

MEMORY AGAINST FORGETTING:  
INSTITUTIONAL ALTERNATIVES AND SOCIAL CRITICISM AS MODES OF  
RESISTANCE



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**Memory against forgetting: Institutional alternatives and social criticism as modes of resistance**

*The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting*

-- *Milan Kundera: The book of laughter and forgetting*

In *The book of laughter and forgetting*, Milan Kundera (1994) describes a historic meeting that took place in Prague's town square in February 1948. The leader Klement Gottwald is surrounded by his colleagues, including one called Clementis, as he is about to make a momentous speech. It is snowing and Gottwald is bare headed: so the ever-dutiful Clementis removes his fur cap and places it on Gottwald's uncovered head, protecting him from the unceasing snow. Many photographs are taken to mark the occasion. Four years pass. One day, Clementis is accused of treason, found guilty, and hanged. He is now airbrushed from all official photographs, including the ones taken that day at the town square. Banished from the photographs, he no longer appears in history. All that remains of Clementis is the cap on Gottwald's head in that historic photograph! Kundera concludes that "the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting" (3). Through Gottwald's power Czechoslovakia's people were made to forget the very existence of Clementis.

But there is another way to look at it: the very act of remembering, reconstructing, reliving or re-framing past experience can be a potent resistance to prevailing structures of power. Through the remembering we recreate Clementis, and thus re-enact his struggle, seeking different results. This paper is about institutional alternatives that have resisted existing structures of dominance and privilege, and have done so through the re-creation of the past. Specifically it describes, in the cases of fisherfolk cooperatives and indigenous management, how social relationships can be constituted as resistance to structures of power, enabling social transformation. Resistance involves the generation of social criticism that promotes alternatives. The paper concludes with an evaluation of the two cases.

### **Cooperatives and NGOs: Two institutional alternatives**

NGOs and cooperatives are well-known alternatives to the *profit motive and managerial hierarchy characteristic of business organizations*. A tradition extending back to Bakunin's famed split from the International at the Hague congress in 1872 connects the study of collectivist organizations with locating socialist alternatives to capitalist models (Rothschild & Whitt, 1986). With their emphasis on elected member representatives, on both social and economic goals, cooperatives are a visible alternative to bureaucratic forms of structuring tasks and defining authority. Similarly, literature on NGOs has discussed these organizations' emphasis on collectivism, on the participation of beneficiaries (Fisher, 1994; Uphoff, 1993). Thus both these types of organizations have been characterized as alternatives to both the capitalistic and bureaucratic features prevalent in most organizations.

In developing countries like India NGOs and Cooperatives embody another theme as well, that of locating alternatives to *western knowledge*. An established research stream challenges the use of western science and knowledge in developing countries, characterizing it as irrelevant (Parikh & Garg, 1990; Marsden, 1994; Sheth, 1996), as imperialist (Alvares, 1988; Nandy, 1988) and even violent (Bajaj, 1988; Shiva, 1988). To such authors it is imperative to develop indigenous alternatives to western knowledge so that the shackles of colonialism are truly thrown away. Cooperatives and NGOs, because of their representation of local communities, are depicted as feasible and important sites for exploring indigenous management (Blunt & Warren, 1996). Thus such organizations are seen as alternatives not only in terms of organization structure but also shared knowledge.

These organizations are a rich arena for the study of institutional transformation and social criticism. The themes of anti-capitalism and anti-westernism are common raw material for the social and political action that presage these types of organizations. In most discourses of

development, the need for alternatives to capitalism and western knowledge, is a oft-heard refrain. Whether the discussion is on patent legislation or herbal patrol, in a country like India, at some point we start to talk of resisting capitalism, of cherishing indigenous knowledge!

We need to know more about the ways in which such organizations craft creative alternatives, framing them as legitimate and desirable options for their constituents. The next section presents an account of a federation of fishermen's cooperatives, based in Trivandrum, to understand some of these issues. Similarly, the theme of alternatives to western science and technology deserves deeper study. At the moment we have some vigorous critiques of scientific institutions in India (Nandy, 1988) and the alienating trends of western science (Roland, 1988; Visvanathan, 1988). But the stridency of these critiques (such as Parikh & Garg, 1991; Shiva, 1988) encourage absolutist views, where the "we" of the third world becomes a self-representation of passive victims in the midst of an implacable, aggressive momentum of western knowledges. We lack sufficient analysis of resistance to western knowledge, particularly in the social sciences<sup>1</sup>. One interesting pocket of resistance has been in the discipline of management. Here a few authors have criticized the dependence of the field on the premises of western management studies and offered indigenous options that are, they maintain, more relevant to developing countries. The second section traces the creative effort of Indian, or more properly, indigenous management and evaluates its achievement.

### **Alternative organizations: the birth and growth of a cooperative movement**

*It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more difficult to manage than the creation of a new system.*

-- Machiavelli

#### Marianad

In 1960, the Trivandrum Social Service Society, an organization set up by the Latin Catholic

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<sup>1</sup>An important exception is Ashis Nandy's (1983) remarkable study of the construction of the Indian and Western self during colonialism.

Church, bought some barren coastal land on the outskirts of the city. The land, called Allialathura, was considered an area of ghosts by the nearby fisherfolk, and they avoided it. The Society renamed the land Marianad and started a bold social experiment where fisherfolk families were invited to settle in the newly-created village. The Bishop of Trivandrum at that time was the Rt. Reverend Peter Bernard Perreira. A person ahead of his time, Bishop Perreira felt a great need to help the fisherfolk community. The 1950s was a period of growing political unrest. The newly-elected communist government wanted to make revolutionary changes in various legislative spheres, notably land and education. The eventual overthrow of this government was made possible by concerted political action, in part spearheaded by the church, action in which the fishermen played a vital part. It was in recognition of their crucial role in these agitations, aware of the potential danger of the community being swayed by Marxism, that Bishop Perreira took some action to benefit them. Marianad was the most important of these actions. It was intended to be a model housing cooperative, where poor people could live comfortably, in clean and safe surroundings. By virtue of it being cursed land avoided by the superstitious, Marianad became a place that attracted only the least-settled and most-desperate, of disparate backgrounds, from widely dispersed villages. 50 houses were built, 50 families moved in.

The housing cooperative and other related social activities were manned by volunteers, some from international church groups. These volunteers largely restricted their work to safe activities that would antagonize very few, typically the provision of amenities and loans for the fisherfolk. An abiding concern was infrastructure for the new village. However all this changed in the mid 1960s with new volunteers joining Marianad: Nalini Nayak, Eugene Culass and later John Kurien. With Laretta Farina, these people became the core of the "Marianad Group". In general these new volunteers had two important similarities: they had some professional training and they had well-developed political ideologies. To these new volunteers, over a period, a clarity emerged about the Marianad situation, one that sharply differed from the prevailing view of it as a housing cooperative.

Each day they saw the catamarans go out to sea. In the afternoon or evening the fishermen returned, running their boats onto the beach, spilling the freshly-caught fish onto the sands. The fish were then sold to the waiting merchants, sometimes for cash, sometimes as settlement for past credit provided. As one observer of the sector said, recounting those days:

“as these new people joined there was rethinking of the basic approach. the s.k. dey community development idea was strong and so... influenced by such ideas, changes took place. the talk became 'felt needs', 'people's participation', and 'democratic decision making'. all these terms were being used in msw (masters in social work) courses then. they started to ask what do the people want? the fisherpeople wanted a church. in these communities the church is a focus of the village. they did not have a church so they wished to build one. but the social workers wanted a fishing cooperative. they saw the indebtedness of the fishermen to moneylenders who took over right of sale. they saw exploitation as the key problem. but the people wanted a church. there was much conflict between these two points of view. but they decided to go with the people and so took up the church. they started to collect money for the church.”

Thus, at this stage these professional social workers saw the situation quite clearly: merchants were exploiting fishermen. This was a perception influenced by their past training and their shared ideology, as admitted by a member of the group at that time:

“...this was the 1960s. there was a student movement active in development. did my msw in bombay influence me? not at all. the course was very far away from reality. we were actually influenced by the radical thinking outside the university. there was a lot of freedom in the course but we could not raise political questions of class and power. but the student movement was already exposed to these ideas, from books in latin america and south africa. we had the concept of a 'free university' parallel to the official one, where we borrowed and discussed these books.”

