



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conference on

The Indian Civilisation in a Globalizing World

25 and 26 April 2002,
Moscow

Abstract

In cooperation with the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) of the Russian Academy of Science, the Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies (LIEIS) held a conference on the present and future perspectives of India as a civilisation in an age of increasing globalisation. The conference is part of the IMEMO's project 'Civilizations in the Globalizing World' and the LIEIS's project on the 'Vitality of Nations'. Following meetings in Calcutta in December 2001 and in Chandigarh on 9 and 10 March 2002, this latest meeting is the third conference organized by the LIEIS on a topic related to India: while the emphasis of the previous two meetings was on the history and the present of India, the conference in Moscow focused on the Indian civilisation in an increasingly globalised world. More than 30 Russian experts on the question of civilisation and globalisation in general and on India in particular, as well as a counsellor of the Indian Embassy in Russia and several eminent Western indologists, outlined the most important stages of the development of the Indian civilisation and discussed the nature of the challenges and opportunities of globalisation.

There were three main areas of discussions: first, some of the peculiarities of the Indian civilisation and its 7,000 year long history; second, the nature of medieval India and of its modernisation; third, India's strategy and model of globalisation and the implications for its civilisation. All the participants stressed that India is at once the land of contradictions and of 'unity in diversity' and that this particular configuration makes India one of the most thriving civilisations in the contemporary world of globalisation and increasing uniformisation. One of the main conclusions of the meeting was that globalisation is not an invariable factor which represents risks as well as opportunities, but that the diversity and richness of its civilisation enables India to become a main actor and to help transforming the current course of globalisation.

I. Some of India's peculiarities

1. Characterizing India

Dr. Satbir Singh, Counsellor of the Indian Embassy in Moscow, argued that India is at once the 'land of many contradictions' and the land of accommodation. The pattern of the development and evolution of the Indian civilisation, which ensues from this apparent paradox, is one of simultaneous and parallel continuity and change, resistance and transformation. Far from ending in confusion and chaos, the Indian civilisation has produced a form of universality whose particular form is to combine mercy, compassion and justice with a pluralist and diverse society.

For Dr. Armand Clesse, Director of the LIEIS, the particularities of the Indian civilisation, namely the way it combines unity and diversity, raises the question of the relation between diversity and democracy. Rather than viewing India's diversity as an obstacle for democracy, the history of the Indian civilisation which encompasses over 7,000 years would suggest that diversity has been the binding element and that it has permitted India to overcome both external threats and internal crises.

Dr. Vladimir Khoros, Director at IMEMO, emphasised the uniqueness of the Indian civilisation, its irreducible diversity and richness which cannot be captured by any account predicated on mere development, but requires an account of the substantive peculiarities of India. Moreover, according to Dr. Khoros, Samuel Huntington's thesis of the 'clash of civilisations' does not apply to India, since it is characterised by a pattern of cooperation and coordination. These features raise a certain number of questions: first, how to account for the simultaneity of India's plurality and the peaceful co-existence, at home and in relation to its neighbours? Second, what is the dynamic underlying India's evolution? Third, how will India be able to maintain and enhance its authenticity?

2. Indian warfare and the question of capacity for dialogue and consensus

For Dr. Christopher Coker from the London School of Economics and Political Science, one of the most striking peculiarities lies in the Indian way of warfare. It would seem that different strategies and methods used in military campaigns are not so much a function of different mentalities and perspectives than of circumstances and of a particular form of question- and problem-setting. According to Dr. Coker, this goes back to the *dharma*, India's code of honour, that is to say it is an existential question, not one of instrumentality. The difference is that this system of warfare is not an Aristotelian account of the relation between means and ends, nor a Clausewitzian account of the continuation of politics by other means, but that it is related to the caste system. Historically, the latter has provided social stability at the expense of social cohesion, whereas in the West, the development has been the opposite. This entails that India's military capacity has declined over time, since its political culture is based, not on dialogue and consensus, but instead on a socially motivated form of division.

