CHAPTER - 7

CONCLUSION

As we have noted at the outset we have been fundamentally attracted towards the spectacular instances of resurgence of ethnicity both in the traditional and the so-called modern and advanced countries. Ethnic and communitarian identities have evidently become stronger than even before despite the inexorable process of modernisation which was supposed to have a struck a blow to the 'primordial' identities. That is the implication one derives from the dominant theoretical perspectives (of Marx, Durkheim and Weber). Ethnicity would inevitably give way to the class consciousness, as Marx would argue. Or the movement from mechanical solidarity to the organic solidarity would privilege individual consciousness over collective conscience thereby implying that ethnic identities would loose their significance. The processes of secularization and rationalization would strike at the very root of ethnic conscience, as Max Weber would contend.

But today we are witnessing the growing salience of ethnicity both in the traditional and the so-called modern societies. One can rationalise the salience of ethnicity, if one may like, in terms of inadequate modernisation in former. But how would one do so in the case of the modern and advanced societies? Evidently the promise made by modernity has not been fulfilled, The project of modernity, a product of Enlightenment privileged reason over faith, knowledge over ignorance, optimism over pessimism. It was
celebrated as a new possibility, as a new hope. It was expected to free us from all kinds of shackles. Ethnicity was supposed to be one such shackle. Evidently it has not happened.

This is what we wanted to know. Whether the same pattern is reproduced in the context of Telugus in Bangalore or not is the central problem that we have tried to explore. More specifically, whether people who demonstrate attributes of modern consciousness also demonstrate attributes of ethnic consciousness. This would tell us whether modernisation co-exists with ethnic consciousness among Telugus in Bangalore or not. We have sought to make one point quite clear. The absence of ethnic assertions and/or ethnic conflicts should not be taken to mean the absence of ethnic consciousness. The latter can exist even in the absence of the former. One need not wait for a conflict to erupt before exploring the consciousness which gives rise to such conflicts.

To do this, we had to gain conceptual clarity about modernity and ethnicity. We have, therefore, involved ourselves in a sustained engagement with these supposedly theoretically loose and methodologically unwieldy terms. Having done that, we have proceeded to examine the considerable body of literature that looks at the relationship between modernisation and ethnicity(though not directly all the time). For the purpose of greater analytical clarity, we have divided the literature into theories of decline and theories of persistence; The former is subdivided into Marxist expectancy
and liberal expectancy. In essence they argue in terms of decline of ethnicity. Reasons could differ depending upon the ideological position they take. The latter would argue in terms of the persistence and in fact of resurgence of ethnicity; A review of the theories of persistence would give us, broadly, the following reasons for the persistence of ethnicity.

One of the important reasons for the growing ethnic conflicts is said to be the model of the nation-state developed in Europe and spread through the entire world (apart from the process of modernisation). It has been observed that this model has been found to be deficient in terms of satisfactorily accommodating numerous ethnic groups within its hold. Subordinate ethnic groups would not like to identify themselves with the state in which they live. They constantly endeavour to gain greater recognition, equality or autonomy within the framework of an existing territorial state or for independence from such a state.

This gives rise to numerous ethnic conflicts between the dominant ethnic groups who are in full control of the state and subordinate ethnic groups trying to gain more control over the state or to carve out a separate state of their own.

Such conflicts could be noticed in Europe and subsequently they occurred in the aftermath of decolonisation during the 1960s within the successor states of the European empires in Africa and Asia. We have also
witnessed the re-emergence of ethnic conflicts as a result of the dissolution of the then Soviet Union and the Yugoslavia Federation in the early 1990s.

The second reason is associated with the growing ethnic turbulence is the competition over declining socio-economic resources. Whatever available resources are there, they are appropriated by the dominant ethnic group in a more effective way than the subordinate ethnic groups, leading to glaring inequalities. These growing inequalities have recently been aggravated by the process of globalisation and the privatisation of production activities. There has been a process of degradation of the socio-economic reality of subordinate ethnic groups. And members of these groups have begun to realise that unless they stay together and fight for the resources, they will not be able to gain anything. This leads to a great competition among ethnic group for the limited resources. Why should this fight assume ethnic shape? As Daniel Bell suggests an ethnic group successfully combines an affective tie with an instrumental one. Mobilisation along ethnic line has been proved to be very effective in competing successfully for the resources. The fascinating story of Mizoram from a small district in the state of Assam into a full-fledged state of Mizoram reveals quite clearly that ethnicity could be mobilised successfully to gain access to political and economic resources.