Was there “really” class exploitation? We do not know. What is important is the social workers’ perception there was exploitation. That is, we can leave aside the issue of whether there was exploitation as alleged, and focus instead on the success in perpetuating the perception

exploitation was occurring and needed to be challenged<sup>2</sup>. Perpetuating such a view was hard work. Two social workers actively involved with the community talk about their tactics for building awareness of a problem:

“if you ask me now after so long (about the process of awareness building) i cannot tell you the exact details about that process. we were on the shore all the time. we took part in the auctions, we were there when they talked to the merchants. but it was not a conscious process. we did not decide what to do and then do it. but yes there was a pedagogical approach we used, paulo freire and all that, we would ask questions...”

“well they would ask the fishermen, why is this happening? why are the fish growing scarce? why are you going hungry, getting poorer? the fishermen would say something like, the god’s angry with us, that is why the resource is reduced. but the priests would persist, asking why should this happen? who is involved? then the fishermen would point to the trawlers, the corals, the loss of young fish. in general the fishermen would sense the situation vaguely, and this would be clarified by the priests and scientists who would then feed it back to the fishermen. let me give you another example, fishermen were fond of saying that at one time there were so many prawns that the beaches were red with them, red sand. or that they were so plentiful they were used as coconut manure. if you asked why this was happening there was only a gradual sense that trawlers were the culprit. so clarification involved the scientific community researching trawler operations, mesh sizes used, the usage of nets, types of nets available.”

These tactics were ways of convincing audiences of the value of a certain perception. They demanded talking to fishermen, convincing them, building awareness. Convincing involved posing skillful socratic questions such that the audience gave you the necessary answers to make them see the situation your way. It involved not only questions, but also ways of severing existing social and economic relationships and developing new ones.

Identifying the situation as exploitative involved discovering a relationship between the fishermen

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<sup>2</sup>This is not to say the issue is unimportant, only that a discussion of the tactics of resistance can proceed without justifying or challenging views of middlemen as exploitative of fishermen. However the issue of merchant exploitation is not uncontroversial; for a strong contrarian view see Platteau (1989).



and the beach merchants and establishing this as one to be severed. In close-knit communities like these, merchants were more than commercial intermediaries: they were relatives, old friends, counsellors, neighbors, patrons. Thus the ambition was truly wide in scope. It was to remove all the ties that moored fishermen and merchants in a stable set of commercial transactions, and set the two loose so that each may find other trajectories and other ports. The task was momentous but enormously difficult: How do you sever such a relationship?

You persuade them to cut ties. The social workers urge the fishermen to *stop* selling their fish to the merchants. They explain the merchants are buying at low prices, so the fishermen get less money for the catch, and are forced to take loans from the merchants, the interest on which is deducted from the price for their catch...thus a debt cycle is revealed that must be avoided at the very start, by snapping economic ties. But the values imbibed by these social workers that made them instinctively study the 'parasitic' role of the middlemen also prevented them from using coercive and authoritarian methods for convincing their subjects. A pedagogic technique had to be devised that would allow the subjects themselves to reach the conclusion that a change was needed, that the characterization of merchants as exploitative was apt. The interesting aspect of the technique was it avoided any pat 'advice' or even 'guidance' to the fishermen; as the two quotes indicate, it involved asking leading questions. These questions were nested in each other: they would begin with a general question such as 'are you happy, are you well-off?' and proceed onward to more specific questions, like 'why are you poor? is it the really the weather? is it really the grace of god?' Such a technique led to questions that inevitably reached a position where the key cause pinpointed was the merchant's role as an intermediary. In fact anyone subject to such a technique would find it hard to question the conclusion since it was one in which they had actively participated.

However as the excerpt shows there were trade-offs in using such a pedagogy. When asked 'what they want' the fishermen respond 'we want a church'. The social workers tell them that what they *really* want is a cooperative. But the fishermen are adamant, 'no, a church'. What a dilemma!

At this stage the social workers can hardly say a place of God is unimportant (the fishermen are very religious and the social workers are part of a church welfare society). Nor can they disregard the views of the fishermen. The pedagogic approach they use has become their captor, imprisoning them within the questions they posed. What is to be done? The social workers agree with the fishermen: yes, we will build a church. But their strategy of questioning does not start and end with simply an oral interrogation. Instead it persists in all other activities as well.

“as these fishermen tried to collect the money they found that in the morning it would seem they would get almost 3000 rupees but by the afternoon collected amount would be just some 500 rupees. the only way to collect money was via 5% of the fish value. but the auctioneer would keep the price down. they had many different methods of reducing income! so they began to ask why this was happening. all this was discussed with the social workers who brought the realization that cooperatives were needed. the situation with them and the role of merchants who bought their fish was discussed. so we brought the fishermen to a point where they said to us they needed a cooperative.”

The fishermen decide on a collection. From the money every fisherman gets for his catch a percentage will be placed in a fund for the building of the church. This is done but the result is disappointing. After a day of collection the amount in the fund is meager. The fishermen see that it will take them a long time to get enough to build the church. The ever-present social workers now ask them ‘why is the amount low?!’ And in that fashion they reinstate the line of argument used earlier, one that makes the fishermen proceed from a position of ‘we don’t have enough to build a church’ through one of ‘this is because we get low prices for our catch’ to that of ‘all this would change if we avoided the middlemen and had our own cooperative’.

“in the beginning itself there was a process going on, to understand where the real profits were going. why did the fishermen not have control over their sale? over time people began to make links between issues. the demand for a church came during this process. the actual awareness emerged through this demand because the fishermen saw they could not pay contributions due to the merchants.”

In this manner the social workers responded to resistance from their own subjects, the fisherfolk.

Yet there was resistance from outside the community as well.

“they decided they would take the money collected, about 4000 rupees, and they would use it as seed capital for the cooperative. it would appoint own salesmen to auction the fish. so money was paid to release them from the bondage of merchants and the cooperative was started. but things were not easy. the merchants and moneylenders were very powerful people. they were of neighboring villages, not marianad, such as rudhukuchi. these were the cream of their community. and they opposed this. at that time the community hall was served by a priest of the next village. but the merchants told him not to go and he listened to them. there was a struggle with the official church. there were also physical fights.”

The social workers had done their best to convert the fisherfolk to a position where they rejected the middlemen as necessary intermediaries for transactions with the outside world. However the merchants were not a passive entity: they actively resisted. They argued they were being falsely represented: a wronged set of people, they were performing a vital service to the fishermen by extending credit and ensuring a market for their catch. Resistance also involved more direct means - attacking supporters of the cooperative, sabotaging their boats, refusing to buy their catch, and enlisting the support of local church functionaries and village leaders. Thus the Marianad fishing community was barraged simultaneously by a mixture of persuasion, intimidation and coercion.

This counter-resistance of the merchants must be opened up. Just like the social workers were enlisting the fishermen into a set of relationships that linked them to each other and to the social workers, the merchants were seeking to maintain the existing set of relationships that linked them to the fishermen. This symmetry is an obvious result of a similar process and goals of these two otherwise disparate parties, for *the social workers and the merchants were both constructing structures of power*. After all, the relationships each sought to maintain were conduits for not only commerce, but technical education, social change, self-empowerment, and eventually political influence. What were all these but ways of interacting in a rival, an alternate structure of power?!

Ironically, the attempts at intimidating had the opposite effect. They confirmed to the fishermen that the social workers were correct. The ultimate goal of the social workers was to sever the

direct links of the fishermen with the merchants and this demanded creating a division between the two parties, an 'us versus them' attitude so that the two would no longer be seen as natural parts of a larger whole. And the attacks of the merchants succeeded in further perpetuating such a division; they themselves were now caught in the webs of representations they had sought to resist. And the now settled links led the fishermen to build a cooperative, to regard the social workers as not only guides, but in a real sense guardians.

The final test: fishermen from neighboring villages sought to quell the Marianad inhabitants.

