

Multiversity
“Resisting Hegemony”
August 2-4, 2010, Penang, Malaysia

A substantive report of the meeting

Day one (Aug.2)

Multiversity had invited a Minister of the Malaysian Government to inaugurate the meeting. Since he called in to say he would be arriving only at 11.00 am, we decided – as a stop gap – to screen the recent Howard Zinn film, “The People Speak.”

The film is based on the well known Howard Zinn book, “A People’s History of USA”. Zinn observes in the film that when he asked around whether there was a history book written from the perspective of the people in the streets – and was told there was none – he decided to write one himself even if his background looked sceptical enough: a former bombardier with the US forces. “Democracy,” notes Zinn in the film, “does not flow from the top; it comes from the bottom.” Nicely put.

For people brought up on official and academic histories of the United States, with almost all historians from the elite upper strata of American society, “The People Speak” provides a radically different view – from below – of what actually happened in that continent over the past three hundred years.

Vinay Lal, however, criticised the choice of the film for the commencement of a Multiversity meeting and circulated his comments (which are worthy of reproduction). He wrote:

“Lest the intent of my remarks be mistaken, I should state at the outset that I have long been an admirer of Zinn's work, and his *People's History* has been the best antidote to the received version of American history. In the American context, he has done marvelous work. He has remained singularly consistent in his denunciation of American imperialism, as well in his efforts to secure justice within the US for people who are marginalized, whether on account of race, color, religion, or otherwise.

“Nevertheless, having said that, I must question why we are commencing our agenda with this film, or indeed why we must have the film at all. Ironically, in one of my earlier emails to the group, I pointed out that we take even our

models of dissent from the US/West, such as Noam Chomsky. Not only are our models of knowledge all borrowed lock, stock and barrel from the West, but apparently our models of who are dissenters are also taken from the West. That does not seem to me to be a particularly encouraging way of beginning our proceedings about resistance to hegemony. There is a hegemony of dissenters, too, and we should recognize the politics of that hegemony.

“Now, in the interest of taking a more complex philosophical view, I concede that one could make two arguments in defence of having the film. One is to state that Zinn shows the injustices that are committed against common people in the US: if a state does that to its own people, it can surely commit injustices against other countries. M L King and Malcolm X both made that link in their own way, pointing to the intricate relationship between atrocities being committed by the US in Indochina and the barbarous treatment of African Americans ‘at home’. The other defence would be something along the lines of what Gandhi endeavored to do, when he sought to find allies within the West and discovered the other West within the dominant West. Perhaps solidarities can be forged across borders between oppressed peoples. That is an old dream and yet the imperative remains fresh.

“One principal reason why I am not inclined to accept either defence in this case as being compelling, even though on philosophical grounds I am very favorably disposed towards both readings, is that both Zinn and Chomsky have also long adhered to the view, with which I am in fundamental disagreement, that IF ONLY the American people knew what was being done in their name by the state, they would never give their consent to American foreign policy. The argument, not a very subtle one, is that the American people have long been misled by their leaders. I find this argument completely untenable, at least at this juncture in history. This argument also arises from the circumstances around the Vietnam War, but those circumstances have altered very substantially. The American people, at least since the late 1980s, with the vast proliferation of the media and the available of numerous alternative worldviews, have had ample opportunity to know what was going on with respect to Iraq.

“Let me, in short, put it this way: whatever injustices are being committed against common people in the US – and I don’t doubt that many are suffering

on account of racial discrimination, increasing unemployment, and so on – ordinary Americans have never, in any substantive way, signalled their dissent from the project of empire. So long as life has been reasonably comfortable for the majority of people in the US, and so long as one ascribed to the view that the American dream remained the supreme achievement of human history, one didn't have to bother very much about what other countries were being invaded, humiliated, cajoled, or bullied into submission. As an immigrant friend of mine in the US once told me, the one fundamental reason for being in the US was that it was the only assurance he had that he would not be bombed into oblivion. This is as unimpeachable an argument as any, a different and contemporary way of writing the history of the US as the prime destination for immigrants all over the world.

“No one has to accept my reading, of course, but the question why our model dissenter is a Zinn or Chomsky will not go away.”

The comments were well taken. In fact, as they were circulated in advance, they did provide a framework in which to view the film more critically than would have otherwise been possible.

After Datuk Saifuddin bin Abdullah, Deputy Minister for Higher Education, Malaysia, arrived, **Mohamed Idris** introduced the meeting and its objectives.

In his characteristic, passionate manner, laced sometimes with humour, Idris welcomed everybody, especially old friends to Penang. He asked the Minister to scrap the present universities if they were unable to produce great minds and doers like Al-Ghazzali, Rumi, Farabi and Kalidasa. He rubbished the term “human capital”, wondering whether the term meant dollars or pounds or ringgit. We do not want to produce human capital or professionals only, he said. We want people of great character, people able to exercise compassion in their relationships with human beings and nature.

Idris then went on to describe our bondage to English Kings and Queens. After the Malays began to make things difficult for them, they decided they did not want to live in KL anymore. They handed over power to strong people who would look after us, whether we needed roads or napalm. For our benefit and control, he said, they set up the Security Council, World Bank, IMF, WHO to keep close watch on us for our own good.

Of course, if they didn't like anything we did, they sent in the army, like they did in Fiji or Latin America or Iraq. Or captured the Head of State, like they did with Noriega of Panama.

Idris denounced the humiliation of being not free. He recalled the recent treatments meted out to the President of India, the Deputy PM of Malaysia at the hands of American security agencies. Were 500 years of such humiliations not enough?

Of course, there were heroes: Ahmedinejad, Castro, Chavez, Mohamed Mahathir: they stood up, they resisted. "I am worried at the bulk of us," agonized Idris. He went on to describe the terrible violence and assaults against human beings at Hiroshima, Nagasaki, even the carpet bombing of Dresden, Korea, Vietnam, Grenada.

Subsequently, they apologise. First kill people on a large scale and then apologise!

This Multiversity meeting was called to form a movement against hegemony. Hegemony comes in many forms: your military, police, media, academy, bureaucracy, thinking, values, outlook, politics are all dominated or commandeered by them. "We cannot go on with this hegemony, we must stand up and fight. Until my last breath I shall work to see hegemony out!" Vintage Idris.

In his address, **Datuk Saifuddin bin Abdullah** said that he had come in spite of the Upper House of the Malaysian Parliament being in session because he considered this meeting important. He concurred with the views expressed by Mr. Mohamed Idris and complimented Multiversity for organizing the meeting. He emphasized the role of a University in building social capital and said that it was not enough to have excellent infrastructure, faculty, research, rank or awards to be a good university. "A university must have a soul. A university must produce good persons, not merely good workers. A good person is also a good worker but the converse may not be true," he observed.

While Harvard university still maintains a Department of Sanskrit, he lamented that many Asian universities have forgotten to maintain their culture. In the world today there is a also a need to teach the students about life as often life has no meaning for them. Universities must build character, not merely transfer knowledge. "We need something fresh in the universities," he emphasized, "but 'fresh' does not necessarily mean 'new'."

After the Minister spoke, **Dr. Dzulkifli Razak**, Vice Chancellor of University Sains Malaysia (USM) made a stimulating inaugural presentation on "The University of Tomorrow: In Search of a New Construct." He informed us that he had prepared this

presentation in response to the “Bologna Process” emerging from the Bologna Declaration [1999] of Ministers for the development and expansion of the European Higher Education Area [EHEA]. Among other things, the process focused on producing comparable degrees through a system of credits and providing trans-university mobility for students.

He cautioned us, however, about the “world view” of Europe being marketed as “international education”. He clarified that “Europeans” in this context included neo Europeans like the North Americans and Australians who are considered “Western” while excluding Africans and Latin Americans, although these continents are to the west of Australia.

He warned that the world is being fitted into a pigeon hole constructed by blending Greek philosophy, Roman law and Christian theology. This is projected as the best stream of thought and practice in the world even while it tries to obliterate any mention of the developments that happened outside Europe during Europe’s “Dark Ages”.

This worldview is reflected, for example, in the work of Gerard Mercator [1512-1594] whose map of the world renders the Northern Hemisphere larger than it is in reality. Alaska looks thrice as big as Mexico when actually both are about the same size.

