

AMLAN DATTA

---

RELIGION  
EDUCATION  
AND  
DEVELOPMENT



ORIENT LONGMANS

BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS NEW DELHI

**ORIENT LONGMANS LTD.**

REGD. OFFICE: HAMILTON HOUSE, 'A' BLOCK, CONNAUGHT PLACE, NEW DELHI 1

NICOL ROAD, BALLARD ESTATE, BOMBAY 1

17 CHITTARANJAN AVENUE, CALCUTTA 13

36A MOUNT ROAD, MADRAS 2

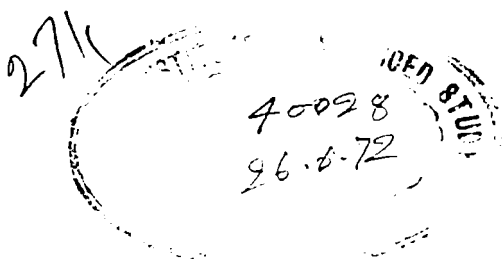
3/5 ASAF ALI ROAD, NEW DELHI 1

**LONGMANS, GREEN & CO. LTD.**

LONGMAN HOUSE, BURNT MILL, HARLOW, ESSEX, ENGLAND

*Associated companies, branches and representatives  
throughout the world*

*First published 1968*



© Orient Longmans Ltd. 1968

080  
D 262



Library

IAS, Shimla

080 D 262 R



00040028

PRINTED IN INDIA

BY P. K. GHOSH AT EASTEND PRINTERS  
3 DR SURESH SARKAR ROAD, CALCUTTA-14

To  
*Tarkateertha Laxman Shastri Joshi,*  
*a radical with roots in the soil*

## PREFACE

ANY simple account of social development is likely to be false. This is so because development is full of paradoxes and 'contradictions'. Some of these apparently contradictory requirements of progress are considered here in their several aspects: religious, cultural, political and economic. In much of this book ideas have been set forth, sometimes quite explicitly, against an Indian background. Yet I should not be surprised if these ideas were found relevant to problems and experiences of a wide variety of other developing societies.

Most of the articles collected in this book appeared earlier in various journals, such as *Quest*, *The Economic Weekly*, *The Education Quarterly*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *Now*.

The two longest essays here were published in the form of pamphlets by the Indian Renaissance Institute at Dehradun. All these, however, have been revised and considerably rewritten before inclusion in this book.

Since some of these articles provide the context for the others, it is hoped that their meaning will be clearer as a result of being brought together in a single volume.

Calcutta University  
Calcutta-50  
April, 1968

AMLAN DATTA

## CONTENTS

- 1 Hinduism, Reason and Justice *1*
  - 2 Liberalism, Puritanism and Economic Development *14*
  - 3 Science and Society *20*
  - 4 Education, Science and Economic Development *27*
  - 5 Quality and Equality in Education *38*
  - 6 Reflections on Economic Transition *46*
  - 7 Class War and Social Progress *62*
  - 8 Leadership in Economic Transition and the Concept of Property *69*
  - 9 On "Contradictions" in a Developing Society *78*
  - 10 Authority in a Transitional Society *84*
  - 11 On the Materialistic Interpretation of History *90*
  - 12 Reason, Faith and Social Progress *108*
- Index 121*

## Hinduism, Reason and Justice

---

RELIGION aims at a conception of the good that is timeless. Yet this conception can be made real and relevant in life only by being interpreted in time. It is in this sense that religion is, as Saint-Simon pointed out long ago, relative to the stage of the development of human knowledge, science and technology. It is only by indicating over and over again the distinction between what is essential to religion and what is inessential, and by restating the essential in the context of contemporary society, that its message can be made meaningful to modern man. To attempt this in our special context is part of the task of the Indian renaissance.

India is a land of many religions. What I have to say in the following pages has a limited scope and an almost exclusive reference to Hinduism and allied faiths.

At one level, and in a sense the highest, Hinduism is concerned with the transcendental or the idea of *moksha*. I shall try in a moment to explain somewhat more precisely what is involved in that idea. At a second level, it is concerned with the rules of right conduct in society and in daily life. These come under *dharma*. At a third level, it has to do with a variety of rites and beliefs which, for want of a precise word, I would characterize as magical. There are threads of interconnection between the three levels; but the first is logically independent of the other two and it is useful to distinguish between them.

At the highest level, Hinduism is concerned with a state of bliss which is to be sharply distinguished from worldly pleasure

since it is beyond both pleasure and pain. This is where the opposition of the Upanishads to the Chārvāka philosophy comes in; for, according to the latter, pleasure is the highest aim of life. The idea can be put more pointedly: Hinduism, and, for the matter of that, Buddhism, can be called a religion not on account of any belief or disbelief in God, but because of the idea that a transcendental state of bliss, and not worldly pleasure, is the highest aim of life. Nor is this attitude quite peculiar to the ancient religions of India, but it unites India with an important strand in the tradition of the Far East. There is something similar between the statements on the highest state of mind we read in the Buddhist and the Confucian literatures and the *Bhagavadgita*. Thus, King Kci, expounding the Confucian Doctrine of the Mean, writes: "While there are no movements of pleasure, anger, sorrow, joy, we have what may be called equilibrium." This sounds remarkably like an echo of the definition of the *sthitaprajna* in the *Bhagavadgita*. It is this which is opposed to mere pleasure, which is not a state of equilibrium but of passing excitement, and it is adopted in the Indian religious tradition as the highest aim of life.

How is this state of mind attained? Indian philosophy makes a distinction between the self as subject and the self as agent. As agent, the self wills and acts, and experiences the pleasure of success and the bitterness of unfulfilled hopes; but as subject, it detaches itself from all these and views them as a spectator. From one point of view, the self as subject is only capable of a negative description; it is the self which is withdrawn from every desire, impulse or animation to which the phenomenal self is exposed and which gazes upon the universe thus emptied of all feelings. But at this point something very positive happens. The experience of mystics testifies to this. The feelings arising from our biological and social needs and desires make us regard everything as either an instrument of or an obstacle to the fulfilment of some cherished aim, and we are divided thus from objects so regarded by greed, fear, or indifference. When the mind views everything with complete passivity and detachment, it is suddenly filled with a joyous sense of unity with things at an altogether different level. This is the miraculous leap of the spirit, and

it results in that inexplicable and ineffable joy of the mystic unassailable by earthly gains and losses, which religious language often describes as the descent of the divine or the grace of God. The joy of the mystic does not depend on anything aimed at in particular, unless to detach the mind from every particular aim is called an aim itself. It needs no other preparation but a total 'emptying' of the mind. This should help us to understand the mystical core of the Buddhist *sunyavāda* and *nirvāna*. Parallels are not lacking in the Western religious tradition, particularly medieval. Thus, we have the following from Meister Eckhart: "Our blessedness does not depend on the deeds we do but rather on our passiveness to God." And, again, "when (God) finds you ready he must act, and pour into you, just as when the air is clear and pure the sun must pour into it and may not hold back. Surely, it would be a very great defect in God if he did not do a great work, and anoint you with great good, once he found you empty and innocent." (*Meister Eckhart*, Harper & Brothers, 1941, p. 121). But Meister Eckhart held views which Christianity regarded as heterodox. In ancient India, on the other hand, this point of view was pushed so far that in Buddhism, for instance, God became a redundant hypothesis and *nirvāna* the effective aim of life. Even in less radical circles it is Brahman, the indefinable ultimate reality expressed by a word in the neuter gender, rather than any father (or mother) image, which served as the ground of Hindu religious speculation, which by this fact is metaphysical before it is theological.

Now, there is something radically rational about this approach. It is sometimes objected that detachment is incompatible with involvement in worldly affairs. But this is to object on psychological rather than logical grounds; and, in any case, the objection is possibly not valid. A doctor is, in a sense, both concerned about the welfare of his patient and yet detached, while a mother is concerned but not detached in relation to her sick child.\* Be that as it may, the main point is that Hinduism at its highest level leaves speculation about God entirely free and is as free of dogmas as any religion can possibly be.

\*Thus we have the Buddha as the great doctor of the soul looking on with detachment and tending with compassion a sick mankind whom he refused to abandon even though he had the choice.



We come now to Hindu *dharma*, of which *varnadharma*, or the so-called caste system, is a principal component. Caste, which determines a man's position in the social hierarchy and his duties, rests on the doctrine of *karma* in conjunction with the law of *samsāra* or the continued existence of the soul in a succession of lives. The doctrine of *karma* has been considered by many as not only the most important dogma of Hinduism but its most unfortunate feature, since it provides a magnificent rationalization of the oppression of the inferior orders of society by the superior. But the doctrine is also a response to a riddle to which, as far as I know, no religion could provide a rational answer. In the Bible there is the story of how Jesus and his disciples came upon a man who was blind from his birth and the disciples asked the master: "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (John, 9: 2, 3). But this is to identify the mystery, not to offer a clue to its solution. Between a man's situation in this life and the sum of his merits and lapses by any acceptable moral standard, there is a gulf so evident and so wide that we are led by reason to deny the existence of God as the guardian of a moral order in the universe. Hinduism seeks to bridge the gulf by suggesting that a man's position in this life must be explained in great part by what he did in earlier lives. Christianity suggests that the soul of a man is preserved after death in some kind of a state of suspension until the last judgment when it receives the balance of reward or punishment due to him. The Christian solution is no more scientific than the Hindu. Indeed, there is no scientific solution of the riddle at all, and the law of *karma* is not scientific as some exponents of Hinduism would have us believe. However, there is a special point to note here. Between Hindu *Brahmavāda* and *karmavāda* there is no necessary link as Schweitzer noticed from his own point of view, and this makes it possible to discard the doctrine of *karma* and effect a reconciliation between the moral and the spiritual at a different and higher level.

But this reconciliation cannot be effected except by a special device. *Brahmavāda* cannot give any compelling reason why the individual should stay in society rather than seek his

salvation outside it. *Karma* is, indeed, stressed in Hindu religious literature as one of the alternative paths to salvation. But this is not enough, if the object is to make one positively interested in one's neighbours. It is not enough to tell the individual that *karma* is a possible way by which he can attain his own salvation. It is also necessary to stress an idea which forms the core of the Mahayana conception of the *Bodhisattva* and which, more recently, Rāmakrishna impressed on the mind of Vivekananda. One must stay in society to help others even if it means postponement of one's own salvation, for the salvation of every other individual is equal in importance to one's own. This is a categorical imperative, a moral axiom, to be added to Brahmvāda, which by itself is trans-moral, before it can enter at the basis of social ethics. There is also an alternative approach. If morality touched with religious sentiments can be grounded in a direct affirmation of the *sthitaprajna* experience, it can equally spring from its contrary, viz., a sense of alienation from one-self, one's fellow men and the universe, which in its own way may acclaim what in it is missing. In a transitional society, when old bonds dissolve and individuals want to base their convictions on their own experience rather than the presumed experience of "the blessed ones", this negative idiom is likely to ring truer. Ethics may then present itself as a practical way of overcoming alienation, for instance, through productive labour and loving service.

While the rules and regulations binding society can be internalized in terms of some central experience or aspiration of the individual, it is equally important to regard them as a manifestation of practical reason. For either they are so regarded, or they tend to stay rooted in fixed dogmas or mere magical beliefs. The Hindu *dharma* needs reassessment from this point of view. *Dharma* is Hinduism's most solid foundation for character formation. But *varnāshramadharmā* is too rigid and it is not easy to get from within the system a sense of direction in a period of social transition. However, it will not be quite correct to blame this rigidity exclusively on the doctrine of *karma*. This doctrine, since it purports to explain everything, must in logic end up by accepting whatever happens—even

under changed social conditions.\* What makes caste so intractable is the collection of "magical" beliefs by which it has come to be supported and governed.

These beliefs may be illustrated with reference to the Hindu conception of purity as it is daily practised over the length and breadth of India. Let us begin with an analogy. The widely prevalent practice of burning or hanging a person in effigy all over the world has, we have been told, its origin in the primitive and essentially magical belief that if you produce the likeness of somebody, or a symbol for him, a harm done to it will also affect the person for whom it stands. In Hinduism an analogous feeling has been carried to absurd lengths. A particular occupation, e.g., slaughtering of animals or scavenging, is impure. Therefore, he who does it is impure. Therefore, again, such a likeness of his as his shadow is impure, so much so that if you happen to cross it you are obliged to take a purifying bath.† By this kind of "unreasoning", even practices which arose originally out of compassionate feelings came soon to be surrounded by an astonishing accretion of ridiculous and unfeeling rituals. Take, for instance, the widely prevalent practice of vegetarianism in this country. The Buddha himself was not a vegetarian; but injunctions about non-violence and non-killing led gradually to the avoidance of meat, particularly among the higher castes in India. Soon the peculiar Hindu idea of impurity took over. Meat is impure; therefore, a pot in which there is meat is impure; and anything else in touch with that pot is impure; and a person touching it is equally so. It is not that this attitude once existed, but has disappeared now, or exists among ignorant people only. We have been treated in the year A.D. 1965 (Nov. 25) to the spectacle of some learned and honourable members of the Indian Parliament expressing their sense of horror and indignation at the

\*At the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies held in Washington D. C., March 20-22, 1964, Joseph W. Elder of the University of Wisconsin read a paper in which he presented the results of two surveys he had carried out in India. One of his very interesting findings is that even among educated Hindus, who have overcome caste barriers in some practical spheres of life, belief in the doctrine of *karma* remains relatively strong.

†Conceivably, it was the lower orders of society who originally feared to touch the higher lest they should be harmed by the superior energy of the latter. But attitudes must then have changed and the higher orders came to live in perpetual fear of losing their purity by contact with the lower. Fear produces fantasies and substitutes for life and reality a strange play of shadows.

discovery that the vegetarian food which they ate while journeying in trains was cooked on the same oven with non-vegetarian food and carried on the same tray. It is evident that the sense of outrage experienced by these honourable representatives of the Indian people had nothing to do with the question of non-violence, non-killing or, for the matter of that, any remotely rational idea on diet, digestion or decency.

Between reason-in-nature and reason-in-society there is a dialectical relationship which offers a key to the understanding of the evolution of rationalism in its concrete forms in different societies. It is instructive to consider here a certain contrast between the Hindu and the Western traditions as these have evolved in history. The idea of the "natural order" and "natural law" took hold of Western thought at a comparatively early stage. This idea was paralleled by the notion that there are universal laws which underlie and sustain social life, that any deviation from these laws is "unnatural", that the purpose of politics and jurisprudence should be to seek these out and secure conformity to them. The twin concepts of a law-governed universe and a human society regulated by laws of the greatest possible universality grew by a kind of mutual sympathy from Greek and Roman days onwards, although other influences also worked side by side, often became powerful, and helped to preserve local particularism and to mitigate those checks to spontaneity that a universalizing reason may produce in social organization.

Ancient Rome reached out for "laws which are common to all mankind" to settle disputes between its citizens and non-citizens, particularly in the course of trade. Ancient India tended to segregate foreigners or to find them a separate compartment in the complex structure of her social life. The search for universal laws as a basis for social intercourse was circumscribed by an inclination to preserve as much as possible of the diverse customs and beliefs of the innumerable communities that came to form the totality of Indian life. Thus, what we achieved was a kind of peaceful coexistence of different groups and castes and layers of culture in which a variety of irrational beliefs continued a tolerant and lazy existence, rather than that active and challenging confrontation of different ways of life which propels towards a synthesis at a

higher level. From the lower levels a damp, enervating moisture ascended to the higher and a rot set in. Beyond a certain point scientific curiosity and the spirit of adventure languished in this social climate.

A critical confrontation of science and what we call *dharma* is essential for the modernization of Hindu society. We should guard here against one fallacy. The power of formal logic as such should not be exaggerated. In India as well as the West, formal logic provided the methodological basis of medieval scholasticism, which flourished side by side with a general prevalence of superstition and injustice. The ascendancy of the experimental sciences is a comparatively recent phenomenon even in the West. In India, where technological stagnation has persisted much longer, it is not surprising that the power of superstitions in the practical conduct of life has been greater.

Nor is it strange in this context that Hinduism has not yet evolved an effective concept of social justice. In the ordinary business of life, an Indian who walks to another Indian and claims something as a matter of right will in all likelihood be considered rude. He is much more likely to gain his object if he begins with a few words of half-concealed flattery and then asks for the thing he wants as a matter of favour. Alternatively, or additionally, he must try to convince the other person that they both belong, even if only in a remote sense, to the same community. Justice, impersonal fairness, is among the last things that count in our daily decisions.

It might seem that what we have to say here about justice can be deduced simply from what we have said earlier about the evolution of the concept of 'natural law'. "There cannot be any question", wrote Sir Henry Maine in *Ancient Law*, "that to the assumption of Law Natural we owe the doctrine of the fundamental equality of human beings", and it is by the absence of this assumption, he suggested, that we must explain the absence of the concept of justice in India. But this is again to oversimplify. The idea of 'natural law', although of inestimable value in the evolution of Western thought, did not suffice to produce a liberal conception of justice and in fact coexisted with a kind of limited autocracy throughout the Middle Ages.

A liberal conception of justice cannot be deduced from abstract reason alone. At the basis of justice there is a tension between the universal and immutable, on the one hand, and the particular and the evolving, on the other, comparable in some respects to the tension between reason and love. Reason, with its universalizing tendency, has to be combined with a recognition of the manifold potentialities of the individual before it can produce a liberal conception of justice. The imperatives of abstract reason have to be suited to changing historical situations; commands have to be general and yet related to social needs. Our tradition needs to be reassessed from this standpoint.

When we stand back and look at the larger movements of Hinduism through the centuries, there is a dialectical pattern which readily comes to view. Rigidity of caste rules and empty rituals have time and again produced a reaction. Leaders of the reaction have stressed the supreme importance of the inner life, of that joy that changes not and bears witness to our deeper unity with Brahman. But this has quite as often turned the mind of the devotee away from society and the world. A second reaction has followed in which the proper performance of the prescribed duties in this world has been stressed. The *Bhagavadgita* sought to reconcile *dharma* and *moksha* by arguing with great conviction that the search for spiritual peace and illumination should not involve a retreat from the prescribed duties in this world but that these duties should be performed scrupulously and yet with that detachment which is an essential condition of inner freedom. But the central intention of the Gita was not to redefine caste duties, but to insist on their performance in a particular spirit. Neither the relativity of laws to changing social conditions, nor even the equality of man, is the central message of the *Gita*.

To be sure, certain strands in the *bhakti* movement came near to preaching equality. Yet even this movement did not produce an effective concept of justice. Let us see what happened. We have noted earlier that the mystic in his spiritual vision feels that he shares with every other person the same divine essence, which is, indeed, the common essence of the universe. Now, this view of the matter introduces a kind of

equality among men (and, indeed, among all creatures) at a particular level. But it does not endow the other person with a separate individuality of his own. What it does is to unite all in a feeling of oneness. For a proper conception of justice one of the things we need is a recognition of the distinct personality of every individual as a basis for a rational consideration of how best to adjust him to society. To be sure, Hinduism does recognize in its own way differences among individuals. But then these distinctions are taken to be settled by birth; or, they are supposed to relate to temperamental differences which may determine an individual's mode of worship rather than the wider conception of his rights in society. What is lacking, more fundamentally, is a positive recognition of the otherness of the other individual and its importance to one's own growth and development.

How far has our nineteenth century renaissance removed these deficiencies of our earlier reform movements?

Raja Rammohan Roy, the great leader of the nineteenth century renaissance in India, belonged to the line of philosophers of the enlightenment who at that time were critically examining religion and social institutions all over the world. It was not the purpose of Rammohan to substitute reason for God; for he did not consider reason sufficient unto itself. Rather was it his purpose to discover that common core of all religions which, although it cannot be deduced from reason alone, is yet compatible with practical reason, and which consists in faith in one God and acceptance of the tenets of good neighbourliness. Thus he wrote: "When we look at the traditions of ancient nations, we often find them at variance with each other; and when discouraged by this circumstance, we appeal to reason as a surer guide, we soon find how incompetent it is alone to conduct us to the object of our pursuit." (Rammohan Roy, *English Works*, Part 2, p. 15). Further, "admitting for a moment that the Truths of the Divinity of Religion cannot be established to the satisfaction of a Free-thinker; but from an impartial enquiry I presume we may feel persuaded to believe that a system of Religion which consists in Love and Charity is capable of furthering our happiness, facilitating our mutual transactions and curbing our obnoxious passions and feelings." (Letter to Robert Dale Owen, April 19,

1833). By this reformation of religion Rammohan wanted to remove the divisions within Hindu society\* and to clear the web of superstitions which impeded the modernization of our society.

Among the leaders of the Indian renaissance from Rammohan to Rabindranath Tagore, it is perhaps the last named who stressed in the most unmistakable terms the value of that distinctiveness of the individual which is his personality. To him this was the crucial differentia between the human race as a truly creative species and such adroit but essentially gregarious creatures as the ants and the bees.

The subsequent evolution of Indian renaissance thought is interesting. The nationalist movement put a high premium on the solidarity of the nation rather than on individual distinctions, a tendency which Tagore courageously but ineffectively denounced in his essays and novels. More interesting in certain ways was the evolution of religious thought. Rammohan, while accepting religion, wanted to keep only as much of it as was capable of furthering human happiness and facilitating social transactions. Two distinct trends of thought arose out of this teaching. A radical wing of the Indian enlightenment argued that religion is quite unnecessary to achieve these ends, that, indeed, it is a hindrance to man's happiness and freedom, that what we need basically is morality sanctioned by reason. The man in whom this particular trend of thought found its most impressive enunciation was M. N. Roy. The other trend culminated in a resurgence of *bhakti* combined with an emphasis on social service. Within the bosom of the Brahmo movement this trend became evident in the personal development of Keshab Chandra Sen; but it is in the life and teachings of Rāmakrishna and Vivekananda that it found its highest expression. There can be little doubt that it is this resurgent *bhakti* movement which has a much larger following in India today than the rationalist trend.

The method of rational analysis has a natural suspicion of all kinds of transcendentalism, while *bhakti* is easily impelled to take the mystical leap. It is this rather than any

\*"The distinction of castes," wrote Rammohan, "introducing innumerable divisions and subdivisions among them (i.e. the Hindus), has entirely deprived them of patriotic feelings." (*English Works*, Part 4, p. 95).



clinging to superstitions as such that makes a Chaitanya or Rāmākrishna regard the rationalist temper as an impediment to spiritual progress. But one is caught here in a dilemma. Reason cannot be bypassed without society having to pay a price for it. The Indian reformation gained in popular appeal by devaluing reason; but it lost at the same time its capacity to function effectively for those enlightened social objectives which the Indian renaissance had set before itself. It is a merit of the movement connected with the name of Rāmākrishna that it does not one-sidedly extol the virtues of other-worldliness. The master himself once remarked that a saint need not be a fool in the ordinary business of life. Social service, in particular, is highly recommended. But one misses in this movement that accent on reason which one immediately perceives on approaching Rammohan. The devotee of Rāmākrishna hardly feels called upon to shed any of his inherited superstitions. He does feel that he has to be tolerant and love his fellow creatures. But this is not enough.

