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The Chicago School goes East: Edward Shils and the dilemma of the Indian intellectuals, circa *1956–67**

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Abstract

The sociologist Edward Shils (1910–95) is a neglected commentator on modern India. Best known in a South Asian context for his involvement in the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Shils also produced an influential study on Indian intellectuals, published in 1961. He was one of the few non-Marxists to write about the role of intellectuals during the era of decolonization in Asia and Africa. His book appeared in the same year as Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre* (1961) and a year before C. L. R. James's *Marxism and the Intellectuals* (1962), just as Pan-Africanism was finding its ideological voice. This article recovers Shils' work on the Indian intellectual. It describes his Indian interlocutors, his methodology, and his claims about the isolated and ineffectual character of the Indian academic elite. The article concludes with an examination of the longer-term influence and validity of Shils' critique of the Indian intelligentsia.

Introduction

The sociologist Edward Shils (1910–95) is a neglected commentator on modern India. Best known in a South Asian context for his involvement in the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), Shils also produced a large study on Indian intellectuals, published in 1961. Moreover, he was part of a remarkable generation of scholars based at the University of Chicago, where he worked from 1947 until his death in 1995, who helped to foster an enduring and influential approach to the study of

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India. Shils' colleagues included Milton Singer, Stephen Hay, and later Bernard Cohn, together comprising a school of Indian expertise honed by the entrepreneurial Robert Redfield, dean of social sciences and son-in-law of Robert E. Park, pioneer of urban studies and the Chicago School of Sociology. But whereas much is known about the work of his peers, Shils' studies in and on India have never been properly evaluated. His credibility took a major hit when it was revealed in the mid-1960s that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had funded the CCF. Although his reputation and legacy as a mainstream sociologist survived this exposure, Shils' standing as an interpreter of the Indian intelligentsia waned almost overnight. However, there are good reasons to recover Shils' work on the Indian intellectual. He was one of the few non-Marxist scholars to write about the role of intellectuals during the era of decolonization in Asia and Africa. His book appeared in the same year as Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre* (1961) and a year before C. L. R. James's *Marxism and the intellectuals* (1962), just as Pan-Africanism was finding its ideological voice.[1] Shils merits inclusion in any analysis of this post-colonial moment. He exemplifies Occidental writing about the global South, but also points us to the legacy of colonialism among new elites.

The article is in four main parts. First, it provides some general background on Edward Shils and his Indian connections. Then, secondly, it analyses and interrogates his 1961 study, entitled *The intellectual between tradition and modernity: the Indian situation*.[2] The third section of the article discusses the book's reception, and also what happened when it was discovered that CIA funding was behind the CCF. Fourthly and finally, I look at the legacy of Shils' work on India, its relevance today, and also why his reputation as an interpreter of Indian intellectual culture suffered, while the profile of other Indianists at the University of Chicago went from strength to strength.

[1] Fanon's work was translated into English two years later: F. Fanon, *The wretched of the earth* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1963). C. R. Johnson (pseud.) [C. L. R. James], *Marxism and the intellectuals* (Detroit: Facing Reality Publishing, 1963). On Pan-Africanism, see: Leslie James, *George Padmore and decolonization from below: Pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the end of empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[2] E. Shils, *The intellectual between tradition and modernity: the Indian situation* (The Hague: Mouton, 1961).

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Edward Shils and India

India was not part of Shils' original academic plan, nor was sociology. He studied French at the University of Pennsylvania and then became a research assistant for the Chicago School sociologist Louis Wirth, translated Max Weber and Karl Mannheim, and worked with Talcott Parsons at Harvard University on social theory and functionalism before joining the Office of Strategic Services (the United States intelligence service in the Second World War). This work brought him to London where he interviewed interned German officers about their loyalty. At this point Shils began writing about some of the important themes that would dominate his career as an intellectual and academic. He had an interest in charismatic leadership, noting that the German officer was more loyal to his immediate superior than to Nazi ideology. He published on the importance of tradition: for example, he co-authored an article with the British sociologist Michael Young on the meaning of the Queen's coronation in 1953.[3] And he wrote about the ethics of privacy and civility in general, but especially in relation to academic research and the precarious relationship between the state and knowledge production. It was against this backdrop that his monograph *The torment of secrecy* was conceived,[4] which railed against the effects of McCarthyism and asserted the importance of intellectuals and their institutions in both the West and in newly decolonized states and nations. Although the legacy of his work on intellectuals is highly regarded, his detractors label Shils as a conservative thinker, part of a moment in American conservatism that includes Russell Kirk, William F. Buckley, and Alan Bloom.[5] However, it might be more accurate to say that although Shils worked on tradition during an era of Cold War conservatism, he was in fact an unapologetic liberal, concerned above

[3] E. Shils and M. Young, 'The meaning of the coronation', *Sociological Review*, n.s., vol. 1, no. 2 (1953), pp. 63–81.

[4] E. Shils, *The torment of secrecy: the background and consequences of American security policies* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1956).

[5] For example, Susan Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph offered the following description in 1993: 'Edward Shils: sociologist, Weber translator, conservative theorist': S. Rudolph and L. Rudolph, 'Remembering Raman', *Times of India*, 25 July 1993, p. 13. For a recent reassessment of Shils (albeit one that does not look at his work on India), see: C. Adair-Toteff and S. Turner (eds), *The calling of social thought: rediscovering the work of Edward Shils* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), esp. Jefferson Pooley's chapter. See also: Stefan Collini, *Absent minds. Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 145–149.

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all to protect liberal democracy in the post-war world from the onslaught of the kind of fascism and communism that he had witnessed in contemporary Europe. For example, in 1955 he gave a talk at a CCF event in Italy arguing that tradition and sacred rules of conduct were not restrictive, but actually helped to maintain free society and individual liberty.[6]

While in London Shils met a number of Indian students. He started to interest himself in the politics and development of newly emergent states and the role played therein by the indigenous intelligentsia.[7] Shils was not alone in being drawn to this topic. Many post-war commentators identified intellectuals as the one group that could lead their countries into modernization. In his book, *Mandarins of the future: modernisation theory in Cold War America*, Nils Gilman has written about this phenomenon as a Cold War moment.[8] He cites Shils' speech at the Committee of Comparative Politics conference in New York in 1959, when he appealed to his fellow academics to emphasize the word 'modern', as opposed to 'Western', when dealing with the new nations of the developing world (not that Shils himself always followed his own advice, as we shall see).