Carolus Linnaeus – who gave the world the binomial nomenclature for species – also made derogatory references to non-European people. This finds mention in the new Britannica Guide to the “Ideas That Made the Modern World.” He quoted Confucius [K’ung-fu Tzu]: “Learning is about *being* and not about *having*,” to emphasize the wrong and misplaced priorities in the European system of learning.

There was a lively discussion at the end of the session. **Dr Sue San Ghahremani Ghajar** queried Dr Tan Sri Razak about why the Iranian empire (pre-Muslim, in fact) and its intellectual contributions was left out of his presentation. Tan Sri Razak admitted to the oversight. Suesan reiterated her view that Iran needed that support given its position in world politics today.

Vinay Lal chided Prof. Razak for relying upon dissenters from the West for critiquing the West, when there were adequate numbers of non-European scholars who said the same thing, perhaps better. He referred to Sardar K.M. Panikkar’s *Asia and Western Dominance* as an example. Minister Saifuddin supported the view that we tended to use Western critics like Ivan Illich and other leftists. In fact, very few from among us criticise the West and promote our own traditions or thinking.

Prof. Razak responded that his presentation was actually prepared for a meeting in Europe which was being attended by over 300 Rectors of European Universities. At such a forum, it was strategically better to use Western critics otherwise they would have responded to what he had proposed as biased.

Shoma Choudhury raised a query about whether the face of modernity today would have been different had one of our own civilizations been in the ascendant. She drew attention to the vast inequalities and hegemonies exercised within our own societies over centuries when knowledge was the domain of the upper classes and this feature of those societies could not be ignored.

C K Raju responded to Shoma's concerns by observing that the right stories have not been told. He drew attention to the fact that Aryabhata was a person from the lower caste and yet made one of the most brilliant breakthroughs. He had followers from the deep south from the caste of Namboodiri Brahmins. The idea that knowledge was the preserve of few people, as it is today, was not true of India always. The University of Nalanda was there for example, it did not just happen.

Ashis Nandy interjected at this stage to observe that according to British records themselves, large numbers of so-called untouchables were found in school compared to the upper classes in many places in India.

Bunn Nagara highlighted the connection between political and religious elites. He referred to the film by Werner Herzog in which a priest tells a native (while the latter is being tortured), that the church has always been on the side of the strong. He said the knowledge and political elites went hand in hand to promote their own interests and we should be aware of this trend as well.

Tan Sri Razak responded that there was something fundamentally wrong with today's knowledge construct. Concern about the community was no longer there. Earlier tradition of the university was rooted in the idea that knowledge was free: it was in fact translated and freely shared. Only after World War II, when the universities were damaged and more national-minded universities emerged, dedicated to the building of national economies and infrastructure, did the construct change. When the nation state collapsed, the market stepped in and it now tells us what to teach and what not to teach: philosophy, religious studies, literature are no longer "marketable" and have become irrelevant. All these are part of the construct that has come from the industrial revolution.

In fact, said Prof. Razak, the university today was very much like a factory system. "I can draw a good parallel between the two," he said. The university is almost like an

assembly line, where the student moves from one classroom to classroom, lecturers are like operators in charge, examinations are another label for quality control. You pass the examination and move to the next conveyor belt. At the end of the day, you are ready for the market. You are successful if you can be absorbed or not successful if employers cannot find a use for you.

Muslim civilization understood knowledge as a single unit, and not as a compartmentalized entity. Arts and science then were the same; in fact, science used to be called natural philosophy. Today's compartmentalization has given rise to knowledge that is reductionist, utilitarian, and consumerist. We might have had a different approach if we had taken different civilizations into account.

Prof. Razak concluded that we are now in retreat so to say, accepting what is coming under the banner of globalization and liberalisation. We accept this globalization as a given, and we find we are getting deeper and deeper into the hegemonic situation. "How do we challenge this, what are the principles we should rely upon, this is what I am hoping this meeting will discuss.

"If I go back to Andulasian civilisation," he observed, "knowledge was pervasive. Of course there were classes, but the whole idea of the university that arose was of creating institutions in which knowledge could be shared. For example, in Cordoba in the tenth century, there were 40,000 books, 70 libraries and 500 librarians as compared with Europe at that time. Libraries were designed for sharing knowledge. Knowledge did not segregate rich and poor, but had the capacity to be a leveller of society. Today it is almost the reverse: knowledge create disparities, between the knowledgeable who are given the label of graduates, or diplomas, and those without these. My father, who recently reached the 60th anniversary of the atomic bomb explosions in Japan, did not go to school, but he is just as educated and literate as many of us. In our indigenous school system, anyone was free to come in and do their studies, and did not have to pay a single cent, because they were apprenticed to their teachers."

Fatima Idris had one insistent query: when was the map shown by Prof. Razak going to become part of history or geography lessons in Malaysian schools, side by side with the Mercator map? Her question was directed to the Minister.

The Minister indicated he could not make any significant comment on the introduction of the map. But he said we do need a new mind-set in planning our educational system. As a Muslim, he said, we have an idea of what falls under the idea of the "perfect man," drawing a profile of such a perfect man and trying to plan our education system in trying to nurture some kind of a perfect man, the good man.

If we want to change, it is not an impossible thing, since we can be clear about our objective. We have merely to re-think and revisit and then just go ahead and do it.

Prof. Razak invited the participants to help him in his efforts to bring that change within his own university.

In the post lunch session, **Claude Alvares** made a slide presentation entitled “500 Years of Violence and Control: An Overview”.

He observed that most of us were under the impression today that hegemony was being thrust on us as people from former colonized countries. However the main gist of his presentation was on how hegemony was first tested out on the West's own populations. The presentation focused on the institutionalized violence inherent in Western culture that was used to bring about a permanent institutionalization of hegemony and which ranged from the burning of alleged heretics and witches in Europe to the Grand Inquisition. He linked these with the history of napalm bombs and “Agent Orange” usage in Vietnam war as well as the current practices of “water boarding” and use of dogs in Iraq and Afganistan. A pointed reference was made to the “Opium Wars” in British-controlled China and the patented production of heroin in Holland till the 1950s as a part of the efforts to dominate the world. It can be safely said that it is the West that introduced drugs and drug trafficking everywhere. While citizens of Western societies are unable to escape from the hegemonic stranglehold of their rulers, people outside the boundaries of these economies are far better off in terms of freedoms and resistance to tyranny. It is important for movements against hegemony to recognize these basic realities. It would help them much in their work.

In the comments that followed, Ashis Nandy provided a different take on the processes of violence. He said he did not think Europe began with a violent core and then universalized that. Instead, Europe began to do to its own population what it had began to do to people outside Europe. Witch hunts did not take place during the medieval period. Indeed A.J.P.Taylor and Norman Kohn have shown that they appeared as a practice only when modernity emerged in Europe and that they increased in intensity with the quickening pace of modernity. What they did to other races whom they considered effeminate and non-martial, they began to do to their women. Women were part of European agriculture, where they had a greater role and were symbols of fecundity and reproduction. This did not fit in with the ascendancy of a patriarchal society. The idea of reproduction was discredited.

Likewise the German genocide of the Hereros set the format of a kind of genocide which the Germans produced within Europe at Auschwitz. It was not that the

Germans started like that. But what they did to the Hereros they ultimately began to do to themselves through the holocaust.

He said that this new attitude is in fact reflected in the change in the writing about China and India. Both these societies were initially seen as old and rich civilizations at the time of the encounter. Once they were dominated and colonised, however, they were seen as decrepit and senile civilizations. Africans were seen as half-child, half-savage, their civilization was seen as infantile and immature. These attitudes were brought to Europe and became the basis of their relations with their women, children and elderly. If you look into the accounts of Victorian ill-treatment of children there is no precedent for that even in England earlier. They come from a new attitude to childhood, childhood as incomplete human nature. The child is only valuable as a productive adult, not as a child.

“There is nothing wrong with your data,” Nandy reiterated, “ but this part of the story of what they are doing to themselves in the process gives us a larger universal claim. We don’t have to offset against their fake claim of universality an alternative claim from an Asian perspective, or African perspective or South American perspective. *Actually what we are offering is an alternative universal.* That is the important issue.”

Vinay Lal emphasized the need to distinguish between “domination” and “hegemony,” though they sometimes got blurred in discussions. He was happy with the reference in the presentation to the Opium trade and noted it was left out of most histories of the British Empire despite it being one of the most calamitous stories of the 19th century. However, in order to complete the picture, he noted, one should not forget the role of local elites that sprang up in cities like Bombay which also prospered from the money made in the trade of opium.

