

The Perception of Citizenship in the Indian Context: Response to Hodgson's Paper

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In response to Naomi Hodgson's Paper 'European Citizenship: Economy, Parrhesia and Sublimation', I will first summarize the important points Hodgson has argued. Then, I will try to develop the discussion of citizenship by taking India's case as one example of the Asian perception of citizenship to contrast it with what Hodgson has suggested as European citizenship. The idea of citizenship is shaped by which aspect of it one is looking at. In other words, citizenship can be explored and practiced individually, locally, regionally, nationally and globally. In this paper, I will first develop the discussion of citizenship by examining how education or development was perceived at the national level in the creation of the citizens of India in the post-colonial period. Then, I will explain how attention is paid to the individual and to one's moral and ethical relation to one's self by referring to the Bhagavad-Gita, the oldest and the most popular epic in India.

SUMMARY, COMMENTS, AND QUESTIONS

In Hodgson's paper, she first explains the ideal citizen of Europe in a knowledge economy.

After the European Union came into existence in 1992, the entrepreneurial self, characterized by employability, mobility and adaptability, became the ideal citizen of Europe and is a dominant mode of subjectivation in the creation of Europe as a knowledge economy (Hodgson, 2009).

She parallels the concept of the 'entrepreneurial self' found in the discourse of European citizenship with 'a unified enlightened self', as suggested in Plato's image in the allegory of the cave. She questions the understanding of education as leading the human to 'a state of perfection and comprehension of the Forms'. Instead, she proposes a different perception of citizenship, which is led by a moral imperative and tries to sublimate (or resist) the language of economy. Hodgson explains: 'the view of education as progress toward a light from afar, or our being oriented by a moral compass, suggests some external and universal source of moral orientation'. She continues that education is rather something that occurs in the darkness, within which the desire for a step toward another, liberating perspective asserts itself.

I found her paper very interesting, particularly because it shows how the role or meaning of education changes according to how one understands citizenship. When citizenship is concerned with something universal, education is regarded as 'a path upward, from darkness to light'. When citizenship is concerned with the individual and related to one's moral and ethical relation to one's self, education becomes 'the care of the soul'.

As the world becomes globalised and more complex, no universal policy can be a guideline for each individual who faces different kinds of experience everyday. In this sense, Hodgson's attempt to sublimate (or resist) the language of economy is effective. However, I wonder how much impact the European concept of citizenship, 'the entrepreneurial self', has on each individual of the E.U. What kind of effect can be assumed if the concept of the 'entrepreneurial self' prevails among the people of the E.U.? This is my first question to Hodgson.

My next question is related to the definition of 'European citizenship' in a global economy. Although Hodgson explains that 'The idea of Europe promoted in the construction of European citizenship is based on a particular history, of events and icons, indicative of the shared heritage and values of the European people', and she refers to a central text of the European canon, Plato's *Republic*, the citizenship she describes does not seem particular to the European context. Whether it is an 'entrepreneurial self' or an 'ideal image of the E.U. citizen', or the citizen like the *parrhesiastes* in Foucault's account, who is able to show the ethical relation between his thought and action, the concept of the citizen Hodgson describes as European can also be found in non-E.U. countries. The idea of citizenship is shaped by specific contexts. My second question to Hodgson is 'How would you define "citizenship" of the E.U.? What would be the unique characteristic of those citizens who have the transnational legal status of E.U. citizens?'

Related to the aforementioned question, it appears that Hodgson's interest in citizenship is concerned with universal issues ('the darkness within which the desire for a step toward another, liberating perspective asserts itself') such as 'the torment, the sickness, the strangeness, the exile, the disappointment, the boredom, the restlessness'. However, the modern E.U. citizens must be facing some unique issues, which they did not face in the past. My last question to Hodgson is 'What do you think are the current issues that each individual of the E.U. faces in a global economy?'

THE PERCEPTION OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

In Hodgson's paper on citizenship, more attention was paid to the individual level. However, citizenship can be explored from local, regional, national and global perspectives as well. In this section, I will try to develop the discussion of citizenship by examining how education or development was perceived at the national level in the creation of the citizens of India. Then, I will explain how attention is paid to the individual and to one's moral and ethical relation to one's self by referring to the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the oldest and the most popular epic in India.

Creation of Citizens of India

India has been developing in line with the demands of the knowledge economy, particularly since 2000. Accordingly, the new curriculum has attempted to equip students with skills in, for example, foreign languages and information technology, to enable them to compete in a global economy. Such skills are important elements of the 'entrepreneurial self', the ideal citizen of Europe, which is characterized by employability, mobility and adaptability. I suggest that because India and the E.U. both share the common context of globalization and the knowledge economy, both emphasize the concept of the 'entrepreneurial self' as the ideal citizen in their policies.