India was an obvious case study for anyone who, like Shils, was interested in the modernization project and liberal democracy. India gained independence in 1947. From being the largest exemplar of imperial dominion of modern times in terms of the size of its subject population, India became the largest secular democratic republic in the world—and the eyes of the world were trained on the country. Journalists, economists, political scientists, and anthropologists from the United States and the West poured into India, funded, inter alia, by the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Carnegie Institute, in order to study and support the pioneers of the new democracy.[9] Film directors and architects followed. Frank Capra went

[6] E. Shils, 'Tradition and liberty: antinomy and interdependence' (typescript), 'The Future of Freedom Conference', Milan, 12–17 September 1955, 'Congress for Cultural Freedom', Folder 406, Box 65, Series 100, Rockefeller Foundation records, General Correspondence, RG2, 1952–1957, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York (hereafter Rockefeller Archive Center).

[7] E. Shils, 'Political development in the new states', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1960), pp. 265–292, at p. 267.

[8] N. Gilman, *Mandarins of the future: modernisation theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkin University Press, 2004), pp. 1–3.

[9] Mark T. Berger, *The battle for Asia: from decolonization to globalization (Asia's transformations)* (London: Routledge, 2004), Chapter 2; David C. Engerman, *The price of aid: the economic Cold War in India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018).

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to India in 1952 and was later told by Dean Acheson, Harry Truman's secretary of state,[10] that he had single-handedly forestalled a communist takeover of India films. The new city of Chandigarh was designed first by Albert Meyer, the American town planner, and then by the exciting French modernist Le Corbusier, announcing the ravaged provinces of Punjab, partitioned between India and Pakistan, as a new centre of global modernity. Roberto Rossellini came with a hundred kilograms of spaghetti to direct a documentary (and ran off with a married Indian celebrity).[11] Other Western visitors had less success. The African-American journalists Carl Rowan and J. Saunders Redding were heckled and ridiculed by Indians who were unwilling to be lectured to by so-called 'Uncle Toms', sent out to explain racial segregation in the United States to a nation of people who had just won their own freedom.[12]

From the University of Chicago a number of scholars homed in on India. The anthropologist Milton Singer worked on the religious mythology of Madras; the mathematician and classicist David Pingree wrote his Harvard PhD on Hellenic influence on Indian astrology; the historian Stephen Hay worked on Rabindranath Tagore and Mohandas Gandhi; the political scientist Myron Weiner, who came to Chicago for a spell after gaining his PhD from Princeton, studied the functioning of democracy in independent India; and Milton Friedman, the economist, who went out to India and reprimanded Nehru for his five-year plans. All these men were acting out the game plan of Robert Redfield, Robert Park's son-in-law and a pioneering anthropologist of rural Mexico. Using Ford Foundation money, Redfield, the dean of social sciences at the University of Chicago, transformed the Asian language expertise that had been developed at the university during the Second World War, turning it into a study and research programme on comparative Eastern civilization. If the civilizations of China, India, and Islam could be compared, Redfield surmised, then the similarities that comprise the core of human values could be discovered. This in turn could ensure peace in the traumatized post-1945 world. At Chicago, Redfield put together the Committee on Southern Asian Studies in 1955, comprising this coterie of scholars, including Shils. The same

[10] F. Capra, *The name above the title: an autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 437.
[11] R. Thapar, *All these years: a memoir* (Delhi: Seminar Publications, 1991), p. 154.
[12] See: C. Rowan, *The pitiful and the proud* (New York: Random House, 1956); J. Saunders Redding, *An American in India* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1954).

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group came together in 1960, when Shils and the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who was hired at Chicago in that same year, established the Committee for the Comparative Study of New Nations.[13] However, Shils' contact with Redfield goes back even further, to the summer of 1945. Both men were shocked by the effects of the atomic bomb, not only because of the devastation and unprecedented loss of civilian life wreaked in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also because of the danger that nuclear power posed to scholarship and the autonomy of scientific research. Together they set up the Office for the Social Aspects of Atomic Energy later that year.[14]

While India was a land of hope and a beacon for the rest of the colonized world, there were many who were fearful about the influence of her close neighbours. China and the former Soviet Union, both communist—the former a rising power and the latter already a superpower—were bearing down on India's fledgling democracy. One organization that was particularly concerned about keeping India outside the scope of communist ideology was the Congress for Cultural Freedom. This was a group of intellectuals, drawn largely from the non-communist Left but also including conservatives such as the English historian Hugh Trevor-Roper. All of them wanted to win the ideological war against communists that raged in the early years of the Cold War. This diverse group, which included luminaries such as Benedetto Croce, John Dewey, Arthur Koestler, Bertrand Russell, Carlo Schmid, Stephen Spender, and Tennessee Williams, first met in Berlin in 1950. Their second meeting was in Bombay the following year. Shils was an active member of the CCF from 1953. He helped to plan the Science and Freedom conference held in Milan in 1955 to which he, according to Chadbourne Gilpatric, the Humanities officer of the Rockefeller Foundation, 'escorted' his 'close friend' the civil servant and writer Astad Dinshaw Gorwala; the Socialist member of parliament Asoka Mehta; and the leading voice of the Indian Congress for Cultural Freedom, the politician Minocher, or Minoo, Masani.[15] By

[13] Memorandum 1, 8 May 1959, University of Chicago Committee for the Comparative Study of New Nations Records, 1958–1975, File 13, Box 2, Special Collections Research Centre, University of Chicago.

[14] John A. Simpson, 'A personal note', *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 37, no. 1 (1981), pp. 26–33, at p. 28.

[15] Chadbourne Gilpatric, 'Diary of South Asia Trip January–March 1956', 20–23 February 1956, Folder 397A, Box 60, Series 460, Rockefeller Foundation records, General Correspondence, RG2, 1952–1957, Rockefeller Archive Center. On the CCF in

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1957 Shils was a member of the planning committee based in Paris, charged with overseeing the activities of the CCF in Asia. Daniel Bell, in particular, saw Shils' involvement as crucial: '[s]ince India as you know better than anyone else, it's such a delicate country it needs preparation'.[16] Two years later, John Hunt, the CIA operative, novelist, and executive secretary of the International Association of Cultural Freedom, wrote to Shils to tell him that he would be paid a monthly salary of US$ 1,250 per month in return for which Shils would help to 'shape the entire program and I would say with particular reference to Asia' and be based in England.[17] This salary was increased to $3,600 in October 1961 for running the CCF's seminar programme and its Science and Freedom committee, and establishing and editing a new journal on education and policy entitled *Minerva*.[18]

Within the CCF, Shils was a dove-like presence. He tried hard to move the Congress away from being simply anti-communist, wanting instead to build a community of intellectuals signed up to a cosmopolitan agenda. In March 1962, he submitted his ideas on future strategy for the organization, arguing that the role of the CCF was not 'to win over intellectuals to any particular ideology or sway loyalty from their own countries'.[19] Instead, the CCF needed to create a fellowship which fought parochialism, specialism, and overcame the isolation of the intellectual community from mainstream thinking, particularly in new nations where intellectuals only existed in small numbers. To grow and strengthen the intellectual cadre, Shils also argued, young people and women needed to be encouraged and enlisted. When the Executive Committee met in

India, see: Paul McGarr, '"Quiet Americans in India": the CIA and the politics of intelligence in Cold War South Asia', *Diplomatic History*, vol. 38, no. 5 (2014), pp. 1046–1082; Eric Pullin, '"Money does not make any difference to the opinions that we hold": India, the CIA, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1951–58', *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 26 (2011), pp. 377–398.

