reconceptualising, Restrategising and Restructuring the NGO task”, an internal discussion paper for the Collective, 1997.

[10] A mandal is a unit of revenue administration. Several villages from a mandal, several mandals constitute a district or zilla, and several districts form the state.

[11] Since 1993, Panchayati Raj (or local self-governance) is enshrined in the Constitution through an amendment. The legislation also provides for the reservation of seats in the local body for groups of people who have been acknowledged in one of the Schedules of the Indian Constitution as belonging to castes and tribes that need special treatment) in proportion to their population at each level. While its actual functioning leaves much to be desired, it has opened up a hitherto unavailable space for political participation of schedule castes and tribes at the local level.

[12] This was evident in our discussions with community leaders and youth in small villages, both men and women who talked of the new power that they felt when they refused to fall in line with traditional expectations from upper castes, when they demanded what was rightfully theirs, right to wages, right to dignity, access to resources, forcing new equations.

[13] Process of globalization the world over have steadily undermined processes of collectivization. The strategy has been two pronged, use of state and economic power to put down collective formations of protest, and the promotion of values of individualism, consumerism, survival of the fittest and competition. The former through a systematic process of weakening of trade movements, harsher laws to crack down on incipient attempts to organize, withdrawal of rights to form collectives, e.g., in Export Promotion Zones and the latter through advertisements, media, promoting lifestyle choices and definitions of development. The process of globalisation, as seen by entrenched capitalist world dominated by the rich, so-called developing nations, has been so strongly projected through advertisements, media, promoting lifestyle choices and definitions of development that a second kind of “globalization” is being steadily ignored even in the poorer nations. This kind of globalisation is represented by the week long Annual International anti-globalization conferences that are being organised for the past few years at Porto Aigre Brazil’ Rio Grande do sul state. This conference is attended by thousands of people from six continents. The agenda consist of hair splitting debates on anti-globalisation movements the world over, lectures, seminars, processions, folk song and folk drama sessions in order to fashion future strategies for anti-globalization movement.

[14] The two main sub-castes of the Malas and the Madigas

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