Sociology and Social Policy in India
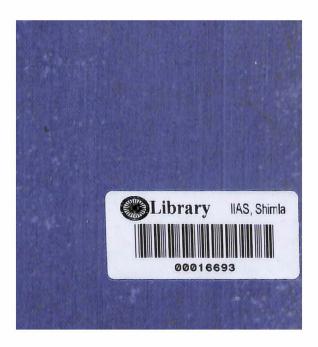
R·N·SAKSENA

ORIENT LONGMANS

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AND
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ORIENT LONGMANS

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To

The Sacred Memory

of

My Father

PREFACE

In this work, an attempt has been made to trace the influence of sociology in the moulding of social policy in India, specially where the involvement of the people constituted an essential element in the successful implementation of the policy. Social policy may be defined as laying down vital principles which should govern the efforts made by the government with the consent of the people to ensure that not only is the individual assured of a peaceful existence but he also finds a favourable climate in society for establishing his 'network of social relationship' with other individuals and groups in a manner that he finds not only harmony therein but also opportunities for the advancement of his physical, social and moral welfare.

The melioristic tradition in sociology finds such a climate extremely congenial. The sociologist often finds himself faced with a situation which needs explaining instead of an abstract question which calls for an answer, particularly in a developing country like India. Such countries are motivated by a burning zeal to develop their social and economic conditions so as to get out of stagnation from which they have suffered for centuries in the past, in many cases under a foreign rule. Thus, a desire that the State should provide all facilities that are essential for promoting and maintaining the *living standard* of the individuals as a member of a civilised society becomes paramount.

In India the central aim of social policy is social welfare. The 'emergent areas' for social welfare call for immediate attention to secure welfare of large and scattered rural communities, which would make life happy for the poorer and economically backward section of the population; the amelioration, rehabilitation and promotion of the interests of Harijans and other backward classes; the welfare of long-neglected aboriginals; and the advancement of the physical and moral welfare of country's youth. Welfare activities not only consist

of the direct action taken by the government in this direction but also include special legislation for removing disabilities or inequalities that may be found to exist in the social system either in the form of institutions or as accepted social practices. Such legislation may also be undertaken to fill in the lacunae that may be discovered to exist in society, hampering social progress.

For a correct appraisal of the situation, therefore, sociology extends the helping hand. It provides a discipline, which has developed scientific tools for correct understanding of social problems, since the primary goal of social research is to understand and even conceptualise social life and thereby gain a greater measure of control over it. Sociology can no longer be regarded as being mainly concerned with the collection or analysis of 'social facts' or with value-judgements alone and not their validity.

It is encouraging to find that our policy-makers and administrators are becoming more conscious of this helping hand extended to them, which has added to the importance of sociology as a useful and significant social science with the result that it is now taught as an independent discipline at both under-graduate and post-graduate levels in most of the Indian universities. This is only a very recent development in teaching in the Indian universities.

It may be interesting to observe here that invariably the syllabi of the universities teaching Sociology as an independent subject include Cultural Anthropology and Social Psychology as compulsory papers. This gives an indication of indefiniteness of the academic status acquired by Sociology, especially in its relationship to Cultural Anthropology. It may be because Anthropology had an earlier start in the country, since the Government at that time needed the help of anthropologists in administering tribal areas and hence many civil servants of the Indian Civil Service, such as Hutton, Grierson, Mill and many others, became known as anthropologists.

With the growing social and political awareness in the country, when the need for a correct appraisal of social and economic needs of the people was felt, anthropologists found a good field and Social Anthropology came into prominence.

This has given considerable indefiniteness to Sociology as an independent discipline in India, since in any social research both find themselves plodding on the same field, even face to face when retraction becomes almost impossible. It is not easy at this stage to suggest any way out of the situation, since at present both are more or less inter-linked. Thus, the syllabi of the universities teaching Sociology as an independent discipline, invariably include Social Anthropology, while in universities where there is a separate Department of Anthropology Sociology (including studies in advanced Principles of Sociology) is always included in the syllabus.

But it is heartening to find that Sociology is now universally recognised as an important aid to development of social welfare. As T. H. Marshall points out, there is always "a sociological core" to every problem.[1] The underdeveloped countries represent sub-standards of living. The social and economic conditions in these countries leave much to be desired. At the same time most of these countries have attained their political freedom only recently, which has created a great national awakening among them, making them more aware of their backwardness. This has emphasised the need for the teaching of sociology, so that trained social scientists are available, who may help the policy-makers in arriving at correct decisions. A committee appointed by the University Grants Commission recommended: "With a view to encouraging scientific studies of social problems..............existing Departments of Sociology in universities should be strengthened and assistance given for the establishment of new Departments of Sociology in those universities where they do not exist."

It is, therefore, obvious that greater demands are made on the universities to encourage the study of sociology. An interesting outcome has been the introduction of Social Work in the University courses of study, which has received increasing patronage from the Government and provides employment to the trained graduate social workers, so that the trained social workers may be better equipped to render a professional service "based on scientific knowledge and skill

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[1] British Journal of Sociology, September 1953, p. 209

in human relations". This has also resulted in a greater
emphasis being laid on empirical or "operational" research,
needing application of sociological knowledge to the under-
standing of emergent problems of socio-economic nature
facing the country. The formation of a permanent research
organisation, the Research Programme Committee, by the
Planning Commission is a good example of this venture.

Agra
June 1964   R. N. SAKSENA

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of sociology as a science of society is quite a new phenomenon. But in the West during the last forty or fifty years, in fact since sociology gained recognition as a science of society, it has taken long strides in emerging as a body of systematic social theory 'in which theory that had formerly been largely speculative in character was drawn into closer relationship with empirical studies. This was accompanied by the restatement of propositions, often deduced from sound theory and expressed as hypotheses and then tested by observations.'[1] Sociology now claims that the discipline of scientific argument can be profitably applied to the study of the relations between men in society. Without going into details, it may be fairly stated that Western sociologists are keeping more to 'hard facts'.

The same impact can be felt in India. But the developments have not been so spectacular; for Indian sociologists have inherited a different social philosophy, which not only is ancient but even goes far beyond the known history of many civilisations. It is also unique in considering the relations of man not simply with other human beings but with all life. In the Hindu social system, the whole Cosmos is believed to be dominated by one Supreme Being, which is identifiable with Self. But a distinction is drawn between the Cosmic Self and Psychic Self. The Cosmic Self is the Supreme Reality, the Unity which lies behind all multiplicity, known as *Brahma*. But the Psychic Self, the manifestation of one's own self, is *Atman*. It is the 'subject which persists throughout the changes......It is the simple truth that nothing can destroy. Death does

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[1] Chaplin, 'Reflections on Changes in Sociology during the Past Forty Years', *Sociology and Social Research*, 40:387.

not touch it nor does vice dissolve it. Permanence, continuity, unity, eternal activity are its characteristics.'

Again it is the doctrine of *karma* that sums up individual action and behaviour. *Karma* literally means deed or action. At every moment of our lives we are performing some *karma* (action). Each action produces its own reaction or result, and the nature of this result depends upon the moral or immoral nature of the action performed. Driven on by his *karma* the individual moves from existence to existence, since individual life is only one span in a series. This series is called the round of Transmigration. And this round ends only with the attainment of salvation (*moksha*), the realisation of the Supreme Unity and experiencing it subjectively.

The doctrine of *karma* provides a continuum of social existence, in terms of *Ashrama*. It literally means a stage, a period or a condition. The past being determined and the future only conditioned, 'life' in Hinduism cannot be regarded as a fatalistic resignation but as an opportunity for intense striving as a preparation for self-realisation.

In this sense human life must be lived for the realisation of the four ideals of life, namely, *dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha*. The law of *dharma* imposes upon the individual a set of rules to be followed in his relationships, filial, economic, religious and social. The second ideal of *artha* may be interpreted as action or conduct leading to the economic or temporal good of the individual as living in a social group of which he forms an organic but unique part. *Kama* indicates the cultural aspect in the sense that it means the enjoyment of life and thus proves to be a strong corrective to the streak of pessimism and renunciation. It regulates the relationships between the sexes on the assumption that the life of the flesh, far from being something sinful or harmful in itself, has a necessary and moral function to perform. Lastly, there is the ideal of *moksha* or salvation which demands that all the actions must be performed by the individual with this ultimate end in view. To facilitate the fulfilment of these ideals an individual's life is divided into four stages of *brahmacharya, garhasthya, vanaprastha* and *sanyasa*. These may be translated as periods of life devoted to study, household duties, contemplation and renunciation.

According to Max Weber, the interest of salvation (*moksha*)

furnished 'no motive for any positive interest in secular goals'. But the concept of *moksha* is not a negative one—certainly it is based on the principle of renunciation of the world. It is only by performing social functions according to *swadharmas* that one can hope to attain *moksha*. It implies complete identification with society and enjoins on the individual to maintain the continuity of society through the four-fold typology of *varnashram*. Therefore, Max Weber's contention that 'Pursuing such an interest as salvation is a matter of action, a matter of doing something about an intolerable situation' cannot for a moment be accepted. The concept of *karma*, which provides us with the basis for salvation, has a much greater connotation than 'action' according to modern sociologists. According to them, 'action' is a goal-oriented activity, which is socially conditioned according to the role played by the actor in a given situation (status). Their approach is essentially from the point of view of behaviourism. But the concept of *karma* is based on ultimate values. It provides for continuity by linking the past with the future through the present. Every individual is expected to perform his duties according to the socially approved norms, without expecting any rewards in his lifetime. This constitutes his *dharma*, a concept under which all the forms and activities, which shape and sustain life, are brought together. Thus not only *dharma* means the ethical norm, a religious duty, and an ideal, but more so it implies economic, political, racial and professional rules of conduct becoming both 'the process and instrument of integration that underlies all modes of association'. Thus, it gives meaning to human behaviour in its all-pervasive spirit and regulates all forms of human activity whether social or individual, moral or metaphysical, rational or mystical, material or spiritual. This concept of *dharma* also gives the clue to the socialisation process in our society.

It is, therefore, obvious that spiritual values to us are not so much a form of mystic religion as a mode of life. It also explains the complete absence of an organised church in India, quite unlike the West. In this connection it may also be mentioned that while other civilisations have perished, Indian civilisation, which is contemporary with those of Egypt and Babylon, is still functioning. How has India managed to remain more or less the same in the midst of social migrations, upheavals and

political changes that have elsewhere changed the face of history? Why is it that her conquerors have not been able to impose on her their language, their thought and customs, except in superficial ways? It is because the vitality of Indian culture lay in its power to reaffirm the old values and unmasking the decaying ones only to rediscover them. This is what Buddha, Mahavir and Shankaracharya achieved, who gave a new lease of life to Indian civilisation. There have been many reformist movements in the country, but none so revolutionary as to upset her fundamental values. As Hans Kohn points out, 'A truer basis of unity than modern national sentiment was to be found in a common intellectual heritage, persisting through an unbroken tradition and moulding and permeating India's whole social life to the minutest detail, and in the peculiar contemplative piety which lies at the root of all the various forms of Hinduism.'[2]

Religion has played a very important role in the life of our country. It is the centre round which the whole of Indian social life rotates. A wave of blind imitation of everything that was Western had begun to spread in the country in the beginning of the nineteenth century. This is also the period when the British had succeeded in consolidating their power in India. The free thinkers and the 'Young Bengal' group under the leadership of Derozio acted like Nihilists paying no respect to tradition or ancient beliefs. But they failed miserably in their attempts. At the same time, reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chundra Sen and Swami Dayanand Saraswati infused a new life into Hindu society, because their great achievement was that they succeeded in preserving the fundamental unity of Hindu social organisation and its systems of value.

Whenever Indian society was faced with forces of disintegration, the society threw up a new culture from within itself. But the contact of Indian society with the West, unlike that of modern with medieval society in Europe, introduced a foreign element in Indian culture. It is in this context that the modern sociological thought of India has to be understood. This impact led some thinkers to reject Western civilisation altogether, as they wanted to return to the traditional principles.

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[2] Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East*, p. 349.

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Among the prominent modern thinkers who subscribe to this view may be mentioned Coomaraswamy and Bhagwandas. Coomaraswamy is very uncompromising in his criticism of Western civilisation, while Bhagwandas, though adhering to the traditional sociological thought of India, believes in a rationalistic synthesis. But it is rationalism on a religious basis. However, a healthier development has been in the direction in which attempts have been made to interpret traditional concepts and values, from a modern rationalistic-positivistic point of view.

Western sociology has a tendency to indulge in reductionism, mainly because of its failure to acknowledge the subjectivity of the human mind. This has led to a denial of introspection as a possible *modus operandi* in the ascertainment of social knowledge. Moreover, it exhibits a leaning towards treating as a whole such things as 'society', 'economy', etc., which forces us to view them from the outside instead of internally, where meanings are to be found. Human relations and social behaviour must be investigated by the use of canons of validity and intelligibility, differing radically from those used in natural sciences. Contemporary sociology in India, therefore, faces a dilemma. This predicament is also the key to the understanding of the fundamental trends in contemporary social thought in India.

Even the current sociological view cannot be said to be divorced from metaphysical thinking; as Dr. Radhakamal Mukherjee has observed, 'Social interests and experiences must express our conceptions of the nature and functions of divinity.' Mukherjee's main concern from the beginning of his intellectual career has been the re-orientation of social sciences as expounded by Western thinkers. His approach may be said to be inter-disciplinary. He regards universal law as affecting human beings 'in something which is moulded by the interaction of classes and interests within the State'. Furthermore, it is in 'groups and associations which conflict or cooperate with one another' that human values are moulded. He has tried to show how economic principles are founded on physical and psychological principles and how intimately they are connected in their functioning with the institutional set-up. Mukherjee is not an orientalist. In his *Institutional Theory of Economics*, he not only joins the American School led by Veblen, Common and Mitchell, but gives it a new orientation by em-

phasising the new role of traditions and values. 'Personality develops out of a process of interweaving of group interests and values with clearly marked out and even stereotyped values.' This organisation of impulses will be furthered and completed by religion. He further elaborates his view-point in his *Dynamics of Morals*. He gives a fourfold typology of groups arranged in a hierarchical series: the Crowd, the Interest Group, the Community and the Commonalty. These groups have different norms of organisation, criteria of evaluation, sanctions and means of control and different ends and values.

Professor Mukherjee's thinking is clearly indicative of the rise of sociology in India. His thought covers a vast field, from ecological studies and observations to religion and mysticism. He even goes further and endeavours to integrate such extremes as ecology and mysticism in one grand whole. In the final analysis, as Saran points out, the bases of Dr. Mukherjee's synthesis of traditional and modern thought are the concepts of level, hierarchy and the theory of symbolism; also the methods of reinterpretation and adaptation. The concepts and methods are all traditional.[3] In both economics and sociology he has made a big effort to meet the challenge of the West.

Another prominent exponent of the synthesis theory of Indian culture is D.P. Mukherjee. He looks at the impact of the West on Indian society as a phase in the social process of cultural assimilation and synthesis that has been going on in Indian history almost from the very beginning. In his view Indian culture has grown by a series of responses to the successive challenges of so many races and cultures, which has resulted in a synthesis. The Western impact is the latest phase in this process, and the problem is not of acceptance or rejection but of understanding the laws of cultural synthesis in the context of Indian history. Mukherjee gives indication of being under the influence of Marxian thought, though it cannot be said to be orthodox Marxian, in his analysis of Indian culture; for, in his view, the process of synthesis of culture which Mohammadan rule in India had initiated was interrupted by the English conquest, since it also meant a change in the economy of the country, which put a new emphasis on economic factors in the

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[3] A.K. Saran, *Recent Trends in Sociology* (ed. Roucex).

process of culture formation and culture change. The British while introducing a new economy tried to foster it by unrealistic policies of land settlement and education, and in the process the old middle-class was replaced by a new middle-class. Indian society ceased to be of the 'closed' type without becoming 'open'. And herein lay the danger. This mechanical unity of Indian society could be torn apart at the slightest clash of middle-class interest. But he does not believe in any such contingency ever arising, since he is convinced that the new economic forces which are working in Indian society will lead to the emergence of a new, stable culture in India.[4]

But in his later thought he shifts more towards the role of tradition in Indian culture. He is not prepared to be dubbed a 'traditionalist', but he passionately advocates the study of traditions with a view to re-interpreting the Hindu theory of man and society. Thus he gives a clear indication of his departure from his earlier attempt to analyse social change in terms of Marxian thought. 'Thus it is that I give top priority to the understanding (in Dilthey's sense) of traditions even for the study of their changes. In other words, the study of Indian traditions, which, in my view, is the first and immediate duty of the Indian sociologist, should precede the socialist interpretations of changes in the Indian traditions in terms of economic forces.'[5] Professor Mukherjee's lament is, 'It pains me to observe how our Indian scholars succumb to the lure of modern "scientific" techniques imported from outside as a part of technical aid and "know how" without resistance and dignity. In the intellectual transactions which are taking place, it seems that we have no terms to offer, no ground to stand upon'.

It may, therefore, be said that in our sociological thinking there is a preponderance of belief in nature and divinity. An individual's actions are believed to be justified not only in his own lifetime but even beyond. Thus, Darwinism, which had a great influence on Western thought, possibly could not have found a place in Indian thought. Even now in our society an individual's behaviour and values are inter-related as part and whole. Hence, sociology in India cannot be entirely

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[4] D.P. Mukherjee, *Modern Indian Culture*.

[5] Mukherjee, Presidential Address to the First Indian Sociological Conference.

'objective' in its content and approach. It has to contain a little bit of abstruse philosophy, which provides a continuum between the past and the present, which constitutes the dynamics of Indian society.

A great product of such a synthesis in thinking was Mahatma Gandhi, who led the national struggle for freedom to its successful end. He cannot be said to be a revivalist or a believer in sociological archaism by any means. On the other hand he was a great social innovator. He did not belong to the élite but to the masses, and succeeded only because he could appeal to their spiritual sentiments and make himself understood. He believed in the dignity of man, not under a class-structure, but as a being to whom nothing is higher. The ultimate ideal of man is to realise God and anything that lowers man in this world, lowers his dignity. Closely connected with this belief was his conception of man in relation to his environment. Since the world is a creation of God, one must enjoy the world with a sense of sacrifice. He did not pin his faith on the material welfare of man, and thus he substituted 'standard of life' for 'standard of living', which had moral values. But the basic idea underlying Gandhian thought was non-violence. There were others, for instance Buddha, who preached non-violence (*ahimsa*). But they meant by it negation of enjoyment. To Gandhi non-violence was not a negative approach. It meant to him that in order to promote the dignity of man and to develop personality there must not be any compulsion or coercion. Non-violence was an approach to a problem through persuasion and compromise; and hence it was the only suitable weapon for being used in the struggle for freedom. It is the greatest tribute to Mahatma Gandhi that through non-violent means India regained her freedom, because hardly a parallel can be found in the history of the world where a nation has established her freedom only through non-violent means. It was a dynamic force created by Gandhi by harnessing the spiritual values of the people and making full use of them. As Bogardus observes, 'Gandhi's special strength illustrates the surprising effectiveness that can be achieved under theories of life and world-negation.'[6]

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[6] Bogardus, *The Development of Social Thought*, p.87.

The same social thought is to be found permeating social welfare work, which constitutes the essence of social welfare policy in the country. It may be interesting to quote extensively Dr. Moorthy in this connection.