Thirdly the very logic of modernisation reaffirms the need for an identity. Modernisation through its thrust on homgenisation seeks to subvert
everything that does not fit into its framework. It ridicules and castigates
and undermines all other social and ethic cohesions and imposes its
globalizing will and power on all others. It is the first claim to universality
that leaves no one out of its domain. There is only one legitimate structure of
power, morality and truth. All others are invalid.

The end result of this kind of world view is that it creates a sense of
rootlessness among people who get dragged, willingly or unwillingly, into
the process of modernisation. The “authentic” identity which they have been
nurturing all along stands diminished and discredited in the face of
modernisation. This creates a sense of restlessness and rootlessness leading
to the inexorable process of searching for one’s roots. This is where
ethnicity steps in comforting the bruised psyche by providing authentic
identity. Thus modernisation ironically reasserts and consolidates ethnicity.

Lastly, referring specifically to the Indian context, the inauguration of
‘mass politics’ has enhanced the significance of groups. Certain fundamental
rights, the introduction of adult suffrage and legal rights and consequent
democratisation have encouraged participation of a large number of people
to take more active interest in their polity. In a democracy physical numbers
matter the most. It has been noticed that ideology and party programmes
alone are not sufficient to mobilise physical numbers in an electoral context.
By harping on the group identity (ethnic identity) it has been observed that
dominant elites in every ethnic group have been able to mobilise people along their side. Ethnicity has proved to be one such effective mobilise tool.

When M.N. Srinivas referred to the growing importance of caste in Indian politics in 1952, very few took him seriously. Subsequent elections reaffirmed the role played by caste in Indian politics. The Backward Classes Movement in Tamil Nadu in 1920s and more recently in the North India especially Bihar and U.P. are sharp pointers in this regard. Caste has been used as a very powerful mobilising tool in India. Ethnic politics has become an incontrovertible political fact.

Let us turn to the place which we have chosen i.e. Bangalore. It must be stated quite clearly that the fact we have chosen Bangalore does not mean that there are ethnic conflicts there between Telugus and Kannadigas. Our attempt is essentially to understand whether modernisation has led to the disappearance of ethnic consciousness or not: our findings suggest that it has not done so. It has been observed ethnic consciousness may or may not lead to ethnic conflicts. Whether ethnic consciousness concretises itself in terms of ethnic conflicts and if so, what time, would depend upon historical and contextual factors. Absence of an ethnic conflict does not necessarily indicate absence of ethnic consciousness.

Ethnic conflicts do not emerge full-blown, but usually go through a period of incubation. In Bangalore also one does not witness any ethnic upheaval as much. But one does not fail to notice certain amount of ethnic
restlessness among Telugus. As their responses to our queries indicate, this has been caused by perceived discrimination against Telugus (as revealed in caste studies), the failure of democratic mechanism for negotiation or power-sharing between ethnic political actors, the emergence of essentialist ethnic ideologies and tightly ethnic politics and the absence of prominent cultural space for Telugus.

It is with the objective of finding out whether the Telugu identity (ethnic identity) has become stronger even in the face of modernisation that we have chosen Bangalore. The logic underlying the choice of this city is that Bangalore being a cosmopolitan city is supposed to have made deep inroads into the life of the city of Bangalore.

As it must have been noticed our interest is with only those who have exhibited modern attributes such as a readiness to face new experiences, preference for democracy, orientation towards present and / or future, respect for efficiency, stress on dignity etc. Responses only from these people have been sought in relation to their attitudes towards ethnicity. Systematic data from these responses only would help us make an enquiry into the problem as so whether modernisation necessarily leads to the erasure of ethnic consciousness.
Substantive Findings

As far as our basic problem i.e. modernisation does not lead to the weakening of ethnic consciousness is concerned, a careful perusal of the responses to our questions and also cases studies would tell us, it is clear that it has not done so. Majority of respondents (over 347 out of 537) have scored mean score more than 2 which demonstrates that they think along ethnic lines. This is further substantiated by case studies which we have taken up and analysed. Though they think along modern lines, when it comes to the question of expression of ethnicity, one notices that their continued ethnic consciousness.