[16] Herbert Passin to Edward Shils, 4 November 1957, International Association of Cultural Freedom Papers, File 13, Box 290, Special Collections Research Centre, University of Chicago.

[17] John C. Hunt to Edward Shils, 16 July 1959, International Association of Cultural Freedom Papers, File 14, Box 290, ibid.

[18] John C. Hunt to Edward Shils, 13 October 1961, International Association of Cultural Freedom Papers, File 4, Box 291, ibid.

[19] E. Shils, 'Confidential note, 'Further thoughts on the Congress in the '60s, for information of the members of the Executive Committee and International Council only', March 1962, International Association of Cultural Freedom Papers, File 7a, Box 291, ibid.

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Zurich to discuss his paper, Shils was adamant that the CCF must spell out what it was in favour of, rather than just what it opposed, commenting tartly that 'being a communist is unpleasant—being an anti-communist is also unpleasant—not quite as unpleasant as being communist—but it is not worthwhile in life just being opposed to something'.[20] However, although Shils may have been on the liberal end of the spectrum of anti-communist opinion on the CCF, he was tarred as a Cold War warrior when the links between the CCF and the CIA were revealed later on. I shall come to this controversy shortly, but let me first say more about Shils' contact with India, to place it in the context of his own work.

Shils' connection with India was long and enduring. He travelled to India for both the CCF and for academic work, one of the first of the Chicago School to go east and discover India. He spent a large part of 1955 and 1956 in India interviewing Indian intellectuals, as well as building up the Indian CCF, from his base in Delhi.[21] Thereafter, he spent at least a month there every year for the next dozen years, right until the time of CIA involvement was exposed in 1967. He also taught a summer school for three years at Agra, Delhi, and Bangalore, as well as spending three weeks in Delhi in 1962, advising and helping to write up the report on universities for the Indian Government's Commission on National Education.[22] When the report was finally published, Shils boasted of his involvement to Milton Singer, with a knowing wink: 'I think I have brought the commission almost entirely to my viewpoint. I have given them a number of papers … I feel a little like a second Macaulay one hundred and thirty years later!'[23]

Beyond India, Shils masterminded CCF activities. Along with Michael Polanyi and Daniel Bell, he organized a series of global symposiums called 'Mid Century Dialogues' on political economy, growth, and development in Rhodes, Oxford, Vienna, Ibadan, and Rheinfelden between 1956 and

[20] 'Intervention concernant le rapport de M. Shils', International Association of Cultural Freedom Committee Executive meeting, Zurich, 10–11/Mars 1962, p. 4, International Association of Cultural Freedom Papers, File 7a, Box 291, ibid.

[21] Nicolas Nabokov, 'Report on trip to India', 8 November–21 December 1956, Folder 406, Box 65, Series 100, Rockefeller Foundation records, General Correspondence, RG2, 1952–1957; Folder 514, Box 78, Series 100, Rockefeller Foundation records, General Correspondence, RG2, 1952–1957, both Rockefeller Archive Center.

[22] E. Shils, *A fragment of a sociological autobiography: the history of my pursuit of a few ideas* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006), p. 103.

[23] Edward Shils to Milton Singer, 11 March 1965, Milton Singer Papers, File 28/3, Special Collections Research Centre, University of Chicago.

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1959 to which he invited his Indian colleagues.[24] This symposium was held every year for three years, culminating in a meeting at New Delhi in 1961. Although he travelled around India, Shils preferred the *adda* (intellectual camaraderie or chit-chat) of Calcutta, where, despite his rather grumpy and gruff demeanour, he made lifelong friends with Satindranath Bannerjee, André Béteille, Nirad C. Chaudhari, and A. D. Gorwala. Moreover, Shils' connection with India continued away from the country. From 1961 he was based at the University of Cambridge for half of every year, and while there, sat on the board of the Centre of South Asian Studies (established in 1964) and the African Studies Centre—in his autobiography, he pointed out that he 'was the only person astride both of them'.[25] He also taught at the university on the political development of new states.[26] The remainder of each year saw him teaching at the University of Chicago and chairing the Committee of Social Thought as well as the Committee of New Nations. His courses included classes on 'New states', 'The roles of intellectuals in advanced and developing countries', and 'Elites in Asia and Africa'. He also ran a seminar on 'Problems of Indian intellectual life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'.[27]

In these fora Shils was joined by his Chicago colleagues. The roll-call included Geertz, Cohn, and Singer, as well as others such as McKim Marriott, Morris Janowitz, and Max Rheinstein, all focused on the new states that were being forged in Africa and Asia. This was a seminar programme in which Shils' interests could converge: his studies on Indian intellectuals, his work with the CCF, and his political commitment to shepherding newly liberated societies away from the influence of communism. Chicago was thus his intellectual home, but of course his fieldwork, such as it was, lay in India. Let us follow him there.

Shils' *The intellectual between tradition and modernity*

Shils conducted the research that led to his 1961 book as a good sociologist. His research on Indian intellectuals was a comparative case

[24] G. Scott-Smith, 'The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the end of ideology and the 1955 Milan conference: defining the parameters of discourse', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2002), pp. 437–455.

[25] Shils, *A fragment of a sociological autobiography*, p. 123.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Memorandum (n. d. 1965), Milton Singer Papers, File 28/3, Special Collections Research Centre, University of Chicago.

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study. He later clarified that his interest in India was governed by what he called the 'political propensities of intellectuals, first in Europe and America and then in recently emancipated and newly sovereign countries'[28] and that this work would always, of necessity, be comparative. He went on, 'A sociologist who studies a problem in a country other than his own is almost compelled, by virtue of the fact that his original concepts were formed with reference to problems in his own society and his own culture, to compare the situation he is studying in the foreign society with the situation in his own society'.[29] As a Weberian sociologist, Shils also believed in 'ideal types'. Like Karl Mannheim (whose work he translated), he saw intellectuals as basically classless, capable of transcending their own original social background through academic pursuits. So Shils was looking at intellectuals because he thought that they were the nerve-centre of society, that they had the power to build or change social direction. Furthermore, the intellectuals of newly independent states had a still greater importance, because they were tasked with creating the nation anew.

