

**INDIAN SOCIETY 2004:
MATRIX AND THE CIRCLE ***

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It is generally argued that the age of isms is over. 'End of history' was also proclaimed by Fukuyama. Though the age of isms may have been over, the age of ideas is not yet over. New ideas have been emerging and re-emerging sometimes like the re-mix phenomenon in Hindi cinema. As a result, social discourse has undergone a radical shift. New phrases, new slogans have acquired a life of its own, leading to many paradigm shifts. From 'Discovery of India' to 'Rediscovery of India' and a 'New Discovery of India' through 'Wings of Fire' and 'Vision 2020' has captured the imagination of common people. From 'Nehruvian Vision' to a 'New Age Vision' of 'Developed India' represents a radical change in India's social vision. Do we have appropriate analytical framework to understand the profound social awakening that has taken us beyond the dichotomized worldviews of the 'right' and the 'left' that dominated the social discourse over last fifty years or so?

Burrell & Morgan (1979) in their work on 'sociological paradigms' provide us a framework for analyzing various philosophical traditions in terms of objective - subjective ways of looking at reality accompanied with incremental - radical change processes in the society. Sharma & Singhal (1993) suggest a taxonomy of social discourse in the context of management theories and concepts based on structuralist - culturalist and universalist - relativist dimensions. Structuralist approach is based on the philosophical assumption of 'reality as a concrete structure' also indicated through 'objective' view of reality. Culturalist approach is based on the philosophical assumption of 'reality as a projection of human imagination' also indicated through 'subjective' view of reality. Drawing upon these analytical frameworks, we suggest the matrix and the circle approach to understand the social discourse in the Indian society. Thus social matrix can be presented in a graphical format with x-axis based on economic philosophy and leaning towards labor ("Leftist") or capital ("Rightist") and Y-axis based on culture - structure approach to social reality. It may be indicated that there exists considerable discourse space or the 'middle range' between the extremes of 'left' and 'right' ideologies and the 'culture' and 'structure' categories. For example, Gandhi articulated the 'Trusteeship model' for harmony between labour and capital. The middle range positions are also referred to as 'centrist' position.

Fig.1 represents the matrix, wherein x-axis provides 'left' and 'right' classification and y-axis is based on culture-structure concepts. Matrix also presents the middle-range or centrist approaches to left and right extremes and culture-structure extremes. This is represented by the flower shape within the matrix, that could be referred to as unfolding of the centrist position. Metaphorically it is the flower of moderation within the extreme points of the matrix.

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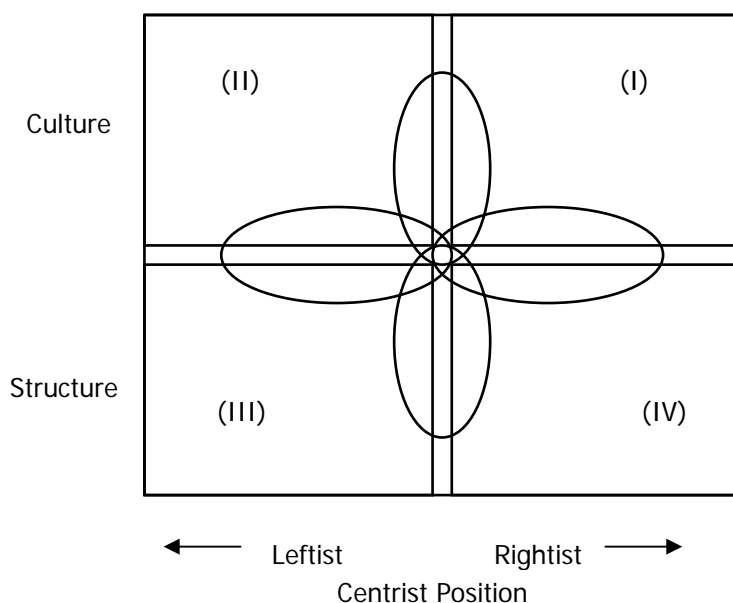


Fig.1: Matrix Analysis of Social Discourse with Extreme Points and Mid-Range Positions

This matrix analysis can be used to identify the social space in social discourse occupied by various social ideas, ideologies and political formations including political parties. For example, the structuralist dimension of social discourse finds its expression in phrases such as 'secularism', secularists, 'secular forces' and Nehruvian 'Idea of India' and the culturalist dimension of social discourse finds its expression in phrases such as 'cultural nationalism', 'India as an idea', cultural dignity, self-pride, etc. 'Structuralist' view of history is a 'secularized' view of history, while 'culturalist' view of history is a cultural view of golden past and 'golden pages'. Both views are reflected in the social discourse leading to a 'contested views' of history reflected in 'multiple histories' and multiple interpretations.