'The body is a psychosomatic apparatus built for itself by each individual soul (*atma*) according to its differing capacity. The body is an instrument of enjoyment and work. We should work and enjoy without individual conflict and social disharmony. According to the *karma* theory the present is a logical result of the past. We should accept the present, integrate the available physical, material and spiritual resources to progress towards a better life and a greater enjoyment. The universal God is in each one of us, and we are all in Him. ....This being so, service of man is service of God. Since every man has his own limitations pertaining to his emotional, physical, social, mental and spiritual condition or environment, we cannot help him unless we accept him, in the first instance, as he is..................What is required of each is to sympathise and to understand persons with problems; make them aware of their own possibilities for growth and development along desirable lines; enable them to assemble their own minor resources for higher endeavour and better life. No one should impose himself on another whatever his problem may be. "Lift thyself by thyself" is the motto of the Gita...............Helping oneself into higher life is the *dharma* of each individual; and helping others to help himself is, again, the *dharma* of everyone. This is self-realisation equivalent to God-realisation.' [7]

Thus, social work may be regarded as help rendered to individuals and groups in overcoming their handicaps and in realising their full personality, not merely with reference to this present life but with reference to progressive series of lives. Social work, therefore, is multilateral, total, sympathetic, gradual and continuous.

It will be evident that in our thinking Indian sociologists are bound to take into consideration the old values which determined individual behaviour in society and formed a part

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[7] *Proceedings of the Seminar for the Faculty of Schools of Social Work in India* (T.C.M.) Ootacamund, 1961, p.16.

of the process of socialisation, while engaged in promoting the development of Indian sociological thought. Yet the tools of research developed in modern empirical sociology are not ignored and full use is being made of them. In the next chapter an attempt has been made to determine the contribution made by sociology in policy-making.

It may, therefore, be well stated that in the teaching of sociology in the country the emphasis is on utilitarianism. Durkheim's dictum that 'sociology would not deserve an hour's effort if it did not serve to throw light on the path of action', fully explains the situation. But sociology may also be regarded as a discipline which elucidates fundamental principles and thus contributes to the formulation of social policy and the establishment of value judgments. But while fundamental research has its own importance, it may not have so much utility to underdeveloped countries in moulding their social policy.

The greatest need of today is to remove the lacunae that exist in the social framework which would pave the path for new reforms. Mention has already been made of the Indian village communities, how they suffer from various drawbacks and yet are not fully prepared to accept the development programme which aims at bringing about a rapid social change. Sociology based on empirical research or 'operational research' can lend a very helping hand in this direction, by helping to achieve a better knowledge of realities, since it leads to find out the suitable means of action—to techniques by which influence may be exerted on situations whose various constituent factors are subjected to sociological analysis. Sociology in this manner assumes the role of science which is both technical and manipulative. It is the development of sociology on these lines which is proving more beneficial to the policy-makers in the country; for in underdeveloped countries with a low level of living, studies of the extent and structure of poverty, its causes and human effects, and studies of levels of living in various social groups, constitute the emergent areas. At the same time planning and community development programmes call attention to the need for studies of the attitudes, sentiments and beliefs of the population towards such a programme.

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SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL POLICY

A science these days gains recognition only by demonstrating the value of its study. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge is not enough. More important is the social utility of a particular branch of knowledge, which is better known as the 'applied side' of science. It is, therefore, a natural expectation that sociologists should prove their usefulness to those who are in authority and help them in arriving at more intelligent decisions and in making fewer mistakes. This need not be taken to imply inherent conflict between sociologists and policy-makers; for social policies are mainly concerned with the 'right ordering of the network of relationships between individuals in societies or with the principles which should govern the activities of individuals and groups so far as they affect their lives and welfare'. Such policies and principles of action must be based on rational standards or criteria.

Sociology affords an answer. The melioristic tradition in sociology finds such a climate extremely congenial. In sociological research attention is commonly focussed on areas of social problems or situations defined as unfortunate. The sociologist is thereby compelled to start with a situation which needs explaining instead of an abstract question which needs an answer. This has developed in him to a high degree of awareness the nature of scientific method, a respect for science comparable with that prevailing in the natural sciences, and an amazing ingenuity in adapting scientific means to scientific ends. But it may be too much to claim that sociology enjoys the monopolist's privileges in this field. There are other 'human science disciplines' which claim to deal with human behaviour in society, particularly anthropology. The anthropologists and sociologists have repeatedly discovered each other in the same situation. In dealing with the problems of underdeveloped countries, such a union proves to be

extremely rewarding. The problems of underdeveloped countries may be said to constitute 'emergent areas', which need a scientific analysis, a closer understanding of the factors involved in social change; for in the very nature of things these countries represent a developing social economy.

At present there are a few countries which are highly developed economically and have very high levels of average real income per head. Richest amongst them are the Western countries, which are mainly located in the temperate zones. These provide us with the economic upper class of nations in world society. The lower class of nations is much larger, where real income per head is only a tiny fraction of what it is in the highly developed countries.[1] To this majority group of very poor nations belong all the people of Africa, except the white settlers in South Africa duly safeguarded by their racial policy, and the whole of non-Soviet Asia, including the countries of the Middle and Near East.

As a result, the industrialised countries are on the whole firmly settled in 'a pattern of continuing economic development'. In the period after the Second World War these countries have seen their productive resources constantly at work in full capacity. But in underdeveloped countries progress is slower, since their main problem is to lift themselves out of stagnation. At times they are even in the danger of losing ground so far as average income levels are concerned. At the same time the peoples in the underdeveloped countries are becoming increasingly conscious of these huge international inequalities and are even inclined to put the blame for their poverty on the rest of the world, particularly the developed part of it. Therefore, all these very poor nations have now been overcome by a craving for economic development as well as national independence. Thus the term 'underdeveloped' acquires a dynamic aspect. It implies a certain value-judgment

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[1] See Report by a Group of Experts on Measures for the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries, submitted to the United Nations, May 1951:

We have had some difficulty of interpreting the term 'underdeveloped countries'. We use it to mean countries in which per capita real income is low when compared with the per capita incomes of the United States of America, Canada, Australia and Western Europe. In this sense, an adequate synonym would be 'poor countries'.

that the goal of the social policy of these countries is their full socio-economic development and rehabilitation on the one hand and complete avoidance of international inequalities on the other. But no economic progress is possible unless the atmosphere is favourable for it. The people of a country must *desire* progress, and their social institutions must be favourable for it.

Since 1947, when India regained her independence, there has been a widespread awakening among the people and a realisation of the social and economic problems which confront the people. The Constitution of the Republic of India (Part IV) gives in detail the principles which should guide the state in promoting the welfare of the people. They are included in the Constitution as directive principles. The state is required to secure for the citizens an adequate means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work, protection of their health as also of children of tender age and youth against exploitation and moral and material abandonment. Within the limits of its economic capacity and development, the state is required to make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness or disablement and other cases of undeserved want. These directives in the Constitution are not mere expressions of pious hopes, but constitute the essential ingredients of social policy in India and the basis of planning.

Thus greater demands are made on the sociologists to devote their energies to the study of social problems. Moreover, greater emphasis on community development projects and other welfare activities initiated by the state has also accelerated this process. Real India consists of villagers: nearly 82 per cent of the country's population are village dwellers. But it is tragic to find that, in general, the village presents a picture of poverty, malnutrition, poor standards of public health and illiteracy. It is, therefore, obvious that if the nation is to progress, the development of the rural community should be given top priority. The planners have been quite conscious of this fact. The First Five-Year Plan defined the ultimate objectives of the Rural Community Development Programme as follows:

1. To provide for a substantial increase in the country's agricultural production, and for improvements in the system of

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communications, in rural health and hygiene, and in village education.

2. To initiate and direct a process of integrated cultural change aimed at transforming the social and economic life of the villages.

The Indian village is a very complex system. The habits and tastes, social practices and traditions, area of belief, social structure, attitudes and values of the rural community not only are different but also form an integrated whole. Therefore, if the state intends to take the initiative in order to bring about radical changes in the village community, it would be easier done by adopting a sociological approach. This can only be done with the help of trained social scientists. While planners and administrators must share the primary responsibility for the formulation and implementation of rural development projects, the social scientist can give them invaluable help in the areas of social organisation, human relations, culture and values touched by the plans.[2]

It is true to a great extent that at present in the case of government-sponsored village welfare work the relations between the common village people and government officials are characterised by considerable distance, reserve and distrust. It is not because villagers are not appreciative of what is being done for them by the state, but their reaction to any innovation is very sharp. Either they reject it in its totality or accept it. There is little scope for experimentation, since in this process of rejection or acceptance traditional values play a very important role. Again, a peculiar type of vacuum exists in the lives of the villagers. Some recent governmental measures, such as radical tenurial reforms, the creation of statutory village *panchayats*, the introduction of the Community Development Programme and the constitutional ban on the public practice of untouchability, have raised their level of expectation and aspiration. This has also affected inter-personal and inter-group relations in the village. Whilst their expectation has been aroused, 'in concrete terms people have not had enough evidence of it so far to warrant a shift in their attitude.' In a community, which has been reared on tradition for centuries,

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[2] Dube, *India's Changing Villages*, p.152.

a new programme or scheme can only be accepted after its resistance has been overcome, not through exercising authority but by creating understanding. This explains to a great extent the lack of the people's participation in the Community Development Programme. Therefore, a full appraisal of their attitudes, values, sentiments and beliefs ought to be obtained first before launching any scheme. In this field, sociologists can be of immense help. It is encouraging to find that the government is fully aware of this need. The Government of India has set up a National Institute of Study and Research in Community Development at Mussoorie, and the Uttar Pradesh Government supports another Action and Planning Research Institute at Lucknow with the same object. In both the institutes sociologists and anthropologists are engaged in research in the field of community development under government service. There are some foreign social scientists also who are associated with some of these projects. But it would be more fruitful if the university departments of sociology were also associated with such studies and evaluation programmes; for, after all, what is needed is a balanced and critical evaluation of the motivations and mechanism of change in rural communities, together with the analysis of the cultural determinants of acceptance and rejection. The findings will prove to be of immense help towards better planning and execution of development programmes. This also emphasises the need for the development of rural sociology as an important branch of sociology in India.

We have dealt at large with Indian conditions to show how sociology helps in the making of social policy. The aim of social policy is essentially social welfare. Social welfare may be defined as a collective effort in which all individuals are expected to join, 'on the wide application of social service plans particularly directed towards the under-privileged groups of the community, with the main object of arousing their awareness of the necessity of reforms to a point where they themselves will make serious efforts to raise their own standards of living'.[3] It is, therefore, obvious that social welfare depends upon awareness of social problems in a society, since a social problem

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[3] Report of Committee on Social Welfare Administration submitted to the United Nations Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States in the Middle East, Beirut 1949, p.9.

refers to a condition or process of society which may be said to be unfortunate or even undesirable. It means that society in some respects is failing to perform the function or achieve the end expected of it. Such a situation calls for correctional methods. This can be best achieved through an organised system of social service and institutions, designed to aid individuals and groups to attain satisfying standards of life and health. This concept has a wider implication than professional social work. It may be characterised as 'an organised concern of all people for all people'.[4] Naturally, policy-makers have to turn to sociologists to fully acquaint themselves with 'social facts'.

One lesson that we clearly learn from sociology is that the feeling of belonging, which is essentially based on the readiness to mutual protection, has been the basis of all types of social organisation, primitive or modern. In the simpler societies mutual aid served as self-protection for family or tribe against a hostile world. In contemporary societies, the horizon has been widened with the recognition of the rights of man. Society is expected to provide a decent minimum standard of living to its individual members. This has led to the development of the concept of the welfare state. International cooperation in social welfare is also gaining ground, based on the recognition of the fact that for securing world peace and stability the well-being of the peoples, their social and economic security and good health, is essential. As has been mentioned elsewhere, in underdeveloped countries subormal living and health conditions have given rise to a subdued feeling of discontent against the opulent and highly industrialised Western countries, which finds expression in such terms as economic imperialism or colonialism. This has also created an intensive national awareness of their social and economic backwardness among the underdeveloped countries, who have regained their independence in the very recent past, and who now have a very keen desire to improve their conditions.

The essence of social policy is what *ought* to be done or what is the best among possible alternative methods of collective action. The question, therefore, arises: in what

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[4] Gertrude Wilson and Gladys Ryland, *Social Group Work*, p.16.

respects and to what extent can sociology help in the shaping of social policies, either generally or in particular fields? We have long passed the stage when sociology was regarded as being mainly concerned with the collection or analysis of 'social facts' or with value-judgments alone and not their validity. Sociology is now confronted with very complex situations, especially when it has to deal with the impact of one culture on another where a traditional pattern of living is being sharply disrupted by the impact of external forces, particularly by economic forces, or the introduction of new forms of land tenure that run sharply counter to established traditions. The range of sociological studies is, therefore, considerably widened. Such studies not only are capable of providing the sheet-anchor to social policy-makers but also influence them in their decisions.

In developing countries the pioneers of progress have to cross various hurdles. As Gardiner and Judd point out : 'Themselves men of outstanding ability, thrilled by the potentialities of the new age, they feel impeded and frustrated by the conservatism and prejudices of ordinary mortals and, in their zeal to make way for the new order, ride rough-shod over established practices.'[5] Where the sociologist and policy-maker work in collaboration, such pitfalls can be avoided; for a high proportion of sociological investigation has a practical purpose and is naturally of great significance to the policy-maker. If the sociological researchers kept looking down their noses at the policy-makers and confined themselves to the purely academic and scientific character of their studies, their work would lose much of its significance, both from the academic and practical points of view. Social research may be defined as a scientific understanding for solving or understanding a social problem, which, by means of logical and systematised methods, aims to discover new facts, or to verify old facts, and to analyse their sequence, inter-relationship, explanations and the natural laws which govern them. The primary goal of social research is to understand social life and thereby to gain a greater measure of control over it. In other words, social research is a method of studying, ana-

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[5] Gardiner & Judd, *The Development of Social Administration*, p.10.

lysing, and conceptualizing social life in order to 'extend, correct or verify knowledge, whether that knowledge aids in the construction of a theory or in the practice of an art.'[6]

In India the central aim of social policy is social welfare, which covers a broad canvas on which sociologists, social workers and administrators are exercising their minds. In addition, there are other vital problems of great social significance which are actively engaging the attention of social planners, such as welfare activities for the benefit of large and scattered rural communities, represented by the village or a group of villages, which could make life happy for the poorer and economically backward section of population; the amelioration, rehabilitation and promotion of the interests of Harijans and other backward classes; for problems of the welfare of the long-neglected aboriginals; and the advancement of the physical and moral welfare of the country's youth.

It may be interesting to mention here that service of the needy has always been part of an old tradition in India. As in other familistic societies, relationships between individuals and groups were so established that the care of the needy was built into the social institutional structure. Religion also emphasised the values of charity, philanthropy and mutual help. Besides this religious emphasis leading to individual actions of charity, various social institutions provided for mechanisms which helped to meet the needs of the aged, the sick and the otherwise helpless sections of the community. The joint family provided for the care of the older generation as also of its other members who were unable to make their fullest contribution to social life by reason of disability. Besides the joint family, the caste and community councils often took responsibility for individuals who needed succour. Similarly, the economic system was itself governed by social customs, such as the *jajmani* system, which made it obligatory for the high-caste employers to look after the needs of the low-caste employees. These social mechanisms with their customary sanctions were effective in a small rural community with its intimate face-to-face contacts. But since the government is actively engaged in the amelioration of the conditions of the

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[*] Pauline Young, *Scientific Research*.

masses, all the welfare schemes have to fit in the framework provided by traditional values and institutions, at least in the initial stages. It is, therefore, encouraging to find that the government have now recognised the importance of taking sociologists into their confidence and established various research centres and institutions for the study of social problems, the most important among them being at Mussoorie, Nilokheri, Ranchi and Lucknow.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Both the objectives and means of social policy are in some degree controversial, but in general there is a much greater degree of agreement in regard to objectives than in regard to means. The recognised objectives of social policy as laid down by the principles *enunciated* by the United Nations or *pledged* by the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation, the Atlantic Charter, the Mutual Aid Agreements, the Final Act of the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture, and other instruments and statements of policy, may be summarised as follows:—

Opportunity for suitable employment for all who seek work; good wages and reasonable conditions of work, opportunity to secure adequate food, clothing, housing and medical care; social security arrangements which, in addition to affording financial protection against the hazards of life in an industrialised society, include prevention and medical services capable of making a positive contribution to building up the vigour and vitality of the masses; reasonable leisure and adequate facilities for recreation and culture; greater equality of occupational opportunity; and proper care and training of the young.

As regards the means of attaining the objectives mentioned above, there is a much greater diversity of opinion; but it is being increasingly recognised that society as a whole, acting through the state, has the ultimate responsibility in regard to all of them. How much should be undertaken directly by the State itself, how much should be undertaken by voluntary organisations acting with the assistance and encouragement of the State, how much should be left to private initiative, will always remain a matter of heated controversy. There are extremists on both sides. But the welfare state is a compromise between these two extremes, and as such, in spite of all its imperfections, it sets a pattern for any humane and progressive

society. It guarantees a minimum decent standard of living without removing incentives to personal enterprise, and it brings about a limited redsitribution of income by means of graduated high taxation. Yet it does not pretend to establish economic equality among its citizens. All are assured of adequate help in case of need, whether that need is due to illness, old age, unemployment or any other cause. The realisation of this social responsibility is essentially a sociological concept. Society exists for the individual, and he constitutes an integral part of society. It follows that in a welfare state if an individual is willing to work and has the capacity to work but fails to get a job, it is not his fault. There must be something fundamentally wrong with the social organisation itself, for which he is unable to get any work. Thus, social policy should aim at providing all the facilities that are essential for promoting and maintaining the living standard of the individual. This constitutes the core of social policy of the welfare state, particularly in an underdeveloped country.

The Constitution of the Republic of India pledged to the people, '*Justice*, social, economic and political; *Liberty* of thought, expression, belief, and worship; *Equality* of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all *Fraternity*, assuring the dignity of the individual and unity of the nation.' Contemporary planning and development activities in India are keyed to the objectives defined in the Constitution. The task was difficult, but India took it up boldly. The Planning Commission was set up by the Government of India in March 1950 to prepare a plan for the 'most effective and balanced utilisation of the country's resources'. In December 1952, the final version of the First Five-Year Plan was submitted to Parliament. The central objective of planning was defined as initiating 'a process of development which will raise standards and open out to the people new opportunities for a richer and more varied life'. Economic planning was viewed as 'an integral part of a wider process aiming not merely at the development of resources in a narrow technical sense, *but at the development of human faculties and the building up of an institutional framework adequate to the needs and aspirations of the people.*' The First Five-Year Plan was followed by another Five-Year Plan, and now we are in the process of experiencing the impact of the Third Plan. But the essential

object of all the plans is to accelerate progress by removing all the lacunae that exist in the socio-economic life of the people.

According to the census of 1961, 360 millions out of 438 million persons in India, or roughly 82 per cent, live in villages. There are 550,000 villages as against 3000 towns. Their main occupation is agriculture, which is a mode of cultivation as well as traditional way of life. The Indian village has always represented a unique social system; self-sufficiency has been its main characteristic. Life in the village has always been self-contained. Very appropriately the village has been called a community, in as much as it constitutes a solidarity, which is a historical fact. And it is this solidarity, which the planners intend to energise to develop all its available resources for a better living in a welfare state through a well-planned Community Development Programme. The success of the experiment essentially depends on the intensity of solidarity that is to be found or can be built up in the community; for participation in common activities or a share in the active management of common affairs is the fundamental attribute of the community and as such is essential for the realisation of the values and experiences which are vital for the existence of man as a member of civilized society. It is this aspect of community life which Durkheim called 'moral'. 'Everything which is the source of solidarity is moral, everything which forces man to take account of other men is moral, everything which forces him to regulate his conduct through something other than the strivings of the ego is moral, and morality is as solid as these ties are numerous and strong.'[1] The chief virtue of the concept of community is that it emphasises the qualitative aspects of human development rather than the quantitative.