Love is an essential element of the good life. Yet it is not in itself a sufficient basis for sane and just social relations. What is needed is a creative tension between love and justice. As Proudhon once said, "the force of sympathy which draws us towards society is of its nature blind, disordered and always ready to give in to the impulse of the moment." This is why the leap from a *bhakti* movement to a fanatical or terroristic creed is so easy. The spirit of loving devotion has to be leavened with a rational conception of justice before it can act as a support for healthy social relations. This is not to suggest that an adequate code of justice can be deduced from reason alone or that we need to adopt that radical rationalism which finds in hedonism the only acceptable principle of ethics. The choice between hedonism and an 'idealistic' or spiritual ethics cannot be made scientifically, that is, on the basis of a common stock of experience available to all. It must be made by every individual in terms of his own maturing life-experience. One may decide that the strictest code of justice must be framed in unconditional forgiveness, for it must be absolutely free of personal rancour; and that every worldly interest must point to something beyond, since there is no aim we can name which does not turn out to be but a means to what we ulti-

mately want. But even if we adopt this view we have to admit that a *bhakti* movement such as we have had time and again in our long history is unable in itself to provide that rationalist critique of religious beliefs and practices which our magic-ridden culture needs today. Nor in its more ecstatic forms can it provide that stiffening without which disciplined performance of duties is hard to secure.

This then is the unfinished task of the Indian renaissance: to carry through a scientific critique of our religious heritage, to recognize the positive value of the individual and his participation in social life, and, on this basis, to evolve that fuller concept of social justice to the absence of which a valiant, if sometimes embittered, line of thinkers from Phule to Ambedkar has drawn the attention of a curiously apathetic Indian society. So long as this task remains patently unfinished the crisis of religion in India will continue, and so it should. When it is completed religion will no longer be the social problem it is today, although it will not, as it possibly should not, cease even then to precipitate individual *crise de conscience* and, while the rest of the world is busy in its normal routine, it will make stray individuals be born anew.

## Liberalism, Puritanism and Economic Development

---

RELIGION may seem to be the opposite pole from economic life. Yet the two are interrelated and the tension between the two is often a major determinant of the quality of social life. Before we proceed further we had better get out of the way an unnecessary controversy. Religious and economic changes act and react upon one another. It is pointless to designate one or the other as "primary". Long-distance trade opened up for England, Holland and Spain in the 16th century new perspectives of economic development. That the reformation in England owed something to economic changes which were already in motion is evident enough. But it is equally evident that the counter-reformation in Spain strengthened the forces of social and economic conservatism in that country. The opening up of new trade routes was itself an expression of a new dynamism in western Europe which started before the Crusades and was further quickened by these. We may go as far back as we like but we are never brought face to face with a "primary" factor any more than we hit upon God as a first cause. In history one studies interaction among different factors leaving it to ideologues and metaphysicians to quarrel about ultimates. If in the following lines we sometimes stress the influence of religion on economic development, this is not to deny mutual interaction.

Modern history is dominated by the fact that in the last few centuries the "sluggish East" has been progressively outstripped by the West in the race for industrialisation. There have been attempts to explain this major fact of history in

terms of religion. Some of these explanations are obviously superficial. The East, it has been said, is other-worldly. But the East is no more other-worldly than the West. Take, for instance, the case of India. *Kāma* and *artha*, satisfaction of the desires of the flesh and pursuit of wealth, are among the traditionally accepted activities in the Hindu scheme of life. Aristotle taught that money-making (*chrematistik*) was an unnatural and debased activity and so he condemned usury, the art of making money breed money; and this attitude continued through the Middle Ages in Europe. In India there was no such outright condemnation of money-making or lending money for an interest. In this sense, the Indian attitude was more congenial to capitalist development. Max Weber had some solid facts in his favour when in *The Religion of India* he wrote: "From the standpoint of possible capitalistic development, the acquisitiveness of Indians of all strata left little to be desired and nowhere is to be found so little anti-chrematism and such high evaluation of wealth."\*

We will be perhaps a little nearer the mark if we say that what India lacked was a theory of social progress. It was typical of the Indian imagination to think in terms of an endless procession of cycles, the world being created, preserved for a brief span of time, and then destroyed, as a pattern repeated over and over again. Through these cycles the trend was, if anything, downwards. In some other religions, it has been claimed, there is a clearer notion of progress. In Zoroastrianism, the world is a scene of struggle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, in which victory lay ultimately with the former. Something of this spirit, according to one view, was handed down through Judaism to Christianity. However, the fact is that Christianity in the Middle Ages did not have much hope about this world and was always anxiously awaiting the end of time. The philosophy of progress which nurtured the West in its formative phase of economic development came later.

A new scientific outlook provided the climate in which this idea of progress blossomed. The development of the idea can be traced through a whole line of thinkers from Bacon and Vico to Condorcet, Turgot, Saint-Simon and Comte. We need

\**The Religion of India*, The Free Press of Glencoe, p. 4.

not go into details; but a few salient features of the new outlook may be noted. The history of mankind came to be regarded essentially as the history of the progress of enlightenment. Both Hegelian and Marxian philosophies of history take off from this common base, though each in its own way claims to explain the quality of enlightenment in a given age in terms of something more fundamental. But that is a different matter. The exponents of the idea of progress, particularly as it was conceived by the philosophers of the enlightenment, believed that human misery and injustice could only be effectively reduced by further development of the spirit of reason and the increasing saturation of social life by this spirit. Reason first takes hold of investigations into the processes of nature. But by degrees man learns also to subject social institutions to the scrutiny of reason. The degree of perfection of social institutions is determined by the extent to which these are based on reason.

The triumphs of the new scientific outlook were impressive on all accounts. In the natural sciences Galileo and Newton became symbols of the new age. Nor did the rationalist outlook fail to produce important ideas in the field of social reforms. Here the new outlook issued in the form of utilitarianism. Bentham offered a new standard and approach by which to judge existing laws and institutions and recommend new ones. Human institutions are artefacts; they should not be accepted simply because they exist, but we must ask what purpose is served by a given law, convention or an institution, and how much it contributes to human happiness, and whether the sum total of such happiness cannot be increased by a suitable reform. This critical approach helped, for instance, to mitigate the severity of penal codes inherited from a ruder state of society.

But economic development needs something more than a rationalist outlook and hedonistic ethics. The interest that one generation takes in the next, the extent to which the present generation is prepared to deprive itself for the benefit of the coming, is not a matter on which reason can pronounce unequivocally. The capitalist entrepreneur was perhaps never, certainly not in the heyday of capitalism, a coldly rationalist person. As Keynes put it, "if human nature felt no temptation

to take a chance, no satisfaction (profit apart) in constructing a factory, a railway, a mine or a farm, there might not be much investment merely as a result of cold calculation.”\*

That in the West Protestantism, and some Puritan sects more particularly, played a leading role in promoting the habits and attitudes essential to the growth of an industrial society is now widely recognised by sociologists and economists. The spirit of economic development displays a curious combination of hedonism, at one level, and what Max Weber called “worldly asceticism” at another. Industrialization requires new habits and forms of activity which cannot be justified simply in terms of the utilitarian calculus of pleasure and pain. Even preference between a slothful and an active way of life is not rationally determined; the value that is attached to work for its own sake is, from the point of view of an individual, a primary decision, so to say. The same is true of preference between unthinking impulsiveness and a more methodical way of life. This is a sufficiently important point to deserve reiteration. What is lacking in a number of underdeveloped countries is not so much hedonistic ethics as habits of hard and methodical labour. Even “corruption”, of which so much is heard in some of these countries, is often an offshoot of this basic deficiency though it is further nurtured by a system of patronage arising from the old extended family system; and vague utopianism and sporadic violence also thrive in this same environment. Thus rationalism is unable by itself to rescue people from ingrained laziness and its manifold consequences. Other pressures, moral and institutional, are necessary. A reformed religion has often been a powerful factor in creating the requisite moral pressure.

In the formative stage of the industrial development of the West a special blend of liberalism and Puritanism is noticeable both in religious life and in society at large. “English Eighteenth Century religion,” writes Trevelyan, “was of two schools, which we may call for brevity the Latitudinarian and the Methodist. The Latitudinarian stood for the spirit of Tolerance. Methodism was a way of life devoted not only to religious observance but to self-discipline and work for others... The coincidence in time of Wesley and the Industrial

\* *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, p. 150.

Revolution had profound effects upon England for generations to come.”\* Thus, these two forces operating side by side, acting and reacting on one another, set the climate in which industrialization took place. Not that religion ever succeeded in removing corruption completely from any society; but in the leading capitalist countries it helped in the formation of decisive habits and attitudes for economic development.

Let us come back to India. Neither Protestantism, nor atheistic materialism, nor any particular ideology as such is essential for economic development; but the developing countries today have still something to learn from that blend of liberal and puritanical virtues which set the cultural climate of the West in the formative period of its industrial growth. People in India are not wanting in any simple sense in the desire for wealth; but this desire, as we have noted, does not suffice to create the character, habits and attitudes necessary for a continuous improvement of productive capacity. It produces more readily parasitic and predatory habits, more of the first in a country where sloth is in the air. India has, of course, its own brand of Puritanism. There is, among other things, great stress on avoiding intoxicants and controlling one's senses. Yoga itself is an elaborate method of bringing one's body and mind completely under control. But Indian asceticism tends to be “other-worldly”. The stress is on turning the senses inward rather than directing them outward to develop the material resources of the world. Despite the activity-oriented teachings of the *Gita*, Indian asceticism, like its medieval counterparts elsewhere, has promoted quietism rather than productive work. To be sure, puritanical virtues in some parts of the country have combined with commercial activity; it has then produced some of the habits necessary for economic advancement. But even this is not enough. To it must be added an urge to re-make society with labour aided by science and modern technology.

The urge to control human destiny with the help of science came to Europe as part of the philosophy of enlightenment. More recently other factors have often been specially important. In Japan, for instance, the urge for modernization was derived from intense nationalism. To a certain extent this

\**English Social History*, 3rd edition, pp. 355-62.

## **Liberalism, Puritanism and Economic Development / 19**

was inevitable. But let us note the consequences. Patriotism of a kind can co-exist with liberalism, but militant nationalism is hostile to it. When in a developing society the accent is on discipline, as it has to be to a certain extent in the new habit-forming stage of industrialization, and on the kind of nationalism that Tagore never wearied of condemning, and when this is not balanced by a liberal tradition of some depth, the country is ready for dictatorship. Between liberalism and Puritanism there is a creative tension that fertilizes new ideas, gives a wider background to the concepts of justice and freedom, and enriches social life. Only in the context of this complex relation of forces is it possible to define the task of a society which wants to build up democracy and to industrialize at the same time.



## Science and Society

---

IF ONE were to take a long view of history, one might reasonably conclude that the discoveries of science were a more potent force for social change than any other factor operative in human affairs. Already in the seventeenth century Francis Bacon stated this point with great force and clarity, and in doing so he made the modern age conscious of what may well be regarded as its chief distinction. In *Novum Organon*, Book I, aphorism 129, Bacon wrote: "It is well to observe the force and effect and consequences of discoveries. These are to be seen nowhere more conspicuously than in those three which were unknown to the ancients, and of which the origin, though recent, is obscure; namely, printing, gunpowder, and the magnet. For these three have changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world . . . insomuch that no empire, no sect, no star seems to have exerted greater power and influence in human affairs than these mechanical inventions."

Bacon chose his words carefully. He put the power of science and inventions above that of empires in an age that worshipped kings and emperors, and above the founders of new religious sects in a century torn by rival sects. He declared that science was even more powerful than the stars which were supposed to govern the destiny of mankind. History has borne out the truth of Bacon's view. The world has changed more in the few centuries after Bacon than in the whole of the Christian era before; and no one factor has been more responsible for this unprecedented pace of change than the inventions of science.

Change is not, of course, the same thing as progress. But before we start qualifying our statement in this matter we will permit ourselves to go so far as to say that science has been the greatest force in modern history not only for change, but for progress.

Suppose we wanted a ready indicator of the progress of society. What would that be? We could not make happiness such an indicator. It is by no means self-evident that modern society is happier than ancient. Modern society is perhaps freer and more just. But if we start arguing about such things, it may prove to be an endless argument. This unending argument has its own value. But it may be better to begin with something simpler and easier to agree upon.

Modern society is unquestionably superior to older societies in one respect: human labour is more productive today than it was in the past. There is progress in history in the simple if limited sense that whatever the vicissitudes through which mankind has passed, it seems reasonably clear that the productivity of human labour has increased over time. By and large, human labour is applied today with greater efficiency in the sphere of material production than in earlier centuries; and it is science which has made this possible.

One is tempted to object to this simple criterion of progress. It strikes one as too mechanical and even superficial. But before we discard this simple criterion we should make sure that we understand all that it implies. Both Bacon and Saint-Simon recommended a deliberate and planned endeavour to advance science and technology because this seemed required by their highest conception of duty to society.

Let us try to look at the matter as Saint-Simon did. The Bible enjoins on men the duty of acting in a spirit of brotherly love and responsibility towards one another. Charity alone cannot deliver the great masses of people from the curse of poverty. Poverty can be permanently removed only through the development of science and technology. Thus, the ideal of brotherly love demands a programme for the cultivation of science and its application for the amelioration of the material conditions of life. This is what Saint-Simon taught under the name of New Christianity.

It is good to remember that Saint-Simon's intuition has

proved right in one fundamental way. His vision has turned out to be more correct than the pessimism of all those nineteenth-century economists, both Malthusian and Marxian, who expounded the iron law of wages. Wherever science and technology have developed, the iron law has been broken and the condition of the masses has improved noticeably.

In the long run, wages are determined by the productivity of labour; and the efficiency with which human labour is applied to material production is dependent on the level of development of science and technology. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx specially noted how capitalists continuously revolutionized the methods of production. "The bourgeoisie," wrote Marx in the Manifesto, "cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production." He went on to add, "The modern labourer, instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth." Marx was wrong. The bourgeoisie could not revolutionize the methods of production without raising, in the long run, levels of labour productivity as well as of wages in general. Saint-Simon may have failed to stress the full extent of the transitional dislocation; but he was correct in thinking that the development of science and technology must mean ultimately a raising of the levels of living of whole society.

Science cannot by itself hold society together and reason alone cannot inspire men with the spirit of dedication to productive work. But once this is supplied, nothing possibly exceeds the power of science to secure social advance. Saint-Simon tried to transform science itself into a new religion. In this he was perhaps demanding of the former rather more than it can be made to yield. But nobody who has once read Saint-Simon will easily forget how much the progress of society is dependent on the progress of science.

Marx inherited the scientific outlook of the age of enlightenment. His preoccupation with the idea of class struggle stood in the way of his perceiving that the progress of science and technology must mean even under capitalism a raising of the level of the whole society and not just of some particular class. On closer analysis it appears that there is a further weak-

ness in the Marxist outlook. Saint-Simon stressed the active role of science in social progress. Marxism cannot allow itself to do this without equivocation. Science after all is part of the cultural "superstructure" of society; and although Marxists allow for some interaction between the "base" and the "superstructure", the active role of the cultural factor cannot be stressed much without reducing the whole analogy to meaninglessness. The materialist conception of history is logically compelled to emphasize the governing influence of material and economic conditions and to assign to science and culture a secondary role in the making of history.

It is from this point of view that Bertrand Russell aimed one of his leading criticisms against the Marxist interpretation of history. Let us consider Russell's statement in this connection. In *Freedom and Organization*, Russell wrote: "Much the most necessary correction in Marx's theory is as to the causes of changes in methods of production. Methods of production appear in Marx as prime causes, and the reasons for which they change from time to time are left completely unexplained. As a matter of fact, methods of production change, in the main, owing to intellectual causes, owing, that is to say, to scientific discoveries and inventions. Marx thinks that discoveries and inventions are made when the economic situation calls for them. This, however, is a quite unhistorical view."

Russell's statement itself is not free from objections. One might, for instance, object that he does not explain adequately the conditions under which discoveries and inventions flourish. But let us first consider the truth that is in Russell's statement. We tend too easily to assume that necessity is the mother of invention, that scientific inventions are the offspring of economic needs. But as Russell rightly asks, "why was there practically no experimental science from the time of Archimedes to the time of Leonardo?" Surely the answer cannot be that economic needs did not exist during the long period. Poverty does not suffice to create interest in science or to devise means to overcome poverty. Thus, scientific discoveries and inventions cannot be explained in a simple way in terms of economic motives.

This helps us to understand better the historical role of men

like Francis Bacon. Before him people had stumbled on inventions, some of them very important; and these had changed society. But Bacon taught people to pursue science deliberately and systematically, with a view to increasing man's command over nature. He helped society to recognize and put a special value on what Russell calls "intellectual causes" of technological progress. The conscious acceptance of the scientific outlook is itself a factor of the greatest importance for the advancement of science and society.

Both Bacon and Saint-Simon stressed the practical aspect of science. Saint-Simon wrote: "New Christianity demands that scientists, technicians and industrialists form an alliance and constitute themselves into the directors of mankind." The point to note here is the special importance attached to linking science with technology and industry for achieving social progress.

Compared with England, this linkage was weak in France and even more so in countries like Russia in the nineteenth century. The discoveries and inventions of science are made by a comparatively small number of people. But social wealth is produced by the many. It is of crucial importance to create those special conditions under which the discoveries made by a few are, without undue delay, utilized by the many for raising the general standards of the productivity of human labour.

This implies a number of things. However gifted the scientists at the top, new knowledge cannot filter down unless there is a broad basis of mass literacy. Nor is literacy enough. The system of technical training must change and grow in consonance with the change and growth of the structure of the economy. Between industry and technical institutes for research as well as training, a specially close relationship must be fostered. There must also be a change in the system of rewarding labour. More intensive labour and labour of better quality must be assured a higher reward.

This last condition can be fulfilled in a number of ways; but the important thing is not to neglect it. In agriculture, for instance, if we have a system of tenancy the laws must be such that the tenant can earn more by working and investing more. If it is a case of joint farming, it is still necessary to

make sure that he who works better is paid better and that the co-operative as a whole has a positive inducement for productive investment. Thus, forms of organization may differ; but certain basic conditions must be satisfied or there will not be sufficient incentive for adopting scientific methods for increasing the efficiency of labour.

The scientific outlook is still the primary requirement for social progress. If a society has this outlook and the will to advance, it will no doubt bring about in its own way those changes in organization which are needed for the progress of science and technology. It is not, therefore, surprising that fifty years after the Russian revolution young Soviet citizens have started stressing the primary role of science in a way that old Marxists find disturbing.

In an article in *Voprosy filosofi* under the title "The Growing Role of Science in our Epoch", academician B. Kedrov wrote recently that many young Soviet scientists "interpret the new facts of contemporary life in such a way that they question the very basic roots of Marxism. Observing the increasing active role of science in relation to technology they rush to the conclusion that science and technology have exchanged places to such an extent that science has now become the leading factor in all progress." These Soviet scientists of the new generation are obviously closer in this respect to the line of thought from Bacon to Russell than they are to some of their orthodox Marxist compatriots.

Orthodox Marxists set their heart on the destruction of a particular economic system. Thus developed a revolutionary fixation which became a power over and against "scientific socialists", who grew convinced that any further development of science in a creative sense was conditional upon a change in the economic system. Thus, economic conditions seemed "basic", since these must change first. But in this century science has developed under many alternative sets of social institutions and dogmatism in this regard seems peculiarly out of place.

In any case, we need science to change traditional institutions just as we need it to control and improve our natural environment. It is not any particular economic system but an active scientific outlook, through whatever social system

it may express itself, which is the greatest single cause of material progress.

Man is not the creator of nature; but he has created science. He can claim to have made his own history to the extent that science has made it. If the problem is to change society, it is only right to lay stress on those factors which give man the power to make and re-make society. Science gives man that power.

## Education, Science and Economic Development

---

ECONOMIC development is not simply a process of quantitative growth. It involves a continuous qualitative change in the economy and society. Capital is not simply 'accumulated'; stocks are not simply 'replaced' and 'expanded'; but new capital goods are introduced and the old structure is all the time reorganized. Hours of work are not just shortened (or lengthened), but the nature of work changes. Income does not simply grow, but the way of life is transformed. The quality of goods that form the standard of life and the quality of knowledge that enters into the production of these goods change and evolve through a kind of mutual dependence. This is something to bear in mind in discussing the role of education in economic development.

Adam Smith noted that division of labour and increasing specialization are basic characteristics of economic development. Correspondingly, the system of education and vocational training in a developing society has to provide for an increased range of specialization. In its absence the educational system falls out of step with the needs of the economy and the discrepancy is reflected in unemployment, lack of correspondence between jobs and acquired skills and aptitudes, and a slower rate of economic growth. This is widely recognized in development-seeking countries and, as a matter of fact, the point has been made in several official reports. In India, for instance, the Sapru Committee of 1934, after an enquiry into the causes of unemployment in U.P., came to the conclusion that "the real remedy is to provide diversified courses of study at the



secondary stage and to make that stage more practical and complete in itself and more closely related to the vocational requirements of different types of students." More recently the Mudaliar Commission observed: "At the High School or Higher Secondary stage, diversified courses of instruction should be provided for the pupils." This recommendation was as a matter of fact officially adopted and an attempt was made to let Higher Secondary education flow in seven different 'streams'.

This change in the system of secondary education in India may seem to correspond to the inherent structural tendencies of a developing economy. But the correspondence is spurious; both the recommendations quoted above and their attempted implementation are based on a misconception; and unless the errors in this system are quickly rectified great harm will be done to the development of science and education in India.\*

Higher Secondary education is properly to be regarded as a preparation for university education. It is an error to make it "closely related to the vocational requirements of different types of students" and to diversify it accordingly. Let us develop this point briefly.

There is a clear distinction to be made between vocational training, of which the main aim is to teach a person the art of doing or making a thing with due care and skill, and scientific education at the university level which should teach students to investigate causes, sift evidence and contribute to the careful building up of a body of systematized knowledge. It is no more certain that a mechanic is potentially a true scientist than that a housewife has an aptitude for philosophizing meaningfully about life and the world. In a developing country which is interested in building up a tradition of scientific education and research, and which does not have unlimited resources to dispense with, it is necessary to be careful about selecting students for university education. Since the last two or three years of higher secondary school should be a preparation for university education, it may be best to make this selection, say, at the age of fourteen.

\*It is gratifying to note that the Indian Education Commission 1964-66 has recognized this. "At the secondary stage," the Commission observes, "we are not in favour of diversified courses." (Report, p. 191).

Let us spell out the point more carefully. It is of great importance that primary education should be compulsory and it is a pity that this objective still remains unfulfilled in our country. With a wide base we shall have a large population from which to choose students for admission to higher education. But if we want to improve the quality of our higher education a careful selection must be made at some stage of our secondary education, say, at the age of fourteen. A substantial section of students can profitably be directed at this stage to technical institutions. In these institutions they can have further general education combined with specialized training in some craft or practical vocation. Still others could be attached to some industry and have training on the job. This is a point where diversification will be useful and necessary. But for these who are allowed to pass on to the last two or three years of higher secondary school preparatory to university education, there should be in the main a consolidated course with relatively few elective subjects. The languages, particularly the mother tongue and English, should be more carefully studied at this stage than is done now in most schools. The so-called 'core' subjects, particularly mathematics, which are dropped now in the last year of higher secondary school, should be persisted with till the very end and a higher standard established. Not only should the core sciences be taught, but an elementary course in scientific methodology may do good. Little diversification should be allowed here beyond, perhaps, a distinction between the sciences and humanities. Just as in the national economy there is such a thing as the social and economic 'infrastructure' on which rests a diversified superstructure of multiform productive activities, so in the sphere of learning, encompassing both the sciences and the humanities, there is a basis of common knowledge to be firmly laid if we want to build up a tradition of intellectual activity which will be vigorous and responsible, specialized and supple at the same time. If this is what the higher secondary school should aim at, the time has not yet come when it can open its doors indiscriminately to all.\*

\*In all this we have something to learn from the experience of the Soviet Union. In the early years of planned development of the USSR there was a tremendous increase in the number of students as well as educational institutions.

