ANATOMY OF PROGRESS

FOREWORD

Social reform has hitherto been considered as a desirable objective and an end in itself. It is also generally known that economic changes, such as industrialization, will bring about social changes in their wake. But that social environment exercises an influence on economic progress and may accelerate or retard development depending upon whether it is conducive or not is not generally realised. The hypothesis put forward in this book is-that the present social environment is one of the limiting factors to economic growth in India. In this respect, this book advances the same thesis as my previous book Productivity and Social Environment. But it takes the idea a step further in analyzing the causes of the present environment to their historic and religious sources in order that social and religious reform may be attempted in a meaningful manner. Some of the new attitudes that have developed in the post-independence period have also been considered in relation to national progress.

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INTRODUCTION

Time does not stand still
To anyone but the dead;
All things in life change, grow
And are changed by Time;
Only death confers immunity
From Time and change;
Only death confers immortality.

1

There has been a controversy in India in recent years as to the economic progress that has been achieved since Independence. The controversy has been intensified during the period of acute recession in the years 1965, 1966 and 1967, and figured prominently in the 1967 elections. The result of the elections, in which the Congress lost its majority in a number of States and had it drastically reduced at the Centre, is an indication of the degree of dissatisfaction in the country with regard to the progress that has been achieved in the previous twenty years. Mrs. Gandhi's great victory in the 1971 elections is merely an indication of the hope that people have in the new radicalism that she has tried to project and does not reflect any satisfaction with past performance.

The Government spokesmen naturally claim that great strides have been made in various fields. They quote impressive figures to show the extent of industrialization, the number of acres that have been brought under irrigation, the improvement in the percentage of literacy, the reduction in infant mortality rate and the increase in the average expectation of life. They point to the various social legislative measures enacted to give protection to the weaker sections of the community in order to ensure an orderly evolution of society. According to them, recession is the result of a number of adverse factors over which Government had no control.

The critics on the other hand, blame the government and its policies for the increase in unemployment, for the economic distress of large sections of the people, for the failure to achieve self-reliance and for the continuing dependence on foreign aid. They refer to the mounting burden of external debt and maintain that whatever progress has been achieved has been only at an exorbitant cost. According to them, the government should have foreseen the coming of the recession and planned to avoid it, or at least tried to minimize its effects instead of merely blaming adverse factors.

There is perhaps some truth in the contentions of both the optimists who support the government and the pessimists who are opposed to it. There is no doubt that the infra-

structure that has been built over the past two decades has been quite impressive. In the development of irrigation, roads, and railways, electricity, coal, and iron, and in the establishment of scientific and engineering institutions, the growth has been particularly good. Without this basic infra-structure, further development would not be possible. But in terms of growth rate of consumer goods and services, particularly with regard to basic requirements, the progress has been poor. Further, the infra-structure has been built, perhaps at an exorbitantly high cost. For example, in some of the public sector enterprises the input-output ratio has been no higher than 2:1. If better use had been made of our engineers and technologists and if more efficient organizational methods had been evolved to meet the growing requirements of the economy, the additional cost could have been probably reduced. Further, if greater attention had been paid to consumer requirements-especially with regard to food production—the seriousness of the recession might have been lessened.

But this controversy, even at its best, has remained at a political or economic level. Though there are frequent references to social progress, the discussion has not gone deeply into the problems of social change or social stagnation. This is perhaps natural, since economic indicators such as production, gross national product, unemployment, and so on, are measurable in mathematical terms and lend themselves easily to statistical treatment. Their growth or otherwise can be easily assessed and the causes analysed and commented upon, though the comments might vary according to one's political thinking or according to whether one is in the Government or in the Opposition. Social progress and its effect on economic growth on the other hand do not lend itself to such measurement and analysis. It depends on one's beliefs and aspirations, sense of values, relationships between people, attitudes, and patterns of behaviour. People are members of a society and have a status and they tend to look upon social changes in terms of their own ambitions. Because of this subjective nature, it is difficult to use sociological factors as a basis to prove or disprove anything in the political arena. In any case, politicians are not very much interested in social change except as an adjunct to political philosophy.

2

The idea that the state is responsible for the economic and social welfare of its citizens is of recent origin. Throughout history, the responsibility of governments and rulers towards their subjects was confined primarily to protecting them from external aggression and internal disorder. The social and economic betterment of their citizens was at best a vague and ill-defined objective and was largely dependent on the idiosyncrasies of the individual ruler. This is not to say that the welfare of the people was ignored by the rulers of the past. There have been many rulers, both in Europe and Asia, who spent considerable time and money in building or improving canals for irrigation and transport, or helped trade and commerce through their foreign policy or through conquest. They built churches and

temples and helped religious orders in order to preserve the spiritual and social welfare of their subjects. The large number of choultries in India with endowments, and the wealth of temples bear witness to the generosity of the rulers and their interest in their people. The protection to the poor and the lowly for whom these institutions catered was a form of social service at a time when there were no other agencies to cater to these needs. But such services were voluntary and based on the wisdom and munificence of the ruler rather than a primary responsibility of his government.

But during the last few hundred years, a new social philosophy has been evolved, which has enlarged the responsibilities of the State towards its citizens. The seeds of this philosophy are to be found in the ideas of social philosophers of the post-renaissance period in Europe. They were further nurtured by the French revolution. The growth of democracy and the rights of the individual meant government by consent, and not by divine right. The industrial revolution and the development of science and technology vastly improved the means of production and increased the resources of those nations. If properly utilized, these resources could raise the standard of living of the people. To begin with the organisation of trade unions and their demands led to State intervention in regulating hours of work, safety in factories, conditions of working, wages etc. Gradually, social and political pressures on the one hand and economic circumstances on the other necessitated the direction of economic activity by the State through fiscal and monetary policies and through active participation in the promotion of industries and through advanced social legislation.

This philosophy has today permeated the thinking of the common men throughout the world. The idea that the State is primarily responsible for the economic and social well-being of its citizens has taken roots among the most backward and illiterate people. Even the most ardent supporters of free enterprise in capitalist countries concede the role of the State in promoting economic activity at the national level. The same philosophy has also been the mainspring of activity in the communist countries, though politically it has been arrived at by a different route. The idea that the State is primarily responsible for economic development is now accepted by all forms of government. Conversely, any failure or setback on the economic front such as slumps, unemployment, etc., is also laid at the door of the government or the party in power, particularly by the opposition parties.

3

Ever since India became independent in 1947, the nation has been making a conscious and deliberate effort towards economic and social development. It has had a democratic government elected by the people, which had set before itself certain specific economic goals and strived to achieve them through a policy of planning, control, and direction of the economic activity of the nation. That is, the responsibility for the well-being of the people has been assumed by the State. Though the glamour of this policy has faded in

recent years, in the beginning at least, the people were certainly enthusiastic about it, and a large measure of voluntary co-operation was forthcoming.

In starting life as an independent nation, India began with certain handicaps. The Second World War had placed a great burden on her economy in the form of shortage of food, industrial equipment and spare parts and even certain raw materials. Her transport system was strained to the utmost because of its use in transporting troops and war materials to Burma and other places. The sense of impending invasion by Japan was followed by a sense of frustration at the haggling of political parties. The war had raised people's aspirations, and there was a feeling of disappointment at the delay in the fulfilment of those aspirations.

And then, with independence came partition. The newly independent nation had to deal with the tremendous problems posed by the influx of millions of refugees and the tensions created as a result of the massacre of minorities. While the political repercussions of partition were uppermost in the minds of the people and the government, its economic consequences were to be felt soon. The economy of the sub-continent had been integrated over a period of centuries. The different parts of the country were commercially inter-dependent. For example, Jute from East Bengal was consumed by mills in Calcutta; and cotton from West Punjab was utilized by mills in Bombay. But after partition, while nearly 30 percent of the cotton growing areas and a major portion of the jute growing areas went to Pakistan, almost all the jute and the cotton mills remained in India, short of vital raw materials.

The integration of a large number of Indian States, each with its own laws and customs, presented another major problem for the new government. It was particularly difficult with the largest of the States---Hyderabad—intransigent and unco-operative. Under these circumstances, the achievement of the full integration of Indian States was a landmark in Indian history.

With Independence, the aspirations of the people rose. They automatically expected a better life. Workmen wanted better wages; industrialists and agriculturists hoped for better prices; merchants, better profits. And when their hopes did not materialize or materialize to the extent of their expectations, they agitated. This was particularly true of industrial workers who were better organized than most, and were more conscious of their rights as also numerically strong. At least one political party tried to make political capital out of such discontent by resorting to violent activities.

That the government was able to overcome most of these problems, enact a democratic constitution and conduct the largest general election in history within five years of Independence is a clear indication that wisdom and competence were not wanting at the highest levels of leadership.