As far as the specific objectives we have set for ourselves are concerned, we mention them below.

1. It is clear that majority of respondents [284 out of 537 (52.88%)] would vote for a Telugu candidate if he is contesting in an election as a political representative for Telugus would bring in a sense of confidence and security to them. The mean score stands at 2.19. Majority of case studies which we have examined also subscribe to this view. This indicates continued ethnic consciousness. Even if no Telugu candidate is contesting, the majority of them [205 out of 537 (38.17%), though lesser in number compared to the above, said that they would vote for a person who enjoys support among Telugus. The mean score is slightly higher at 2.02.
2. Majority of our respondents would like to see that the Telugu community become stronger then they presently are [329 out of 537 (61.26%)]. The mean score is 2.37. This is further substantiated by some case studies which we have taken up. Majority of them specifically referred to their desire to see that the Telugu community becomes stronger, a fact which is reflective of their ethnic identity.

3. As far as their perception of the number of Telugu association and their activities and their role in promoting political awareness or extending economic assistance is concerned; majority of them would like Telugu associations to promote political awareness among people [247 out of 537 (45.99%)]. The mean score stands at 2.09. They also feel that they should try to extend economic assistance to Telugus [335 out of 537 (62.38%)] and the mean score stands at 2.34. However only 214 respondents (43.76%) of respondents say that they are satisfied with the number of Telugu associations and 310 (57.72%) respondents say that they are not satisfied with the activities undertaken by Telugu associations. The mean score stands at 2.29. These findings are more or less echoed by the people whose case studies we have taken up. These findings suggest an affirmation of their ethnic consciousness.

4. As far as the objective of finding out if they support any movement to mobilise Telugus politically is concerned, we notice that an
overwhelming number of people [307 out of 537 (57.16%)] would do so. The mean score stands at 2.30. Political mobilisation on the basis of linguistic identity is an affirmation of one’s ethnicity.

5. Majority of our respondents (249 out of 537) would like to depend upon other members of the community for economic betterment. In terms of percentage it comes to 46.36% and the mean score is 2.11. This reflects their willingness to tap ethnic linkages in times of need. Some of people whom we have taken up as case studies also subscribe to this.

6. As far as their preference for the medium of instruction is concerned, it is interesting to note that majority of them [355 out of 537 (66.12%)] would send their children to English medium schools and it is also reflected in the lower mean score of 1.55. Pragmatic considerations seem to determine the preference of those who opt for English as the medium of instruction because they know lack of access to English education could effectively deny their children significant opportunities. Majority of them (as we will see shortly) support the idea of Telugu schools, but when it comes to the question of their children, they prefer English medium schools.

7. But when it comes to the question of preference for the language at home and in communication with the other members of the community is concerned, 379 respondents (70.57%) would like to use
Telugu. The mean score stands at a high of 2.52. Close affinity to one’s own language is considered natural.

8. Majority of the respondents (353) would support the idea of Telugu schools. In terms of percentage it comes to a significant 65.74% and the mean score is a high of 2.40. Majority of them (234) also said that they are not satisfied with the number of Telugu schools and there should be more schools. This is further substantiated by many of our case studies. This may be characterised as a contradiction in terms. As far as their children are concerned, they would like to send them to English medium schools. But when it comes to the question of supporting Telugu schools, they would do so. What explains this apparent contradiction may be the existence of real pragmatic considerations, as we have noted above. But any support for the identity-based schools may be taken as the illustration of one’s ethnic consciousness. In Mizoram too where the researcher is presently employed, though the language Mizo is used as one of the mobilising tools, they have a marked preference for the English Medium schools for the ostensible benefits they offer.

9. As far as marriage, most of them would like to marry within the Telugu community itself (320 out of 137) and 59.55% say inter-linguistic community marriages may cause some problems. The mean
score is high at 2.32. Illustrative evidence of this can be found in our case studies also.

10. As far as question of finding out if they support of the idea of a Telugu magazine, it is clear that 62.38% of respondents (335) would support it. The higher mean score of 2.34 reflects this.