Professor A. Prazauskas from the Magnus University in Vilnius argued that the caste system helped produce and foster India's plurality and that the political strategy was profoundly marked by Hinduism, that is, a dominant religion which represents the basis around which the Indian civilisation has revolved. Andras Balogh, Professor at the University of Budapest and former Hungarian Ambassador to India, contended that there was a pre-Aryan civilisation and

that India has always practised a form of synthesis between different cultures, which is what explains its irreducible diversity. Yet Hinduism has played a predominant role in recent times, for example in the birth and rise of Indian nationalism and in the struggle for independence.

II. The Indian Civilisation during the Middle Ages and the nature of India's modernisation

1. Reappraising medieval India

In response to these accounts, Dr. E. Kamarov argued that the Indian civilisation has not always been characterised by a lack of dialogue and consensus. During the Middle Ages, there existed a tradition of ambulant theologians who encouraged discussions among the different cultures and religions and who practised forms of dialogue and consensus in all spheres of societal life. This was followed by a debate on the nature and importance of the medieval Indian civilisation. Several participants claimed that the Middle Ages were one of the high watermarks of the Indian civilisation and that India's path to modernisation displayed a number of interesting exceptions. According to Dr. E. Vanina, the complex evolution of India is best described in terms of a 'core-periphery' model which applies to the political, economic, social and religious aspects of India's civilisational development. One of the implications of this approach is that the 'caste system as such' had no historical reality, but that the caste system had a different meaning and a different reality over time and across the various parts of India. This was most apparent during the Middle Ages, when the rural and urban areas were closely integrated with one another and marked by an intense level of mobility and exchange. Moreover, the political organisation did not serve primarily its own interests, but served the *dharma*, that is the code of honour and the underlying social order within which each member of society has particular rights and responsibilities. One of the most striking features of this system was the fact that the King was under particular pressure to honour and live up to his tasks and that the political structures were far less authoritarian and centralized than in modern times. Finally, the autonomy of citizens was such that there were regular protests against the ruling regime. Thus, contrary to most accounts which argue that medieval India was backward, reactionary and opposed to all forms of progress, Dr. E. Vanina showed that the Indian civilisation during the Middle Ages was dynamic and creative, producing many innovations and also political stability, including a peaceful coexistence of the various religions. Modern imperialism was therefore not so much a liberation from the dark ages than also a force of destruction and uniformisation.

2. An alternative account of medieval India and Indian modernisation

This account was challenged by Dr. Leonid Alayev who argued that the rigidity of the caste system, the conservatism of the Hindu religion, as well as the tendency of self-sufficiency of Islam all contributed to India's backwardness in the late Middle Ages. This background explains the extent to which colonialism was beneficiary for India's subsequent development, even if its ideology and its practices were highly problematic, politically as well as morally. According to this alternative account, the decisive changes took place in the latter half of the 19th century, namely the introduction of a modern legal system and of primary and secondary schooling. Furthermore, the beginnings of some form of parliamentary political organisation favoured India's take-off by granting some freedom of speech and discussion and by introducing elements of (at least partly) elected regional and local political structures. These efforts to reform and modernise India were mostly undermined by the advent of capitalism

which transferred some of the powers back to regional and local barons and which permanently excluded members of the lower caste (already marginalized since the Middle Ages) from the new system of exchange.

Professor H. Kulke from the University of Kiel, contended that the Middle Ages did not at all constitute a period of stagnation and backwardness, but rather one of stability and plurality. Nor did modernisation necessarily engender diversity and stability. Rather, it would seem that medieval India produced a form of civilisational dynamic which was curbed by modernisation. Dr. E. Vanina prolonged this critique by arguing that unity and diversity entertained a complex relation of interaction and mutual reinforcement and that medieval India was not based on ethnic criteria of inclusion or exclusion.

