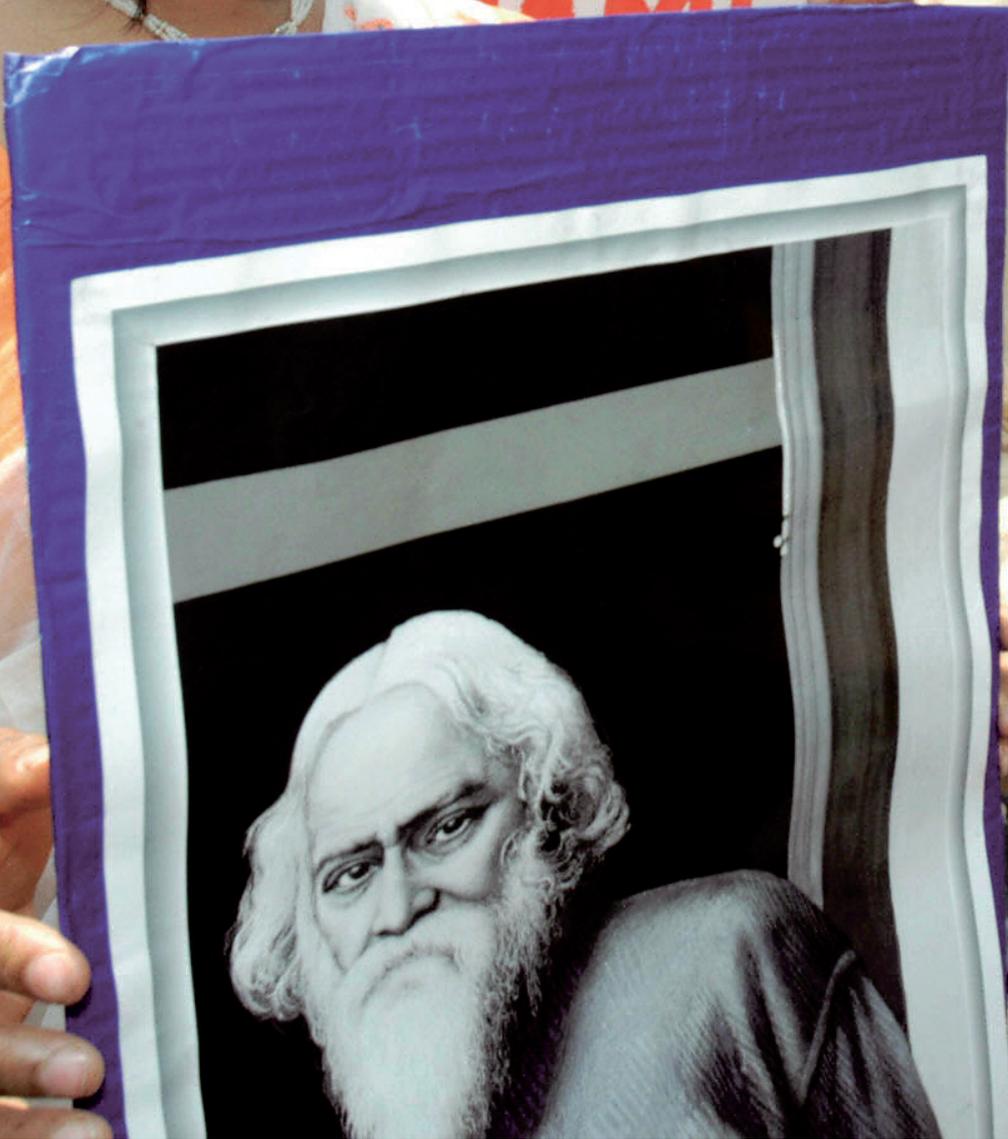




বিশ্বকবি বরীন্দ্রনাথের পাওয়া নোবেল  
গুরুত্বপূর্ণ নথি সত্য  
এত আয়াদে  
জেলা যুব কংগ্রেস

SHAME!  
SHAME!