11. Majority of our respondents [327 out 537 (60.89%)] say there should be a greater interaction among Telugus. The mean score is high at 2.33. Further evidence of this can be found in the case studies. It is reflective of their desire to cling to their ethnic roots. In fact many of them have expressed concern over the lack of appreciable interaction among them in Bangalore.

12. 57.91% of our respondents feel much more closer to Telugus then they did when they were in Andhra Pradesh (311 out of 537). The mean score is high at 2.28. Our case studies provide further substantiation of this. This is reflective of the deep-rooted ethnic consciousness.

13. Given a chance, majority of our respondents [329 out of 537 (61.26%)] would like to go back to Andhra Pradesh. This is also reflected in the higher mean score of 2.22.

14. As far as the objective of directly finding out from them about the relationship between modernisation and ethnicity is concerned, 266 respondents (49.54%) feel that there is no necessary positive
relationship between the two which means that ethnic attachments do not decline simply because somebody becomes modern. The mean score is 2.22 and further evidence of this can be found in our case studies.

Location of our Study in the Larger Context

A look at the above findings and also our case studies would enable us to locate our study in the larger context of how modernity has found itself incapable of weakening ethnic and community identities. The promise of modernity has proved to be a little exaggerated one. The power of identity has proved to be intractable. Identities persist because they have tremendous emotional significance for the people or because these identities have emerged as powerful instruments which are used to achieve political and socio-economic objectives. Whatever it may, our study provides empirical evidence for the possibility of co-existence of modernity and ethnicity. Modernity instead of looking down upon identity needs to engage itself in a creative dialogue with it.

This would also lead us to briefly reflect on the very question of nation-state formation, which is viewed largely as a modern process. Though this issue has not been our main concern in this work, it should be possible to make a brief reference here. The concept of nation-state transplanted here from Europe has not proved to be a tenable and sustainable doctrine. Within Europe itself, as T.K.Oommen would argue, it has largely remained a myth.
There have been different nations within the Europe itself, an empirical reality which has been conveniently pushed under the carpet. One could usefully speak in terms of multiple nations within a State itself. What should remain a common bond is the citizenship. The hegemonic concept of the nation-state would find itself incapable of being accepted by the subordinate groups who feel left out of the system.

The efforts being made at present, in the name of cultural nationalism, to homogenize cultural diversities would do immense conceptual and physical violence to our body politic and society; It betrays an astounding ignorance of our history and culture. Culture is an inclusive term and the reduction of it to religion would be untenable.

In our view what needs to be privileged is the respect for cultural diversities and the federal polity. It is only by privileging these two, one can provide a sense of belonging to different groups. Every group would like to have its own ideological and political space; Competent claims of different groups can meaningfully be accommodated within the framework of federal polity and cultural diversities. Any tendency, in the name of modernity, to homogenize cultural diversities and to make any one model hegemonic would make the very project of modernity a problematic proposition.

Possible areas of research

We conclude by indicating possible areas of research by more competent scholars.
1. There are multiple ways of interrogating modernity. In this study we have adopted only one understanding of modernity, that of Alex Inkeles for the purpose of our study. It is possible to look at modernity from multiple perspectives for the purpose of understanding it in relation to ethnicity.

2. A more ethnographic mode of analysis to understand the relationship between modernisation and ethnicity would be highly welcome. We have tried to use both the questionnaire and the case study methods and our suggestion would be a more comprehensive and elaborate ethnographic treatment would be in order.

3. There have been many scholarly works about the rise of ethnic and nationalist movements. But one finds that in these analyses, the dialectic of modernity/modernisation has not been sufficient importance. But one can gain a better appreciation of these movements within the framework of modernisation. However, a linear way of understanding the relationship between modernity and ethnicity needs to be rejected and multiple ways of understanding must be explored.

4. Using the comparative method, one could take up cross-societal studies about the relationship between modernity and ethnicity. There are already some. But more studies could be profitably undertaken.
5. It will be meaningful to study ethnic consciousness even in the absence of ethnic conflicts. One need not wait for an ethnic conflict to take place to explore whether ethnic consciousness is present or not. Just as it will be profitable to study communal consciousness even in the absence of communal conflicts, it would be equally profitable to study ethnic consciousness even in the absence of ethnic conflicts. We have done in our study. We do hope that many more studies will be taken up.