Shils' methodology was thorough. He based his study on interviews conducted with a thousand 'intellectuals'. These were university lecturers and professors, civil servants, journalists, and authors. It is noteworthy that all of his interviewees were men. He visited their homes, reviewed their reading habits, talked about their attitudes towards marriage and caste, and made observations on their tastes and life choices. The thousand men that he picked were a relatively small sample compared with the 160,000 intellectuals that he estimated made up the Indian intelligentsia, a figure he derived from adding together the number of people who had passed the competitive Indian Civil Service exams and other professional entrance tests. However, these interviews, as well as a look at the intellectual environment in which these people worked and lived, were sufficient for him to report on the Indian situation with confidence. Transcripts of the interviews, unfortunately, do not survive, but a visiting official from the Rockefeller Foundation observed Shils going at his work with energy: 'he has two or three interviews a day, sometimes lasting four hours. He reads the publications of each man and has built up a remarkable library of

[28] E. Shils, 'Introduction', in his *Centre and periphery: essays in macrosociology. (Selected papers of Edward Shils 2)* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975), p. xi.

[29] E. Shils, 'The confluence of sociological traditions', in his *The calling of sociology and other essays on the pursuit of learning. (Selected papers of Edward Shils 3)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 160.

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speeches, books, pamphlets and other materials, probably not available to students in the United States.'[30]

Shils began his book by describing the main influences on Indian intellectual endeavour. He did not think it necessary to go beyond the nineteenth century. For Shils, echoing Occidental prejudices in which the basis of all modernity was Western civilization, Indian thought emerged during colonial rule and was its result. Thus, in one fell swoop, rather like Macaulay, he dismissed the entire edifice of indigenous thought. Indeed, the main reason, he argued, why it was so important to look at these Indians was that theirs was an intellectual tradition that had successfully taken on Western beliefs and ways of thinking. In his opinion, the Indian intelligentsia was more like the West's than any other country's intelligentsia, apart from Japan.[31] Part of his definition of what it meant to be an intellectual was that one should be educated at a university, be that one of the federal 'Presidency' colleges established by the British (Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay) or a university in the West such as Cambridge, Oxford, or London. It was also thanks to British and some local Indian initiatives that intellectual organizations, such as the Royal Asiatic Society, dominated the Indian landscape of India's intellectuals. Shils described the resulting institutional apparatus—the libraries, bookshops, university seminars, research laboratories, reading rooms, publishers, bibliographic services, learned societies, journals, clubs, and cafes—as complex and dense. India was thus rich not only in the numbers of its intellectuals but also the spaces in which they could operate.

However, in Shils' view, India was a poor country and this poverty had a telling effect on its intellectual citizenry. It did not pay to be an academic or an author in the country. The life of the mind was a hard one, unless you could rely on inherited wealth. An academic was paid a pittance. Making a living as an author was even less financially viable. This also meant that the men Shils interviewed did not own many books, a fact he found a convenient explanation for by referring to Hindu beliefs in non-attachment. They lived in conditions that were, according to him, tacky and in bad taste. If they were employed in a college, the hierarchy, lack of facilities, and Kafkaesque bureaucracy meant that, '[f]undamentally the Indian college is a mind-deadening machine'.[32]

[30] Chadbourne Gilpatric, 'Diary of South Asia Trip January–March 1956', Rockefeller Archive Center.

[31] Shils, *The intellectual between tradition and modernity*, p. 18.

[32] Ibid., p. 46.

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This was also, he concluded, why so many of the brightest academic minds sought careers in the government or in the West where the rewards for their considerable achievements were far greater.

Having thus set out the importance of his inquiry and the institutional context in which his subjects lived and worked, Shils went on to present his 'findings'. They were the central part of his book but also had been substantially prefigured in two research papers published in 1959.[33] Shils' main argument was that Indian intellectuals were not sufficiently detached from their culture. A degree of rootlessness and alienation was necessary for any intellectual to function, to be imaginative, and to make a difference. This applied to intellectuals everywhere, whether in Chicago or Calcutta. However, Indian intellectuals were neither Indian enough, nor Western enough, and lacked a coherent intellectual tradition. As a result, they situated themselves permanently in opposition to their nation's political culture.

For Shils, intellectual tradition radiated outwards from the West to the rest of the world. There was an intellectual metropolis—Europe and North America—and its periphery or provinces—areas that were intellectually dependent on the West. This was the 'indispensable condition of modernisation of intellectual life' and was not permanent or fixed, but a fluid process that would lead to the intellectual tradition of each nation becoming as robust and modern as those of its mentors. His examples of former intellectual 'provinces' were eighteenth-century Russia and the United States in the nineteenth century—countries where, despite the considerable cultural and artistic innovations generated indigenously, national intellectual life was still derivative of outside influences and driven by what Shils called 'parochial self-sufficiency' to seek advances in science and scholarship. It should not be too surprising that, in the age of Walt Rostow and Andre Gunder Frank, Shils was using the language of dependency and stages of development. Equally, it is hard to miss his description, albeit uncritical, of intellectual centres and peripheries or provinces, 40 years before Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincialising Europe*, a manifesto-like critique of the tendency to equate modernity with the West.[34] The problem with Indian intellectuals, argued Shils, was their unremitting

[33] E. Shils, 'The culture of the Indian intellectual', *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 67, no. 2 (1959), pp. 239–261; E. Shils, 'The culture of the Indian intellectual', *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 67, no. 3 (1959), pp. 401–421.

[34] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

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deference to the work, ideas, research agendas, and academic standards that emanated from abroad, especially from Britain. As he wrote, '[t]he sad fact is that India is not an intellectually independent country'.[35] The Indian intellectuals Shils encountered were obsessed with the Western world, like Chekhov's provincials, always awaiting news from Moscow.[36] They judged their own research by comparing it with that taking place in Oxbridge or the American Ivy League colleges, and privileged Western academic journals and publishers over those in India. In fact, these views were widely expressed by Indians at the time and lay behind the drive to reform the higher education system inherited from colonial rule.