Second, he cautioned that educational sites – like museums – can be drafted to play a hegemonic role in societies. He recounted that there was a massive literature on the holocaust, some of which tried to show it as an aberration. However, a scholar like Sigmund Baumann in *Modernity and the Holocaust* has shown that it was not an aberration but the logical culmination of modernity. Referring to the last Tasmanian, he related how she was taken and exhibited in a museum in England. That is the hegemonic aspect of the encounter. How the modern museum becomes part of the military-industrial complex is the story of hegemony. It was not just enough to kill them but one must exhibit them as well. Museums therefore may not be that innocuous. Some of them are part of the story of hegemony.

Shoma Choudhury expressed some uneasiness with Claude's presentation, saying it smacked of just a wee bit of propaganda. Our elites would do the same if they had similar power, if they had the same military strength, she said. She gave examples of Saddam Hussain, India and Japan. We in India have exercised terrible hegemony over untouchables. People become like this when you have power, more so if you are a super-power. She cautioned that listeners might be alienated from a one-sided version of events. She said the extent of violence in tribal wars in India and Africa was shocking.

Bunn Negara disagreed. The scale of the violence today and the duration of it dwarfed all others, he said. It should in fact have been less, since everybody claimed to be educated in our time, especially the industrialised world. The important thing was to examine why violence and aggression had become so acceptable and to know how we could bring an end to it.

Vinay Lal also responded to the argument that all societies commit violence. He said the reason why violence by the US rankles more is their claim to be great champions of democracy and freedom and human rights, claims also made by the British and French in the 18th and 19th centuries. In Africa number of presidents have declared themselves to be dictators for life. When the US does this it has a very different meaning to that claim. I think we should not confuse these cases.

Progler related his own childhood and college experience of discovering the violence associated with American culture. He said it was most important to view the same violence from the perspective of the victims. Was there any potential for activating this?

C.K. Raju put forward his conviction that the violence was a continuous part of Western culture and much of it related to the role of the Church. He made connections between the Papal Bulls, the genocides in the Americas and Australia. He said the US today was one of the most religious societies around. Violence was being perpetrated in the name of morality. There was a single, unifying thread of moral violence, religiously promoted, against the Jews, during the inquisition, genocides, going on to Hitler, going on to what is happening today.

Doostdar said we must go behind these allegations and examine how we are losing our humanity. "You said, for example, that America is losing the war. I think it is losing more than that, it is losing its humanity and ethics." No religion, he said, encourages the violence that is perpetrated in its name. They are all trying to show that people should live with ethics, love with humanity, friendship and brotherhood.

Why then do religious persons indulge in violence? What does it do to their humanity?

The last session of the day was addressed by **Mr. Iain Buchanan** whose book, "The Armies of God" had recently been published by Citizens International. His presentation was entitled "Unholy Crusaders: The Role of Evangelicals in US Imperialism." The focus of the presentation was the symbiotic and thriving secular-spiritual teamwork that exists between the United States government and Christian missionary or evangelical groups for the expansion of their areas of influence through a high degree of operational convergence.

He provided an outline of the evangelical activities of the Baptist-Pentecostal Church combine in expanding the secular objectives of the US for world domination that he accidentally discovered while studying the "World Vision" organization. Based largely on deceit, the organization targets the very soul of a people, specially tribal communities, for whom their native religion is central to their culture and lives. It lends a moral glow to what are for the most part ruthlessly secular objectives. Evangelization in turn usually maintains a secular cover which includes aid agencies and NGOs like Campus Crusade for Christ. Buchanan emphasized their role in grooming Christian leaders to play a secular and military role, where required.

Dr Seyyed Navvab was the first to respond. He said in Iran too they have published a book on the Evangelical Church and have thoroughly examined the issue. They (the Westerners) have created more than 30 films about the future (through Hollywood). Is this because of their policy or because of their actual way of looking at the future and the world – that they consider themselves the inheritors of the earth? He also brought in Zionist Christians.

Others who joined the discussion included Proglor, Vinay Lal, Ashis Nandy, Bunn Negara and Shoma Choudhury.

Proglor suggested we do not further disturb Iain Buchanan in his retirement and that we should take responsibility to ensure people read the book, or produce shorter versions including pamphlets and audioversions and perhaps a taped interview as well. Shoma Choudhury related how her magazine *Tehelka* had launched a massive investigation into the activities of Christian missionaries in India. The new mood of evangelisation emanating from America had India as one of its targets. She drew a connection between the Khandhamal-Orissa riots in India in 2007-08 and evangelization.

Bunn observed that the Assembly of God group is very aggressive. Malaysia is one of the countries with a non-Muslim minority and the state with the largest proportion of Christians is Sabah. He said he was clearly worried about the spread of missions and about what appeared to be the undeclared agenda of the Christians. The law bans proselytizing Muslims, but penetration among non-Muslims is going on. At least people should know what is going on. They will try and hide what is going on. Both the public and the authorities can be forewarned with objective data before it is too late.

Day Two (Aug.3)

In the morning, Dr. Anwar Fazal moderated two presentations: First, **Dr Seyed Abulhassan Navvab** spoke on “The Unity Between Theology and Science and the Problem of Disconnect Today,” with Iranian student Ahmadreza as the Persian-English translator. Thereafter, **Dr Shad Saleem Faruqi** spoke on “Globalization, Human Rights and Western Hegemony.”

Dr Seyed Navvab, the President of the University of Religions and Denominations, Pardisan, Qom, Iran, stated that knowledge and understanding of life, both intuitive and practical, are unified. Separating them, or separating Science from Theology, is a

recipe for disaster. In the past, either in ancient Rome or the East, whenever there was talk of science and knowledge there was a single or unique understanding that it consisted of all knowledge and 'what could be known' whether worldly (earthly) or divine, whether physical or metaphysical, whether mathematical, natural or theological science. In that science, the objective of existence was important and the reason for man's existence and the universe and its whereabouts were answered and other sciences were seen within this system.

Separating science from divine science and the metaphysics of theology, especially after the renaissance in fact inflicted major damages. Science which in epistemological discussion had been considered "light, knowledge and wisdom" turned into a soulless, meaningless and at its best a neutral tool.

In the discussion that followed the reasons for the disconnect between Islamic Universities and Islamic science was discussed. The need to restore the link between theology, philosophy, sociology and psychology in the universities was also explored.

In the second presentation, **Dr Shad Saleem Faruqi** challenged the human rights record of the West and said it was, in fact, worse than that of the Orient and the Islamic world. "Yet, the West neither acknowledges it nor apologizes for its cruel past – slavery, colonialism, genocide of indigenous population of American Indians and Aborigines in Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania, nuclear testing in the Pacific atolls, bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – and the present." Western culture had globalized and most of the educated persons had Western education even in their own countries. However, that did not mean that the West had the best. "The best garland is made with the best flowers from different gardens," he said. For example, Islamic jurisprudence covers not just the treatment of combatants and non-combatants as in the Geneva Convention but also the humane treatment of animals and plants. In contrast, the West misappropriated the land of the aborigines in Australia by classifying the people as "flora and fauna" of the land.

The economic, military and political successes of the West are used to mask its terrible human rights record while accusing other nations of having a poor record. The Orient is also denied the right to have a world view as if that were an exclusive Western prerogative. America has even arrogated to itself the right to effect violent regime change in other countries such as Panama, Iraq, etc. He proposed that the West be warned, "We will tell the truth about you if you do not stop telling lies about

us.” For this to be effective, we must create our own media and use the internet extensively.

After Prof. Shad Faruqi’s talk, **Mohideen Abdul Kader** spoke on the idea of a manifesto against hegemony.

He first spoke about the subtle shift in the colonization process from the imposition of physical presence (as was done by the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French and the British earlier) to the use of West-controlled knowledge, information and entertainment systems through the internet, media, education and even Hollywood films. Three-fourths of all films are from Hollywood, and USA is the Mecca for education. It has been claimed that the best students choose to stay back and work in America while almost every cabinet across the world has American alumni in it.

US hegemony today is based on four strengths or foundations: first of course is the overwhelming military power; second, economic dominance; third, technological innovation and fourth, cultural invasion. Of these four, economic dominance and the cultural factor play very significant roles in ensuring the continuance of this hegemony.

