

Feminists have thus argued that this is also a constitutive element of male dominance. In any case patrilineal practices consolidated in the colonial period served to erase cultural mixedness, hybridity and multiculturalism and perpetuate the myth of pure ethnic identities.

The process of translation and transformation begun in colonial times put in place the cognitive structures of the configuration of identity politics in Sri Lanka where Sinhalese and Tamils have emerged as singular ethnic groups. For the post-colonial period, communal, or what are now termed ethno-racial or national, identities were mapped on to conceptions of race, thereby changing existing identity configurations. What is clear is that linguistic and religious categories have been consolidated along an ethno-racial fault line in post-colonial Sri Lanka. Thus, despite the fact that Hindus and Buddhists share a pantheon of gods and many common religious practices, they are viewed as belonging to different religions. Likewise, though Sinhalese and Tamils have intermarried over the centuries, Sinhalese and Tamils are construed as exclusive categories in the census.

It is hence imperative that the census in Sri Lanka be pluralized to reflect the diversity, mixed and multiculturalism of the island's peoples also as a means of conflict resolution. For it is arguable that those who are mixed are least likely to do harm to the other,

since the other is within us rather than the enemy outside. Let us pluralize the census as one long-term strategy for undoing colonial and scientifically false race-based identity classifications and recognizing diversity within and without us – also as a small step towards reconciliation and conflict resolution.

The False-Truths of Classification.

We recommend a recent film (in Sinhala) called “The Census” based on a short story in Malayalam. As an introduction to the film says, “the census-taker in Karoor Nilakanthas Pillai’s story *The Wooden Dolls* (1963) tells Nalini, the woman he interviews, that the census is concerned with the ‘truth.’ The government needs verification on the lives of its citizens, their civil status, professions, age, parenthood, patterns of internal travel etc. But what is the truth, particularly when it comes to the life of this poor woman, living in a rural village in Kerala? This is where the census form, influenced by, and in collusion with an age-old patriarchy which classifies women in particular ways, constructs a sexual division of labour, and genders their roles in everyday life, comes into confrontation with another lived reality, more ‘truthful’ to the woman in question. Karoor’s short story, through the lively, witty and poignant dialogue between the census taker and Nalini, foregrounds this anomaly with subtle irony.” It has been filmed in a local setting by Robert Cruz .

IF IT'S FAIR, IT'S GOOD: 10 TRUTHS ABOUT GLOBALIZATION

Amartya Sen

Even though the world is incomparably richer than ever before, ours is also a world of extraordinary deprivation and of staggering inequality.

We have to bear in mind this elemental contrast when considering widespread skepticism about the global economic order and the patience of the general public with the so-called anti-globalization protests, despite the fact that they are often frantic and frenzied and sometimes violent.

Debates about globalization demand a better understanding of the underlying issues, which tend to get submerged in the rhetoric of confrontation, on one side, and hasty rebuttals, on the other. Some general points need particular attention.

Anti-globalization protests are not about globalization:

The so-called anti-globalization protesters can hardly be, in general, anti-globalization, since these protests are among the most globalized events in the contemporary world. The protesters in Seattle, Melbourne, Prague, Quebec and elsewhere are not just local kids, but men and women from across the world pouring into the location of the respective events to pursue global complaints.

Globalization is not new, nor is it just Westernization:

Over thousands of years, globalization has progressed through travel, trade, migration, spread of cultural influences and dissemination of knowledge and understanding (including of science and technology).

Globalization is not in itself a folly: It has enriched the world scientifically and culturally and benefited many people economically as well. Pervasive poverty and lives that were “nasty, brutish and short,” as Thomas Hobbes put it, dominated the world not many centuries ago, with only a few pockets of rare affluence. In overcoming that penury, modern technology as well as economic interrelations have been influential. The predicament of the poor across the world cannot be reversed by withholding from them the great advantages of contemporary technology, the well-established efficiency of international trade and exchange, and the social as well as economic merits of living in open, rather than closed, societies. What is needed is a fairer distribution of the fruits of globalization.

The central issue is inequality: The principal challenge relates to inequality — between as well as within nations. The relevant inequalities include disparities in affluence, but also gross asymmetries in political, social and economic power. A crucial question concerns the sharing of the potential gains from globalization, between rich and poor countries, and between different groups within countries.

The primary concern is the level of inequality, not its marginal change: By claiming that the rich are getting richer and the poor getting poorer, the critics of globalization have, often enough, chosen the wrong battleground. Even though many sections of the poor in the world economy have done badly, it is hard to establish an overall and clear-cut trend. But this debate does not have to be settled as a precondition for getting on with the central issue. The basic concerns relate to the massive levels of inequality and poverty — not whether they are also increasing at the margin.

The question is whether the distribution of gains is fair: When there are gains from cooperation, there can be many alternative arrangements that benefit each party compared with no cooperation. It is necessary, therefore, to ask whether the distribution of gains is fair or acceptable, and not just whether there exists some gain for all parties.

The use of the market economy can produce different outcomes: The central question cannot be whether or not to make use of the market economy. It is not possible to have a prosperous economy without its extensive use. But that recognition, rather than ending the discussion, only begins it. The market economy can generate many different results, depending on how physical resources are distributed, how human resources are developed, what rules prevail and so

on, and in all these spheres, the state and the society have roles, with in a country and in the world.

The market is one institution among many. Aside from the need for public policies that protect the poor (related to basic education and health care, employment generation, land reforms, credit facilities, legal protections, women’s empowerment and more), the distribution of the benefits of international interactions depends also on a variety of global arrangements.

The world has changed since the Bretton Woods agreement: The current economic, financial and political architecture of the world (including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other institutions), was largely set up in the 1940s, following the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944. The bulk of Asia and Africa was still under imperialist dominance then; tolerance of insecurity and poverty was much greater, the idea of human rights was still very weak; the environment was not seen as particularly important; and democracy was definitely not seen as a global entitlement.

Both policy and institutional changes are needed: The existing international institutions have, to varying extents, tried to respond to the changed situation. The World Bank, under James Wolfensohn’s guidance, has revised its priorities. The United Nations, particularly under Kofi Annan’s leadership, has tried to play a bigger role, despite financial stringency. But more changes are needed. Indeed, the power structure underlying the institutional architecture itself needs to be reexamined in the light of the new political reality, of which the growth of globalized protest is only a loosely connected expression.

Global construction is the needed response to global doubts: The anti-globalization protests are themselves part of the general process of globalization, from which there is no escape and no great reason to seek escape. But while we have reason enough to support globalization in the best sense of the idea, there are also critically important institutional and policy issues that need to be addressed at the same time. It is not easy to disperse the doubts without seriously addressing the doubters’ underlying concerns. ■

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