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BASANTA KUMAR MALLIK'S THEORY OF THE DYNAMICS OF INTERSOCIETAL CONFLICT

MADHURI SONDHI

Basanta Kumar Mallik (1879-1958) was a modern Indian philosopher who studied, lectured and worked at Oxford.* Along with philosophy, Mallik had also read law and anthropology as an undergraduate at Oxford, and his writings reflect a dual perspective, philosophical and sociological. He wrote four major works outlining his philosophical system, *The Real & the Negative*, *Related Multiplicity*, *Non Absolutes* and *Mythology & Possibility*. His first publication, *The Individual & the Group*, was a study of Hindu-Muslim conflict, *Gandhi—A Prophecy* followed the death of the Mahatma, *The Towering Wave* was an extended literary parable about his theory of conflict and the search for peace. A collection of his articles and lectures on the nature of society, *Hindu Inheritance Incorruptible*, was published after his death.¹

Introduction

There are indications in several areas of enquiry that the claim of any one civilisation to a monopoly over truth, or even methods of truth-seeking, can no longer be upheld. There is a steady and growing cognisance of multiple epistemologies and cultural pluralism. Furthermore, the globalisation of political issues has led to an awareness that survival means common survival. It is a matter of opinion whether this common survival includes only the major power blocs or nation-states, or, as was the contention of Basanta Kumar Mallik, of all groups and communities, which

*Based on a paper entitled 'The Making of Peace' presented to the ISCSA annual meeting at Berkeley, CA, 1989, researched under a grant from the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi.

would include all the marginalised and threatened, be they the Amerindians of both American continents, the Lepchas of Sikkim, the tribals of the tropical forest regions or the Tibetans on the roof of the world. It follows from this position that normative theories of the so-called “world revolution of Westernisation”² dangerously ignore an important aspect of the global situation—its essential and non-hierarchical pluralism. The thrust of Westernisation or modernisation is towards more and more scientific-technological industrialisation and social homogenisation, and much has been written about the threat these constitute to bio-life, freedom and diversity of cultural systems. The accompanying military processes add a dimension of anxiety and crisis.

Mallik did not belong to the category of optimists who, as technological or evolutionary determinists, believe that in time, tomorrow’s sense and technique will sort out the problems of today. That determinism and that technology have derived from a particular world view, and do not represent the world interpretations and methodologies of the whole of humankind. They have evolved from a specific understanding of man and nature, from a cognitive imperative of power characteristic of the rise of modernity in the Western world. Their philosophic roots lie in particular interpretations of reality, in a particular metaphysic. When these are extrapolated onto cultures with different reality values, they create confusion and stultification. Often the host culture is reduced to “filling in the gaps” by providing an “ethnic” flavour, or it can defensively and violently counter-react. (It is salutary to remember that the etymology of the word “ethnic” lies in its Christian and Jewish usage to describe the “other” gentiles or heathens).³

If we wish to achieve common survival and peace, taking the one to be necessary for the other, then we are obliged to search for a more genuine universal, or an alternative grounding for global co-existence and cooperation. Mallik was confident that this could be achieved, but laid down certain conditions for avoiding the pitfalls of cultural, civilisational or any other forms of domination. These arise out of his theory of conflict, which can be studied under the following six headings: (a) the logical input, derivative from the Law of Contradiction; (b) the metaphysical role of illusion in framing absolutist positions; (c) conflictual action arising out of mythology; (d) the origin of values and their relation to

social conflict; (e) the interactive dynamics of the competing civilisations and (f) intersocietal conflict in the see-saw pattern of history. These categories can apply to any culture or civilisational system, to any ideology, religion or any kind of belief-pattern.

Conflict is an integral feature of the human condition—as we have known it until now. To quote Mallik, “We either think or live. To live is either to win or lose in a conflict. . . . To think is to resolve the state of doubt which life as such produces.”⁴ He acknowledges that conflict has also performed a positive sociative role in the past, but that as we stand on the verge of entering a global society, it has lost its utility function for the future. It can no longer be said to serve the need for survival. In his attempt to reverse the mental and living habits which have developed through millenia of historical experience Mallik could be branded a dreamer and visionary, except for the unprecedented situation created by an irreversibly nuclearised and ecologically threatened world. Certainly his theory of conflict is original and thought provoking, and leads logically to the possibility of neutralisation of conflict.

(a) *The Role of Contradiction*⁵

Mallik commenced his investigations by exploring certain logical axioms which govern rational thought, specifically Aristotle's second law of thought, the Law of Contradiction, in its concise expression: “It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be.” The classic construction of his law is A cannot be A and not-A at the same time, or that A and not-A are contradictories. But the same incompatibility can suggest also a relation of opposition between A and not-A, where not being contradictories, they are contraries in a state of mutual implication, suggesting some shared plane of co-existence which Mallik called possibility. This second relationship between opposites he designated the metaphysical form of the law, as it actually performed the function of positing a possibility of existence.

When A and not-A are taken as possibilities, their contrary relationship continues to foreclose the ability to actualise together, since they remain incompatible, but enables them to actualise successively or alternately. This provides more space than the logical implication of sheer impossibility.