American television programmes and films account for about three fourth of the global market. American popular music is equally dominant while American fads, eating habits and even clothing are increasingly imitated world wide. The language of the internet is English and an overwhelming proportion of the global computer chatters also originates from America influencing the content of the global conversation. Lastly America has become a Mecca for those (this is a very important point) seeking advanced education with approximately half a million foreign students flocking to the United States with many of the ablest never returning home. Graduates from American universities are to be found in almost every cabinet on every continent.

Culturally, intellectually, we are being dominated,

I think there are two factors that are contributing to bringing about an end to this hegemony: one is of course an internal factor, an approaching collapse within the US itself, and two, the challenge mounted by people who are being dominated, who are being colonized and these two are very important factors that we have to bear in mind. We should be optimistic that people are standing up and fighting this hegemony.

The US economy is in serious financial crisis:

- The so-called toxic debts – US\$3 trillion in U.S and U\$1 trillion in Europe and Asia [IMF]. A 2009 report claimed that \$50 trillion worth of financial assets had been wiped out in 2008.
- The housing crisis – In the past two years, the housing market has lost an estimated U\$4.9 trillion dollars, as 59 million homes have declined in value. [CBS, February2, 2010]
- Declining economic growth – 2.5% despite injection of billions of dollars.
- Declining consumption – growth fell to 1.6 per cent from 1.9 per cent, which reflected the lack of new jobs, and implied that the recovery still cannot sustain itself. [FT.com, August 1, 2010]
- Growing unemployment – over 10%. Economy unexpectedly lost 85,000 jobs in December 2009. The labor force decreased by 661,000 last month. Underemployment rate rose to 17.3 percent in December from 17.2 percent.

Trade deficits

- Trade deficit – U\$ 380 billion in 2009
- Budget deficit – U\$1.75 trillion in 2010 [13% of GDP] excluding U\$640 billion defence budget and the cost of war in Afghanistan and Iraq

Cost of global military presence

- 900 military facilities in 46 countries
- 190,000 troops and 115,000 civilian employees
- \$250 billion per year to maintain the bases/military presence

Public debt

- U\$5.8 trillion in 2008 increased to S\$14.3 trillion in 2019. Interest of 8% of federal revenues to increase to 17%.
- Increase in consumer debt

Between 2000 and 2007, U.S. households nearly doubled their outstanding debt to U\$13.8 trillion – an unprecedented amount in both nominal terms and as a ratio of liabilities to disposable income (138 percent).

Any change in U.S. consumer behaviour could have profound implications. From 2000 to 2007, personal consumption accounted for 77 percent of real U.S. GDP growth. And the United States has accounted for one-third of the total growth in global private consumption since 1990.

Resistance to U.S Hegemony

Oppression breeds resistance. That is the law of life. People are resisting U.S hegemony in different parts of the world in different ways, from armed struggle to economic, cultural, and social boycotts. The purpose of this meeting should be to identify how we can fit into this global resistance and what role each of us can play to free the world from imperialist, capitalist tyranny.

In the category of armed resistance:

- People of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia and Palestine are at the front line, resisting imperialism with their lives.
- The U.S is trapped in a quagmire in Afghanistan, unable to free itself with honour and dignity. A 9-year war has sapped its strength and will. There is no possibility of victory. There are increasing calls for withdrawal of troops. The war in Afghanistan demonstrates the limits of U.S power and the continuing victory of the human will over technology. It is an inspiration to all those resisting imperialism.
- Unsustainable economic cost of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan U\$1 trillion up to now, cf U\$4 trillion (adjusted) for entire WW II involving 16 million men fighting on 3 continents. Annual cost today U\$1.1 million per soldier in Afghanistan, cf \$67,000 (adjusted) for WW II, U\$132,000 for Vietnam.

In the category of popular movements:

- Indigenous and social movements allied with the armed forces have brought to power in South America progressive nationalist governments opposed to U.S hegemony.
- The movements include: Movement of Landless Workers – Brazil; *piqueteros*, strikers – Argentina; CONAIE, Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities – Ecuador; The Movement to Socialism – Bolivia; the Peruvian Nationalist Party
- Examples of South American assertion of independence from U.S:
 1. U.S not invited to South American Summit
 2. Closer economic relations with China
 3. Rejected Free Trade Area of the Americas and creation of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas
 4. Ecuador gets rid of U.S base in 2009

5. Bank of the South launched
6. Cuba joins the Rio Group
7. Union of South American Nations [UNASUR] constituted
8. Telesur launched, Latin America's answer to CNN and the BBC World Service.

Other international developments directed against the US:

- Co-operation among several independent nations on international issues – China, Iran, Brazil, Turkey, Venezuela, Syria, Bolivia, Ecuador – is weakening U.S dominance in the diplomatic arena.
- Environmental and anti-globalisation movements
- Attempts to prosecute war criminals in the ICC and under the doctrine of Universal Jurisdiction.
- Religion-based movements
- Campaigns for boycott, divestment, sanctions campaigns

What shall we do?

1. Citizens International
 - Develop regional network to oppose the growing presence of the U.S in the region
 - Monitor and expose U.S supporters in the important state institutions, e.g. military, police, civil service, judiciary, parliament, executive.
 - Mobilise opposition to training of police, military in the U.S.
 - Undertake grassroots mobilisation to resist U.S cultural invasion.
 - Support resistance movements – e.g. Mindanao, South Thailand, Palestine, Afghanistan, South America, etc
2. Academicians

- Have programmes for raising awareness of students about the global resistance to U.S hegemony – Hezbollah, Hamas, Venezuela as well as the popular movements, ecological and anti-globalisation movements.
- Teach them about previous student struggles.
- Question the relevance of the subjects taught, e.g. capitalist economics
- Cultivate progressive student leaders
- Conduct polemics in the media

Mr. Bunn Nagara who spoke on “Media in South-East Asia and Hegemony” emphasized the need to develop the appropriate curriculum and training programmes to train journalists and media persons in the context of hegemony. The content and development of journalism skills are important as the print and visual media can reach opinion makers. The corporate world extensively uses media. It is, therefore, important that the media is not parochial or controlled by state and corporate sectors only.

He emphasized that positive feedback is important to ensure that a committed journalist survives in his profession, as the corporate sector creates a media campaign against those it perceives as opposing it.

Ms Shoma Chaudhury thereafter spoke on “Media in India and Hegemony”. She observed that American hegemony is created through seduction and the colonization of the mind and warned against retreating to a “glorious past” or foreclosing reform of the colonizer and the colonized in an effort to reduce losses. The children and youth need a competitive alternative and not a moralizing or pedantic solution as the latter does not even hold their attention, much less convince them. The genie of individualism – that “I” matters – has been released and no one can put it back inside.

She was of the view that we need to find ways to deal with hegemony and reform ourselves where needed, specially in terms of how we deal with one half of the human race: women.

Shoma spoke of the need to create games that would educate the children about their history, language, culture and traditions using top-of-the-line technology and using a narrative form that appeals to children. This need is felt all the more by persons who are displaced from their homes, including the diaspora, as there is a yearning for home. It can create a powerful reconnect. Many of our stories have that

battle of Good and Evil that attracts children. This will cost money. The West has endowments made by philanthropists for such creative work. We need to do likewise. Times have changed and so must we.

In the post-lunch session, **Vinay Lal** spoke on “The Radiance of Despotism: The Consequences of American Hegemony for the World.”

He stated that he would divide his remarks into roughly four overlapping sections, pairing dominance and hegemony on the one hand, and resistance and interculturality on the other hand. Despite much talk about the declining influence of the US, the sheer dominance of the US is indisputable, and he argued that neither the ascendancy of China, nor the deep recession and financial crises that afflict the US are likely to affect the standing of the US in the near future.

At the same time, he was of the view that America is more an idea, marketed, let us say, by the hamburger and oil [petroleum] alike, rather than merely a place on the map. It is like the Biblical city on the hill that draws all men to it. Such is the attraction of the US, altogether unparalleled in the history of the world, that even those who have lived under the subjugation, dominance, and hegemony of the US crave to come to its shores. Consider that in Myanmar, which has been under American sanctions for the last two decades, the US dollar is the only foreign currency that is accepted; and the youth in Iran, who live under the constant threat of American bombing, nonetheless would rather migrate to the US than anywhere else. In Vietnam, a nation the Americans bombed for ten years, and where they used napalm and “agent orange” defoliation agents, the Americans today are the largest FDI partners for growth and the encroachment of the American way of life is evident in the streets. In the US, non-citizens join the military because of the promise that should they die in the service of America, they will be declared as citizens posthumously. That is the radiance of despotism.