“the marianad people used hook and line fishing. these people were from the south and this is the method used there. but the villages around marianad used shore seines. the hook and line fishermen were able to bring in fish. they were successful. the shore seine people resented this and claimed they were stealing their fish. they felt the catch was being reduced. these shore seines were owned by big fishermen and manned by coolies. so they took the matter up. the parish of puthukazhi and others went to the church. the fishermen took matters in their own hands. arms were used and marianad people were prevented from going to the beach. after a couple of days they (the marianad villagers) had no food left and they decided to physically fight to go to the beach. but when they got there the people ran off. because you see these were coolies and their heart was not in the fight. this was seen as a victory for the marianad people.”

And the test was passed. After that, the Marianad experiment was seen as a stable one. It had withstood a crucial challenge. The attacks of merchants, intimidation, and constant unease of segments of the church would continue through the 1970s but no longer would the concept of a cooperative be questioned. The idea of fishermen avoiding middlemen, and instead forming a cooperative was accepted. Eventually the method of collecting the catch of members, pooling it and letting a cooperative-appointed agent auction it became part of the “Marianad model”. Nearby villages accepted the need for such an approach, and started their own ‘Marianads’. The need for adopting the ‘Marianad model’ was typically from villagers, church or social workers who had heard of the village cooperative.

### Creating an apex organization

Through the 1970s South Kerala saw a rapid spread of fishermen cooperatives. In 1978 the Marianad group renamed itself the Programme for Cooperative Organization (PCO) and became autonomous from the church. PCO members started to explore the idea of an “apex body”. The idea of an apex body emerged from discussions on how to take the logic of the cooperative further. What was needed was an organization controlled by the cooperatives that would both acquire fish and sell them. Thus no reliance on middlemen, and greater returns to the fishermen. At present the cooperatives still auctioned members’ catch to middlemen.

the marianad model was generally successful in marketing at the primary level. but 20-25% of the fish cannot be handled by the local auction system. its successful only if there are a large number of buyers and (if it is) for local consumption. because then there was good competition. but that left the export and distant internal markets. this can be effectively handled by big merchants who can manage the transport costs, the risk, who have the contacts. it was not easy to be in this market. fishermen were running counter to the merchants, and so a parallel marketing venture was needed. the individual village societies lack the scale to buy equipment, such as fish nets. local traders would hike prices, cheat on weight, provide substandard stuff. so at this time two functions emerged one of agency, purchasing in bulk and supplying the fishermen, providing them fishing requisites such as nets mines gear. and marketing. these were the two areas where some intervention was demanded.

At that time there was a model for an apex body. The AMUL dairy had become famous for its successful marketing of milk products, on behalf of members who were dairy farmers. AMUL followed a “three-tier” organization form: its milk farmers supplied milk to district-level federations that processed. The apex body was the final tier; here the milk was packaged into different products, like butter, ghee, milk powder, and marketed to different segments of the Indian urban market. This organization form came with a rationale. It was argued by its proponents that there was surplus supply in village area that could be routed to urban areas to meet their high demand for fresh, standardized products.

now all the models of cooperative marketing assume a rural surplus that is available for urban consumers. so cooperatives can offer a high price and high value product. this is the case with milk, where the surplus milk in the villages is collected and sold to urban consumers willing to pay more for a pasteurized product. so this was our (SIFFS’) logic.

Thus the idea of transforming “raw” milk of villages to homogenized milk for urban areas was closely linked with a three-tier structure.

The promotion of the apex organization was fuelled by not only needs of creating an alternative but also the need for creating a large organization representative of the fishermen, the fishermen’s own AMUL, an apotheosis of modern technology and professionalism.

...it was eugene who dreamed of the federation. he had been sponsored by the bishop to go to the coady institute in canada and he came back with all these grand ideas, these ambitious plans for fishermen. through this and his visits to amul he became the “cooperative man”. he had these preconceived and ambitious ideas on what to do with cooperatives. this was of an organization that would control all aspects of the fishing economy. but there were few details. he thought big; iceplants vehicles. the export of prawns, of cuttlefish was very high on the agenda of the new federation.

Once it was decided to start an apex organization, which by this time was known as SIFFS, the South Indian Fishermen’s Federation of Societies, a professionally trained graduate, Mr. Vivekanandan, was hired as a marketing manager. At this time the rationale for SIFFS hinged on two points. One, it would make itself useful to the cooperatives which would naturally count on it for their specialized marketing needs. Two, the organization would promote an alternate marketing system. Both of these points lead us to a basic observation on power. The task facing SIFFS was similar to that facing the Marianad group: it needed to make itself indispensable to its chosen constituency, the fishermen. This demanded further snapping their commercial links to merchants, and further representing the key problem as being the merchants and their exploitation of the fishermen.

However this time it did not work. For one thing, the times had changed. The 1970s had seen a growing ecological crisis in Kerala’s fisheries. Fish stocks were declining. Policy-makers and academics were decrying the government’s encouragement of mechanized technology into the sector.

most of eugene's ideas were based on the 1970s experiment. then *marketing* was a problem. there was no ability to obtain fair prices, credit. the merchants had total control. but now the trawler problem had become important. the catch was declining. fish were getting scarce. but the federation idea was based on the earlier experience.

For another, everyone resisted. Earlier, fishermen agreed with the characterization of merchants and accepted the role of the cooperative. Now SIFFS found its marketing policies questioned. Earlier there was understanding and coherence within the Marianad group of the necessity and suitability of the approach, but now there were differences.

Within PCO there were differences about the suitability of an alternate marketing approach. Some noted that women relied on the existing marketing channels which provided them means to earn money. In a setting where men were prone to waste money on drink, they argued, the women were crucial as safe-keepers of the home. Why threaten this with an alternate arrangement?

we immediately faced opposition in our ranks. some felt we would be competition for fisher women. nalini nayak was against it. she even threatened to have our tires punctured if we went ahead, because we should not work against fisherwomen.

Predictably the merchants were unwilling to help the nascent organization. SIFFS' attitude was one of competition with the merchants, a vestige of the earlier Marianad experience.

we had a very preconceived notion about a cooperative. what a merchant can do a cooperative can always do better. after all we have professionals, we can do it. no reason we cannot do better given the right people. so we would compete in the village auction, purchase vehicles, ice boxes. we even opened a retail stall.

Such an approach made it difficult to learn the required marketing skills. These included a knowledge of shifts in commodity market prices, in exchange rates, and up-to-date information on existing fish prices, and trends in prices and demand. It demanded rapport with retailers, export houses and foreign importers so a trusted long-term trading relationship could develop. Most important, it required skills in handling government regulations and regulators.

they were trying export but the problem with export is you have to first deal with basic issues. can you keep double books, bribe officials, use black money? can a people's organization do

this? also, there was a hostile private lobby who would get in the way. you have to play the game by their own rules, and they've set the rules...in coop fish marketing here you have no direct selling to consumers anymore. you either sell to a wholesaler through auctions who then passes it onto distributors who sell to the international market. or you sell directly to export houses who have a fixed price system.

You would expect atleast the fishermen would pose no problems for the new organization. But, while enthusiastic about the new project, the fishermen expected flexibility in price-setting. They were unwilling to provide the organization a professional autonomy where it could set the sort of prices that would ensure returns. At the same time SIFFS itself was reluctant to enforce such prices since that would make them seem akin to the merchants they claimed to replace. This led to situations like this:

we went into cuttlefish, a van would go to each center. the fishermen were very enthusiastic. we built up their motivation to resist merchants. with only 10% of fishermen, we were able to acquire 25% of the landings. but the operation was difficult to sustain. we had machinery for 12 months that was operated for a maximum of 5 months. we were being squeezed on both sides, by fishermen and by competitors. we were trapped. competitors sold in bulk at low prices. our fishermen wanted high prices. so all this meant very low margins. there was no cushion for weight loss, rejection, cheating. and this was when there was a problem in weighing the fish. they absorb water and the fishermen wanted them weighed like that. but the company would drain the water and then weigh.

The fishermen expected, in return for their support, advantages the old system did not provide. What was the use of an apex organization if it did not offer members the flexibility they needed? But SIFFS found itself caught between fishermen demanding better prices and exporters offering only fixed prices for meeting fixed levels of quality.