While all these handicaps were there, nevertheless, India started her independent life with a number of advantages and under excellent auspices. Independence was not the result of a bloody struggle leaving behind the ravages of war, but the outcome of an agreement by which British withdrew in a dignified and orderly manner. With the exception of some of the border areas adjoining Pakistan, the change was smooth and almost went unnoticed except for the celebrations and the hauling down of the Union Jack and the hoisting of the Tricolour. The officials continued to be the same; there was no difference either in the laws or in the administration. Consequently, the country inherited a good and efficient administrative system and an impartial judiciary. There was a fairly well developed transport system in the Indian railways. While many of the senior British civil servants retired, there were others equally competent to take their place. India had also accumulated a store of sterling balances during the war which she could use for economic and industrial development.

There was also a fund of goodwill for India in almost all countries of the world. The Western world in general and the United States in particular, were eager that India should develop as a democracy and provide a stabilising influence in Asia. The defeated nations—Germany and Japan—were grateful for India's stand with regard to the trial of war criminals and reparations. Japan was particularly so because of the role played by Netaji Subash Chandra Bose during the war years. China, still under the nominal control of Chiang Kai-Shek, was a traditional friend of India. The communist countries, notably the Soviet Union, which had originally characterized Gandhiji civil disobedience movement as a capitalist struggle, were beginning to have second thoughts on Nehru's government. Nehru's stature as a world statesman and his earnest desire for peace found an echo in most countries of the world. All this friendship towards India was reflected in the fact that Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit was elected as the President of the United Nations Organisation in the early years of its inception.

Because of this fund of goodwill that existed throughout the world, and because of the policy of the Indian Government in seeking foreign aid for industrial development of the country, a considerable amount of aid has poured into India during the last two decades. The volume of such aid had been increasing year by year, and has often been limited only by the fact that India has been unable to utilize it fully. While the United States has been the largest contributor of such aid, other countries also have contributed to various projects.

Such aid has been instrumental in developing irrigation and power projects, agriculture, industries of various types, technical education, etc. It has made a significant impact on the progress that has been achieved so far. Besides, there have been other types of aid such as the P.L. 480 which has been utilized for the purchase of agricultural commodities which have been in short supply in India, like wheat and cotton. Further, many voluntary agencies such as the Ford Foundation, the British Council, etc., have also been helpful in specific areas like education, and industrial and scientific training.

In addition, both in the private and in the public sectors, foreign companies have collaborated with Indian firms in establishing new industries. Usually, the foreign collaborators have provided the technical know-how, machinery and equipment as part of their capital investment or as loans. They have also been responsible for training Indian technicians abroad and for sending their own specialists for installing and running the plants in the early stages. Such collaboration has enabled India to acquire some of the most sophisticated plants in the world in certain industries.

As a result of such help from abroad and as a result of the use of resources within the country, a considerable amount of progress has been achieved in the last two decades. There has been a broadening of the industrial base with the starting of a number of basic industries. In many areas of industrial production, India is not only self-sufficient, but is in a position to export her goods. In recent years, items such as machine tools, bicycles, textile machinery, etc., have been exported, though as yet, only in small quantities. Such difficult and complicated items as aircraft, radios and television sets are now produced within the country.

There has also been a rapid expansion of technical education within the country. The percentage of literacy has gone up considerably during this period. There are about four hundred engineering institutions within the country turning out a large number of engineers and technicians every year. There has also been a rapid expansion of social services, particularly medical services. Even villages in remote areas boast of dispensaries and trained midwives. As a result, infant mortality has shown a sharp decline, and the average expectation of life has gone up. Since the birth rate has not decreased appreciably, this has meant a greater increase in population growth. A large spate of legislation has also been enacted which gives protection to industrial workers, agricultural tenants, backward classes, and so on.

In spite of all this development that has undoubtedly taken place, the fact remains that during the years 1965 to 1967, India had been facing an extremely difficult economic situation with acute food shortage, rapid rise in the cost of living and stagnation in industrial production. Agricultural production had also fallen during this period with the result that agro-based industries such as cotton, sugar, jute, etc., had been hit by the shortage of raw materials, and the cost of their products had been higher than international prices. Thus, we have had the unusual phenomenon of a recession accompanied by a rise in the cost of consumer goods. The prices went up at a time when the common people were least able to afford such rise. Because of the same reason, it had become more and more difficult to export. This was the situation which led to the devaluation of rupee. There had also been an acute and prolonged foreign exchange crisis, and it had been extremely difficult to import much needed raw materials and spare parts for the existing industries. While the nation was getting over the recession and was hoping for a break-through on the economic front, the massive influx of Bangladesh refugees has created another serious set back to the economy.

How has this situation developed? How is it that in spite of the developments that have taken place in the past two decades, India has been in such a difficult situation? This is difficult to understand for the common man.

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There are of course a number of political and economic reasons which are very relevant and which explain this state of affairs. In the first place, India was attacked by her neighbours, by China in 1962 and by Pakistan in 1965. The threat still continues. Ever since 1962, therefore, a greater proportion of India's resources had necessarily to be diverted to defence requirements. It has meant that to that extent, developmental activities have had to be curtailed. Secondly, there was a failure of the monsoon in most parts of India during the years 1965 and 1966. In spite of all the irrigation facilities that have been made available, Indian agriculture is still largely dependent on the vagaries of the monsoon, and therefore failure of rains resulted in a lowering of production during those two years and a rapid increase in prices. In a country where more than 75 per cent of the population depend on agriculture and where agricultural commodities account for a large percentage of the Gross National product, any failure in the agricultural sector is bound to upset economic stability in the industrial sector also.

Thirdly, a number of imbalances had developed in the economy due either to faulty planning or to the failure of certain projects or areas of economic activity to keep up to scheduled times of completion. Thus, we find that a number of industries have been set up in certain areas and power supply in those areas is not adequate for the industrial capacity with the result that all industries have had to curtail production. In certain other areas, even existing industries are not assured of uninterrupted power supply. Raw materials for certain industries were supposed to be available within the country by the time they were ready for production, but for some reason or other, they have not been available. The acute shortage of cotton in the years 1970/71 with no prospects of improvement has up-set the stability and progress of the textile industry, increased the price of cloth for the consumer and seriously hampered exports. The law of supply and demand does not operate freely in a controlled economy, and the imbalances had not been set right quickly and in some cases, not been set right at all. As time goes on, these disparities go on multiplying, leading to more and more wastage of industrial effort.

Then, there are other factors such as the high level of taxation--both direct and indirect--which has meant that savings in the private sector have been drastically reduced with the result that new companies that are established or old companies which go in for expansion, modernization or diversification have to depend mostly on financial institutions for their capital requirements. Further, while production has been unsteady and haphazard during these years, the population has been rising at a steady pace of about 2 percent per

annum aggravating the already acute economic situation. In the ultimate analysis, control of population may be the most important single factor in improving the standard of living in India.

While these factors may explain, to some extent, the difficult economic situation, one might be tempted to ask, “Is it not the responsibility of the government, the policy makers and the economists to foresee some of these problems and to provide for them in their policies and plans? Is it not their duty to avoid periods of economic depression by suitable measures, or if they cannot be avoided, at least to minimize their effects when they occur?”

But more important than all these, one might also be tempted to ask, “Are there not other factors which have retarded growth but for which India’s progress might have been more rapid?”

5

Perhaps, a brief look at other countries which have recently made attempts at progress might be of some help in understanding the situation in India.

The countries that were defeated during the Second world War-Germany and Japan – have shown remarkable powers of recovery. The end of the War found their economies completely devastated. Most of their industries had been destroyed by allied bombing. Their currency became valueless. There was acute shortage of food as well as essential raw materials required to rebuild their industries and start them working. They had no foreign exchange resources to buy these commodities and the victors had the responsibility of feeding them. Their leaders had been put on trial and most of them were jailed or executed. The youth of these countries was sacrificed in the war and those who survived were defeated and demoralized. And they had to face a hostile world which treated them rather as outcasts.

Yet, from this position of acute economic distress, they have been able to rebuild their economies and their industries so that within a period of two decades, they were able to achieve a high standard of living, a stable economy, a good export trade and practically no unemployment. In fact, the growth of West Germany has been hailed as the German miracle and many books have been written on the subject.

But it can be rightly argued that progress in India should not be compared with what had happened in these two countries. Though Germany and Japan were practically destroyed as a result of the war, they were already advanced countries with considerable industrial potential and an industrial memory which they could put to good use. Though war destroyed the physical resources of these two nations, the knowledge and skill of their people could not be obliterated and that was responsible for their rapid growth. Further, in

the early years after the war, the allied powers had to undertake the responsibility, not only of feeding them but also of providing the necessary means for economic revival so that they might not be a permanent drag on the occupation powers. These nations did not have to spend any money on defence and even now, their defence expenditure in terms of their total revenue is very small. The large expenditure incurred by the occupation forces also helped to revive the economy to some extent.