The term 'community development', as defined for working purposes within the United Nations, refers to 'the processes by which efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of the communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress.'[2]

[1] Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, p. 398.
[2] Draft Report, Public Administration Problems involved in Community Development, 1958, p.2.

The distinctive features of community development programmes are: 'the participation by the people themselves in efforts to improve their level of living with reliance as much as possible on their own initiative; and the provision of technical and other services in ways which encourage initiative, self-help and mutual help and make them more effective.'

According to the above definitions, any programme for community development includes:

1. Improvement in the social, economic and cultural conditions of the community, which consists of
    (a) physical improvements, such as roads, housing, irrigation, drainage and better farming practices;
    (b) functional activities, such as health, education, and recreation;
    (c) community action involving group discussion, community analysis of local needs, the setting up of committees, the seeking of needed technical assistance and the selection and training of personnel.
2. To integrate these communities into the life of the nation by giving a chance to the members of the community to participate on a local level under the decentralised machinery of government.
3. To enable them to contribute fully to national progress, or the participation of the citizens in national programmes. In low-income countries, where there is shortage of money, active participation of citizens in national programmes has two advantages—(i) they save money and (ii) on the other hand they also shift the responsibility to the people for looking after the projects. This constitutes the basic idea underlying the *shramadan* movement.

The Indian village has, since the dawn of history, formed the basic unit of social and economic life, characterised by a sort of self-sufficiency, both in production and distribution. The bonds of social relationship were intimate but static. Life was essentially pious and simple. Self-help, self-reliance and self-confidence were the dominant characteristic traits. Mutual help and consideration for one another made the lives of its people more concrete in solving their problems during national calamities. Even the changes at the Centre of Government did not affect them, since the social and economic pattern of rural life remained undisturbed.

But with the advent of British rule, the rulers soon discovered that the interests of their government, which was foreign to the soil, could not be served by such social solidarity. They brought a new approach to solve the rural problems. New tenurial laws were enforced, and new tenurial systems introduced. The villages came to be regarded only as a source for the supply of raw materials or a market for coarse finished goods. Thus 'began also our descent down the abyss, for "co-existence" had given place to "co-exploitation". We fell at last to the sweep of foreign rule.'[3] The rural economy, which represented a happy combination of agriculture and cottage industries, was thrown out of gear and the impact of machine -made goods and consumer goods led to the extinction of rural handicrafts with disastrous social and economic consequences.

This unbalance in rural social economy naturally attracted the attention of leaders of public opinion and the administration in course of time. When India attained her freedom it was but natural that the immediate attention of the government should be focussed on rural uplift. But even prior to this, many experiments in rural reconstruction were tried, which are worth mentioning here.

Rabindranath Tagore, the great poet, was the first to be stirred to action and in 1921 established an institution for rural reconstruction, known as Sriniketan (which is attached to Visva-Bharati at Shantiniketan). Tagore had already been an ardent organiser of a new life in the village for a number of years. His association with the Bengal Welfare Society reflects his thoughts on village programmes. The programme included adult education; rural sanitation; campaigning against malaria, tuberculosis and other epidemic diseases; measures to prevent child mortality; the supply of drinking water; the creation of cooperative societies and the provision of relief in times of flood and famine.[4] In short, the central objective of the Institute was 'to bring back to life its completeness into the villages, making the rural population self-reliant and self-respecting, acquainted with the cultural

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[3] Dey, S.K., *The Story of our Programme*, p.25.
[4] Bose, R.N., *Tagore and Gandhi on Village Uplift*, A Symposium on Community Development in India, Kurukshetra, pp.55-58.

traditions of their own country and competent to make an efficient use of modern resources for the improvement of their physical, intellectual and economic conditions'.[5]

Gandhi was perhaps the first great leader, who not only stressed the imperative need for rebuilding village life, but also stepped forward with a practical programme of action. The eighteen items of Gandhi's programme for the emancipation of villagers are of great significance. 'Communal unity; removal of untouchability; prohibition; use of Khadi; promotion of village industries such as paddy husking, gurh-making, oil-crushing, weaving, production of neem oil; the utilisation of dead cattle; manufacture of hand-made paper; woollen blankets, etc; basic and adult education; rural sanitation; the uplift of backward tribes; the uplift of women; education in public health and hygiene; propagation of Rashtra-Bhasha; love for the mother tongue; economic equality; organisation of Kisan, labour and students; use of nature cures and promotion of economic equality.'

Above all else, he wanted the villagers to feel that India was their country. As he said, 'I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice.'[6] All his efforts at rural development were directed at making the villagers self-reliant and self-sufficient and at developing in them moral stamina to stand up against oppression and injustice.

To further elucidate his ideas on village work, Gandhi wrote in *The Harijan* (July 26, 1942): 'Every village's first concern will be to grow its food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and play-ground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available it will grow money crops, thus excluding ganja, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village school. It will have its own water-works ensuring clean water supply. This can be done through drilled wells or tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes, such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-

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[5] Report of the Committee for Evaluation and on Public Participation, Uttar Pradesh (1959), p. 5.
[6] Ibid., p. 57.

violence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-cooperation will be the sanctity of the village community. There will be compulsory service by village guards who will be selected by rotation from the registers maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons, annually elected by the villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. They will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. The Panchayat will be legislative, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Any village can become such a republic today without such interference even from the present government whose sole effective action with the village is exaction of village revenue. I have not examined here the question of relations with the neighbouring villages and the centre. My purpose is to represent an outline of village government, where there is a perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government.'

Besides, there were still others and among them even a few administrators, humanists at heart, who felt drawn to rural problems and devoted themselves to the uplift of village people. To this category belonged F.L. Brayne, an able administrator, whose spirited work and devotion to rural uplift deserves special mention here. He took the initiative in launching with the petty funds of the District Board of Gurgaon District in the Punjab a wide programme covering items like the construction of manure pits, the use of improved agricultural implements, the education of women, the construction of wells, and the improvement of hygienic conditions both in and outside the dwelling places. He further directed the programme by organising the community for co-operative endeavour. In its execution he involved the revenue officials. He was quite successful though he started with limited resources, both in material and merit. But whatever little progress was made during the office tenure of Mr. Brayne, he made it clear that rural upliftment could be taken up with limited resources.

With the growth of political consciousness among the people, a natural corollary of the freedom movement was that the struggle for liberty aimed at improving the social and economic

conditions of the rural population. In 1937, when the first popular ministry was formed, a rural development programme was launched in Uttar Pradesh, laying great emphasis on community organisation and co-operative effort, keeping in view the development of rural economy. The popular ministry resigned in 1939 on the issue of the War. The outbreak of World War II gave a temporary set-back to the implementation of the programme for rural uplift. However, the end of the War witnessed the birth of free India with its new hopes and aspirations of nationhood. The new Government of the Republic was faced with the immense task of building up a strong nation, and so focussed all its attention on nation-building activities, particularly in rural India, which was the real India. This was also the time when foreign aid, particularly American, was available for rural uplift programmes.

The Operational Agreement No. 8 signed between the U.S.A. and India, popularly known as the Community Development Programme, under which both the countries undertook to bear an estimated expenditure of $7,260 and Rs. 34,840,000 as their respective shares for the first fifty-five projects of rural development came into operation in India in 1952. The activities of the Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Institute may be cited as other specific instances of interest taken by the U.S.A. in this direction.

In 1947, the introduction of the Firka Development Scheme by the Madras Government was aimed at securing the economic upliftment of the people and the introduction of a new social order of a casteless and classless society with the intention of making the villagers more self-reliant and self-confident and active participators in the programme for improving their living conditions. As a result, in 1948, the U.P. Government also inaugurated the Pilot Development Project at Mahewa in Etawah District, covering an area of sixty-four villages with a population of 10,000 inhabitants with the intention of improving the land, agricultural practices, education facilities and sanitation in villages. Its programme was intended to be self-propelling. Simultaneously the Government of India also launched the Nilokheri Project to rehabilitate displaced persons and to set up a new township. The functioning of the new administrative set-up, co-operative effort and people's

enthusiastic participation at Nilokheri gave a new impetus to formulating the Community Development Programme. Thus, in a way, the present concept of community development emerged from the experience gained from various experiments carried out in different parts of the country.

With the initiation of the First Five-Year Plan, fifty-five community development projects were launched in the country on October 2, 1952, the anniversary of Gandhiji's birthday. Each project consisted of approximately 300 villages covering an area of 400 to 500 square miles, with a population of about two lakhs of people; and the area of operation of each project was divided into three development blocks, each comprising about one hundred villages with a population of about 65,000. Each block was divided into about twenty groups, each containing five villages. Each group of villages was to be served by a Gram-Sewak (village level worker). Its programme included the development of agriculture, communications, education, health, sanitation, training, employment, housing, and social welfare. The entire programme aimed at the transformation of the rural community into a dynamic force, which would make the nation prosperous.

The Community Development Programme is broadly divided into three phases: the National Extension phase, the Intensive Community Development Project, and the Post-Intensive Development phase. Of course, it is not necessary that everywhere the first two phases must follow each other; the National Extenstion phase in some areas has been skipped over to usher in the Intensive Community Development phase. Usually the period of the first and the second phase is to last for three years each. In the first phase, the areas selected are subjected to the method of providing services on the ordinary rural development pattern with a lesser governmental expenditure. In the intensive phase, the blocks selected are subject to a more composite governmental expenditure. In the post-intensive phase, it is presumed that the basis for self-perpetuation of the process initiated during the earlier phases has gained enough momentum and the need for special government expense reduced. Gradually the areas are left in the charge of the government departments for development.

Since its inception eight years ago, by the end of the First

Plan, the Community Development Programme was introduced in over 2,000 blocks and served a population of about 194 millions. By the end of the Second Plan the programme had extended to about 3,100 blocks comprising about 40,000 villages. Of these, over 1,000 blocks had completed more than five years and entered the second stage of the Community Development Programme and about 2,040 blocks were in the first stage. In addition, in about 500 development blocks pre-extension activities were taken in hand. According to the programme already approved, by October 1963 community development work will extend over the entire country. At the end of the Third Plan, about 2,100 blocks will have completed ten years development activity. For programmes under community development and co-operation, the Third Five-Year Plan provides a total outlay of Rs. 400 crores.[7]

The programme of Community Development has, thus, a history behind it and is a natural outcome of a series of experiments conducted and ideas tried in the past by various agencies, both official and non-official. It embraces some of the basic tenets of Gandhiji, adopts some of the extension techniques practised in the U.S.A. and seems to bring about a social transformation through a community way of working and thinking. The present programme is an improvement on the past experiments in as much as: (1) it has started with an administrative machinery of its own with a welfare bias; (2) it offers a uniform working pattern to the whole country; (3) it aims at an all-round development of village life; (4) it draws sustenance from the people's co-operation and active participation in aided self-help basis; and (5) it is backed by substantial government financial and technical assistance.[8]

The concept of the community organisation indicates the many-sided development of community life in the rural areas. There are two ways of planning the community life: planning each individual aspect separately and then establishing some sort of co-ordination between them, or attempting a co-ordinated development of all aspects   that they are integrated

[7] Government of India, Planning Commission, *Third Five-Year Plan—A Draft Outline*, New Delhi, June, 1960, p. 153.

[8] Report of the Committee for Evaluation and on Public Participation, U.P., 1959—p. 7-8.

with the whole, with the result that wide aims are given more prominence than individual considerations in a comprehensive plan. A community project is, thus, a comprehensive scheme of rural development on a multi-purpose basis.

The definition of the concept as enunciated by the Planning Commission, and as reflected in the deliberations of the national conference on community development, is 'to promote community life amongst the people; to promote the all-sided development of the village community: to develop self-reliance in the individuals and cohesion in the community so that the village people are able to manage their affairs themselves and make their village, through its Panchayat and Co-operative, a self-governing unit of the larger Indian democracy.' The immediate goal of the programme is to provide for a substantial increase in the country's agricultural produce and for an improvement in the system of communication in rural health and hygiene and in village education; while the ultimate objective is to initiate and direct a process of integrated cultural change aimed at transforming the social and economic life of the village. The programme as visualised by Prime Minister Nehru offers a challenge to the people to prove their mettle and to find their own measures for social and economic amelioration. It is a challenge likewise to the administration to prove that they can rise in public estimate as the real servants of the people.

Thus, the Community Development Programme is a social device under the aegis of the Government so that millions of rural families may organise themselves in co-operatives of different kinds and take decisions as free agents practising scientific agriculture and finding supplementary occupations in a variety of decentralised cottage and small-scale industries while the State assists them with expert advice, service and credit. At the same time the foundation on which the whole superstructure of the Community Development Programme is to be built is essentially the human factor—self-help, self-reliance and community life. Hence, the people's active participation is the most essential factor for the success of the Programme.

There are two types of Community Development Programmes:

1. *Integrative Type*: This consists of those programmes which are intended to be nation-wide in scope with emphasis on expansion and coordination of rural development effort. These programmes have a distinctive, readily identifiable organisational structure which is designed to coordinate at each level the efforts of governmental and non-governmental agencies which can make a contribution to community development. Substantial technical and financial resources are channelled through this structure for the achievement and promotion of the nationally planned development goal.

2. *Project Type*: These programmes also lay considerable emphasis on development. But they are multifunctional and limited in geographic scope and have the character of a project.

Of the two, the project approach to rural development would appear to be unrealistic since disparities of status and power may hamstring community activities in more ways than one and rural development would be difficult without thorough structural changes. John T. Hitchcock has accused Albert Mayer, the originator of the Etawah Pilot Project, of having based his whole programme on the assumption 'that obstacles to village development are either non-existent or unimportant'. This divergence in approach not merely is academic but has practical significance, because for the successful implementation of the Community Development Programme it is essential that the people should themselves get involved in it; in fact the success of the Programme depends on the degree of their involvement. Involvement has two aspects: cooperation and resistance. It will, therefore, be more rewarding if we first attempt to analyse the factors that lead to resistance. Kusum Nair has observed: 'Development will not become a self-generating process with its own momentum unless the value system of the community, and the social structure containing it, are first altered and adjusted to be in harmony with the socio-economic objectives of planning.'[9] Dube is of the opinion that the basic error implicit in Kusum Nair's argument lies in the static view that it takes at one point of time, which he calls 'timeless present'.[10] But the present is

[9] Quoted Dube. S.C.. *The Human Element in Community Development*. Kurukshetra, October, 1961.
[10] Ibid.

never timeless. It is a reality and in the case of a social phenomenon it is a social fact at a particular point of time. The Indian village community is not a spontaneous or accidental growth in our social history. In fact its roots are much deeper. The first Aryan settlers on Indian soil were cultivators who laid the foundation of the rural community. History bears ample testimony to the fact that the Indian peasantry has lived in little rural communities quite peacefully, unaffected by the great political upheavals or conquests in the country. Therefore, in order to understand correctly the value system, sentiments and beliefs of the rural community it would be better to go to the past rather than only interpret the present in terms of the future; for if we can trace the continuums in the rural community, it would give us a greater insight into the socio-psychological build-up of the rural community. The rural community cannot be explained only in terms of 'rituals', 'inter- and intra-group relationship', 'caste-kin-relationship' or even in terms of a shift from 'sacred to the secular'.

The village community even now represents a social solidarity in which human nature and impulses are expressed and an association is formed in which wasteful conflict has been eliminated and plus values are produced. It represents both a structure as well as a process. The fallacy in which the social scientists are indulging at present in studying the Indian rural community mostly from a social-anthropological point of view is to regard the community as a configuration of families and/ or as a system of institutions, particularly caste, designed to exercise social control and regulate social relationship. Thus, in planning for the farming community it is apparent that there cannot be any economics isolated from sociology and social psychology. There are many types of causal relationships and connections between purely economic factors and social and cultural conditions which cannot be ignored or excluded from economic analysis and planning; for a community's attitude to work can be a more decisive determinant for raising productivity in Indian agriculture than material resources, or for that matter even technology.

However, some social scientists are not impressed by this argument, particularly Dube, who argues: 'There must obviously be some point from which to begin. When change is

viewed in a global and cross-cultural perspective, we learn that the economic and technological aspects of culture are often easier to penetrate than the hard core of deep-seated beliefs and values.'[11] If we follow this line of argument, we inevitably come to the conclusion that physical targets of the Community Development Programme should be given top priority, which will release forces for change and induce the community to accept the Programme. But as Dr. Carl Taylor points out, the programme has 'to combine all elements of organised activity which are needed to accomplish effective cooperation between organised local community groups and the organised sources of technical, economic and local assistance which local groups must receive.'[12] It is possible that a well might be dug by the villagers and a school building constructed with their help. But if the well is used only by a section of the community, or if the attendance at the school is negligible, it would be a matter of greater concern. This poses a new problem, for deep-seated social prejudices might be at work. Therefore, the village community has to be prepared for change before it is actually initiated into the programme. This raises the question: Can we use the village community as an agency of reconstruction and social change? This involves the fundamental question of regarding the village community as a single unit both from the structural and functional point of view.

It is possible to regard the village as representing a functional unit in the sociological sense and at the same time disregard the view that it should be considered 'a primitive isolate'. The village community even till now, when urban influences have become really strong, more so under the great sweep of adult suffrage in the new Republic, has been a self-sufficient unit to meet all its requirements and to keep itself integrated. Srinivas, Miller, Gough and Beals, who have made interesting studies of the village community, are all agreed on this point that until the foreign or urban influences of thirty, fifty or even a hundred years ago, the villagers represented little communities. One may even be led to believe that the modern village community is no longer isolated, with the result that marriages, social contacts, and daily intercourse are increas-

[11] Ibid.
[12] Quoted B. Mukerji, *Community Development in India*, p. 35.

ingly becoming extra-territorial. But the sentiment of the village community remains as strong as ever. This sentiment is compactly moulded by the values, attitudes, ideas and personality systems which are peculiar to the rural community and constitute the ethos of their lives. Hence, a programme which aims at a directed social change in the rural community has to reckon with all these factors as vital and all important for the successful implementation of the programme. One may, therefore, feel inclined to agree with Dube when he says, 'while the emphasis on the material factor as the sole determinant of change must be resisted, we shall perhaps have to agree that neutral (or resistance-free) zones along the economic and technological frontiers of a society provide the most hopeful landing ground to the promoters of directed change.'[13] But it is difficult to agree with his view: 'Major structural and value-attitudinal changes are difficult to achieve, and it is not easy to foresee how they could be thought of as a primary condition for initiating a programme of economic development.'[14] Irwin I. Sanders suggests in one of his articles on 'Theories on Community Development' that there are four ways of looking at community development itself:

1. Community development as a process, the emphasis being upon the sequence of interacting.
2. Community development as a method, as a means to an end.
3. Community development as a programme, consisting of contents and procedures.
4. Community development as a movement involving personal commitments and emotional dynamics.

But all these facets of community development are mutually interdependent; for in the final analysis the utility and productiveness of the community development programme will be judged by the lasting and permanent changes it succeeds in bringing about in rural India. 'The Community Development Programme and the National Extension Service are temporary devices aimed at providing the initial generative push in the shape of new ideas and techniques which may later become self-generative in the commu-

[13] Dube S. C., *The Human Element in Community Development*, Kurukshetra (October, 1961).
[14] *loc cit.*

nity.'[15] Thus the vital source for the successful implementation of the Community Development Programme is the full utilisation of the latent forces which have so far kept the village community integrated and have been responsible for its continuity.