Conflict situations, according to Mallik, actually reflect the metaphysical condition of opposition, of contraries implicative of one another, but are misinterpreted by the participants to the conflict as logical contradictories—as impossibilities in the face of one another. This systematic misinterpretation characterises the logical structure of conflict.

*(b) From Logic to Illusion*⁶

The terms of conflict are provided by competing values, and by the logic of contradictories, one of them should preclude the other.

However, in this complex and pluralistic world, any chosen value is always faced with the disturbing presence of its opposite—indeed values nearly always seem to come in pairs, and differences are easily perceived as opposites. Since the “other” value cannot be factually demonstrated as “impossible” the human mind practises a deception on itself, by describing its preferred term, A, as absolute. It judges its own value ‘A’ to be the only real eternal, good or true one and not-A or the other as either unreal, temporary, evil or untrue. Not-A is thus construed as secondary, a temporary manifestation, which will eventually disappear or be defeated, after which the real A value will pervade the whole of existence in its absolute unchallenged form. And thus the Law of Contradiction will be validated.

This trick of the mind Mallik designates “illusion” to be distinguished from the Indian advaitic use of illusion as maya, where maya specifically relates to mistaking phenomenal or multiple existence as having an independent reality instead of perceiving it as grounded in the ultimate, the absolute Brahman. Mallik’s use of illusion applies to any univocal absolutist view of reality which interprets its opposite as unreal: thus the empiricists and positivists are as much illusionists as the idealists. One may note here, how Mallik has begun to interweave the play between logic and values: by itself, logic is neutral between both contraries and contradictories, only legislating on the relationship between them; but if one term is converted into and valued as an absolute, as the only constituent of Reality, then logic becomes a tool of commitment.

*(c) Mythology as Action*⁷

So far, at least analytically, we are well within the conventions of the debating hall, no matter how basically or profoundly we may disagree with one another. However, in the context of the real life situations, the matter does not rest with a merely logical and philosophical delineation of preferred views of reality: indeed, chronologically speaking, the logicians and philosophers arrive on the scene much after the values have been set and absorbed into living. Only in a strictly analytic sense can we trace the steps consecutively from logic to illusion to mythology.

The term "mythology" in the Mallikean lexicon no longer refers to a body of culture myths or their study, but has been appropriated to describe a specific function. By mythology Mallik designates a series of actions which are undertaken to reify the position of the absolute value or value system, to universalise the system and make it a concrete absolute. Mythology is not merely the creation, but the acting out of myths. In other words it embodies all the attempts made to remove the presence of the offending not-A which by its very existence diminishes the claimed universal reality of A. All efforts to get rid of the perceived contradictory are mythological. History records a variety of methods from persuasion (e.g. reasoning, preaching, propaganda), forcible conversion (e.g. through intimidation, duress, brain-washing) to social violence, war or genocide. Mallik calls these activities of attempted expansion mythological because they are intended to realise an illusory absolute, to transform reality according to an ill-founded notion of universality, and they are doomed to fail in their efforts.

An illusion cannot be transformed into reality. This statement is the outcome of a complex metaphysical argument about the impossibility of absolutes contained in his second philosophical work *Related Multiplicity*.⁸ we can leave it aside for the moment, as there are no doubt researches in other fields of inquiry which also point to a similar conclusion. It is noteworthy that since Mallik bases his arguments on logical and metaphysical premises, he is able to categorically conclude that no absolute can ever rule the world unimpeded: what looks like a temporary success will yield to its opposite, because the logic that underlies the play of opposites is not one of contradiction, but of contraries. Contradiction,

we may repeat, can and does serve the useful logical function of locating the impossible, but in the realm of reality we often deal with contraries in a state of mutual implication, and so long as there are thinking minds integral to reality, there will be opposition or alternate view points. Conflict therefore, technically speaking, is experienced in the phase of mythology, though it is intellectually grounded in a logic of contradiction and in illusion. Hence the strange mixture of rationality and irrationality we associate with conflict.

So far we have been examining conflict more in a philosophical context, through logic, illusion, mythology. The next three features are concerned with the actual formation and expression of societal values through which this conflict pattern is manifested.

(d) Origin of Values and Social Conflict⁹

The fourth step highlights the nexus between Mallik's philosophical and sociological analysis. It is concerned with values which profile and are reflected in a whole range of organisational and cultural components, none of which are primary.

The operative principle in the field of values, so far as the tendency to conflict is concerned, both philosophically and sociologically is the dichotomy of the real and the unreal or the principle of unequal valuation which arises out of the problematic of the one and the many.

The philosophical problem of the one and the many,¹⁰ or ideas and particulars, has existed in various forms throughout the history of Western philosophy as a dualistic metaphysics from the Greeks to the Enlightenment. It was Mallik's contention that after Descartes the problem of organisation (i.e. how to relate the one and the many) reappeared within the quasi-monistical positions of rationalism, empiricism, idealism, positivism etc. The various "solutions" could not escape the formal necessity of selecting one of the two terms as basic. In the classic Greek context, apart from closed Parmenidean monism, greater reality was accorded to Ideas or universals (the one), as by Plato, or to individuals (the many), by Democritus and Aristotle. The classical Indian solution has been to posit a third category, *maya* or illusion (here carrying the traditional Vedantic meaning) which is the many misper-

ceived as independent or real. The basic point to bear in mind is that, West or East, the problem could only be dealt with by introducing what Mallik called the dichotomy of the real and the unreal: Platonic Ideas are more real than the particular instances: individual substances are more real than the categories which describe them: atoms are more real than the wholes they make up: Brahman is more real than the world of the manifold. Or again, there is no single "Self" behind the succession of events in consciousness—this one could be attributed both to David Hume and the Madhyamika Buddhists, except that Hume concluded that phenomena are real and Nagarjuna that emptiness is real!