# India, Identity and Globalization

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*The Argumentative Indian*

Amartya Sen

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The 'nation' may not have been as significant as once thought in the making of modern India. While nationalism played a key role in securing India's freedom from colonial rule, other identities, beliefs and ideologies continued to exist, and arguably to predominate. As the historian Partha Chatterjee has argued, the nationalist imaginary in India was posited not on *identity* but on *difference*, and was thus distinct from the purportedly 'universal' modular form supplied by Europe (regarded in the West as one of its greatest 'gifts' to the world).<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, 1994)
- 2 Ashis Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self* (New Delhi, 1983)
- 3 V. D. Savarkar, *Hindutva* (Nagpur, 1928)

Indian Congress Party activists stage a silent protest in Calcutta to demand the return of the Nobel prize medal awarded to poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) in 1913. At least 30 items, including the medal belonging to Tagore, disappeared from the museum at Visva Bharati University on 26 March 2004. Photograph: Deshakalyan Chowdhury/AFP/Getty Images.

For the Indian humanist Rabindranath Tagore, nationalism, patriotism and anti-imperialism had come to be regarded as synonymous in India by the early twentieth century. The problem with this, for Tagore and other Indian critics of nationalism such as Mahatma Gandhi, was that in a colonial condition such as India's, nationalism produced a fundamental contradiction. Nationalist ideology served culturally to consolidate the West in India while at the same time nurturing rebellion against the West politically. As the scholar and critic of Indian nationalism Ashis Nandy has argued, nationalism for Tagore and Gandhi was thus an imposition, an attempt to internationalize an alien history (as well as to exteriorize the internal conflicts that had been wrought in India by colonialism) in order to mould the Indian concept of the public realm to the requirement of standardized Western categories.<sup>2</sup>

Tagore and Gandhi were not the only ones to critique the ideology of nationalism or

to question the internal dissonances of the emergent Indian nationalist movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. Some of the most prominent critics of Indian nationalism were Muslim intellectuals and clerics, individuals such as Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Maulana Mohamed Ali, and Maulana Husaain Ahmad Madani. They feared for the status of India's Muslims in an independent nation-state in the face of a growing Hindu nationalist movement (which sought to exclude Muslims from the Indian nation-state on the basis, as averred by the prominent Hindu nationalist V. D. Savarkar, that India may have been the *pitrībhūmi*, or fatherland, of Indian Muslims but was not their *punyabhūmi*, or holyland).<sup>3</sup> The attitude of Indian Muslims was not, however, simply reactionary. For Indian Muslims, 'difference' (namely their distinct religious identity) did not automatically translate into a communal consciousness. For most Indian Muslims there was, in fact, no tension or contradiction in feeling a love for India (their *watan*, or motherland) and

pride in being Muslim.<sup>4</sup> In a remarkable treatise written in 1938, at a time of severe (largely nationalist-induced) tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India, Madani issued a call for what he termed ‘composite nationalism’, in which he argued forcefully for the formation of a secular nation-state.<sup>5</sup> Such secularism did not, however, reject the role of religion in framing an Indian polity. As Maulana Mohamed Ali famously declared in a speech in 1930:

I have a culture, a polity, an outlook on life — a complete synthesis which is Islam. Where God commands I am a Muslim first, a Muslim second, and a Muslim last, and nothing but a Muslim ... But where India is concerned, where India’s freedom is concerned, where the welfare of India is concerned, I am an Indian first, an Indian second, an Indian last, and nothing but an Indian.<sup>6</sup>

Rather than removing religion from the realm of the state, as has generally been the case in the West, Indian Muslims such as Ali and Madani sought to construct a particularly Indian variant of secularism, in which all religions were accorded an equal place within the state. While such an understanding of the relationship between religion and state was undermined during the course of the Indian independence movement, most notably — and ironically — by individuals such as the atheist, rationalist and ‘modernist’ Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who deployed religion to achieve specifically political ends, and more recently by a resurgent Hindu nationalism — it still exists in India today.