III. India's standing and role in a world of increasing globalisation

1. India's 'via media'

In his paper, Dr. Sergey Lounev argued that India's performance in the globalized economy has so far been particularly successful thanks to a 'via media', a middle-way between the extremes of individualism and collectivism. Even if its political and economic system is not dissimilar to that of the West, India has nevertheless managed to preserve and foster its uniqueness by adapting its civilisation to ever more rapidly changing external influences. Moreover, the Indian political culture and the religious system have favoured India's integration in the process of political and economic globalisation, since the elite is well acquainted with the functioning of the Western capitalist system and therefore capable of defending and promoting India's interest on the international level. This strategy is complemented by a capacity to muster domestic support and build a national consensus on the crucial political and economic questions. India's path has therefore been one of modernisation, but not of Westernisation. For Dr. S. Lounev, while it is true that the discrepancy between the core areas and peripheral areas persists (and even grows), it is also true that the Indian economy is already the 4th or 5th most powerful in the world (in terms of purchasing power). Most economic forecasts predict that it could match the economic power of Japan in as little as 10 to 12 years. This success story reveals a thriving domestic culture capable to survive and to dominate in some of the most competitive areas of the world economy, above all the information technology sector. Yet this is not to say that India does not face huge problems and challenges, such as fighting fundamentalist Hinduism, tackling persisting inequalities, protecting the environment and critically assessing its relation with the USA.

2. A brief outlook of India's performance in the globalizing world

Dr. G. Shirokov from the IMEMO contended that the intra-Indian consensus on the strategy of globalisation is far less stable and that India faces an increasingly important problem, that of the exodus of large parts of the elite and the ensuing 'brain-drain'. Similarly, Dr. N. Simonia, the director of IMEMO, criticised the model of 'catching-up' as problematic insofar as it does not allow for alternative strategies and methods of economic development. Professor H. Kulke raised the question of the relation between globalisation and regionalisation and wondered whether they represent two sides of the same coin or whether regionalisation is a form of protection against the negative, uniformising impact of globalisation. Dr. A. Rogozhin pointed to India's adaptiveness and the creativity, especially

its performance in the sector of information technology, one of the most competitive areas of the world economy.

Concluding remarks

Beyond the findings contained in the various papers and expressed in the course of the discussions, the meeting contributed to clarifying a number of key issues to be addressed in future research work and in the framework of future meetings. Two such key issues can be singled out: first, the extent to which modernisation can be conducted and achieved independently of Westernisation. This raises the question about the feasibility of recovering and extending traditions which are specific to cultures and civilisations, in the face of contemporary exigencies, namely a successful integration in the world economy and in the system of international relations. Another related question concerns the future orientation of international relations. Is India in a sense doomed to seek closer ties with the USA? What alternative alliances exist? How could they come into being and what shape might they take?

The second key issue is the nature of religious fundamentalism in politics. The question is whether it is a predominantly political or religious phenomenon and, more fundamentally, which logic dictates parties and governments which deploy religion as a reference. This is all the more important since critiques of the current forms of globalisation increasingly invoke religious traditions to articulate alternative visions of political and economic organisation.

Adrian Pabst
LIEIS



**Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences
(IMEMO, RAS)
Luxembourg Institute of European and International Studies (LIEIS)**

INDIAN CIVILIZATION IN THE GLOBALIZING WORLD

The Programme of Workshop. April 25-26, 2002, Moscow,
Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO)

April 25, Thursday.

10.00 - 10.45: Inaugural Session
Opening Speech by **Academician Nodari Simonya** (Director of IMEMO).
Address by the Guest of Honor - **Dr. Armand Clesse** (Director of LIEIS)
Address by **Prof. Vladimir Khoros** (Head of the Centre for Development Studies, IMEMO)

10.45 - 11.30: Session 1.
Peculiarities of Indian Civilization – **Dr. Christopher Coker** (London School of Economics)
The basic values and institutions of Indian civilization – **Dr. Eugenia Vanina** (Head of Department, Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS)

11.30-12.00: Coffee-Break

12.00 - 14.00: Continuation of Session 1

Discussion in round-table format (Prof. Leonid Alaev, Prof. Andrash Balogh, Dr. Alexander Dubyansky, Prof. Boris Falikov, Dr. Irina Glushkova, Dr. Boris Ivanov, Prof. Artem Kobzev, Prof. Anatoly Kutsenkov, Prof. Sergei Lounev, Prof. Vadim Mezhuev, Prof. Algis Prazauskas, Prof. Eugene Rashkovsky, Prof. Alexei Vigin, Prof. Igor Yakovenko, etc.).

Key points:

I. Core institutions and values

1. The human being and the realm of the sacred.
 - a) Sacred texts and traditions.
 - b) Images of the divine, natural, human and their correlations. Notions of human age and the life cycle.
 - c) Religious institutions (castes, priests, temples, sects, etc.).
2. The human being and society
 - a) The character of social hierarchies. Criterion of social status, measures of rigidity or flexibility of social structures and mobility systems.