At the level of society,¹¹ there is also a problem of the one and the many—i.e., since human beings always live in groups, there are two aspects involved—that of particular individual humans, the many, and that of the collectivity, which is numerically the one. As individuals, humans are characterised by differences from, as well as by agreements with, one another: as members of a group they have an important commonality—an identicalness. Thus there arises a tension between individual particular values and group common values. All societies to maintain stability have to function on the basis of a stressed value—to decide the important term in the relationship between the individuals and the group. A society may function with the group as the more important—the tribe, clan, family or nation; in such cases the individual as individual has less importance—his or her value derives from membership in the group, and since the group is conceived of as more than the sum of its members at any particular time, the value of each individual is considerably lessened. In another society family and community have secondary importance; reality values are vested in individuals.

Thus we have here once again the operation of the dichotomy of the real and the unreal or the principle of unequal valuation: if the group is real, the individual is (relatively) unreal, and vice versa. Since all societies have to make do with both components, no matter which is treated as more real or more important, there is always a latent tension contained through custom and law and expressed through diverse forms of cultural imagination. Mallik described this situation as one "ramshackle duality" present from the first appearance of social life.

The tendency towards absoluteness arises from the threat of disequilibrium to system maintenance, particularly when the internal suppressed value may receive reinforcement from an external challenger. Thus a value-system, i.e. a system of unequal values, has to be created and maintained for functional and survival purposes. To compensate for the arbitrary nature of the selected value, it is elevated to the status of an absolute, which then proceeds to act as a sanction for all methods of order preservation, including conflict. Logically speaking, since the principles of unity and individuality are opposites, they cannot, when equally valued, lead to a functioning organisation. History, as Pareto has observed, only moves when powered by myths, which translated into the Mallikean idiom becomes, when powered by illusions of the absolute.

One may note in passing, that apart from the pervasive tensions referred to in the previous paragraph, Mallik also describes the conflicts within social organisations arising out of disagreements over the methods to be adopted for realising the agreed upon goals of any particular society.¹² Ultimately Mallik believes all internal disagreements over agreed goals can be reduced to a preference for “freedom” or “order” approaches. In contemporary societies the goals may be multiple—i.e. national, westernising, regional or traditional in a country like India, spawning groups disagreeing over how to realise their preferred goal, i.e. communists and liberals for the first, reformers and fundamentalists for the second and weak and strong regionalists for the third, each of these again capable of splitting into further “freedom” or “order” factions or groups. These oppositional attitudes produce their own illusions, so that the two sides compete against one another through a logic of contradiction. This may lead to a period of alternating victory and defeat, but a time may well come when both stalemate one another leading to a dampening of societal dynamics. This pattern foreshadows the larger-scale dynamics of intersocietal conflict, to which we may now return.

(e) Civilisations

Strictly speaking, Mallik's is not a theory of civilisations, in the particular Toynbean sense, but a theory of social organisation, akin to Sorokin's which contains several civilisational variants.¹³

Organisation he defined as "the simple process of unifying and individualising the multiple entities" and describes two fundamental interpretations of unity and individuality which give rise to three major organisational schemes. Each of these interpretations utilises the notions of logical contradiction, of the absolute and of the device of the real and the unreal, to legitimate and delegitimate positions, thereby to prepare the stage for continuing conflict.

The first interpretation keeps reality as absolute, with which is identified either unity or individuality, but not both. Two organisations result from this approach, the mystical or group type, and the humanist or individualist type. The former stresses the absolute value of unity, and relativises the individual, whereas the second makes the individual the absolute centre of value, and relativises the importance of groups.

The second interpretation of unity and individuality treats them both as real, but changes the meaning of reality. Reality no longer means the absolute since absoluteness implies self-sufficiency and unrelatedness. Reality now applies to *relationship*: unity and individuality stand in eternal relationship and become actually relative. Hence this is a dualistic organisation, with two real terms in relationship, but unity is valued more than individuality. This inequality of evaluation leads to two stages, the eternal and the temporal. However, since Mallik did not expatiate further on the implication between unequal valuation and these two stages, the matter remains far from clear. More so when Mallik goes on to add that the eternal relationship takes the place of the real and the temporal, the unreal.