With respect to political formations in Indian context, the worldview of quadrant I, viz. Culturalist-Rightist approach is reflected by BJP ideology. The worldview of quadrant II, viz. Culturalist-Leftist is represented by 'socialists' of many varieties. The worldview of quadrant III, viz. Structuralist - Leftist is represented by various Leftist parties with Naxalites representing the extreme point of Structuralist - Leftist worldview. The worldview of quadrant IV, Structuralist-Rightists represents the 'liberal' worldview represented by the liberals and liberal ideology.

It may also be indicated that various quadrants have given rise to various isms with their own slogans and symbolism, catch phrases and inspirational / revolutionary messages. For example, Marxist phrases of 'dialectical materialism', 'workers of the world unite', 'religion is opium of masses', etc. originated from quadrant-III worldview of social discourse. These phrases have now lost their shine and appeal and though once they served as useful analytical framework for analyzing changes and transitions in society. Now 'New Age Nationalists' have taken over the task of spin doctors and created many new phrases of social discourse. This also reflects a transition from 'naxalite' extreme to 'nationalite' extreme in the social discourse.

In consonance with the four quadrants, there are four types of intellectuals and social thinkers viz. culturalist - rightist variety, culturalist - leftist variety, structuralist - leftist variety and structuralist - rightist variety. It may be indicated that quadrant III thinkers, think of violent 'revolution' as an instrument of social change, while quadrant I thinkers think of 'resurgence' as a means for the same. Indian history has been more a history of 'resurgence' rather than 'violent revolutions' e.g. Bhakti movement, Freedom movement and New Age Spiritual movements such as ISKCON, TM (Transcendental Meditation), BK (Brahma Kumaris), Vipasana, Art of Living, etc. represent the resurgence view of Indian history.

It may be indicated that the framework suggested above can also be used to analyze various isms. For example, feminism originated largely from quadrant III worldview, but has now moved into other quadrants also. In fact, an ism may acquire a configuration or amoebae like structure across all the four quadrant. For example, Congress in Independent India, as a major political force had drawn its initial sustenance from Nehruvian vision with influences from quadrant IV, Then it shifted to quadrant III with LPG (Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization) initiatives started by Dr. Man Mohan Singh. Now it is attempting to occupy space in various quadrants and thereby it is attempting to redefine itself and is trying to balance its quadrants.

The framework presented above has universal application. However, in the Indian context an additional factor of caste also plays a dominant role. Concept of caste originated from its original conceptualization of 'varna' classification. Its journey over the centuries could be traced in terms of three stages viz. varna system, caste system and casteism or caste as vote-bank. In contemporary context, more than caste system, casteism has emerged as important contender of political space and sharing of social and political power. Varna system viewed society in terms of a broad four-fold classification, rooted in four types of needs of the society in terms of knowledge creation needs, protection needs, wealth generation needs and services needs and an interdependence between these classifications. While this had a logical basis in work-classification system, in practice, the interdependence resulted in a social hierarchy. In its subsequent development, varna system became caste system, as a result of numerous jatis and professional communities that evolved over a period of time. New hierarchies developed resulting from the multitude of jatis and castes with expertise in specific economic activities. As a result of such hierarchies, some castes became marginalized. With the advent of democracy in the Independent India, caste system became a vote-bank system and thus emerged the concept of casteism, wherein caste in itself became an 'ism'. Even various religions are considered as 'castes' in popular discourse and popular parlance and have become part of the casteism or vote-bank politics. As a result, they lost their 'emancipatory potential'. Because of the same reason, many other social movements also lost their emancipatory potential. As an ism and vote-bank, caste is now occupying full circle influence in the political discourse particularly during election times.

In addition to caste factor, the regional factor also plays an important role. Emergence of regional parties and regional leaders is a testimony to the importance of region as an influencing factor. Further, rural-urban discourse is also affecting the society. In view of these observations, the framework presented in Fig.1 can be modified to include the influence of caste, rural-urban and region factors in the social discourse. Fig.2 presents the modified framework that includes the 'caste-circle', region-circle, rural-urban circle, as important elements of social discourse. Hence, this diagram also represents India's 'vote-matrix'. In this modified framework matrix is presented as swastika, hence it can be referred to as swastika of social discourse. Depending upon the 'dialectical intensities' emanating from various circles and their directions, this 'social swastika' takes the shape of 'dialectical chakra' leading to synergies (symbiosis of positive energies) or nebergies (negative energies) which is reflected by harmony and cooperation or acrimony and conflict situations in the society.