Shils was thus acutely aware how important the legacy of colonialism was for the Indian intelligentsia. As he said, '[t]he truth of the matter is that the British not only ruled India for a long time but they also took partial possession of the Indian mind'.[37] Every ideal towards which the imaginary Indian was drawn was taken from Britain: 'The novels he reads, the science he studies and practices, the principles of administration which he applies, the economic policy which he recommends or seeks to carry out, all come from the foreign metropolis.'[38] Shils claimed that these ideals resonated with Indians who struggled to survive in the haphazard economic conditions of hardship, tried to have a choice in who they married, lived in hierarchical extended family arrangements, and fought to influence how they taught. Shils' informants suggested that the liberty they had learned about while in the bosom of empire had left an enduring trace. The British colonial project had been so successful at penetrating the indigenous mind because English was the language of administration and education, the *lingua franca* of power and control. Shils also showed that his informants had fallen in love with the Anglophone literary scene. One of the pieces of evidence he used to exemplify this was the 1947 survey carried out by the Madras publisher, Natesan, on the favourite authors of India's elite.[39] Without exception, those questioned listed mostly British, and some American, authors. A few of the respondents regretted that they had only named a few Sanskrit works,

[35] Shils, *The intellectual between tradition and modernity*, p. 78.
[36] Shils, *A fragment of a sociological autobiography*, p. 113.
[37] Shils, *The intellectual between tradition and modernity*, p. 79.
[38] Ibid., p. 86.
[39] B. Natesan, *Books that have influenced me: a symposium* (Madras: G. A. Natesan and Co., 1947).

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but none mentioned any European writers who were familiar with Indian vernacular languages. Shils, in the context of the debates raging at the time in government and the media alike about India having a national language of its own, was aware of the call in some universities for English to be dropped as the main medium of instruction. Others argued that losing English would be a move towards insularity and leave India even more backward. Shils picked up on this theme in his book, claiming: '[e]ven where the world which is seen through the window is French or German or Russian or American, the "window" remains British. Science, Marxism, psychoanalysis and existentialism are not British, but these too come largely through translations made in England, through British books and periodicals.'[40]

Britain's centrality and ubiquity in Indian academic life reaffirmed the provincial status of Indian intellectuals. They could not sustain themselves without referring or deferring to the British metropolis. The most respected intellectuals were those who had come back from the West (the 'foreign returned'). The most important textbooks were British. So how could an Indian intellectual get out of this provincial mindset? Shils saw nationalism as the most immediate, but not necessarily the most helpful, response. Rather than a way out, it was a constant reminder of the distance between province and metropolis which Indian intellectuals faced. As Shils stated, the Indian intellectual 'cannot escape into London in the way a young man or woman from Leeds or Nottingham or Cardiff can escape, assimilating himself in it with the reasonable expectation that, after a few years, he too will have ceased to be provincial'.[41] The only way out was to develop an indigenous modern cultural tradition, sustain it, nurture it, and ensure that it became so embedded that everyone came to think of it as home.

Having discussed what Indian intellectuals owed to the West, Shils then turned to examine their own domestic arrangements. For Shils, another barrier in the way of the development of a modern intellectual culture were the ties that bound the intelligentsia to their home, their family, and, especially, their caste. Shils' thinking on caste is curious: on the one hand, he accepted its logic, but, on the other, he condemned its continuing impact on Indian society. In his view the Indian intellectuals

[40] Shils, *The intellectual between tradition and modernity*, p. 82. For the background, see: Sujit Choudhry, 'Language', in Sujit Choudhry et al. (eds), *The Oxford handbook of the Indian constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 180–183.

[41] Shils, *The intellectual between tradition and modernity*, p. 87.

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who thrived were those who worked in the fields closest to the traditional roles of the Brahman scholar: 'Sanskrit linguistic and grammatical studies, mathematics, statistics and theoretical physics'.[42] He also accepted that, as a caste, Brahmans were intellectually 'superior' simply because they populated universities and had been educated in the West or in Western-inspired universities such as the Presidency colleges. However, Shils also condemned the pervasive and divisive character of the caste system which cut off Indian intellectuals from the majority of their own compatriots.

Shils claimed to have observed his intellectuals at close range. He wrote about their marriages, their domestic habits, their social mores, and the contradictions between their stated politics and their actual practices. For example, he noted that most of his interviewees had married within their caste and after marriage remained in the family home, where the mother was the centre of the domain. They ate in the family unit to avoid caste 'impurity', and tended to observe caste customs so as not to upset the sentiments of the extended family. 'Many who have few or no conscious desires to maintain caste barriers and who are proud of the inter-caste nature of some of their friendships would not think of inviting a person from another caste to take food with them at home "because it would cause distress to my women-folk".'[43] In accepting and perpetuating these mores, intellectuals were restricting their own development: their prejudices helped to perpetuate inequality and prevented their fellow citizens from joining academia through more meritocratic systems. The entire project of intellectual modernization was thus compromised because prejudice was so ingrained that intellectuals were simply unaware just how much it dominated Indian life:

> It is the caste system which helps deaden the imagination to the state of mind of other human beings. It is the caste system, perhaps even more than the other factors like poverty and the crushing ubiquity of other human beings, which makes the upper-caste Hindus, from whose circles most Indian intellectuals are recruited, fundamentally and humanly insensate to the mass of the population who belong to the lower castes.[44]

For Shils the most profound effect of the caste system was to make the Indian intellectual socially blind, unable to empathize with others in their society. Shils saw this in the Indian press, which, for him, had

[42] Ibid., p. 27.
[43] Ibid., p. 63.
[44] Ibid., p. 70.

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little concern with human interest or social reportage. He saw it in Indian literature: he believed the Indian novel was 'poorly developed'. And he bemoaned the state of his own discipline: empirical sociology was 'practically non-existent', a sweeping judgement that betrayed his ignorance of developments in the field at Lucknow and Bombay.[45]

In characterizing the Indian scene in this way, Shils seems to have fallen into the trap of cultural reductionism that he himself had criticized in Karl Mannheim's work, that is to say, a 'sociology of knowledge' in which ideas are shaped fundamentally from the position in society of the intellectual putting them forward.[46] Shils put great store on the domestic environment of Indian intellectuals and its psychological and social effects on their outlook. Caste was centrally important, the role of the women in the house being the other principal determinant. These were the main obstacles in the way of the Indian intellectual's development—the shackles of religiosity reinforcing the imperative of having to provide for the household. Poverty emasculated Indian intellectuals, making them, in Shils' words, 'despised and disregarded'. The Indian intellectual was acutely sensitive to the contradictions between his 'desire to be a democrat' and his obligations to his caste and community.[47] In accepting the rules of the game, Indian intellectuals were irremovably rooted in their own culture.[48]

Shils emphasized this theme in his article in *Encounter*, published in the same year as his book, in which he sought to explain student protest in India. Long before May 1968, student protests were a constant of academic life in India. According to Shils, students were in turmoil because more of them were coming from families 'with less of the traditional, indigenous or Westernized respect for learning—from families where English was less spoken and understood'.[49] Thus, without really getting to the bottom of the actual reasons for student unrest, Shils concluded that student protestors recruited their activists because they were not as clever as other students. He also considered that these students were easily led by older students who remained on campus despite coming to the end of their studies, and that they also

[45] Ibid.