With the acquisition of scientific knowledge thus available, the government will be in a better position to pick the proper channel of communication for creating among the villagers the necessary enthusiasm to get involved in the development programme, for the peasants' legitimate fears of technology will have to be answered by the innovators. An attempt at introducing an innovation must not only satisfy the new needs but should also be integrated into the cultural pattern of the community. The rock on which many a developmental programme has foundered is the socio-economic matrix of the Indian village; and, therefore, ability to appreciate their basic facts, pattern of values, local history, village organisation, existing groups, the emerging pattern of rural leadership, and the mechanism of change, will definitely pave the way for the desired social change. In short, the people's participation in the Community Development Programme depends on an equation between the farmer's socio-psychological preparedness and his economic capacity. The former is essentially a sociological problem, while the latter is manipulative.

The philosophy underlying community development, as will be evident from the above discussion, accepts the following major sociological assumptions:

(1) The individuals, sections, groups and strata forming the village community have a large number of common interests, sufficiently strong to bind them together.

(2) The interests of the various groups within the village are both sufficiently alike and common to create general enthusiasm as well as a feeling of development for all.

(3) The interests of different sections of the community are not irreconcilably conflicting.

(4) The State is a superclass, impartial, non-partisan association, and the major policies of the government are of such a nature that they do not further sharpen the inequalities between the existing social groups.

[15] D.N. Majumdar, 'Role of the sociologist,' *Sociology, Social Research and Social Problems in India*, ed. R.N. Saksena, (Asia), p. 36.

This philosophy is in keeping with the aims and objects of the Community Development Programme as enunciated by the Government. But how far this social policy has actually energised the rural community remains even now to be answered. Although the ideal of the Community Development Project was to work for the many-sided development of the entire community, its significance and best organised activities have been confined to the field of agricultural extension. A closer analysis of the agricultural extension work reveals that nearly seventy per cent of its benefits went to an elite group and to the more affluent and influential agriculturists. The gains to the poorer agriculturists were considerebly smaller.[16]

Undoubtedly the Community Development Programme has many critics. Is there anything wrong in the execution of the Programme? Is the rural community prepared to accept the Programme? Is the administration fully trained to make the policy effective, or is it just a bureaucratic organisation meant to carry out orders from above? These are some of the important questions raised by the critics.

Every kind of democratic planning makes provision for a continuous evaluation of its programmes and procedures. The working of the Community Development Programme has been evaluated both by governmental and non-official agencies. While the official evaluation reports have mainly focussed their attention on the accomplishment of physical, tangible targets, the non-official agencies have tried to find out the weaknesses and defects in the implementation of the Programme. However, an evaluation of achievements of physical targets cannot be regarded as an index of the changes in the mental outlook of the villagers, which is the main object of the Community Development Programme. A correct appraisal can only be made with the following aims in view:

1. Evaluation of the targets and priorities fixed and achieved.
2. The attitude-orientation of the action personnel.
3. Social cleavages and cultural barriers to change; and
4. Evaluation of change in the economic and social life of the people and their attitudes brought about by the agencies of directed change.

So far the evaluation of the Community Development Pro-

[16] Dube, S.C., *India's Changing Villages*, pp. 82-83.

gramme has been mainly with the first and third of the objec-
tives mentioned above in view. The human factor involved in
the administration and implementation of the Programme has
not been properly analysed. Some of the major problems of
administration that have hindered the successful implementa-
tion of the Programme may be discussed here.

The staff appointed for the Community Development
Programme suffers from a feeling of superiority, which is a
legacy of the old Civil Service, and coupled with this there is
an attendant poor opinion about the public in general and
illiterate villagers in particular. The traditional Indian
bureaucracy has always been based on the pattern of 'boss-
subordinate' relationship. The boss, especially at a high level,
was mainly concerned with passing on his orders to his subordi-
nates, rather than acting after joint consultation, with the
result that the subordinate staff had no initiative left. And
this chain of communication within the administration was
bound up with any amount of red tape. The same practice
prevails even now, showing no signs of abatement. The team-
spirit and co-operative endeavour, often professed in the ad-
ministration of the Programme, is often found to be com-
pletely lacking. Very often the orders are issued from the top
by administrators who have no active contact with or ex-
perience of the 'field'. They are there simply because they
hold a senior position in the Civil Service. These orders are
in the nature of prescribing targets which have got to be
achieved in a given period, and the efficiency of a subordinate
officer lies in how quickly he does this. Thus, there is always
a tendency on the part of the subordinate staff to rush the
programme through. Therefore, to judge the success of the
programme in terms of quantitative achievements cannot be
treated as proper evaluation from the sociological point of
view. The acceptance or rejection of a particular innovation
does not depend on the efficiency of the field worker in govern-
ment service. Several factors, social, cultural, geographical and
even historical, govern the process of acceptance. The mere fact of
fulfilment of targets ought not to be regarded as the sole crite-
rion for judging the efficiency of a field officer. This unfortuate
outlook, as prevails at present, only goes to prove that the ghost
of the old bureaucracy even now haunts the minds of other top

administrators, whose main duty is to execute the policy laid down by the policy-makers, and its shadow holds the field officers in fear of ultimate doom if anything goes wrong in the execution of policy, which, in the final analysis, only implies the achievement of physical targets. The Mehta Committee was quite aware of these shortcomings and as a remedy they strongly recommended the democratic decentralisation of power, which is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. The U.N. Mission made another interesting suggestion: 'Since all parties support planned community development the Mission suggests that members of Parliament and of the State legislatures might assume an even greater responsibility for leadership in this movement for rural development. The prestige of elected members of public bodies should be used as effectively as possible in support of the plans and of the officials charged with the responsibility of putting them into effect.'[17]

There is another significant lacuna to be found in the administrative set-up. It is in connection with the training of action personnel. The training imparted to them in various orientation and training centres fails to lay greater emphasis on the high ideals for which the Programme stands, and is more concerned with day-to-day routine, with the result that 'The Community development staff at present, however, largely think in terms of programmes dictated or indicated on a state or national level and of how to spend the allocations of money.'[18] What is actually needed is just the reverse. They have to put themselves in the place of the village people who 'look at programmes from an internal and not external point of view'. In this process the concept of the village community is altogether ignored.

There is yet another great danger of far-reaching sociological significance in the administration of the community development programme. With a view to minimising or eliminating official bias in the administration, increasingly effective powers are being given to the rural institutions, such as *gram panchayats, Vikas mandals*, etc. But as the Programme Evaluation Report mentions, 'When one considers

[17] U.N. Community Development Mission in India Report, p. 11.
[18] Ibid, p. 50.

the pattern of membership in village organisations, be they cooperative societies, *Vikas Mandals, Gram Panchayats* or *Nyaya Panchayats*, one clearly finds that the membership is confined to the large cultivators and that the smaller cultivators as well as landless agricultural labourers have practically no stake in the organisations of the village.' It implies not merely a hold over the economic resources in that area by a small upper class, but also a hold over the political, social and cultural life of the community. It also means that in the agrarian area the community development projects are creating an institutional and associational matrix wherein the Government buttresses the economically dominant sections of the rural population, and in their turn their dominant sections strengthen the hands of government officials in their administration of the programme. In another Evaluation Report, it is mentioned: 'Within the blocks it (disparity) exists as between the H.Q. villages of Gram Sevaks, the villages easily accessible to them, and the villages not so easily accessible. Within the villages, it exists as between cultivators and non-cultivators; and within the cultivating classes, it exists as between cultivators of bigger holdings and larger financial resources.'

Thus, as Desai points out, 'As a result of the functioning of the community development programme, a stratum becomes strengthened economically and politically, and utilizes various institutions for its own ends,' which defeats the very ideal of the establishment of an egalitarian society based on a socialist pattern, which is so loudly acclaimed by our policy-makers. Again, mention has already been made elsewhere of how the community development programme has proved to be a failure from the point of view of the people's participation. This has been pointed out with equal emphasis both in the Mehta Committee Report and the U. N. Community Development Evaluation Mission in India Report. Hence sociologically we shall be justified in saying that the whole Programme has proved to be futile in its acclaimed goals and, in certain respects, even harmful.

It is, therefore, evident that the main factor involved in the successful implementation of the Programme is the degree of acceptance or rejection of the Programme itself by the rural

community. It is the sociological factors which need priority over economic ones. What is actually being done in the field is that an intensive attack has been launched by the Community development programme officers and workers against old beliefs, faiths and social values without making any attempt to equip them with new values of life. So they always find tension in the minds of the villagers instead of cooperation.

No discussion on the Community Development Programme can be profitable without analysing the role of Caste in the rural community. Caste even now serves as a cementing force for group formation; for within the structure of a caste-oriented society, individual behaviour is largely regulated in terms of expected and accepted norms of the caste in which he is born. His primary loyalties are to his kin and caste members at the local level. Even if he migrates to urban centres, it is essentially along caste lines; if he turns factory worker he returns to his village for traditional ceremonial occasions and finally after retirement. In short, caste represents a close clustering of the members on family-kin-caste lines, especially with reference to birth, marriage, death and financial obligations. This restricts the mental outlook of the villagers, which is likely to be traditional and caste-bound. This is so even now; higher castes dominate over lower castes in a rural community despite an intensive drive against it by the Community Development Programme.

On the other hand the Constitution aims at the establishment of a 'casteless and classless' society, which is a contradiction in itself. Every society has to be stratified along some lines with members occupying some positional rank, either in a caste hierarchy as in a rigidly stratified society or in a class hierarchy as in a comparatively open society. 'Egalitarianism, therefore, does not mean the absence of various levels of stratification. It has to be understood more in its economic context, in terms of equality of opportunity. If non-discrimination between castes is to be achieved, it can be done only by pulling up different caste members together within a class where equal opportunity and status prevails for all.'

But can caste ever emerge into class? As already mentioned elsewhere, the roots of the caste system are too deep. Apart

from its symbolic value, caste is a functioning unit in the Hindu social system. There may have been changes in inter-caste or intra-caste relationships, but in its functioning caste is as important a factor as ever in maintaining social distance as well as social solidarity. In a recent study of Jaunsar-Bawar by the present writer it was found that in spite of the keen desire of the government to remove the social and economic handicaps of the Koltas, who form the depressed class and provide free labour to their landlords, it is not possible to remove their disabilities, since the Koltas themselves feel tied to their landlords by tradition, which is not easy for them to break. So any amount of legislation or governmental effort could not succeed in removing the disabilities which keep the Koltas in a perpetual state of economic serfdom.

Therefore, it is obvious that a mere declaration of faith in terms of ultimate goals will not do. What is being actually attempted is to substitute a new social structure of the village community and fill it by different kinds of sub-structures like economic, etc. This is a great social experiment in time that is being attempted by the government. It is true that spectacular results cannot be achieved in a short period, but at the same time the policy-makers must have a very clear picture of the existing social structure of the rural community and its functioning before them, so that necessary devices may be found to overcome resistance and reorientate the rural community for a new life. Hence a 'troika' of policy-maker, administrator and social scientist is necessary for a correct appraisal of the situation and implementation of the programme.

While the planners and administrators are mainly concerned with the primary responsibility for the formulation and implementation of the rural development projects, the social scientist can render them invaluable help by acquainting them with social facts in the field of social organisation, human relations and values affected by the new social policy. It is encouraging to find that the Government is gradually becoming aware of this need. Mention has already been made in Chapter I of the National Institute of Community Development at Mussoorie and the Planning and Action Research Institute at Lucknow set up by the Uttar Pradesh

Government with the same object. In both the institutes, sociologists and anthropologists are engaged in research in the field of community development under government service. It may, therefore, be reiterated that it would be more fruitful if the university departments of sociology are also associated with such studies and evaluation programmes for a more objective assessment. At the same time the universities will be well advised to lay greater emphasis on the teaching of rural sociology and research.

We now have quite a few interesting studies of rural life in different parts of the country. Recently illuminating village studies have been published by Srinivas, Dube, Majumdar, Oscar Lewis, Gough, Beals, McKim Marriot, Steed, Mandelbaum and others. All these authors have adopted a different approach by not studying rural life as a traditional rural sociologist would do, because these social scientists had different orientations and backgrounds. If Oscar Lewis was interested in comparing his Ranikhera village with its counterpart, Tepoztlan in Mexico, and thus considering the two cultures on the basis of the findings of these two villages, others want to explain how the norms and values are being carried on in a traditional way. In other words, the studies undertaken so far reflect the microcosmic approach and try to generalize from one village the nature of the social structure of the rest of rural India. How far these generalizations may be said to be a scientific analysis of the Indian rural community is open to grave doubt.

It is in this field that American influence has been most powerful. In fact, it has been mostly American scholars who have made these studies and those that have been done by Indians are, with few exceptions, in collaboration with American Research Projects. The techniques used have been mostly interviews and questionnaires by paid investigators. I have nothing against the interest being taken by foreign social scientists in studying processes of rural change in India. It is something for which we may even feel grateful since we have had the advantage of empirical research techniques. But the difficulty arises in the use of interpreters, whose real assignment is collecting field material. Again, it is open to objection that the data thus collected should have been processed in another

country and the book on the Indian village written according to a preconceived plan there. These doubts were raised by the late Professor D.N. Majumdar in his Presidential Address (Anthropology Section) to the First Indian Sociological Conference in 1955. He went so far as to say: 'This is......mechanization with a vengeance and a challenge to methodo-logy in the social sciences.'

It has been the belief of social scientists in this field that intensive studies of a few select villages would yield in course of time certain generalizations, first, in the field of Indian rural sociology and, second, in general social theory. With the latter objective comparative studies have also been made. All that they have succeeded in achieving is describing the habits and customs, rituals and ceremonies and economic structure of the villages. The social structure of villages has been studied in terms of caste and the socio-economic relations of caste. It could be expected that in this process the determinants of these inter-caste rankings were discovered, but it is difficult to establish any consistent set of criteria even for a single village. The chances of discovering general principles applicable to Indian rural society are very remote. This approach ignores the fundamental fact that the Indian village is a community. So far it had been a self-contained socio-economic unit. It had not been concerned with the great political upheavals that had taken place in Indian history. What is the vital force that kept the Indian village alive and self-sufficient throughout history? The present studies fail to give an answer, since their approach is mainly ethnographic. However, this approach to rural sociology may have some appeal to cultural anthropologists, since it affords them an opportunity to interpret a traditional society in terms of the assumptions of modern thought. But such an attitude implies the refusal to understand tradition in its correct perspective. There is another danger in such ethnographic-monographic studies. It has led to a number of implicit or explicit generalizations which are unwarranted not only because they have been inferred from insufficient data, but also because evidence to the contrary is available. Most of these studies have been made in short periods, ranging from six to eighteen months, which is a very short period for proper appraisal, particularly for foreign social scientists, who

do not understand the language of the people. In these circumstances, exaggerations and important omissions can hardly be avoided.

However, their method of study has been mainly microcosmic and therefore fails to provide valid generalisations of universal applicability. We cannot isolate the area of the enquiry from neighbouring areas or from history. As Dumont and Pocock point out: 'To try to understand a local Indian society as an anthropologist in the past approached a primitive society elsewhere in the world, or as the Indian tribes have been approached, is to fail at the outset.' For a comprehensive understanding of rural India there is a need for vigorous historico-sociological studies of the Indian social system. The factors responsible for the resistance to change are deeply rooted in the historical development of Indian civilisation, which has continued to exist in spite of many invasions by foreign hordes and political upheavals within the country. History tells us that despite these political turmoils, which often changed the map of the country, the Indian peasantry remained comparatively unaffected. Hence, apart from analysing and assessing the attitudes, systems of values, and beliefs of the village-dwellers, an attempt has to be made to trace the continuums which have helped to retain village solidarity throughout our history.

DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALISATION

Decentralisation in administration refers essentially to the process of the transference of administrative authority from a higher to a lower level of government. Its essential aim is the distribution of power to make decisions. However, it differs from delegation of power where there is no transfer of responsibility. In a sense a higher authority in a decentralised process divests itself completely of a certain responsibility which then devolves on to some lower authority. It is in this sense that administration has been decentralised in the implementation of the Community Development Programme. Since this process of decentralisation involves democratic methods of administration it has come to be known as democratic decentralisation. It implies that there must be a democratically elected body with centralised powers and responsibilities and this centralised authority must devolve power to democratic bodies at a lower level.

In the administration of the Community Development Programme the nucleus for democratic decentralisation was provided by the traditional Panchayats, which had been a unique feature of the village community throughout the country. The various committees appointed by the Government, as well as experts, arrived at the decision that the traditional instituton of the village panchayat should be revitalised and placed on a democratic footing and entrusted with the task of rural administration in all its aspects. One essential advantage that would accrue from this new experiment would be the greater involvement of the rural community in the administration of rural welfare and development schemes. The Balwantray Mehta Committee emphasised the point that in the working of the Community Development Programme, while the official machinery was under obligation to guide and assist, the principal responsibility for improving their conditions must rest with

the people themselves. Unless the rural community felt that the programme was meant for them and regarded it as a practical contribution to their own welfare, no substantial results would be gained. This broad principle was accepted by the Government and the whole system of self-administration in rural areas came to be known as Panchayati Raj.

In terms of organisation or structure the Panchayati Raj envisages three tiers of government from the village up to the district level. These three tiers are (1) the panchayat at the village level, consisting of elected representatives of the village community with provision for coopting women and representatives of scheduled tribes and castes; (2) at the block level, an elected self-governing institution called the Panchayat Samiti. Membership to this body is by indirect election through the village panchayats. Its jurisdiction is co-extensive with a community development block; (3) at the district level, the organisation is known as the Zila Parishad. This is a kind of apex organisation consisting of the presidents of the Panchayat Samitis, members of the State legislature and Parliament and the district-level officers.

All the organisations at the various levels mentioned above constitute the Panchayati Raj. The Panchayati Raj may be said to be operative to the extent that it results in 'the community understanding its programme, realising its responsibilities, exercising the necessary power through its chosen representatives and maintaining a constant, intelligent vigilance on local administration.' Most of the states in India have now accepted this principle of democratic decentralisation and passed legislation to that effect. At present Panchayati Raj is under implementation in eight States—Andhra, Assam, Madras, Mysore, Orissa, the Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Legislation has been passed in four States, namely Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, while in West Bengal it is in progress. Jammu and Kashmir and Kerala have yet to take the necessary steps for legislation.

It is now to be seen how far this policy of democratic decentralisation has been successful in securing the real co-operation of the rural community in the administration of development programmes and in avoiding friction and tensions that may arise because of the various levels that are to be found in ad-

ministration. So far no clear demarcation of powers among the different levels of the three-tier system has been made, which is very essential to avoid duplication and consequent waste. At the same time it has also not succeeded in mitigating bitterness and friction between the different tiers. The absence of discretionary power at each tier of administration has further added to the difficulties experienced in speedy and successful administration. The hasty devolution of power, without adequate preparation at the lowest level for shouldering responsibilities, has resulted in generating a power conflict between various tiers of the Panchayati Raj. The appalling illiteracy in rural areas also stands in the way of a proper appreciation of devolution of power at the lowest level.

It has also been experienced that within the revenue framework of the states there exists very little scope for the panchayats to have adequate resources of their own. Finance is the key to the successful implementation of any programme, much more so in the case of rural reconstruction. Hence funds have to be properly allocated which may be commensurate with the schemes undertaken for community development. To this extent rural self-government is unreal and its budgets are a statement more of needs than means. The ideal situation is for the local bodies to be given full freedom to spend such income as they themselves raise or earn. But there is a danger that such an attempt might intensify the traditional localism of the villagers.