Vinay briefly compared and contrasted Japanese hegemony without dominance – in the arena of popular culture, if one considers the wide dispersion of anime, manga, play stations and the like – and American hegemony with “full spectrum dominance in all sectors”. He also discussed the analytical difference between “dominance” and “hegemony” and emphasized that American hegemony is best understood if we can fathom the transition from imperialism to cultural imperialism to the “imperialism of categories”. The “imperialism of categories” is clearly evident in the social sciences: whatever the particular circumstances of societies in the global south, all their concepts of poverty, growth, development, scarcity, waste, productivity, and economy have been borrowed lock, stock and barrel from the West. Our notions of

“majority” and “minority”, to take a different illustration, are part of the political arithmetic of the West. He quoted Mr. Hallegua, who belonged to the tiny community of Jews (a handful) in Kochi, Kerala, and who passed away last year, saying that he never thought of himself as belonging to a “minority” group in India and never experienced any pressure to convert when he studied in a school managed by the Jesuits. He did not feel the need to migrate to Israel when it was created in 1948, or ever after.

American hegemony survives as well by looting the history and culture of others, even if otherwise the US describes itself as the house of multiculturalism. The US has McDonalds in as many countries as it has military bases. During the invasion of Iraq, American soldiers looted the National Museum in Baghdad, the National Library, and the National Quranic Museum. When Donald Rumsfeld, then US Secretary of Defence, was asked about the looting, he gave a laconic reply, “Stuff happens.” The past of others, Vinay argued, doesn’t matter; but Americans treasure their own past, since their past was to them always a sign of the future that lay before humankind.

In the last part of his remarks, Vinay dwelled on three modes of resisting hegemony, while recognizing that any resistance would have to be multi-pronged. For instance, he recognized the necessity of radical curriculum reform in countries of the global south, and of various other measures designed to change the face of education. Nevertheless, he wished to draw attention to three modes of resistance, and he began by observing that the West had an addiction to violence, and that radical non-violence – whose votaries include Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy – had never been given a chance. Secondly, he proposed that we understand how we are captive to certain languages – the language which insists on the “nation-state” as the only viable form of community, or the language which insists on “minorities” and “majorities” – and why we must now deploy other languages and categories of thought. Thirdly, he proposed, while fully aware that such a proposal would draw much criticism, an Occidentalism that would place on the peoples of the south the onus of not merely writing their own history, but also the history of the West – and a history of the West not just for themselves but for the West. Vinay also proposed that if America insists on shaping the destiny of the whole world, the whole world should demand the right to vote in the election of the President of America. A lively discussion on non-violence and its forms followed.

The last session of the day featured **Dr. Vandana Shiva** shared “Lessons of Fighting Hegemonies in Food and Seed for 30 Years”. She focused on the role of multinational companies [MNCs] who were once the leading manufacturers of war chemicals and

have come through the agricultural chemicals route to now promote hegemony over crop seeds and in promoting American hegemony over the whole world.

The hegemony in the area of food production, agriculture and biodiversity commenced with the Green Revolution and the imposition of the Western model of industrial agriculture on the Third World with the assistance of USAID, World Bank and the Rockefeller Foundation. It has now yielded way to the so-called second Green Revolution (Genetic Engineering) which has its roots in the pseudo science of eugenics and has USAID as a major player again alongside Monsanto. The book “The World According to Monsanto” and the film of the same name and content have some important pointers to the things to come. She traced Dr. Norman Borlaug’s footsteps from Du Pont to CIMMYT, the training of 12 scientists sent out to the world as the “Wheat Apostles” converting everyone to industrial agriculture, its faith and practices.

She traced the saga of GATT and WTO and Monsanto’s roles in the creation of the Intellectual Property Rights [IPR and TRIPS] and biopiracy to create patents as a new form of colonization. The “royalty” collected on patented crop varieties is like the tribute paid to imperial rulers. Monsanto took away millions @ Rs.2400 out of the price of Rs.3,600 per kilogram of Bt cotton seed sold to poor Indian farmers who were given no alternative if they wanted crop loans. The era of farmer suicides began after the introduction of Monsanto’s seed monopoly and its genetically engineered Bt cotton. The attempts to repeat the same with Bt Brinjal (eggplant) has been thwarted for now in India. The issues are of food security and seed sovereignty. The “Iraq Order 81” (issued by the USA’s Bremer Administration in post-war Iraq) has already outlawed seed saving in that country.

Dr. Shiva also recounted her efforts to build alternatives and movements of resistance to reclaim our seed sovereignty, food sovereignty, and knowledge sovereignty. She circulated a draft of her work on “knowledge sovereignty” and offered information on other works so that everyone did not have to reinvent the wheel when working on seed sovereignty and other issues of food security on which Navdanya has done work.

Day Three (Aug.4)

The third day commenced with a moving, personal presentation by **Mr. Hossein Doostdar and Ms. Sue San Ghahremani Ghajar**. They shared their perspectives on Multiversity based on their Muslim-Iranian lived experiences in Iran during and after the Eight Year War [1980-87] with Iraq, and earlier, living in the USA as post graduate students of engineering and literature respectively.

The differences in their culture, beliefs and actions were highlighted while hoping that the disconnect between the people of Iran and people elsewhere would be

bridged so that all of them find legitimate pride in their own culture. In a telling anecdote, Sue-San recounted an incident where a Swiss academician told her as a matter-of-fact: “First, I was prejudiced against you. Now I am learning to tolerate you.” This was when Sue-San, a post graduate and teacher in English literature, was a guest of the academic as a delegate to the latter’s country. Sue-San says these reactions were probably caused because she insists on wearing a “hijab” (Islamic scarf) as a matter of identity and as a non-verbal form of protest against the hegemony of the West even in what constitutes dress style and modesty.

Both individuals presented examples of how, through his teachings on Islam, Imam Khomeini challenged the bulldozing global political, economic, and cultural forces of his time to create revolutionary Islamic transformations in all spheres of society especially non-elitist community life. He replaced materialist values with lived Islamic values and tried to create relationships among communities beyond nation state borders.

Their joint presentation began with a film clip from the 8-year war that was fought by untrained college students and other citizens of Iran against a well-trained and well-armed Iraqi military with total economic, political and media support from the USA, T-72 tanks from the USA, Mirage jet-bombers from France, poison gas canisters from Germany and soldiers and money from most Arab countries as well as some African countries. The country was in a disarray after the overthrow of the monarchy but the war started before the revolutionaries had time to settle down to governance and nation building. It was at this point that the Iranian nation showed faith in God. In the absence of high tech mine-clearing equipment, more young men than required volunteered to walk on anti-personnel mine-fields to clear the path for other brave warriors to carry on the battle. Young men strapped explosives to their bodies and exploded themselves below the soft under-belly of the battle tanks to become martyrs for freeing their land and an inspiration to their nation.

During the beginning of the 8-year war, Hossein and Sue-San were still in the USA. One fourth of July, they learnt that their eldest son, Alireza, had been draped with the star-spangled banner of the USA. When the American Embassy hostage crisis ended, Sue-San was surprised to find a yellow ribbon tied round the wrist of their son at the play school as per the American tradition of tying a yellow ribbon as a sign of freedom from imprisonment. It was time to remember they were Iranians, not Americans. They went back to their country, in spite of having good jobs in the USA and the difficulty in getting their visa through the “Iranian Interests” section of the Algerian Embassy in the USA.

They discussed the “vicious cycles of captivity” to demonstrate that apparently attractive alternative paths themselves have mainstream structures as legitimizing benchmarks. Therefore, the core of the dominant perspectives and practices continue to be reproduced under different covers. Multiversity must be aware of this and work to transcend these limitations.