Amartya Sen is one of the few individuals who has entered into that debate and sought to make it accessible to a non-academic audience, not only in India, but in the West as well. Moreover, his central argument — that Indian identity is multifarious and cannot simply be subsumed within either religion or the history of the nation-state

— merits serious consideration in the West, where the writing and teaching of history remains wedded to the nation-state, and where non-Western societies continue to be conceptualized largely in terms of religion.<sup>7</sup> The sixteen essays in this collection range from diegeses on Indian history, culture and thought to economic critiques of problems, such as inequality in India, to more intimate studies of individual authors or artists (such as Rabindranath Tagore or the Indian film-maker and writer Satyajit Ray). For Sen, what binds these diverse themes together is their elucidation of the long history of what he terms the ‘argumentative tradition’ in India, one that embraces, moreover, ‘heterodoxy and dialogue’.<sup>8</sup> Such a tradition, Sen argues, is under threat in contemporary India, thanks primarily to the resurgence in the past two decades of Hindutva, or Hindu nationalism, which seeks to reconstruct India’s past and promote a narrow view of Indian civilization. The ideology of Hindutva has been subject to scathing critique by defenders of India’s secular tradition, particularly following the destruction, by Hindu nationalists, of a mosque in the Indian pilgrimage city of Ayodhya in 1992 (because, according to Hindu nationalists, it was built on the birthplace of the Hindu god king Lord Ram, the protagonist of the *Ramayana*). Sen seeks, however, to tread a more nuanced path than most critics of Hindu nationalism between the cultural tenets of Hindutva (in which the history of ‘Hindu’ India has been pushed back a millennium to the third millennium BCE and the key texts of Hinduism, most notably the Vedas and the *Ramayana*, are deployed for political ends) and the ideology of secularism. While he lauds the ‘integrationist approach’ to Indian history and society by advocates of Indian secularism, and is understanding as to why such advocates regard ‘the harking back to ancient India with the greatest of suspicion’, he nonetheless critiques them for seeking to challenge Hindutva through disregarding

4 See, for example, Aysa Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850* (New Delhi, 2001).

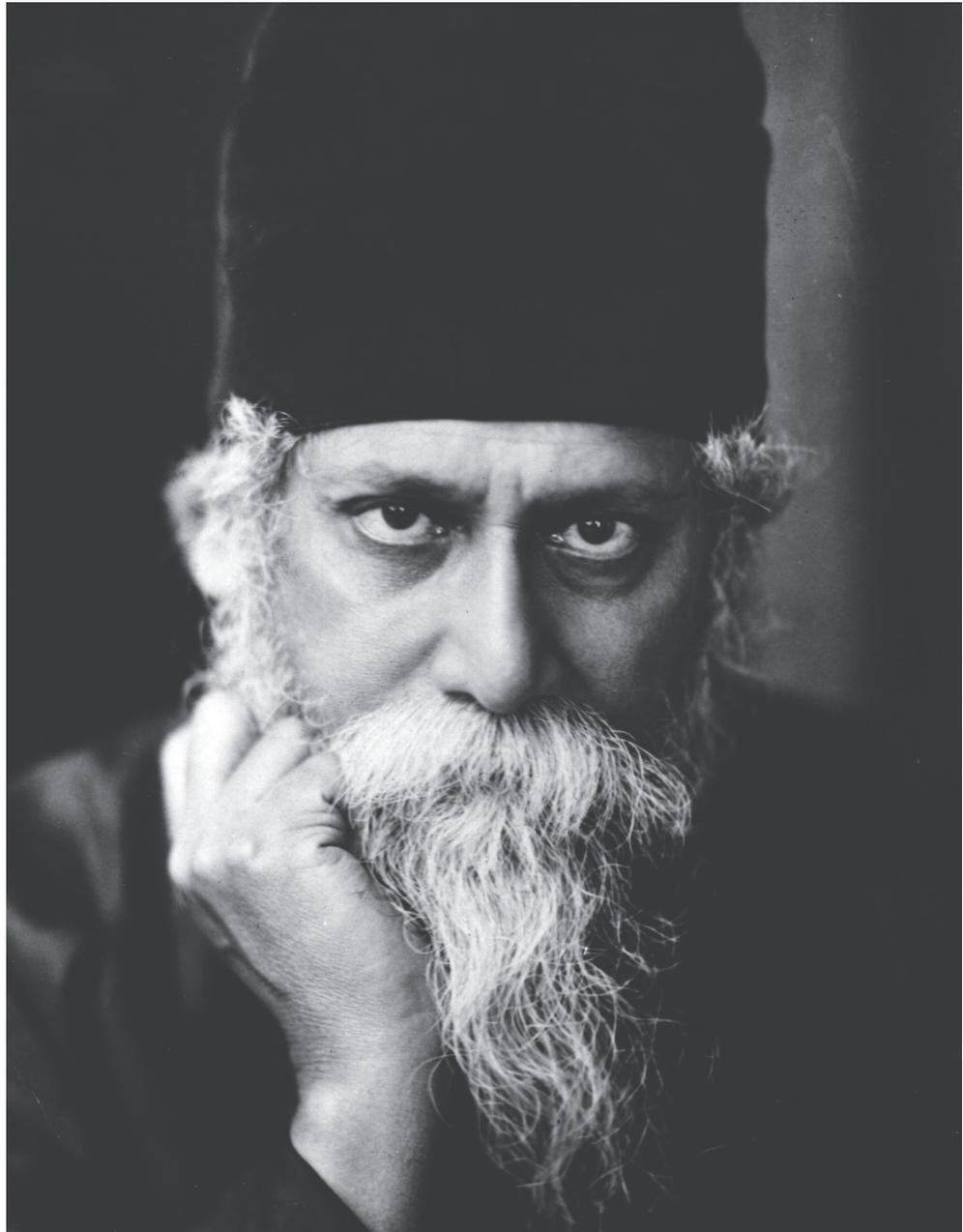
5 Maulana Madani, *Composite Nationalism* (New Delhi, 2005 [1938])