They were defeated and humiliated. Their leaders were tried as war criminals and sentenced. What was worse, they had to receive sustenance and succour from their erstwhile enemies in rebuilding their economies. They received it because there was no other alternative. But they were also proud and determined that they would do without such help at the earliest possible opportunity. Their aim was to be self-reliant, and to discard such help. It was a national ambition and they worked towards it with discipline and resolution. No other objective was allowed to stand in the way of this, and they achieved it in the shortest possible time.

From the foregoing, it is clear that one of the major factors in economic progress is the level of knowledge and skill that a nation possesses. The other requisite seems to be the united, co-operative and disciplined effort of the whole nation towards a common national objective. In any consideration of the factors that have retarded India's progress, it would be worthwhile assessing how far India has been able to fulfil the two conditions mentioned above.

While it might be unfair to compare the development of Japan and Germany to the progress made in India, China is a country that is comparable with India. In terms of size, population, educational standards and industrial capacity, these two countries were fairly similar in 1947. But China had none of the advantages that India had when the communists came to power in 1949. That country had been torn by war, civil war and revolution intermittently for the previous fifty years. Parts of China were occupied by Japan from 1931 onwards. She did not have the peace and stability that India had enjoyed for the previous one hundred and fifty years. Her economy was completely damaged and she did not have a modern transport system to speak of. When the communists took over in 1949, the entire structure of government had to be reorganized according to the communist pattern. While China got some help from Russia in the initial stages, she has received no assistance from any quarter since, say, 1960. Certainly, the quantum of aid she might have received from Soviet Union is probably nowhere near what India has received in the last two decades from abroad. Nor did China have a substantial amount of foreign exchange that India had when she attained her Independence.

And yet, in spite of all these handicaps, many neutral observers agree that China's progress has been more spectacular than that of India, that her economy is stronger, her industrial capacity greater and her military, superior.

Here again, it seems that the factors responsible for rapid progress have been not so much foreign aid in the form of technical know-how or capital equipment, as the disciplined and co-operative hard work. What has been achieved through skill and voluntary self-dedication in Japan and Germany has been achieved through fanaticism and a sense of mission of the leaders who have imposed compulsion and an iron discipline on the nation.

Or, let us take a small country like Israel, created out of the chaos and confusion of the Second World War. It was a strip of desert, unfertile for the most part and uninviting to anyone except for religious, historic or archeological interest. To this small strip of inhospitable land came Jews from all over the world from the concentration camps of Belsen and Buchewald, from the ghettos of central and Eastern Europe, from the slums of the Middle East. They spoke different languages, hailed from different strata of society, and had different educational levels and cultural backgrounds. There were among them, sophisticated business and professional men from Western Europe and peasants who lived at the same level of culture and social organisation as in the days of the Old Testament. Yet, out of these diverse elements and over a span of less than two decades, they have been able to create a small, but strong and united nation which was able to humble the combined might of the Arab world in a matter of six days. They have turned barren desert into a blooming land, established industries, developed science and created a new culture. Men who had never held a plough or a sword in their hands for the last two thousand years have proved to be among the best farmers and soldiers in the world.

How has this been achieved? No doubt money poured in from the United States, and it helped to give them a good start. The highly skilled and professional men from Europe were able to impart their skill to others, the smallness of whose numbers facilitated the accomplishment of this task in a short period of time. While these factors might have contributed to their rapid development, above all it is the determination, the singleness of purpose and courage that have enabled them to achieve success to their national endeavour. They were resolved never again to be a nation without a home, never again to suffer the humiliations, persecutions and tortures of the past thousand years. It is perhaps this single factor, more than any other that has been responsible for their success. Secondly, they had competent and dedicated men as leaders, not only at the highest level, but at all levels of society. Cultured and sophisticated men, used to a high standard of life, were prepared to give it up, live with the farmers and peasants in improvised camps, teach them the knowledge that they possessed with no thought of personal gain or reward. It is such leadership at the lower levels of society that inspires confidence, arouses enthusiasm, gives people a sense of fulfilment and relates each man’s small contribution to the overall national objective. India has not been fortunate in having such dedicated leadership at the lower levels.

These four nations considered above have different historical backgrounds, different national characteristics, varying levels of education and culture and different political systems. Diverse social and economic factors have been in operation in each of them. Yet, they have all achieved fairly rapid economic development. While the factors that have contributed to this growth in each case are different, one single factor that is common to all emerges. It is passion. It is not the logical reasoning of scientists, economists or politicians on the need for economic development that has provided the necessary motivating force for the common people. The drive has been forthcoming from a passionate desire to wipe out the past, to create a new world for themselves in which they would have self-respect, honour and a sense of common identity, instead of the humiliations and sufferings of the past. In achieving great things, either by individuals or by nations, such passionate longing is an essential ingredient of success. It is passion that makes people sacrifice themselves for a cause and subordinate personal or narrow group interests to the larger national objectives. It is passion that makes people achieve the impossible. Intellectual conviction by itself can never provide the drive that is necessary for progress in the midst of obstacles, frustration and confusion. It is only strong emotional conviction backed by courage and determination that can achieve great things. Where such passion exists, the intellect can be used to determine the right course of action, the allocation of priorities, the correct strategy, and so on. But without such passion, intellectual discussion often has a tendency to degenerate into a sterile argument.

Unfortunately, whatever else India might or might not possess, passion is the one element that has been lacking in its desire for economic development. We are not a nation without a home like the Jews; we had not undergone sufferings and tortures like them for centuries. We were not humiliated and defeated in war as were the Japanese and the Germans. We had not a blot on our national conscience like the post-war Germans for the persecution of millions in Europe which we wanted to erase from our memory. Though some of us were rather ashamed of the social evils like untouchability, we could always satisfy our consciences saying that we had made them illegal in our Constitution. Even the fight for independence was highly polite and civilized affair with both sides observing decorum and dignity. It was more like a test match at Lords, or the C.C.I. in Bombay, than a struggle between two nations. Finally, when Britain withdrew from India, there were no feelings of hatred or bitterness; we congratulated each other on a fine performance and remained good friends. Unfortunately, in the progress of nations, an element of physical suffering, violence and bitterness seems to be a necessary ingredient for further progress. Threat of war creates more passions and brings about better unity than the threat of starvation does.

Nor has there been a great national hero who has come to stir men’s minds and hearts with a religious fervour. Nehru spoke of the new dams and factories as India’s temples, but

in spite of the great affection with which he was held by the mass of the people, he was unable to create for economic development, a passion in the country. Except for brief moments in 1962 when China attacked India and in 1965 during the time of Pakistani aggression—a national enthusiasm for a cause has been sadly lacking. Recently, such passions have been aroused on regional, local or linguistic issues. These passions have been fanned and nurtured by the very people who profess to have the national interests at heart. The interaction between the needs and demands of a group and the needs of a political party to gain popularity and win elections has been largely responsible for such a situation. It is also a reflection on the quality of leadership in the country at the regional and local levels. Whatever may be the outcome of these agitations, unless and until India is able to identify herself with a great national cause that will provide the necessary momentum and enthusiasm and a mission to inspire her people, economic development is bound to be slow and halting.

7

The resources of a nation particularly, the resources of a country like India, are limited and there are many demands on them. Therefore, allocation of priorities is essential. The resources can be in the form of money, man-power, technology and organisation. A brief assessment of these four factors as they exist in India may be of some value to this discussion.

In spite of the apparent luxury that one sees in Indian cities, money, that is, capital resource is extremely scarce in India. Capital is the accumulated savings of people's labour, but because of poor productivity, low wages and large scale unemployment, the vast majority of the people in India are unable to save. Those who are able to do so are a very small proportion of society and these savings are nowhere near adequate for national requirements. These requirements may be estimated as follows: To employ one individual economically, it is necessary to find capital worth about 20,000 rupees. Here, the crucial word is 'economically'. It means, first, that the individual working in the industry will be able to earn a minimum wage for all the necessities of life. Secondly, it will be possible to pay a reasonable interest on the invested capital and thirdly, the industry will be able to turn out a useful product or a needed service at reasonable cost to the consumer. These conditions can only be fulfilled by an investment of about 20,000 rupees per employed person. It may vary from industry to industry and may be taken only as a rough average. But what is important to note is that this figure is increasing year by year, partly because of the rapid development of technology and partly because of the increase in the cost of capital goods. Statistics in India are not very accurate and often out of date, and the number of unemployed often depends on one's political conviction. But it may be roughly estimated that there are between fifty and eighty million people with no work. Therefore, the capital that would be required to employ all these people at 20,000 rupees per head is quite

staggering! And this money has to be found in addition to that normally needed for administration, social services, law and order, defence and so on.

Attempts have been made in other countries—particularly in totalitarian States—to overcome the deficiency in money by other means. These methods include the use of compulsory labour, reduced use of mechanization in order to reduce capital cost, and so on. But in a democratic society some of these methods may not be possible though the use of labour intensive methods has been in vogue in India. But in the ultimate analysis, it is capital formation that plays a very crucial role.