After the tea break, **Dr. Mira Shiva** spoke on “Public Health, Policy and Practices”

She told the group she is involved with pharmaceuticals, pharma corporations and their domination and control of IPR issues like TRIPS, TRIPS plus. She related all the sly corporate-led efforts at killing the competition afforded by generic drug formulations, by getting them labelled them as “counterfeit” through changes in the definition of safe medicines, and then by pushing for a patently “counterfeit agenda” for the International Medical Products/Anti Counterfeiting Task Force (IMPACT) and Anti Counterfeit Trade Agreement [ACTA] which is basically an “IPR enforcement agenda” being formulated by USA and EU and is harsher than any regulation so far.

She pointed out that in India the Ministry of Chemicals deals with the pharmaceutical industry though its products concern the Public Health system. The business priorities perpetually keep medication for control of diseases like tuberculosis (TB) in the industrial areas in short supply as that is not as profitable as production of other formulations that are promoted for use even when wholly unnecessary. The Drugs & Cosmetics Act in India had no provision for banning hazardous medicine till the case of high dose estrogen/progesterone drugs became a major issued and the authorities were forced to include it. But there is still no criminal liability for consequential damage in mass testing of vaccines and other drugs on an unsuspecting population. There is a dire need for a rational vaccine policy as vaccines are being promoted for Human Papilloma Virus [HPV], Rotavirus, etc.

The increasing privatization and commercialization of health care in developing countries, the marginalization of traditional birth attendants or *dais*, the shortage of auxiliary nurses and midwives (ANM), privatization of medical education, and private firms being allowed to open medical colleges, unethical clinical trials, HPV, production and testing of Pneumo-coccal, H1N1, rotavirus vaccines were discussed.

Dr. Mira Shiva also raised the red flag about the use of the chimeric Cry1Ac-Ab or Bt gene from the *Bacillus thuringiensis* bacterium introduced in brinjal to get genetically modified, pesticide producing Bt brinjal. The Kanamycin antibiotic resistant gene could result in emergence of antibiotic resistance in the consumers

with serious implications as Kanamycin is used for cure of TB, a major public health problem. What the other gene marker, the cauliflower mosaic virus would do, was unpredictable. Normally, brinjal is used in Ayurveda to treat skin problems. Bt brinjal could even lead to increased incidence of diabetes as it affects the pancreas. Health hazards associated with GM foods are allergenicity, tumorigenicity, infertility, higher mortality of offspring in addition to effects on pancreas, kidneys, liver and immune system.

She also warned about NGOs and Indian Medical Associations [IMA and FOGSI] getting into the pharma industry's bandwagon under ACTA under the guise of free vaccine, safe medicines and safe nutrition programmes which are launched to penetrate deeper into the rural markets. Medical indebtedness is already an issue in India. The evidence of evidence of conflict of interest in WHO is a cause of concern. Close relationship between medical doctors and pharma companies also results in irrational prescriptions.

In the next session **Dr. Anwar Fazal** spoke from his experience on "Fighting Hegemony Through Galactic Organising". The presentation focused on:

- why and how some social movements succeed and others die ...
- how to be creative and 'chaordic' (chaos and order combined) and
- practical ways forward in global organization

He dwelt on the power of networking and remaining connected with leaders of organizations with big and active membership bases where each one contributes as per its core competence and works with a high degree of autonomy in each area. Regional autonomy and local leadership makes it difficult for anyone to break the organization, like a large tree, if one branch dies, the rest of the tree can still function and grow. The power of a circle is the power of close connectivity, he stated.

The relationship between the diverse groups in the network is more like a passionate "love affair" and not very formal and defined like a marriage. The engagement remains as long as each participant is "passionate" about the cause espoused by the organisation's network. The working system unleashes the incubators, catalysts, multipliers and accelerators while remaining connected to the hubs.

In an effective and efficacious galactic organization there should not be "members" who do not participate in the activities. Hence, the term "participants" better

describes the persons involved in the network. Like a wheel, the rapid movement is along the periphery, while the hub turns slowly, anchoring the movement all the time.

Like a Japanese wrestler (or a cricket batsman), an organization must take advantage of the force of the opponent to floor him. Strategy and tactics are as important as actions themselves. To get the different groups in any area to sit at a table and discuss, one often needs a facilitator who is external to all of them. All types of people make an organization but three broad categories of persons are needed for success:

- Ph. Ds: The thinkers and the leaders who will do the planning;
- B.S.Ts: The committed workers – “blood, sweat and tears”; and
- G.T.Ds: The captains who “get things done.”

The easiest things to manipulate are those things that are controlled by the “reflex” such as fear, food and sex. These three issues have a scripted auto-reflex in human beings. The next easy area to manipulate is the “emotion” like patriotism or regionalism which can be worked into a frenzy. The hardest to manipulate is “reasoning” as this needs a lot of convincing to do.

It is not all smooth sailing and every organization goes through the development phases for varying durations after birth: 1) Change of form – the organization’s participants change, grow, or decrease; 2) Loss of passion; 3) Dormancy or Lag phase –This stage is often afflicted by the “Founder Syndrome” where the Founder Members jockey for position and some members leave, the organization matures but does not grow or remain active on the ground; 4) Nobody remembers the original issue that brought them together and finally 5) People completely forget the organization exists.

The memory of the struggle has to be documented and recalled periodically for the new members to know how the organization started and why. One has to avoid the “Sisyphus complex” and not take the burden to the peak only to see it slip and start all over again. The leaders must inform, enable and empower the third generation of participants to perpetuate the organization.

Ashis Nandy made his presentation after the lunch break.

Though he was to speak on the idea of a university, the various possibilities, other meanings we should assign to it, he said he would raise a few points that might

appear to be a digression but were important from the point of view of Multiversity goals.

He said in India today we have about 300 universities (not counting the private ones). Out of these 50-60 have music departments in which they teach both north Indian and south Indian music. In the last 70-80 years, not a single one of them has produced a single great classical musician. They have produced teachers and Phs in musicology, but no musicians. Obviously the message for aspiring musicians is you cannot learn music through the university system we have. If you want that vocation, you have to do it the traditional way, which is work under a guru for something like 20 years. So one can say that in the field of Indian music, Multiversity really does not have to do anything at all! There need be no talk of Western influence, because there is none. Indian music teaching can survive without our help. Similarly for a few other subjects, like the teaching of Sanskrit and Persian.

Through the example of the life of Ramanujan, the greatest natural genius in mathematics in 300 years, Nandy concluded that natural genius can break through existing barriers or obstacles. We need to neither protect them nor promote them because they are quite capable of being on their own.

His second proposition concerned the exorcism of violence. He reverted to Fanon's plea for violence as a plea for cleansing, as a way of getting out of the clutches of the West, with its history of association with vast historical injustices, genocides, wars, etc. We can exorcise, but be warned that the very act of exorcising will leave stains on the perpetrator. Even the killers have to pay a cost. Those who rebel against the system in terms of the system will also perhaps go through the same cycle. Exorcism a self destructive process beyond a limit. Fanon himself noted how those who tortured Algeria's freedom fighters got sucked into their role and tortured their families as well when they returned home.

Nandy then discussed negation a la Adorno and Habermas. He observed that negation has enormous possibilities. Through negation, defining what you do not like, you can allow people to participate in your revulsion. Negative evaluation is easier to convey. It is far easier to mobilize through negation than through a positive agenda. He recalled that both *1984* and *Brave New World* were negative utopias. We can agree easily on what we do not like about a regime. The moment we sit down to discuss what would be the alternative, then 2,000 points emerge, with arguments for each and the coalition collapsed.

A third possibility was "denial". There is a technical psychiatric definition of denial, involving serious psychotic disturbance. But a large part of our world, though not

psychiatrically ill is using a form of denial. Technical psychiatric definition of denial: if a psychiatric patient shows, what is upperstrong is not a minor neurotic, but a serious psychotic one. So, for example, in relation to the environmental devastation we are causing to the planet, we deny it since we will not be there, even our children may not be around when it manifests. When an American wit was asked, what do you think of the future, he replied: Why should I think of the future? What has it done for me?

Large section of the people who believe they are not in politics, better they are not in, but live in denial: they feel science will take care of everything. Charismatic magic is today the prerogative of the scientists.

Nandy said his next proposition was about how everyone wants to speak on behalf of others. Speak for them, take away their voice. Everyone has acquired the right to speak on behalf of someone else. This is one of the most obscene developments of our time. The politics of the 19th century created the legitimacy for all this and allowed some people to claim that right to speak on behalf of others. People become “voiceless” because their voice has been taken away from them. We have reduced large sections of humanity to categories of “poor and oppressed”. All other aspects of their personalities are denied. They have no stories, no cuisines, no shared memories. Multiversity must recognize this condition and ensure that they have once again adequate space and opportunity to speak for themselves.