6 Mohamed Ali, speech at the fourth plenary session of the Round Table Conference in London, 19 November 1930

7 See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis and London, 1996).

8 Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian* (London, 2005), ix; hereafter cited as *AI*.

Rabindranath Tagore,  
poet and philosopher.  
Photograph: Photo by E.  
O. Hoppe/Hulton Archive/  
Getty Images.



9 *AI*, x, xi

the importance of the ‘Hindu classics’ — namely India’s literary and philosophical writings, as well as folk traditions — in India’s history and culture. Thus, for Sen, ‘It would be as difficult to ignore [the] general importance’ of the Vedas or the *Ramayana* on some allegedly ‘secular’ ground, ‘as it would be to insist on viewing them through

the narrow prism of a particularly raw version of Hindu religiosity’.<sup>9</sup> Not only, he believes, do the ‘Hindu classics’, as well as many other pre-modern Indian texts, reveal the *longevity* of the secular tradition in India, but they also serve to ‘Indianize’ it and, in the process, afford the basis for a more inclusive Indian identity.

A critique of the undermining of the argumentative tradition by both Hindutva and advocates of Indian secularism are two of the strands that tie the essays in this volume together. A third is Western perceptions of India, particularly of understandings of India as a land constructed and defined by religion. The liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s and the IT boom have, undoubtedly, served to alter perceptions of India in the West. So too has the globalization of Indian culture, as transformations in India's political economy have effected major changes in Indian film and literature, which have made Indian culture more accessible to Western audiences (although Indian cinema has always been popular throughout much of the non-Western world). Transformations in the political economy of the West have in turn opened it to what we might term the globalization of Indian affect, or 'structures of feeling'. Such changes offer strong evidence that globalization is not a one-way process, and that it is not synonymous with 'Westernization'. They have done little, however, to alter Western perceptions of India. While Sen seeks to challenge Edward Said's analysis of Western perceptions of the 'Orient' by arguing that there are in fact three intellectual traditions through which India has been understood in the West (which he terms 'exoticist', 'magisterial' and 'curatorial'), they all, he is forced to admit, privilege the 'exotic', 'spiritual' India over the 'rationalist' one. The framing of India in religious terms emerged during the colonial era as a means of justifying and validating British rule: Indians, according to the ideology of colonialism, were irrational, backward, incapable of self-control, effeminate, and slaves to 'tradition', while the British were rational, progressive, manly, and 'modern'. But the British do not bear full responsibility for the longevity of these perceptions, since such Orientalist myths were in turn embraced by Indians during the course of the nationalist movement as a means of fashioning an Indian identity

outside the domain of Western power. They are in turn fostered today through such means as didactic films, which circulate widely at international film festivals and which offer up India's 'truth' to the West and serve to reinforce its perceptions — including their understanding of the causes of India's problems. As Sen notes in his critique of Mira Nair's film *Salaam Bombay!*, 'The exploitative form draws at once on the knowledge — common in the West — that India has much poverty and suffering, and also on the comfort — for which there is some demand — of seeing the faces of the "baddies" who are causing all the trouble'.<sup>10</sup> They thus serve to undermine, once again, the complexity of Indian society.