Confusion here arises due to the admixture of religious and sociological terms. Scanning the various references to this organisation in Mallik's writings, something like the following usage emerges: unity applies to the Godhead, and individuals are of course the second term. Since an absolute God is outside relationship, self-sufficient and self-contained, a personal God as creator enters into community with, or relates to, earthly creatures. Neither God nor individuals can have absolute value since relationship modifies them both, but God has greater value than his creatures. There is thus incipiently present the illusion of the one, though not sharply pitted against the reality of the many. Within this model it is difficult to know how to differentiate between an

eternal and a temporal relationship connecting God and his human creations. According to received tradition there is only a never-ending relationship from birth in historical time through death to after life.¹⁴

If one traces the evolution of Mallik's thinking on social organisation, one finds in his first three books, *The Individual and the Group*, *The Real and the Negative*, *Gandhi—A Prophecy*, mention of just the first two types, which correspond neatly to his delineation of the dilemma of the one and the many in its philosophical perspective. In that phase, he classified the community religious societies as derivatives from the individualist scheme—i.e., as variants of humanism. However, by the start of the fifties, Mallik's views had progressed to recognising the dualistic as an independent organisation, since empirically it presented certain well-defined and distinctive features, but his problem was to provide it with a self-defining principle.¹⁵

Perhaps a better formulation, less asymmetrical or tangential with Mallik's sociological problematic of the one and the many, is to keep both terms in a societal context; instead of unity or the one depicting a religious or quasi-historical entity like God, it can be used to describe the community, which as a group embodies unity. Neither community nor individuals have absolute value per se, because both derive their value as eternally related through a personal God. The value of the community is expressed through such terms as the "body of Christ" or the Muslim "quam" or Judaic "Israel" and the specially saved constituents of these groups also have privileged status. The principle of unequal valuation applies to relatedness and non-relatedness: those outside the particular community of relatedness to God are the disvalued ones, the infidels or ethnics. The final triumph or reification of the absolute will take place when reality-space is occupied only by an all-encompassing community of believers during the millennium, when the others will be either converted to the truth or destroyed.

Any attempt to equally combine the opposites of unity and individuality in a single organisation presents insuperable difficulties: hence the necessity of the third term, God, to mediate eternally between the two. Karl Marx tried to retain both individuals and group (through the proletariat) without a divine relationship, grounding his hopes on a species-being that would

emerge after the distortions of property relations had been rectified, but the scheme, to all intents and purposes, has not got off the ground. The only enduring examples of this organisation remain the traditional God-centered dualists, whose intraorganisational strife revolves around which *historical* personality uniquely mediates between God and humankind.¹⁶

However, despite the difficulties attendant on the triangular and mixed nature of this scheme, the pattern of conflict within and with the other two remains unaffected, and it is in this area that Mallik's analysis is of abiding interest.

The three patterns of social organisation produce three types of individuals: those who have the sense of being one with others (in the group or mystical societies), of being unique and different from others (in the humanist or individualist societies) and of cohesion and solidarity with their brethren (the dualist or community societies). All individuals all over the globe cohere in groupings like the family, clan, class, tribe or nation, and develop religious, economic and political institutions. Despite these apparent institutional similarities they in fact aspire to different life goals and objectives, be it unity (identicalness), uniqueness (independence) or solidarity (brotherhood). Differences in socialisation, based on the three different objectives, lead to different emphasis of character and personality traits. Other cultural specificities may be related to historical geographical and other extraneous circumstances.

Unfortunately, however, from the point of view of world peace, these societies of opposing value-systems are a constant threat to one another, because each one rates as unreal the most treasured reality-value of the other. Inevitably the three organisations are constantly in competition. So that, individuals "live in three distinct types of families, belong to three unique types of sttes, worship or meditate in three altogether distinct environments—and all in a state of perpetual conflict."¹⁷

We may briefly elaborate on these three organisational schemes.¹⁸ The classic example of the group or mystical civilisation Mallik not unnaturally gave as his own, the Indian, though he was of the view that all Asian civilisations possessed analogous features. In terms of social organisation, not religion, Mallik equated the Hindu scheme with the Indian, because it reflected at its most quintessential, insights of the Hindu view of life, based on

the disvalue of egoistic individuality. Sociologically, the individual is submerged into intermediary groups, enabling ultimate absorption into the mystical absolute. The group system encourages members of its groups to be "at one" with others, and to achieve this, groups have to be relatively small: but the totality of groups together constitute the unity. It is logically impossible, from such a point of view, to exclude any group. When differences arise, as they inevitably do, both within and between groups, the aim is to overcome these by stressing the agreements and ignoring the differences in the process of reaching a solution. Ultimately the differences between groups are accommodated in a hierarchical structure. Favoured social techniques are accommodation, persuasion, consensus, compromise. When even these fail, individuals can form new groups, but they cannot exist as mere individuals unless they abdicate from social life altogether and become sannyasins—renouncers. Economically, this society evolved forms of communal, village and family ownership, but not of private property. Ownership is also a misnomer, for what mattered was titlement to the produce of the land, and here again all the different communities were entitled to a share, albeit not always an equal share.

This system, of course, was disturbed initially by British imperial rule, and particularly in terms of land holdings has virtually been eradicated—but that is an alien input and not a natural outgrowth from the fundamentals of this type of society. Until the advent of the British in India, Mallik contends, all new entrants to the subcontinent were accommodated within this social system: they could settle down in their own groups, maintain their own customs, beliefs, practices, but deal with one another and share with one another especially in the village communal schemes. The unit of value in society and law remained the group, and not the individual *per se*. Within groups, special laws and customs could prevail, e.g. Muslim personal law, but the overall organisation of society, founded on the original Hindu pattern, remained group-based. Thus even those of the dualistic religions, Jews, Christians and Muslims, functioned in the Indian organisation as *de facto* castes; it could accommodate certain features of the community social organisation, but resisted large scale universalising tendencies. It is only when the group society came into contact with its direct opposite, the individualist society, that ab-

sorption became impossible—either one or the other had to change. In a similar vein, Chinese and Japanese societies can also be described as group-based, with families or clans as the social units.