And finally the market resisted. Markets are not animate objects, they lack a will of their own. What we mean is the SIFFS marketing intervention was unable to shift the existing configuration of demand and supply. Where Marianad had rapidly placed the cooperative between the fishermen and the middleman, here the entry into wholesaling was not working. SIFFS was



scrupulously following the marketing model of AMUL, where rural surplus flowed to urban pockets of high demand. Except here the market resisted. There was no rural surplus, and no high urban demand.

the economics were not in their favor. you see there was no rural surplus going to urban areas. rather there was coastal surplus going for rural consumption. urban demand was for table fish which you would get from cochin, calicut, quilon (where there were mechanized boats), mangalore, rameswaram, tuticorin. these places had landing centers where the fish was heavily iced and there was bulk purchase, the quality being lower. because of the high landings, prices for fish in urban areas were lower than in rural areas. also, in rural areas the purchasing power is actually high. there are many gulf people who return to the villages. people here prefer fresh fish and are willing to pay more for it. so the fish caught on the coast were being sold at high prices. the concept of rural surplus for urban consumption was thus not applicable.

Since the market is not a person, who then resisted? *Those participating in the existing market system resisted.* Those that comprised the urban demand were not interested in buying freshly caught fish sold by SIFFS. At the same time the rural consumers were quite willing to buy fresh fish though it was expensive. Thus neither of the parties cooperated so that the new system could prevail. Ultimately, the apex was unable to persuade consumers, retailers, federations, members/suppliers to follow this new chain. In theory everyone wanted an apex organization. But in practice the required effort for shifting existing ties was not available. There was too much resistance. Or, to put it another way, the existing market ties were too strong to overthrow.

What was left for SIFFS? Its role of coordinating these cooperatives demanded forging relationships of influence with existing cooperative leaders and members. The best way of doing this would have been via the AMUL model and a competence in marketing. However the marketing intervention was not working. The apex was swiftly becoming an external organization with weak ties to its constituents. A new problem was needed, one with a better chance of linking constituents such that they would see SIFFS as a necessary and inevitable party to aid their daily lives.

Entry into boat building

in 1983 there was a total transformation in siffs. it was a major event, when we entered the boat industry.

The crucial shift, the one that ensured SIFFS' long-term viability, happened almost as a fluke. The SIFFS' managers received an offer. Would they be interested in taking up boat-building? Concurrent with the efforts of social workers to set up a cooperative to market fish, an effort had gone into locating technological alternatives for fishermen. Much work had been done in the Kanyakumari region by a Belgian engineer, Father Gillet, who looked for alternatives to the catamarans used by fishermen. First he tried building fiberglass boats, later, with more success, plywood boats. Working with members of Intermediate Technology Ltd. Gillet developed a plywood boat that could be produced economically. However who would manage the long-term production of the plywood prototype? Members of PCO were in touch with Gillet. Now they both approached SIFFS to persuade it to take up boat-building.

so a push was made to get siffs involved. now we were *very* reluctant to take this up. we had no time for this new venture. but we were persuaded to take it up. it was shown to be of strategic importance, very practical extension to many of our utopian ideas. so anjengo boatyard was set up and an administrator put in charge of it.

The move into boat-building was not a conscious one; no one planned it that way. But in a sudden moment, when the opportunity to move into this new activity came up, SIFFS took the plunge. The rest is history. Rapidly the demand grew for plywood boats. The demand was intense in the area of Quilon, north of Trivandrum.

in 1983 quilon coops came up...they took up some initiatives. one was new technology. the dugout canoe was a major handicap. it cannot get large. it needs a single log of a certain size. the timber substitution logic was stronger here as wood was scarce. the substitution logic gained strength because with plywood you could bridge catamarans and trawlers, by an intermediate craft which could go deeper into the seas, be fitted with obm etc. this logic was (also) very strong in kanyakumari and trivandrum. the plywood vallom clicked in quilon.

Plywood boats became popular because they provided fishermen an affordable craft with the sea-worthiness to venture further offshore. Catamarans were prone to capsize easily in rough seas. But the plywood boats were sturdier and more stable. The boats had another advantage:

they could be fitted with outboard motors, enabling fishermen to be less dependant on currents and the winds. And since they used plywood, the boats did not need the precious alpesia wood from which catamarans were made.

By 1983, after a decade of rapid mechanization, the sector was showing signs of ecological overfishing. Stocks were in decline. Fishermen found their livelihood threatened by increased competition from trawlers. As the availability of fish declined, tensions within the community rose. PCO members helped promote a political union that made abolition of trawlers in Kerala waters its main demand. The political position was clear, and a familiar one. Industrialized units were alien to Kerala waters. They were controlled by the merchant class, not the fishermen. Profits from these units went outside the community, to cities, not to the fishermen of the locality. These units used large-scale technology that removed enormous loads of fish from the waters. Trawlers and the merchant class that owned them, were destroying the sector and needed to be stopped. There was an important addition to the familiar theme of merchants as inimical to the community's interests. It was coupled with an ecological message: the destruction of the sector's species was being caused by the merchants' profit motive and reliance on industrialized machinery.

The theme circulated well. Fishermen were angry. The fish had rapidly depleted. How were they to earn a living? The trawlers were obvious targets. The political demand for banning trawlers acquired much potency and support. Mainstream politicians took up the call, aware of the vote bank fishermen represent. While these agitations continued through the early 1980s, SIFFS helped artisanal fishermen meet the crisis by acquiring intermediate technology, that which was neither rudimentary (like catamarans) nor mechanized (like trawlers). Thus their actions fit the political climate within the community well; although they were no longer directly competing with merchants, their support for artisanal fishermen was still evident.

The boat-building activity remains SIFFS' major success. Coming at a time when the fisherman

began to see the need for equipment that enabled greater range of fishing, the boats were in swift demand. However the reader may have spotted the contradiction already emerging. Eager to acquire the support of its constituents the apex body had responded to their interest and built boats. In this way passage through SIFFS was made inevitable to fishermen wanting the new plywood boats. In turn this enhanced SIFFS' stature and increased its influence with district federations, offsetting the latter's power. However all this demanded a compromise: from a position of direct competition with merchants, the apex had moved to one of complementing the merchants. From an earlier representation of the apex as promoting an alternative to merchants, now the apex was shown as a specialist in technology and R&D. It was now aiding the fishermen's participation in the market. Fishermen began to equip boats with outboard motors, thus mechanizing them. SIFFS in this manner began to indirectly help mechanization spread further in the sector while affiliates at PCO were still trying to suppress this form of technology! Eventually outboard motors would spread through the sector and lead political movements to change their position on mechanization; abandoning their earlier hostility to mechanized craft, now they focussed on safe-guarding the fishermen's livelihood. With such a shift, the earlier hostility to mechanization, and to the merchant class grew somewhat muted, though agitations continued through the mid 1980s for a trawler ban. Eventually in 1989, the state government enforced a trawler ban for the monsoon season.

SIFFS is now an exclusive dealer in outboard motors. From its original focus on alternate marketing, its move to a focus on technology is complete. It sees itself as a professional organization working for the fishermen. Yet the roots in Marianad, while oft-noted, evoke a time when the situation was defined differently. The apex body has made impressive in-roads into many spheres of support for fisherfolk. However the stance of challenging existing structures of power has shifted from direct opposition to indirect accommodation.

siffs has since changed. today it is unclear on many things. you cannot be a people's organization just by status. how do you balance the social and economic aspects of the organization, of the cooperative? this depends on the leadership as well, their vision. does it wish to be fully professional? or an alternative professional organization? what do you want

to achieve? what is your perspective, your motives?... for example, should you support motorization? why accept it? what criteria will you use for accepting technology?... does siffs really oppose modernization? can modernization go together with resource management? has this been debated or not? can you really document excesses of mechanization when you are encouraging your members to modernize gear?

### **Alternate Paradigms: The search for Indian Management**

*Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.*

– Lord Keynes: *General theory of employment, interest and money*

It is really the voices of Gandhi and Nehru continuing an interminable conversation, one that underlies different constructions of power. These ghosts resound in so many discourses of India and Indians. Let us hear them on the value of Western knowledge.