Nandy’s next proposition was about the sharp line that emerged from the Enlightenment between technic and episteme, technology and science. Increasingly technology is devalued intellectually, whereas science, theory, is valued as a higher form of intellectual activity. All the problems created by theory are passed on to technology. Something is always wrong with technology, nothing with science. If you discover poison gas, you cannot be blamed. The fault is always with the one who finds out how to use it and then uses it. Here is another aspect of the denial I am talking of.

He said a group of colleagues had envisioned the erection of a south asian university. Someone the idea is now usurped by the Manmohan Singh government and made into something else. The university will be more prosperous than any other asian university and I heard the most recent discussions were whether the rooms should have attached bathrooms or not. One decision taken was the professors would get first world salaries!

All universities today suffer two major shortcomings: they are busy with knowledge management more than knowledge generation. The latter is being sourced out to private establishments, including research.

Secondly, universities are increasingly depending on university based knowledge. Traditionally the job of a university was always the authentication of knowledge. All knowledge including knowledge from society at large came into the university and was considered. The university scanned it on behalf of society, evaluated it and gave its version. Uni scanned it and on behalf of the society passed some evaluated it and gave its version.

Today's university has increasingly narrowed in scope. The university authenticates itself, and is not open to criticism from outside. It is heavily dependent on university generated knowledge. Public intellectuals come now only from university, compared to the earlier generation of public intellectuals many of whom never went to university. For example, in contrast to the earlier public intellectuals, Chomsky, Edward Said, are located in universities.

Finally, we do not pay enough attention to the export of categories from the West to the south. When we talk of the nation, nationality, nation states, we forget that all these categories came from Europe and Enlightenment Europe. These are in fact 17th century terms. The Treaty of Westphalia consolidated the nation state system. We have imbibed these terms through the colonial connection. We are societies in which people live in communities, where there is a different type of patriotism, the patriotism of language, culture, recipes and clothes.

But nation states presume the dominance of a nationality, ethnically oriented, with no place for no community, only the relationship between the State and the individual. We are talking in the context of societies where communities are alive. Unless we are suspicious of our own nation states, we (Multiversity) cannot go too far.

The last session was addressed by **Prof. C. K. Raju**. He clarified that his topic was an action agenda to resist hegemony. He regrouped the 16-point agenda already circulated into areas of history, education, ethics, and experts. The actions aim to dismantle Western hegemony by destroying the soft power on which it rests. He clarified that soft power was not a cliché but rather a US military doctrine, propounded after the Cold War, which envisages reliance on religion (post-Crusade

Christianity) as an integral aspect of military strategy. It rests on Toynbee's account of history which sees religion as the driving force of history.

Soft power is propagated through Western education which was implanted (and is maintained) using a false history of science which must be dismantled. Referring to VC Dzulkipli's presentation, he said that apart from throwing light on the Dark Ages, one must go a step further and expose the false claims of Hellenic achievements linked to the West. 17th century racist historians appropriated the work of the Egyptians to Hellenic authors. Earlier, in the 12th c., the knowledge of the rest of the world which accumulated and developed in Jundishapur and Baghdad and spread to Toledo, was appropriated to the West by attaching the names of real or imaginary Greeks to it. Eliminating Hellenism makes manifest the real history of the West and its continuous record of using religious violence for power since the 12th c. Crusades. He said the Howard Zinn film did not mention that Las Casas' description of the genocide in the Americas actually showed it was religiously motivated. Even today, the church refuses to withdraw the papal bulls which commanded this violence, or the related doctrine of Christian discovery which is part of current US law.

Prof. Raju said that any attempt to refute false Western history would encounter prejudice, since the priest rules by superstition, defends superstition by implanting prejudices, and implants prejudices through education. The demand for Western education relates to science education, but most people in the hall were not educated in science, which is critical to all four areas of energy, food, health and education in which the West seeks to dominate today.

Prof. Raju referred to the earlier question about "Islam's arrested development," attributed to al Ghazali's theology by Pervez Hoodbhoy (echoing the West): that Islam does not believe in natural laws. He said his own view was different: that post-Crusade Christian theology had penetrated mathematics and physics through the notions of time and infinity, and this theology must be eliminated from present-day science. To illustrate this point, he explained his criticism of Newton's "laws", the alternative to it in the theory of relativity, and the further correction he had suggested. This broke down the idea of a law-like physical evolution, so critical to Hoodbhoy's arguments and post-Crusade theology. Likewise, the use of Buddhist or Jain logic would change the theorems of present-day mathematics, exposing its religious bias. He corrected the action point, suggesting that it could be limited to eliminating religious bias in science.

As yet another example, he illustrated the religious bias in economics. Referring to Arrow's impossibility theorem (which claims that rational social choice is impossible, so that public good cannot be rationally defined), he juxtaposed it with Buddhist beliefs about time. On the latter beliefs, forcing a child not to play now, so that he could have an expensive car later, involves exactly the interpersonal comparison of utility (disallowed by Arrow), so that by Arrow's logic, rational choice is impossible then also for "individuals".

Because of widespread scientific illiteracy people are forced to rely on "experts", and experts are made subordinate to the West because expertise is judged purely by Western norms. Various action items were designed to eliminate this subordination by demanding that government money spent on science and technology should benefit people, instead of merely fetching Western approval. Another bunch of action items relate to ethics. In particular, ethical considerations should be used to force experts to be responsible to people, instead of being responsible only to their sponsors.

Day Four (Aug 5)

On Friday 5 August, 2010, in a special session of the Penang Meeting related to strategies for developing Multiversity, Yusef Progler spoke about the potential for developing Multiversity Media.

His talk proceeded from the paper and supplementary notes he circulated prior to the meeting, which will be published by Multiversity at a later date. He began by surveying recent developments in file sharing, copyright, piracy, copyleft and issues of access related to digital media, in particular videos. He outlined the current state of war that exists between the entertainment industries and the global file sharing movement, and noted some of the tactics being used on both sides. After explaining that the old business model of the entertainment industry, which was based on sale of individual physical media (music CDs, movie VCDs and DVDs), was no longer relevant in light of more pervasive and faster internet access, he further noted that the industry has responded by resorting to intimidation and litigation rather than attempting to adapt to the changes in technology.

Meanwhile, he continued, the global file sharing movement has been developing ever more sophisticated ways to distribute music and films despite threats by the

industry. After noting the irony of this situation, that the world's addiction to Hollywood movies and American TV may lead to the collapse or restructuring of the entertainment industry, he suggested that participants in the meeting take this moment of flux as an opportunity to develop our own media distribution networks for Multiversity related content.

Toward that end, he recommended eight action points: 1) Catalogue the currently available documentary and narrative films, and educational television (including online courses), that support our efforts and make these widely, readily and easily available through multiple channels to teachers, administrators, activists and students in digital formats that can be delivered via the internet; 2) Digitize existing physical media (VHS, DVD, VCD) of useful programs and make these widely and easily available online. This might involve some of us raiding our libraries and other institutions that keep these items under lock and key or which otherwise limit their exposure and usefulness for those not privileged with access; 3) Liberate existing materials that are effectively censored by outdated Western copyright laws, and develop strategies for preserving access to these materials that can learn lessons from the global war between the Western entertainment industries and the global file sharing movement; 4) Initiate production of subtitles in other languages as needed for various already existing films, documentaries and educational television series that pertain to our efforts; 5) Institute an online clearing house to announce, discuss, evaluate and share the emergence of new media related to Multiversity; 6) Approach content producers to pursue non-profit licensing deals [like Copyleft of Creative Commons] with Multiversity, in cases where this may be an issue; 7) Support those content producers who are already offering open access media, such as PRATEC in Peru, or Shikshantar and Abhivyakti in India; and 8) Set up our own servers for storage and propagation of Multiversity related media materials and make sure that they are always up and running for global access.