The formulation of the dualistic organisation is based on the societies which have grown around the major Middle Eastern religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam. If the tendency of the group organisation is to be inclusive, to accommodate all groups in an umbrella organisation and conceptually in a single universal theme, the community peoples, based on strict notions of inclusivism and exclusivism, display strong solidarity relationships amongst the members of their own community, and hostility to those outside in their classic formulations. Since the community is created round a historical personality, the claim to particularistic truth becomes strong, and the tendency is either to convert or defeat those of different beliefs. (These tendencies exist in all the organisations but get accentuated in this one).

There are many differences between the three types of religious communities—but what all share is the unique and soteriologically assured future of their own community—as opposed to the evil or unredeemed others—and Mallik felt justified in describing them all as community-religions, or dualistic societies. Since the individual finds accommodation in this type, economically and legally there is room for private property, but socially and politically community interests are likely to dominate. Mallik felt that the dualists would tend to develop two kinds of institutions, the religious, arising out of the group community values, and the civic and political, arising out of the principle of individuality. However, historically one sees that there are moments when the community or religious values threaten or overwhelm the civic. Obvious examples are in the contemporary Middle East. Since this organisation does not clearly stress either individual or group values, it can also assimilate economically and politically into other types, so long as its basic community structure remains intact.

The individualistic organisation, alternately designated the humanistic by Mallik, has seen two major phases in Europe—the classical Greco-Roman period, and the modern starting from the seventeenth century. There are many important differences separating these two periods, but both are recognisably

individual-based. The classical period had an infrastructure of slavery and in Greece at least the position of women was hardly better, but the source of value, in so far as there were claimants for value, were individuals as members of a political organisation—a city or an empire. The memorable contribution of the Greeks has been a humanistic politics; of the Romans, a humanistic legal system. The modern European state, however, has far outstripped in power and reach its predecessors in pre-Christian times. Since it is the most dominating organisation in the world today, one may quote Mallik's description of its basis: "To (the individual centre) the historic and the immediate is the seat of all life and activity, so that the ultimate resides in its generative power and all order and arrangement comes and goes like gossamer by the dictate and mandate of its will. Nothing counts finally except the free will of the individual."¹⁹

Such a radical conception of freedom, whether flowing from an innately noble or nasty nature, depending on whether we side with Rousseau or Hobbes, demands political organisation. The totally free or independent individual is a surd, but as a concept provides the absolute regulative idea from which approximations in social economic and political life are sought to be developed. Since the emphasis is on what amounts to an atomised individual, relationships between individuals tend to be instrumental, and require a strong legal state to adjudicate between the rights of individual citizens, and between citizens and their governments for rights or welfare. These compulsions of individualism which find expression in legal rights have very logically been claimed by women also, and it is interesting that the ecology-minded are seeking to apply them to plants, animals and the environment as well.²⁰ Equal rights, moreover, demand an expansive bureaucracy, which in its turn paradoxically becomes a threat to the individual freedom it is meant to serve. However, detailed analysis of the contradictions of modernity are outside the purview of this paper.

Modernity, with all its trappings of democracy, secularism, science and technology etc., is classified by Mallik as an instance of individualistic humanism, of one of the three traditional social organisations which includes all variants of capitalism, communism and socialism. It is chronologically recent, very powerful, radically hostile to dualism and mysticism, but suffers from the

characteristic internal contradictions and imbalances which follow from the principle of unequal valuation. In the emerging critique of modernity, Mallik's insights may contribute analytically and normatively to the search for alternatives.

This brief sketch of the three macro-systems has not elaborated on the internal conflicts, on the innumerable modifications brought about by historical interactions which have produced mixed societies all over the globe, but only profiled some of the prominent features embedded in the chosen values of any society or civilisation.

In the area of cultural and civilisational dynamics Mallik's theory offers a sharp and cutting edge. He locates the dynamics of expansion and retreat of values not in a unidimensional internal self-generated process, but in a perpetual battle for supremacy, where the contrary can never be eliminated. Victory and defeat are followed by stalemate: historically this has often been the interval before the values reassert themselves in new updated formulations. Both within and between societies, the ascendancy of one system or set of ideas means the suppression of another system or set of ideas. The creation of a world involves the denial of another world. Values do not occur in a vacuum—it bears repetition that a value logically implies a disvalue, a preference implies a rejection, and hence the struggle for the maintenance of value is a constant endeavor.

The forward movements of cultural or social systems is due to constantly renewed choices and rejections—sometimes the rejected value may win the day but the decline of a society occurs when both values are at equal strength and neither can prevail. This is the internal story. Between social organisations with their representative civilisations, cultures and societies, conflict occurs on a greater scale because here there are no shared goals and the norms of one society are an affront to the other. Interactively the three organisations form a compact global system of societies, constantly tending towards disequilibrium.

