

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, 2010).

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.

POSTSCRIPT—SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT SELF LIBERATION: 'PERFECTIONISM' OR 'PERFECTIBILITY'

The interdisciplinary discussion at the colloquium allowed me to understand how the dimensions of the research would differ according to the discipline one chooses. Through the discussion with Hodgson, I come to understand the disciplinary difference between philosophy of education and comparative education more clearly. In addition, Hodgson and I both agreed the importance of the dialogue between disciplines since it helps understand how one's research could develop in a broader academic context.

What was interesting about our session was that the Emerson's idea of 'moral perfectionism', Hodgson explained in her paper was influenced by *Bhagavad-Gita*, I referred to in order to describe the idea of education in relation to self in the context of Hindu society. Here, I would like summarise the Hodgson's paper with particular focus on the notion of 'perfectionism' and 'perfectibility' since I did not clearly explain my interpretation of these terms in the presentation regardless of the fact they are very important to understand *Gita*. My intention here is to further elaborate the discussion of citizenship and understand the different perceptions toward self liberation (or development) by comparing Hodgson and my interpretation of the Cavell and *Gita*'s texts.

Plato's image in the allegory of the cave in *Republic* depicts education as a linear moving away from darkness toward a unified, enlightened self. Plato images 'a path upward' which concludes in a state of perfection. Hodgson argues that in Cavell's view, this Plato's image is countered by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Wittgenstein. Emerson describes moral perfectionism which 'does not envisage, even deplors, the prospect of arriving at a final state of perfection' (Hodgson, 2010). Hodgson continues 'In Cavell's view Wittgenstein, he says, does not share "the *Republic*'s idea of a goal of perfectibility, a foreseeable path to a concluding state of the human"'. However, Hodgson also explains that 'Cavell's interest in conversation and everyday language, informed in part by Wittgenstein, enables the reading of Plato's text in perfectionist rather than perfectible terms' (Ibid.).

Cavell draws attention to our negative or mundanely everyday experiences, which he takes from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*—'the torment, the sickness, the strangeness, the exile, the disappointment, the boredom, the restlessness'— that constitute our education as humans (Ibid.).

Hodgson also suggests how Cavell 'understands the impulse for the reorientation of the self' by citing the following texts:

The measure of direction, or progress, . . . is concretely guided, and tested, by whether the next step of the self is one that takes its cue from the torment, sickness, the strangeness, the exile, the disappointment, the boredom, the restlessness . . .

By a step that 'takes its cue' from these conditions I do not mean one that attempts to escape them but one that judges the degree to which these conditions must be borne and may be turned

(some might say sublimated) constructively, productively, sociably. This puts tremendous weight on one's judgment, critically including one's judgment of whose judgment is to be listened to most attentively (Ibid.).

The reorientation of the self Cavell suggests requires one's attitudinal necessity to be open to loss. In Hodgson's term, 'willingness to listen' or 'willingness to be changed' is required. This reorientation process describes the term 'perfectionist' well. It is different from the *Republic's* idea of a goal of perfectibility, which envisages the process led by 'some external and universal source of moral orientation' that will always lead us to 'the right knowledge of the world' (Ibid.). It occurs to me that the following statement given by Hodgson implies the importance of the question of 'whose judgment' suggested in the Cavell's text. Hodgson explains, 'In Cavell's view, Plato and Wittgenstein "share the sense of liberation as requiring the intervention of a new or counter voice"'.

Now I turn to *Gita* and explain how the process of self liberation (or development) is described in this text. The term 'self realisation' is used in *Gita* to describe this process whereas it is explained as 'self-reorientation' in the Cavell's text. This difference of the term used in two texts may stem from the different perception toward 'self'. *Gita* confirms that the God resides in every living entity and the state of perfection can be attained when the self becomes one in all respects with the God. In this sense, *Gita* envisages a goal of perfectibility. *Gita* also identifies whose judgment is to be listened most attentively to reach that state. It is the God that resides in oneself and one's actual position or one's real spiritual mind and intelligence will be realised through the Krishna consciousness, or the direct contact with the God.