India has huge reserves of man-power and it is about the only resource that has been registering a steady increase. But at present at any rate, it is liability rather than an asset. The people of India are largely illiterate and untrained in any of the skills that an industrial society needs. Some of the craftsmen possess exquisite skills, but these are the skills of a by-gone age and—except in the case of a few handicrafts—not suited to modern requirements. For the rest of the people engaged in agriculture, their skills are traditional, their attitude is negative and their productivity is low. To convert millions of these people into skilled industrial workers with a positive approach to productivity and a desire to rise in the social scale will be the greatest social revolution in India for many centuries. While the revolution has already started, it does not seem to have acquired the necessary momentum to attain quick results. Meanwhile, lack of skilled man-power on the one hand, and an excess of unskilled people demanding the attention of the State on the other continue to be a bottle-neck in economic development.

Economic development depends on large-scale industrialization. This again is dependent on knowledge of science and technology in various fields. Until quite recently, science and technology were not highly developed in India. Even today, there are many gaps in our knowledge in this respect. We still have to depend on other countries for quite a lot of technical know-how. But quite apart from knowledge of science and technology, what is important is the development of a spirit of enquiry and logical reasoning. It is such a spirit that promotes the growth of scientific knowledge, helps the development of new ideas and facilitates the implementation of those ideas not only in industry but in all walks of life. What is essential, therefore, is not only to have a few brilliant engineers or scientists at the top, but for every worker, foreman or technician to introduce a large number of minor innovations that constantly improve quality and productivity. The number of patents taken out in India through Indian innovation is very small in comparison with the total population. The social conditions in India are such that a spirit of enquiry has not yet permeated among the large masses of people and until that happens, the development of new ideas, either scientific or technological, is bound to be slow.

Industrial and economic development necessarily means the growth of large organisations. Whatever the form of government a country has, the modern State has adequate means at its disposal today for controlling and directing the activities of its citizens

into desired channels. The powers of the great rulers of the past are infinitesimal when compared to the power of a modern State. The means of communication, transport and propaganda are powerful media in the exercise of that power. In spite of these vast resources at its disposal, a government cannot implement its policies without taking other factors into consideration. Further, in a democratic society implementation has to be through persuasion rather than by compulsion. Such implementation involves vast numbers of people whose interests, aspirations and ambitions are not always the same. They may even be conflicting. The larger the number, the greater the number of conflicts are likely to be.

To illustrate this point by an example, if there are two people involved in a relationship, say wife and husband, Mr. and Mrs. A, there is only one relationship. If, however, Mr. A were unfortunate enough to have two wives, then there are three relationships, between Mr. A and Mrs. A1, between Mr. A and Mrs. A2 and last but not the least, between Mrs. A1 Mrs. A2. Similarly, if there were four partners in a business, there will be six relationships. It follows therefore that as the number of people involved increases in numerical proportion, the number of relationships increases at a faster rate. It means that the number of conflicts between people is also likely to increase in the same proportion unless there is identity of views or a common frame work of understanding.

In modern society, implementation of economic policies involves large numbers of people. They are implemented through large organisations. In such organisations where many people have to work together, the efficiency depends not only on the knowledge and skill of the people, but even more on their ability to accept the broad objectives of the organisation and to co-operate for their success. If there are too many conflicts, too much non-co-operation, then, the policy is ineffective and the aims are not achieved. It is obvious, therefore, that for the success of any economic policy, it should be broadly accepted by the nation as well as by the people involved in its implementation.

If we think of India as a vast organisation struggling to achieve economic progress, it is extremely doubtful if, as a nation, we have accepted the need for development as an over-riding national objective to be persevered above all others. Even to many knowledgeable people, other minor or regional issues are more important than national development. Although economic progress is accepted, the methodology is questioned either in terms of ideology or in terms of region, or in terms of strategy. The single-minded determination, the whole-hearted enthusiasm witnessed in the other nations, discussed in the previous section, has been sadly lacking.

Based on these four resources, namely, money, man-power, technology and organisation, the strategy of economic development should be evolved. In planning such a

policy, it has to be realistic, consistent and capable of successful implementation. Realism in this context means taking into account, not only the needs of a given situation, but even more, the resources available. One can stretch one's resources to the utmost in order to achieve maximum fulfilment, but it is not advisable to stretch them beyond that point. Any attempt to do so would result in wastage of resources, because, too many people are competing for the same resources, and it is not always the most needed people or projects that get them, but those who are politically more powerful. This naturally leads to a feeling of animosity and non co-operation between groups. But such things are bound to happen, because in democratic societies it is not the leader who promises modestly and also fulfils his word but the one who makes tall promises and then tries to find excuses for not having achieved them that becomes popular.

Secondly, the mass of the population should be in sympathy with the policy followed by the State and there should be enthusiastic co-operation between the State and its citizens. This relationship is an extremely subtle one. It depends not so much on politics, as on a psychological understanding of each other. It demands from the leaders, a true understanding of the needs and aspirations of the people and giving expression to them in a meaningful manner. The leaders should be able to understand and interpret the effect of their policies on individuals and groups and be able to give subtle direction to people's thoughts and attitudes. They should be careful to eliminate, or at least minimize, rivalries and conflicts not only among their followers but in the country at large. And the people should have a high degree of confidence and trust in the leaders.

Thirdly, the progress made by a society depends to a very large extent on its capacity to change-to change its institutions, to change social relationships as well as its sense of values. The capacity for adjustment to a constantly changing environment is a very desirable trait in any society, but it is essential to a nation which sets before itself the goal of rapid economic and social growth. A society that is conservative that is sure of its own virtues and resists change in spite of evidence to the contrary cannot progress.

In the march of a nation towards social progress and economic betterment, a number of other factors also play a part. The ability to progress is a complex phenomenon that depends not only on policies and resources, but also on the relationship between government and people on the one hand and between groups and individuals on the other. It depends on the objectives a nation sets before itself, the enthusiasm that is generated and the single-minded determination with which they are pursued.

From the foregoing brief discussion, it is obvious that economic progress depends not only on capital investment, technical knowhow, and foreign aid and so on, but also on other factors which may be sociological, psychological, or even spiritual in character. The nature of a society and the nature of its internal relationships are perhaps just as important in the long run. Progress depends on the unity of objectives that a society has and the enthusiasm and the single mindedness with which it pursues those objectives. The economic

development is also influenced by the sacrifice that is demanded of a people, the rewards that are offered, and the manner in which enthusiasm is generated and retained and criticism is met. The capacity of a society to change according to the needs of a situation and yet to retain its inherent strength and stability is also an important factor. The spiritual background and the ethical concepts and the attitudes that arise out of that background seem to persist generation after generation in spite of political, social and economic changes, and influence and modify the changes that take place and consequently affect progress. Finally, the way in which a society meets adversity and misfortune and emerges out of it has a profound impact on further developments.

It is not the aim of this book to participate in, or to contribute to, the controversy with regard to India's economic development. Objective norms for economic progress are extremely difficult to lay down, and even more difficult to apply because no two situations are identical. It is also easy to have 'hind-sight', and say what ought to have been done under given circumstances long after the circumstances have changed and the results are known.

The thesis put forward in the book is this; economic progress and social change are intimately related. Though they may be distinct and separate, one has a profound influence on the other and to consider one without taking the other into account would be misleading. Economic progress depends not only on policies such as investment, industrialization, allocation of economic priorities, foreign aid and so on, but also on the nature of a society and its internal relationships, its aspirations and sense of values. If this thesis is accepted, it follows that any inhibitive factors in Indian society would naturally hamper economic growth. Because of the background, historical circumstances and a long and continuous religious tradition, we, in India, have developed certain attitudes of mind, sense of values, and social relationships. The objective of this book therefore is to identify these basic factors in Indian society which affect economic progress adversely, to analyse their effect suggest possible solutions. It is hoped that such an analysis would lead to some basic rethinking on many of our national problems.

CHAPTER ONE

TO EACH HIS GODS

Of the trees of faith that blossomed in their day
And bore rich fruit, but since withered,
Clutching the earth with their dead roots;

1

If the thesis put forward in the introduction that the nature of a society and the nature of its relationships, its spiritual background and its ethical concept can aid or hinder economic progress is accepted, then, an analysis of this background will be helpful in assessing its effect on progress and development.

Though India has been a multi-religious society from the earliest times, nevertheless, Hinduism has predominated throughout the ages. Even at the height of the Muslim rule, the majority of the people were Hindus. The attitudes and relationships established by Hinduism have affected not only Hindus but the other minority communities also. These minority communities have had to adjust themselves to living among the Hindus, and have been considerably influenced by their ethics and approach to problems. Therefore, the beliefs, the concepts, attitudes and relationships developed among the Hindus have affected economic progress of the nation as a whole. A consideration of some of these aspects is attempted in this and the next two chapters.