*(f) The Seesaw Pattern of History*²¹

Mallik's theory of history grows out of his understanding of societal dynamics. The same seesaw pattern, of alternate rise and fall of cultures or social organisations, punctuated by periods of

stalemate or stagnation, characterises historical change: there is no unilinear social progression. Military and political victories are not curtain-raisers to stable peace or culture—the germs of instability lie on the side of the defeated. Mallik's criterion of progress is not technological or scientific sophistication, but achievement of societal goals, and this shows, with a little plus or minus on either side, that all societies are more or less equivalent, without fulfillment or stability, although perhaps all have experienced at one time or another, and some currently are undergoing, periods of ascendancy or “success,” i.e., doing better than or successfully frustrating others. As Mallik graphically put it, when the lights come on in one part of the house, they go out in another: historically, success for one party implies defeat for the other: the disjunctive “either-or” is contained in the logic of contradiction.

That we live today in a world of exhausted ideologies, cultural relativism, scepticism, Mallik took as evidence that the strength of contradiction was finally, and fairly universally, lapsing into contrariety and stalemate. In his day the resurgence of fundamentalist Islam had not commenced, but significantly he had referred to Islam as “asleep” rather than exhausted, and thus the current stirrings are not outside the scope of his analysis. However, it would be incorrect to describe the humanist societies as suffering from complete scepticism: they continue to appear as the most expansive and threatening to others: not necessarily physically expansive, but in a variety of sociocultural forms. The shift in absolutism often transfers from substance to method, and radical relativism can mask the last ditch stand of the dogmatist, as does radical scepticism. However, the negative manifestations of modernity as well as more sophisticated epistemological enquiries have acted as catalysts to a growing, explorative critique.

In spite of the seesaw patterning of history, Mallik did encase his system in an overall teleological frame, larger than the global conflict system created by the interactions of the three social organisations. The latter constitutes an important phase of development marked by frustration and neutralisation of values, but by no means exhausts the conditions of fulfillment. Those can be discovered and brought into service, on a global scale, but with the important precondition of the establishment of worldwide peace as a first step. The received tradition of peace thinking is, first establish order, justice, equality, truth, and peace will be

added on. Mallik reverses it: first establish peace, and then begin the search for truth and the conditions for fulfillment. With minds historically and educationally conditioned to think and operate through a logic of contradictories it would be nigh impossible to arrive at genuine harmony, hence the order of priorities must necessarily be reversed.

Also implied is the view that justice and peace are not equivalent: the one may be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the other. Furthermore, the conventional notions of equality and justice have emerged with distinct civilisational emphases and forfeit their claims to universality. Not only is peace, as we have conceptually inherited it, essentially contested, different conceptions of justice are also the cause of social and political conflict. In this respect Mallik, who otherwise deeply loved and admired Gandhi, significantly differed from him, as Gandhism stops short with converting violent conflict into a nonviolent "struggle for truth" or justice. In terms of the Mallikean analytic truth cannot be a term in a conflict or account for it in any way: conflict can only take place between two illusions.

The Technique of Peace-Making through Abstention

Mallik's conditions for achieving peace are several, and the most important amongst them, but by no means sufficient by itself, is the technique of mutual abstention.²²

Abstention has to be grounded in the rationale of conflict: if conflict is based in absolutist values, a disjunctive logic of contradictory perceptions about opposition and a metaphysics of unequal valuation, then the quietus to conflict can only be attained through nonabsolutist thinking and through a recognition of the contrary and equal nature of social values. Contrary values have a weaker mutual exclusivism. Opposites may not exist together, but contraries as metaphysical possibilities, which is how they are viewed in the Mallikean system, suggest alternation, and also mutual dependence or necessity. To perceive an opposing value-system as contrary therefore allows a possibility for accommodation, for coexistence, for abstention from mythologising. Moreover, a Mallikean reading of history shows a pattern of mutual frustration through conflict which Boulding observed to be: "The instability of empire, the instability of peace and cyclical

stability of war” which “compose the whole age of civilization from 5000 BC to the present time.”²³ The seesaw historical process identifies wars as no-win situations, thereby weakening the motivation for undertaking them. The total Millikean picture emphasises the self-defeating, self-frustrating, illogical and illusory nature of attempting to expand and universalise any of the particular points of view which contend in the world today. Learning to coexist through abstention follows.

In a sense Mallik is asking us to take a leap into the unknown: if all that we treasure as value, no matter of what kind, is not absolute or irrefutable, then how do we order our personal and social lives? Fulfillment, Mallik says, will come after peace, for it is impossible to visualise harmony and fulfillment in an atmosphere charged with tension and conflict. Aware of the need for providing a working basis to tide over the transitional period, Mallik qualified his stand by suggesting that abstention be practised only at the stage of mythology: every society needs a code with which to regulate its functioning without which there will only be social chaos. For much time to come we cannot surrender our individual illusions. But we can abstain at the flashpoints if we have begun to grasp the essentially futile nature of conflict, its self-defeating character, and the intrinsic absurdity of trying to universalise illusory absolutes. As much as we can, we should also abstain from activist mythologising, from dominating, exploiting or converting those whose values differ from ours, i.e., apart from overt warfare, we should refrain from what has come to be known in international relations literature as economic, cultural, academic and other imperialisms. The reduced spaces in the world demand that we affirm our own values in our own areas—not spill over into those of our neighbours. And today all are neighbours.