The tendency of the Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is based on a belief in God. So understanding and so believing, it behooves every lover of India to cling to the old Indian civilization even as a child clings to the mother's breast. (M.K. Gandhi: 37)

It is science alone that can solve the problems of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and literacy, of superstition and deadening custom and tradition, of vast resources running to waste, of a rich country inhabited by starving people...Who indeed can afford to ignore science today? At every turn we have to seek its aid. The future belongs to science and to those who make friends with science. (J.N. Nehru; in Blakett: 61)

The trajectory of management knowledge and education in India has been a path between these two exhortations. These two voices, one basking in Indian tradition, the other glorying in Western scientific knowledge, remain a vital part of the day-to-day construction of management knowledge in Indian institutions. Though only about three decades old, the management discipline already boasts five major journals, considerable Industry support, and a very high student enrollment. It is not an exaggeration to say the MBA degree is the most popular post-graduate degree in India today. The Indian Institutes of Management have been highly influential

motors in the rapid spread of management studies in our country. This brief note highlights the attempt to pose an “alternative paradigm” of management studies.

In the late 1950s, about the time social workers in Trivandrum were assisting fishermen, bureaucrats and academics were sitting together in Delhi trying to set up a management school. It was a time of modernization, of large-scale investment in science and technology. India was in the midst of its second five year plan and needed trained personnel to guide the industrialized growth transforming its economy. Yet where were these people to come from? Historically Indian businesses were controlled by a few professionals organized as managing agencies. Management was a rare skill, acquired through great experience, and a little education, usually British. Many of these professional managers were British, typically on a short-term renewable contract. Their key task was to create systems that could then be taken up by less skilled Indian personnel (Ray, 1992).

After independence all this needed to change. With the rapid growth of industrial investment, with the promise of improved transport, power, and communication infrastructure, large scale enterprises were almost mandated. In such a situation what worried the planners was the availability of skilled manpower for the requirements of these enterprises (Choudhry, 1977). Thus, hand-in-hand with the planning for Indian Institutes of Technology, went the planning for Indian Institutes of Management. Both these enterprises were intended essentially for dissemination (Ganesh, 1984; Srinivas, 1994). What was needed was a means of sharing Western knowledge on the subject, through the latest pedagogical techniques. That the knowledge was Western was unproblematic. It was a time when the superiority of Western knowledge, for certain spheres, was accepted. The need of the hour was not only industrial investment but the technical knowledge that accompanied it (Roland, 1988; Sinha & Kao, 1988). Learning how to construct and maintain large-scale dams and irrigation projects had its natural counterpart in learning how to run large-scale enterprises. In both instances, the question posed was acquiring technical knowledge. Management was seen as a set of techniques, an applied science like

engineering, where the basic principles would remain the same irrespective of contexts. At most what would change is perhaps the inevitable accommodation to local constraints. And in both instances the source of all this knowledge, of these techniques and basic principles was undeniably, unremarkably the West.

The large exodus of skilled manpower after independence meant that the human resources needed to fill the many vacant positions were not available. There was little question that replacements needed to be found and the emphasis of much development aid in this period (and arguably continuing to the present) was on human resource development and on crash programmes to train people so that they could fill the gap. Business schools modelled on their western counterparts, and usually linked with them in one form or another, rapidly expanded, as did the numbers of graduates from western institutions of higher learning. Products of these various institutions replicated views of management promoted in the United States, where management was seen as being based on a general set of principles and analytical techniques which could be applied to organizational problems in a universalistic way. The local context and culture were deemed to be unimportant (Marsden, 1994: 45)

What was the knowledge for? India lacked the history of enormous growth in large-scale enterprise that presaged the birth of American management schools. They were born artificially so to speak, and the birth needed to be explained so that it would not be rejected. And the explanation that spread was that these were schools that would help India *develop*. India would become a wealthy country, or at least less poor, through the import of knowledge and techniques. Thus the management schools were not to be presented as only sites to acquire managerial knowledge but as sites where much-needed professionals would be groomed to take up crucial industry positions that would enable economic growth and prosperity. Not just economic development but social development as well. Yes the need of the hour was acquiring Western knowledge. But the issue was also of *unlearning* Indian knowledge. For, the acquisition of Western knowledge in, say, managing large-scale enterprises, demanded abandoning the restraints seen in adherence to traditions, to religious values, and to cultural beliefs. For, all these were represented as constraints, hampering the smooth transfer of this new knowledge which would forge a new India (as in Prasad & Negandhi, 1968 and Kapp, 1963). These were seen as

'superstitions' that needed to be overcome. Thus, managing a factory involved finding ways of overcoming the inevitable systems of patronage that developed on caste, kin, and religious lines. It demanded overcoming such 'traditional' restraints with a new force, that of impartiality, of merit-- in fact, of professionalism. And what was there before was traditional, "unprofessional". The need of the hour it was said was giving India professional management, ridding it of the unprofessional practices preventing its development.

The project of management thus was part of a larger task, that of reshaping India itself. And in the sense that it involved over and over the themes of tradition and modernity being mobilized by actors battling for supremacy, it really involved bringing in the voices of Nehru and his emphasis on western science and technology and much later, in resistance, of Gandhi and his emphasis on harmony with local traditions. And the issue was not simply of creating an institute but one that would *disseminate*. Particularly in the case of the IIMs, the need of the hour was training so that suitably educated manpower was available. This meant developing curricula that taught the state-of-the-art in management techniques. At the time this task was not seen as one of research, except in passing. What was most immediate was educating Indians in management techniques, not researching if management techniques were followed in Indian companies, a situation akin to that in other third world countries (Rwegasira, 1988).

Accordingly the Government of India deputed a committee to study the issue. The committee presented a plan: with the aid of the Ford Foundation, Western management experts would be transported to India to help set up the management schools. The plan was accepted and in 1959 and 1960 two management schools started functioning in India, at Ahmedabad and at Calcutta. The experts' discussions were the root of three fundamental decisions that decisively influenced the character of the education students received at these institutes. First, it was decided that the IIMs, like the IITs, would be kept independent of state universities. As autonomous institutes they would have greater freedom in deciding their curriculum as well as in administration matters such as salary and tenure. Second, the institutes would follow the pedagogy in use in Western



schools, notably the case study and class discussion approach. These were considered useful for better understanding of the managerial issues in organizations. Third, it was decided they would be two years in length and residential; so, hostels were constructed so that students could attend the programs from all over India (Hill, Haynes & Baumgartel, 1973; Tandon, 1980).

Initially the competition for admission to these schools was limited. However, as Indian industry grew, so did the demand for skilled professionals in marketing, production, finance, and human resources. Business schools became a natural source for sating such demand. And as this demand rose, two more management schools were started, in Bangalore and Lucknow. And still the demand grew, and independent institutions started to offer MBAs on the “IIM” model. XLRI, Bajaj, and later state universities like the University of Delhi. Today some say that the prestige and privilege that go with acquiring an MBA degree from a few select institutions is unprecedented, that it is virtually the creation of a new professional class (Rajagopalan, 1992).

By the mid 1970s questions began to be raised about what was taught at these schools. A growing feeling among some academics was that western management came with inherent assumptions. Unless such assumptions were discarded, management interventions would not be successful. A conference proceedings resulted in a book with contributions like Mendoza (1977) and Moris (1977), which urged modification of management approaches to the local work values of Asia and Africa respectively. Within India, by the 1980s, authors began to discuss the need for challenging the dominance of western knowledge.

Science and technology constitute two major oppressions of our time...the dissemination of scientific knowledge is dissemination of a specific corpus of knowledge, and, more often, of an alien cosmology that is exogenous to people's living environments and harvested through a method which must conflict with nature, and with the daily technology of the non-elites (Alvares, 1988: 109).

Academics argued for a shift from the existing management paradigm (Khandwalla, 1988; Sinha, 1980; Srinivasan, 1989; Tripathi, 1988). The proposed alternate paradigm came under various names, but perhaps it is apt to term it “indigenous management” since this was indeed the goal,

to identify management techniques more true to the country, more characteristic of it.

How was this paradigm described, how was it differentiated from what-came-before? It was described as a return to native values, to the traditions that defined India. Locate native values and cherish them. Then, incorporate them in management techniques, in management theory. Two articulate writers of indigenous management have been Indira Parikh and Pulin Garg, both Faculty at IIMA. Their articles (such as Parikh & Garg, 1990) make a clear link between colonization by a distinctly alien western culture, ensuing alienation, and declining work effectiveness.