[46] For this criticism of Mannheim, see: Shils, *A fragment of a sociological autobiography*, pp. 33–37.

[47] Ibid., p. 69.

[48] Ibid., p. 64.

[49] E. Shils, 'Indian students, rather Sadhus than Philistines', *Encounter*, vol. 17, no. 3 (September 1961), pp. 12–20, at p. 16.

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were drawn into agitations because their anxiety about unemployment and poverty could be forgotten in the 'immediate delights of denunciation and resistance against his elders'.[50] However, for Shils, the most important factors that drove student protest were that, given the later age of marriage and concomitant lack of sexual intercourse, there was little to 'bind the youth into a pleasing or compelling routine'.[51] This claim had been implicit in his 1961 book, but was further developed in the piece for *Encounter*. In Shils' words, '[a] mind which cannot attach itself to intellectual objects, a libido which is prevented from attaching itself to sexual objects, a spirit which resents the burden of familial discipline and resists incorporation into modern impersonal adult institutions—what direction can it take except rebellion, blind causeless rebellion?'[52]

Shils thus explained the dilemma of the Indian intellectual as being simultaneously not Indian enough and yet too Indian, too reliant on the West, and yet too rooted in caste and matriarchy at home. The interviewees that he spoke to remembered their education in the West during the aftermath of the Great Depression and the Independence movement. Many had been impressed, especially, by the magnetism of Gandhi and his denunciation of the 'brown sahibs' of his country, contrasting the sense of purpose of those years with the dampening disillusionment of idealism of the late 1950s. This manifested itself in similar attitudes and prejudices, and explained, for Shils, certain political tendencies adopted by his informants. Was nationalism a way out? In his view, nationalism stemmed from a sense of being aggrieved or alienated from those who ruled the nation.[53] Nationalism, in India, but also earlier in Russia and Ireland, had involved campaigns to 'return to the people'. In India this meant learning about Indian art, architecture, dance and music crafts, and folk style. These nationalists connected with village India and its peasants; they read religious texts (in English) in order to reach out to ordinary, uneducated, and unintellectual people. It was also manifested, for example in the revival of hand crafts and the development of regional crafts emporiums initiated by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya and others, as well as the national revival of dance forms such as Kathakali and Bharat Natyam.

[50] Ibid., p. 18.
[51] Ibid., p. 19.
[52] Ibid., p. 20.
[53] Shils, *The intellectual between tradition and modernity*, p. 71.

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Surprisingly, Shils saw all this as a descent into what he termed 'populism', which he defined as imputing superior virtues to the simple peasant. In his somewhat simplistic analysis, Gandhi was its source, and after the assassination of the Mahatma, he saw it as surviving and prospering under the leadership of men such as Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narayan, and Jawaharlal Nehru.[54] In Shils' eyes, they were Gandhi's heirs and legatees, who fashioned a politics of disdain towards bureaucracy, championed the village community, and (as Bhave and Narayan in following Gandhi) renounced worldly concerns by retreating into the ashram.

With populism came socialism, and Shils tried to explain why Indian intellectuals were so drawn to Marxism. This was, he argued, not so much because of its scientific 'pretensions', but rather from a mixture of prejudice and hope. Shils described how these intellectuals had picked up derogatory notions of business and business practice popularized in British socialist tracts of the 1930s and 1940s, an attitude that was reinforced by a Brahmanical disdain for commercial castes. Shils, and others, also noted how Indian intellectuals saw in the political experiments of the Soviet Union and communist China an opportunity to fundamentally change society. In a context in which the Indian intellectual was 'the insulted and the injured', and conscious of his duty to improve his country, the attractions of a socialist India, Shils concluded, were inevitable. Socialist thinking, for Shils, was not a problem in itself: his concern was more that it might lead to totalitarian dogma that would stifle rather than encourage intellectual debate. Although an active member of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an anti-communist organization, Shils' agenda in this book was not to fulminate against international communism, but rather to set out an alternative, a positive model for intellectuals of newly independent countries. His understanding of the Indian situation led him to conclude that the best Indian intellectuals either worked for the government, attracted by the access to power and the fact that it was the one agency capable of effecting change in the new state, or they ended up as resentful outsiders within opposition groups linked to the Communist Party. In his view, neither path would create, nurture, and sustain a modern intellectual culture, a new force that would pave the way for Indian intellectuals to innovate and invent—to become, parochially stated, a Chicago School in and of the East.

[54] Ibid., p. 102.

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Shils' solution to the predicament of the Indian intellectual was a return to the traditions that had existed in colonial India, expressed in the form of societies such as the 'Servants of India'. This culture of national social service, he observed, was dying a slow death, as the young elite of the nation were increasingly recruited into government and administration. Instead, they needed to return to ideals of civic responsibility espoused by an older generation, and he took hope in the trend by which groups of young men met to discuss social, political, and cultural topics.[55] Here lay an organic source of change in India, and Shils set great store by its development.

Reactions to Shils

Predictably the reception to Shils' work in India was mixed. At first it was met with anger, resentment, and sarcasm. One reviewer in the *Times of India* accused Shils of reheating old stories about the detached intellectual as an 'obnoxious variation on the tiresome theme of Indian spirituality'. Others, such as Vinod Sena, took Shils more seriously, rejecting his claims and saying Indians needed to return to their Hindu past in the manner of Mohandas Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and Swami Vivekananda, not embrace modernity. Did not, Sena suggested, Vivekananda, Tagore, and Gandhi shed their 'provinciality and self-derogation', and did they not feel themselves 'to be at a creative centre, one of the world's creative centres? Might not the modern Indian intellectual's road to freedom lie the same way?'[56] Shils' critique of Indian students also brought rebuke, notably from Ranjit Gupta, who accused him of being patronizing.[57] As time passed, however, many Indian writers came to be influenced by Shils' ideas, to value his research, and quote him at length. Three trends can be identified. First, some Indian sociologists, especially some that Shils had met and interviewed, for example André Béteille, deployed Weberian analysis of the kind Shils advocated and took his concepts and work to the next stage within some of the frameworks set by him. This, in turn, has

[55] Ibid., p. 115.

