and spread out — creates gaps and blanks, that may, at some opportune moments, assume such dangerous proportions as to unhinge the entire system. And it is this latent 'anarchy' that sheds meaning on the word 'culture' — particularly on the nineteenth century employment of the term, which with its steady rise in influence was fated to become a crucial component in the make-up of 'universal commonsense'.

Culture: The Universal Solvent

Sketching the complex history of 'culture', Raymond Williams observes that at the romantic moment, "it was used to attack what was seen as the 'mechanical' character of the new civilization then emerging: both for its abstract ratioalism and for the 'inhumanity' of current industrial development. It was used to distinguish between 'human' and 'material' development. Politically, as so often in this period, it veered between radicalism and reaction and very often, in the confusion of major social change, fused elements of both".[10] By a further twist, and an enduring one at that, 'culture' was used to designate a theoretical space and an ensamble of practices, which were deemed to have near-total autonomy and self-determinacy. Eventually, 'culture' came to be accepted as a matter of 'soul' and 'spirit' — the 'deeper' reasons of the 'heart' which, in the first place, could never be grasped by the 'head', the 'muted murmurings' of the 'inner being' necessarily neglected by the votaries of cold rationalism, were put under its purview. 'Culture' then brought about elevation and refinement of taste, and by association, contributed to the cultivation of morals and opinions. In the era of high capitalism, at a time when more and more sectors were being opened up for investments, 'culture' was the site chosen for safely investing and anchoring 'affections'. This 'affective investment' then cleared the way for the formulation of the now-proverbial Arnoldian remedy vis-a-vis the ills that plague the modern world. Matthew Arnold's 'celebrated' statement on 'culture' (Culture and Anarchy, 1869) appeared at a critical juncture of England's history — indeed, it well catered to the pressing needs

of an epoch witnessing decisive and momentous transformations in the social structure. Writing when the transition from 'industrial capital' to 'monopoly capital' was nearing completion, Arnold was dead right in sensing the anxieties of the age as well as the ideological limits and layout of the newly evolving order. "Adolescent frivolty" being inimical to the hard-headed monopolists, their rule signalled the end of "boisterous' laissez-faire". This meant that the long-pursued crude logic of possessive individualism had to be tempered, the reckless adventurous 'individual' had to sober up and prove himself capable of dealing with more portentious matters. Arnold, accordingly, set up an agenda for ideological reform: inverting the earlier prioritization, he assigned the pivotal role to the "self-less" instead of the "self-seeking" individual in his programme. In his view, only those, who did not derive their stimulus for action from class-instincts alone, but had, in the bergain, the powers to reflect on and work for common good, could be described as truly "self-less" and "enlightened". But from which segment of society were these persons, raravises of comprehensive vision, most likely to come?

Arnold knew, history had bidden adieu to the aristocratic class; dumped into the trash-bin of dead history, the aristocrats had only a regressive role to play in society. Neither could the working class, uncouth plebaians, be trusted with the exacting task: in point of fact, it was precisely the 'anarchy', sporadically unleashed by the 'immatured' and 'irresponsible' working people, that constituted the prime menace, a permanent threat to the social fabric. Given this situation, the bourgeoisie was the natural choice for Arnold. More correctly, he held faith with the more advanced sector of the bourgeoisie, with men who were not so dissipated as to expend their entire energy in accumulating profits. Such persons, Arnold believed, were ethically flawless, sound in judgement and detached by temperament — if they could somehow take over the charge of social affairs, things would immediately begin to straighten out; with such impartial men acting as moral trustees, the prosperity of the collective-whole, the state in other words, was absolutely assured. What is peculiarly striking about the Arnoldian thesis is the

way in which it blends the art of statecraft with 'culture'. In Arnold's scheme of things, the "elects", the "representatives" chosen by the process of natural elimination and selection, were not required to rule by a vulgar display of brute force. All they had to do was to rally round people and persuade them to stand on a common platform — this would, in spite of class- differences lessen class-antagonisms, and enable everyone to join hands to hold the system together. The Arnoldian tag for that common platform was 'culture'; envisaged as a sphere of amity and a meeting ground, it was used as a shorthand for social consensus. 'Culture' then was like an intervening copula that covered the unseemly gap between 'identity' and 'difference' — the two which generate the paradox of power and produce, at times when the friction between them becomes much too evident, yawning wounds on the social body. Shaken by internal as well as external rifts, the era of monopoly capitalism, hit upon an effective antidote against chaos and confusion, in the shape of Arnoldian 'culture'. 'Culture' was given the rare distinction of a homogenizing factor in a world, otherwise defined by fixed hierarchies and strict power- asymmetries. It was hoped against hope that this universal solvent would imperceptibly permeate into every aspect of life — private or public, family or civil society — its insidious infiltration would with the passage of time reconcile all opposites. In brief, 'culture' is power aestheticized; the aestheticization being eminently suited to inducing soothing anaesthetic effects on individuals, it can be ranked as a mode of "governmentality"[11] on its own right; it is an hegemonic instrument which seeks to, in a manner of familial bonding, couple "individualization" and "totalization". In addition, by resonating with and drawing sustenance from the socially-sanctioned and generally accepted schema of gender- constructs, the symbiotic relation between 'power' and 'culture' has the look of an unwavering 'natural' law — the common consent, silent yet strong, works to merge it with the background. Thus while 'power' functions as the male principle, tough, arrogant, fractious, 'culture' acts as the demure female consort, caring, nurturing, filled to the brim with piety. That this idea of 'culture' would move out of its immediate

surroundings and travel farther 'East', was a foregone conclusion. In this context, it needs bearing in mind that, one of the distinguishing features of 'monopoly capitalism' was a marked acceleration of the seizure and annexation of foreign territories, which ushered in a situation qualitatively distinct from the earlier phases of expansionism: to underscore the uniqueness of the phenomena, Lenin proposed to reserve the term "imperialism" for 'monopoly capitalism', the "highest stage of capitalism".