On the other hand, the curriculum in India does not fully inculcate the values of cooperation and openness, or in Hodgson's term, the 'willingness to listen or to be changed', which is also required for a global citizen. Instead, current Indian educational policies emphasize such values in relation with national issues rather than global issues. For example, national unity, equality, and the development of national identity that includes support for diversity are addressed in the policies (Joshee, 2008, p. 176). A good citizen of India is one who accepts all Indians regardless of social characteristics, is proud of India's diverse cultures, respectful of elders, and devoted to the nation.

One of the reasons for this is that the resident Indian population consists of a variety of people with different languages, religions and classes. This makes the emphasis on the concept of national citizenship inevitable. Second, the history of colonization still weighs heavily in people's consciousness. Following independence, there was an urgent need to promote Indian nationalism. The reinterpretation of history and the creation of their own concept of the Indian citizen were part of this process. In the field of education, the government criticized history text books for their Eurocentric perspective (p. 181). This process illustrates the perceived importance of education and development at the national level in the creation of the citizens of India. For the citizens of modern India, development (education) started from the darkness, their history of colonization, within which the desire for a step toward another occurred. They did not see development (education) as progress toward a light from afar. In this way, Indian policies have effected a subjectivation according to Indian moral principles rather than an external compass of the West.

'Bhagavad-Gita'

It is not government policy that creates the common brief of citizenship for the nation of India, however; rather, it is the religious or caste-based communities. I will try to develop the discussion of 'accounting for the self' by examining how one's moral and ethical relation to the self is explained in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. *Gita* plays a very important role in understanding the largest and dominant community of India, the Hindu community. It explains the orientation to social life and Indian moral values and shows how attention is paid to the level of the individual.

Hodgson explains the accountability drawn out in Foucault's account of Socratic *parrhesia*, which requires the giving an account of one's life, one's own *bios*, is to demonstrate whether one is able to show that there is an ethical relation between one's thought (the rational discourse, the *logos*) and action (the way that you live). Interestingly, a similar conception of accountability is found in the most famous scene of *Gita*, which takes place in the conversation between Arjuna and the God, Lord Krishna at the battlefield.

Arjuna was born of the nature of a *kshatriya* (warrior), one of the four caste communities, and thus as having a duty to fight. His duty was to fight against the enemies (who were considered as the evil in the epic), however, he was hesitating to kill them. Krishna explains to Arjuna that one should work according to his own nature, and that one could achieve the highest stage of perfection by being engaged in his occupational duty without renouncing the results of one's action (Bhaktivedanta, 1972, p. 731). He further explains that no work is abominable and that there need be no fear of degradation if one listens to the Lord's direction and performs their duty for the sake of Krishna (p. 733). However, if one does not act according to Krishna's direction and does not perform one's duty, then one will be falsely directed (pp. 743-744).

According to *Gita*, the God can be understood as 'the Supersoul' that resides within oneself (p. 745). When taking an action (particularly the action that requires a moral decision), one should always listen to what the Supersoul says. Here, whether one is accountable or not can be proved by one's ability to show an ethical relation between what the Supersoul says and the action one takes. Hence, in *Gita*, the *logos*, or God's guidance is explained as what the Supersoul instructs. And such *logos* emphasize the importance of acting according to the nature with which one is born. The uniqueness of the Indian understanding of 'accountability' shown in *Gita* are: 1) one's moral and ethical relation to one's self is regarded as equal to one's ethical relation to God, 'the Supersoul' and 2) one's 'accountability' can be proved by whether one follows their collective nature, explained as caste-based duty in *Gita*, rather than one's individual rational discourse. This perception of 'accountability' reflects Indian values and morality.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have tried to develop the discussion of citizenship by taking India's case as one example that reflects the Asian perception of citizenship, and contrasting it with Hodgson's account of European citizenship. I have suggested that because India and the E.U. both share the common background of globalization and understand the current context of the knowledge economy, the concept of the 'entrepreneurial self' is emphasized as the ideal citizen in policies in both contexts. I also explained India's understanding of education or development in the creation of the citizen and concluded that Indian policies have effected a subjectivation according to Indian moral principles rather than an external compass of the West. Finally, I explained how attention is paid to the individual and to one's moral and ethical relation to one's self in India. I pointed out that the uniqueness of the Indian understanding of 'accountability' are: 1) one's moral and ethical relation to one's self is regarded as equal to one's ethical relation to God, the Supersoul and 2) one's 'accountability' can be proved by whether one follows their collective nature.

NOTES

- * This research has been supported in part by Research Fellowships of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science for Young Scientists

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