## II

In a traditional society and a stagnant economy the state of the arts and techniques is unchanging or very nearly so. So is the state of knowledge. In a dynamic society knowledge, together with the arts and techniques, is in a state of flux. This has profound implications for methods of teaching. So long as awareness of these implications is not reflected in our methods of teaching, there will be little 'advancement of learning' in this country.

In a traditional society the teacher is supposed to know the truth and the whole truth, which he transmits to the student. The ideal relation of the pupil to the preceptor is one of unconditional trust as of a child to its parents. It is the same in the sphere of the arts. The technique of production is transformed by tradition into a hallowed ritual which is handed down from father to son without change or addition. In a dynamic society problems and their solutions, techniques as well as products, are continuously changing. It is, therefore, not enough to transmit to young students a body of settled conclusions. It is particularly important to build up in them a capacity to react positively to new situations and problems. This can only be achieved by drawing the students into some sort of a dialogue with the teacher. Teaching has to be problem-oriented. But this change in the method of teaching cannot be made effective without a corresponding change in our system of examination. Our students would be drawn as readily to an intellectual activity unrelated to final examination

The number of universities, for instance, increased from 129 in 1928-9 to exactly five times as many (645) in 1932. Simultaneously, the level of university education declined. In 1932 it was officially recognized that "abuses had appeared, mainly apparent in the one-sided attention directed to increasing the network of educational establishments and the number of students, whilst insufficient attention had been given to the quality of teaching; the subdivision of specialization had also been carried too far." Subsequent reforms of the Soviet educational system make sense in the light of this basic criticism. It is significant that while the number of pupils in elementary and secondary schools increased from 21 mn. to nearly 32 mn. between 1932-3 and 1938-9, the number in universities and higher technical schools rose only from 50½ to 603 thousand. Moreover, in 1940 comparatively high fees were introduced in the three senior forms of secondary schools apparently setting aside the constitutional guarantee of free education for all. "This measure was designed to make it somewhat more difficult to receive secondary higher education and to divert some of the school population towards Artisan, Transport and Industrial Schools." (See Baykov, *Soviet Economic System*, pp. 219, 346, 355). These fees were abolished sixteen years later.

results as traders would respond to motives other than profit. If teaching through discussion is to be promoted, we must discard sole reliance on written tests at long intervals and start grading students on the basis of their participation in seminars and class-room discussions and the papers they prepare for this purpose. Our examination system has often been criticized on the ground that its results are not 'just'. But the more important criticism is that the existing system is an adjunct of an outmoded method of teaching, and both reflect and help to perpetuate the ethos of a traditional society. The alternative we are suggesting here will not necessarily be more 'just'. We must try to make it as fair as possible; but it is the need for dynamism in our educational institutions, and through these in our intellectual tradition, which must guide us in our choice of a new system of examination. It is exactly like that in our economic policy too. A dynamic economy is not at every point more just than a static economy. We have to try to make it as just as possible, because a minimum of justice is needed even to sustain dynamism; but it is dynamism which we have to make our first concern whether in economic policy or in education and science policy.

Any serious attempt to change the system of teaching would involve as a necessary corollary a new programme of training and retraining for the teachers themselves, changes in pay scales and conditions of work, etc. But this is a matter into which we cannot enter here. What may still be worth adding is that if we decide to wait for all 'preconditions' to be fulfilled before the new methods are introduced, we may never get started. We had better begin at a few selected points and then push ahead through trials and errors. There is no sufficiently good reason why a beginning should not be made, for instance, in post-graduate classes in the leading universities of India.

### III

While capital has been moving from the richer countries to the poorer, scientists have tended to move the other way. In traditional international trade theory we are told that while

capital is mobile between countries, unless its movement is restricted by special measures, labour is more tied to the country of its origin. Obviously this is not so true of labour of the highest quality, the movement of which is, moreover, more difficult to restrict in a democratic society. In recent years there has been a certain amount of discussion on the problem of outflow of talents from this country. There is, however, another aspect of the same problem which has engaged less of public attention, but which is even more fundamental. It is not simply that we lose our scientists to foreign countries. But those who come back after doing good work abroad often cease to do research of any value on their return. It is possible that we lose more in this way than through any outright defection of our trained scientists. Moreover, the two phenomena are interconnected; and if we could stop the one we might go a good way towards stopping the other.

The fact is that we have not been able to create in this country a climate in which scientific research flourishes. It is this situation that we have to remedy. If we want to retain our best students and promote simultaneously a climate of creative work in our universities, the best strategy might be to select a few centres spread over the country and bring them up to the highest academic standards we are capable of. This may be better than trying to upgrade all educational institutions equally at the same time. Something like this happened naturally, without any central planning, in many pioneer countries. Japan did it consciously in the early period of her industrialization with her select imperial universities. The main points of this strategy are simple. No student will normally be allowed to proceed abroad for higher studies until he has completed the highest courses that the best universities at home have to offer. On passing out of these universities students will get assured jobs commensurate with their abilities. It is after they have thus established themselves in life, struck roots in their own society and formed some idea of what they want to look out for in other societies that they should make their foreign trips which, therefore, would be purposeful and not of indefinite duration. Meanwhile, the best universities of the country should be provided with all necessary equipments and facilities for study and research, a large number

of scholarships of sufficient value to attract talented students, even if poor, from all over the country, and the best available teachers from all over the world. *Mutatis mutandis* the same policy should apply to our leading research institutes.

It is widely felt that there is too little team work in our research institutes. A brief comment is made here on one aspect of the problem only. In our institutes and other seats of learning the head is usually a senior member of the team. In a traditional society, where experience is another word for knowledge, and men, like old wine, are deemed to mature and gain in value by being preserved longer, promotion is naturally by seniority. In a progressive society men are more like fruits that first ripen and then decay. One is continually running to keep pace with growing knowledge, and one ultimately falls behind. This does not necessarily mean that research institutes should be headed by young people. It may be better not to embarrass a young researcher—and the same holds good for a young teacher—with administrative duties in the most productive period of his life. Moreover, the brightest man in a team is not necessarily the best fitted to be its head just as the brightest member of the cabinet will not always make the best prime minister. Age does confer a few advantages: an older man, for instance, would be less likely to arouse envy. But in the peculiar situation of a growing society the head should have a proper conception of his role. He may or may not be the best scientist in the group. He should not be perturbed if he is not; for his task is not to compete but to co-ordinate. Where other members of the group are often his superior in their own lines, co-ordination demands mutual consultation. In some cases it may be best to form a small committee at the top with the post of the chairman rotating. Even if this is not acceptable, there should be firmly established conventions to make joint consultation effective. More generally it is important to foster among scholars, research workers and teachers a sense of belonging to the institution where they are enrolled and of pride and responsible participation in its work and achievements. Further, an attempt should be made to promote simultaneously specialization and inter-disciplinary dialogue. It is by these methods that creative team-work can be developed in depth.

A few words may be added here on the vexed question of promotion in educational and research institutions. In research institutions promotion should go by research output, in published form or circulated otherwise, the evaluation being done wherever possible by an independent and competent body. In educational institutions both the quality of teaching and the output of learned work should count. The former is particularly difficult to assess with any show of objectivity: a possible aid to assessment might be a vote of, say, the best one-fifth of the students who have passed out of the institution in the previous five years, or, a certain proportion of this population taken at random if the total is large. Whatever one may think of this, the main point is quite straightforward. If advancement in places of learning appears to depend on adventitious considerations, these will be plagued by what in India we call 'politics', the essence of which is the substitution of a skilful combination of sycophancy and factional intrigues, a game with a negative sum, for the more productive work of pursuit of knowledge.\*

#### IV

It is usual to make a distinction between scientific discovery, invention and innovation or development. That in the long run there is a vital connection between scientific discovery and industrial development is easily understood. But the lag between an important development in pure science and its repercussions in productive enterprise can be long. "In general", writes J. D. Bernal, "the industry of the nineteenth century depended on the scientific and technical achievements of the late eighteenth century." (*Science and Industry in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 6). Similarly the great discoveries of the 19th century in the physical sciences, resting essentially on the law of conservation of energy and the interchangeability of its different forms, took decades before they made a notable

\*A section of our teachers wants to keep 'politics' out by making promotion depend mechanically on "experience" or "seniority" more than on anything else. But this is to perpetuate in educational institutions the rules of a traditional society. The problem is to evolve clear-cut criteria of efficiency, and teachers in India should strive and agitate to formulate and get accepted such criteria.

impact on industrial processes. It is true that the lag between advance in pure science and industrial development has, generally speaking, narrowed in our century. But the relation between the two is still sufficiently remote to make it patently unwise to leave the organisation of scientific research to private initiative. Even in matters of invention and development, where the link between science and industry is closer and where industries should be both expected and encouraged to make investment in research, public funds must supplement private. Private investment is bound here to fall short of the social optimum for a number of reasons. The social value of an invention would often be greater than its value to any individual firm because it is of use, directly or indirectly (e.g. by making other inventions easier), to a much wider range of enterprises than the one where it originated. Also the funds necessary for organizing research on an effective scale are often beyond the means of individual producers or productive units. This is best illustrated in agriculture. As Nurkse rightly observes, "innovation in this sphere (i.e. agriculture) cannot be relied upon to happen in response to market incentives alone. Even in the United States the agricultural extension service has long been a classic example of a non-market method of development policy in a progressive and market-oriented economy." (*Patterns of Trade and Development*, p. 42).

In India where most intellectuals are by no means partial to private enterprise these propositions would be readily accepted and it is unnecessary to dwell on them longer. But there is one point that does need to be specially stressed. It is possible to have, with or without government aid and encouragement, a good deal of research and cultivation of science at the top and yet very little material development at the base. The contrast between Russia and the United States in the nineteenth century helps to bring out the point forcefully. Russia in the 19th century produced scientists of the highest calibre, such as Lomonosov, Jacobi, Lobachevski, Mendeleev, and many others. The tradition of scientific work in her academies was, if anything, superior to America's. But the Russian masses remained ignorant while in America education spread rapidly. This is one of the handicaps which the Soviet Union determined to remove.



Evidently, what is needed is a system of links or lines of communication by which scientific knowledge at the top can pass to common people engaged in the ordinary business of life. The Middle Ages evolved a priestly class which mediated between God and man, and explained the scriptures in simple terms for simple people. If science is to be brought to the common people we need a class of dedicated intermediaries. Even after mass literacy is achieved a large section of people will go without university education. Most people will not specialize in science. A major objective of science policy in this country must be to promote a varied scientific literature for such people. It is quite obvious that such literature must, for the most part, be in the regional languages. Nor is it enough to have popular scientific literature. There should be organized guidance for people who need such guidance outside of their working hours. We need, for instance, night schools fitted with libraries and laboratories, at least, in all the bigger cities to begin with, where working adults should be able to take science courses. By such means interest in science can be made to percolate through a society. It is in such society that new knowledge finds ready acceptance. Given also a tolerably good system of incentives to productive work, development of knowledge can enter into that process of interaction with material needs by which economic development is sustained and quickened.

## V

A sound science policy needs to be rooted in an appropriate philosophy. To this statement an objection can be raised immediately. Science has grown in combination with diverse faiths. Pascal was a devout believer; Cavendish 'non-religious'. America, by and large, has believed in a divine purpose from the days when the Pilgrim Fathers founded a settlement in New England; the USSR believes in history's broad design, but not in God's. It might seem that the growth of science is unrelated to any particular philosophical conception of life and the world. This is both true and untrue. Wherever the scientific revolution has taken place, an adjustment of the old tradition in a particular *direction* has been found necessary.

What science demands of its devotee is not that he accept or renounce faith in God, but that he believe, broadly speaking, that the universe in its measurable aspect is subject to measurable laws. Science is intolerant of magic. It calls for a critical scrutiny of religion itself to rid it of pre-scientific, magical remnants. Much of the philosophical-religious revolution in the West from Occam through Bacon down to Kant can be explained in these terms. A properly conceived science policy must be friendly to a similar philosophical revolution in this country. Let us face the fact that religion in India is permeated with magic. Many of us seem to think that it does not matter. The leaders of the Indian renaissance, such as Raja Rammohan and Vidyasagar, thought differently. Perhaps they knew better. The path of scientific progress is strewn with trials and experiments gone wrong, and the scientist too needs a faith to sustain him through the journey. Even when superstitions retreat from the field of the physical sciences they continue to impede the advance of the biological and social sciences. In their own ways both the West and the USSR have faced this problem. Science policy in India cannot afford to ignore these facts. It must give the country a sense of direction.

## VI

A few controversial measures have been suggested above. Some of these will possibly be opposed on the ground that they are 'unpractical'. The existing system is always practical. Through years its rough edges have been polished and the whole system works with an impressive interdependence of parts and the whole. Change is always 'unpractical'; for all things do not change equally readily and discrepancies arise between one part and another. How, for instance, can we make a success of the new system of teaching? Where do we get the teachers? Where are the books? Where are the conventions that make such a system work smoothly? Let these come first. And, of course, they just cannot come first. There is point in the practical man's objection. But beyond a certain point, in social life as in economics, the glorification of equilibrium is the hallmark of conservatism.

## Quality and Equality in Education

---

AMONG the many 'contradictions' in an industrial or industrializing society there is one that specially concerns us in this essay. Industrialization has often been accompanied by a democratic movement of some sort or other. This is not an accident. An industrial society is marked by accelerated 'mobility' of men and resources. In the process so many old fortunes are ruined and new positions created that the almost supernatural sanction that protected authority in a traditional society is destroyed. At the same time something subtle takes place. Between the esoteric knowledge claimed or possessed by the élite in a traditional society and the levels of skill and knowledge of the common people there lies an unbridgeable gulf, with few intermediate points to indicate continuity. By contrast, the gulf is less wide between the expertise of the head of a big industrial concern and the skill of the common worker. Moreover, as orders and files pass in a routine manner, a kind of visual illusion is created and the worker tends to believe that he knows nearly enough to be able to run the show if he is given a chance. This is the kind of illusion that Lenin, for instance, had to puncture when workers' committees claimed the right to take over the management of industrial enterprises soon after the Bolshevik revolution. But industrialization does create a psychological climate in which such egalitarian ideas catch on relatively easily. Yet, on the other hand, the process of industrial development is bound to be hampered unless special attention is paid to the formation of a body of highly trained experts. Saint-Simon regarded

scientists and engineers as the historically ordained priests or the new élite of an industrial society. A truth is dramatized in this statement. Its implications for social policy are manifold and complex.

We shall discuss here no more than a special aspect of the problem as it touches educational policy. The democratic and egalitarian sentiment in an industrializing society expresses itself through the demand for equal opportunities for all to receive education. Nor is this demand merely a matter of sentiment. It has a more material justification as we will note later. At the same time, a qualitative change in the content of and approach to education is urgently needed in the developing societies. Without this change education will be cut off from its historic purpose and thus become largely meaningless. How far, and by what methods, can the demand for equal opportunities be harmonized with the need for a qualitative change in education? If at certain levels these two objectives are found to be not quite compatible, which of the two should have precedence over the other?

In India the Education Commission, 1964-66, recommended five years of primary education for all children by 1975-76 and seven years of such education by 1985-86. This is an important recommendation. One may rightly feel impatient that almost twenty years after independence the country should be asked to wait for another twenty years before complete primary education will have been made available to all children. The case for universal primary education in the shortest possible time is quite simple. Our greatest problem today is a stagnant agriculture. Our rural economy will not begin to be effectively modernized until education spreads in our villages. Till now the minority of educated villagers have mostly migrated to the cities and other urban centres. It is only when the great majority of people in the rural areas are educated that a substantial number of educated persons will have no option but to stay in the villages with agricultural pursuits, since industry and trade even a generation hence can provide employment for no more than a minor fraction of the total labour force. Moreover, mass literacy will create a basis for expanded supply of skilled workers for all sectors of the economy. Finally, we cannot have a just society without

at least some education for all. Whatever the ideals we profess, those at the top will never feel towards the common people a minimum of respect until education becomes broad-based.

In higher education the perspectives in which policy decisions have to be taken are different. Here we must aim first and foremost at raising standards. This becomes obvious as soon as we consider the social purpose of university education. We need people with a certain quality of universality about their minds. This quality may manifest itself in two different ways. Some we need who will have the capacity to contemplate the problems of the country as a whole, to consider life in its varied and interrelated aspects, and help others to see local demands and passing problems in this larger context. Without their aid the stresses and strains of a transitional society will hardly admit of a satisfactory resolution. In the second place, we need people belonging to specialized disciplines, who have yet a certain universality of outlook in the sense that within their respective fields they are alive to developments in all parts of the world, who indeed have the world as a domain in their pursuit of knowledge. Without their aid no country can keep abreast of the continuous advance of knowledge in the modern world. To produce such people is the principal purpose of the university. Investment in higher education is justified only to the extent that it contributes to producing such people. Admission to higher education should only be as broad-based as it can be made without discarding or lowering this basic aim. This is particularly important in the developing societies, for a wrong kind of academic tradition once created is difficult to get rid of later.

If university education is to fulfil its purpose, admission to higher educational institutions must be restricted in the present stage of our development. This is true above all for post-graduate admissions. At the same time it is necessary to create public opinion, particularly among employers in the private sector as well as in the public, so that a post-graduate degree ceases to carry any value for most jobs outside of teaching and research work. The argument for restriction of enrolment for the higher courses can be developed in a number of ways which mutually support one another. In India, stu-

dents have often joined university classes partly because of the lack of facilities for technical training and education and partly for reasons of prestige. Many such students do not have the aptitude and taste for abstract reasoning and conceptualization which are essential in higher learning.

In pre-industrial societies the man of higher education had to master the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the past and transmit it to posterity. In developing societies something more is necessary. Those who have university education are not only inheritors of the knowledge of the past, but they must learn to doubt and to question, to suggest new hypotheses and test them. But students cannot be encouraged to question old knowledge and test new truths without some change in methods of teaching. This means in turn that admission should not be determined, as is quite often the case now, particularly with courses in the humanities, by the size of the lecture hall, but should have some definite relation to the number of competent teachers available. In India total enrolments in post-graduate courses in arts and science and in research is estimated to have increased, according to the Report of the Education Commission, from 18,000 to 86,000 between 1950-51 and 1965-66. In other words, post-graduate enrolments increased almost fivefold in fifteen years. But the supply of competent teachers did not increase that much. We must aim at increasing the number of competent teachers and of student admissions to universities in the long run. But for the time being we have to restrict admissions, or standards of university education are bound to fall.

It may be said in criticism that restricted admission to the university will lead to the formation of an academic and intellectual élite in society. To a certain extent, this is inevitable and even necessary. People who cultivate the higher sciences and philosophies will inevitably be limited in number and will speak among themselves a language which is not quite comprehensible to the layman. At the same time, we should try consciously to mitigate the worst consequences of this phenomenon. This can be done in several ways. Restricted admission to universities should be combined with an enlarged system of scholarships from higher secondary classes upwards and aiming specifically at the poorer students. I would go so far

as to suggest that while no student should be admitted to higher educational institutions unless he satisfies certain minimum scholarly standards, scholarships should go by family income and social position alone among those who have qualified for admission. Thus, students coming from poorer families and socially and educationally backward castes and classes should have absolute preference over others who are better off. Other things being equal, investment in higher education of a young person from a backward community should be deemed socially more profitable because the "spread effects" of such investment are likely to be greater and so would be its contribution to the promotion of a more unified and just society. For adults who have been diverted from the general stream of education at a relatively early stage in their life, there should be expanding opportunities for improving their education through evening classes, correspondence courses and other devices. Finally, it is to be expected that at a higher stage of economic development admission to universities will also substantially increase.

There are other areas of educational policy where the same conflict between 'elitist' and 'populist' points of view reappears in other garbs. In each case a flexible combination of scientific pragmatism and idealism provides the best approach for resolving the conflict. Let us illustrate.

In India, with her fourteen major living languages, the question of the medium of higher education has assumed major importance. There is a clear case for adopting the mother tongue, or the principal language in each region, as a medium of education up to the highest standards as early as possible. In its 'populist' form the case is this. If education is imparted through the regional language, this will help to bring people with higher education in closer touch with the common people of the region. The argument is valid with some qualifications. Even if education is imparted through the mother tongue, a technical language hardly comprehensible to the layman will evolve in the higher realms of thought. Yet in a sense the passage from ordinary to higher thought will be more easily negotiable if education is imparted through the mother tongue than if a foreign language is made the sole medium of instruction. The case for the mother tongue is further strengthened

by the solid academic reason that ideas come more 'real' when they are conveyed through a language in which one is steeped from childhood. But if the regional language is made the sole medium of education in the major universities of India, we will be confronted at once with a formidable problem of communication between different regions. While, on the one hand, it is desirable to have closer links between the more and the less educated people in each region, yet, on the other hand, it is of very great importance that the academic fellowship of the country is preserved. This does not mean that the mother tongue should not be adopted as a medium of higher education. It means that Indian universities must adopt effective bilingualism and that higher education should be imparted simultaneously through the regional language and a common academic language for the country as a whole. Either we have such a common language, or the country will be first academically fragmented and then culturally Balkanised.

Now, what should be this common language in India? If we care for the quality of our higher education, then the criterion to accept here is quite simple. Among the available alternatives we should choose the one that best fulfils two simultaneous conditions: it should assure the academic unity of the country, and, in combination with the regional language, it should maximize our total access to knowledge. Let us look at the question from the point of view of a scholar who has Hindi for his mother tongue. I suggest that as a rule Hindi combined with English would give greater access to knowledge on most subjects than Hindi combined with any other Indian language, such as Bengali, Tamil, or whatever it be. The position is exactly the same for a student who has Bengali or Tamil for his mother tongue. English then best qualifies as the common medium of higher education throughout India.

By effective bilingualism I mean that people with university education must learn two languages, a major regional language and English, so well that they can not only read in both but also express themselves effectively in the higher regions of thought through both languages. The Education Commission in its recommendations does not go as far as that. All that it



recommends is that "postgraduate students should be able to follow lectures and use reading materials in the regional language as well as in English" (Report, p. 649). But it is not enough to know one's mother tongue just well enough to be able to "follow lectures"; and if our students learn English no better than that, it will certainly fail to function as a medium of effective communication among scholars all over the country. The standard of linguistic proficiency that the Education Commission demands here would be exactly right for any third language that the scholar may choose to learn, but not for the two we need for effective bilingualism in this country. A scheme for bilingualism in the sense defined above is not impracticable. Given the will and a well-thought-out plan, high-level text-books can be produced in the major Indian languages in the next few years. At the same time, we can and should have a system of rotation of professors giving courses, and requiring students to write answers, in the common medium of higher education in the country. Once the basic idea is accepted, it should not be difficult to devise measures to give effect to bilingualism in the higher educational institutions in India.