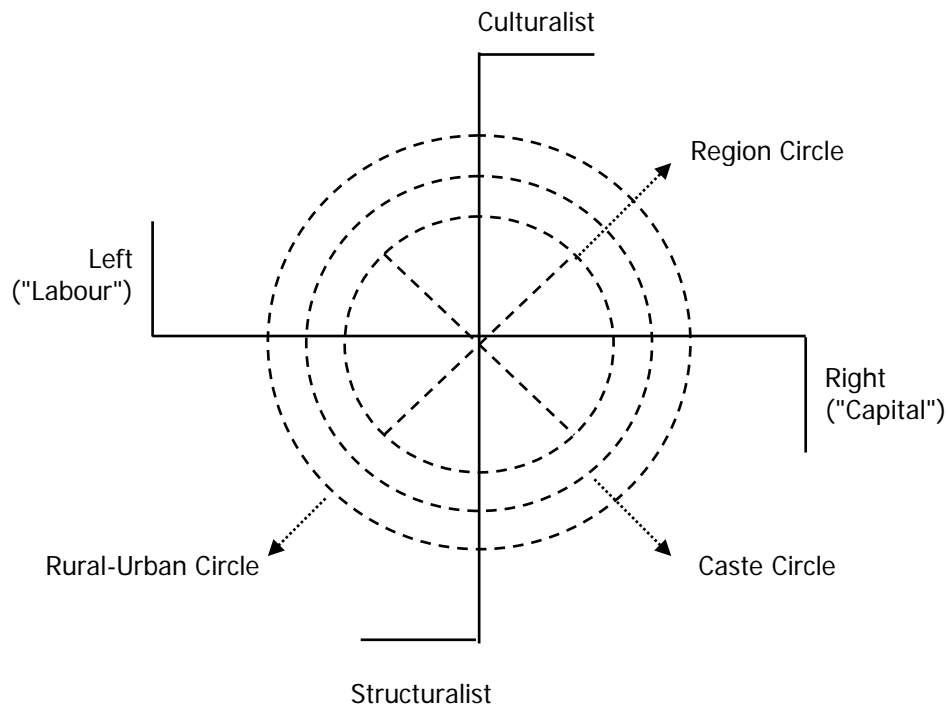


Fig. 2: Matrix & The Circle as Swastika of Social Discourse

While the matrix and the circle framework presented above provides us an analytical way of viewing the complexity of the Indian society, the same has also been captured through many popular metaphors and symbols. For example, Pathak (2004) considers India as a 'multi-coloured' society and its many colours start shining particularly during election times. Other metaphors and phrases include unity in diversity, pluralism, overlapping cultures, confluence of cultures, rainbow society, cultural pendant, cultural collage with varying colours, symbols, sign, etc. It is because of this diversity, the "spell of India " still attracts many to understand the vibrant nature of the Indian matrix and the circle, with its ancient linkages and modern continuities. The framework also explains that centre could turn into periphery and periphery into centre through shiftings across the matrix and the circles arising from dialectical intensities. Further, a sidestream could become mainstream and mainstream could become sidestream. Various Indian elections, including election 2004 indicate the shifting nature of centre and periphery and mainstream - sidestream dialectics manifested through dialectical intensities. This is also reflected by swastika movement arising from dialectical forces originated from various circles. Thus, we find sometimes structuralist discourse and othertimes culturalist discourse dominating the society.

The swastika framework presented above could also be represented in the form of another matrix, with one side of the matrix representing caste (Manu), class (Marx), community (Mahatma Gandhi) and categories (Market) as part of historical links and the other representing region, religion, rural and urban dimensions. Market creates categories and categories can create marks. Emergence of a 'New Professional Class' with its many subcategories is a pointer in this direction. The phrase, Manu to Markets, captures this dimension of Indian society. In fact, this historical evolution could be viewed in terms of caste economy, state economy and market economy in consonance with the kingdom state, nation state and corporate state framework of changes in the society. During ancient times, castes provided the economic foundations for the society. During nation-state era, State was the major player hence we use the term State economy as State was primarily responsible for

creating economic foundations by creating employment for people. With the emergence of the markets and market economy, corporates are the driving force of economy, hence, the shift from Manu to Markets, from caste to corporates with its own categories of 'new professional class' and work classification systems. In Indian society 2004, the caste economy, state economy and corporate economy are co-existing. The impact of corporates is particularly felt in metros with some spill over effect to smaller towns.