A final strand that unites these essays is the undermining of India's argumentative tradition by post-colonial scholars. In contrast to the other three strands, Sen's debate in this case is not about the role of religion in shaping Indian identity, but about the universalism of particular socio-political norms. This is the ground, ultimately, on which Sen's battle line is drawn. One of the tenets of post-colonial studies is a denial of Enlightenment values as universal and a rejection of their legacies as the historical path that all peoples were destined to follow. This has provoked debates about the nature of global modernity. Until relatively recently, modernity was envisioned as a process that originated in, and was then 'disseminated' by, the West, primarily under the aegis of colonialism. Modernity was thus viewed as being both homogenous and 'Western'. Scholars working on colonial contexts such as India, however, have argued that this view of modernity is flawed, for while modernity introduces a radical rupture in colonized societies, aspects of the new modernity may have already existed in them. Furthermore, since modernity is constituted by a plurality of processes and an unfolding set of relationships that are constantly being made and unmade, contested and reconfigured,

11 See, for example, Sudipta Kaviraj, 'Modernity and Politics in India,' *Daedalus*, Special issue on Multiple Modernities, 129, 1 (2000), 137–62; Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton, 1999).

12 *AI*, xii

13 *AI*, 16

the sequence in which these occur and the manner in which they are interconnected in each context means that the conditions of modernity differ in each society. Western modernity cannot, therefore, simply be 'imposed' on colonized societies, it needs to be translated and adapted. For proponents of 'alternative' or 'multiple' modernities, what was therefore produced in contexts such as India was a hybrid — and therefore decidedly distinct — modernity.<sup>11</sup>

This is, ultimately, an argument about Indian 'difference', although one that seeks to reverse the binaries of Orientalist discourse. It therefore rejects universalist frameworks — there is no *singular* mode of socio-political development that all societies are destined to follow. For post-colonial scholars India will never, therefore, become a carbon copy of the West. But while Sen shares the enthusiasm of post-colonial scholars to celebrate India's diversity and difference within *India*, he largely denies the existence of diversity and difference within *history*. While he refutes the perception predominant in the West that its modernity is purely 'Western', believing instead that it is a blend of Western and non-Western cultures, there is thus no such thing, for Sen, as alternative modernities.

What, then, is the argumentative tradition that Sen is so keen to define and defend? He outlines the nature of this tradition in the first two parts of the book, 'Voice and Heterodoxy' and 'Culture and Consumption', which explore the nature of the argumentative tradition and its contemporary relevance in supporting democracy, secularism, social justice, and scientific inquiry within India, as well as India's ability to communicate with and understand other cultures. The first essay, from which the title of the book derives, is superb, and outlines the basic arguments that he elaborates throughout the succeeding chapters. The argumentative tradition is, however, a relatively amorphous concept; rather than

stemming from a particular philosophical or religious discourse or tradition in India, Sen seems to imply that it is, instead, more of a state of mind endemic to Indian culture brought about through the constant negotiation of its peoples with cultural and religious 'difference'. Sen makes much, for example, of the diversity of faiths in India and the longevity of this diversity. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Judaism were already co-existing by the first millennium BCE, which in turn, Sen implies, made India receptive to other faiths — namely Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism, which arrived in India in the first millennium CE, and Sikhism and Baha'ism, which followed in the second millennium.