This raises the important question: What should be the role of the Government in the management and day-to-day functioning of rural self-government? While it is commonly held that the role of the Government should be restricted only up to the point of providing expert guidance and finance and general supervision, there are others who feel that the village organisations, constituted, as they are, of illiterate and semi-illiterate masses, cannot function effectively unless duly guided by experienced administrators. However, transference of power to an elective body does not mean lessening the importance of bureaucracy in administration. It only means establishing a new relationship between bureaucracy and the newly decentralised units of democratic government. While under British rule the Indian Civil Service provided the forceful venue for

the successful governing of the country by an alien power, it is now called upon to serve the government established by the consent of their own countrymen. Hence, while retaining their impartiality, objectivity and anonymity, civil servants are required to develop human qualities and a social sense necessary for building up a welfare state. It may be that for some time the old prejudice against the civil service as agents of a government with imperialist designs may persist, but with a changed outlook on the part of the civil service in a democratic set-up it will soon die a natural death.

By far the greatest controversy has been raised regarding the election procedures in Panchayati Raj. Elections at the village level have clearly demonstrated how factionalism has been heightened, resulting even in political murders in many districts. Even disparities, both social and economic, have been created so far as membership of the village organisations is concerned, be they cooperative societies, Vikas Mandals, Gram Panchayats or Nyaya Panchayats. It is very commonly found that the membership is confined to large cultivators, and small cultivators have practically no say in these organisations. It has resulted not only in the concentration of economic power in the hands of a small upper class, but they have acquired political and social importance also in the village community. Thus the economically dominant section of the rural population has come to acquire political power, and it is they that control and manage the elections to the Gram Panchayats. The Second Evaluation Report on the Community Development Programme has mentioned: 'Within the blocks it (disparity) exists as between the headquarter village of Gram Sevak, the village easily accessible to them and the village not so easily accessible. Within the village, it exists as between cultivators and non-cultivators; and within the cultivating classes it exists as between cultivators of bigger holdings and large financial resources.'[1] Consequently a stratum is created which 'becomes strengthened economically and politically and utilizes various institutions for its own end'.[2] This defeats the very ideal of the establishment of an egalitarian society and democratic decentralisation.

[1] *Evaluation Report of Second Year's Working on Community Development Programme,* p. 21.
[2] A.R. Desai, *Rural India in Tran ition,* p. 77.

The parliamentary democratic system, which provides the base for decentralisation, also has been criticised because of the role of political parties in elections. It is maintained that the village community is more or less a homogeneous group with well defined boundaries for its functioning. As such participation of the whole community in any collective activity is not impossible. Decisions can be arrived at with common consent and without the interference of political parties. Jai Prakash Narain holds the view that such participation by the whole community is possible and has suggested that the rural community should be on the pattern of a communitarian society. This will permit a two-way relationship between Gram Sabha and Lok Sabha, running through the intermediatory administrative set-up. In such a society differences are resolved by taking the consensus of opinion, thereby promoting harmonious relations between members of dfferent communities. This will not be possible if political parties are allowed to operate as they cause a permanent split in the community. It is better that a rural community is encouraged to try its own experiment and learn through the method of trial and error. An intensive educational campaign among the rural masses will also be a step in the right direction and enable the village-dwellers to understand their responsibilities and actively participate in all matters of common concern. This suggestion goes against the three-tier system. From the point of view of national integration it is necessary that smaller units in administration, democratic or not, should not be made autonomous. There is always a danger of more fissiparous tendencies being created in such a system. Apart from inter- and intra-village rivalries, it might constitute a threat to national solidarity. However, there cannot possibly be much difference of opinion on the issue that political parties should not exploit village elections for their own political gains. The village community has to develop its own resources (of course with the aid of the Government) for its development by voluntary agreement and labour and thus provide the base for the development and prosperity of the whole nation. If this solidarity is to be created by voluntary sacrifice for the common good by the people's participation in the community development programme but is vitiated by political wranglings and struggles for power, it

will give a jolting blow to all nation-building activities. Hence it will be in the interest of the nation if all the political parties agree among themselves to keep their hands off village elections at all levels. The aim of democratic decentralisation or devolution of authority to grass-root institutions is obviously to enable the village inhabitants not only to participate actively in rural development but also to inspire the villager and to make him realise that he has to play an important role in improving the socio-economic conditions of his rural community in co-operation with his fellow villagers and the Government.

This brings us to another important aspect of democratic decentralisation, the emergence of a new pattern of leadership. In superimposing a democratic system upon the traditional, and substituting *achieved* status for *ascribed* status, forces are generated in the rural social system which call for new leadership. This can best be done by fostering various interest groups, all of which require leadership.

However, it is unfortunate that experience of the working of Panchayati Raj has clearly shown that the type of leadership which has evolved is undemocratic, professional, power-ridden and sectarian in outlook. Instead of mobilising public opinion in favour of democratic principles, the leaders have very often tried to exploit the caste-sentiment. Thus, 'casteism' and 'communalism' have proved to be powerful weapons in election tactics. The emergence of new leadership on the basis of caste or creed cuts at the very roots of all democratic principles. It also creates suspicion in the minds of the rest of the community whether the elected leaders will really function in the interest of the whole community. Mention has already been made elsewhere of interest-groups, community development is essentially a goal-oriented activity. It embraces various aspects of the social and economic life of the rural community. Hence constructive rural leadership can but be in the form of 'interest-group' leadership. Since the Community Development Programme through democratic decentralisation aims at bringing about an accelerated directed social change in the rural community, the panchayats can prove to be of immense value in fostering such interest groups for the achievement of accepted 'goals' and also contribute towards the creation of a new positive leadership.

SOCIAL LEGISLATION

Any act passed by the legislature, or a decree issued by the government for the removal of certain social evils or for the improvement of social conditions or with the aim of bringing about a certain social reform, may be defined as social legislation. In this sense the beginning of social legislation may be traced to the first half of the nineteenth century, when strict measures were taken by the government for the abolition of the evil system of *sati* owing to the pressure exerted by the enlightened public opinion in the country on the government. But after Independence crucial changes took place in the country both in the social and in the economic life of the people and naturally social legislation assumed a far greater significance.

Even earlier to the modern enactment of social laws, the Hindu law-givers were fully conscious of the need to regulate social life by defining right conduct and clearly differentiating it from the wrong. And they were also conscious of the fact that the rules of conduct, rights and privileges thus laid down by them, were liable to change with time. Manu and other *smriti*-writers have declared that if any rules framed by them are found to be not conducive to the welfare of the society, or are against the spirit of the age, they should be given up or modified without hesitation; and this principle has been actually followed by the *smriti*-writers, e.g., the Vedas were not in favour of giving women the right of inheritance to property, but later *smritis* have got these rights recognised. Vasistha (XV, 7), Gautama (XX VIII, 21) and Manu (IX, 185) have excluded the daughter from the list of heirs. But Yajnavalkya fights for the case of the daughter and lays down that she should be the next heir after the son and the widow (II, 135). Brihaspati and Narada also champion the cause of women. Narada argues: "Is it not the daughter as

much a child of her parents as the son? How, then is she deprived of her right of inheritance in the absence of the son?" (XIII, 50). Similar has been the case with rules regarding marriage and divorce, adoption and maintenance, and so on. These instances are sufficient to prove that our laws have undergone several changes under the influence of new ideals and changing conditions. Also, they indicate that our law, though closely connected with religion, has no divine origin.

In ancient times, the king was primarily concerned with the duty to protect his subjects and keep them happy. He himself was governed by the laws of society. Usually, justice was administered by the king, but the courts functioned not far from where the king resided, so in order to facilitate administration of justice in the rural areas, there were the *Sabha*, the *Samiti* and the *Parishad*.

The *Sabha* was some sort of a village council or an assembly consisting of learned men, which used to administer justice. The *Samiti* was an assembly of warriors (Dharmakosa 1,22). The *Parishad*, according to Baudhayana, consisted of about 10 members of great learning. The striking feature of these Pandit associations was that the Pandits used to survey the social situation from time to time; and if some new changes in law were felt necessary under changed circumstances, they used to convince the people of the advisability and suitability of the changes in law. Thus they guided the society by expressing their opinions. The *smritis* like those of Devala, Brihaspati or Katyayana and later works like the Mitakshara and the Dayabhaga, which proposed important new changes in the then established old practices, were really due to the activities of such learned bodies (Pandit Parishads).

The Hindu law continued to develop freely till the establishment of the Muslim rule in India. A little change in the Hindu law took place during the Muslim period. Broadly speaking, the Muslim rulers did not concern themselves with the local administration of justice. They were concerned only with the collection of revenue and the repression of acts affecting the stability of their rule. The Muslim law was based on Islam and had no application to the Hindus. The Hindus, therefore, had to move in their own circles for guidance and governance.

During this period, the Pandits ceased to be legislators and the previous laws were stereotyped. The process of stereotyping continued for a long time. The Hindu law tended to be crystallized at this period of its history. Practices which had no support in the Shastras came to be considered sacred. No doubt, interpretations on Hindu law were made during this period, but the commentators who interpreted the original texts had no hand in the actual administration of law. Due to Muslim invasion they were faced with the problem of saving Hindu society from the threat of Islam. It is for this reason that the Nibandhas of the 13th century have laid great emphasis on *prayaschitta* and social rigidity.

With the oncoming of the British in India were introduced social, political and economic forces which created a stir in Hindu society. It is in this context that social legislation in India has to be studied. The British penetration in India began during the Muslim period. The foundations of the British rule were laid when they occupied certain areas, such as Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The British established High Courts in these towns. These courts were regarded as an extension of the High Court in London. Naturally, English law was applied in these courts, and disputes between Indians were excluded from the jurisdiction of the courts.

During the latter part of the 18th century, the Hindu and Muslim laws were applied as the personal law of Indian litigants in such matters as inheritance, succession and contracts. Further, the British administered a uniform criminal code for the whole of India. So, cases of assault, adultery and rape which were previously decided by the caste councils were now decided by the courts. This led to a change in the status and functions of the caste. Their power over the caste-members suffered a jolting blow.

When the personal laws came to be applied by the courts, the British judges, who were to administer justice, did not have any knowledge of the usages of the land. They did not even understand Sanskrit in which the personal law of the Hindus was written. They, therefore, relied upon the interpretations of Pandits. Later on, after 1868, the texts interpreted by the Pandits were translated by Western scholars. But even these scholars, little acquainted with the Indian

culture, could not understand the life which was described in the literature of the *Shastras*.

The British judiciary in India considered Vijnaneshvara and Jimutavahana as the expounders of Hindu law. The commentaries were written by Jimutavahana and Vijnaneshvara in about the 11th and the 12th centuries. This meant that the judiciary were applying the law of the 11th and the 12th century to 19th-century conditions. The result was that the spontaneous growth of our law was suddenly arrested, and a degree of rigidity was given to it which it never possessed. Kapadia has pointed out two significant drawbacks on the part of the British judiciary in India: "First, for nineteenth century conditions they were accepting the law as it was expounded in the eleventh and the twelfth centuries, ignoring thereby the momentous development of the law in the writings of Nanda Pandit, Nilkantha and Balambhatta. And second, by accepting Vijananeshvara and Jimutavahana as the expounders of the personal law of the Hindus, the natural evolution of Hindu law for centuries was ignored; for instead of recognizing its essentially dynamic character they accepted it as a stereotyped system based on a particular principle."[1]

However, the establishment of British rule in India brought about a significant change in the judiciary system of the country. But laws affecting the social life of the people were not laid down in a systematic manner. In its initial stages social legislation was confined to the abolition of certain socio-religious customs which were prevalent in the first half of the 19th century.

The custom of burning alive the widow with the corpse of her husband was known as *sati*. Several young widows were consigned to the flames every year. Most of them had to submit themselves to this fate against their will. This custom was believed to have a religious sanction behind it. Therefore, the East India Company did not interfere with the custom, its policy being non-interference in religious matters. It was Raja Ram Mohan Roy who started the agitation for the abolition of this custom. The statistics prepared by the

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[1] K.M. Kapadia, *Marriage and Family in India*, Indian Branch, Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 248-49.

British Government indicated that the percentage of *satis* was larger in Bengal than in Bombay and Madras. The following statistics show the number of *satis* in Bengal during the years 1815 to 1828. Bihar, Orissa, U.P. and Assam were then included in the Presidency of Bengal.

Year	Number
1815	378
1816	442
1817	707
1818	839
1819	650
1820	598
1821	654
1822	583
1823	575
1824	572
1825	639
1826	518
1827	517
1828	463

Raja Ram Mohan Roy published a tract against *sati* in 1818. In 1822 he published another tract "The Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females, according to the Hindu law of Inheritance" in which he pointed out that in a number of cases the widows thought it wise to embrace the flames rather than living a miserable life. In 1828 when Lord William Bentinck became the Governor General, he invited the opinions of civil and military officers, and found out that there was a consensus of opinion in favour of the abolition of *sati*. At last the Regulation No. XVII dated December 4, 1829, was passed which made the practice of burning or burying alive the Hindu widows a crime of culpable homicide punishable with fine and/or imprisonment. It also declared that the practice was not enjoined by religion as an imperative duty.

The Regulation of 1829 was strongly opposed by the 'Dharma Sabha', an association formed by the Hindus to oppose reforms. By this regulation the widow was rescued from the

flames. But she had to spend the rest of her life in a miserable condition. People believed that remarriage of widows was against the teachings of the *Shastras*, but no one ever tried to read or understand the *Shastras*. In fact, the *Parashara Samhita* has declared: 'on receiving no news from a husband, on his death, on his becoming an ascetic, on his being impotent under any one of the five calamities or on his degradation the wife should take another husband.'

Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar published a pamphlet on 'Marriage of Hindu Widows' in 1855, and pointed out by quoting reference from the *smritis* that widow remarriage was in conformity with the *Shastras*. Taking note of the agitation led by Vidyasagar, the government introduced a bill in the Legislative Council to remove all obstacles to the marriage of Hindu widows, and twenty-seven years after the Regulation prohibiting *sati*, the Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act of 1856 was passed. This Act states that 'no marriage contracted between Hindus shall be invalid, and the issue of no such marriage shall be illegitimate.' As to the rights of the widow in the deceased husband's property, the Act declared that they shall cease upon her remarriage.

The effective implementation of every piece of social legislation depends on how society accepts it. The orthodox Hindus protested furiously against any social legislation aiming at the abolition of old practices. But at the same time a new 'social reform' movement was set afoot. A new revolutionary movement was started, especially in Bengal, which was aimed at rejecting the past traditions and accepting everything that was Western. This movement was led by H.V. Derozio, who got many followers. The movement was looked upon by a large section of the Hindu society as a danger to religion. The Christian Missionaries had already started their activities. By that time Raja Ram Mohan Roy had established the 'Brahmo Samaj'. All these factors naturally led the Hindus to think that it was their duty to defend their customs. As Pannikar points out: "Most of the reform movements of the last century were..................directed against the orthodox Hinduism. They proceeded on the assumption that what was necessary was a purification of the Hindu religion. The Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj and similar

movements, which were started with the laudable object of reforming Hindu society confused the main issue and organised themselves on the basis of a reform of religion. It roused the dormant powers of the Hindu religion which called forth its ancient armoury, all its weapons to defend its institutions, right or wrong. Practices which had authority neither in religion nor in tradition came to be regarded as fundamental. Even the self-immolation of widows, which was never widely prevalent and which certainly had no sanction in religion nor in tradition, found its defenders at one time. Secondly, it made even the internal organisation of Hindu society difficult as reformers came to be identified with the thought and practice of other religions".[2]

Though the Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act of 1856 removed the legal obstacle in the way of Hindu widows, it has remained a dead letter ever since it was passed. First, it was only a negative type of legislation. Secondly, a great social stigma was attached to the widow who re-married, and a Hindu widow of a superior caste would prefer to undergo the suffering of widowhood rather than bearing the stigma.

The Census Report of 1931 of the Government of India shows how alarmingly high was the number of widows who could remarry. Taking the marriageable age to be up to 25, the figures from the ages 1 to 25 are given below:—

Ages	Number of Widows
0- 1	1515
1- 2	1785
2- 3	3485
3- 4	9076
4- 5	15018
5-10	105449
10-15	183998
15-20	514394
20-25	846959

After the first struggle for Independence in 1857 which the

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[2] K.M. Pannikar, *Hindu Society at Cross Roads*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1956, pp. 1-2.

Britishers called 'Mutiny', the power of administration of India was transferred from the East India Company to the British Crown. From the experience of the 'Mutiny', the British decided to keep themselves aloof from intervention in social matters. This policy, however, did not stop the social reformers from making efforts to bring about social legislation.

One of the items in the programme of the early social reformers was child marriage. When the Indian Penal Code was enacted in 1860, sexual intercourse with the wife below the age of 10 was included in the definition of rape and was made punishable. By 1891, the attention of the Government and the people was drawn towards a number of cases in Bengal where young girls died due to consummation of marriage. A bill was put forward 'to raise the age of consent' to 12. Sir Andrew Scoble, the sponsor of the Bill has expressed that it was "the right and the duty of the state to interfere for the protection of any class of its subjects where a proved necessity existed."[3]

When the controversy over the Age of Consent Bill was going on, educated Indian opinion was divided into two camps. There were some who advocated legislation to introduce such reforms. Ranade, Agarkar, Gokhale, Bhandarkar and others belonged to this group. But Tilak and his followers strongly objected to state interference in social matters. Under the leadership of Tilak political reforms had attained a great importance. He thought that it was not proper for the reformers to take the help of the foreign bureaucracy in personal matters. He believed in 'growth from within'. Thus the authority of the British Government to interfere in the social life of the Indian people was questioned by him for the first time.

But even earlier to this agitation some important legislative measures were taken by the government. The Caste Disabilities Removal Act was meant for abolishing the effects of degradation from a caste or loss of religion, as these had resulted in forfeiture of property, of rights of succession and the right to adopt. The Native Converts' Marriage Dissolu-

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[3] Shyam Kumari Nehru (ed.), *Our Cause*, p. 261.

tion Act of 1866 enabled a spouse who had been converted to Christianity to obtain a divorce if the other spouse refused to cohabit with the converted partners. This Act is applicable to persons who are converted to Christianity alone, and not to other faiths. The Special Marriage Act, 1872, permitted intermarriage with persons belonging to another caste or to persons of the Jain, Sikh or Buddhist faiths by a civil marriage ceremony.

The above three Acts extended religious and caste liberty, and thus introduced the concept of freedom of religion. But it may be noted that these provisions were meant mostly for the converts to other faiths. They did not help in any way to improve the internal organisation of the Hindus. No legislative action was taken for the 'untouchables' who suffered greatly at the hands of the so-called upper castes.

The Special Marriage Act of 1872 was hailed by the Brahmo Samaj, as it was initially meant for persons belonging to the Brahmo Samaj. Under this Act, the marrying parties had to declare at the time of marriage that they 'did not profess the Hindu, Mohammedan, Christian, Parsee, Buddhist, Sikh or Jain religion.' This made the law practically ineffective, as few people approved of the idea of disowning their own religion. But at the same time this Act gave an incentive for further reforms in Hindu society in that it permitted widow-remarriage, made polygamy penal, and sanctioned inter-caste marriages. Moreover, it did not permit a boy and a girl to marry unless they were eighteen and fourteen years of age respectively.