Let us now consider another controversial recommendation of the Education Commission. "The most important reform in higher education", we are told by the Commission, "is the development of some 'major universities' where first-class post-graduate work and research would be possible and whose standards would be comparable to the best institutions of their type in any part of the world." (Report, p. 646). That we need some such institutions would seem to be obvious. At present we have to send our best students abroad for higher education; and even then when they come back they often cease to be intellectually productive and any promise they showed abroad comes to nought. This is a stupendous waste. We cannot stop this waste without building up in this country major universities and centres of research. Yet the idea has been opposed and critics have pointed out that any attempt to build up major universities is to introduce a distinction between those that are 'major' and those that are not. This is true. But it is clearly beyond our means to bring up all the sixty-six universities in India (1965) to internationally com-

parable standards. We may perhaps try with six. Here we have, again, a case where quality must be given priority. There is, of course, nothing to prevent us from offering special financial and other facilities to the poorer scholars and, if they have sufficient merit, to get them admitted to the major universities. Indeed, this is what should be done as a matter of policy. Moreover, measures should be adopted to prevent these universities from growing into immobile centres of academic privileges. The University Grants Commission should carry on a continuous assessment of all universities in the country and any 'minor' university which shows sufficient promise should be adopted for special aid and encouragement.

"On the quality and number of persons coming out of our schools and colleges", declares the Education Commission, "will depend our success in the great enterprise of national reconstruction." (Report, p. 1) But "quality" is not the same thing as "number", and we have tried to show that there is sometimes a conflict between their demands. We have also attempted to indicate the manner in which this conflict should be resolved in the present formative phase of our economic and social development. We should aim at securing certain minimum standards of education for all. In formulating a policy for higher education the stress should be on quality, whether we are deciding on the question of admissions, choice of the medium of education, or building up major centres of learning and research. It matters little if this results in the creation of what some would brand as an intellectual aristocracy. What, however, is particularly important is that it should be an "open" aristocracy. Special measures should be adopted to recruit into its ranks young men of merit from all orders in society, but particularly from the lower. This is something to be deliberately aimed at, the more so because the natural tendency of a caste-ridden society is to produce exactly the opposite result. In higher education, democracy in India should not be an enemy of quality any more than it should oppose progress. But it should tirelessly recommend a systematic search for talents at the lower strata of society and declare that, paradoxical as it may seem, equality requires special treatment for such talents.

# Reflections on Economic Transition

---

## I

### AGRICULTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC development can be regarded as a process raising the productivity of human labour through a progressive transformation of the technological basis of society along with other supporting institutional and cultural changes. These changes do not come smoothly and it is quite usual for serious discrepancies to arise. The study of such discrepancies is an important part of the study of economic development itself.

New knowledge and technology do not penetrate all sectors of a developing economy equally rapidly. Some sectors are more resistant to modernization than others. Agriculture is often one such sector. But the experience of all countries has not been uniform in this respect. There is something to be learnt from these differences among different countries.

In Japan the Imperial Agricultural Experiment Station with its six branch stations was established on a permanent basis in 1893. Government experimental farms (e.g. the Saidapet Experimental Farm) were started in India as early as in the sixties and seventies of the last century. On a more solid basis the Imperial Agricultural Research Institute was established by Lord Curzon in 1905. Experiments at the Pusa Institute produced some notable results, such as improved varieties of wheat, sugarcane, etc., and better breeds of cattle. But these innovations had little effect on Indian agriculture,

and our food production persisted in a virtual state of stagnation till the middle of this century. In Japan, on the other hand, it was possible for a historian to report already in the 1920's that "during the thirty years of its activity and development, the Station has contributed remarkably to the rational management and rapid progress of Japan's agriculture". In some countries in the West impressive improvement in agriculture had come even earlier. How to account for this contrast?

In agricultural development in Western countries initiative came quite often from people belonging to the higher strata of society. When Warren Hastings returned from India he used his fortune to acquire and re-equip his ancestral manor which he had lost earlier. In this he was not an exception. "Scotland", writes John Strachey in *The End of Empire*, "contains many an estate, the land of which was improved by returning 'Indians'. (Thus) they took part in the revolution in agricultural technique which underlay the industrial revolution." On the other hand, Indians who became rich by sharing in the profits of trade with England constituted themselves into a class of absentee landlords, and although they often played a prominent role in the cultural life of the country they cannot be called improvers of agriculture.

In Japan leadership in all spheres, including agriculture, came chiefly from the *samurai* class. We come across the following interesting statement in the autobiography of a Japanese written in the early period of the economic development of that country: "Many *samurai* families came into every village to live among the farmers. This mixed living disturbed the peaceful life of the farmers. However, . . . the coming into our community of so many *samurai* families . . . was greatly advantageous to us in acquiring various kinds of knowledge. Especially many young farmers who were in contact with them were inspired." Another difference between India and Japan was equally notable. In Japan mass literacy had already been achieved by the turn of the century; in India most people in the villages are illiterate even today.

The lessons to be drawn from these facts are quite simple. For the modernization of an economy, and particularly of agriculture, it is not enough to have research organized at the

top. It is also necessary to have a degree of social mobility so that men of higher education and influence help in the practical application of knowledge. The efforts of such people are likely to succeed so much the more if a minimum standard of education is widespread at the base.

Why is it that British traders often turned improvers of land in their own country while their Indian partners did not? Foreign observers usually adduce caste as the explanatory factor. There is certainly some truth in that view. But there is still something missing. In India backward Brahmans in distress sometimes took to farming; but once a man, whether Brahman or non-brahman, came to the city and imbibed its culture, he almost never went back to agriculture as an active pursuit. It seems there was something in the nature of these new cities that made a return almost impossible. In Japan as in England the cities grew out of the native economy through a process of natural evolution. A commercial centre like Calcutta, on the other hand, was suddenly grafted on the Indian economy by foreign traders; it never developed close organic links with the rest of the country. Indians who moved to these cities and allowed themselves to be transformed by the new culture became in many ways more alien to their native country than British traders coming there became to theirs.

Moreover, these cities drawing away the best of men, talents and capital from the surrounding land left the countryside denuded of its most precious resources. And so the trend continues to this day. The best of young men come to Calcutta for education. At the end of their education, even the less successful among them do not go out to teach in the districts except with great reluctance; and so long as they are there, their foremost thought is how to come back to Calcutta. Likewise the more successful administrators are always on the look-out for a secure post in the capital. To a certain extent this is so in other countries too. But in many ways, the trend has gone further here than in most other countries. In the state of West Bengal trade, industry, education and administration, all centre in Calcutta. Beyond Calcutta and the adjacent industrial areas, the countryside stagnates—and so does agriculture. In relation to West Bengal, Calcutta is

New York, Washington D. C. and Cambridge, Mass., along with Boston, all thrown together. If this city were dismembered and the centre of administration transferred to, let us say, somewhere near the old Murshidabad and the centre of education elsewhere again, West Bengal would have, present inconveniences notwithstanding, a more balanced economy in the long run. As all roads led to Rome, Roman agriculture fell gradually into decay. Agriculture prospers or decays as part of a regionally balanced economy.

In standard text-books on Indian economics this is not the kind of thing usually stressed. Instead a venerable myth is discussed with fervour. We are told that large-scale farming is a sine qua non of scientific agriculture. To a student of Indian economics the tractor is the symbol of scientific farming and it is regarded as indispensable for a high return from land. Capitalist interest and leftist ideology have combined to uphold this myth. In the name of large-scale farming, some demand the abolition of ceilings on land holdings while others preach the necessity of co-operative joint farming.

Now, large-scale farming is not one of the urgent needs of India today; nor is it essential for increasing the productivity of land. The experience of the last half a century makes this abundantly clear. The contrast between Japan and the Soviet Union has been before us long enough: while the small farms of Japan set an example of how to go about the business of raising agricultural productivity the huge collective farms of Stalin's Russia warned us against what not to do. In more recent years the contrast between Communist China and Taiwan has pointed again to a similar conclusion.

We have, for instance, the following information from the *Economic Survey of Asia and the Far East 1964*. China and Taiwan (Formosa) had, more or less, the same average of yields of rice per hectare for the years 1948-49—1952-53. Over the next ten years yields rose by slightly less than a quarter (24 per cent) in China and by about two-fifths (41 per cent) in Taiwan. It may be of interest to note in this connection that India's yield per hectare was much lower in the base period, and increased by about 28 per cent over the decade. While China experimented with her communes, Taiwan in a less spectacular way achieved greater increase of agricultural

productivity. To suggest that this impressive development was simply the result of American aid is to flatter America unduly. Foreign capital by itself cannot bring about solid development; it can do so even less in agriculture than in other sectors of the economy.

To argue that large-scale farming is not essential for higher productivity of land is not to deny the need for agrarian reform in the underdeveloped countries. In many of these countries the existing systems of ownership and tenancy do not provide sufficient incentive for productive work and investment. Required reforms, under the circumstances, may take any one of a number of alternative forms. Ceilings may be fixed for family holdings of land, and these may be sufficiently low to make possible a substantial redistribution of surplus holdings among the poorest peasants. Alternatively, landlordism in some form or other may be retained, but laws regarding tenancy may be so reformed as to assure that the tenant will be able to reap the fruits of careful husbandry. Of these alternative programmes of reform, the first has the merit of being more egalitarian. But it is also more difficult to implement effectively with the existing administrative machinery in some countries, since the more prosperous farmers can, when the stakes are high, defeat the law by bribing officials. If, for political reasons, a radical reform of the administration is ruled out, the more moderate programme of reform of tenancy may be adopted. If other technical conditions are satisfied, this can still serve as a basis for agricultural improvement.

In Taiwan post-war land reforms introduced a ceiling on holdings of ten acres per family; small-scale farming is the general practice there as in India or Japan. But Taiwan, unlike India, has a broad basis of literacy. As in India so in Taiwan the use of tractors is uncommon (though somewhat less uncommon in the latter country); but it is in the use of fertilizers that one notices a very great difference indeed. The *Economic Survey* from which we quoted above informs us that the consumption of chemical fertilizers per hectare in 1961-62 amounted to 3 kg. for India, 209 kg. for Taiwan. This, not the size of the farm, is the clue to Taiwan's high productivity. What we need in India for higher agricultural productivity

is a very substantial increase in the use of fertilizers. With fertilizers must go improved seeds, assured water supply (which does not mean simply irrigation but also an adequate system of drainage), insecticides and the necessary organization to co-ordinate these different requirements and supply these to farms in proper time. The farmer's acceptance of new methods of production was naturally conditioned in the past by his level of enlightenment and capacity for initiative; but there seems to exist at the moment a good deal of unsatisfied demand for fertilizers in India, and if the essential requirements can be supplied in suitable packages much progress can be expected in future. Together with essential supplies we need equally a vigorous movement for further education at the base and a widespread system of expert advice available to farmers all over the country. For instance, the adjustment of fertilizers to local soil conditions and the most economic combination of different types of fertilizers are questions where expert guidance is indispensable, and if this need is not met progress of our agriculture will be unnecessarily slowed down.

For the rest what we need for agricultural improvement are such well-known things as price stabilization (along with crop insurance to the extent this can be introduced) and provision of cheap credit. On one aspect of the matter a final comment may be in order.

The farmer needs credit for a variety of reasons. In a poor country he is under strong pressure to divert credit granted for relatively remote, often productive, purposes to satisfy more urgent consumption needs. From this arises the idea of supervised credit as an instrument of agricultural improvement. But this supervision to be effective must arise from within the village community; if imposed by officialdom from above, it will be both irksome and ineffectual. We noted above that co-operative joint farming is not necessary for raising the productivity of land. But a policy for agricultural improvement does need at the base a rural community sufficiently well knit to be capable of taking counsel and planning together and acting in concert in some selected spheres.



## II

## ON BALANCED GROWTH

A simple version of the theory of balanced growth runs like this: In an underdeveloped economy growth of industry is hampered by the narrowness of the domestic market. But each industry demands the products of other industries in certain more or less definite proportions. So if different industries grow simultaneously at appropriate rates, they will mutually support one another; and thus the obstacle arising from limitation of the market will be overcome.

Now, as a matter of historical experience this is not exactly how industrialization has taken place. Quite often some industry or group of industries has shot ahead, and other industries have grown in its wake with varying time lags. Thus, for instance, textiles have sometimes led the way, being enabled to grow particularly fast by the possibilities of exports or import substitution, or railway construction has forged ahead with special government assistance.

Patterns of industrialization vary from one country to another. But there is a common pattern which the German economist, W. G. Hoffmann, noticed in a large number of countries.\* Consumer-goods industries (such as textiles and food-processing), which are also comparatively light industries, develop first while capital-goods industries, which are relatively "heavy", become preponderant at a later stage. This in a way is what one would expect. Capital goods are required to produce consumer goods. It is only after consumer-goods industries have already made some progress that the demand for the "heavier" type of capital goods is large enough to justify setting up industries to produce them, since heavy industries cannot be run efficiently unless they are of a certain minimum size. If textiles constituted the leading industry at the early stages of the modernization of Japan, and if at that time she imported capital goods against exports of the products of her light industries, this is what seems to correspond to reasonable expectation. If in more recent years Japan's heavy industries have grown faster, this is again only to be expected.

\*W. G. Hoffmann, *The Growth of Industrial Economies*, Manchester.

Hoffmann makes a distinction between different "stages" of industrialization. One may say that light industries predominate at the first stage and heavy industries at higher stages. It is interesting to note that while the transition from the first to the higher stages was made comparatively slowly in countries like England where industrialization started earlier, it happened much more rapidly in some of the late-starting countries like Germany, for example. Russia belongs to this latter category of countries. Iron industry developed quite early in that country. When afterwards the Bolsheviks came to power they paid special attention to heavy industry as a matter of policy. Since then a school of thought has come to recommend priority to heavy industry as the most effective strategy for economic development.

Now, it is one thing to give priority to heavy industry in the special circumstances of some country; it is quite a different matter to make out a general case for this line of development. The Second Five-Year Plan of India laid it down as one of its principal objectives to strive for rapid industrialization, "with particular emphasis on the development of basic and heavy industries". The juxtaposition of the words "heavy" and "basic" in this statement is not accidental; as a matter of fact, there is an unstated assumption here that heavy industries are basic to economic development in some self-evident way. It is possible to argue the case for heavy industry in other ways too; for example, there is a theory of limited validity that emphasis on heavy industry quickens capital formation. But in the public mind the case for heavy industry depends on some such psychological association as we have mentioned above and, of course, on heavy industry being also a symbol of power.

In what sense is heavy industry "basic"? In the sense that its products are essential requirements of all kinds of industry. Iron and steel, for instance, are needed on all hands; and machinery of some sort is needed by an industry whenever it wants to add to its productive capacity. But then quite a few other things are equally basic. Agriculture is basic and so is education, for instance. Agricultural raw materials are essential to keep industries running, and the marketed surplus of grain to feed the industrial population. If the marketed surplus of

agricultural produce is reduced, or fails to increase sufficiently, the pace of industrialization threatens to slow down, and a number of other difficulties appear.

If a country does not produce enough food, it has to import a part of its requirements. But so can it in the case of machinery and other capital goods. The products of heavy industry are, in a sense, basic; but they can be either produced directly at home or obtained indirectly in exchange of other products. If at a certain stage of its development a country has comparative advantages in light industry, it may be more economic to obtain the products of heavy industry indirectly.

Thus, the characterization of heavy industry as "basic" is a little misleading in two ways: some other kinds of investment are quite as basic as investment in heavy industry, and the needs supplied by heavy industry can also be supplied indirectly through exchange with the products of light industry. There is no general case for priority to heavy industry. But this does not mean that there cannot be a special case for such priority in particular situations. As a matter of fact, a reasonably good argument for according some kind of priority to heavy industry is suggested by India's position in the world economy today.

Let us try to put the matter in perspective. In a number of countries in the past the export sector played a leading role in initiating sustained economic growth. We have already noted the case of Japan. There is another group of countries to which reference can equally be made. In some of the recently settled areas of the world, such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, some Latin American countries—the USA is a slightly different case and it is better to leave it out of this list—agriculture and food-processing came to constitute the vital export sector on which accelerated economic growth depended. At the time this happened, Britain was the leading industrial country of the world. Since she produced herself only a small fraction of the food and raw materials she needed, her industrial growth created an increasing demand for these commodities. Other countries could supply these and purchase in exchange capital goods for their own development.

Countries which are striving for rapid economic development today find that the pattern of international trade has

already changed in important ways. It is much more difficult for developing countries to increase their exports now than it was in the decades before World War I. We need not go here into a detailed explanation of this change. But a few things stand out quite clearly. The leading industrial country in the world today is the United States which, unlike Britain, has surplus agricultural products. Moreover, recent advances in science and technology have in a number of ways curtailed the demand for raw materials per unit of manufactured product. All this makes it difficult for a developing country today to increase its exports of primary products fast enough to meet its growing import requirements. There are exceptions to this rule; for instance, countries which are in a position to export large quantities of petroleum have no difficulty with their balance of trade. But India is not in this happy position. What is she to do? Foreign aid helps temporarily. In which direction must she move for a long-term solution of her problem?

India cannot get very far by trying to push her traditional exports. In the long run, she can overcome her balance-of-payments problem by selling on the world market increasing quantities of the products of her engineering industries, on the one hand, and by substituting domestic products for imports, on the other. Import-substitution would mean, among other things, priority to agriculture since food is the largest single item of India's imports currently. But it would also mean developing a variety of industries, particularly heavy industry. In exports her advantage will often lie in the products of relatively light engineering industries. Even then heavy industry will also be needed as a support for light industries. The fact that India has large reserves of iron ore of good quality strengthens the case for our paying attention to heavy industry. Thus, India's position in the world economy and her natural endowments require a programme of industrialization and special attention to heavy industry.

One-sided emphasis on heavy industry would, however, create complications. We already know something about the nature of these complications, thanks particularly to the abnormally rapid rise in prices in the last three years. Inflation is often explained in terms of money-supply rising faster than

the volume of goods for sale on the market. Put in these terms the explanation does not go far enough and offers no more than a limited, often too limited, basis for effective policy formulation. We will not go here into all its limitations, but stress only one aspect of the matter which concerns us more directly. Inflation often indicates basic structural maladjustments in the economy. If, for instance, substantial investments are made in heavy industry, but not sufficient work is done to break the stagnation of traditional agriculture, the result, as we know from our experience, is food shortage and rising food prices, driving up, first, the cost of living and then all prices in general.

The remedy to this economic ill is not simply to put a check on the growth of aggregate money-supply. This may slow down our rate of economic growth without removing the structural maladjustment in the national economy and, therefore, without even removing the basic cause of inflation.

Thus we come back to the need for balanced growth. This is not, however, quite the same thing as the case for balanced growth with which we started. We need not bother too much about an exactly proportioned growth of each and all industries. This is neither necessary, nor even very desirable. Some industries may be temporarily left behind and then pulled up by the general growth of demand in an expanding economy. But sometimes this does not work and so disproportionate growth in one direction cannot be depended upon to bring about necessary growth in other directions after a reasonably short time-lag. Persistent stagnation in some sectors may then slow down the overall economic growth. Moreover, the tensions arising from such maladjustments may be of a major order; they may be very painful and threaten to disrupt that minimum of social solidarity without which planned development is not possible. A sound strategy for economic development demands then that we pay attention simultaneously to several sectors and try to preserve some balance among them in our overall plan.

## III

## ON ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

In India as in most other Asian and African countries our ideas about capitalism are strongly coloured by the fact that we were till recently ruled over by some Western imperialist countries. Capitalism is associated in our mind with plunder, slave trade, exploitation and war. But the industrialization of the West cannot be explained adequately in these negative terms. It is obvious on a moment's reflection that capitalism has some more positive aspects also.

What are these positive aspects?

In the first place, a capitalist enterprise is based on the principle of economic rationalism. It aims at profits, but in order to maximize profit it has to keep strict accounts of its assets and liabilities. Double entry book-keeping is a concrete manifestation of economic rationalism. The point becomes clearer when we contrast capitalist enterprise with what it has replaced. In pre-industrial societies people follow time-honoured patterns of consumption and methods of production. Under capitalism people experiment with alternative uses of resources in order to achieve a certain effect at less cost. The use of money has been increasingly adopted not simply as an instrument of exploitation—pure usury was more a medieval phenomenon—but as a powerful and an indispensable aid to greater specialization and more economic use of scarce resources. Even socialist societies had to adopt the capitalist principle of accounting before they could run their economies with reasonable efficiency.

Secondly, capitalism stressed the importance of saving and investment. This was a great thing. In pre-industrial societies, tomorrow, if it existed, was essentially a repetition of today; the idea of economic progress did not effectively exist. Investment, on the other hand, means creating productive capacity for the future. Capitalism, by stressing the value of investment, created a new vista of indefinite economic progress. Malthusian population theory tended to qualify this idea of progress, but could not annul it.

In a sense the future is always uncertain and whoever

makes an investment is taking a risk. Capitalism fostered risk-taking as a driving force behind economic development. "Enterprise," Keynes once wrote, "only pretends to itself to be mainly actuated by the statements in its own prospectus."\* Those who tested out new ideas in the market-place often ended up in bankruptcy, but society gained even from their failures. Thus, the spirit of capitalism represented something greater and more profound than mere accounting. The spirit of adventure used reason to its larger purposes in transforming the material basis of society.

Whatever the economic system we adopt something of this spirit is necessary to achieve development. To recognize this is not to overlook the limitations of capitalism as an instrument of economic development. Some of these will be briefly examined now.

Perhaps the most common criticism against capitalism is that it breeds inequality. Capitalism is supposed to lead to concentration of wealth in a few hands. Classical economists generally defended inequality on the ground that it made the total savings of society larger and thus promoted investment and growth. With the rise of socialism the argument has been reversed: society will accept a larger cut in present consumption if there is a sense of justice in distribution. It is true that even in socialist societies substantial inequality in incomes has been found necessary for incentive to work and acquisition of skills. But there is much greater inequality in the distribution of wealth under capitalism. This inequality, however, tends to be reduced after industrialization has made some progress. This happens partly because of the spread of education among the workers and the increase in the proportion of skilled workers. Moreover, the progress of industrialization tends to narrow down differences in levels of productivity between towns and villages and this helps to reduce the degree of inequality in the distribution of incomes in society at large. In the long run, nothing promotes equality so much and establishes it so surely on a stable basis as the spread of education and skills throughout society.

We spoke earlier of capitalism as a promoter of economic rationality. But from the point of view of society, this is in-

\**The General Theory*, pp. 161-62

complete rationality. Decisions which are rational from the point of view of the individual consumer or firm may not be rational from the point of view of society as a whole. Private costs do not always coincide with social costs, nor private benefits with social benefits. Thus, for instance, producers of opium inflict on society costs which do not enter their own account books; and the opposite must be true of any good educational institution. Moreover, the time horizon of decisions taken by individuals is generally much narrower than what would be proper to a great society. The case for planning at a higher level rests on these limitations of a system of individualistic capitalism. Planning in this sense expresses a more complete economic rationality than does private enterprise.

But an argument for planning is not necessarily an argument for state ownership and management of the means of production; nor, by the same token, is it an argument against making very substantial use of the market mechanism. Planners, for instance, may decide that agricultural output should grow faster or a different combination of products should be produced than would be achieved under unaided market forces. But this result might be attained, say, by a system of subsidies and technical assistance without abolishing either private farming or free markets. State management of enterprise is one among many alternative instruments of policy; whether this is desirable in any particular case should be decided independently and it should not be confused with the general case for planning.