The argumentative tradition, for Sen, is evident among all these faiths. In the third century BCE, the Buddhist Emperor Ashoka, Sen argues, 'not only outlined the need for toleration and richness of heterodoxy, but also laid down what are perhaps the oldest rules for conducting debates and disputations'.<sup>12</sup> He claims that the key texts of Hinduism, most notably the *Bhagavad Gita* (also dated to the third century BCE) — essentially a dialogue about the rationality of contending moral positions — likewise encouraged disputation, as did the medieval mystical poets such as Kabir and Mira Bai and the Muslim Emperor Akbar in the sixteenth century CE. Indeed, Akbar's 'overarching thesis that "the pursuit of reason" rather than "reliance on tradition" is the way to address difficult problems of social harmony included a robust celebration of reasoned dialogues', which he did through staging public debates between members of different faiths (including atheists) and laying the foundations for a non-denominational secular state.<sup>13</sup> At the root of Sen's argumentative tradition, therefore, is a belief in the necessity of toleration and the value of dissent. Akbar is a figure whom Sen returns to again and again, since he embodied, for Sen, India's principles of toleration, and he

enunciated them at a time, moreover, when ‘the Inquisition was in full swing in Europe’ — a useful reminder at a time when Western perceptions of Islam are at one of their lowest ebbs since the Crusades.<sup>14</sup>

India not only has a long and vibrant history of toleration and heterodoxy, according to Sen — it also has arguably the longest history of scepticism, a key component of the argumentative tradition, which dates back 3,500 years. The ‘Song of Creation’ in the *Rigveda*, for example, questions the existence of god, while the Sanskrit literature of which it is a part ‘has a larger volume of agnostic or atheistic writings’ than exists in any other classical language. This history of scepticism in India is another point that Sen turns to repeatedly, in part to undermine Western perceptions of India’s ‘religiosity’ (in particular of religion as constituting the primary, or even the only, form of identity in India). Such a focus on religiosity has contributed to ‘an underestimation of the reach of public reasoning’ and of the ‘long tradition of rational assessment’ in India.<sup>15</sup> It has also led to an underestimation of Indian science and mathematics. In two of the finest chapters, Sen examines some of the achievements of Indian mathematicians and astronomers such as Aryabhata — whose work on the diurnal motion of the earth and his elucidation of the force of gravity pre-dated their ‘discovery’ by Galileo and Newton by over a thousand years — while mocking colonial British conceptions of Indian science, as embodied most famously in James Mill’s *The History of British India* (which declared that Indians could not have made such discoveries themselves since they had ‘a general disposition to deceit and perfidy’ and had taken only ‘a few of the earliest steps in the progress to civilization’).<sup>16</sup>

The significance of India’s scientific traditions or its history of scepticism, or the larger history of the argumentative tradition of

which they are a part, is the role they have played in facilitating the development — and successful maintenance — of democracy in India. The transition from colonialism to the formation of a democratic nation-state was achieved, Sen argues, because India was able to merge alien institutions (the apparatus of the nation-state) with its own traditions of reasoning, toleration, and heterodoxy. Discussions and arguments according to Sen, ‘are critically important for democracy and public reasoning.’ They are central, furthermore, both to the practice of secularism and to challenging poverty and social inequality, since ‘Voice’, as he forcefully contends, ‘is a crucial component of the pursuit of social justice’.<sup>17</sup>

But while India’s democracy has managed to survive, glaring problems nonetheless remain. Some of these, such as the resurgence of Hindu nationalism, are of notably recent origin, and are in fact a product, in part, of the democratic process (although Sen does not acknowledge this). The root of many of these problems is the contemporary obsession with ‘see[ing] people mainly, or even entirely, in terms of their religion’ rather than in the multifariousness of their identities (such as class, language, literature, or political beliefs), an understanding that undermines both India’s argumentative tradition and the secular democracy that it has served to foster.<sup>18</sup> Hindu nationalism, with its emphasis on constructing and enforcing a single, dominant identity, is clearly the chief target here. In part four, ‘Reason and Identity’, Sen rehashes many of the familiar arguments against it, including its ignorance of the nature and implications of India’s long history of religious diversity, and makes much of the fact that India currently has a Muslim president, a Sikh prime minister, and a Christian head of the ruling party (and one who is, moreover, a woman of foreign origin). But while he protests that the ideology of Hindutva forces Indians to “go through” their religious identity first,

- 14 *AI*, xiii
- 15 *AI*, 23, 25
- 16 *AI*, 79
- 17 *AI*, xiii
- 18 *AI*, 165

19 AI, 307

20 AI, 164

21 AI, 54

22 AI, 69

23 AI, 285

before asserting their Indianness' (which it does in order to 'build up' Indian identity 'on the constitutive basis of the different religious identities') and argues, rightly, that 'religious identity has to be separated from its relevance in the political context', he offers few insights as to how this can be achieved.<sup>19</sup> One of the reasons he is unable to do so is because he does not explore *why* Hindu nationalists seek to assert the primacy of religion in constructing Indianness, or the *meaning* of concepts such as 'nation' and 'democracy' in contemporary India.