2

The word 'Hindu' originates from the river Indus. People living in the Indus valley and to the east of the Indus were called Hindus by others in ancient times and their religion was referred to as Hinduism. Thus, originally Hinduism had a geographical significance rather than a religious one.

In ancient times, India was peopled by diverse tribes and races at different levels of civilization. The Indus basin was populated by the incoming Aryans with Vedic culture. The rest of northern India was occupied by various primitive tribes with numerous cults. In the South, there were the Dravidians with a high level of culture and civilization. As the incoming Aryans moved eastwards and southwards, they met new Gods and new faiths and different levels of social organisations and development. In the conflict and interaction between the Vedic religion of the Aryans and the peoples of the various tribes inhabiting northern and central India and the theistic religion of the Dravidians, was born Hinduism as we know it today.

If there is one thing that is specific to the Hinduism of the Vedic period, it was the ease with which it was able to absorb the ideas, customs and beliefs of other races and peoples into its fold. Thus, while the basic religion of the Aryans predominated, it did not liquidate the Gods and customs of people with whom it came into contact. There were no inquisitions, heresy hunting and wholesale destruction of ideas and beliefs as had happened often in both ancient and modern civilizations. Hinduism, on the other hand, found a place for all beliefs, however primitive or sophisticated, within its fold. This process of assimilation and interaction must have gone on through many centuries. And as new people poured into India, they too got assimilated and accommodated themselves inside the Hindu fold.

Thus, Hinduism is the only major religion that is not based on a single, universal concept of God. It is not the result of the inspired teachings of a single prophet; nor is it based on a code of ethics and behaviour as most of the other religions. The concept of God is a matter for the individual or for the group to which that individual might belong. He may worship God as a universal spirit that is the basis of all creation, or he may worship one or more of a thousand Gods. Or he may create a new God out of his own inspiration and imagination. He might be an agnostic who questions everything or a ritualist who practices all kinds of ceremonies and superstitions. He may be monogamist or polygamist, a strict vegetarian or one who makes animal sacrifices. But behind all this apparent diversity and contradiction, there is a fundamental unity of attitude and approach to problems that is the result of centuries of integration between the various groups and people living together. The different social groups in Hindu society are like the different pieces of a zig-saw puzzle, each having a distinct and separate existence but each fitting into a particular position to make up the overall design of the social fabric.

It may be that the ancient Hindu philosophers, faced with a basically heterogeneous society with varying levels of culture and beliefs, deliberately and consciously brought about an integration of society by allowing the greatest freedom of worship and customs. It may be that they recognised that no single individual, however gifted, prophetic or inspired, could have a complete and permanent concept of God that would remain unchanged for ever. Perhaps, they acknowledged that the right of each individual to form his own concept of the universal spirit in however incomplete a manner was a sacred right to be protected and that each man should find his own way to salvation. If so, it is a lesson for us to ponder over in the context of present day problems of integration and unity of India. Or, it may be a mere accident of history. But whatever the reason, here was a society highly heterogeneous in many aspects, yet living together in unity and co-operation and united by a common understanding and adopting a common way of life.

Such extreme freedom of belief meant that no two people had a common idea of God. There were no doubt philosophers and prophets from time to time who interpreted the Vedas or who enunciated their own concept of God and they have had many followers both on their time and since. But there was nothing formal. No code of beliefs was laid down, no

formal admission of members or ex-communication of non-believers. There was no religious hierarchy enforcing discipline with an iron hand and eliminating all forms of non-conformity. It was completely voluntary. Members of the same family might worship different Gods. Sometimes the same individual might worship one God today and other tomorrow. This complete lack of theological control and direction and absolute freedom of thought for the individual has had long standing repercussions which we can notice even today.

This wholesale acceptance of the beliefs of others people in ancient times was perhaps not peculiar to Hinduism. Other societies too accepted the Gods and the ceremonials of the people they came across as in the case of the pagan religions of Europe and in the case of the Greeks and the Romans. But in Europe, such acceptance generally resulted in an amalgamation of the two beliefs so that they could no longer be distinguished as separate faiths. The acceptance was also accompanied by social interaction through inter-marriage and a forging of common customs and social organisation. This was possible because, though the beliefs were perhaps different; their level of social development was more or less the same and total interaction was possible.

In the case of Hinduism however, acceptance into the Hindu fold did not automatically bring about social integration also. On the contrary, it resulted in the caste system. This was possibly because of the wide divergence that existed between the intellectual and philosophical sophistication of the Aryans and the Dravidians on the one hand and the primitive faiths of the other tribes of Central India on the other. It must be borne in mind that even at a very early stage; Hindu thinkers had developed a high level of philosophic thought and ethical concepts which have rarely been surpassed by other religions either at that time or since. It was obviously not possible for an amalgamation of such a philosophy with the beliefs of primitive tribes. Nor was social integration between such groups widely differing in culture feasible. Therefore, the only alternative was to permit freedom of belief and ritual according to a man's level of development and culture, but preserve social cohesion through a rigid control of social and economic behaviour through the caste system. Thus, integration in the case of Hinduism did not mean the dynamic growth and development of a common social organisation for the entire community. On the other hand, each small group was given a particular place in the hierarchy of the caste system with a particular profession and made complementary to the others.

When Christianity spread in Europe, the pagan religions and beliefs of the past were completely wiped out. A new religion with the universal concept of a single God and a new philosophy took their place. A Christian priesthood was soon established to propagate this doctrine and to ensure conformity. A considerable degree of uniformity in thought, belief and ceremonial was brought about and this in turn resulted in a great degree of homogeneity in social organisation and development also. The same thing can be said to have happened in the Middle East and North Africa with the spread of Islam, though perhaps not to the same extent.

But no such spring cleaning ever took place in Hinduism. Philosophically and ethically, Christianity replaced more primitive and backward faiths. But Hinduism never really encountered a superior philosophic concept until quite recently. On the other hand, the tolerance of belief that has become part of the Hindu attitude of mind ensured that all beliefs would survive irrespective of their backwardness or their validity. And so we find blind belief and superstition existing side by side with subtle thoughts and broad concepts—all within the banner of Hinduism. The tolerance of Hindus towards other religionists has been noticed and commented upon by many observers. While in the spiritually higher strata of Hindus, this tolerance may be due to a broad universal spirit, in the lower levels of society it is due to indifference. When a person is surrounded by a thousand Gods and many kinds of ritual, one more or less is not going to make any difference.

This constant reconciliation and assimilation of other people has been perhaps the major reason for the survival of Hinduism while many ancient religions have been forgotten. But assimilation has not led to the creation of a homogeneous society, but rather to the preservation of a heterogeneous set of beliefs and values. While most religions have attempted to bring about homogeneity among their followers in matters of belief, thought, ethics, social custom and behaviour, Hinduism has always permitted—even encouraged—divergency in these matters and has allowed people in the lower levels of culture to stay where they were and never aspire towards higher levels. Conformity to social behaviour was enforced through the small groups of castes each different from the other, rather than though the large group namely, the entire community of Hindus. It is extremely difficult to build a homogenous society out of people holding heterogeneous beliefs. Industrial progress and economic development can be rapid only if the society is homogeneous with a fairly uniform sense of values and a common framework of understanding. Without such understanding, co-operation and team work, particularly between large groups of people, are not possible, because they are not enthusiastic about the same ideas and not motivated by the same forces.

3

This complete freedom of thought—amounting to licence—in matters of belief and worship among the Hindus has given rise to a highly individualistic attitude of mind that is not easily amenable to discipline. Each individual is a non-conformist in ideas, following his own inclination, accepting other people's ideas, if it suits his emotional and spiritual needs, but also varying them or rejecting them if it does not. Normally, such freedom would have led to religious disintegration in a very short time. That this did not happen was due to the evolution of the caste system. When whole groups of people—with varying levels of culture and social organisation—were incorporated into the Hindu fold, they probably became separate castes practising their faith and their trade but with social isolation from others and with no freedom in economic and social matters. While total freedom was permitted in

the intellectual and spiritual fields, complete conformity was demanded and enforced in the areas of social and economic activity through the operation of the caste system. If a man was ex-communicated or a social boycott was imposed, it was not for questioning the validity of the Vedas or even for denying the existence of God, but for breaking the rules of caste. Such rigid regulation of society in the social and economic spheres ensured continuity, preserved social equilibrium and prevented disintegration so long as the means of production remained unaltered.

In Hinduism worship it is not a group activity. Both in Christianity and in Islam, prayer is essentially a congregational activity. Whatever ritual there is has been highly standardized. The celebration of Mass for example is the same in all catholic churches in Asia, Europe or Africa. But in Hinduism, ceremonial varies from temple to temple and from sub-caste to sub-caste. A thousand people might visit a temple at a given time, but they are not a congregation. Each man converses with God individually as if the others were not there. And though there is group participation in religious singing—such as Bhajans—it has not developed to anything like it has in Christianity.