In some cases the argument for government enterprise is so clear that even those who are generally sympathetic to private enterprise often make exceptions in these cases. Adam Smith, whose authority is sometimes quoted in favour of capitalism, stated the argument neatly. While enumerating the functions of the state he spoke of "the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and public institutions, which it can never be for the interest of any individual, or small number of individuals, to erect and maintain, because the profit can never repay the expense to any individual or small number of individuals, though it may frequently do much more than repay it to a great society." This is the basic argument for government investment in public utilities and



in building what is now called the "infrastructure" of a developing economy. Sometimes, again, the initial capital and organizational effort needed to establish a new industry are so large that government initiative is called for, although in some such cases the industry has at a later stage been turned over to private management.

Just as private enterprise is open to a variety of criticisms so public administration of industry also suffers from many drawbacks. These things should not be discussed in terms of idealized models, but realistically. In private enterprise competition leads to a kind of natural selection, so that those who are too inefficient are weeded out; survival is often ensured by a combination of efficiency, cunning and a certain amount of luck. In India the higher posts in public enterprises go mostly to senior members of the administrative services. It will be obviously unrealistic to imagine that efficiency is the determining criterion here. In certain ways public enterprise is less economy-minded and more easily tempted to create unnecessary posts carrying salaries with no commensurate duties. Public enterprise also tends to be more allergic to risk-taking. This is because failures and irregularities are more likely to be pounced upon and castigated in Parliament and elsewhere than success is likely to be noticed and applauded. The more conservative code of conduct that develops as a result in the public sector is not particularly conducive to economic growth. Rigidities are also created by the system of fund allocations and auditing in public enterprise. Private enterprise permits of a more flexible distribution of expenditure over time with resulting gains in efficiency.

For all these reasons public enterprise is at a disadvantage where quick adjustment to changes, often small changes, is particularly important. In road transport, for instance, this is noticeable. It can also be an important factor in trade, for better or for worse. The case of foreign trade perhaps needs special mention. In the home market an authoritarian government can ignore changes in consumer tastes and shifts in demand, though not without some trouble. But even a dictator must take tastes and demands and changes in these for what they are in the foreign market. Exporters must adjust to them or be content to lose the market. Totalitarian planning is

easier in countries which depend but little on foreign markets. Had the first communist revolution succeeded in Great Britain, the results could have been disastrous for the British economy, as Arthur Lewis somewhere remarked.

Precisely because both private enterprise and public have their own peculiar defects one has to approach these questions without narrow doctrinaire attitudes. This may seem to leave the whole question of the choice between economic systems undetermined. But this is as it should be. The attempt to establish the absolute superiority of one economic system over another in the universalistic terms dear to ideologues can be harmful. The matter needs to be decided in the light of the total social situation in any particular case. Economic development is always a painful process and will be so under any conceivable economic system. The suffering can only be increased by dogmatic adherence to rigid ideologies.

---

## Class War and Social Progress

---

THAT nothing is more fundamental to the progress of society than the advancement of science and the rational outlook on life is the great idea that gradually unfolded itself after the renaissance. In order to understand its novelty, we have to contrast it with an older idea. The older idea was that society falls into disorder when people fall off from the rules of righteousness or the commandments of God, and order is restored with the restoration of righteousness. The conception of a gradually increasing stock of tested knowledge by which man can control and change his environment and thus improve his material conditions, and that standards of justice are themselves related to this process of material and social improvement, is something new. A society which ignores this today will fail to hold its own against other advancing societies.

In order to apply knowledge to change the environment, men have to co-operate and organize themselves in a certain way. With the improvement of science and technology, the social organization has to change itself. Thus, social progress signifies an improvement in the terms on which men co-operate. Let us consider carefully what this means and what it does not.

The dictum that the history of society is a history of class struggle expresses a partial truth. It is more correct to say that the history of society is a history of the struggle to improve the terms of human co-operation. That society is, in fact, based on co-operation is quite obvious. The proof of the proposition is simple. Where a number of men enter into a definite relation-

ship and work together, the crucial question is whether there is anybody in the group who will be better off by staying out of the group. Ancient Hindu society recognised the right of the individual to leave society; if he renounced all claims on society he was also absolved of all obligations. But this was an exception which proved the rule. For the majority, living in society meant living under a bond of mutually advantageous co-operation. The great Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, pointed out long ago that human needs being many and varied, these are more amply satisfied and man's personality is more fully developed when people come together in society instead of each trying to be sufficient unto himself. In this sense, society means co-operation.

But the fact that it is co-operation at one level does not mean, of course, that the level of co-operation cannot be raised. An individual or a group may be worse off by leaving society altogether; but the same individual or group may still be better off by a change in social relations. And it is possible that the whole society will in some sense be better off thereby. The struggle to change social relations is a struggle for improving the terms of social co-operation.

What does it mean to improve the terms of social co-operation? Since social relations provide a basis for productive work, progress will mean, in the first place, a change in social relations by which human labour is rendered more effective or the introduction of more advanced methods of production is facilitated. It is in this sense that the new relations embodied in the factory system represented an advance upon the older domestic system of production.

Progress in social relations also means that a step has been taken in the direction of a fuller realization of the ideal of justice. This is not the place to embark upon a long discussion on the meaning of justice. Justice involves the substitution of arbitrary force by a system of impersonal laws. These laws, moreover, must be defensible, under the given circumstances, in terms of what has been called the public good. When in ancient history a country was conquered by "outside barbarians", as the invaders were often called, there was at first a period of rule by methods of terror, but when this was later replaced by more settled norms of mutual obligations this

could be regarded as progress in human relations. Or, to take a different kind of example, in the struggle between the plebeians and the patricians in Roman history, the successive victories of the former can, I suppose, be described as progress towards greater justice.

Or, again, one can conceive of progress in a different manner. One may mean by that term progress towards self-determination. Let us take for illustration the situation in modern industrial society. The worker has to work in the factory according to certain rules which he often feels to be an imposition from outside. Thus, the labourer feels alienated from the management. Whatever reduces this sense of alienation, without at the same time lowering standards of efficiency, denotes progress. We may never be able to overcome alienation completely, but we should still have a certain sense of direction in striving to improve the terms of co-operation in modern industry. John Stuart Mill thought that progress in industrial relations would lead to "an association of the labourers themselves, on terms of equality, collectively owning the capital with which they carry on their operations, and working under managers elected and removable by themselves." This is an ideal which we had better not lose sight of; its practicability is a matter to be tested through social experiments. In any case, what is known under the name of "capitalist relations of production" is not something fixed and unchanging. These relations are not the same in the industrially advanced economies as they are in the underdeveloped countries. The movement is in the direction of what we may broadly call industrial democracy.

Thus, the statement that society is based on co-operation needs amendment. The rules or laws that govern social relations are capable of improvement. They can be changed and reformed and made a more effective instrument of the productivity of human labour, the realization of fuller justice, and the diminution of a sense of imposition from outside. Seen from this point of view the most significant thing in history is the struggle to improve the terms of social co-operation with a view to the enlargement of human freedom.

Marx made a stronger statement. He spoke of the class struggle, particularly under capitalism, in a special sense.

Labour creates all value, but it gets no more than the bare subsistence of the labourer; and the surplus is appropriated by the capitalist class. This is supposed to be the essential feature of capitalism and the interests of the two classes are seen as strictly antagonistic.

This theory is wrong for a number of reasons. The advance of science and technology makes it possible, even under capitalism, to raise the standard of living of the working people without any necessary diminution in the incomes of the other classes in society. At no period in history has this been more amply demonstrated than in the hundred years that have elapsed since Marx's *Capital* made its first appearance. In these hundred years methods of production have been greatly improved. Since capitalist entrepreneurs have not been passive rentiers but played an active role in carrying through "innovations", it is wrong to argue that the resulting improvement in the standard of living all around is unrelated to the "essence" of capitalism. Any theory which diverts attention from this central fact is not a correct theory.

The proposition that history is class struggle is misleading in yet another sense. With the evolution of society there takes place a change in the character of social leadership. But the new leadership does not necessarily arise from the ranks of the "have-nots", the poorest and the most exploited sections of society. More usually it comes out of the 'middle class' or the upper sections of society. Quite often a section of the old aristocracy changes its character and assumes a new role. The Japanese *samurai* provides a good example of such transformation. The actors on the stage of history are not abstract concepts, but men; and the same men can realize themselves in alternative roles. What is needed above all is the ability to see clearly new lines of social progress and come forward as pioneers. The force of conservatism which stands in the way and gives an old society its staying power is often particularly strong not in the higher strata of society but among humble people who do not want to lose the certainty of their old convictions.

This is not to deny that there is a section of the old leadership which stands to lose materially in the transition from one social system to another and is on that ground likely to oppose

change. But this is not the whole truth. The habit of seeing different 'systems' as opposed 'types' tends to exaggerate the contrast between them and to underrate the possibility of adjustment of interests in the transition. The landed aristocracy has quite often shown a striking capacity to adjust themselves to the task of providing the political and administrative leadership in "capitalist" states. Or, again, take the case of the transition from capitalism to socialism. The modern industrial society creates a large new middle class consisting of technicians, managers, administrators and other professional people who are well off under capitalism and will, again, be comfortable under socialism. To think of it all in terms of an irresolvable conflict of class interests is to allow an imposing theory to falsify our consciousness of reality.

In fact, the Marxian theory of transition from capitalism to socialism mystifies the whole process. It suggests that the alienation of the worker from the management and of the people from the government is finally and completely overcome as a result of the liquidation of capitalism. But this is a false prophecy; and its consequences are very unfortunate in more ways than one.

In the first place, those who believe in this prophecy feel justified in sacrificing the means to the end. The end promised is so impressive, so brave and intoxicating, that it seems foolish and almost mean to stick at anything to achieve it. The road to the dictatorship of the proletariat is thus paved with suspicion, intrigues, falsehood and violence justified by good intentions. But intentions do not determine the outcome of a movement; the means chosen do to a great extent.

Social development, to be sure, can never be an altogether smooth process. Yet progress has been found to be possible by means of gradual change, though this depends on the regard in which democratic methods are held by those in power as well as the opposition. Under an autocratic regime every protest tends to take a violent form. It is under such conditions that Leninism had its birth and growth. But it is a mistake to generalize from such exceptional conditions. The Leninist party has a congenital tendency to blame every act of revolutionary violence on the 'ruling class'; the party never

strikes but it is compelled to do so in self-defence. But this is a revolutionary half-truth. Nobody knew the other half of the truth better than Lenin himself. The working class, exclusively by its own effort, explained Lenin, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness, which is quite different from revolutionary class consciousness. For Lenin there could be no socialist consciousness without revolutionary class consciousness; and this, as he said quoting Kautsky with approval, was "something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without and not something that arose within it spontaneously". (Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*) The task of the Leninist party of "professional revolutionaries" is precisely to prepare the working class for a revolutionary course which the trade-union movement left to itself would not spontaneously adopt.

It is true that Marx and Engels in their later years spoke occasionally of the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism. But the theory of class struggle and the idea of a peaceful transition do not very well go together; and whoever dwelt on this latter idea and followed it up logically risked being branded a 'revisionist'. The orthodox view remains wedded to violence. The theory of class struggle proclaims the inevitability of a civil war and the party of the proletariat feels justified in obeying no other ethics but the ethics of war. But in releasing itself of all other ethical obligations the party arms its declared antagonists with at least a pretext for doing likewise. Its prophecy of war and dictatorship enters history as a new force and helps bring about what might not otherwise have come true.

Then in the new society that is born after the revolution, the faithful are led to believe by the very power of the revolutionary prophecy that the "objective" basis of alienation has disappeared and those who do not yet wholeheartedly accept the new leadership can only be deemed to be particularly wicked. The result of this is to lay the basis of a new tyranny. It is a dangerous illusion to suppose that in the transition from capitalism to socialism human alienation is overcome by a qualitative leap; and it is totally wrong to introduce in the new society standards of conduct based on that supposition. Only in a complete void is all conflict completely overcome.



To attribute to an existing society a false perfection is to destroy the possibility of any real understanding of the grounds of dissent. It equally precludes, therefore, any genuine acceptance of the right to dissent. Thus, the theory of class struggle is led even by its apparently honest commitment to progress to sanction tragic and avoidable crimes and postpone the enlargement of human freedom.

Social progress means progress in co-operation and in freedom. If the problem is to change society, it is by these standards that the adequacy of every theory of social change must be judged. By these standards the theory of class struggle is found wanting. This is not to sanction the *status quo*. There is no alternative to change. There are only ways and ways of changing society.

## Leadership in Economic Transition and the Concept of Property

---

LOOKING at social evolution from the point of view of the changing productive relations, Marxists have generally distinguished between certain fairly clearly demarcated stages of development, such as primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism in its two phases, mercantile and industrial, and, finally, socialism and communism. Marxists are sure that in this account of historical development they are indicating, at one and the same time, the successive stages of development of property relations in history and of technology, or, speaking more broadly, the productive forces in society. Indeed, this is a central point in Marxist sociology, that the productive forces create corresponding property relations, and when the latter fall out of step with the development of the former, the resulting unbalance ensues in social turmoil and revolution till harmony is restored at a higher level; and so on from stage to stage.

The general run of historians, less preoccupied with ideological considerations, but interested none the less in the wider question of the development of technology and civilization, have generally adopted a somewhat different and more flexible view of stages of economic development. Here hunting and the pastoral stage are followed by agriculture-cum-handicraft, then by the increasing importance of trade, and, finally, by the predominance of industry-and-trade. One has only to confront these two pictures of development to see that correspondence between them is significantly imperfect. There is a great variety of social organizations at the agricul-

tural stage of society. Even if we agree to confine ourselves to feudal type societies, we cannot fail to notice that the actual status of "serfs" is different in different countries and at different times, so that it approximates to slavery in some cases and comes close to free contractual relations in some others. Such differences are not always determined by levels of development of the forces of production, political and cultural factors also being evidently important. Again, countries at comparable stages of industrial development exhibit, not infrequently, interesting differences in the ideas of ownership which their social systems express and uphold. Thus, if one is asked to name the leading industrial nations of today, without taking any account of their ideologies, countries with widely different social systems will have to be named. The classification which we usually adopt when we are thinking in terms of productive relations, social systems, legal forms is quite different from the commonsense classification which we adopt when we are thinking in terms of development of the forces of production, levels of productivity of labour, industrial progress.

This is not to deny an element of truth in what Marx had to say on this subject. There does obtain a rough correlation between the level of material development of a country and the degree of justice, and, for that matter, of freedom, that can or is likely to be effectively embodied in social institutions at that level. But this relationship is disturbed and modified by so many and varied factors that it will be extremely hazardous for any one to try to guess back from the second to the first. Even within the same country, or what came later to be constituted into a single country (e.g. Germany), comparing one part with another at a pre-industrial stage, it is not unusual to find that the extent of individual liberty and social justice achieved was smaller in that part where agricultural practice was more advanced rather than less. And a similar conclusion holds good, even more unmistakably, for industrial societies. The extent to which justice and freedom are embodied in the spirit and institutions of a given society is determined not merely by the level of material development attained in that society, but, to an important degree, by the historical path by which this level has been reached. Thus,

for instance, the difference between the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and England and the Scandinavian countries, on the other, is not explained so much by contemporary differences in their technological levels as by the respective histories of these countries.

The general conclusion from the above reasoning is simple: there is no definite and invariable set of institutions, or systems of ownership of the means of production, which accompanies the transition from any given stage of economic performance to a higher stage. On looking more closely at the "capitalist" and "socialist" countries as we actually find them today, there is a further point that strikes us in this connection. In opposing "socialism" to "capitalism", Marx was opposing one abstract concept to another: either you have private property or you have it not. Now, in actual life we have, of course, many intermediate situations. By this I do not mean simply that private property in some industries or types of resources may co-exist with national ownership in other industries or other types of resources. I rather mean that a thing may be neither quite privately owned, nor quite nationally owned, but individuals, groups, such as municipalities, and the state, may, at one and the same time, have certain more or less clearly understood rights in relation to a particular thing or resource. Thus, in place of ownership, properly so-called, we may have a bundle of finely adjusted rights, and corresponding obligations, on the part of a number of bodies, private and public. Indeed, this is true even of such intimate possessions as children, over whom parents generally have certain rights, but not absolutely unrestricted rights. They may not keep their children uneducated, and the State may conscript them and order them to go to the front.

Children, it may be objected, are a special case; they are nobody's property and are not considered as such in most civilized societies. But land is so considered, and it is, indeed, the classic example of private property. Yet in the case of land, even if we consider such a normal relation as that of tenancy, the concept of property seems to dissolve within our grasp as we try to analyse it. Tenants have often certain very clearly specified rights in relation to the property which they hold in tenancy. The owner is not free to evict tenants

whenever he likes. And just as children must be educated, so terms are or can be laid down that land must be properly cultivated or existing rights would cease. Finally, there is the reserve power of the state which makes itself felt in special circumstances; just as people can be conscripted so property can be commandeered. Absolute proprietary rights exist only as a legal fiction.

This analysis has obvious relevance to modern capitalism as well as to twentieth-century socialism. The communist commissar or manager is not any the less powerful than his capitalist counterpart because he lacks ownership rights. An increasing number of labour economists in England and other Western countries are veering round to the view that "it is the physical problem of control which is of the essence, rather than the metaphysical problem of ownership". In "revisionist" Yugoslavia, state ownership is no longer the issue; the practical problem is rather the manner and extent of control over enterprise to be exercised by various bodies, such as the workers' council, the local authority and the state. In a different way, and with a more pronounced ethical accent, the Gandhian idea of trusteeship tries to effect a not dissimilar change in attitude towards property.

The problem, then, is not one of simply preserving or extinguishing proprietary rights, but of effecting a careful adjustment among a plurality of competing and complementary rights. The habit of thinking in terms of a dichotomy of "capitalism" versus "socialism" has made for unnecessary rigidity of thought on questions of choice of new institutions for the future. If, on the other hand, one accepts the view presented above, alternatives are seen to be less sharp and more varied.

The idea that society is divided into two irreconcilably hostile classes, that the property-owning class has vested interests in the existing order and is bound to oppose the movement for a higher social order, is based on the belief that the real issue is proprietorship versus expropriation. But this dangerously oversimplifies the issue. And it is as unhistorical as it has been shown earlier to be analytically faulty. There are, indeed, instances in history of conflict, of people fighting for their vested interests, and perhaps even more for their wanted

ways of life and images to which they have been long and fondly attached. But, on the other hand, there is a not insignificant number of instances of people high up in the social order being deeply influenced by new ideals, sometimes acquiescing in change and, at other times, even taking the initiative in introducing a new order.\* By the time the French Revolution came, a large section of the aristocracy had already lost the strength of conviction to defend resolutely the old order and had been more or less won over in favour of change. In Germany, unlike France, the industrial transformation of the country followed in the wake of a defeated bourgeois revolution, and the administration was almost throughout this period heavily under the control of the aristocracy. An English House of Lords presided over the industrial development of England and the Tories carried through as many reforms as the Whigs. The initiative for the Meiji Restoration came from a section of the higher caste in feudal Japan, and although, as in other similar cases, there were rich merchants to support them, it is to these people enjoying high prestige and traditionally accustomed to a role of leadership in society that Japan owes the vision and energy that marked her development after 1868. It is they who proclaimed the abolition of feudalism, raised the "hinin" to the status of common people, introduced a system of compulsory education for every child, and preserved social cohesion through the strains and stresses of rapid economic development. Thus, people marked out as leaders in a society characterized by feudal particularism, with production chiefly organized for barter, can subsequently take on a new role and actively assist in building up a higher and more round-about system of production for larger and inter-related markets.

It is necessary to be explicit on one point. A class, as a concept, has all the rigidity of an intellectual construction; but individuals belonging to a class are capable of fulfilling themselves in many ways. People, even when they have a privileged position in terms of the old relations of production, may not only be inspired by a vision of new possibilities,

\*Cf. "No revolution, whether peaceful or violent, has ever taken place without the new ideals having deeply penetrated into the very class itself whose economic and political privileges had to be assailed." (P. Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*.)

but come genuinely to believe that in the society of the future they themselves will have new functions more satisfying than any that they ever had in the past. In acting on this conviction, they will, in a sense, be sacrificing "vested" interests only to create new and higher interests. There is no reason, objectively speaking, why a whole class, or a major part of it, cannot be so transformed, like the Japanese *samurai*, partly by wise decision and partly by force of circumstances. When people have been inflexible in defence of their vested interests, they have often acted against their best interests. The Russian aristocracy did not defend their interests any better for being more inflexible, nor the English aristocracy any worse for being a little more adaptable. In acting as they do, die-hards are not guided by rational calculations or economic motives, but by instincts which are deeper-seated and pre-date the emergence of the rational spirit of man.

The transition to a new stage of economic performance, the development of productive forces from a lower to a higher level, is never altogether smooth and frictionless. But under certain circumstances the attendant strains and stresses are greater than usual. Common sense would suggest, and historical evidence seems to bear out, that a society in which the old leadership is rigid and incapable of evolving or evolving fast enough, and has to be replaced by a new leadership, more or less unrelated to the main tradition of the community, and lacking, therefore, the lustre and appeal that such tradition lends by association, has to pass through greater disorganization, bitterness, and physical and spiritual destruction, in the process of economic growth.

It is a little difficult to illustrate the point with decisive examples, since in any actual case the quality of leadership is not the only factor, but only one among a number of factors, determining the nature of a community's experience of economic growth. But an attempt may still be made to make some comparison. It is instructive to consider, for instance, the contrast between the respective experiences of Japan and Russia. Both these countries have achieved quick industrial development, beginning approximately with the eighties of the last century. Both found it necessary, at one time or another, to depend chiefly on "surplus" from the agricultural

sector to sustain rapid growth of the economy as a whole. Yet in the manner in which this basic task was accomplished, the experience of the two countries differed profoundly.

Japan, in the crucial period of her economic transformation, had a leadership which was not as dissociated from the tradition of the country and as alien to the peasantry as the Russian leadership after the October Revolution. In the early period of modernization of Japan, this apparently made it easier for the government to preserve social solidarity while collecting surplus from the agricultural sector. The peasantry, long used to surrendering an appreciable fraction of its produce to the feudal nobility, could be easily induced to make a similar contribution in favour of a new government which inherited traditional prestige. On the other hand, the Bolshevik leadership, with its militant atheistic ideology, and lacking roots in the countryside, never succeeded, in spite of the decree for abolition of landlordism, in winning the allegiance of the mass of the peasantry. While in Japan new institutions grew out of the old with a minimum of social dislocation (some dislocation is inevitable), in Russia forms of collective farming came to be introduced which never found favour with the majority of rural people nor were justified by their productivity, and these were yet deemed necessary in order to establish over the peasantry the control of a State which found it impossible to make its will effective in more normal ways. Twice within a generation after the October Revolution, the Bolshevik government was involved in a bitter and long-drawn-out conflict with the rural population in which millions perished and a reign of terror was established throughout the land.

This is not to suggest that Japan can be a model to other developing countries or that the lessons of her experience are all positive. Japan remained a private enterprise economy in the period of her industrial transition. It is likely that many 'Afro-Asian' countries at this time of the day will have to follow a different course. Perhaps a kind of commitment to a socialist ideal on the part of the government will be necessary for the preservation of social cohesion. But this is not the only limitation of the Japanese model.