(Indian society holds) two distinct ethos. One comes from the traditional culture of India and the other comes from the West. (Parikh & Garg, 1990: 175).

Another important writer is S.K. Chakraborty. In Chakraborty (1987, 1991) India's culture emanates from Hindu religious and philosophical texts that provide guiding values, offering a more apt model of motivation than accepted Western theories.

...This is a typically representative case of the mental conditioning management students of independent India are still imbibing at our prestigious institutions. The message they absorb and transmit goes something like this. Whatever an affluent or technologically advanced society might say or do must be right and good; whatever might have been enshrined and institutionalized in an old but living culture, if it is economically poor or technologically backward, must be wrong and bad; therefore the path to the lost paradise lies in imitating the former and disowning the latter...Our young students and adult managers are systematically tutored to associate Indian tradition chiefly with the evils of casteism, joint family, sati, ritualism, feudalism, child marriage, widowhood, and so on. They are equally carefully trained not to link Western modernity with colonialism and apartheid, world wars and nuclear weapons, Berlin Walls and Prague Springs, North and South Koreas, North and South Vietnams, ozone layer piercing, and greenhouse effects, no-parent or single-parent children and AIDS, and much else. shall we forever stop ourselves from asking then: what has done more harm to the world, Indian casteism, for example, or western colonialism for instance? Such then is the great curse of the closed Indian mind of today. (Chakraborty, 1991: 24-25)

There is by now a significant amount of discourse in social science and management literature

on the possible contribution of unique Indian values to the performance of modern enterprise. Some scholars stress the importance of Indian familial values of protective paternalism and respect for age and experience. It is contended that such values may contribute to stress and anxiety reduction in superior-subordinate relations and promote mutual understanding and loyalty, with positive effects on performance at the workplace. Similarly there is growing opinion among social scientists that ancient Indian spiritual and philosophical values can become major assets in raising the levels of performance and quality of work-life in modern enterprise. This opinion is vigorously promoted by Indian and Western scholars who are concerned about the rapidly degrading social and natural environment in the wake of the worldwide ascent of individualism, liberalism, consumerism, and normlessness (Sheth, 1996:24).

Through such texts a categorization is made where management students, academics and managers are asked to choose. Will they retain western and alien knowledge or will they accept that which is indigenous and relevant? Returning to indigenous concerns involved two basic moves: one, a greater study of the distinctive values of Indians and their impact on the work setting. This move led to development of management practices more suited for Indian settings. Two, a greater understanding of Indian cultural history and philosophy so that decision makers would better appreciate their traditions. Such an understanding would have the dual effect of providing a sound basis for ethical management while innately helping managers develop apt management practices. The consequence would be better motivation in employees. And ultimately all this would lead to more prosperous organizations and so bring about development.

As in the fishery cooperative, hard work went into constructing an alternative paradigm. A representation of management was developed and passed around; connections were severed; new connections were made; and indeed if all these were followed they led inevitably to the doors of the new paradigm, to an indigenous management. The first step was to characterize management. Earlier, management was a necessary set of techniques that would help ensure professional values and economic development. But now a new representation was made. Management was now linked to western domination. We had become free yet we were still in the shackles of

western knowledge. But what if western knowledge was superior? However this was swiftly refuted: we had followed western management for two decades, where had it got us? Look at Japan-- now there was a country that had located native values and flourished. That was what was needed in India, not this aping of the West! And all this was linked to the decline in local traditions and cultures, a decline that had vital managerial consequence. This decline was causing alienation in employees and thus reducing job effectiveness. Thus the categorization was three fold: management was linked to western colonization; it was termed ineffective; and seen as eroding values, leading to alienation and work problems.

Such moves led to splitting various connections that moored the concepts, that underlay management, together. The key links were between western knowledge, management, cultural values and development. Earlier these four concepts were connected in this way. Western knowledge and management went together such that they were almost the same. Management emanated from western knowledge. Culture had no direct relationship with the other three concepts except that occasionally it was seen as a constraint on the rapid spread of management (as in Prasad & Negandhi, 1968; Sinha & Kao, 1988). The most important relationship was between western knowledge/management and development. It was through the adoption of management practices (seen as western in nature) that India would develop.

Now splits were made, challenges issued. Management and Western knowledge were no longer synonymous. Management was no longer a universal set of techniques. It was practices that led to a prosperous organization and could differ from place to place. Culture and management now had a vital direct relationship: management reflected underlying cultural values and so needed to be in harmony with the surrounding culture. Development was no longer the result of western management practices. Instead development would result only when management practices were culturally congruent, as had occurred in Japan.

...for improvement and success, even in the sphere of secular aims, the inherent strain of a culture should be identified and taken as the instrument for managing transitions...deep-

seated cultural values in each society need not be regarded as faulty or aberrant. Difference (from Western values) should not be equated with inferiority. Besides, human values *precede* organizational (economic) values as well as role-centred skills. (Chakraborty, 1991: 10-11)

Splitting existing links enabled stating the problem anew. Earlier the links naturally led to problematizing professional management in Indian organizations. Now the problem that arose naturally from the links was of *indigenizing* professional management. These links were cause-effect relationships in that they stated one concept caused the other: culture affected management which then caused development. Cause-effect relationships also helped bring in supporters. For instance, arguing that Indian culture led to development attracted those who believed in the benefits of cultural traditions. Similarly, arguing for greater study of Indian philosophy and history attracted those who were interested in knowing more about these subjects. Now, such people need not have been interested as such in rejecting existing management paradigms or in learning about indigenous management. Through the links made to concepts in which they *were* interested, their support was enlisted. For instance, the rhetoric of indigenous management evoked cultural icons from India's history and nationalist struggle. The average Indian would have little disagreement with a greater return to native traditions, especially when the call was echoed by cultural heroes like Vivekananda.

For all the present-day high-priests of Japanese management in India, it may be chastening to be reminded that it was Vivekananda who had, ninety-five years ago, drawn our attention to the need to learn from Japan. (Chakraborty, 1991:18)

Support was also attained by crafting connections to larger social issues, such as lowered morality in public and private life, and social problems faced by Indian youth. These were devices that led readers concerned with such matters to look towards indigenous management for solutions. In this manner the links made by proponents of indigenous management were also tactics for enlisting support. Today indigenous management is a swiftly growing field of studies. While it is unclear whether it will become a paradigm (its authors are yet to clearly set out the principles of indigenous management), its influence is evident in the increased discussion of Indian values, and calls for cultural relevance in the management discipline.

## Social criticism as resistance

*There was this bloke there that seemed to be the ace face. He was dancing one night in the Aquarium ballroom and everyone was copying him. He kept doing different dances, but everyone would copy it and the whole place would be dancing a dance that he'd only just made up. That is power for you.*

-- Pete Townshend: *Quadrophenia* liner notes

A discussion of the dialectics of transformation and of social criticism would benefit from some understanding of the *process* of resistance, that is, how resistance is constituted. These two cases indicate, I hope, that resistance is not simply heroism and inspired leaders. It is a process, one that involves finding ways for people to give support to the cause. It requires moving people into new relationships so that the old lack potency and wither away. It involves providing new shades in identities, so that those who move into new relationships have a sense of place. It involves creating a new dance that others will dance with you.

The process of resistance described here involves these moments<sup>3</sup>: defining a problem; removing links; enlisting support; mobilizing representatives.

### Defining a problem

This is the stage where to succeed is to make oneself *indispensable*. It goes like this: "Accept this as the problem so that you have to go through me." So, when the social workers in Marianad convinced fisherfolk the problem was exploitation by merchants, there was a solution in the wings awaiting deployment: the cooperative. And accepting that solution demanded the fishermen take instruction in how to work a cooperative. Then social workers were offered key

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<sup>3</sup> Following Callon (1986) I have chosen to use the term 'moments'. The term stages would convey a greater sense of a discrete sequence than is justified. These are really snap-shots of a larger and more complex process. All we can do is isolate ephemeral instances that are definitive.

advisorial and leadership roles within this organization. To put it a little differently, accepting the problem led to accepting a network of relationships, where people acquired submissive and dominant roles. So, the fisherfolk moved to a position of instruction in the task of running a cooperative, moved to allotted roles as suppliers, members, and later, as debtors. Such a network uprooted the existing network of roles, of debtor and creditor, of fisherman and merchant, uprooting that structure of power.