So much being heaped upon it, 'culture' as a concept was bound to show signs of strain: the more its field of applicability increased, the more defused it got. By now it is sufficiently vague to be all-encompassing, but nothing without a cutting-edge can be of much value either. For good or bad, it is a term that has come to stay. To retain the word and at the same time to re- vitalize it, what one needs to be constantly reminded of is that 'culture' is *not* the site where contending practices so arrange themselves as to produce a happy blending or synthesis, a stable symbolic order, but instead it is a site of contestation, inextricably linked to the material conditions and contradictions of life. In Stephen Greenblatt's view, it can be put to use if one perceives that "the concept gestures toward what appears to be opposite things: *constraint* and *mobility*".[12] In passing, it may be noted that these two words are particularly apposite for the purpose of reading the narrative of overlapping territories and interlocked histories in spatial terms. And all said and done, isn't 'space' the heart of the matter? The imaginary, rather the ideological map with its counterpoints 'East' and 'West' could in the first place never have been drawn without the systematic and merciless extension of the territorial control of Europe. In 1800, the Western powers held approximately 35 percent of the earth's surface and in 1878, the same powers had extended their hold over 67 percent of the earth and in 1914 the proportion was roughly 85 percent; while the annual rate of increase between 1800 to 1878 was 83,000 square miles, it had, by 1914 reached the staggering figure of 2,40,000 square miles.[13] It is in the context of this power over space — space-power for short —that one must place the sense of an all-round opening up, of the wonder mingled with anxiety, of

the fear and allure of risks which seem to grip and give a kind of specificity to the English imagination in the modern epoch. And isn't it equally true, that not just "cultural expressions" such as literature, but the "scientifically rigorous" principles of standard political economy too share the same propensities? Aren't the terminologies and concepts of political economy too charged by the impulse towards legitimizing and consolidating the interests of capital and colonial power? And 'market', has the long- standing reputation of being one among its more cherished concepts. Through each of its three phases, 'commercial', 'industrial' and 'monopoly', which vaguely covers the period between mid-seven-teenth to the early twentieth century, 'capital' has always been in search of markets: the drive to expand market and the need to extend territorial control are joined in a perpetual circularity. As Marx and Engles had once put it, "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere".[14] The shifts in the colonial policy vis-a-vis market, dictated as they were by the pressures of capital ac-cumulation process and of ceaselessly advancing technology, transformed the colonial subject into an 'active' customer, resulting in the 'break-up' of non-capitalist sectors, and thus dissolving his/her world into a world economy — one that was characterized by an internal division of labour in which the leading industrial nations made and sold manufactured goods and the rest of the world supplied them with raw material and food.[15]

Given this well-known line of 'development', would it not pay dividends — to use a mercantile metaphor — if we choose to read the 'symbolic economy' of cultures and the so-called principles of political economy in tandem, that is, mix up categorical predica-tions and technical terms belonging to different realms of discourse and practice, make elements interact that rarely have 'commerce' with one another? Perhaps, only by establishing such unorthodox contacts, only by deliberately disregarding the polite yet rigid protocols of walled-up disciplines, can one show up the tacit conceptual contracts which exist between various discourses and

reveal the sordidness that is pushed beneath the carpet whenever a comfortable and satisfying "affirmative relation" is said to be achieved between "artistic production and the other modes of production and reproduction that make up a society".[16]

To critically examine the 'East-West' Gordian knot, a knot too intricate to be untied in any forseeable future, let us ask two related questions: (a) How does 'exchange' and 'commerce' between 'East' and 'West', affect the temporal and spatial consciousness — the consciousness to which is linked the process of fostering and fashioning of identities — of the classes engaged in the 'business' of 'modernity' in literature and elsewhere, both 'here' and 'there'? (b) Did the constraints imposed by the colonizing elite on the colonized elite, generate, ironically enough, a mobility in the latter? That is, how did the group that came into being in the wake of the break-up of non- capitalist sectors and was granted the privilege of an 'open' access to the 'free market' of ideas, react to the pressures and persuasions of the masters?

Tales of 'Mobility' and 'Constraint'

Surely, transformations and mutations at the level of symbolic economies are not only produced by but also contribute towards larger changes which take place in any society. This makes possible some sort of cross-reading between different layers and levels, provides a means of "transcoding that results in a kind of mapping out of the raw materials in which the real consists".[17] Taking the temporal and spatial indicators in literary works as being con-stituted by as well as constitutive of a larger matrix, one can negotiate between different domains without taking recourse to straight reflexionist models that encourage a naive belief in un-mediated correspondences. In literary works, in the words of Mik-hail Bakhtin, "Time as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope".[18] Being necessarily implicated in and informed by some or the other