- b) Basic social cells: the family, the caste, local community, etc.
- c) The city and the countryside.

II. *The human being and power relations*

- 1. Divine and secular legitimization of power.
- 2. Ruler's status and the scope of power.
- 3. Legal and ideological preconditions of power.

III. The human being and the realm of labor

- 1. The hierarchy of the forms of labor.
- 2. Implicit and explicit notions of property. Regulation of property forms (corporate, state, private).
- 3. Sacred and natural cycles of human activities.

14.00 – 15.00: Lunch

15.00 -16.20: Session 2

Historical Dynamics of the Indian Civilization – **Prof. Leonid Alayev**,
President, All-Russian Association of Orientologists

Discussion in round-table format (Prof. Andrash Balog, Dr. Christopher Coker, Prof. Boris Falikov, Dr. Boris Ivanov, Dr. Erik Komarov, Prof. Anatoly Kutsenkov, Prof. H. Kulke, Dr. Arkadii Lipkin, Prof. Sergei Lounev, Prof. Algis Prazauskas, Prof. Andrei Samozvantsev, Dr. Anna Tkatcheva, Dr. Eugenia Vanina, Prof. Alexei Vigasin, etc.).

Key points.

- 1. Cycles of growth, decay, stagnation, and structural crises in Indian civilization's history.

16.20-16.40: Coffee-Break

16.40 - 18.00: Continuation of Session 2

- 2. India in the process of modernization (the middle of XIX century – 1980s).
 - a) Predominant modernization impulses (inner and/or outer).
 - b) Inner value and institutional preconditions of the modernization process in the course of indigenous evolution of particular traditional society (elements of rationalism in traditional sacred knowledge; individuation processes in a framework of traditional collectivism; modes of contacts among cultural elites and the rest of the society; the openness to cultural innovations, etc.).
 - c) Initial period and stages of modernization .
 - d) Economic shifts (changes in labor motivations, technological innovations, agrarian reforms, industrialization).
 - e) Social shifts (departure from traditional social hierarchies; urbanization; emergence of modern entrepreneurial groups, indigenous as well as alien).
 - f) Legal factors of modernization (systems of property, corporate and personal rights, judiciary systems).



- e) Political modernization (transformation of traditional political institutions; trends towards democracy and separation of powers; growth of the civil society; the state as an agent of modernization).
- g) Cultural shifts (dissemination of Western/British forms of knowledge, education, scientific research, artistic and literary skills; emergence of local intelligentsia; religious reformation and secularization).
- h) Ambiguities and reverse trends in the process of modernization, instances of disjointedness between changes in different fields.

April 26, Friday.

10.00 – 11.30: Session 3
Indian Civilization's Position in the Globalizing World – **Prof. Sergei Lounev**, IMEMO

Discussion in round-table format (Prof. Leonid Alaev, Prof. Andrash Balog, Prof. Elena Bragina, Dr. Armand Clesse, Dr. Christopher Coker, Prof. Leonid Fridman, Prof. Vladimir Khoros, Prof. H. Kulke, Prof. Anatoly Kutsenkov, Prof. Algis Prazauskas, Prof. Alexandra Safronova, Prof. Jakov Shemyakin, Prof. Glerii Shirokov, Dr. Eugenia Vanina, Prof. Andrei Volodin, Prof. Igor Yakovenko, Prof. Felix Yurlov, etc.).

Key points.

- The role of Indian civilization in the context of a global economy.
- Its contributions to political and social change in the world.
- Inter-civilizational diasporas.
- The ability of a particular civilization to adapt itself to the «information age».

11.30-12.00: Coffee-Break

12.00 - 13.30: Continuation of Session 2
The antinomy of adaptation to global realities and maintenance of identity.
Potential for internal and external conflicts in particular civilizations.
Civilization's ability to contribute to the social and cultural experience of the human race today and tomorrow (in the fields of science, artistry, education, religion, etc.).
Civilization's vitality in the changing world.

13.30 - 14.00: Concluding remarks – Armand Clesse, Vladimir Khoros