[56] N. J. N., 'Sunday soliloquies', *The Times of India*, 17 February 1963, p. 8; V. Sena, 'Discussion: the dilemmas of the Indian intellectual, a counter-statement', *Quest*, vol. 26 (1960), pp. 73–83, at p. 83.

[57] R. Gupta, 'Books', *Seminar*, vol. 44 (April 1963), p. 38; cf. M. Rao, 'Institutional failure', ibid., p. 21; Kusum Madgarkar, 'Review', *Seminar*, vol. 92 (April 1967), p. 37.

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established a particularly Indian liberal tradition of sociological thinking, one that is more Weberian in approach and one that could, in political terms, be labelled free thinking rather than Marxist or conservative.[58] The second trend, understandable in the circumstances, if misdirected, has identified Shils as a conservative, who thought of tradition as backward, its shackles preventing Indians from fashioning a modern society.[59] As discussed here, this is not what Shils was arguing: he was more concerned with the isolation, not the atavism, of the Indian intellectual. However, his approach was so flawed by Orientalist notions of Indian history and explicit assumptions about the supremacy of the West, that most commentators have not been able to see past his Occidental conceit. Other Chicago scholars also wrote about the developing world from much the same perspective, employing a tripartite division, of first, second, and third worlds, albeit without Shils' insistence that West was best.[60] And new nations themselves used these categories to their political advantage, for example, the first prime minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru, at the Bandung conference of 1955, as he urged the 'people of Asia and Africa' to unite against the superpowers.[61] The third trend is evident among those Indian and Western commentators who accepted Shils' characterization of the Indian intellectual. Most of these were fellow American sociologists or Indians trained in the United States.[62] They ensured that by the 1970s, Shils' depiction of the subordinated Indian academic would be routinely invoked in studies of higher education in South Asia.[63]

[58] André Béteille, *Ideologies and intellectuals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

[59] Rudolph and Rudolph, 'Remembering Raman'.

[60] For this criticism of Shils, see: McKim Marriott, 'Constructing an Indian ethnosociology', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, vol. 23, no. 1 (1989), pp. 1–39.

[61] Nehru, 'Asia and Africa awake', Speech at the Concluding Session of the Asian-African Conference at Bandung, Indonesia, 24 April 1955, in *Jawaharlal Nehru's speeches, Vol. 3: March 1953–August 1957* (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1958), pp. 288–291.

[62] A. K. Singh, 'The impact of foreign study: the Indian experience', *Minerva*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1962), pp. 43–53, at p. 47; Irene Gilbert, 'The Indian academic profession: the origins of a tradition of subordination', ibid., vol. 10, no. 3 (1972), pp. 384–411.

[63] H. C. Srivastava, *Intellectuals in contemporary India* (New Delhi: Heritage, 1977); K. N. Panikkar, *Culture, ideology, hegemony: intellectuals and social consciousness in colonial India* (New Delhi: Tuloka, 1995); Philip Altbach, 'The distorted guru' (1979), in Pawan Agarwal (ed.), *A half-century of Indian higher education: essays by Philip G. Altbach* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012), pp. 125–159; Kameshwar Choudhary, *Intellectuals and society: a study of teachers in India* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2004).

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Curiously, those who review Shils' work have not been primarily interested in his claims about the ubiquity of caste in Indian academic life and its detrimental effects on scholarly life. That is not to say that they argue that the Indian intelligentsia ignored caste. It is, after all, a central feature of the Indian academy: for example, just consider the issue of the place of Dalit (or so-called 'Untouchable') students and giving university places to them and other deprived or disadvantaged communities. In the 1970s, policies of positive discrimination in Indian higher education reserved places for staff and students from such backgrounds. Shils opposed affirmative action for black and women students in the United States, so it is likely that he would not have favoured such moves in India. But, his perspective on caste—as blinkering the intellectuals whom he interviewed—was missed by reviewers and critics. Nor did any of them engage with Shils' call for institutions that would nurture research and teaching programmes aimed at solving Indian, as opposed to Western, problems. Having said that, Indian participants in the Congress for Cultural Freedom—men such as A. B. Shah and Asoka Mehta—were involved in the discussions that led to the creation of a new national university: the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), which opened its doors in 1969, conceived to 'promote the study of the principles for which Jawaharlal Nehru had worked during his lifetime, national integration, social justice, secularism, democratic way of life, scientific approach to the problems of society'.[64] And many of its subsequent students and staff saw it as a space where the barriers of caste and gender would not be allowed to stifle academic work. However, judging from the Marxist bent of the most radical initiatives in JNU, this was certainly not the sort of institution envisaged by Shils.

Ultimately, Shils' reputation in India never recovered from the revelations in 1967 that, all along, he had been a 'Cold War warrior'. In that year, *Ramparts*, a New York magazine, began exposing the links between the CIA and cultural aid programmes since the end of the Second World War. Soon the fact that the Congress for Cultural Freedom had been administered by a CIA operative from the very

[64] Report of the Visiting Committee to the JNU, 1–2 February 1972, Appendix; *46–48th Inter-University Board Annual Meeting, 1971–3, Proceedings* (New Delhi: Inter-University Board of India and Ceylon, 1973), p. 49. For the JNU, see: R. Batabyal, *JNU: the making of a university* (Delhi: Harper Collins, 2014); Shalini Sharma and Rajat Datta, 'Jawaharlal Nehru University: a university for the nation', in Jill Pellew and Miles Taylor (eds), *Utopian universities: a global history of the new campuses of the 1960s* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

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beginning, funding each international initiative, including its extensive operation in India, became common knowledge. The issue was debated in the Indian parliament and Indian recipients of CIA money were condemned as anti-national stooges of Anglo-American imperialism.[65] Many Indian members of the CCF claimed ignorance of the CIA connection; others were instrumental in hounding the CIA operative, Michael Josselson, out of the Congress, continuing to work instead with a renamed organization until its eventual demise.[66] However, CCF connections did not tarnish the reputations of Indians as much as it did that of the Americans who had been its beneficiaries. One, Minoo Masani, led the Swatantra party to become the main opposition after the 1967 elections. Another, Jayaprakash Narayan, was Indira Gandhi's chief antagonist in 1975, rallying students and railway strikers just before the Emergency. Their credibility was not damaged. But Shils remained loyal to Josselson till the end. He felt that anyone who feigned ignorance of the CIA's role was lying or trying to survive in the political context of the time. For Shils, all funding—government or charity, public or illicit—was tainted if intellectuals played the tune required of them by donors.[67] However, if the funds were deployed solely to encourage freedom of scholarship and intellectual endeavour, which he believed all funding should, the CIA connection, he argued, did not warrant the hue and cry it generated. Be that as it may, it can surely be no coincidence that Shils was never to return to India after 1967. In the preface to the third volume of his collected works, *The calling of sociology*, published in 1980, Shils wrote: 'India which for many years was one of the countries most studied by foreign social scientists, particularly American, began several years ago to put some restrictions on such study; controlling visas.'[68] One can assume that Shils was himself a victim of this process.