Sen is much stronger in critiquing the 'religious reductionism' of Indian identity in the West, which, he contends, completely ignores the argumentative tradition in India (or rather is completely ignorant of it) and continues to regard Indian society as unchanging and 'eternal'.<sup>20</sup> Such perceptions have been reinforced in the past decade by 'the contemporary obsession with classifying the world population into distinct "civilizations" defined principally by religion', as illustrated notably in Samuel Huntington's conservative and highly provocative best-seller *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. The world, for Huntington and his followers, is divided into discrete civilizations, and India, in spite of the fact that it has more Muslims than the population of Britain and France put together (and more Muslims, moreover, than every other country barring Indonesia and Pakistan, which Huntington labels as part of 'Islamic' civilization), is relegated to the status of a 'Hindu civilization'. They ignore the fact that 'There is a difference between a constitutionally secular nation with a majority Hindu population and a theocratic Hindu state that might see Hinduism as its official religion.'<sup>21</sup> What makes India differ from nation-states such as Pakistan or Bangladesh is therefore that it is a secular democracy, which accords an equal place to every citizen regardless of their religious background. Moreover,

in spite of the importance of religion in India, Sen also rightly notes that 'there is a resilient undercurrent of conviction across the country that religious beliefs, while personally significant, are socially unimportant and should be politically inconsequential'.<sup>22</sup> This is a claim substantiated in India by the fall from power in 2004 of the Hindu right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (a party that, notably, had only been able to form a government in coalition with almost two dozen other political parties), and more broadly in the subcontinent by the separation of East from West Pakistan in 1971 (brought about by divergences in secular ties, such as language and literature). Such a claim once again raises questions, however, about the nature and meaning of 'democracy' in contemporary India.

The implications of such 'religious reductionism' are significant, since such a perception fosters important misconceptions in the West about the nature of Western culture and power. In an excellent essay on 'The Reach of Reason', Sen explores the impact that Western ignorance of India's argumentative tradition (as well as that of other non-Western cultures) has had in constructing conceptions of Western 'uniqueness' and superiority. The role that reason plays in this sense of uniqueness and superiority cannot be overestimated. Ever since the Enlightenment (which shaped the ideologies through which Western culture continues to define itself), the West, Sen argues, has come to see itself as 'having exclusive access to the values that lie at the foundation of rationality and reasoning, science and evidence, liberty and tolerance, and of course rights and justice'.<sup>23</sup> Yet while 'it is by no means clear that, historically, greater importance has been systematically attached to freedom and tolerance in the West than in Asia', these continue to be viewed as specifically 'Western' values (essentially a product, for Sen, of poor and biased scholarship which '[attaches]

significance to particular components of Western thought without looking adequately for similar components in non-Western intellectual traditions').<sup>24</sup> Western faith in the irrationality of non-Western peoples has served to justify conquest, colonization, and exploitation from the birth of the modern era to the present. In an essay on 'India and the Bomb', Sen demonstrates that such a belief also serves to rationalize the continued inequities in global power, resentments against which, in turn, have played an important role in fostering the nuclearization of the subcontinent (beliefs about the irrationality of non-Western peoples have also led to efforts by countries such as the United States and United Kingdom to prevent non-Western states from obtaining nuclear technology).

The emphasis on reason is yet another example of defining identity 'by contrast', although Sen's focus here is on the ways in which 'divergence with the West' is central to such constructions. His underlying concern with identity and difference serves to explain the apparent anomaly of the essays in the third part of the book, 'Politics and Protest'. Focusing on issues such as globalization, class, and gender, they examine the nature of inequality in India, and propose possible means to erase such internal differences. For Sen, multivalency and difference cease to be socially beneficial when they serve to undermine individual freedom and human rights. Notable here is Sen's elaboration of how factors such as gender, caste, class, globalization, and regional differences have to be taken into account to understand problems such as female infanticide and foeticide in India. In an essay entitled 'Women and Men', which generated considerable controversy when it was originally published, Sen argues that in 1986 (the year for which he seems to have the most recent statistics) there were 100 million 'missing women', not simply in India but in Asia as a whole (an estimate he produces by an analysis of male–female