The enactments during the second half of the last century show that no systematic effort was made by the Government to introduce changes by legislation. It was only due to the pressure of the enlightened Indian opinion that social legislation was brought about here and there. "The British administration moved slowly and almost reluctantly in matters which did not affect the stability of the country. It watched carefully whether any new measures might cause offence and give rise to opposition in the country...................the policy of the British administration to interfere as little as possible with customs of the population in matters of personal status, family law and succession,

however, well intentioned, acted as a break on progress and retarded a possible natural line of advancement and development of Hindu society."[4]

Up to the year 1919 the Indians had no voice in the matter of legislation. So the only thing they could do was to carry on agitation against the evil customs, thereby making the people conscious of the facts, and to bring pressure upon the government to enact legislation. The Montagu-Chemsford Reforms of 1919 gave the people of India some voice in law-making, and in the years following a number of private Bills were introduced in the Legislative Assembly to prohibit child marriage and to raise the age of consent. In 1928, a committee was appointed by the Government of India to examine the problem of child marriage. The committee in its report stated that the Indian public opinion was in favour of such a reform. As a result, the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed in 1929, which came into force on April 1, 1930. This Act penalises all marriages below the age of 14 years for girls and below 18 years for boys. The husband, if a major, the parents or guardians and the priest are all liable to punishment with a fine or imprisonment or with both, if found guilty of the offence.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, popularly known as the Sarda Act, could not be successfully implemented due to the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-31, because the British Government at such a time was not in a position to displease the people by applying the law rigorously. As a result the provisions of the new law could not be enforced effectively.

The Age of Consent Committee (1928), in its Report, had recommended that (1) wide publicity should be given by the government to the sanctions of the Act in order to make the masses familiar to it; (2) registration of all marriages should be made compulsory, which would act as a check on child marriage; (3) registration of births in rural areas as well as in urban areas should be made compulsory; and (4) the government should cooperate with social reform

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[4] K. Lipstin, 'Reception of Western Law in India', *international Social Science Bulletin*, Vol. IX, No. 1, 1957 U.N.E.S.C.O., p. 90.

organisations for the successful implementation of the law.

These recommendations, unfortunately, remained on paper only and the government did not pay any attention to them.

Among other social problems which attracted public attention, the most vital was the status of women, which they had lost considerably during the Muslim period. With the partial representation of the Indian opinion in the legislature a number of bills, with a view to giving women better rights of inheritance, were introduced in the Legislative Assembly. Consequently in 1937 the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act was passed which was amended in 1938. By these Acts important changes were made in the Hindu Law of Succession. The most important change was the share of the husband's property, which was given to the widow. Under this Act the widow got an equal share with her son and grandson in her husband's separate property. Moreover, in the case of a Mitakshara joint family she was entitled to her husband's interest in joint property and could claim partition. But in both cases she got only a limited estate with all its implications.

While this Act enlarged the rights of Hindu women, it was soon found to be defective and unworkable. The courts were confused at the proper interpretation of certain sections of the Act. The necessity for a full revision of the law, due to the defects of this Act; was felt by all concerned, and consequently various amending Bills were moved in the legislature:

The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act was proposed to be amended to remedy the adverse effect produced upon the rights of succession under the Hindu Law by the Act of 1937, and to give retrospective effect to the Act of 1937 from the 26th September, 1935. Besides, a number of other amendments to the existing law were proposed in the legislature as follows:—

1. The Hindu Women's Property Bill:—This Bill proposed to remove some of the inequalities under which women were suffering, that is, to give the Hindu women abso-

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lute right to property in respect of inheritance, partition, etc., and to bring them on an equal level with men.

2. The Hindu Women's Estate Bill:—This Bill proposed to amend the Hindu law with a view to enlarging the interest of the Hindu widow in the property inherited by her from her husband, and proposed to give her absolute interest in one-sixth of the corpus of the property inherited by her from her husband.

3. The Hindu Law of Inheritance Bill:—It proposed to widen the scope of Hindu Law of Inheritance Amendment Act of 1929 by providing that a son's daughter's son, son's son's daughter, daughter's son's son, son's daughter's daughter, and daughter's daughter's son shall be entitled to rank in the order of succession immediately after a daughter's daughter, and that a sister's son's son shall rank after a sister's son.

Faced with such private bills, the government realised the urgency of the problem. It decided, therefore, not to allow piecemeal legislation of defective types to remain on the Statute Book, or to be pursued further by private members; and further thought that the proper course of action would be to have all the matters examined carefully. With this purpose the government appointed a committee consisting of the late Sir B.N. Rao, a brilliant judge of the High Court of Calcutta, as Chairman, and three other distinguished lawyers as members.

The Committee issued a questionnaire to different governments, different courts, lawyers of eminence, Sanskrit scholars and Pandits' Associations, and Women's Associations. The preliminary report of the Committee was mainly based on the questionnaire.

The Rao Committee strongly advocated the preparation of a Hindu Code "which will, without laying violent hands on the ancient structure of Hindu Law, be a judicious selection and combination of the best elements in the different schools of Hindu Law, and evolve a system which, while retaining the distinct characteristics of Hindu Law, will satisfy the needs of any progressive society," and "which generally

speaking, shall be a blend of the finest elements of various schools of Hindu Law; a code, finally, which shall be simple in its language, capable of being translated into the vernaculars and made accessible to all."[5]

The Preliminary Report was widely publicised, and was on the whole favourably received. The government, therefore, called upon the Committee to prepare draft bills on Intestate Succession and Marriage. The Committee, then, prepared Memoranda on Intestate Succession, and published them in the same manner as the Preliminary Report; a large number of suggestions were received in the light of which the Committee prepared a bill on Intestate Succession. The Bill was presented to the Indian Legislature in 1942. The Committee also proposed another bill on marriage.

The Joint Committee of the legislature which considered the bill, recommended that for a proper appreciation of the bill, it would be advisable to have the entire Hindu Code drafted by the Hindu Law Committee. According to this recommendation, the Rao Committee was again called upon to prepare a Hindu Code, which was done in 1947.

The task of the Committee was delicate and difficult. They had to prepare a draft codification of the existing law and suggested the incorporation in the draft of necessary changes in view of the changed social and economic circumstances and requirements of the modern times. They had also to deal with an ancient legal system, which is at several important points intermingled with religion and deep-rooted religious beliefs and traditions.

In March 1947, the Final Report of the Committee and the Hindu Code Bill were submitted to the government. The Hindu Code Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 9th April, 1948. It was sent to the Select Committee, which revised the draft by making certain amendments in it, and presented its Report on 12th August, 1948. As there was strong criticism of the Bill, the Lok Sabha adopted the motion that the Bill be considered by the Select Committee again. But due to the dissolution of the Parliament the Bill

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[5] Legislative Assembly Debates, 1943, Vol. II.

had to be dropped. In the meantime there were new elections, and the government accepted the policy of splitting the Hindu Code Bill into parts, and enforce them through piecemeal legislation. Consequently, the Hindu Marriage Bill, the Hindu Succession Bill, the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Bill, and the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Bill were introduced in the Lok Sabha one after the other. Though the Hindu Code Bill was dropped, yet the new Bills concerning Hindu Law were based upon it. By the year 1956 all these above Bills were passed in the Parliament and have now come into force.

The problem of immoral traffic among women has attracted the attention of social thinkers for long. It constitutes, today, an international problem. "Traffic in women and children is one of the vilest forms of slavery and the worst form of exploiting the weak, the ignorant, and the helpless by an organised gang of traffickers. Its extreme secrecy makes it almost impossible to expose the organisers, and the degradation, physical, mental and moral that follows the woman after she is forced to sell herself makes it absolutely difficult for her to secure her release, or in the absence of organised state help, to return to normal healthy life."[6]

During the period of the East India Company, the Foreigners Act (India Act of 1844) was passed which enabled the government to extern prostitutes and pimps.

The Indian Penal Code contained provisions for the protection of women against exploitation. Section 372 of this Penal Code prohibits the selling of a minor girl for the purpose of prostitution. Section 373 I.P.C. prohibits the buying of minor girls for the purpose of prostitution.

Similarly, Section 552 of the Criminal Procedure Code empowers the Courts 'to restore abducted or kidnapped women to liberty'. This law has also made a distinction between prostitution and immoral traffic. Not only prostitution itself but soliciting for the purpose of prostitution is also declared unlawful. The Prevention of Prostitution Act was the first enactment pertaining to prostitution which came into operation in Bombay in 1923.

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[6] Shyam Kumari Nehru (ed.), *Our Cause*, p. 187.

There are some parts of South India where girls were dedicated to temples. These girls were known as 'Devadasis', a term which literally meant servants of God. This practice had led the girls, so dedicated, to a life of prostitution. In North India, too, among the Naiks the custom of training minor girls for prostitution prevailed. All these evil practices were abolished and declared to be unlawful through special legislation e.g., Madras Devdasi (Prevention of Dedication) Act of 1947, and Uttar Pradesh Naik Girls' Protection Act of 1929.

The Police Acts, which have been applied in some of the big cities, prohibit the location of brothels in specified areas. The Municipalities Acts also empower the municipalities to prohibit the location of brothels or residence of prostitutes in specified areas.

For a long time the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene in India has been trying to deal with the problem of immoral traffic in India. The Association was started in 1875. The programme of this association has taken into account both the curative and preventive aspects of the solution of the problem and has adopted a short as well as a long term policy of action.

In 1950 India signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of others. In pursuance of this Convention a Bill for the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls was introduced in the Lok Sabha in 1954. And in 1956 a Central Act was passed which is known as the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act, 1956.

A review of the enactments of the British period shows that legislation during the latter half of the 19th century was concerned with the socio-religious customs. But in the first half of the present century the British Government concentrated its law-making activities on the social problems and needs that had arisen due to urbanization. Though social legislation of the early British period was piecemeal, a sympathetic approach to the enactment of the laws was made in the last phase of the British regime. The Acts which were passed to amend Hindu Law with the object of giving

better rights to women no doubt contained defects. But these enactments have marked an important stage in the evolution of the rights of Hindu women, and have paved the way for further reforms.

In a dynamic society law can never keep pace with the new forces that are generated by social change within its structure. The change may affect social structure itself. Thus new situations are always being created in society, which can only be dealt with through special measures. Social legislation is an attempt to meet the challenge and bridge the gulf between existing laws and current needs of society.

On August 15, 1947, India regained her Independence. The Constitutent Assembly adopted a Constitution for India, which came into force on the 26th January, 1950. The Preamble to the Constitution declared India to be a Sovereign Democratic Republic which will 'Secure to all its citizens Justice—social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status and of opportunity, and will promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation'. The Constitution proclaims India to be a welfare state and a secular state. Religion, which has played a great role in our law for centuries, has now been dissociated from it. It has become strictly private and personal, having nothing to do with status, or with rights of inheritance. The distinctions of religion, caste and sex, which have been tolerated by Hindu law for centuries, are in direct opposition to the principles of equality, fraternity, justice and liberty.

Under Article 17 of the Constitution untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. Article 15(4) empowers the states to make special provision for the advancement of the scheduled castes.

The Untouchability Offences Act of 1955 has introduced the most far-reaching reform in Hinduism—the abolition of untouchability. It secures to every citizen access to all shops, hotels and places of public entertainment and the right to use wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads etc., maintained wholly or partly out of state funds. Also the enforcement of any discrimination against the scheduled castes is made illegal. If

any person interferes in such manner as to obstruct or prevent the exercise of the rights secured to the citizen by Article 17, he shall be punished with imprisonment or fine or with both. Encouraging the practice of untouchability or taking part in any boycott or excommunication are also considered offences liable to penalty. Legally, therefore, untouchability is no more a part of Hindu life.

These provisions indicate clearly that the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955, is simply the statement of Article 15 and 17 of the Constitution in an extended form. The Act brings about a change in the legal status of the untouchables, and it will, no doubt, be helpful for their amelioration. But reforms of such a far-reaching nature depend upon the attitude of the so-called upper castes towards the untouchables. So a change in our social values is vitally essential.

Article 23(i) of Part III of the Constitution lays down that 'traffic in human beings and *begar*** and other similar forms of enforced labour are prohibited and any contravention in this provision shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law'. It is also provided in the Directive Principles of State Policy that 'Childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment'. (Article 39(f). India has also signed the International Convention at New York on the 9th May, 1950, for the suppression of immoral traffic in women and girls.

As a result, the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act of 1956 has been passed. It declares that if a person lives on the earnings of prostitution, procures, induces or takes a woman or girl for the sake of prostitution, or detains a woman or girl in the premises where prostitution is carried on, he shall be punished with imprisonment or fine or with both.

This Act deals with two aspects—the penal and the rehabilitative. The second part of the Act provides for the rescue of girls from brothels, their custody and protection, and for their rehabilitation in what may be called protective homes.

The Act assigns the establishment and maintenance of such protective homes to the state governments. As it states: 'The state government may in its discretion establish as

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*Forced labour.

many protective homes under this Act as it thinks fit and such homes, when established, shall be maintained in such manner as may be prescribed.' No person or authority other than the state government shall have power to run a protective home except under and in accoradance with the conditions of a licence issued by the state government. Even after obtaining such a licence the protective home run by voluntary agencies shall have to be maintained according to conditions and rules imposed upon them by the state government. The Act also declares that a person or body of persons who establish or maintain protective homes except in accordance with the provisions of this section, shall be punishable in case of a first offence with fine and/or imprisonment.

This Act brings about a uniform piece of social legislation, a necessity which has been felt for a long time due to the inconvenience caused in the implementation of the state acts, as a result of the variations in their provisions. It will check inter-state traffic. But the Committee on Social and Moral Hygiene has expressed the fear that too much has been left to state governments to provide rules. "This again is bound to lead to a lot of variations between state and state thus defeating the very uniformity which is the aim of the Central Act."[7] In the opinion of the Committee the Centre should sponsor regional institutes for women. The Committee, further, points out: "The law must aim at closing the entrances to this profession and opening more exits out of it. Methods of fine and imprisonment are neither suitable nor effective. It is wrong to treat the prostitute as a criminal. The present methods must be replaced by scientific methods of supervision, provident care, protection and reduction." Thus more emphasis has to be laid on reformation and rehabilitation. Moreover, social vice cannot be eradicated by group therapy, through provision for the establishment of rescue homes alone. A prostitute is a psychopathic case She can neither be rescued nor 'cured' unless there is a complete change in her attitude towards life. Thus every case needs to be studied separately. Thus, what is needed is a team of trained

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[7] Report of the Advisory Committee on Social and Moral Hygiene, Social Welfare Board, Government of India (1958, ed.), p. 35.

social workers rather than administrators whose main task is to enforce the provisions of the law.

The object of the recent legislation pertaining to Hindu law has been to give women those rights and opportunities which they were deprived of during a certain period of history as a result of certain socio-political factors. For instance, the daughter who had been deprived of her right to a share in her father's property and her right to be adopted, on the plea that the *Shastras* did not permit these, now gets a share in her father's property and also has got the right to be taken in adoption.

Adoption has become one of the most controversial topics of Hindu Law and the root cause of litigation. As a result the real object of adoption is completely lost sight of. The Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956, simplifies the Hindu Law of adoption, thus giving it a uniform character. It also does away with the distinctions of sex and caste in the adoption of a child. It declares that the consent of the wife must be taken for the adoption of a boy or a girl, provided that the wife has not renounced the world or has ceased to be a Hindu or has been declared by a court to have an unsound mind. This section brings the wife on a level of equality with her husband in cetain vital matters of the family. Similarly, under Section 8 of the Act the widow is authorised to adopt in her own right and no previous permission of the husband is considered necessary. The unmarried woman also gets a right to adopt under the same section of the Act.

Under the Act the adopted son's rights even with regard to his father's property will accrue from the date of adoption, and he cannot divest the property which has been vested in any person before his adoption. This provision does away with the complicated case law regarding the adopted son's right of vesting and divesting of property.

Most of the provisions of the Act indicate that too much emphasis is placed upon the rights of property of the persons concerned. It seems as if our legislators were pre-occupied with the thought of reducing the conflicts in the courts of law, which have been taking place in this field since a long time.

With regard to maintenance, under the Act, a Hindu wife is entitled to live separately, under some particular circumstances, from her husband without forfeiting her claim of maintenance. It also provides for the maintenance o f widowed daughter-in-law, of children, legitimate and illegitimate, and also for the maintenance of aged parents and other dependents in the house.

The Hindu Succession Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on December 22, 1954. This was the most controversial and revolutionary part of the Hindu Code, in that it proposed to bring about changes in the fundamental concept of the Hindu Law of Succession. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956, which came into force from 17th June, 1956, introduces important and far—reaching changes.

Broadly, the main objects of the Act are:—

(a) to evolve a uniform system òf law for the Hindus regarding intestate succession;

(b) to give the daughters a right of inheritance to remove inequalities between men and women with regard to rights of property; and

(c) to introduce a list of heirs on the basis of love and affection rather than of religious efficacy.

Subject to a few exceptions, the Act regulates succession to all properties of a Hindu.

Under Section 16 of the Act, a woman becomes the full and not the limited owner of all types of property that she holds. Thus the daughter gets an equal share with the son in the self-acquired property of the father. Her marriage does not affect her right to inherit it.

With regard to ancestral property, under the old Hindu Law if a male member of the family died, his share in the joint-family property was acquired by other male members to the exclusion of the wife of the deceased. This is known as the principle of survivorship. This has resulted in hardships and injustice to her, as she was allowed maintenance only. Under the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, the joint family property will devolve by survivorship, though this rule is

subject to many exceptions. But the Act allows a male member of a Hindu Mitakshara coparcenary to dispose of his interest in the coparcenary by will. This is a vital departure, from the present law according to which a member of a Mitakshara coparcenary can dispose of by will only his self-acquired property.

The Act declares: 'Any property possessed by a female Hindu whether acquired before or after the commencement of this Act, shall be held by her as full owner thereof and not as a limited owner'.

This is an important section which brings about a radical change in the established concept of Hindu Succession by giving women full and absolute right over property. The concept of *Stridhan* will have now no place in Hindu law.

In the realm of marriage, important and far-reaching changes were introduced by the Hindu Code Bill. These changes have been strongly criticised and objected to by the orthodox section of the society on the plea that the very basis of Hindu marriage would be shaken by them. It is, therefore, important here to turn to the concept of Hindu marriage first.

Marriage has certain biological aspects. It has been accepted since ancient times that a human being is endowed with biological needs, and he should be given an opportunity to satisfy these needs through marriage. But the satisfaction of these needs is not the end of marriage. Hindu marriage has an ethical basis which has received greater emphasis. Here, marriage has been looked upon as a sacrament "In it, two complementary halves are brought together to make a complete whole. It is more a psychic bond rather than merely physical."[8]

The concept of Hindu marriage is closely connected with *Dharma*. Manu says: 'Mutual fidelity should continue until death; this may be considered the sum and substance of the highest law for the husband and wife' (Manu, IX). The Vedas ordain that *Dharma* must be practised by man together with his wife.

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[8] K. Motwani, *Manu Dharma Sastra*—A Sociological and Historical Study, Ganesh & Co., (Madras) Private Ltd., 1958, p. 116.

These facts reveal that the husband and wife are given an equal importance of status as well as function.

The *Saptapadi* is the most important rite in the whole marriage ceremony. The bride and bridegroom together take seven steps round the sacred fire and recite seven *mantras*, one at each step. Marriage becomes complete and binding after the seventh step is taken.

A careful examination of the earlier *Dharmasastra* literature reveals that the ancient law givers had permitted divorce under certain well-defined circumstances. Even Manu laid down that if a wife who leaves a husband who is insane or suffering from an incurable or a contagious disease, she should not be blamed (Manu IX, 79). Moreover, he permits such a wife to remarry provided her previous marriage was not consummated (IX, 175-6).

The *Dharmasutra* writers have laid down that a Brahman woman should wait for her husband gone out on a long journey for five years; Kautilya says that she should wait for ten months only (III, 4). Parashara permits the wife to remarry if the husband is impotent or has become a religious hermit or is boycotted (IV, 24). These instances clearly indicate that Hindu society has been familiar with the concept of divorce for centuries.