Historically, this extreme freedom of thought has made every Hindu a potential dissenter. For countless generations in the past, he has cherished and nurtured his ideas and he has never had to compromise them. Therefore, he claims the right to disagree and to follow his own course. Now that the social compulsions of the caste have been removed there is no other factor that forces him to conform. In such a situation, it becomes difficult for people to conform and compromise their ideas for a common purpose. People find it difficult to give up their individual ideas and attitudes in order to achieve major objectives. On the other hand, there is a tendency to insist that their ideas should be accepted completely as a price of their co-operation. If this is not possible, then they non-cooperate irrespective of the effects of such non-cooperation. It is not unusual for a single individual to resort to fasting or other forms of protest because of a minor pricking of the conscience or because his interests are being threatened in some form. The mental satisfaction of a protest seems to be more important than the achievement of a major objective. Either they protest or, if there are sufficient dissenters, form splinter groups or separate organisations to fight the parent body on the points of issue so that the basic objectives of the original organisation are themselves threatened. But the newly formed organisations are also not particularly stable because even dissenters are not all agreed and they tend to fall apart sooner or later on minor principles.

Such an attitude results in a multiplicity of organisations, all of them professing the same ideology with minor variations, but quarrelling mostly with each other. Thus, we have a multiplicity of trade unions, a multiplicity of employer's organisations and even a multiplicity of communist parties where one might have expected greater discipline. There is a constant under-current of 'politics' in social clubs, cultural, athletic and sports organisations and cliques and groupism in political parties. Considerably more time and

effort of members is devoted to furthering the interests of a section within the organisation rather than the objectives of the organisation itself.

In all types of economic and social activity in which human beings have to work together, ability to adjust oneself to other peoples' ideas is a necessary requirement for the achievement of common objectives. The larger the group and the more important the activity, the more essential is the need for accommodation of different viewpoints. The ability to compromise on minor issues in order to achieve major objectives, the habit of subordinating one's own viewpoint in order that the view of the group might prevail is very much a matter of habit and tradition. The subordination of individual aims or interests to the needs of the party and the nation is also an indispensable attitude for the successful functioning of democracy. The Indian mind-used as it is to complete freedom from discipline or compromise of any sort in one of the most basic of human beliefs, namely God-seems to be temperamentally incapable of the compromises that are necessary for the successful achievement of group activity.

It may be asked, "Do the people involved not realise what is at stake? Do they not understand that such dissipation of their energies and disintegration of their strength defect the basic objectives for which are striving?" Perhaps, they do. But by insisting on their own ideas and opinions, however insignificant, they achieve intellectual satisfaction of having stuck to their ideas and ideals. Countless generations of such freedom of thought without a single unifying intellectual or spiritual force has made it a habit with the Hindu mind, and in the absence of other motivating factors, this insistence tends to predominate.

It would of course be extremely naive to presume that the freedom of thought in Hindu religion is the only reason for the fissiparous tendencies existing in India and in Indian organisations. There are other reasons too. Motives of personal profit and prestige, clash of personalities and wills, difficulties of psychological adjustment between people, desire for power and political maneuvering are all factors influencing these tendencies. But these factors exist in other societies also and in spite of these, strong, permanent and enduring organisations have come into being in those societies.

The history of the Congress party since the passing away of President Zakir Hussain is a tragic illustration of this attitude of mind. India has just emerged from a period of acute economic depression. There are a number of economic and social problems needing urgent consideration and solution. There are also a number of disruptive political forces pulling in various directions and threatening the unity of the country. If India is to maintain her identity as a nation and to make rapid economic progress, what is needed is a long period of political stability. It is also agreed on all sides that the Congress in the only political party that can provide this stability. Coalition governments are weak at the best of times and the functioning of the United Front governments in West Bengal and Kerala has not been such as to encourage further experimentation in that direction. Whatever else United Fronts

might have accomplished, they have not been successful in providing the stability that is necessary for sustained progress.

Under the circumstances, the congress party has a tremendous responsibility to the nation. One would have expected that whatever differences the leaders of the Congress might have had among themselves, they would have sunk those differences in order that the major objectives of the nation might be achieved. Or at least, they would not have allowed those differences to reach a point when the entire organisation is irrevocably split. One might have expected that even if the interests of the nation were of no account, at least the interests of the party remaining in power might have kept them together, since both wings profess democratic socialism, secularism and the unity of the country. As a result of the split, each side has been forced to find allies who do not believe in one or more of these basic tenets of the Congress faith. Various reasons have been advanced for this sorry performance such as personality clashes, ideological differences, the desire for power, conscience, and so on. Whatever be the causes, at a critical moment in history, the leaders of the Congress have failed to rise to the demands of the nation and have placed within-party dissensions above national or even party interests. The more acute the crisis and the greater the need for unity, the sharper the internal differences that seem to split organisations and groups. The great victory achieved by the Ruling Congress in the midterm elections in 1971 does not really invalidate this argument; for the victory was achieved partly because of the personality and the new radicalism of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and partly because of opportunist alliances between parties whose basic objectives are conflicting and who will not hesitate to let their partners down if stood to gain by it.

Throughout history, whenever India has been conquered by invading forces, the victory of the invaders was not due either to cultural, social or military superiority. During the long period of Muslim invasions and again during the British annexation of India, the Indian rulers were interested more in getting the help of the foreigner to liquidate each other than in uniting against the external aggressor. The Indian forces could never be unified in those critical periods, and internal differences often predominated over external threats. The more critical the situation, the less able we seem to be to unite and make common causes. Every time the dominant personality of the Central Government passed away and the Centre became weak, the various parts of India tended to fall apart and a period of confusion and stagnation followed. This has happened again and again, after Asoka, after Vikramaditya and after Akbar. The question we have to ask ourselves is, “Is it going to happen after Nehru?” With the Chinese threat looming large over the Indian horizon, with the Bangladesh problem at our door-step and with the situation in West Bengal, one is forced to wonder whether the nation and the people will learn the lessons of their own history in time or whether history will repeat itself.

To-day, the social compulsions of the caste system has more or less completely disappeared, and it is right that this should be so. But unfortunately, there are no

alternative social or psychological factors to replace the social cohesion provided by the caste system in the past, and in the absence of such factors, this has become another disintegrating factor. Historically, the castes were complementary to each other, and helped to strengthen the fabric of society. But to-day, they tend to be antagonistic to each other making rival claims, asking for special privileges and using them in the political arena for gaining power. We have not built other social and psychological disciplines on the basis of the ethics and values of to-day to replace the old compulsion of caste. In a democratic society these disciplines cannot be imposed from above. They have to be created from within through social reforms, through inspired leadership and through education.

4

This combination of complete freedom of thought for the individual on the one hand, and absolute conformity to caste, tradition and ritual on the other, has led to a form of idealism that is completely divorced from reality. A man's ideals, thoughts and values were not limited by anything other than his imagination, and he could cherish the highest sense of right and wrong without feeling in anyway compelled that he should bring them into practice, for his practice was determined by a sense of obligation only to his caste. A man might believe in one universal spirit and yet worship a thousand Gods because other members of his caste did so. He may not believe in ceremonials and yet submit himself to a whole lot of practices because his family obligation dictated it. In Hinduism, there has rarely been any correspondence between these two. Ideals are to be cherished and worshipped and revered, but not necessarily to be followed. No attempt has been made to bring about a practical compromise between these two extremes. It had led to a wide, often unbridgeable gulf theory and practice, between thought and action.

But it may be asked. "If the social compulsion of the caste system has broken down under the stress of modern ideas and circumstances, should it not have led to a compromise between these two?" Unfortunately, habits of thought and attitude have a way of persisting long after the need for them has ceased to exist and long after the situation that has given rise to them has disappeared. In this case, it is the attitudes of more than three thousand years that have to be changed. On the other hand, relaxation of the caste system, by eliminating the social cohesion that existed in the past, seems to have merely sharpened the difference between these two. This dichotomy in our religious faith between thought and action, between ideals and realities, between profession and practice has permeated every aspect of our individual as well as group life.

In our national life, we have glorified and idealized Gandhiji's teachings, but have not seriously made any attempts to follow them. In fact, in the Gandhi Centenary year, India has witnessed more violence than for a long time. We preach inter-national ethics to all other nations, but our own attitudes on many problems have hardly been ethical. Parents who

decry the English languages as ‘alien’ send their children to English medium schools. Leaders who constantly talk of equality and democracy are often highly authoritarian in behaviour. The gulf between public postures and private behaviour in India is wide, but often goes unnoticed because it has become so much a part of our national life.