Japan never experienced in modern times anything nearly as profound and far-reaching as the cultural renaissance that



heralded the modern age in Europe. This means that the foundations of a liberal culture were not deeply laid in Japanese society. Although technology is built on science, a community can make great strides technologically, without experiencing a liberal, rationalist revolution to match its material progress. This is not altogether a desirable situation. But we must be careful about drawing conclusions. For the conclusion is not that the political leaders of a people in a period of industrialization should themselves be the leaders of a rationalist revolution. This second task they are unlikely to achieve at all well, while in attempting it they may lose much of their cohesive influence in society. Indeed, it might be much better if political leaders tolerated the rationalist radicals, the critical intellectuals, the *philosophes*, while they themselves remained closer to the central tradition of the community and were only indirectly affected by the philosophic revolution, which they only gently encouraged instead of proclaiming Robespierre-like a militant adherence to it.

Indeed, this last point can be further extended and generalized. It is not good for the health of a great community that any one aspect or sector of its highly differentiated life, economic, political or religious, should acquire absolute power over all others. At first sight it might seem that in a period of transition the economic, political and intellectual leaderships in society should act in unison towards a common purpose. But this idea of concerted action, if it is too mechanically interpreted, points towards totalitarianism. The proper roles of these leaderships are not only quite different, but they are conflicting in certain ways. And the tension between them, so long as it is held within proper limits, is a factor for social progress.

One final observation is in order. Leadership in a new age cannot come wholly and exclusively from any one class or stratum in society. People from different castes and clans must have the opportunity to climb the social ladder. For, in the context of the new tasks of the age, the old restrictions, if continued, would look infinitely more arbitrary and intolerable than they ever did before. If leadership is made a monopoly, this is likely to provoke a combination of those excluded from privilege, who would now oppose even those

efforts of the powers that be which, under normal circumstances, they would themselves have upheld and advanced. It is not enough, then, for leaders of an old society to take account of the future and address themselves to new tasks, but it is equally important that they adopt measures and make those appropriate gestures which guarantee and appear to guarantee that talent everywhere, even outside the old ranks, will be recognized and valued. It is this that an old leadership, frozen into a caste, often finds it difficult to achieve, even when it has otherwise resolved to pioneer progress.

Where society permits a fair degree of freedom in the realms of thought and conscience, where leadership is not the monopoly of a closed group, and where, at the same time, the executive authority is firm but not rigid, transition tends to be relatively smooth. It is not common for all the three conditions to be satisfied in a transitional society. The last two conditions went unfulfilled in France in the eighteenth century. "Privilege, medieval and unprofitable, pervaded every portion of the body politic", and, at the critical time, "a people needing, perhaps more than any other for the full development of its great qualities, the firm hand of authority, was surrendered to its own devices."\* In Stalin's Russia, on the other hand, it is the first condition which was even more grossly flouted than under the Tsarist regime. Not by any single factor, certainly not by the question of property alone, but by a variety of circumstances, some of which we have analysed above, is the quality and effectiveness of leadership in a period of economic and social transition determined.

\*H. A. L. Fisher, *A History of Europe*, Complete Edition in one Volume, pp. 794, 801-802.

## On “Contradictions” in a Developing Society

---

A PERIOD of rapid social and economic changes is not a golden age. It is more likely to be a time of discord and suffering. The typical individual loses in this period what he needs as an essential pre-condition of happiness viz. a secure sense of his own identity. In our traditional society with its caste system the individual knew exactly where he belonged. He knew whom to obey and whom to command, what exactly his rights and duties were, what he owed others and what were his dues. He knew his exact situation in society and he also knew, in his own way, how his society was related to God's great universe.

All this is changed in a period of rapid economic transition. People are forced out of old occupations and thrust into new ones. Old skills lose their worth and new skills develop. Relative prices change. In other words, society no longer values an occupation, a skill or a commodity as it did before, and one cannot be sure any longer of the “intrinsic” value of things and persons. At the same time, old social ties dissolve and old loyalties cease to have the power to determine conduct that they once had. People once in authority lose power, and the *nouveau riche* gain power far in excess of their admitted social authority. The old picture of the universe crumbles. A period of social transition is a time of moral confusion and a deeply felt sense of insecurity; and we blame it all on something or other in the light of a false consciousness.

Yet, on the other hand, a society in the process of industrialization has a specially urgent need of a new code of

discipline and moral values. This is easy to illustrate. Habits of leisurely work brought over from pre-industrial societies are incompatible with efficiency in an industrial economy. "The drive for relentless work", writes Erich Fromm, the celebrated psychologist and sociologist, "was one of the fundamental productive forces, no less important for the development of our industrial system than steam and electricity." Hard, concentrated work can only be sustained by its own appropriate ethics. It calls for, fundamentally speaking, a new attitude towards time. An industrial society which has found its proper ethics regards waste of time as a sin. There is also a certain transformation of the idea of authority in an industrial society. Social status is not the sole determining factor here. A man is vested with a certain limited authority by virtue of the post he holds, and within his sphere he is entitled to obedience by others irrespective of their social position. There is another most important difference. In pre-industrial societies our duties to others were largely confined within family groups. In modern societies we enter into a much wider network of impersonal relations, including relation to public authorities, and we need in this sphere new standards of honesty.

At this point we perhaps begin to understand a little better the underlying causes of the rise of dictatorship in a number of transitional societies from Russia, Italy, Japan and Germany earlier in the century to some of the more recent military dictatorships. Dictatorship promises to overcome at a single stroke a series of contradictions within a transitional society. There is, first of all, the contradiction between the growing confusion of values and erosion of authority so common in such societies and the urgent need for the enforcement of a new code of industrial discipline and a new concept of authority. Secondly, such societies are generally in a state of open or subdued civil war resulting from a weakening of old social ties and disturbance to the previous equilibrium of forces among social groups. The more serious conflict in this situation is quite often not between one "class" and another in the Marxian sense of the term, but between different groups and strata belonging to the same "class" and between parent parties and organisations and dissident groups. Finally,

masses of ordinary people, who have been half-freed from the shackles of the old order but lost in the process their bearings and sense of identity in the social confusion, want a *fuehrer* to direct them, to tell them where exactly they belong and where their destiny lies. The populist revolt against authority is not simply an expression of the people's desire for freedom, but it is also in its own tortured way a demand for the reassertion of authority.

Yet dictatorship is an extremely crude response to the basic problem of a developing society. For the problem is to make a new distinction between the spheres of necessity and freedom, the area where a society must enforce some common rules of conduct and the areas, particularly, of conscience, creativity and higher speculation, where it must set store by diversity, or lose even the title to be called a civilized state. But these distinctions are apt to elude a dictatorship which pushes the rules of uniformity beyond their proper sphere. The more "efficient" a dictatorship is, the more is this likely to be true. The most "efficient" dictator is not yet God incarnate. His sources of power are very much of this world. He depends on one group to reduce others to submission. The more he smothers diversity the more he must preach hatred in justification of what he has been driven to perpetrate by the blind logic of power. If he succeeds in restoring order, he builds up in the process an apparatus of coercion and vested interests connected with it, which are very difficult to dislodge later. Thus, when an absolute human will is brought to the task of organizing the affairs of a great society, it never measures up to the natural diversity of that society, and its unnatural processes outlive by far any limited justification that it might have had when it came to power.

The design of history is too complicated to be adequately represented by any single party or person. In the crucial period of England's industrial transition, a strong puritan movement developed side by side with liberalism. The one helped to mould the practical code of conduct of an emerging industrial society, the other to reform laws and reorganize human relations on a more tolerant basis and weaken the hold of dogmas on the human mind. Modern dictatorships—Chinese communism, for instance—reproduce in their

own way the equivalent of the puritan movement. But, as the "hundred-flowers" episode so poignantly illustrated, a society under a full-blown dictatorship cannot enact a puritan movement and a liberal at the same time. In this respect, the Marxist ideology appears to be more a hindrance than a help. That there is a kind of interaction between "material" and "cultural" factors is obviously true, and it is sometimes useful to stress this. But the idea that the material "base" of society determines its cultural "superstructure" has deceptive overtones and can be harmful when it suggests that there is a certain historical justice in a transitional dictatorship reproducing in the cultural sphere the equivalent of the discipline and uniformity required at the "base" of society. In the "Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" adopted on August 8, 1966, we read the following: "Our objective is to struggle against and crush those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road, . . . and to transform education, literature and art and all other parts of the superstructure that do not correspond to the socialist economic base." Thus Marxist theory provides the most "scientific" justification for the totalitarian bias of modern dictatorship.

On the other hand, it is good to stress that the faults of modern dictatorship arise in large measure from a too exclusive preoccupation with a real need and that democracy cannot survive if it fails to meet that need. Social cohesion depends on the general observance of a minimum code of conduct. This minimum is not the same for all ages and societies. A society in the process of industrial transition must discover the peculiar mores and rules of conduct required by its special circumstances and get these widely accepted in practice. This involves at least three things viz. a procedure for arriving at some sort of social consensus including agreement to differ, a widely based educational movement to explain to the people the meaning and purpose of the new code, and, at least in the formative period, a strong executive authority.

The ethics of an industrial society presents a whole hierarchy of directives, some of which are specific (e.g. thou shalt

work by the clock) while others are more general and permissive (e.g. thou shalt seek out thy special talent and cultivate it with all thy heart and all thy strength). It is the same with institutions. All growth-minded countries must pay attention to the organization of research. But capitalist farming, cultivating ownership and co-operative farming are all compatible with agricultural improvement, provided that some side conditions are also satisfied in each case. If we name at random a few countries (Japan, West Germany, Israel, Yugoslavia, Taiwan, France, Italy, Mexico) where the rate of economic growth has been particularly high over the last decade, we are at once struck by the variety of institutional set-ups under which development has taken place. The point can be re-stated and made more general. There are certain fundamental conditions which have to be fulfilled before vigorous economic development is possible and there are some social and economic institutions which do not meet these conditions; but, on the other hand, there are various institutional arrangements, one shading off into another, all of which are consistent with economic growth and trace out a feasible region of policies for development. While some of these arrangements are better than others, depending on the given circumstances in a particular case, it is a gross oversimplification to present the choice as confined to two rival systems. The task of political democracy in developing societies is to approach some kind of a social consensus within the feasible region in each case.

It is not enough to arrive at a wide consensus of views; policy once adopted should be continuously explained and its purpose interpreted to the people. We have here something to learn from communist theory and practice. Lenin spoke of trade-unions and other mass organisations in the Soviet Union as "transmission belts"; by these official policy was meant to be transmitted to the people and popular reactions conveyed back to the leadership at the top. This is not a task that can be left to the bureaucracy. The ruling party in India must so organise itself that it can explain policy to the people and report popular grievances in a systematic manner. This is part of education for democracy, though the latter is a much larger thing than mere political education. The fine sense of discrimination by which a citizen learns to value order for the

sake of liberty, and liberty for the sake of the good life, springs from a philosophy which assigns to politics its proper and limited role in a larger scheme of life.

Education is a slow process. Meanwhile, society must be held together. The struggle for social justice is fundamental to democracy. Yet, unfortunately, we cannot wait for injustice and corruption to be eradicated before discipline in the day-to-day business of life is insisted upon. England in the days of Marx or Russia under Stalin was not a just society, nor was American capitalism ever free of corruption; but habits of methodical work were formed under such imperfect conditions, with the struggle against injustice yet unfinished. Before the new values and code of discipline are internalized, they must yet be enforced by an external authority with determination, to allow productive work to be carried on reasonably unhampered while the transition is under way. Democracy must have the strength for this hard job; or it will let in worse and be guilty of abdication in favour of dictatorship. If the democratic order is to survive in a period of transition, its principal distinction from dictatorship may well have to lie not in any lack of determination with which it creates and protects the basic rules of social stability, but in its greater concern for the rule of law, its respect for freedom and diversity in man's cultural and spiritual endeavours and in its readiness to experiment with new and multiple social forms in order more fully to realise this freedom.



## Authority in a Transitional Society

---

AMONG the many changes required in the transition from a traditional to an industrial society is a changed attitude towards authority. In a traditional society, authority vests in people who are regarded, so to speak, as a superior race of men. The person who is obeyed is looked upon by those who obey him as not simply a person with a greater technical competence in a certain direction, but altogether a greater man. The Brahman in traditional India was regarded as sharing in the powers of God. The king in most ancient societies ruled by divine rights, some of which he delegated to others. Superiority being total, authority also tended to be unlimited.

An industrial society needs a very different conception of authority. It needs a whole army of executives, big and small, who are not necessarily superior as human beings, but who have the right to demand obedience within their limited spheres of authority. Those who issue orders may be inferior as men, in character, education and social status, to those on whom these orders are served; but they must still be obeyed. A bus conductor, for instance, is entitled to address a command to a priest or professor if the latter happened to be a passenger and can legitimately expect to be obeyed. The relevant question in all such cases is not whether the person issuing orders is adorable as a person, but whether he is functioning within his sphere of competence and in accordance with the rules laid down for the purpose.

This may seem all very simple; but it poses a difficult

problem. Habits from a traditional society are taken over into the transitional period. People in power do not easily get used to the idea of limited authority; they tend to exceed their rights. And they are disobeyed on wrong grounds. The new leaders of society are felt to be small men and, therefore, not quite worthy of obedience. When a dispute arises attention turns all too easily from the real issue to personal slanders. In a climate like this charismatic leadership seems to be needed to hold society together. But charisma is not a strictly reproducible commodity. Its supply dwindles rapidly in an industrial society with the growth of the critical spirit. Thus, society is faced with the danger of disintegration. How serious this danger is, in a particular case, depends to some extent on the character of the people who are at the helm of affairs in the period of transition. But it is not a simple problem and there is no simple solution.

A transitional period tends to be particularly prolific in all kinds of frictions and disputes. Why this is so is a large question. What we are concerned to stress here is that in the situation described above disputes do not simply multiply in number but they tend to be settled increasingly by force. With the erosion of authority in the traditional sense, force, brutal force, is apt to arise as the ultimate arbiter. Everybody tries to get as much as he can by deceit and coercion. The outcome is a retrogression from civil society to a kind of Hobbesian state of nature. For a time people may feel justified in organizing group violence, which seems to pay better than any other method. But society as a whole loses from this kind of activity; it is a game with a negative sum. In the long run this is an intolerable state for everybody, except perhaps for professional hooligans.

What is the way out? One way out is to legitimize arbitrary violence by installing somebody in power who can outrival all others in the exercise of violence. There are examples of this in recent history. The circumstances which make this possible are complex and varied. We shall make no more than a passing remark on the nature of the forces at work. The disintegration of traditional communities, growing complexity of the bureaucratic machinery, and changes in the mode of production, all combine to produce a new sense of alienation

of the common man from those in authority and create, in the same measure, a hankering for a leader who will terminate this alienation. Until an industrial society develops its distinctive outlook and ethics most of its day-to-day work seems to lack meaning and purpose to quite an extraordinary degree. Between a family producing a whole commodity and an atomized employee attending to a small sub-division of a process of work of which he sees neither the beginning nor the end, in the company of others to whom he does not feel attached by any natural tie, the psychological distance to go is long and weary. The rules imposed by the new routine are felt to be so much the more intolerable because they lack meaning and are administered by people who do not seem to have any natural title to obedience. The situation provokes rebellion. It is at the base a spontaneous rebellion, "romantic" in nature even when in deference to the spirit of the times it is tempted to adopt a rational or materialist language, and expresses the desire of the people for a leader to guide them out of a "bureaucracy"-ridden, routinized existence through blood and tears towards a purposeful destiny. Whether we are considering the Blackshirts or the Red Guards, something of this spirit is lurking at the back of the movement. A society which wants to rise above routine and established rules without having mastered them can only be ruled by arbitrary will. To accept it is, in a sense, to accept defeat. Normal social relations must rest on a different basis. The transition to normalcy involves the substitution at the basis of society through trials and errors of arbitrary force by a complex of values and attitudes evolving out of the moral consensus of society. For this what is needed is not a vision of instant purification, of the world's rebirth after total destruction, which comes so easily to a certain kind of imagination, but a more patient, exploratory and pragmatic approach.

Let us illustrate the kind of attitudes and institutions people have to develop to establish authority on a democratic foundation? One primary requisite is a network of associations of the weaker sections of the people to defend and promote their rights and interests. Such organizations grow up more easily in towns; but it is necessary to have them in villages as well, which among other things makes mass literacy im-

perative. Secondly, social institutions need to be so remodelled as to provide opportunities for systematic presentation of grievances. This is quite often lacking in developing societies in their early stage. Thirdly, one must develop towards one's profession a pride and devotion which is at the same time concrete, in that it extends to every detail of the work, and abstract, in that it is sustained by the belief, until the contrary is established, that the work to which one has been called has a place in the larger scheme of life so that in doing it well one is doing one's duty to oneself as well as to society. Finally, people must get into the habit of deferring to others, whatever their station in life, so long as they are acting within their rights.

In every society, specially in democratic societies, there is a continuing conflict of ideas which is never quite resolved. But in the meantime life has to be lived and, therefore, decisions taken. Every such decision is in a sense provisional; but in a properly ordered society it is usually obeyed so long as it is made by one entitled by his office to do so. A democratic society needs a combination of a habit of discipline and a critical spirit. People have to learn to formulate their demands precisely, argue about them, submit them to arbitration if necessary and, more generally, press for their acceptance by methods of which they themselves would approve if these or their equivalent were applied against them. Before normal social relations are possible it is necessary for people to realise that a general defiance of all authority is likely to result in the establishment of a more oppressive authority, that a movement conducted according to democratic norms is the best instrument for taming power.

Let us note the implications of this approach in terms of party politics. In an atmosphere of general violence party politics often degenerates into a thinly veiled civil war. It is difficult for any single party to observe a significantly higher standard of conduct than the others. What is necessary then is to enunciate a common code of conduct for all parties and mobilize public opinion in favour of this common code. In countries where parliamentary democracy has a long history, there are conventions rooted in tradition which mitigate the fury of the struggle for power among rival parties. Something

of the kind has to be deliberately fostered in the new democracies.

All this may sound too constitutional. And that in a sense it is. Only autocracy can do without constitutionalism; it is in the nature of limited authority that it has to accept constitutional safeguards and permit legalism. Democracy is supposed to rest on the popular will. But this is an inaccurate statement. It is not the wild and arbitrary will either of the king or of the demos which is the foundation of liberty, but a will that is informed by the spirit of impersonal justice and has submitted itself to certain minimum restraints of reason as secured by constitutional processes accepted by the community after sober deliberation. This is essential; democracy is based on the rule of law.

Yet it is also good to remember that the law can only set minimum standards. Legalism does not suffice to create positive morality and can, indeed, coexist with a singular lack of public spirit. This is easy to illustrate. We will illustrate it in terms of party politics again. It is well known that there are certain issues of common concern to the whole society which political parties tend to avoid because these are not popular issues. Every party would normally give most of its time and energy to causes and campaigns which promise popularity. This puts a high premium on campaigns of recrimination and greatly reduces the attractiveness of any movement with a predominantly positive educational content. Yet much of the most important work in developing societies is concerned with the creation of a common stock of tangible and intangible social capital on which depends the welfare not of any particular section, but of the people as a whole. Even when political parties appear to interest themselves in such constructive work, they are often more interested in political gains than in the work itself.

The conclusion from this is that too much politics is a country's undoing. Non-party work is important. Not everybody will want to go with Jayaprakash Narayan all the way to recommend partyless democracy; but even in the West democracy has functioned best in those countries where an active concern for the common good, issuing in the form of multifarious educational and co-operative activities, has

supplied to the life of the people what mere politics could not have given it. Political parties in India have not been remarkably active in literacy campaigns or in building up co-operatives in a constructive spirit. They have not been particularly busy telling the people that prosperity cannot be achieved without hard work because this is not likely to make them popular. No party as such has thought fit to attach much importance to family planning. Even those parties that believe that the anti-cow slaughter movement is unjust to non-Hindus and harmful to the nation would not make of it a major issue for fear of losing popularity. No party, whatever its convictions, carries on a forceful campaign against divisive caste barriers. But if political parties as constituted today cannot be depended upon to do any of these, they cannot be very useful in much of our work of social reconstruction.

If political parties do not devote themselves to the kind of activities we have named above, it is not because they do not recognize that these are important for the welfare of our people. But at some point the interest of the party diverges from the larger interest of society. The moral chasm is bridged by the convenient theory that the country requires above all, and before everything else, that the party in question come into power (or that it stay in power if it is already there). But if too much of the energies of a people goes into this struggle for power not enough is done by way of constructive, nation-building activity. In an emerging industrial society, the first advent of reason is often in a negative form. Even this negative reason can be a powerful force in removing many superstitions of the past. But left to itself it tends to be nihilistic. It cannot provide the foundations of a new conception of authority, nor a constructive outlook on rights and obligations for a developing society. A society that has ceased to be ruled by anointed leaders must be ruled either by brute force or by reason; but it has to be reason in that positive sense in which it is the property of the free individual and yet takes the individual out of and beyond himself. Without it there is no basis for that respect for the rule of law and those larger loyalties which a society in industrial transition needs to bind people together in larger freedom.

## On the Materialistic Interpretation of History

---

TAGORE once suggested that the clue to Indian history is to be found in the conflict between the Kshatriyas and the Brahmanas. If he wanted to generalize he could say that the whole of human history was but an unfolding of the interaction between a creative, innovating life force which the Kshatriya represented and a formalizing, universalizing reason symbolized by the Brahmana. There is a certain correspondence, though only a limited one, between this vision of the historical process and the materialistic interpretation of history in Marxian theory. For Marx, the creative energy in history expresses itself above all and most significantly through developing "forces of production". Further, at any stage in the development of the forces of production, certain relatively fixed forms, legal codes and standard human relations, are brought into existence, which provide the general framework within which material productive activities take place. In other words, forces of production operate in conjunction with their appropriate complement of "relations of production". Up to a point this formalization of relations helps the working of the existing forces of production. But these forces grow and develop while the relations in which they are enmeshed have a tendency to become rigid and are thus transformed into fetters which then have to be broken to permit of further progress.

In this general form, there is something admirable in the Marxian interpretation of history. It has the strength, and inevitably the weakness, of stressing the creative force in

human history particularly in its manifestation at the material level and, derivatively, at other levels. It dramatizes powerfully the obstacles, particularly those that have roots in conflicting economic interests, which society has to overcome in course of its progress. But there are also points in the Marxian theory about which one has to be cautious.

Medieval society, with its theology and cosmology, its conception of duties and obligations and its traditional institutions, received from the common people a degree of allegiance which cannot be explained by economic interest only. It expressed also something deeper viz. man's hankering for faith and security and his inner urge to give himself up to an idea of the absolute. The strength of any established society does not arise simply from "vested interests", but it has at its source this deeply felt attachment to the old certainties, an attachment that is perhaps even stronger in the humble and "exploited" people than in the rich and the powerful.

In Tagore's interpretation, it is the Kshatriyas who provide leadership in change and development. The word Kshatriya need not, of course, be interpreted too narrowly as the name of a particular *varna*; it is the common designation of that section of society which at a given juncture represents the principle of creative energy or the quality of *rajas* par excellence. Communist doctrine is apt to suggest that leadership in change is most likely to come from the most oppressed and propertyless sections of society. This has little correspondence to actual history. Under feudalism, for instance, the serfs constituted the most oppressed section of society. In terms of the relations of production, their position vis-à-vis the feudal lords comes closest to that of the proletariat vis-à-vis the capitalists. But the revolt against feudalism was led, according to the Marxist account itself, not by the serfs but by the bourgeoisie. In strict fact, it was not led by the bourgeoisie either, but, more generally, by a combination of sections of the aristocracy and of the bourgeoisie. In more recent history, leadership in communist revolutions has come, as Lenin himself noted as well as exemplified in his person, from "declassed" middle-class intellectuals and aristocrats; and the same is true of nationalist movements in a great variety of countries. In short, leadership in crucial social change has



usually come not from the poor and the propertyless but from the "second" rank of the upper classes in society, although it has also naturally received support from other sections of the population lower down in the social and economic hierarchy.