By about the 5th century B.C. the wave of asceticism swept over Hindu society. The philosophy of asceticism came to be reflected in our law also. Society began to hold that a girl could be given in marriage only once. To divorce one husband and to marry another came to be regarded as grossly sensual. Society, therefore, held that even if the husband were a moral wreck, or grievously ill-treating his wife, the latter could not claim any relief by way of divorce.[9] This aspect of the social philosophy of the 5th century B.C. prevailed to this day.

The Hindu Marriage Bill was the first instalment of the Hindu Code Bill, which was passed in the Parliament in 1955 after much controversy. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 makes monogamy a rule for men as well as women. It allows divorce and judicial separation to both the parties on certain grounds.

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[9] A.S. Altekar, *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, p. 36.

The Act recognises the Hindu marriage which may be solemnized in accordance with the customary rites and ceremonies of either party thereto; and where such rites and ceremonies include the *saptapadi*, the marriage becomes complete when the seventh step is taken.

The Act raises the age of marriage to 15. Again, the bride must take the consent of her guardian in marriage if she has not completed her eighteenth year. The Act provides for the registration of Hindu marriages for the purpose of facilitating their proof.

When either party has withdrawn from the society of the other without reasonable excuse, the aggrieved party may apply to the district court for restitution of conjugal rights; and if the court is satisfied, it may decree restitution of conjugal rights accordingly. If however, the decree is not acted upon for two years or more the aggrieved party may apply for judicial separation or for dissolution of marriage. However, judicial separation has to be distinguished from divorce. While the latter terminates the marriage, the former merely exempts the decreeholder from the obligation to have marital relations with the other party.

Under the act, a decree for judicial separation can be obtained by either party to a marriage, on the ground that the other party—

(a) has deserted the petitioner for a continuous period of not less than two years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition; or

(b) has treated the petitioner with such cruelty or to cause a reasonable apprehension in the mind of the petitioner that it will be harmful or injurious for the petitioner to live with the other party; or

(c) has for a period of not less than one year preceding immediately the presentation of the petition, been suffering from a virulent form of leprosy; or

(d) has immediately before the presentation of the petition, been suffering from venereal disease in a communicable form, the disease not having been contracted from the petitioner; or

(e) has been continuously of unsound mind for a period

of not less than two years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition; or

(*f*) has, after the solemnization of the marriage, had sexual intercourse with any person other than his or her spouse.

Similarly, any marriage which is solemnized either before or after the commencement of the Act, will be dissolved on the ground that the other party—

(*a*) is living in adultery; or

(*b*) has ceased to be a Hindu by conversion to another religion; or

(*c*) has been incurably of unsound mind for a continuous period of not less than three years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition; or

(*d*) has for a period of not less than three years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition, been suffering from a virulent and incurable form of leprosy; or

(*e*) has for a period of not less than three years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition been suffering from venereal disease in a communicable form; or

(*f*) has not been heard of as being alive for a period of seven years or more by those persons who would naturally have heard of it, had that party been alive; or

(*g*) has not resumed cohabitation for a space of two years or upwards after the passing of a decree for judicial separation against that party; or

(*h*) has failed to comply with a decree for restitution of conjugal rights for a period of two years or upwards after the passing of a decree.

A petition for divorce shall not be entertained by any court unless three years have elapsed since the date of marriage. But in certain exceptional circumstances a petition for a decree of divorce may be entertained even before the expiry of three years from the date of marriage.

Broadly speaking, the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, regards marriage as a sacrament. It aims at avoiding the possibilities of divorce as far as possible. This tendency is revealed in

clause (2) of Section 23 of the Act which states: 'Before proceeding to grant any relief under this Act, it shall be the duty of the court in the first instance, in every case where it is possible to do so consistently with the nature and circumstances of the case, to make every endeavour to bring about a reconciliation between the parties.' If, however, a reconciliation is impossible, the court will grant a decree for relief only when it is satisfied with the facts.

The right to divorce given by the Act would enable a wife to obtain relief whenever she needs it.

Quite recently an Act has been passed by the Parliament to prohibit the giving or taking of dowry. Dowry in its original form was the gift given voluntarily by affectionate parents to their daughter at the time of her marriage. Today, the demand for dowry has assumed such proportions that it has simply become a transaction which, in many cases, results into unhappy marriages.

In the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, 'dowry' means any property or valuable security given or agreed to be given either directly or indirectly by one party to a marriage to the other party to the marriage; or by the parents of either party to a marriage or by any other person, to either party to the marriage or to any other person at or before or after the marriage as consideration for the marriage of the said parties.

The Act provides for the punishment of a person, who gives or takes or abets the giving or taking of dowry, with imprisonment which may extend to six months, or with a fine which may extend to five thousand rupees, or with both. The codification of Hindu law has become almost complete with the passage of this Act.

Since the middle of the 19th century laws have been framed affecting some of the vital aspects of Hindu life. But publi opinion has always lagged behind in appreciating legal changes in this direction. Thus, we have been facing the problem of cultural lag. And, though the recent acts concerning Hindu law have been enforced, it might take a long time before they are accepted by the public.

In view of the inevitability of the social change and the capacity of our institutions to adapt, and adjust to it, essential

changes in legislation have to be made. We find a significant change in the ideals today which govern our social life as compared to those of the ancient and mediaeval times. The religious ideology on which all the issues vital to our life were based, has now been replaced by the secular one. This ideology is naturally reflected in our legislation also. Thus new values are taking the place of old ones. Consequently, in this process there is a clash between the two. This is so especially due to the fact that there is a confusion in our mind about the true nature of our values. It is, therefore, essential to make a scientific appraisal of our value system as it has been centuries ago and how it has been evolving in order to adapt itself to changed conditions.

In determining the rules by which men should be governed, two factors are mainly taken into consideration, viz. the prevalent moral and political philosophy, and the felt necessities of the time. We find that these were reflected in our social legialstion centuries back. But if we compare it with modern social legislation, the difference is to be found mainly in the law-making and law-enforcing agencies. Today these two agencies are controlled by the state, whereas in the past this function was entrusted to the sagas and philosophers, who were our law-givers, as has already been pointed out elsewhere in this Chapter.

Social legislation, as has been undertaken by the state today, reveals the fact that the state is becoming increasingly conscious not only of man's material but also social and psychological needs. This is shown, for example, in its concern for the child's need for care, affection and security, in its stress on the value of good family relationship, in the value that is placed on equality between man and woman, between persons of different castes, and so on.

The Constitution of India has assumed as well as declared its right and duty to make laws for social needs. The passage of the laws on various subjects reveals that the Indian Parliament has been active in the matter of social legislation.

Carlston once remarked, "In the modern society, the fact of the institutionalisation of law has become such an accepted part of our perception of the world in which we live that we no longer think of law as living law but only as 'social control'

through the systematic application of the force of politically organised society."[10] Institutionalisation of law defeats the very purpose of social legislation.

The Hindu society, today, has been experiencing revolutionary changes. In view of these changes it is necessary for the government to have a body of experts who would fulfil a two-fold duty, first to survey the social conditions, and to guide the legislature with regard to the advisability of the changes which are felt necessary under new conditions; second, to undertake surveys in order to find out the effects of the enactments on the society, and then propose changes in them wherever necessary. The establishment of a permanent organisation, Law Commission, for suggesting changes in existing law to keep pace with current social needs, is a right step in this direction.

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[10] K.S. Carlston, *Law and Structures of Social Action*, Stevens and Sons Limited, London, Columbia University Press, 1956, p. 7.

TRIBAL WELFARE IN INDIA

India has a rich tribal heritage built of several racial strains, varying in matters of dress, speech, aspects of social organisation, religion and levels of economic and technological development. According to the census records of 1941, they numbered 2,47,12,000 representing 7·8 per cent of the Indian population. But owing to Partition a significant part of it went to Pakistan and as such there was a reduction of 3·44 per cent in the census returns of 1951, according to which they numbered 1,91,16,498. This population comprises 212 tribal groups and constitutes 5·36 per cent of the total population of India. The following is its distribution in various regions of India:

Distribution of Tribal Population

Regions			Population
1. Eastern India	...	...	1,03,03,631
2. Southern India			6,98,953
3. Western India			34,15,155
4. Central India		...	43,70,165
5. North-West India	...	...	3,28,593
Total	...	...	1,91,16,497

It may be mentioned here that these 212 groups listed as tribals are those which have been recognised as Scheduled Tribes. One of the reasons for the reduction in numbers was, also, the transference of a considerably large section of the tribes of Central India and Rajasthan to the Scheduled caste groups. However, according to the revised scheduled

castes and scheduled tribes lists, the tribal population now consists of 2,25,11,854 people.

As regards the recognition of a tribe as scheduled tribe, the Constitution of India has made a provision in Article 341 (1), which reads: "The President may with respect to any state............after consultation with the Governor......... thereof, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be scheduled tribes in relation to that State." Article 341(2) further specifies: "Parliament by law include in or exclude from the list of scheduled tribes specified in a notification issued under clause (1) · any tribe or tribal communities, or part of or groups within any tribe or tribal communities, but save as aforesaid notification issued under the said clause shall not be varied by any subsequent notification." In accordance with article 340 of the Constitution, the President of India appointed a Backward Classes Commission on January 29, 1953, with a view to investigating into the conditions of the backward classes and recommending measures to improve their conditions. The Commission was also entrusted with the task of laying down the criteria for the determination of the scheduled tribes. It suggested the following criteria : "They live apart in hills, and even when they live in plains, they lead a separate excluded existence and are not assimilated in the main body of the people. Scheduled tribes may belong to any religion. They are listed as scheduled tribes because of the kind of life led by them."

In spite of the similarities described above, the tribal population has a heterogeneous character. It will be useful here to outline briefly the differences that exist in the tribal population.

Geographically, the tribal population is scattered all over India with certain important pockets of concentration. Broadly speaking, they could be divided into three major zones:

1. North-North-Eastern zone.

2. Central zone.

3. Southern zone.

The North-North-Eastern zone harbours tribes like Garo, Khasi, Naga, Bhotia, Lepcha, Dafla, Kuki, Abor-Miri, Mikir, Gurung and others. In the Central zone some of the important tribes are Munda, Ho, Kamar, Muria and Maria, Gond, Baiga, Bondo, Birhor, Oraon, Juang, Kanda and Santal. The Southern zone is inhabited by the Chenebu, Kadar, Irula, Muthuvan, Badage, Koda Kurumba, Chetti, Savra, Gadaba, etc. The Central zone comprising Northern and Eastern Bombay, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Bengal is the largest zone of the three in terms of its physical extensions and demographic dimensions of the tribal people.

Racially speaking, following Guha's classification, the tribes of India could be grouped into three categories :

(*i*) *The Proto Australoids* (Munda, Ho, Oraon, Gond, Khond, etc.)

(*ii*) *The Mongoloids* (Tribes of sub-Himalayan region and Eastern Frontiers of India)

(*iii*) *The Negrito* (Kadars of Cochin, Andaman, etc.)

The major population of tribal India belongs to the Proto-Australoid group which is characterised by darker skin, sunken nose and lower forehead.

Differences among tribal people are also significant from the point of view of the language spoken. Their language belongs to three major linguistic families, namely, (1) Dravidian; (2) Austro-Asiatic branch of the Austric speech family; and (3) the Sino-Tibetan, further divided into (i) Tibeto-Burman and (ii) Siamese-Chinese. Gonds, Kandh, Oraon, Malto, etc. have their linguistic affinity with the Dravidian Family. Languages of the Austro-Asiatic origin are spoken by groups like Santal, Munds, Ho, Kharia, Bhurrij, Kerku, Khasi, Nicobarese, etc. Tribes mostly inhabiting the Himalayan region and parts of Assam speak languages of the Tibeto-Burman group.

There is also a great variety in their social organisation and levels of economic and technological development. Both patrilineal and matrilineal forms of societies are found

here. Incidence of polygamy and polyandry, presence of youth-dormitories, head-hunting, animistic faith, etc. characterise tribal India. There are some tribal societies which live in secluded pockets and have a subsistence economy while there are others who are substantial tillers. In various areas tribal people have gradually accepted the Hindu view and way of life. There are others who have converted to Christianity. Thus there have been different degrees of culture contact and assimilation in different parts of tribal India. The problem of culture contact and the processes of acculturation and assimilation have further enhanced the differences and created new levels of cultural development. For a student of tribal welfare in India it is necessary to identify clearly and rightly these levels and seek solutions of the problems that the tribals face at these levels.

Various classifications have been proposed based on the criterion of culture contact. Professor D.N. Majumdar in his Matrix of Indian Culture has given a three-fold classification of the Indian tribes as under:

1. Primitive tribes outside the pale of Hindu influence, the so-called "real-Primitives".

2. Primitive tribes who have adopted Hindu customs, beliefs and practices, have shown a degree of association with the Hindu castes and have attained some cultural progress, though they are not recognised as forming the prominent castes.

3. Primitive tribes who are Hinduised but maintain social distance from the clean castes, though some of them are indistinguishable from the inferior ranks of the caste order, inferior or clean.

Suggesting a four-fold classification Verrier Elwin has made an attempt to broad-base the classification. While Majumdar has focussed on "Hindu influence", Elwin talks of "external influence". His classification puts the tribes into the following categories:

1. Those who are most primitive, live a joint communal life and cultivate with axes;

2. those who, though equally attached to their solitude and ancient traditions, are more individualistic, less occupied with axe-cultivation, more used to outside life and generally less simple and honest than the first category;

3. those, the most numerous,............who under external influence are already on the way to the loss of their tribal culture, religion and social organisation;

4. Tribes like the Bhil and the Naga who are representatives of the old aristocracy of the country, who retain much of their original tribal life, and who have won the battle of culture-contact.

Elwin considers that the tribals belonging to the third category are suffering most and that efforts should be so made that the tribes of category 1 and 2 should directly advance to the 4th category "without having to undergo all the suffering, despair and degradation associated with the third."

Professor S.C. Dube has proposed a five-fold classification in his book *Anthropology: The Study of Man*. From his point of view, Indian tribal groups could be classified as below:

1. Aboriginals living in seclusion, comparatively un-influenced by recent culture-contacts.

2. Tribal groups which have developed their association with neighbouring village folk, have modified their tribal economy but which still retain their tribal vitality and distinctive social organisation.

3. Tribes which retain their tribal organisation, not unlike distinctive caste organisation, but live in common villages mixed with the other castes, sects and religious groups.

4. Tribes which have been forced to accept a degraded status of untouchables as a result of unhappy contacts.

5. Tribes enjoying high social status notwithstanding their tribal origin, because they had a better economic status and political influence.

The Tribal Welfare Committee constituted by the Indian

Conference of Social Work in the year 1952 divided the Indian tribes into four main divisions for planning the welfare programmes.

1. Tribals who confine themselves to original habitats and are still distinctive in their pattern of life. These may be termed as *Tribal communities*.

2. Tribals who have more or less settled down in rural areas taking to agriculture and other allied occupations. This category of people may be recognised as *semi-tribal communities*.

3. Tribals who have migrated to urban or semi-urban areas and are engaged in "civilised" occupations in industries and other vocations and have discriminatingly adopted the traits and culture of the rest of the population. These may be classed as *"acculturated" tribal communities*; and

4. *Totally assimilated tribals.*

All these various classifications indicate that there is not one tribal problem. Nor should it be taken to mean that members of a particular tribe face common problems. Problems arising out of culture contact have been varied and also have had differential impact on various sections of the tribal population. The major aim of tribal welfare programme should be to solve the various problems arising out of uncontrolled, haphazard and at times disastrous culture-contact, to provide amenities of modern life and to create conditions of their systematic integration into the main stream of Indian society.

Many writers have pointed out the evil effects of culture contact and have suggested, even at the cost of their being misunderstood, a partial segregation of the tribal people. Such writers, mostly anthropologists, have been described as isolationists who want to keep the tribals as museum specimens in order to practise their blessed science undisturbed. But a close examination of the writings of the anthropologists would show that their intentions are fair and that the approach is not so partial as is commonly understood. Guha very emphatically mentions: 'The views put forward are not

framed with the purpose, conscious or unconscious, of attempting to keep the tribal people as "museum specimens" as is so often wrongly attributed to the anthropologists. To allow a tribe to retain its traditional value and mode of life in its natural setting and give it the chance to develop along its own genius is very reverse of the museum specimen idea.'[1] Verrier Elwin, who is primarily held responsible for the promulgation of this view has himself denied the allegation. In fact, he goes to the extent of calling it a "curious criticism". "This suggestion", he writes, "was first, as far as I know, made in the Legislative Assembly in February 1936 in a debate on the Excluded Areas, when a number of speakers attacked anthropologists as wishing to keep the primitive people of India 'uncivilised' and 'in a state of barbarism' in order to add 'to their blessed stock of scientific knowledge'."[2] He further clarifies, "We do not want to preserve the tribesmen as museum specimens, but equally we do not want to turn them into clowns in a circus. We do not want to stop the clock of progress, but we do want to see that it keeps into the right time. We may not believe in the myth of the noble savage, but we do not want to create a class of ignoble serfs."[3] Referring to the limitations of the policy of isolation Elwin mentions (1) that policy has never been implemented; (ii) that the belief in the happy carefree noble savage is a myth; and (iii) that isolation may have been possible in the past centuries but not now. Modern industries, humanitarian ideals of a welfare state, political necessity of not keeping an administrative vacuum in the frontier areas, demand for greater opportunities by tribal leaders, recent administrative policies affecting the break up of isolation, introduction of roads, improvement in communication channels are some of those factors which have broken the isolation of the tribal people to a considerable extent.[4] It would be hard to find even a single tribe in India which has remained completely aloof and isolated.

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[1] Guha, B.S. "Tribal Welfare in India" in *Social Welfare in India*, 1960 p. 230.
[2] Elwin, Verrier ; "Do we really want to keep them in a Zoo" in *Adivasis*, 1955, p. 9.
[3] Ibid, pp. 20-21.
[4] Elwin, Verrier, *A Philosophy for N.E.F.A.*

Another extremist viewpoint relates to the thorough detribalisation which "became popular with the Christian Missionaries, social reformers, and village uplifters."Though all of them had a philanthropic attitude associated with enthusiasm, initiative, courage and sacrifice, they were governed largely by their own cultural values. They considered tribal cultures inferior, their traditions absurd, their rituals exotic and their behaviour full of vices. Their lives were interpreted as full of miseries and devoid of worldly lures and the pleasures that were derived by the members of the so-called "civilised society". Thus though the approach was humanitarian, it lacked scientific coherence. The feeling of superiority prevalent among such workers always stood as a barrier to free intercourse with the tribals. For the latter these workers have always been outsiders who were all for "giving" and not for a mutual appreciation of values. A break with the past must necessarily be related to the provision of a satisfactory substitute. In regard to medicine, the tribals unhesitatingly accepted the western cure, but the new form of education, new legislations, rules regarding land ownership and such other measures challenged the very essence of their living. It is an admitted fact that no people can give up their culture completely; nor can they accept every innovation introduced by an external agency without proper screening. The views of civilisation created a greater frustration, although it might have favoured a few gifted individuals among the tribals. One of the serious consequences of the detribalisation process is to be seen in case of those tribes who have begun residing with the Hindu population in the villages and where they are given the lower status of an untouchable.