Solutions came first then the problem. Then the two came together such that accepting the problem meant accepting a solution. With their background in Marxism, filled with the revolutionary fervor of the 1960s, the social workers came with solutions already in their minds. In fact, this is not unusual. We all have solutions in our minds, stemming from our previous education and experiences. These solutions look for problems. So, the solution of the cooperative resided there, awaiting the problem that would make it acceptable. A successful problematization makes the identified problem seem acceptable and the identified solution as the only way of solving this problem. The two become linked till they are indistinguishable from each other: where-the-problem-ends and where-the-solution-begins are boundaries that blur.

The task of those creating indigenous management was similar. They were confronted with two problems that had become intertwined, culminating in the project of management, their solution. One was the problem of India's social and economic underdevelopment. The other was the problem of training people to lead India's large scale enterprises. The task of those promoting the nascent field of management had been to link the two problems, to make them seem synonymous, or atleast coterminous. Now, the first of these was a general concern, in fact *the* problem in independent India. Political leaders discussed underdevelopment, policy-makers pondered it, citizens confronted it. To it the link was made: *By having trained managers Indian enterprises would become more prosperous and improve India's economic output*. By allying the general problem with the second, more specific problem, the project of management acquired broader support, increasing its acceptability. And with these allied problems came a solution:

promotion of a field of management.

How did the project of indigenous management respond? It retained the first problem: that of development. And to this it added a different problem. This was the problem of declining cultural values, and their social consequences. And the solution? Promote indigenous values. So, again, problems were linked with solutions, so that there was a willingness for others to accept alliances, to link their fates with those promoting the solution.

### Removing links

people get linked to each other. The fishermen and the merchants were connected by various ties. To define the problem is to simultaneously remove existing links and develop new ones. Otherwise the problematization fails. If the social workers had convinced fishermen to start a cooperative but allowed them to maintain their existing ties with merchants, how would the cooperative have functioned? It would not have a role at all. It would stand an empty bulwark, not incorporated in the living experience of the fishermen. To be relevant it would need to become part of the fishermen's lives. But this would mean they shift their existing ties from the merchants to the cooperative. So, the social workers consciously strived to snap these links so that the problematization would be accepted, and would become firmly moored in the fishermen's routine.

The links are not simply economic. What makes them potent is their multiple features: they are economic, they are ethnic, they are personal, they are traditional...The merchant is a buyer of the fish, he is a "friend-in-need", he is a guide, he is a neighbor, he is a local leader, he is "from-the-community". Yet at the site where all these come together, the point of sale, the links must be snapped. So, the task of removing ties must as well be a multiple one. Part of it requires *discursive* or *rhetorical action*: convincing fishermen the problem is as stated, that the reasoning is appropriate. We have seen that certain ways of framing questions and arguments help in making this effective. Part of it requires *cultural action*: maintaining the problem by constantly



interpreting the merchants' actions. Explaining the merchants are not there for the good of the fishermen. Why is the merchant nice enough to lend money to the fishermen? Because he can exploit the fishermen longer. Why is the moneylender nice enough to defer payment of the loan? So that he can justify lower prices for the catch. Cultural action is constant and consistent: all the time, someone or the other is explaining what the moneylenders are doing. And finally *political action*: resisting through physical force any attempt by the original problematization to return. The merchants enforce the original links. Here comes active force, coercion. The merchants are angry: they band together and demand the fishermen stop the cooperative. They refuse to buy the catch. Or, they influence the local parish priest, so that he no longer comes to the village. They prevent fishermen from going out to sea. To all these a response is needed, one that is not arguments, not interpretations. This is a response of force-meeting-force, of displaying solidarity and thus strength, of indicating coercion cannot work with those strong enough to fight back. We saw this when the fishermen of Marianad returned to the beach and the neighboring villagers fled. The problematization is a site where these three types of action constantly interact and reinforce each other. Social workers ask the fishermen what the problem is, while they also are part of interpretations of the merchants' actions, and part of responses to coercion, which all then feed into a further cycle of actions. Interestingly, the success of a problematization is indicated by the fact that responses themselves feed into the problem. That is, the response of the middlemen only corroborate the problem as it stands. They attempt coercion in response to the social workers; this serves to substantiate the claims made in the problematization.

Again, for those within the project of indigenous management, these three types of action express themselves, in the effort to frame alternative connections. An important effort is *rhetorical*; convincing the audience that the arguments are sound and should be heeded. This has constantly involved criticizing the dominant management approach as inappropriate and colonial in nature. No longer can we say that management will lead to development. What poor results we have, after so many years of management schools! No, the crucial link is with culture. We must tap the innate culture of our nation, only then will management be something of the soil, not

something implanted from an alien place. Look at Japan! In this manner, an argument is made to split previous connections. A *cultural* action is also evident in the constant interpretation of the management model by those within the project. However, *political* action is less evident. This would demand creating connections between parties, for instance, by locating organizations that will fund research, management institutes that will make indigenous management a conscious part of the curriculum.

### Enrolling support

Here we are with a problem defined, links exposed, yet there is a difficulty. Outside the immediate circle, who will listen? The task of crafting an alternative also involves creating networks that support your problem, and this is what these next two moments describe. The snapping of links is simultaneously a time for creating different connections. However what is interesting is such a creation of links also acts as a negotiated agreement. The moment of 'enrolling support' is of locating connections that will enable attaching the problem to other conceptions, providing space for other actors.

Enrolment involves providing roles for the parties that need to be part of the problem-definition for it to succeed. This happens by representing these parties so that they are seen as not only supportive of the problematic but with defined roles in it. The cooperative was defined such that merchants were anathema, social workers guardians and fishermen the victims to be helped. Immediately those given such a problematic take sides, accepting or rejecting the roles. Other social workers are attracted by the role offered to them: be guardians who start new organizations. No more the limits of village visits-- now the frontier of new organization forms! By framing the fishermen as victims, the church becomes enrolled as well. People within the church now see the cooperative as a way of helping the fishermen. Surely the fishermen are poor? And surely the church is to help the poor? However there are others in the church who are uncomfortable at that time with the framing of merchants as exploiters. And so the church would eventually be divided on the issue of fishermen rights, with some priests openly defying parish

strictures in their support for the fisherfolk. The problematic offers other roles as well, and each of these drags new actors into the growing network. By the 1970s government officials start to bring prestigious visitors to Marianad, to show the success of cooperatives. Donor agencies also offer funding to the cooperatives. To them, the cooperatives are an agent for development. The government officials and the donors have accepted their role of championing cooperatives, each for their own reasons. And the fishermen most of all, accept the cooperative because it offers them not only a passive role as beneficiaries, but an active role as leaders in this economic enterprise.

Yes, we have succeeded in getting the attention of our constituencies, the fishermen, the church, the bureaucrats, the donors, by distributing roles that they have accepted, and in the process spreading networks. But what about those management people? Particularly important here is the role accorded to business organizations. They can be sites of indigenous management! Certain practices within organizations become represented as indigenous and the organization leaders accept their role as paragons of indigenous management. In this way these organizations participate in networks that propagate indigenous management. They also fund research on indigenous management. Management schools could encourage research on indigenous management, perhaps by starting 'centers of learning'. The community of management scholars are offered other roles: they are given areas for further research, where they can chalk out the spaces carved out for this problem. Thus, someone can study the indigenous work culture in an organization; another the indigenous leadership style of a patriarch, and so on.

### Mobilizing representatives

An initial problem spreads, not only by enrolling people but by mobilizing them: by designating representatives, and establishing relationships between them. The definition needs to spread. For this purpose, actors are designated as representatives of constituencies. A series of intermediaries and spokesmen are created between the people and the actors who represent them. This leads us

to see these actors as commanding those larger constituencies; their decisions seem to commit a far larger mass of individuals. In Marianad, the fishermen and the social workers developed representatives, spreading the network of problematization wider in the process. The larger fisherfolk community provided individuals who became members of the cooperative and even members of the managing committee, that is, its leaders. These individuals were defined as representatives of the fisherfolk community at large. Their actions were ones the larger community would take as well. Their efforts to cobble together a working cooperative were now part of the on-going struggle of fisherfolk to defend their livelihood. Similarly the merchants were portrayed as representatives of a larger entity-- the "merchant class". Their actions too, were those of a far larger set of people. Their pricing practices were dubbed as redolent of the practices of an intermediary merchant class at dominating producers.