A second point in Marxist theory which needs to be viewed critically is its conception of the relation between the material "basis" of society and its political and cultural "superstructure". It is this and some allied questions which will chiefly concern us in the rest of this essay. In considering this matter, it may be useful to introduce a brief extract from Marx for comment thereon. In the *Preface to The Critique of Political Economy* Marx wrote: "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which corresponds definite forms of social consciousness." And further on in the same *Preface*, Marx observed: "At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. . . . (However) no social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed."

Now, as a matter of fact, societies at a comparable stage of development of their production forces are often marked by dissimilar economic structures in the Marxian sense. It is easy to give examples from past history; but let us confine ourselves to some recent experience. Since the end of World War II the productive forces in West Germany have been developing under "capitalism" and those in East Germany under "socialism". Obviously, if capitalist relations of production were overthrown in East Germany, this was owing to certain special military and political circumstances at the end of the war and not because the possibilities of further development of the forces of production under capitalism had been

exhausted there by that time. But Germany, it is arguable, is a special case. Yet a somewhat similar conclusion is borne out by the Russian example itself. Industrialization started both in Germany and in Russia in the nineteenth century, and development was remarkably rapid during the three decades previous to World War I. After the war the communist attempt at revolution in Germany failed while in Russia it succeeded. So Russia developed under socialism and Germany under capitalism. Nothing in all this proves either that Germany could not have developed under socialism had the revolution succeeded there, or that Russian industrialization after 1917 could not have taken place under capitalism had the Bolsheviks failed to seize power in that country.

Marxist-Leninists tried to explain this whole matter with the help of a special theory. The theory, in effect, stated that by 1917 world capitalism had already developed to the full all the forces of production for which there was room in it, but that Russia being one of the weakest links in the entire system of world capitalism the revolution succeeded there. This, however, leaves too many questions unanswered. If world capitalism had already reached the last stage of its development by 1917, one would have expected the Russian revolution to be followed immediately afterwards by successful revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries. How is it then that capitalism continues to function throughout the western world, with minor exceptions, half a century after the momentous November revolution? How is it that in many capitalist countries development in the last twenty years has in fact been faster than before and instability has become less marked? How is it that some capitalist countries which have lost colonies are better off to-day than they were before? Instead of trying to force facts into the strait jacket of Marxist theory, it seems better to adopt a less dogmatic explanation of these facts. There is no single system, no definite set of property relations, which is indispensable for the development of the productive forces at the present stage of the world economy; but economic growth is possible under both capitalism and socialism as well as mixed systems. Once either of these systems has been firmly established, it is difficult to overthrow it. In other words, communist revolution is not the

outcome of the intensification of "contradictions" within capitalism. It is more usually a result of those stresses and strains which operate with special intensity in societies at the early stage of the industrial transition, when these societies, strictly speaking, are not yet fully capitalist. While both capitalism and socialism once established can be comparatively stable systems, each has its special problems. In the case of capitalism, its special problems appeared in an acute form in the 1930's, and, as a result, what we find today is a kind of reformed capitalism. After the death of Stalin, the problems of the socialist systems have been freely admitted and reforms are now indicated with increasing clarity. Between reformed capitalism and reformed socialism there are more similarities than between the unreformed variants of the two systems. But even if one adopts the idea of the "convergence" of the two systems, this is of course something quite different from the Marxian idea of the collapse of capitalism and the movement towards communism and the withering away of the state.

Marx noticed that with the evolution of technology the relations of production change. He failed to stress that the same technology permits of alternative modes of organisation of economic life. In a similar way, he noticed that with changes in the relations of production there is a change in the balance of power in society. But he again oversimplified the relation between property and power in its different forms. "Relations of production" indicate the position of different classes in relation to existing means of production, and according to the Marxian doctrine, the class which owns the means of production is the dominant class. Ownership of the tools of production is the means to power in society; or, in other words, economic power is primary, other forms of power secondary or derivative. But this is to take a one-sided view of the matter. While economic power certainly helps one to gain other forms of power, other forms also may, and do, help one to gain economic power. And once gained, economic power is often too weak to defend itself, and requires other forms of power for its own defence. In relation to other forms of power economic power can be both causal and consequential, and it is not always the case that its operation as a cause is, from the point of view of social analysis, more important than its

appearance as a consequence. At one stage of social evolution, as Russell has persuasively argued in his well-known book on this subject, military power was the principal means to other forms of power, including economic. Again, the Church gained economic power primarily through non-economic influence, and has retained this power for a long time with the assistance of non-economic influence.

Just as property is not the only source of power so also the economically dominant class is not the sole agent of all effective power in society. For instance, in most modern societies the business community, the administration (or the bureaucracy), and the trade unions are three separate blocs of power, and many important pieces of legislation bear evidence of the independent pulls of all these three blocs. Few pieces of legislation and few political situations are shaped from a single centre of power. Moreover, Marxist theory tends to generalize from capitalist experience. In capitalist societies property is the most convenient means through which power, however gained, can be consolidated. But it is never the only means of consolidating power; and as its potency in this respect is largely dependent on the institution of inheritance, in societies where this institution is weak, abandoned or non-existent other ways of consolidating power can hardly fail to acquire a heightened importance. Abolition of private ownership in the means of production can still coexist with great inequality in the distribution of power in society, and in such situations political power may well be primary.

Whatever the power that property bestows on individual families, the course of history is governed by powers of a very different order. For Marx, as is well known, the problem was to change society, and the "class" analysis was advanced as the "scientific" basis for correct formulation of tactics and strategy for social change. Confronted with a proposal for reform, the Marxist as a matter of first reaction tries to ascertain which class in society is likely to gain materially and which to lose from it. This can be a useful approach up to a point; it gives some basis for guessing who are the likely friends of the proposed reform and who its enemies. But people belonging to the same "class" may yet belong to different

sects and nationalities, and ancient animosities are often stronger than present ("objective") community of interests, so that even in the short term the actual alignment of forces can substantially diverge from what one would expect on the basis of class analysis. Moreover, many of the more important movements for social and economic change have an educational character. They aim at changing social attitudes or applying new ideas, as when people are taught to accept vaccination or family planning or their neighbours of a different faith; and the most important point about these movements is not that they impoverish some and enrich others, but that, in some sense or other, they raise the level of society as a whole. The stress on "exploitation" as the key to accumulation and economic development gives a distorted picture of the historical process. In the long run it is possible, through improvement of techniques and organization, to raise the material standards of workers in general without any lowering of the rate of "surplus value" extracted from the economy. Not only is this true of economic development, but a similar proposition holds good more generally. The key to social development is not to be found in class struggle alone. On any long-term view of the matter, the success or failure of a comprehensive movement for "modernization" of a traditional society depends, among other things, on a change in the cultural climate of society. It is in this sense that a "philosophical" or cultural revolution is, as M. N. Roy used to stress, a pre-condition of a social revolution. Leadership in this direction has often come from those sections of the upper and middle classes in society which have been long exposed to and are specially receptive of "foreign" ideas without their being cut off from native roots. As Roy perceived with increasing clarity towards the end of a long and chequered revolutionary career, class analysis and the political tenets that have been drawn from it are not even a tolerably good basis for laying down the strategy for a cultural and social revolution. The glorification of a class lays the basis for totalitarianism either of the "right" or of the "left" and substitutes for liberal pragmatism a new brand of fanaticism.

According to a "vulgar" version of Marxism, the politics and culture of a given epoch can be explained in terms of the

economic interests of the dominant class in that epoch. This view is patently erroneous, and its error can be logically demonstrated as well as historically illustrated. This is a point worth developing at some length.

A class even when solely inspired by the economic motive may, in a given situation, adopt any one of a number of alternative courses, depending upon the degree of reason, knowledge and foresight that it succeeds in bringing to the service of the motive involved: mere acceptance of a motive or intention does not ensure the adoption of the course best suited to the intention. Even if we grant that the aristocracy in pre-revolutionary Russia was eager to safeguard its class interests, we cannot conclude that it acted in a manner most conducive to its interests. As the same motive, coupled with different degrees of foresight, may lead to different courses of action a motive can, at best, set certain limits to, but can never explain the actual conduct of any class, still less the course of historical evolution. As the same motive may lead to different actions, the attempt by Marxists to explain the conduct of a class in terms of the economic motive has produced the queer result that the same hypothesis is often taken to be equally confirmed by quite opposite courses of events. Thus, the decision of the Labour Government to make India politically independent is, in the minds of the Communists, as much a confirmation of the self-interested motive of the British capitalist class as an opposite decision by a possible Churchillian Government would have been taken to be a confirmation of the same. Thus hypotheses are freed from dependence on the results of observation, which however makes such hypotheses largely useless in explaining historical phenomena. The chief weakness of the attempt to explain history in terms of the economic motive is that it neglects the influence on history of reason and unreason.

Not only is a motive taken alone incapable of explaining an action in its specific form, the "economic motive" is a bad indicator of the psychological springs of action of any individual, class, or community. What exactly is the so-called economic motive? The most commonsense answer will possibly be that the economic motive consists in the desire for economic power or wealth, in particular. The desire for economic power or wealth is, however, no simple desire; it is compounded

of a variety of more fundamental desires all of which lead us to seek economic power or wealth as a means to their satisfaction. The instinct for self-preservation, the desire for security, fellow-feeling, family affection and love of power and distinction may all lead us to seek wealth, and in this way all of these basic desires may enter into that compounded motive, the economic motive. Any desire, selfish or philanthropic, may be part of the economic motive when, and in so far as, it impels us to seek economic power as a means of its satisfaction, and, conversely, any desire may cease to be part of the economic motive (and may indeed stand opposed to it) when and in so far as it turns us away from economic power. The realization that economic motive is not something fixed and self-supporting but is sustained by other basic impulses does not necessarily detract much from the importance of the economic motive; but it certainly gives us a fuller understanding of human nature and a new flexibility to our thought in investigations into human actions. The impulses which generally enter into the economic motive are mostly capable, in large measure, of being directed to non-economic ends as well. The desire for distinction may lead us to seek economic power, it may also lead us to martyrdom. The influence on history of impulses turned away from economic ends has not been unimportant.

The economic factor undoubtedly exerts a very important influence on politics, but if what has been just said is generally true, we should not assume beforehand that its influence in every case is decisive or even preponderant. Some economic considerations almost invariably lie behind political expeditions, but equally invariably, other considerations are not quite absent, and it is not infrequently that other considerations are really more compelling. Alexander's invasions served an economic purpose; but the range of his invasions far exceeded what the economic factor alone would prescribe or permit. The lure of personal glory and the adventurous spirit seem palpably to have played here a decisive role. The same must be true of some, at least, of those Indian rulers who strove for the sovereignty of undivided India. The Middle Ages are replete with military expeditions undertaken more in fulfilment of the desire for distinction or on grounds of prestige than in pursuance of balanced calculations of probable material

gains. Nor is the position quite different today. It is not uncommon for man to misunderstand his own deeper motives, and the way he misunderstands himself is often indicative of the cultural climate in which he lives. In our "scientific" age we are prone to imagine that we, or others, are actuated by material interests because that is the kind of explanation our conscious and rational mind finds easiest to grasp. It is only natural that those who carry the investigation farthest—psychologists, for instance—have little difficulty in discarding such explanations.

As a matter of fact, such a simple-minded explanation would not do even for an analysis of man's economic activities. The capitalist entrepreneur himself was acting from a deeper motive when he was remaking the world. Keynes had a point when he remarked that enterprise only "pretended to itself" to be based on calculations of gains and losses and was, in fact, inspired and sustained by spontaneous vitality and the spirit of adventure almost as much as "an expedition to the South Pole".\* Neither war nor imperialism is simply an activity of the economic man. Japan's empire-building in the Far East, for instance, was not undertaken out of rational self-interest: her development might have been as quick without an empire, as it has been, in fact, quicker after loss of empire. It is palpably wrong to argue that Germany and her Fuehrer embarked upon a course of aggression and war in response to an economic need or as a way out of the "crisis of capitalism": a German variant of Roosevelt's New Deal would have been a more rational response to that crisis. One suspects that most wars in modern as well as ancient times would not have been launched, and if launched would have been quickly settled, if sober economic interests were allowed to dictate decisions.

If in its political activities mankind is continuously going beyond any recognizable economic interest, this cannot be any less true of its religious aspirations and cultural and intellectual endeavour. Religion has sometimes been presented as the handmaid of the economic interests of the dominant class in society. We are not concerned here with the truth or untruth of religious beliefs, but with their social role. One of the things to note in this connection is that religion, both when

\* *The General Theory*, p. 162.



it unites large masses of people and when it divides, produces results which economic self-interest left to itself could not produce. The point can be illustrated in terms of the paradox of ethics. The specific content of social ethics changes from one age to another and these changes are in some ways related to material circumstances. Yet, on the other hand, there is an element of transcendence in the religious sanction of ethics. For, while it is to the interest of each one of us that others observe certain standards of conduct, it is not to our interest that we accept the same commitment. Nor is it quite rational for an individual to argue to himself that he should observe these standards to set an example to others, so that in the end his own interests might be better served by all acting for the good of all. From the point of view of the individual, it is more realistic to assume that his own conduct will have but an infinitesimal effect on how others behave, and so the conduct of others should in most cases be taken as something given and the individual should choose his own course of action without bothering too much about setting examples. The religious sanction for moral standards is not stated, nor can it be, in terms of individual self-interest; it contains inevitably an element of transcendence that takes one beyond self-interest. This is one reason why when history demands of some scattered tribes that they either form themselves into a larger community or face subjugation by a more powerful enemy, the outcome is uncertain, since individual or tribal self-interest does not suffice to effect the leap to a larger brotherhood. Moreover, once a religion creates certain loyalties, moral and communal, these become, for better or for worse, an independent force acting on society and on history. The fanaticism that is so often associated with religious sects and communities is not simply a derivative of material self-interest. Moreover, the sanction of religion extends from the social totality to its parts, that is, the relation of the parts to the whole; and the parts thus sanctified by religion are transformed from functional groups into castes. Thus, religion, both when it promotes transcendence and when it produces fixation, has a force and an effect that cannot be explained by material circumstances alone.

These characteristics, moreover, are not quite specific to

religion, but are shared in some measure by culture generally. The culture that the ruling class promotes or permits is still less than its politics a mere expression of economic interests. It is true that the ruling class sometimes specially encourages ideas which clearly promote, or seem clearly to promote, support for that class, and discourages and suppresses ideas which hold a visible threat to the power of the ruling class; but ideas which directly and visibly strengthen or jeopardize the position of the ruling class constitute only a small part of the total culture of a community. The major part of the culture of a community receives the support of the dominant class on the strength of its general human appeal. The attempt has been made to show that even those parts of the culture of a community which are apparently unrelated to the class-struggle have an indirect influence on the struggle. This proves and disproves little. Given the class-struggle, anything and everything must inevitably have some relation, direct or indirect, to that struggle; but the important point is whether that relation is of the essence of the matter from the point of view of the birth and growth and social significance of the thing under consideration. Of the culture of a community, especially in comparatively peaceful epochs, not a large part owes its essence to its relation to the class-struggle. Stalin once remarked that language is the creation of society as a whole, not of some particular class; it is the expression not of class-struggle, but of the basic unity and coherence of social life. The same observation is true of much of culture besides language. There is much in culture, in tales and epics, in painting and architecture, in music and poetry, in dance and drama, which satisfies deep-laid human impulses, common to the ruling class and the ordinary masses, and expressed on a plane of universality so much removed from the sphere of class-conflict that different classes may enjoy them together and may contribute unitedly to their development. Moreover, where the culture of the "people" is different from that of the "élite", the difference is not always due to conflicting class interests.

Among the most important contributions by outstanding individuals in the making of history is the contribution of new ideas. Ideas and ideologies, again, are influenced by material

circumstances, but cannot be explained by them, the same circumstances being capable of yielding different systems of thought. Adverse economic circumstances produce misery and hardship, but how exactly misery will be reflected on the plane of ideas is not settled by the economic situation but is left to be conditioned by tradition, human genius, and other factors. As with the birth of a system of ideas so also with its subsequent growth, the influence of material conditions is far from decisive. A system of thought grows and modifies itself in obedience to diverse urges among which one of the most important is the inward impulse for logical unfoldment of the system, an impulse vitalized by impatience with internal inconsistency and an aspiration for widest possible comprehensiveness. Thus, systems of thought have their own dynamics of development, and acting on the external environment they are often best treated as an independent factor influencing the course of history.

We have treated above of the relative autonomy and transcendence of man's cultural, intellectual and religious activities. But, of course, there is a continuous interaction between these and man's material state. No responsible historian would deny—and the great contribution of the materialistic interpretation of history lies in forcefully pointing it out—that economic and other material conditions have a large measure of influence on political and cultural movements. The problems with which these movements wrestle are often and in substantial part posed by material circumstances. But when problems are so defined, that is, in terms of one "primary" factor, they have alternative "solutions", and which of these alternatives actually materializes in any given society is determined by all factors taken together. One of the things Marx wanted to stress, and quite rightly too, is that in every epoch the material conditions of life impose limits within which social ideals are realizable in practice. But one can accept this proposition and yet find the materialistic interpretation of history faulty and unsatisfactory. The reciprocal influence among the different factors in social life is such that the economic factor has a tendency to appear as basic when we are interested in finding out the causes of or constraints upon political, cultural and other non-economic

movements, while political and, especially, cultural factors have a tendency to appear as basic when we are investigating the causes of technological and economic progress or backwardness. Admittedly geography has been a factor of much importance, but this does not explain fully the secular movements of progress and retrogression through which so many countries passed in ancient and not so ancient times. When we come to modern history the interaction among different factors is seen even more clearly. If the industrial revolution visited different European countries at different times, the explanation is largely non-economic. For instance, if Spain after the sixteenth century lagged behind England in trade and industry, social and cultural factors had a good deal to do with it. Britain's leading role in the industrial revolution was due only partly to an advantageous geographical situation and bountiful supply of crucial mineral resources, and depended, to a quite important extent, on her political system which came to be marked early enough by internal national unity, emancipation from feudal fetters on her economic life, and governments actively helpful to her commercial and industrial classes. Germany, with her substantial natural resources but handicapped by wasteful internal divisions, had to go through her industrial revolution much later. That the political factor has had decisive influence on Soviet economic development is incontrovertible.

If productive forces and attendant economic conditions influence but do not determine political and cultural movements, and if politics and culture in their turn influence the development of productive forces and relations, it is not permissible to describe the mode of production as "primary" or "basic", and to speak of culture and politics as "secondary" or "derivative". The relation between technological, economic, political and cultural factors is one of mutual interaction, where no one factor determines the others, but each unquestionably influences the rest. Those who are impressed with the idea of the primacy of the economic factor will possibly do well to ponder on the question: What is the development of productive forces due to? The forces of production are not "material" in the same sense as the forces of nature are; they are nature rearranged in the light of ideas. The development

of productive forces is due to man's increasing mastery over nature, and the role of science in the advancement of this process is too obvious to require explanation. To try to explain the progress of knowledge by the "economic motive" alone is useless, because that motive is equally present in all countries which differ nonetheless from one another in their respective degrees of scientific and economic development.

There is, however, one special point to note in this connection to which the Marxian interpretation of history has usefully drawn our attention. While cultural and political factors have unmistakably influenced the development of productive forces, this influence has shown itself more in the tempo than in the general direction of technological progress. It is true that in certain cases political ravages have not merely checked economic progress but thrown the economic system back to an earlier stage, but the sequence of different stages of the development of productive forces appears in past history as something broadly pre-determined. We are furnished with some sort of a uniform economic axis of diverse social development in different lands. This, among other things, often makes a description of prevailing economic conditions a convenient starting point in a fuller exposition of the complex social life of an epoch. Nor can we overlook a related point. In so far as the resources of the earth are limited and there is a constant struggle for survival among societies, a community is more likely to hold its own if the kind of knowledge and the arts it cultivates, the moral ideas it practises and the spiritual convictions by which it is sustained, lend themselves to conversion into material power.

But all these do not yet make valid a materialistic interpretation of history. The power of a community to survive and make its mark is not a simple function of its wealth or level of economic development. Civilizations have decayed at the height of prosperity. Empires have been vanquished by organized nomads. There is also a more fundamental point. Economic development itself cannot be economically explained. Even here a deeper force is at work. Perhaps the best way of getting at the point is to reflect on the nature of economic stagnation. Once a society is caught in long-term stagnation, as large parts of the world were in the Middle Ages, it is difficult to give

any purely materialistic explanation of how it recovers the capacity to move forward. The different characteristics of economic stagnation form together a vicious circle, and it is much easier to understand through pure analysis how stagnation tends to perpetuate itself than how it is broken. Conventional economic explanations do not take us far. For instance, the challenge of pressure of population on limited land has not always sufficed to initiate development; high birth rate has simply been matched by high death rate. Poverty itself cannot supply the energy and determination to overcome poverty; for centuries on end it has produced only lethargy and fatalism. The impact of some external factor has often been a more potent force for change. The challenge of an external enemy, for instance, has been more decisive than that of poverty within. But this, again, does not solve the riddle of development but helps only to underline the complex forces and motivations behind it.

It is possible to state this point in a wider context, for it is true not of the economy alone, but of society as a whole. Let us take an example. Somewhere in the early centuries of the Christian era India lost her creative powers and vitality. Attempts have been made to explain this in terms of external invasions. But, as Nehru points out in *The Discovery of India*, a huge, well-developed and highly civilized country like India could not succumb to external attack unless internal decay was already there. We are faced with the same kind of question about the decline of the Roman civilization. Some civilizations have recovered after a period of setback; others like the Maya civilization have disappeared. The ebbs and flows of creative vitality in history remain unsolved problems defying mechanical explanations. We can study attendant circumstances and trace the paths of development of different societies; but we cannot explain fully either development or decay. Every true renaissance has a two-fold message: man makes his own history, but he never ceases to be a mystery to himself. It is a message which no interpretation of history can ignore without raising doubts about its validity.

Some "scientific" historians are apt to get suspicious at the very mention of the word "mystery". Everything, they argue, must have a cause. This may be so; but it does not

follow that every cause effective in human affairs is also knowable to man. In the development of man and his society new qualities, combinations and forms emerge continually, and their very novelty may imply that they cannot be anticipated. This does not mean that we have no basis for planning our activities. Probabilistic estimates are often better than no estimates; and anticipations based on moderate optimism are sometimes justified, even in the absence of a scientific basis for anticipation, if optimism helps constructive effort.