5

Another factor that has to be taken into account is the long and continuous tradition that Hinduism has established when compared to other religions. The pre-Christian religions of Europe have all disappeared though the epics created by these civilizations still remain. The modern Greek may read the lliad or the Odyssey of Homer and not feel any emotional affinity towards them except perhaps a vague feeling of satisfaction that his ancestors in the distant past were responsible for them. But he does not draw inspiration from these works. He does not treat them as works of moral philosophy and he does not worship the heroes and heroines of these works as Gods and Goddesses. His ethics and morality are based on a much later period and perhaps more relevant to the modern age.

But many modern Hindus derive emotional satisfaction and inspiration from the Ramayana and Mahabharatha. They are treated not as great and fascinating works of human drama, but as words of divine wisdom. They are taught to children as works of moral philosophy and as providing divine guidance. They are represented as works of conflict between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ in which the ‘good’ triumphed in the end and the ‘evil’ was destroyed. But as works of great literary and artistic value, the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha have portrayed complex characters and situations and the distinction between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ is not always clear. Often, the ‘heroes’ have behaved badly and the representatives of ‘evil’ have shown virtue and magnanimity to a surprising extent. Consequently, drawing of moral lessons from such complicated and interesting sagas of the ancient world is a difficult business at the best of times and Hindu philosophers have had to depend on the ‘divine’ character of these books in order to gain universal acceptance. Few Christians in the world today believe literally in the story of creation—in Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. Yet millions of Hindus believe in the literal validity of their epics. While many educated and progressive Hindus think of these epics as symbolic rather than literal, nothing has been done to persuade the rest to follow suit. Any attempt to do so will meet with fierce resistance from the orthodox.

One result of this has been that ethics as enunciated in Hinduism has been highly complex, involved and metaphysical. It is more suited to discussions between erudite philosophers rather than as a code of conduct for the erudite philosophers rather than as a code of conduct for the common man. Hinduism has not succeeded in evolving as simple, universal and straightforward a code of conduct as the Ten Commandments. The ethics and codes of conduct as propounded by Hinduism have always been beyond the intellectual

comprehension of the ordinary man, and there was no means of bridging this gap between highest ethics of the philosophers and the ordinary practice of the common man. The ordinary man has had to depend largely on group and caste pressures, conformity to social requirements and customs, and whatever moral value he could extract from religious epics.

This was not so bad in the pre-industrial age when the demands on a man's behaviour were essentially one of conformity to social requirements and his code of conduct was fairly simple. But modern society demands a set of social ethics understood and accepted by all as a common basis of understanding and behaviour. In a multi-religious society, such a common basis should transcend all religions and should be based on a universal, secular foundation. Hinduism has not succeeded in evolving such a code of ethics for all Hindus, much less to the Indian society as a whole. The code of ethics derived from purely economic and social considerations does not carry the emotional and spiritual conviction necessary for their universal acceptance. Those Hindu philosophers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who have attempted to introduce a new concept of ethics have not come across active opposition. In fact, they have been glorified and worshipped. But they have come up against the burden of tradition and custom that hangs like a millstone round the Hindu society. One result of this confusion in ethics has been that Hinduism has not succeeded in developing a sense of social responsibility among its followers as Christianity has done. The responsibility of a man to his fellowmen has never been emphasised to any great extent. Charity and service have no doubt found an important place in Hindu ethics, but charity is dispensed not so much for the benefit of the receiver as for the salvation of the donor. There are of course societies such as, The Ramakrishna Mission which have tried to relate religious conviction with social needs. But they have been the exception rather than the rule. To most Hindus, going to temples, putting some money in the Hundi, distributing alms to beggars, or feeding the poor on festival days are the only forms of service known. Consequently many undesirable forms of beggary are encouraged, while deserving social service to raise the unfortunate into self-reliant men and women remains undone and uncared for. Only a re-kindling of the social conscience will change this state of affairs and enable social service to be divorced from the attitudes of charity.

6

Another aspect that is relevant to this discussion in the spirit of other worldliness that has persisted in Hinduism throughout the ages. In the United States, for example, worldy success and ever increasing material prosperity have been accepted as desirable social objectives individually as well as collectively. They have been following these objectives relentlessly and with no reservations. The dream of most American school boys has been to become another Henry Ford or Rockefeller when they grow up. Successful captains of industry are looked upon as heroes and social benefactors because they have contributed to the growth of national wealth and they have made it possible for every working man in

America to have a better standard of life than the emperors of old. The social and spiritual problems of an affluent society have somewhat tarnished their image of worldly success in the United States in recent years. But their spiritual questioning has arisen after affluence has been achieved, not before.

In the communist countries also, material prosperity is the major goal. But because of the nature of the political system, it is collective well-being that is the objective, and not individual prosperity. For the same reason, the methods adopted to achieve their goals are also different from those of the United States and other Western European countries. But it has been accepted by all types of governments that improved standard of living for all is a basic objective.

The vital need for maintaining and enlarging exports is universally recognised in Japan. It is a country with a large and growing population and inadequate natural resources. Raw materials for their industries such as iron, coal cotton, etc., have to be imported. The only way by which they can pay for these imports is by maintaining a high level of exports. Successful competition in international markets demands a high level of productivity. The universal realization of this inescapable economic fact has enabled Japan to achieve high levels of productivity and raise the standards of living in the post-war period.

From a brief consideration of the above situations, it is obvious that it is not so much the particular economic system that is responsible for the increase in prosperity in these countries as the objectives that they had set before themselves and the unity of purpose with which these objectives have been pursued.

The pursuit of material prosperity has never been considered a worthy motive in Indian thought and tradition. The saffron robe and the begging bowl have been considered better symbols of a man's worth than affluence and ostentation or even intellectual superiority. While this has been so in most religious societies, it has been a dominant feature of Indian philosophy. The streak of other worldliness has persisted throughout the ages. The physical world is an illusion; life on the earth is transient; what matters is the life hereafter. The body is merely a temporary vehicle for the soul in its passage through eternity before ultimate salvation. These ideas have been predominant in India, particularly in those periods of history when there was social, cultural and moral stagnation.

If life on this earth is an illusion, then it follows that how one lives is a matter of supreme indifference. Activity—whether public or private, individual or collective—does not matter. Since everything is pre-ordained by fate, there is nothing one can do to change things. Misery, cruelty or injustice have to be tolerated, however unwillingly. All that is possible is to make the best of a bad job and pray that one may be released from the cycle of births and deaths. It is a philosophy of despair. But at the same time, it is an escape from the realities of existence; it is a consolation for disappointments and an excuse for inaction.

In an industrial society in which man has learnt to control the forces of nature and use them for his benefit, he is conscious of his powers and does not hesitate to take responsibility for success or failure. He also strives consciously and persistently to improve his own powers over nature. But in an agricultural society in which man is at the mercy of natural forces such as the vagaries of the monsoon, floods and droughts and soil erosion, and about which he is unable to do anything, he is likely to say. 'It's God's will' or 'It's fate' and leave it at that. That is his explanation as well as consolation. And when he has been saying it for many years, he evolves a philosophy out of it. There has of course been many periods in Indian history when man has dared to defy nature, has aspired to great heights and often reached them. But during periods of stagnation, the doctrine of fate has been his philosophy and his consolation.

But it would be a mistake to presume that this philosophy dominated at all times. Sooner or later, some prophet came along to reverse this trend and reaffirm the importance of this world if not as an end in itself, at least as a means of attaining the next in a worthy manner. Hindu mythology is full of men and women who defied their environment and circumstances and even fate in order to attain their ends. There is the story of Markandaya who was destined to die at the tender age of sixteen. Through prayer and a blameless life, he not only escaped death but was granted life everlasting. Savitri—one of the heroines of Hindu mythology–argued with Yama, the God of Death, and got her husband back to the land of the living. But even in their cases the emphasis was on the spiritual, and not on material achievements; on prayer, meditation and a virtuous life, rather than on action. Even where action is undertaken, it should not be dictated by desire for wealth, power or fame. It does not mean the mere satisfaction of one's own or other people's desires. It is detached, selfless action. It is the path of duty, dictated by the purest of motives and carried out with absolute indifference as to the ultimate result. It is the path of Dharma. The method adopted is more important than the result achieved.

The importance of the right means to attain a given objective has received great impetus in this century through Gandhiji's philosophy of Satyagraha. The struggle for Independence was based—successfully-on this philosophy. Passive resistance was not a mere technique adopted to suit the circumstances of the moment. It is a creed that is a logical development of a progressive system of Hindu philosophy.

Both these attitudes—the philosophy of contemplation, meditation and resignation, and the philosophy of a selfless action—have existed side by side in India for ages past. They exert considerable influence on the minds of people even today. It does not mean of course that people work any less hard or that they have no materialistic ambitions whatever. But they do influence the motivating forces behind action, and consequently the effectiveness of such action in many cases. The driving force behind industrial development is essentially material in character, the hope of economic well-being. It demands the formulation of specific objectives and the attainment of these objectives within a specified time. While the

right method is important even in achieving higher standards of living, the emphasis is on achievement. When too great a stress is laid on the method, it may be that action is delayed and often, it may be that no action is taken. The exclusive concern with the method also makes one to lose sight of the objective itself.