Appointing representatives for these larger entities works closely with the creation of roles. In the previous section we saw that part of the problematization process is distributing roles for actors so they will participate in the way the problem is defined. The civil servant participates better when he accepts the role of championing cooperatives. At the same time he participates not as an anonymous individual but as a representative of the state bureaucracy. As Marianad becomes established training programs are started by the social workers, "leadership camps". For these camps, young people from neighboring villages are solicited. To the young people who come, the cooperative is a representative of Marianad fishing village, not of some cooperative members, or of some social workers. When they leave the program they leave with a defined role: of "leaders" who will spread the ideals of cooperation and class-consciousness in their own villages. They have become representatives of the "cooperative movement".

With the management academics, mobilization seems limited. It is evident in lesser areas. Organizations that are hailed as "sites of indigenous management" become examples for others to follow. Such organizations' leaders become spokesmen for "indigenous organizations", informing us of the needs of Indian organizations and the relevance of cultural values to business success.

Individuals specializing in the knowledge of religion or philosophy become spokesmen on what-is-tradition and what-are-cultural-values. Research centers are started within universities and management schools; these centers become spokesmen for the institution itself, and their successes and visibility become associated with that of the institution. Through these representatives the project of indigenous management is disseminated.

### **Evaluating the alternatives**

*Meet the new boss/ same as the old boss ?*  
-- Pete Townshend: *Won't get fooled again*

This paper described two attempts at creating institutional alternatives. Such creation involves considerable social criticism to make the championed alternative desirable, necessary. In this concluding section let us examine to what extent these are really alternatives. Fisherfolk cooperatives and indigenous management were both pushed forward by their champions as a form of resistance. Each was an alternative to an existing structure of power, to a prevalent set of relationships that unevenly distributed privilege and created a pattern of domination. These alternatives were intended to remove the power structure and liberate those subjected to it. They were modes of resisting prevailing structures of power. The social workers identified the class structure in the fishing village. The cooperative (and later the federations) off-set the dependence of fishermen on merchants. The management academics identified the western flavor of management studies in India. Indigenous management off-set the dependence of Indian business leaders, students and academics on Western research. In each case, the alternative was framed with respect to a structure of domination identified as repugnant.

Were they successful? Only to some extent. In both cases, the project of *challenging* an existing structure of power was successful. An existing situation was problematized, its conceptual links were exposed, alternate relationships were posed. However, the project of *changing* the structure of power, of adopting alternatives, was not successful. In the Marianad experiment, as the social

workers themselves realized, the alternative was a a limited one. Now, fishermen could avoid selling their catch to the middlemen. However all that was done was a new agent had been added to the existing mercantile chain: the cooperative. It appointed an auctioneer who sold the communal catch to the merchants with the highest bids. The cooperative was still part of a larger set of interactions governed by prices set by middlemen. When an apex federation was created to eliminate middlemen, there were too many actors to be persuaded: fishermen, fisherwomen, retailers, rural consumers, urban consumers, exporters. And they were not willing to move toward the alternative. This made SIFFS reduce its role to that of technology-promotion, like boat building, to retain allegiance of members. From an original position of being a competitor with prevailing market arrangements, it had moved imperceptibly to a position of being a complement.

In the case of indigenous management, the alternative to the prevailing paradigm of management stayed within the original premises that underlay the structure of power. The ensuing similarity between the two paradigms, I argue, vitiated the potency of the postulated alternative. One, indigenous management retained a premise that management knowledge would benefit everyone, equally. Two, it retained the premise that the subjects of management were similar and of the same cloth. And three, it retained the premise that management was a choice between the mutually exclusive extremes of tradition and modernity.

The foundation of indigenous management is the premise that management favorably influences development. Management will benefit *all*. The criticism of prevailing management theories as elitist and colonial is now replaced with an alternate conception; but the alternative retains the same elitist flavor albeit with a traditionalist accent. Managers maintain a privileged role that actually reflects the privilege of the institutions that provide them knowledge. Advantages continue for those who are faculty and students within management schools. For the task of spreading management knowledge, professionals are pushed into senior levels of organizations, and academics are invited to advise these organizations.

As in the previous paradigm, the whole foundation of indigenous management rests on a spurious sense of unity: earlier, *all* would benefit from development; now it is culture that will help *all* benefit. Yet what is this culture? It is a shared set of beliefs and knowledge. To Chakraborty (1991) it is Hindu philosophy. The task of defining “Indian-ness” is reduced to “being Hindu”. While he claims this is acceptable to non-Hindus as well (see Giri, 1995: 7), very sharply differing views can be had regarding Indian core values. Again we see a spurious unity of the subject: earlier development would benefit all; now culture represents all.

Finally, indigenous management retains the crucial need to reify in order to construct. To create a traditional versus modern division about Indian culture is to urge the acceptance of a position either for rejecting or cherishing Indian culture. However who is to define what is Indian culture, what is modern, what is traditional? Whichever way it is defined, the identification of Indian culture becomes a way to link this representation to a body of knowledge. Management education became linked to the modern. Later, indigenous management arrives and we are now told to link ourselves to traditions. In both cases an either-or approach to culture is created. The consequence of such a division is that it obscures. It pushes us toward accepting the paradigm on the basis of a huge generalization, a broad representation. Indigenous knowledge is deemed necessary, just like its predecessor, on a questionable reification of the tradition and the modern. All three of these similarities serve to reduce the extent that indigenous management is able to challenge the existing structure of power. The creation of an “all”, of a unified subject, and of a reified dualism, all obscure the very real working of the power structure, reducing the ability to identify it, and to change it.

In general it is very difficult to create alternatives. Such work demands a comprehensive problematization: in the first case that would involve a critique of all aspects of the market and in the latter of all premises of management. Such a complete critique is difficult and what remains in these two cases is partial resistance. Resistance remains here at the level of creating

contradictions and anomalies that start to disturb the smoothness of 'established order'. Arguably this in itself is a success when attained; it not only reduces the efficacy of existing structures of power but provides hope for future resistance.

The two cases on first sight reveal limited resistance: the way power is distributed changes but slightly. However a closer analysis reveals impressive gains in challenging existing assumptions and creating legitimacy for new types of organization and new forms of knowledge. Should we evaluate these alternatives only on the basis of success in a seamless and complete social transformation? From the 1980s onward the dominant conception of power as a unified, consistent phenomena embodied in discrete resources has been questioned. Such a conception is evident in many discourses of liberation and class. Ironically such a conception is also evident in the two cases described here! Various authors (such as Callon, 1980; Callon & Latour, 1981; Jermier, Knights & Nord, 1994; Latour, 1987) have argued that power is embodied in identities and relationships that are multiple, fractured, and contradictory. They are multiple; many of them inhabit the same space. Simultaneously villagers in Marianad are fishermen, debtors, friends, relatives, and members. They are fractured in that the ways actors interact cannot be reduced to one simple, united, complete identity and relationship. The merchants are never all "bad", all "powerful"; the "indigenous manager" is never wholly modern or wholly traditional. And identities and relationships are never free of contradictions; people can step out of their identities, the submissive can dominate. The indigenous manager, the social workers cannot free themselves of such contradictions.

These two cases reveal that a conception of power as multiple, fractured, contradictory in its effects on relationships and identities is of value in understanding the limits to resistance through institutional alternatives. Accepting such a conception leads us to abandon any privileging of power and resistance in separate subjects, such as the power of the merchants, the resistance of the fishermen, or the power of western management, the resistance of indigenous management. Resistance cannot be total and absolute, just as power cannot be total and absolute.



Relationships and identities are webs of contradictory possibilities. These contradictions make any attempt at total resistance impossible; however they enable resistance itself by providing avenues for actors to challenge the existing order. It is through such contradictions that small-scale forms and indigenous knowledge are reclaimed, memories created, forgetting prevented. They ensure these organizations and knowledge do not remain only a photograph, a news clipping, some publication-- a mere trace in history, a forgotten anomaly, like the fur cap on Gottwald's head.

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