He noted that the last point was not necessary at the present moment, and that, based on the current experience with TV Multiversity on YouTube, Vimeo and TVU, much could be accomplished using the already existing services. However, while he has been developing aspects of TV Multiversity in a variety of directions more or less on his own, to further develop a media activist movement for Multiversity media contributions from volunteers will be needed. The basic pre-requisites for these would be: 1) commitment to the goals of Multiversity; 2) some interest in and/or facility with computers; and 3) access to media content and broadband internet. He concluded by reviewing points made by previous speakers and how they relate to his proposal for Multiversity Media. In the ensuing discussions, he

clarified some of the technical points of his presentation and responded to comments from the participants.

Progler, supported by Azra's intervention, sought assistance from the group in specific ways:

- a) Wherever country you go to, please turn to Multiversity TV and let us have your comments on problems you face with watching the site;
- b) Whenever you come across a document that you think would be good material for Multiversity TV, send us relevant information or the file itself for uploading;
- c) Subtitling is a need. If people can do subtitling, the same documentary or film can be shown with different subtitles.

Multiversity TV requires the installation of a small bit of software and two or three clicks of the mouse before it is operationalised. It is broadcast only in Windows Media. You watch it like any TV, but it's not a file you can download like Utube.

Above all, Progler emphasized the need for giving time. He said the technical aspects were not difficult for any person to master and there are adequate sites which teach you everything including sub-titling, But even browsing existing sites like Utube to find material to check whether it is useful for Multiversity TV requires time.

Hossein Sattari indicated that this was something they could do while being students in KL. The discussion had enabled them to focus on what they should download and thus provided much needed direction.

On the proposal for a manifesto:

The first manifesto proposal made by Claude was for a 20-25 page document that would be simultaneously translated and launched from different websites and sources. There is a huge constituency out there which does not want to go on the path laid down for them during the past 500 years. Mohideen Kader was asked to come up front with his proposals as he was the first one to make it to the group.

Mohideen said the manifesto should crystallize the ideas we have been discussing and it should become an organising point for people in grand sympathy with them. The document should link to social movements, should be written in powerful language, should contain a rational analysis of the situation, should be emotive in that it should bring out the emotions of the people and stimulate them to resist hegemony.

He also added that it should not be written in English and then translated into other languages. Only the draft ideas should be circulated so that the right phrases and idioms can be used. It should be around 20 pages, with a wide sweep.

Content wise, it will look at the beginning of colonialism, the encounter between Columbus and the Arawaks and the relationship that developed between the two because that encounter has eventually defined the violent relationship between the West and other societies.

Of course it should also examine the theological justification for this domination besides of course also the main issues of genocide, slave trade, scramble for colonies, European War I, the partitioning of the Ottoman empire among the European powers – although they promised independence to the Arab countries to fight the Turks, lot of deceit involved in this – and the creation of Israel to dominate the area. This would deal with the colonial period.

It was also necessary to deal with the ideological underpinnings of the colonial project and how science and technology became part of the instrument for domination.

Thirdly, it should look at the resistance to colonialism: individual, collective, some of which may have been documented, most maybe not. It should describe this resistance.

Then we come to the period of the second European war and the dominance of the US and the use of culture to dominate people, to make people accept colonialism. It should analyse the structuring of your own mind, internalising what the coloniser wanted in the colonised. How did the British control such a huge empire of millions of people, despite a small army? They obviously did not use arms, but they convinced the colonised that they had a superior culture. How they did this through Macaulay, how it continued, post Euro War II, should be discussed. The US also concentrated on the war for the mind and were not interested in occupying countries. Only if the other strategies did not work, they invaded, like Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. They preferred to use international institutions which they created and give them directions.

The manifesto must reflect on the north in the south and the south in the north. In our own countries, there are people closely connected to the oppressors and they also benefit from the association. This must also be highlighted.

Finally, the manifesto should highlight ideas of how to resist hegemonic conduct. It should report on resistance going on and how to follow up.

Anwar Fazal came up with several ideas of how to go about organising the format of the manifesto. He insisted it should be brief, not more than one or two pages max, though the key points can relate to a supporting document of 150-200 pages. The short document should consist perhaps of ten points, each related to ten action points, links to other sources, books, films. He spoke of the need for posters, introduced the group to the “creative defiance” website (www.maviyane.com) and recommended easy accessibility to information which could be downloaded by people and used as per their needs. Formatting of the manifesto should have these kinds of ingredients.

Proglor recommended we look at existing manifestos and not repeat things that have been said before.

Vinay referred to *The Blinded Eye* as a good example of what he had in mind for a manifesto. He also referred to *Hind Swaraj* and highlighted its convenient format. Though content wise he agreed with Mohideen’s statement of ideas to be included, he did not think an ideal manifesto which went into all these issues – some even before 500 years – could be less than 150-200 pages. (*Blinded Eye* was 96 pages.)

He also did not think we should wait for translations because these were always difficult to organise and things would be delayed inordinately or never happen. So the manifesto should be a substantial document which he would be happy to work on, but he had objections to an abbreviated pamphlet and posters with the main high lights.

Raju came down on the side of a short pamphlet, with an attached volume if required. A manifesto by definition is a call to action and there is no reason to cover for every possible objection that will be made. Translations he felt were really very difficult, especially into languages like Hindi. The manifesto therefore *ab initio* should be written afresh in each language.

Ashis said that he had experience with two manifestoes which went a long way. The first was the UNESCO statement on violence which is not more than 3 pages long. Many things were not argued out, but from the way things were worded, the underlying assumptions were clear. He gave the example of asserting the rights of rivers to be themselves, which implicitly critiqued large dams. A small drafting committee would be best and most effective. Beyond 7 people, consensus would become difficult.

Anwar emphasized that the manifesto must be written in a form that does not alienate and does not generate resistance from those who resonate with our way of thinking and who have been a part of it for several years. He said it would be a great idea to collate all the manifestos written so far.

Vinay Lal insisted that a short document would not meet the need of the hour. He highlighted the fact that the text book was the key to dissemination of knowledge and a pamphlet cannot take its place. The larger document does not preclude the shorter ones, but we do not want simply one more document in addition to the several dozens already in circulation.

Iain Buchanan intervened at this stage to propose a short, multi-media version of the manifesto. He said he had come to revise his opinion of the internet, Utube and other electronic media and felt that a multimedia version with some kind of sound byte would reach for a very wide audience. He said this could be accompanied by a larger, published, b/w edition of the manifesto.

It was finally agreed that three persons (Raju, Ashis and Vinay) would attempt the short statements of intent, while Vinay would be free to work on the longer edition, with circulation of the draft on completion. A meeting in the near future would then bring together a final drafting group together with a multimedia equipped team which would prepare an electronic document needed. In the meanwhile, the Iranian students offered to work on smaller clips and submit these to the larger group for discussion and direction.

Afternoon: Multiversity Project Activity

There was a fairly critical discussion on the Multiversity Philosophy course for undergraduates prepared by the Multiversity group set up for the purpose. The document containing the course was circulated. Criticisms made by Buchanan, Raju and Vinay were detailed and noted down. The Multiversity convenor indicated his difficulties in getting scholars to work on the other disciplines though some work had commenced on sociology and psychology. On psychology we should have a good note, he said, in the next six months.

The Iranian team lead by Hossein Doostdar indicated the following five point action programme to move the matter forward when it gets back to iran:

- a) They would continue to invite people from Multiversity to Iran (they have done so already on two occasions earlier) and arrange meetings with some

Iranian scholars particularly in the areas of economics, psychology, sociology and try to find ways to teach these courses replacing existing practice.

- b) The invitees would also talk about other methods of teaching which are superior to current methods so that students get a better, more exciting reason for attending university.
- c) They would prepare a class of ten form teachers and some students to implement the new methods proposed.
- d) Multiversity scholars would be invited one at a time or in groups to have discussions with university students, staff and even government agencies to discuss issues raised within the Multiversity Project.
- e) They Iranians would support collaborative research in social science researches which could focus on what our countries had for several centuries. This would mean they would support not just Iranians trying to recover their history and traditions using Persian sources, but also Indian scholars attempting to retrieve original Indian sources for Indian Philosophy courses.

Claude introduced the issue of better representation of thinkers and scholars from the South on Wikipedia. This was a cost-free way of involving more people in Multiversity work. Names and work could be recommended to the Iranian student group which would assemble the final piece, have it circulated for comments, before being uploaded at Wikipedia.

(The detailed transcripts of the above meeting are still being processed. They will be uploaded on the www.multiworldindia.org website, when ready and also brought out in book form.)