Abstention is a process. It starts with some individuals or with decision-makers in some states, and certainly the intellectual insights about conflict processes cannot immediately be realised by all, nor all at once. Abstention, moreover, is embedded, or to be successful has to be embedded, in a view which values survival:—not only social survival, but the survival of all. Social survival as a goal cannot be sufficient for peace, as it is valued above its individual members, and also above other societies. This kind of survival thinking contributes to the tension that pervades

the international system today. Survival of all implies a stringent concept of equality, in which the individual qua individual has value. In contemporary times the idea of equality has got contained and disfigured within the adversarial political units of nation states, but the idea of absolute equality will have to transcend these limits. Indeed Mallik extends the notion of equality to the organic and inorganic world as well, which lends itself to the construction of a philosophical theory of ecology.²⁴

Equality is the one absolute Mallik allows himself, although it has an aspect of rights as well as responsibility. Individual or civil rights to life-needs, protection etc. do not require repetition. He also emphasised rights to group identities through cultural equality and mutual respect, also recognised in international theory if not in practice. The equal responsibility he demanded was from both individuals and groups to abstain from conflict.

Together, abstention and equality do not add up to a prescription for passivity as commonly understood. They do not entail acceptance of the status quo, nor appeasement of aggression. Indeed they cannot, for the notion of equal rights is subversive, and that of equal responsibility activist and positive. Mallik endorsed the demand of all groups for their own identities, and if in the present they can only be safeguarded through nation-states, then so be it. But nation-states have their own compulsions, against the weaker in their own societies and against one another, so they can only be a step on the way. The government of a nation-state can represent no more than the views of some over the others, be that government of the majority or a minority. It is an unsatisfactory vehicle for the expression and establishment of equality and peace and ultimately it will have to be modified or yield to other political forms which guarantee survival and recognition for all individuals and groups.

Mallik posits three fundamental though skewed ways of ordering social reality, and in spite of the differentiations worked out in varying cultures, the problems are to that extent contained. The answer is not a synthesis or patchwork of these views for in the nature of things that is impossible. But three deficient orderings suggested to Mallik the possibility of a fourth efficient ordering, taking cognisance of both unity and individuality, or grounded in a metaphysical notion of individuals-in-relation (which he also termed related multiplicity). Individuals are essentially related to

one another, not atomic; i.e., the definition of the individual includes relationship, and the group is not an entity over and above the individuals it comprises. Bare social reality stripped of illusions is composed of related individuals, and only this can form the basis for a new structure.

Mallik did not claim to know, rather declared he could not know from within the present historical moment what form this would take: it was axiomatic, however, that the form would have to be commonly agreed upon by all, derivative from non-absolutist and dualist reality perceptions and founded in a rationality that takes a looser view of differences. This could achieve a perspectival shift from "clean opposition" to gentler "dissimilarity." Dissimilars, unlike opposites, may be combined in a unified system.

At the moment this possibility is remote and can only serve as reassurance. But the establishment of peace through the practice of abstention, through the removal of the "dead corpses of tradition from the battlefield" is distantly nearer on the horizon.

Conclusion

The above account of conflict and abstention helps to understand some of the deeper causes which have so far escaped analysis and which could contribute to the attainment of stable peace. According to their importance for lifting major constraints on the globalisation of peace, the results may be summarised as follows:

1. *The Knowledge Dimension:* Knowing is a way of participating in conflict, hence the importance of basing it in an awareness of the non-absolute nature of reality, and the underlying logic of contrariety or mutual implication. The universalisation of any religious, ideological, academic, political or social system is self-contradictory. We must coexist with multiple knowledge systems and methodologies.

2. *The Ethical Dimension:* The practice of mutual abstention at the flashpoints of conflict can contribute towards a cooling down of the conflict-system. It is grounded in the irrationality of illusion and mythology and reduces the absolutist dimensions of all value-systems.

3. *The Social Cum Political Dimension:* This requires a formulation and movement towards:

- (a) the structuring of rigorous equality between all individuals and groups in terms of survival,
- (b) the ethical, social and political implications of the necessary relatedness of all individuals within and across groups,
- (c) equal obligation to abstain from conflict,
- (d) preservation and respect for all cultures.

One may conclude with a few thoughts for the future. Mallik emphasised the importance of a search for a harmonious social system to engage the telic drives of humankind. A common search implies a common dialogue, and Mallik believed that an abstentionist world could provide the requisite foundation for an honest dialogue, where all would address one another as equals—perhaps, equals in ignorance. A body like the United Nations, with due recognition of its current utility and even indispensability, does not provide a forum for a dialogue of equals. International bureaucrats and international citizens represent the international civility of the occidental world: the world community is defined by the West, and others are “admitted” to the family of nations. Some learn the manners more quickly than others, but the norms have been set by one culture. They are not, if looked at from the Mallikean point of view, a set of common norms—these have yet to be discovered.

International academic and cultural exchanges again tend to reflect the epistemologies, methodologies, procedures of a dominant culture. At worst, others may be “ethnically” interesting objects of study; at best they are “on the way” to full participation, to full absorption in the dominant mode of discourse.