Although *Gita* identifies the state of perfection very clearly, it must be emphasised that this state is describes as a vulnerable state in *Gita*.

When the results of pious activities are finished, one falls down again from the peak of happiness to the lowest status of life (Bhaktivedanta, 1972, Chapter 2.8).

Actual devotional service continues even after liberation. When the devotee goes to the spiritual planet in the kingdom of God, he is also engaged there in serving the Supreme Lord (Chapter 9.2).

Thus, reaching the final stage is rather a momentary reality than permanent one. In this sense, the notion of perfectionism may well demonstrate the self liberation process described in *Gita*. While *Gita* confirms that the quality of the existence of every living entity is equivalent to that of the God, it emphasises that the former is never equal to the latter in terms of the quantity of power. The text explains:

Although the living entities are part of His [the God's] energies and are therefore divine, due to contact with the illusory energy in this dark material world, their original superior power is covered (Chapter 7.14).

Due to the influence of the illusory energy (or the false ego), the living entity forgets his real

spiritual mind and intelligence, and thinks 'I am matter, and material acquisitions are mine'. *Gita* also explains how material world is constituted of and how one could be liberated from it.

In his constitutional position, a living entity is above the three modes of material nature, but association with material nature entangles him in the different modes of material nature, goodness, passion and ignorance (Chapter 14.27).

The mode of goodness is explained as the purest form of existence in the material world. 'One in the mode of passion is never satisfied with the position he has already acquired' (Chapter 14.12). Those in the mode of ignorance is without knowledge, hence, all his activities result in misery. 'Because of ignorance, people do not perceive that there is a complete state controlled by the Supreme Lord' (Chapter 14.16). There is always competition for supremacy among these three modes and they induce the desire to dominate the material world.

What should be emphasised here is that this materialistic energy is actually conducted by the God himself.

[H]is release from the clutches of material nature is very difficult, . . . because material energy is ultimately conducted by the supreme will, which the living entity cannot overcome. Inferior material nature is defined herein as divine nature due to its divine connection and movement by the divine will. Being conducted by divine will, material nature, although inferior, acts so wonderfully in the construction and destruction of the cosmic manifestation (Chapter 7.14).

This statement returns to the notion of the 'perfectionism' because the living entity cannot overcome with the material energy conducted by the God regardless of the fact that the state of perfection cannot be attained unless one is detached from such energy. The text continues:

God has given independence to everyone; therefore, if a person desires to have material enjoyment and wants to have such facilities, the Supreme Lord, as Supersoul in everyone's heart, understands and gives facilities to such persons. . . . The answer is that if the Supreme Lord as Supersoul does not give such facilities, then there is no meaning to independence. Therefore he gives everyone full independence-whatever one likes-but his ultimate instruction we find in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: man should give up all other engagements and fully surrender unto him. That will make man happy (Chapter 7.21).

In the Cavell's text, it was described that darkness was something that 'must be borne and may be turned (some might say sublimated) constructively, productively, sociably'. In *Gita*, however, the darkness (or the material nature) is regarded as something necessary in the process of the self-realisation. The material energy which is ultimately conducted by the God's will provides the opportunity to the living entity to escape from the competition for supremacy and transcend the modes of material nature to reach at the state of perfection.

When one can understand that the material world is not independent from the God and sees everything on an equal level, one will be able to appreciate the state of darkness as much as they appreciate the enlightened state.

A pure devotee is neither happy nor distressed over material gain and loss. . . . If he loses anything which is very dear to him, he does not lament. Similarly, if he does not get what he desires, he is not distressed. . . . He is prepared to accept all kinds of risks for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord (Chapter 12.17).

One who is equal to friends and enemies, who is equiposed in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, happiness and distress, fame and infamy, who is always free from contamination, always silent and satisfied with anything, who doesn't care for any residence, who is fixed in knowledge and engaged in devotional service, is very dear to Me (Chapter 12.18-19).

Therefore, one who sees everything at the equal level thinks that it is the God's mercy upon him when he encounters difficulty. This way, he becomes free from all dual conceptions, and liberated from the modes of material nature.

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