[65] 'Question no. 1 (Lok Sabha) by Shri George Fernandes Regarding Activities of CIA', 20 March 1967, Ministry of External Affairs, File WII/125/67/Pt I, National Archives of India.

[66] For the fall-out in India after the revelations, see: K. K. Singh to A. B. Shah, 6 June 1967, International Association of Cultural Freedom Papers, File 351/5, Special Collections Research Centre, University of Chicago; Jayaprakash Narayan to Raymond Aron, 22 June 1967, Congress for Cultural Freedom Correspondence, Jayaprakash Narayan Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum, New Delhi; Minoo Masani to Jayaprakash Narayan, 25 July 1967, ibid.

[67] E. Shils, 'The invitation to Caesar', *Minerva*, vol. 10, no. 4 (1972), pp. 513–519.

[68] E. Shils, 'The legitimacy of social inquiry', in his *The calling of sociology*, p. 487.

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Although he would refer to Indian intellectuals and teach about India throughout the remainder of his working life, Shils never did complete the larger book of which his 1961 monograph was only intended to be an introduction. This is in stark contrast to other members of the Chicago School who focused on India. The anthropologists Milton Singer and Bernard Cohn were prolific, with the latter influencing not only his own discipline, but also given pride of place in the famous 'Subaltern studies' group, which revolutionised the social and cultural history of colonial India.[69] One big difference between later Chicago Indianists and Shils was his role in the CCF, and the abrasive manner in which he refused to recant or apologize, although by the end of the 1960s, there were others, notably a growing rejection of the concept of 'tradition', signalled in the work of Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph.[70]

The legacy of Shils' work on India

What can Shils' work on Indian intellectuals in the late 1950s tell us today? The first obstacle to a balanced assessment is to confront Shils' status as a 'Cold War warrior'. It undoubtedly explains why he does not occupy a more prominent place in the history of South Asian scholarship, at Chicago and beyond. The university has named a reading room after Shils, but nowhere has it recorded his India-related activity. This omission continues in recent work on Shils' colleague, Robert Redfield.[71] In rewriting the history of the Chicago School and South Asia in which the role of its most prominent pioneer has been written out is reminiscent of political power games described in Pierre

[69] David Ludden, 'Introduction: a brief history of subalternity', in D. Ludden (ed.), *Subaltern studies. Critical history, contested meaning and the globalisation of South Asia* (London: Anthem Press, 2002), pp. 1–42.

[70] E. Shils and P. Coleman, 'Remembering the Congress for Cultural Freedom', *Society*, vol. 46, no. 5 (2009), pp. 437–444. For these shifts, see: Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Rudolph, *The modernity of tradition: political development in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Arjun Appadurai, 'Knowledge, circulation and collective biography', in Jackie Assayag and Véronique Bénéï (eds), *At home in diaspora: South Asian scholars and the West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), pp. 28–43.

[71] Richard H. Davis, *South Asia at Chicago: a history* (Chicago: Committee on South Asian Studies, 1985); Nicole Sackley, 'Cosmopolitanism and the uses of tradition: Robert Redfield and alternative visions of modernisation during the Cold War', *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 9, no. 3 (2012), pp. 565–595.

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Bourdieu's *Homo academicus*, with Shils as victim.[72] Welcomed initially as an expert ready to document India's modernity, by the early 1960s there was no place for Shils within an Indian intellectual scene that was increasingly nationalist and influenced by both socialism and communism. This challenges the idea that Shils symbolized a powerful Western gaze and the simplistic view that the adoption and development of knowledge in India has been dominated by the West and has been based on practices—superior or inferior—borrowed from the West. Rather, it was negotiated on a number of levels—one of which was political orientation. And in that respect, Shils was stranded by Indians moving rapidly to the left, while he remained tired and unmoving in his conservatism. In 1967 when the CIA exposure broke, this left him vulnerable, his reputation in tatters, and his contribution rejected.

For all that, Shils' findings should not be ignored. His book offered the first comprehensive critique of the peculiar predicament of intellectuals in India, summed up in the paradox that they were both too Indian and yet not Indian enough. Years later, in 1983, Ashis Nandy, the Bengali political psychologist, made a similar argument, emphasizing, as Shils had done, the traumatic after-effects of centuries of imperial rule on the mental habits of Indian intellectuals.[73] There are still hints of that today. Ironically, some of India's best-known intellectuals are those who have had their careers overseas, for example, scholars such as Amartya Sen or Gayatri Spivak, both based in the United States (the universities of Harvard and Columbia respectively)—and, of course, India has come to Chicago, Homi Bhabha and Dipesh Chakrabarty being two outstanding exemplars. By interrogating issues that are peculiar to India, these Indian scholars have the authority to address problems in economics, culture, and society that go well beyond India.

Shils also addressed, admittedly in a different context, one of the most pressing issues of contemporary Indian politics: the undercurrent and impact of populism. He appreciated how Indian intellectuals were both attracted by and vulnerable to a rhetoric that elevated the ordinary people who had been neglected by the political elites. In India, populism has forced its way into academic study: written by elites, be they the colonial power or the official nationalism of Congress,

[72] Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo academicus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).
[73] Ashis Nandy, *The intimate enemy: loss and recovery of self under colonialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

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'Subaltern studies' themselves have been a form of 'going to the people' to restore their place in history. And, of course, populism has been mobilized as a political force in modern India, most emphatically since 2014, when Narendra Modi rode to power on a wave of Hindu popular nationalism.[74] It is striking how complicit much of India's intelligentsia has been in Modi's rise and in explaining away, and sometimes justifying, the ominous anti-Muslim and anti-Dalit mood that has developed, not least on Indian university campuses. In Shils' work, we find the classic plea for intellectuals to remain independent, to be the custodians of disinterested liberalism, never more important today than at any previous juncture in the history of independent India. As a neglected founding father of South Asian studies at Chicago, and as an early chronicler of the 'argumentative Indian', Edward Shils is worth another look, and his contributions deserve a permanent place in understanding the endangered role of the intellectual in India's history.

[74] Narendra Subramanian, 'Populism in India', *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2007), pp. 81–91; Christophe Jaffrelot and Louise Tillin, 'Populism in India', in Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser et al. (eds), *The Oxford handbook of populism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 179–194.

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