An honest dialogue would have to start on a more tentative basis, on a recognition of mutual ignorance about the common goal. However, the whole drift of Mallik's philosophical analysis indicates a final outcome to this dialogue. There must exist an adequate answer to the social fact of related individuals. One cannot participate in a serious dialogue if it is simply an end in itself without the possibility of a common agreement. One cannot simply be a cultural relativist.

In this respect one must appreciate Mallik's stupendous intellectual effort. He understood the need for nonabsolutising re-

ceived dogmas and traditions, for introducing a measure of cultural pluralism and nonconflictual coexistence to ensure survival and peace for all. He also understood the human need for certainty and transcendence, and his philosophy, spread as it is in time, space and endeavor, opens the system enough to accommodate multiplicity, but also has the theoretical underpinnings for evolving a system of global harmony. Moreover, he achieved this without a theory of compulsive utopianism by basing it on common and equal participation in a search for truth.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Further details about Mallik's life are contained in the Short Biography by Winifred Lewis in *The Garland of Homage* (see list below) pp. 3-78. The following is a list of works by and on Mallik, giving the abbreviations used in these references:

Works by Basanta Kumar Mallik

IG *The Individual and the Group—An Indian Study in Conflict*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. (London, 1939). RN *The Real and the Negative*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. (London, 1940). GAP *Gandhi—A Prophecy*. Hall the Publisher Ltd. (Oxford, 1948). RM *Related Multiplicity*. Hall the Publisher Ltd. (Oxford, 1952). TW *The Towering Wave*. Vincent Stuart Publishers Ltd. (London, 1953). NA *Non-Absolutes*. Vincent Stuart Publishers Ltd. (London, 1956). MP *Mythology and Possibility*. (Vincent Stuart Publishers Ltd. (London, 1960). HII *Hindu Inheritance Incorruptible—Studies Mainly in the Philosophy of the State and the Community*. Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya (Calcutta, 1967).

On Basanta Kumar Mallik

GH *Basanta Kumar Mallik—A Garland of Homage*. Vincent Stuart Publishers Ltd. (London, 1961). MOP *The Making of Peace: A Logical and Societal Framework according to Basanta Kumar Mallik*. by Madhuri Sondhi Select Book Service Syndiate (New Delhi, 1985). ECP *Ecology, Culture and Philosophy: Metaphysical Perspectives from Basanta Kumar Mallik*. by Madhuri Sondhi and Mary M. Walker (Abhinav Publications, 1988).

2. Laue, Theodor Von, *The World Revolution of Westernization: The Twentieth Century in Global Perspective* (Oxford 1987).

3. From Shorter OED 1959. Even the "modern" usage of ethnic is

given as "the religions of the Gentiles or their common characteristics."

4. R.M. pp. 46-7.
5. See R.N. Chs. VI Laws of Thought, Fresh Interpretation and VII Notions of Possibility and Existence, pp. 83-110; RM Ch. VI p. 50, 143.
6. NA Chapter Give The Issue of Illusion pp. 96-109; TW pp. 54-8.
7. See MP Ch. III Frustration and Conflict. For definition of mythology, *ibid.* pp. 54-55; 129.
8. See RM Ch. IV Revision of my Metaphysical Position pp. 27-35.
9. See MP pp. 165-66; HII Radhakrishnan and the Philosophy of State and Community pp. 33-36.
10. See RM Ch. IX Nature of Organisation pp. 68-77.
11. HII The Human Society: What are its Essential Needs? pp. 142-3. Refer to MOP Approaches to Society and Civilisation pp. 55-84.
12. See HII The State and the Community pp. 32-43.
13. See HII the Human Society pp. 142-45; MOP *ibid.*
14. HII The State and the Community pp. 36-43; NA Chapter Eight The Three Social Schemes of History pp. 139-49; MOP pp. 60-68.
15. The definition here used is from his essay entitled "The State and the Community" written for the volume on Radhakrishnan in the *Library of Living Philosophers* series, 1952 (republished in HII) and the third organisation is well entrenched in his major philosophical works between that date and his passing away (RM, TW, NA and MP). In his last year, however, he had begun to explore the nature of a split in the third form between One God and Many God societies (HII Society as Concept pp. 1-4).
16. RN Part II Ch. VII Totemism and Animism p. 401.
17. HII pp. 39-40.
18. See HII The State and the Community pp. 28-43.
19. IG p. 148.
20. Discussion relating to animal rights can be found in Joel Feinberg's *Rights, Justice and the Bounds of Liberty Essays in Social Philosophy* (New Jersey 1980). In *Independent Journey: The Life of William O. Douglas* (New York 1980), James F. Simon cites his subject's opinion that trees and rivers deserve the legal status of individual citizens.
21. See RN Part II Ch X Claims of History pp. 432-442; RN Ch XIII Review of European History pp. 105-20, 131-2; TW pp. 101-3; MOP pp. 31-43.
22. See RN Part II Ch XI The Ethical Standpoint pp. 443-64; NA pp. 262-3; MP pp. 207-11; TW pp. 109-11, MOP pp. 19-21, 119-36, 162-70; Mary M. Walker Abstention ECP pp. 165-8.
23. Kenneth Boulding, *Stable Peace* (Texas 1978).
24. See Madhuri Sondhi Thinking Ecologically ECP pp. 1-59.