Let us sum up. Progress of science and knowledge follows certain broadly pre-determined lines, and in so far as society is made and re-made by the practical application of knowledge one can also speak of social development as pre-determined in a very broad sense. This does not mean that we can always know in advance what the way ahead is. It does not even mean the inevitability of progress; as a matter of fact, many societies have stopped advancing or become extinct at an early stage. Furthermore, it does not mean that material conditions at every stage are the decisive "instrument variables" of progress. The Marxian dictum that man's consciousness is determined by his being, that is, his social existence,\* strongly suggests that an improvement of the material conditions of life is a pre-condition of intellectual and cultural progress. But if being is only contemporary being—as it ought to be with a materialist—it does not entirely determine consciousness, which is also a product of instincts and superstitions which have long outlived the material conditions in which they first arose. We cannot wage war on superseded modes of production except in a quixotic sense; but we have still to reckon with outmoded loyalties and inherited unreason. For the same reason a forward-looking leadership cannot be adequately defined in terms of the present conflict of economic interests. The struggle to change and improve existing material conditions needs the support of a vision embodied in a movement which goes beyond the present and has, so to speak, all history within its scope. The materialistic interpretation is also open to the criticism that it is inevitably monistic

\*"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness." (Marx, Preface to *The Critique of Political Economy*)

while the historian needs a pluralistic approach. Material conditions impose certain broad limits to what is practicable; but within these limits a great variety of lines of political, economic and cultural development is possible. It is in this sense that there is scope for choice and statesmen and men of genius are aided by a kind of creative intuition and do not simply follow a scientifically pre-determined course. Further, the historian needs to recognize the relative autonomy of different spheres and levels of man's existence even as he studies their interaction. Those who ignore this are tempted to impose on the historical process greater structural unity than the actual material warrants. Finally, the creative force in history by which man continually recreates himself is falsified by any strictly deterministic theory. History is subject to determinism only from a transcendental point of view. From the standpoint of man's knowledge of himself, his own growth and development are not, and can never be, entirely predictable. Theory is grey; but evergreen is the tree of life.



## Reason, Faith and Social Progress

---

SINCE man has been defined as a rational animal, a simple distinction can be made between the animal level of existence and the rational level. But there is also a third level which is less easy to define. It has even a certain similarity to the animal level, like the similarity between a child and a very wise man who has got rid of all pride. It marks a return to spontaneity resembling the animal spirit, but it is spontaneity at a higher level. It is sometimes called the divine spirit to distinguish it from the merely animal, although one need not, like the Buddha, believe in God to achieve something of this noble spirit. In actual life one thing passes into another and it is not easy to lay hands on something that is purely animal, or rational, or "divine"; but we can still feel the difference, and it is interesting to study how the movement from one level to another takes place.

### I

We shall begin with something which illustrates rather clearly the similarity between the animal spirit and its highest sublimation. Take the following passage from Charles Baudelaire's *The Painter of Modern Life*:

"When Mr. G. wakes in the morning, opens his eyes and sees the rollicking sunlight beating on the squares of his windows, he thinks to himself remorsefully and regretfully: 'What an imperious command! What a fanfare of light!

Already for hours, now, there has been light everywhere—light wasted by my sleep! How many things I might have seen *in a new light*—and I did not see them!

“So he leaves his house, and watches the running river of life’s essence, so majestic and so bright. . . . He contemplates the landscape of stone caressed by the mist or smacked by the sunlight. He rejoices in fine carriages, in proud horses, in the dazzling smartness of women, in the handsome children who are happy to be alive and well-dressed. He rejoices in life as a whole.”

Now, there is something common between this poetic vision of life and the child’s vision. To the child, the child who is happy to be alive, things which to us are commonplace seem appalled in a more-than-worldly light. Baudelaire recognises this with a conviction that matches Wordsworth’s. “For the child,” he writes in the same essay “everything is *new*; he is always *exhilarated*. Nothing more closely resembles what is called inspiration than the joy of a child absorbing form and colour. . . . Genius is simply *childhood rediscovered* by an act of will.”\*

In what, then, lies the superiority of a genius or a great artist over a child who takes a spontaneous delight in life? The difference lies only partly in the fact that the artist has mastered forms of expression and the child has not. The artist subjugates “by an act of will”, by the force of his spirit, things which are apparently commonplace or even repellent, and distils from them whatever mysterious beauty they may contain. There are certain things which are naturally beautiful, such as flowers or a drop of dew glistening in sunlight, to which long familiarity may yet render us indifferent. There are other things, like a decomposed carcass, which may make us feel uncomfortable for biological reasons. The artist lifts us above the biological, that is, animal level, tears asunder the shell of indifference and set habits in which our soul is normally encased, and makes us see things in a new light as in a world reborn. The child’s delight has nothing to conquer or overcome; and if something arose to interfere with that delight, the child would be helpless against it. Between a child’s delight

\**The Essence of Laughter* by Charles Baudelaire, Meridian Books Edition, pp. 27-28.

in things and an artist's the difference is as between instinctive love and a love that has forgiven every wrong.

In religion there is a similar problem. In the early religions of the childhood of the human race men celebrate their sense of enchantment with nature, its abundant vitality, its power to call back life and vegetation, colour and warmth after cold winter and death. Thus, the Mother Goddess, the fertility cult, ideas of death and resurrection interpreted in terms of the miraculous powers of nature form the kernel of these early religions.

But religion in this form was found wanting quite early. Nietzsche spoke of the Dionysian strand in religion and the Apollonian strand. In ancient China the marriage between the earth and the sky is an essential idea in religion. If enchantment with Mother Earth, intoxication with her marvellous vitality, is an element of religious fervour, it is equally essential to cultivate detachment and to consider the law-governed universe in the light of reason.

There is something slippery about the drunken state of delight that enchantment with nature engenders. It is apt to produce strange rituals, irrational, often blood-thirsty, cults, and moral decadence. As a safeguard against this degeneration, religion enjoins rules of inner discipline and norms of conduct. But these rules or norms, and the spirit of detachment itself, are only valuable in so far as they help to transform an instinctive delight with the world into a more settled joy which can endure and survive the trials and accidents of life.

The Yoga system in India with its key concepts of *Prakṛti* and *Purusha* illustrates the point very clearly. *Prakṛti*, *Shakti* or *Kali* represents nature or energy in time, the word *Kali* denoting time in the feminine form. *Purusha*, on the other hand, stands in detachment above and beyond time and is thus a symbol of freedom from human bondage. The word Yoga is connected etymologically with the English word "yoke". Thus, on the one hand, it denotes a system of cultivated restraints on our natural self, its desires and tendencies. But, on the other hand, the aim of Yoga is inner freedom. Thus, we have a complex movement in course of which we pass from animal spontaneity to "higher" freedom.

From the point of view of the man of religion the artist is

but a half emancipated soul. He lives half in bondage to nature, tasting the exhilaration and inevitably the bitterness of unreformed life; and only by a second movement, as by an act of recollection, does he transform odd bits of this life into things of beauty, and by his success in doing this he lends enchantment to that state of bondage on which he depends for the raw material of his art.

## II

So far we have been considering the individual and his inner experiences. But the distinction we adopted above between the animal, the rational and the spiritual levels of existence retains its relevance when we pass from individual to social development.

First, there is the role of animal aggression in social development which is too large to be missed. But then, in the second place, instinctive love and hatred are not a sufficient basis for stable social relations and reason has a role in determining such relations. When Plato made a distinction between reason, on the one hand, and passion and desire, on the other, and cast the guardians or legislators of his ideal society in the same role as reason has in the inner life of the individual, he had a point. Finally, a society needs something more than a framework of laws appropriate to its stage of development; it needs to be held together not by laws alone but by an inner sense of unity.

Let us illustrate these propositions. We shall do this with the help of a very brief and schematic reconstruction of one phase of historical development which, even if it is not accurate enough to pass a historian's scrutiny, is close enough to actual experience to reveal the meaning and substance of the propositions set forth above and the qualifications to which they are subject.

Over a fairly long period in the past the aggression of nomadic people against settled agricultural societies was a main fact of history. These nomads usually came on horseback, devastated large territories, and then retreated with substantial booties only to reappear after a time. This is as good an

example of animal aggressiveness in human history as any other we could cite. The societies which were thus attacked were often fairly large and civilized, with cities standing in the midst of extensive agricultural settlements. But they were powerless to match the impetuous courage and fighting skill of the nomadic horsemen.

After a time these horsemen would themselves settle down in some of these societies. They would be the new *kshatriyas* of these societies, *rajahs* and the ruling class. But when this stage was reached a significant change would come over. In place of the unregulated aggression of the invading horde, now transformed into the ruling dynasty, there would grow a body of rules and conventions broadly defining the powers and obligations of the king in relation to his subjects. Even the king is supposed to be bound by *dharma* and he himself is its chief upholder. The conception of mutual obligations that is accepted in any age aspires to express a certain idea of justice and yet does not cease to reflect in its own way the existing balance of power among different groups and classes in society. Thus *dharma* or justice is two-faced: it does not ignore existing reality or else brute power will overwhelm it. But it does substitute for arbitrary will more impersonal commands; and it strives, within the limits of prevailing conditions, to make these commands point towards some common good.

The analogy between a law-governed universe and a law-governed society captured the imagination of the West at a comparatively early date. Stoic philosophers, such as Zeno, believed that the course of nature was rigidly determined by natural laws. These laws were universal and immutable. With the Roman jurists the idea of natural laws came to find a place in jurisprudence. As the Roman empire expanded and Rome came to have trading relations with aliens from many countries, the limitations of the Roman civil laws came to be clearly recognized and an attempt was made to develop a more universal system of laws which could be applied to settle points of dispute between a Roman citizen and a non-citizen. We have here the conception of reason as the basis of a system of laws striving for the utmost universality in governing human relations.

We need not trace the further development of the idea of natural laws. It has already been noticed that in prescribing laws for any actual society reason cannot ignore the basic power structure in that society; for laws would not otherwise be enforceable. Yet it does make a difference when a move is made towards replacing the totally arbitrary will of tyrants and aggressors by a system of laws recommended by reason; for reason looks at the social situation with a certain detachment, imports into laws a certain impersonal quality, joins duties to powers and points, even if abstractly, to certain ideals of equality and the public good which are of value in furthering social development.

But at this point a new problem arises. Laws are prescribed and enforced by an external authority. Viewed as such they constitute a system of restraints. How can individuals be free if they are restrained by laws?

The answer to this question falls into two parts. In the absence of laws every individual would be restrained by the arbitrary and, therefore, unpredictable wills of other individuals. When these wills are replaced by a determinate system of laws, the individual is to that extent freed from the tyranny of the unknown. He knows what is permitted to him. So far as the law is concerned, he knows the consequences of any action he may contemplate. In other words, he is free to choose with knowledge of the consequences of his choice.

But this is not a full answer to the problem of freedom. I may know that if I kill a fellow human except in self-defence or under other extenuating circumstances, I shall be punishable with death under the law of the land. And this knowledge may decide me against attempting murder even when I would otherwise want to kill. But the law in this case is quite clearly a restraint on my will; and the same would be true of less extreme cases of forbearance from crime or infringement of the law. A person is only free when he follows his own will, whole and entire; he is not in a state of enjoyment of inner freedom when one part of his will is in conflict with another, which is the case when he acts out of fear. The problem was given a memorable formulation by Rousseau. If the law aims at the common good, it is the product of a will that wills the common good, which is the general will. But if and to the

extent that the individual will is at variance with this general will, the submission of the individual to the law is not and cannot be inwardly felt as freedom. A society is not free simply because it has good laws and conventions and codes of conduct; but its sense of inner freedom depends on the extent to which people understand the meaning and purpose of these rules and make the common good an integral part of their private aspirations.

Thus we have, again, a complex movement by which societies strive to ascend from the level of brute necessity through rationally evolved laws to wider and inwardly realised freedom.

### III

The "common good" is, however, too abstract a concept and too perfect to bind together a real society. Rationally conceived it must mean the good of the whole human race taking the present as well as all future into account. Ordinary men and women, even when they rise above individual interests, want to identify themselves with something more limited in time and space. It may be the family, clan or caste, tribe, race or the national state. But every such limited object of allegiance becomes altered and outmoded in course of time; old bonds weaken and need to be replaced; and the ultimate grounds of man's obligations have to be pondered anew. It is likewise in religion. The ordinary man cannot give himself up to an abstract concept, timeless and universal, but wants to give his devotion to its incarnation in time. Stoicism yields place to worship of the son of God, a purely moral and philosophical Buddhism to a cult of devotion to a personal deity. But whatever is thus brought down in time is subject to change and decay and the scrutiny of reason, and faith itself needs renewal.

In those long stretches of ancient and medieval history when the "material" basis of society, that is, its technological level, remained more or less unchanged, it is usual to find a cycle of growth and decay repeating itself of which the broad characteristics have been impressively delineated by a number of great historians.

The story can be told in many different forms. Let us begin it at the point where a rude conquering horde sets itself up as a ruling stratum in society. As time passes it is transformed by the comforts and conveniences of its new settled existence. It develops a taste for the finer things of life. That aggressiveness which at first drove it to invade and conquer, and then to settle to the task of bringing order and justice to a conquered people, now turns partly to patronage of art and other cultivated pursuits, and partly perhaps to factional quarrels. A rude conception of justice gradually mellows into a more aesthetic culture. If the king began as a defender and patron of a God-fearing religion, he comes soon to be regarded as no less than God's incarnation or the son of Heaven; or, at any rate, the king and his court become centres of elaborate and pompous rituals. Perhaps for a fine moment a balance is achieved between the ethical and the aesthetic; but beyond this brilliant climax decadence sets in, as in the case of Islam under the Abbasids. There is a gradual softening of the moral fibre of the ruling class while the burden on the people increases as state expenses mount. Finally, the dynasty is overthrown by a combination of internal disturbances and external aggression, and the whole cycle is apt to begin anew. With some variations this pattern is repeated through much of known history. Ancient and medieval India and China provide numerous examples, and the story that Ibn Khaldun had to narrate about the Maghreb dynasties in north Africa is strikingly similar.

In this account the repetitiveness of the historical process is more in evidence than progress. But if now we introduce in our account of history the process of accumulation of knowledge by which man's mastery over nature is increased, in other words, the development of science and technology, there emerges a different picture of historical evolution which highlights progress. The interaction of the instinctive, the rational and the spiritual aspects of life appear equally in this story, but there is now a new perspective. Looking at history and its broad movements, Saint-Simon thought he descried there an alternation of epochs of positive organization with phases of criticism and revolution. The broad organization of medieval European society cannot be explained without



some reference to the place of ecclesiastical authority in that society, on the one hand, and its predominantly agricultural and decentralized economy, on the other hand. But neither the quality of the religious life of medieval society nor the principal characteristics of its economy can, again, be understood except in the context of the stage of development of science and technology in that age. Thus, in a settled society life and institutions at various levels form together an indivisible whole. When from whatever cause a disharmony appears at some point in this whole, it is either quickly smothered by the weight of the system or it spreads in a cumulative fashion from one part to another, thus forcing the whole system to seek a fundamentally new equilibrium.

It is risky to generalize about how exactly this process of readjustment gets started. In European history the renaissance round the fifteenth century was once regarded as a new point of departure in social evolution. But we have now learnt to regard the fifteenth century in its proper context. The crusades opened up a new commerce in commodities and ideas. But the crusades themselves expressed an already growing upsurge of expansionist energy in European society. Within the continent new settlements, for instance, from the west towards the east of Germany, bore witness to this expansionist vitality. Europe, dispirited and forced to withdraw within herself after the fall of Rome and the dazzling exploits of the Moslems in and around the Mediterranean soon after the death of Mohammed, slowly recovered her self-confidence and a new élan long before the renaissance celebrated by Burckhardt and forged ahead in many directions.

Behind the crusades, the geographical discoveries and the opening up of trade and colonies, there was a great deal of sheer animal vitality and a high spirit of adventure. The critical spirit developed side by side but took rather more time to mature. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it found its most powerful manifestation in the domain of religion through movements led by numerous dissenters. Tensions developed between different spheres of life and within each sphere. Through these the outlines of modern society and its distinctive mind were slowly formed. Faith and the critical spirit strove for mutual adjustment; new rights had to be conceded

and the political organization of society changed; business drew inspiration from religion and religion sanctioned business practices which it had long roundly condemned. Animal vitality, the rational spirit and faith do not lead separate and independent lives, but quarrelling they seek reconciliation and yet are not reconciled for long.

The movement of human society is not linear; but can we speak at all of a general direction of social evolution? Perhaps we can, but we have to state it cautiously. The inner impulse of society seems to be towards a voluntary co-operation of increasingly self-conscious individuals for a fuller satisfaction of their wants and a greater recognition of equality between man and man. But this is not a simple ideal and it is no use minimising the hurdles on the way to its achievement. Let us illustrate the difficulties. So long as the industrial organization of society remains as complex as it is today, a centralized government with extensive powers at its disposal is unavoidable. If nations continue to be separately organized for their defence, the degree of centralization of power must be even greater than it might be otherwise. In a society where power is highly centralized, it is idle to pretend that hierarchy and bureaucracy can be avoided. Thus, the character of modern industrial society and the division of the world into rival national states seriously limit the extent to which effective equality, which is equality in the distribution of power, can be achieved in our age. Or, again, consider the problem more inwardly. The modern man is, by and large, more self-conscious than people were in earlier societies. But self-consciousness is not all that man desires; he also wants to be able to communicate with fellow men. While the external means of communication have incomparably improved, the modern man is inwardly lonelier today than he was in more traditional communities. It is easier to socialize the means of production than to make the rational man feel at home in the universe.

Before this century is out most parts of the world will have made substantial progress towards removing material poverty; and this, so far as it goes, is most welcome. Indeed, it has to be among our principal concerns in the poorer countries. But however we may go about it we shall still be left with the question as to how to reconcile spontaneity, which is a founda-

tion of happiness, with the critical spirit and the latter with a joyous acceptance of what seems to be a morally indifferent world. But this only means that there are problems which cannot be solved by social organization alone, but which the individual must primarily solve for himself. The individual now as always will be born as an animal; he will inherit now as never before a highly critical tradition; and he will have to grope his way towards a positive conception of freedom. In medieval society the key to this freedom was furnished by tradition. In modern society it will have to be a more personal exploration across doubt and anguish; and history with characteristic variations will reproduce itself countless times in individual souls.

#### IV

Actual history is, of course, much more complicated than any abstract schema might lead one to suppose. Yet there are long-term trends in the evolution of man and society which are better grasped by methods of abstraction. While these methods have their dangers, they can also provide a basis for certain broad and valuable conclusions about the process of history and tasks ahead.

One particular idea arising out of these reflections is of sufficient importance to deserve a separate statement. Reason operates in two ways, negatively, when it exposes inconsistencies in a system of ideas, received or proposed; and positively, when with a sense of purpose it recommends means best calculated to achieve it. A purely negative reason destroys, but it cannot effectively build. Yet both these functions of reason are necessary and important. When in the course of evolution of society the human spirit and imagination vaguely perceive a larger aim and objective looming in the future, it is essential that the assistance of reason be available, in its critical as well as its constructive form, for the realization of that objective. Without this assistance old beliefs and loyalties escape critical scrutiny; and men are liable to be led by the ardour of their spirit to seek emancipation in ancient prejudices dressed up as new principles. This is as true of the life history

of individuals as of society; but it is in the latter that the matter is, as it were, held up conspicuously to the gaze of the world. The processes of blind nature are stupendously wasteful; and the progress of society has to be paid for with many avoidable tragedies unless it is guided by reason informed with an awareness of a larger human freedom to achieve. There is no dearth of examples of this wastefulness in modern history. Now when the need for adjusting practical ethics to higher forms of social organization is again so pressing over large parts of the world, this is something worth remembering particularly.

# Index

---

- Abbasids, 115  
Agricultural research, 46  
Ambedkar, 13  
*Ancient Law*, 8  
Aristotle, 15, 63  
*Artha*, 15
- Bacon, Francis, 15, 20, 21, 24  
Balanced Growth, Theory of, 52  
Baudelaire, Charles, 108, 109n  
Bernal, J. D., 34  
*Bhagavadgita*, 2, 9, 18  
*Bhakti*, 9, 11, 12, 13  
*Bodhisattva*, 5  
*Brahmavāda*, 4, 5
- Capital*, 65  
Caste system, 4  
Cavendish, 36  
Chaitanya, 12  
Chārvāka, 2  
Chinese Cultural Revolution, 81  
Communist Manifesto, 22  
Comte, 15  
Condorcet, 15  
Confucian Doctrine, 2  
Curzon, Lord, 46
- Dharma*, 1, 4, 5, 9  
*Discovery of India, The*, 105
- Eckhart, Meister, 3  
*Economic Survey of India and the Far East*  
1964, 49, 50  
Education Commission, 1964-66, in  
India, 39  
Elder, Joseph W., 6n  
Engels, 67  
*English Social History*, 18n  
*English Works of Rammohan Roy*, 10,  
11n  
*Essence of Laughter, The*, 109n
- Fisher, H. A. L., 77n  
*Freedom and Organization*, 23  
Fromm, Erich, 79
- Galileo, 16  
Gandhian idea of trusteeship, 72  
*General Theory of Employment, Interest  
and Money, The* 17n, 58n  
*Growth of Industrial Economies, The*, 52n
- Hastings, Warren, 47  
*History of Europe, A*, 77n  
Hoffmann, W. G., 52, 53
- Kāma*, 15  
*Karma*, 4, 5, 6n  
Kautsky, 67  
Kedrov, B., 25  
Keynes, 16, 58, 99  
Khaldun, Ibn, 115  
King Kci, 2  
Kropotkin, P., 73n
- Latitudinarian, 17  
Lenin, 67, 91  
    on trade-unions, 82  
Lewis, Arthur, 61
- Mahayana, 5  
Maine, Sir Henry, 8  
Marx, 22, 23, 67, 70, 71, 92, 94, 95,  
102  
    on class struggle, 64, 65  
Marxian philosophy, 16, 23, 81  
Marxian Theory, 91, 92, 93, 95  
    on transition from capitalism to  
    socialism, 66  
Marxist sociology, 69  
*Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 73n  
Mill, John Stuart, 64  
*Moksha*, 1, 9  
Mudaliar Commission, 28
- Narayan, Jayaprakash, 88  
Nehru, 105  
Newton, 16  
Nietzsche, 110  
*Nirvāna*, 3

- Novum Organon*, 20  
 Nurkse, 35
- Owen, Robert Dale, 10
- Painter of Modern Life, The*, 108  
 Pascal, 36  
*Patterns of Trade and Development*, 35  
 Phule, 13  
 Plato, 63, 111  
*Preface to the Critique of Political Economy*,  
 92, 106n  
 Protestantism, 17, 18
- Rāmakrishna, 5, 11, 12  
*Religion of India, The*, 15  
 Research institutes, 33  
 Rousseau, 113  
 Roy, M. N., 11, 96  
 Roy, Raja Rammohan, 10, 11, 12, 37  
 Russell, Bertrand, 23, 24
- Saint-Simon, 1, 15, 21, 22, 23, 24, 38,  
 115  
*Samsāra*, 4  
 Sapru Committee of 1934, 27
- Schweitzer, 4  
 Second Five-Year Plan of India, 53  
 Sen, Keshab Chandra, 11  
 Smith, Adam, 27, 59  
*Soviet Economic System*, 30  
 Stalin, 94  
     on language, 101  
*Sthitaprajna*, 2, 5  
 Strachey, John, 47  
*Sunyavāda*, 3
- Tagore, Rabindranath, 11, 90  
 Trevelyan, 17  
 Turgot, 15
- Varnāshramadharmā, 5  
 Vico, 15  
 Vidyasagar, 37  
 Vivekananda, 11  
*Voprosy filsofi*, 25
- Weber, Max, 15, 17  
*What is to be done?*, 67
- Zoroastrianism, 15