ratios in India and China). Contrary to popular perception in the West (as well as, to some extent, in India), the problem of missing women cannot be explained by resorting to the old binary between 'modernity' and 'tradition' — in fact, not only are there notable differences in male–female ratios between the north and west of India and the east and south (the latter of which have higher ratios than the former), but India's temples of modernity, its great metros, have lower male–female ratios than its hinterlands. Culture, class, and education clearly, therefore, play an important role in shaping the gender balance in India, although it is notably the *higher* classes rather than the lower who are availing of foetal sex screening and the abortion of female foetuses. Since the opening of the Indian economy in the early 1990s and the ensuing expansion of the Indian middle classes, clinics offering foetal sex screening have mushroomed in India (although the practice was made illegal in 1994) which has fostered fears, as embodied in Manish Jha's 2003 film *Matrubhumi*, that India will become 'a world without women'. The only way to prevent this, according to Sen, is to focus on improving women's agency rather than simply their well-being.

Sen does not regard globalization, therefore, as a panacea for all of India's ills, either for the nation or the individual — he argues, in fact, that 'even a hundred Bangalores and Hyderabad [India's globalization hot spots] will not, on their own, solve India's tenacious poverty and deep-seated inequality'.<sup>25</sup> The only way to do so is to change what he terms 'global arrangements' (by which he seems to mean the institutional frameworks through which global economic policy is shaped) and domestic policies, although central to both is finding the means to increase individual agency. He makes it clear that such changes need to be made not just in India but in the West as well — as he notes in the case of women, for example, there are different forms of gender

<sup>24</sup> *AI*, 135

<sup>25</sup> *AI*, 197

inequality, and while female infanticide and foeticide remain a problem in South Asia, all the major countries in South Asia, namely India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, have or have had female heads of state, and a third of all seats are now reserved for women in the Indian parliament. Few political systems in the West have, in fact, incorporated women to the degree that India's has. As Sen demonstrates in the most delightful essay in the book, 'India through its Calendars', the world may now follow the same calendrical system (namely the Gregorian calendar), but dozens of other calendars are still in use throughout the globe, including thirty in India alone. Not only have those other calendars not been erased, but the predominance of one calendar over all the others is not a result of its superiority as a system of marking time, but is a result, rather, of imperialism, colonialism, and globalization. And globalization, furthermore, is an ancient phenomenon, one in which the East has played as vital a role in transforming the West as the West has in transforming the East — and the West still has much to learn from the East.

Sen's emphasis on India's argumentative tradition is thus valuable in raising questions about identity and understanding in both India and the West that processes of globalization are making ever more pressing. His analysis is not, however, entirely convincing, due largely to his understanding — or misunderstanding — of history, particularly of the relationship between colonialism, nationalism, and the nation-

state in South Asia. Apart from a reference to Indian Defence Minister Krishna Menon's historic nine-hour speech at the United Nations in 1957, all his examples of the argumentative tradition date from pre-modern or early modern India. What, then, happened to the tradition after that? The glaring absence in Sen's text is, in short, colonialism, and its impact on Indian culture and identity in the post-colonial era. Modern Indian conceptions of difference were, to a considerable extent, shaped by colonialism, since delineating and fostering differences between colonizers and colonized, and among the colonizers, served to facilitate colonial rule. The Indian nationalist movement was also shaped, therefore, by colonial conceptions of difference, although the struggle for independence from colonial rule also unleashed and mobilized alternative understandings of identity — as well as, significantly, conceptions of what constituted 'freedom' and how to achieve it (in which heterodoxy and dialogue did play an important role) — to those based on colonial categories. Hence, the ultimate flaw in Sen's argument is his understanding of the 'nation' in India — for him it is, like 'democracy', a universal category with a modular form of historical development. But how can the 'nation' in India, in which it is a recent and imposed concept, mean the same thing that it does in places where it has a longer history, and where the concept emerged organically? These are questions that need to be addressed in order to understand the nature of contemporary Indian identity, and of contestations over it. ■