Fig.3 represents the 'Manu to Markets' matrix of Indian society, wherein the gender forms the axis of the matrix. This framework provides a holistic view of the Indian society 2004 as against a segmented view that one gets from different cells of this matrix. In general, intellectuals and scholars have put their intellectual energies in analyzing the Indian society from a particular position in the matrix rather than a holistic perspective by stepping out of the matrix and taking an overall view.

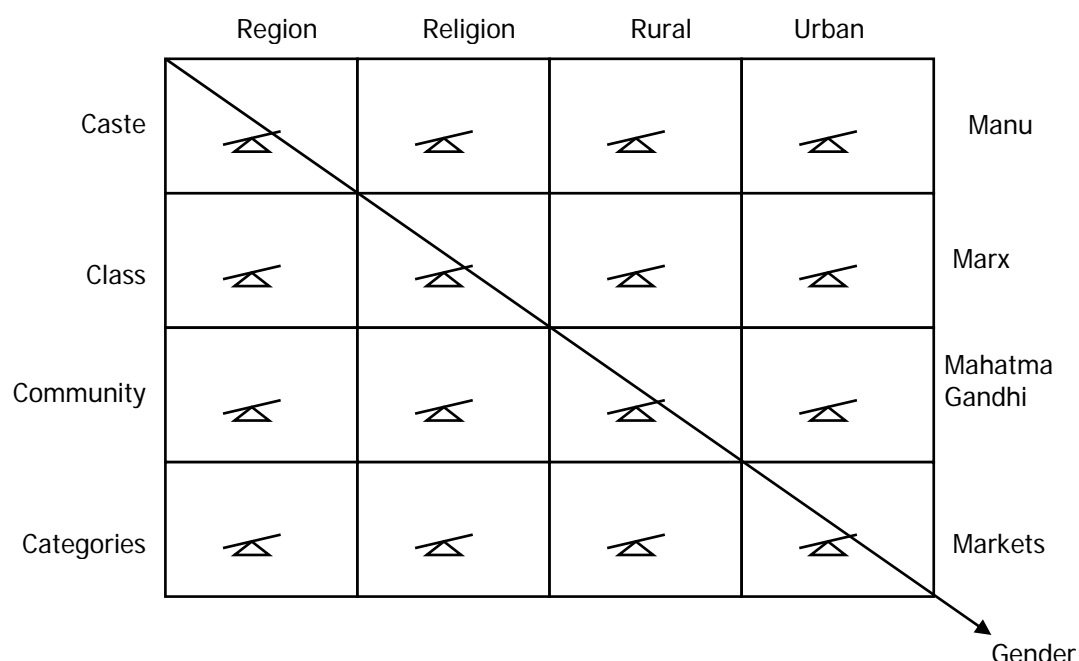


Fig.3: From Manu to Markets - India As a Matrix Society

It may be indicated that high intensity of dialectics within each cell represented by the see-saw could lead to intensification of conflicts and it could manifest in the society in the form of neergy-spiral and social chaos. Hence, the role of enlightened leadership is to create a social equilibrium, wherein dialectical intensities originating from various cells of the matrix are allowed to remain within critical limits. This will ensure vibrance and synergy within the society. If dialectical intensities assume uncontrollable proportions, there is instability in the society.

Thus, we find social discourse see-saws taking the shape of 'swastikas' and 'chakras' manifesting in varying intensities in terms of synergies and nenergies. This makes the social discourse relatively complex as society is always in a state of 'dynamic chaos' because of varying dialectical intensities. Hence, no single 'ism' has been able to hold its sway in Indian context. In fact, most isms have been merging and disappearing in the complex mosaic of the Indian social matrix. This is also reflected in emergence, disappearance and decline of many political formations and parties. It also explains the reason for emergence of coalitions rather than a single party dominance. Further, our discussion indicates that perhaps there is no 'end of history' but beginning of a new history manifesting itself in various forms through

the movements of the matrix and the circle. Because of universal application of the swastika framework presented in this paper, we refer to the same as 'world swastika' that is at the root of making the history move.

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