"Voluntary social service agencies" to quote Dube, "have done considerable humanitarian work in the tribal areas but often their idealism and spirit of service have not been matched by their understanding of tribal organisation, values and problems. They sometimes went to the tribal areas with an omnibus solution to the tribal problem as they understood

it............They failed to realise that their well intentioned 'reforms' may be injurious to the tribes in terms of their socio-cultural integration."[5]

Considering the fact that isolation in the present century is impossible and not even desirable, and that hasty efforts to detribalisation are injurious, the approach to be followed has to be more systematic and carefully planned. What has now come to be known as the late "Prime Minister's Policy" emphasises this aspect of the Tribal Welfare Programme. In a foreword to Elwin's book *A Philosophy for NEFA* the late Indian Premier, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, laid down the following five fundamental principles:

"1. People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional art and culture.

2. Tribal rights in land and forest should be respected.

3. We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt, be needed, specially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.

4. We should not over-administer those areas or overwhelm the tribals with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions.

5. We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved."

The British Government in India was in the beginning not much interested in the welfare of tribes. The "main purpose of the British Policy was to secure peace and not necessarily to help the people to advance on the road to

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[5] "Approaches to the Tribal Problem in India" in *Journal of Social Research* Vol. III, No. 2.

progress". However, it is with the efforts of Augustus Cleveland that the policy of 'Indirect Rule' was adopted in the Raj Mahal Hills. For about 100 years pensions worth Rs. 15,000 per annum were distributed to the prominent tribal leaders who acted as the agents of the Government. In the year 1782, these areas were excluded from the jurisdiction of ordinary courts and a special assembly by the name of *Daman-E-Koh* was constituted. This system worked until 1826 when they were brought back under the jurisdiction of country courts. In 1870 the Government specified certain tracts and designated them as scheduled tracts with some special provisions. The Act of 1919 divided these backward areas into two categories, namely (i) wholly excluded areas and (ii) partially excluded areas. Special seats were allocated to the representatives of these scheduled areas. The exclusion of these areas was made for two reasons. Firstly, they were politically and educationally backward, and secondly, the inhabitants also had a desire to retain their own way of life and to get economic protection from the Government.

With the dawn of Independence, tribes in India have received special attention. The new Constitution of the Democratic Republic has made certain special safeguards for the tribals. According to article 341, the President of India notifies certain groups as scheduled tribes for various states. The states are required to "promote with special care the educational and economic interests.........of the scheduled............tribes", and to "protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation". Article 45 of Part IV, Articles 154 of Part IV and 244 of Part X relate to the special provisions for the administration of these areas and creation of separate ministries in the States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, which have larger concentrations of the tribes. Similarly provisions are made for the grant of special funds (Part XII, Article 75) reservation of seats in the Parliament and Legislative Assemblies (Part XVI, Articles 330 & 332), and preference while filling in posts in the services (Part XVI, Article 335). The late President also appointed a Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under Article 338 of Part XVI. Out of the Consolidated Funds of India very large amounts of money are paid to the State Governments

for recurring and non-recurring expenditure on welfare schemes.

Hence it will be useful briefly to outline the development activities undertaken by Governmental and non-governmental agencies in the tribal areas.

Public Health and Sanitation: Tribal India has had very poor medical aid and only indigenous methods were employed to cure the diseases. With the daring efforts of the Missionaries and other social reformers, however, the tribals in remote areas were approached and they received medicines from these agents. It is generally found that people accept the cure of the disease but not the explanation of its cause. The Missionaries in order to establish rapport and to gain their confidence employed this measure of curing the sick among the tribals. However, with the advent of contact-era some new diseases also penetrated the areas. Venereal diseases, syphillis, tuberculosis, etc. are some such diseases. Besides these, the incidence of Malaria, Black water fever, Leprosy and other skin diseases, Cholera, Small-pox, and Gonorrhoea is also very great. These diseases with the attendant lack of medical facilities and malnutrition have aggravated this problem and a need is felt to curb these diseases by intensifying anti-malaria activities providing adequate safeguards against epidemics and taking special care for the cure of other scourging diseases. The measures taken by the Government in this connection may be summarised below:

(a) Health propaganda: the officials organise some lectures, film shows, lantern slides on fairs and market days to propagate the ideas in regard to health and hygiene.

(b) Mobile dispensaries have been opened, which visit the tribal villages and provide medical care.

(c) Some medicine chests have also been established, and peripatetic distributors employed.

(d) In some areas new hospitals and dispensaries have been opened.

(e) Efforts have also been made to improve the sanitary conditions, supply of drinking water by sinking tube-wells, digging tanks and artesian wells and making bunds.

Educational Development : Various agencies have tried to educate the tribals by opening up schools in those areas. Most of these miserably failed because both the medium and content of instruction were alien to the tribal. Moreover, no immediate advantages were gained through education. However, whenever any inducements were given, these programmes succeeded partially. The role of Christian Missionaries in this regard has to be appreciated. Keeping in view the earlier failures, new programmes are phased with a vocational bias. For instructions, tribal dialect is used in the initial stages. In some areas *Ashram* schools have been established. These schools are attached to agricultural land and the students are trained on the lines of basic education. Hostels are also attached to these schools where tribal students live and board gratis. In Bihar, Orissa, Manipur and Kohima (Naga area), technical training institutions have also been opened. Students are also given scholarships for advanced study in various fields of knowledge. The teachers work in tribal centres like Wardha, Pachmarhi and other basic training centres.

Shifting Cultivation : Some of the tribes in India even today practise shifting cultivation known as Dahi and Jhum. Loss of forests and soil erosion, being the two serious consequences of this slash and burn cultivation deserve deepest thought from the national point of view. Various schemes undertaken to solve the problems have been grouped into three categories:

"1. Opening of demonstration Jhum-control centres for taking up planned land-use which includes introduction of cash-crops as in the State of Assam;

2. Establishment of colonies for rehabilitation of families engaged in shifting cultivation;

3. Assisting the tribals in taking to improved methods of cultivation on Jhum lands through the provision of subsidies, agricultural implements, seed, etc."

Community Development Programmes: For an all-round development of the rural and tribal areas, community development programmes were launched in the year 1952. Under this

programme several cooperative societies have been opened. It aims at developing the new tribal leadership and a gradual integration of the tribes into the main stream of Indian society. The development workers are given special training for the purpose. The Social Education Organisers Training Centre (SEOTC) of Ranchi is mainly devoted to this task.

Besides these the Department of Anthropology, Government of India, also undertakes certain programmes of research for the study of tribal cultures and problems. The Tribal Research Institutes set up in Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal are also doing useful work for providing "background material for a better appraisal of tribal life and problems." The works of Bharatiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangh, a non-official agency, deserve commendation. This Sangh trains the tribal workers and has also created a cadre of members dedicated to tribal welfare work. The different schools and departments of Social Work, especially Tata School of Social Sciences, Delhi School of Social Work, Faculty of Social Work, Baroda, etc. have also taken special interest in the training of tribal welfare workers.

The brief outline of the tribal welfare work undertaken by the Government and other private agencies suggest that the tribals have certain problems which are in many ways different from the problems of rural areas. It is, therefore, necessary to identify the tribal problems at different levels of their living, varying in habitat, dress, speech, economy, social organisation and nature of culture contact. It is also desirable to assign the priorities and to evolve efficient means to solve the problems in a manner that they do not lose vitality of their life and feel frustrated. Using their own institutions and media of communication if new innovations are reinterpreted to them in their own cultural frame of reference their success is assured. If however, new and alien institutions are tried to be planned, they would stand in rivalry with the traditional institutions and thereby develop unhealthy conditions. A proper understanding of the culture, its weak and vulnerable aspects which could receive the impact of change is therefore essential.

SOCIAL RESEARCH AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Social suffering is the result of the failure of society to adapt its culture and social institutions to human needs and social change. The individual usually fulfils his needs and urges as a member of the social group. When he fails to safeguard his personal interests, the social group steps in to give him necessary aid and support or even to create the basic conditions for his happiness.

The need for social assistance to individuals is certainly not of recent origin. Charity and mutual helpfulness are rooted in the nature of man. From the earliest days not only the monastic and priestly orders but the ordinary men have been giving shelter, food and clothing to the needy and the destitute. Social service in the sense of mutual aid has long been known in our country as in the rest of the world. It has been enjoined by religion and sanctified by tradition.

In the old idea of charity the individual was the focus of attention, the group as such did not receive much notice. With the increasing social awareness and application of scientific knowledge to everyday life the emphasis has shifted from the individual to the social group. Thus, the United Nations has defined social welfare as "A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the amelioration of specific social evils." Such a goal inevitably leads to a shift of emphasis from the principles of *laissez-faire* to the concept of a Welfare State, the main characteristic of which is the assumption of the responsibility for the provision of minimum standards of economic and social security for all the citizens. This involves the obligation to guarantee the satisfaction of fundamental needs like food and shelter and security at minimal level, and render help to the individuals in adverse circumstances. The methods adopted for the satisfaction of these needs are of paramount importance and constitute the core of the social policy.

'Social welfare' has recently developed into a scientific programme. Poverty, sickness, suffering and social disorganisation have always been known to man in the long course of history of mankind; but after Industrial Revolution new social problems were created, which could not be faced by the older human institutions—family, neighbourhood and local community. In fact, this was not the situation only in industrial societies, particularly of the West, but such a situation is being created in the developing countries also. With the increasing realisation of the magnitude of the social problems, it was recognized that greater responsibility had to be assumed by the Government for the well-being of the citizens. Apart from the humanitarian aspect of it, the development of scientific knowledge provided new tools of investigating the causes of poverty, of human deficiencies and of dissatisfaction with the sole object to find out a remedy for the various social problems facing the society. Hence social welfare developed into a scientific concept based on a scientific knowledge of the problems facing the society, particularly in a free society, with the object of finding out ways of solving those problems. Friedlander defines social welfare as an "organized system of social service and institutions designed to aid individuals and groups to attain satisfying standards of life and health and personal and social relationships, which permit them to develop their full capacities and to promote their well-being in harmony with the needs of their families and the community."

Thus the essential object of social welfare is to enable the individual to lead a decent life in society along with his family with satisfying standards of life and health. Here I would like to differentiate between "social welfare", "social service", "social work" and "social security". The object of social welfare is to secure for each human being a comfortable standard of living, a decent standard of health and living conditions, equal opportunities with the fellow citizens and the highest possible degree of self-respect and freedom of thought and action that do not interfere with the same rights of others. It is an inherent right of every citizen born in a free society. By social security we understand a programme of protection provided by society against those contingencies

of life against which the individual cannot be expected to protect himself and his family by his own ability or foresight, such as sickness, unemployment, old age dependency, industrial accidents and invalidism. This goal of social protection is generally secured through the various forms of public assistance, social insurance and frequently preventive health and welfare services. These measures also constitute the core of social service. In short, social welfare services denote services intended to cater for the special needs of persons and groups who, by reason of some handicap, social, economic, physical or mental, are unable to avail themselves of, or are traditionally denied, the amenities and services provided by the community. Lastly, social work is both an essence and an art of rendering help to the needy. Social work draws its knowledge from all the social sciences and through a process of synthesis has developed into a science of its own. The essential object of social work is to help the needy people to help themselves. Social work has now become a profession.

However, the influence of sociology in this field cannot be ignored, since as Gunar Myrdal points out, "while there was little participation on the part of social sciences in actual technical preparation of legislation and still less in administering induced social change, their influence was nevertheless very considerable, and that this influence was due in the main to their exposition and propagation of certain general thoughts and theories." This particular influence of sociology has been through general studies of social development and surveys of living conditions in all strata or in certain groups. In all studies and surveys there is always a sociological core which should direct and inspire a whole mass of social investigations. What is, then, the sociological core? Henning Friis in his introductory paper on the Application of Sociology to Social Welfare Planning and Administration has summed them up as follows:

1. First is the study of the social forces which are active in shaping the demand for various forms of social welfare. In this connection the actual living conditions and economic structure are basic targets for study, but the social

attitudes and values related to social welfare and the institutionalisation of such values are very important.

2. Studies of living conditions of "problem groups" and their "needs" for social services have been the field of social welfare research, to which sociologists have given most attention. Whether studies of living conditions are dealing with "problem groups" or "normal families", the questions which are relevant to social welfare planning are those which are related to "needs" for services, met or unmet. The information gathered must be organised in such a way that the researcher can confront his factual material with various standards of income and services, specified by policy-makers, administrators or interested groups or suggested by himself.

3. It is possible to secure some information on the opinions held by the "consumers" and the "producers" of social services on preferred welfare standards. Such survey focuses attention on three types of data: (1) public knowledge on existing benefits and services; (2) public evaluation of the adequacy or inadequacy of these benefits and services; (3) expressed wishes for changes."

Thus whether it is the question of finding out the need for social welfare or the nature of it or the adequacy of what is being done in the nature of welfare, social research affords the answer. But at times forces may be encountered, which are openly or tacitly hostile to research topics which carry or appear to do so overt political implications or appear to threaten the authority of large-scale organisations. The growth of bureaucracy is one such force. Bureaucrats have one attitude in common, a self-assumed role and self-image of political neutrality. This is based on the assumption that administration, specially civil service, and to it may be added bureaucratised research services, can be wholly rational. This leads to create suspicion in the minds of the administrators regarding social research into contemporary problems done by independent agencies, particularly academic, whose findings may challenge the existing order or rationality of

structures and system. This danger is particularly great when bureaucracy is really strong, which creates a kind of 'peaceful conformity' among the masses, a situation what J.S. Mill has described as "the deep sleep of decided opinion." This creates a kind of conflict between 'professionalism' in social research and bureaucratisation of social research in the field of social welfare. In our country the Government, both at the Central and State levels, have tried to arrive at a solution of establishing a professionalised research service of their own. The Central Institute for the Studies and Research in Community Development at Mussoorie, Research Programmes Committee of the National Planning Commission, the Action and Planning Commission, the Action and Planning Research Institute at Lucknow and various Tribal Research Institutes are typical examples of such an enterprise.

But in this process of bureaucratisation of social research there is a lurking danger of self-complacency on the part of those who are engaged in social research in government service; for the bureaucrat soon gets accustomed to listen to his own voice or of his boss and considers himself to be superior to the rest. At least that is the tradition which seems to have been handed over by the British bureaucracy and may constitute the basis of the outlook of the present one. The danger may be particularly great in a society, which is fairly backward according to literacy standards and is tradition-bound, where the bureaucracy has been given a high social prestige and even constitutes the elite. Thus, government-sponsored research may give only a coloured view of the problem they intend to tackle. This danger is real and has to be looked into.

Social research may be defined as a scientific undertaking for solving or understanding a social problem, 'which, by means of logical and systematised methods, aims to discover new facts or verify old facts and to analyse their sequence, inter-relationship, causal explanations and the natural laws which govern them'. The primary goal of social research is to understand social life and thereby gain greater measure of control over it. In other words, social research is a method of studying, analysing, and conceptualizing social life in order to "extend, correct or verify knowledge,

whether that knowledge aids in the construction of a theory or in the practice of an art." This comprehensive approach to human problems can prove to be more fruitful if we cross boundaries, defined by various disciplines. This will also stimulate and extend the scope and predictive power of behaviour sciences, including all the specialities involved.

There are three main disciplines which may be considered the 'core of science' of human behaviour in society—namely, anthropology, psychology and sociology. The anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists have repeatedly found themselves treading the same path and have had to establish some kind of approach. Out of this situation has emerged the realisation that all the disciplines have many mutual problems, though they may be approached from different points of view. All of them deal with human behaviour, though their focal points are different. The sociologists are mainly concerned with the relation between 'actor' and 'situation' comprising 'social objects'. Thus their frame of reference is *social interaction*. The anthropologists focus their study on 'culturally organised action and patternised behaviour', while the psychologists lay stress upon individual rather than social action and confine themselves to individual motivations and behavioural traits. In other words all these social sciences find themselves in each other's company in some way or the other. The question, therefore, arises: Cannot the integrated approach prove more rewarding than the approaches of single discipline?

It is suggested that there should be some kind of unification of social sciences, which need not necessarily lead to scientific authoritarianism. As Gillin has suggested: "In approaching the possibilities of interdisciplinary collaboration, we propose, if the figure be appropriate, not a Monolithic State but rather a Federal Union of the specialities dealing scientifically with human behaviour in society. In such a Federal Union the several member disciplines would be able to pool their scientific resources for the solution of certain problems requiring multidisciplinary treatment, while maintaining a species of 'State's Rights' that would guarantee full freedom for each member to attend to concerns that seem to be of more specialised interest." Thus, collaboration in social research

does not in any way infringe upon autonomy of the established disciplines nor hinder such research with new findings that are discovered by those equipped with theoretical guidance and technical knowledge peculiar to their respective specialities.

In social research, attention is mainly focussed on areas of social problems, that is, situations defined as unfortunate particularly when commonsense efforts and corrections have failed and more precise knowledge is needed. Thus, in interdisciplinary social research, one is compelled to start with a situation which needs an explanation instead of abstract questions which need an answer. It is, therefore, obvious that interdisciplinary approach covers the entire field of human behaviour in society.

Its main concern is the social man and all that he stands for. Such an approach is nothing new in the field of social studies. Parsons derives specific laws from several dimensions and explains social interaction as embedded symbol meaning systems, which may be transmitted between various systems of action. Kluckhohn explains human behaviour in terms of value orientations which are related to human problems of key importance. These include the innate dispositions of man, the relation of man to nature, the significance of the time dimension, the modality of activity most valued and the dominant modality of man's relations to other men. Kluckhohn shows how these five orientations can be used as a means of categorizing various societies. Again, Thomson contends that social systems must be viewed as a multi-dimensional pattern in the space-time of which it is a part. But all of them agree on the integrated nature of human action or behaviour which can be understood only by crossing various boundaries.

However, considerable confusion is created by using the some terms, though in different context, by the various disciplines. All the social disciplines feel that they have some understanding of such terms as culture trait, complex, culture area, ideal pattern, behaviour pattern, acculturation, material culture, cultural integration, social system and so on, yet a good deal of controversy prevails among all of them as to the exact meaning and content of these various terms. But a general

fringe work of theory for the study of social man can provide a setting to arrive at a clear understanding of the various terms used in all the disciplines. This, again, necessitates inter-disciplinary approach in the study of social problems.

In India, after regaining Independence, there has been a wide-spread awakening among the people and greater realisation of the social and economic problems which confront the people. Greater emphasis on community projects and other welfare activities has also accelerated this process. And, thus greater demands are being made on social scientists to devote more attention to the study of manifold problems that arise out of the crucial changes that are taking place in the country. Thus, social research assumes a greater significance. Should this research be segmented or integrated? This needs revaluation in our concept of social research as applicable to Indian conditions. For what is needed is the harnessing of our research competence to problems of rehabilitation and social reconstruction. The best suited research methodology can only be an inter-disciplinary approach under the existing circumstances.

Before an integrated approach in social research is made possible, it is necessary that 'integration must be achieved in the minds of collaborators'. It may entail a different orientation of a social scientist to acquire a fuller understanding and realisation of an integrated approach. His academic training and acumen, his active participation in understanding of the convergences and differences of various social sciences, should be such that it leads to a clear understanding of the unified science of human behaviour. This experiment has been very successfully tried in the Harvard University Department of Social Relations under the inspiring leadership of Parsons and his associates and promises to be fruitful, if tried in India; for in the final analysis we find that while dealing with complex social problems, they have to be studied in all their individual aspects as well as in their entirety. In the words of Brightman, "Frontiers are necessary; and frontiers must be crossed." It is, therefore, not intended to suggest that there should be no specialised studies by individual discipline. But in an integrated approach what one discipline lacks the other would apply. This also implies that the social

scientist must be aware of his own frontiers before crossing the frontiers of others. In short, he has to be a competent specialist in his field and a competent generalist having a sound grounding of the theory and techniques of other social sciences.

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