The philosophy of Gandhism is intimately connected with the development of attitudes in India towards industrialization. Viewed in a historical perspective, Gandhism is the logical development of the philosophy of selfless action, and love and sacrifice and its emphasis is on the same basic concepts of service and spirituality. Its logical reaction to the inhumanities of the early industrial age was one of abhorrence. It is a powerful protest in the Indian tradition against the greed, the materialism and the soul destroying character of the industrial revolution just as Marx's communism was a protest in the European tradition. The difference in time may be attributed to the fact that industrialism came to India at a much later date. Based on his opposition to industrialization, Gandhiji developed a system of social philosophy in consonance with his basic concepts, placing spiritual and not economic objectives, as the goal of life. If it had only been a system of philosophy based on truth and non-violence, austerity and sacrifice, it would have remained in the realm of the intellect. But its almost universal appeal in India in the twenties and the thirties is due to the fact that it was not only a system of thought, but also a method of action, a means of political and economic deliverance.

In economic terms, it visualizes society of village communities based primarily on agriculture and handicrafts, and more or less self-sufficient. Though the use of power for cottage industries has not been altogether ruled out, Gandhism is fundamentally opposed to methods of mass production in which large numbers of people are employed under one roof and the work of an individual is reduced to a set of meaningless movements. The simple tools of the craftsmen are glorified while the automatic machine is condemned as soul destroying. Thus, the spinning wheel is not thought of as a method of providing employment to those who are unemployed or underemployed in villages until such time as the tempo of industrialization catches up with unemployment. It is associated in the minds of most people as the unique symbol of a new philosophy and as a symbol of freedom.

Those who are in charge of decision-making in the various walks of life in India—people in their forties and above—are the products of the Gandhian age in Indian history. They have been considerably influenced by his philosophy. Even when they disagree with it from a purely logical or intellectual standpoint, they have been emotionally swayed by its powerful appeal, because it is basically a logical development of Indian thought and it is essentially ethical. It was also responsible for the freedom of India. And above all, the powerful admiration and loyalty that Gandhiji evoked in most people have tended to cloud the issues and prevented their discussion at a purely intellectual level. Mr. Nehru's own attitude towards Gandhism is a case in point. Again and again he disagreed with Gandhiji on a purely intellectual basis. Many of Gandhiji's actions and ideas caused him acute mental

agony during the struggle for Independence. Yet, Nehru followed him, and no leader could have had a better or truer follower.

Thus, these ideas on industrialism are deeply rooted in the minds of many people consciously or unconsciously and have an influence on the attitude and decisions of individuals. Unless and until the need for improving the living standards of all people in the country is accepted not only as an economic objective by the politicians but also as philosophic goal, the commitment of the nation to economic progress and industrialization cannot be said to be complete.

7

It is thus seen that the fundamental basis of Hindu society is social diffusion rather than social cohesion, insistence on individuality rather than group activity, belief in unrealistic and unachievable ideals rather than workable compromises. The philosophic concepts of Hinduism—even at their highest—emphasise renunciation rather than pursuit of earthly objectives however noble, and insist on following the right method rather than the importance of achievement. Ethics as propounded by its philosophers are highly complex and cannot be easily understood and followed by the common man. Therefore, the attitudes and relationships that have grown out of this basis are not conducive to the establishment and successful running of large enduring organisations which are essential for modern economy and industrial progress. While it might enable individuals to attain high levels of intellect, spirituality or sacrifice for a worthy cause, by failing to provide for conformity, discipline and uniformity in social and spiritual spheres it has reduced the effectiveness of all group activity whether it is at the national level or on the cricket field.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOCIAL PYRAMID

Mind is but a broken mirror
Of what has gone before,
Each piece producing its own image
In its own angle; reflecting truly,
But producing only
A heap of broken images.

1

Throughout history, Indian society has been authoritarian in attitude and hierarchical in structure.

Movement of people from one strata of society to another was always difficult and later became impossible. Learning was the monopoly of a small group, and never became wide-spread. In certain periods of history and under certain circumstances, not only was knowledge restricted, but those who aspired to acquire knowledge that was beyond their status in society were severely dealt with, Hindu epics are full of tragic examples of such restriction of knowledge. Ekalavya---in Mahabharatha—became a great master in the art of archery in spite of the fact that the royal teacher—Dhrona—did not give him any lessons. But when Arjuna complained about it, Dhrona asked Ekalavya to cut off his thumb as his 'fee' and thus made his skill and knowledge useless.

Nor was this restriction of knowledge confined only to the lower strata of society. Karna learnt from Parasurama the mantras for the use of the weapon known as Brahmastra. But when Parasurama discovered that Karna was not a Brahmin, but a Kshatriya by birth, he cursed his pupil so that he would be unable to remember the mantras at the moment he needed them.

It is well known that ability is individual rather than communal. In every strata of society, there are a few persons who could come to the top if given the opportunity. A hierarchical society denies this self-evident truth and deprives itself of the services of some of its most able members. Such a society suffers because of its refusal to utilize human resources in the most effective way. The potential talents of many are never exploited. Unless everyone has freedom to grow, those with the qualities of leadership will have no opportunity to exercise them. And society must have leadership at various levels. When leadership is by tradition or succession, it is often ineffective.

This restriction of knowledge has ultimately led to the downfall of the very people who practiced such restriction. Ancient India was in the forefront of scientific knowledge. But Arabs, and in later years Europeans, have surpassed it. This is partly because knowledge was guarded as a trade secret to be passed on to the son or disciple-at the point of death. But since death has a habit of coming unawares, such knowledge became extinct with the individual concerned. Therefore, instead of expanding, knowledge continued to contract. This reluctance to communicate knowledge or skill to others is still found in India today.

The traditional Indian family exhibits the authoritarian attitude to a very high degree of perfection. The wife is not considered the equal of her husband, but his subordinate. She is not supposed to sit down in his presence. On ceremonial occasions, she may worship him as a God. According to Chanakya, a woman is dependent on her father in her childhood, on her husband during her married life, and on her sons if she is widowed. On the other hand, the eldest male member was always considered the head of the family. Sons are expected to obey the father even if he is senile and they are wise. Similarly, younger brothers are supposed to obey elder brothers even if the difference in age might be only a year or two. In many conventional families, the younger brother does not smoke in the presence of the elder brother out of respect. Rama went to the forest instead of being crowned as emperor in order to fulfil his father's vow. His younger brother Bharata would not accept the kingdom that was offered to him and would only rule as his brother's representative. And he placed his brother's sandals on the throne as a sign of humility.

In an authoritarian society, obedience is the most important virtue. It does not encourage discussion. No questions should be asked, even in explanation. Consequently it does not allow for the growth of the critical faculty and makes leaders into demigods. It depends for its progress on the ability of the few rather than the intelligent participation of the many. When once the leader goes and there is no one to succeed him, his handiwork falls to pieces. On many an Indian battlefield, even an army on the point of victory has been defeated because; the commander-in-chief has been wounded, captured or killed. Indian society, while it has produced just as many able and even great leaders as any other civilization in history, has not maintained consistent progress because of the authoritarian nature of the society on the one hand and restriction of knowledge on the other.

This twin combination leads to intellectual arrogance among the privileged few and timid passively among the multitudes. Such a social hierarchy had been one of the major causes of India's misfortunes in the past. Contact with Europe and the coming of industrialization has shattered the basis of social stratification. But it has by no means been completely eliminated either from our society or from our social thinking. Though its intellectual basis has been destroyed, it still lurks in different forms partly as a matter of habit and partly as a vested interest. The hierarchical structure is represented by the caste system and the authoritarian attitude in the joint family.

The caste system has been a part of the social structure in India for many generations past and is firmly rooted in the Indian mind. Other religionists-whether they are immigrants into India or converts—have also been considerably influenced and have generally come to accept some aspects of the caste system. Recent advances in industrialization and urbanization have struck at the very roots of this social system and there is no doubt that as industry develops, it will tend to disappear altogether in course of time. But at the same time, the system has shown a remarkable power for adaptability and survival and at present, it still plays a major role in social environment and economic progress as well as in politics.

In sociological terms, caste system implies that each caste is a closed social group, admittance to which can only be gained by birth. Nor is it possible for anyone to leave that group because, irrespective of one's views or behaviour or profession, society considers him as belonging to that caste. At one time an individual could be ostracized from his caste for breaking some important rule such as marrying outside his caste, or for changing his religion. But thanks to the flexibility and the power of adjustment that the system has exhibited, such social ostracism is now a thing of the past and today, even if a man marries outside his caste, he is still considered a member of the caste. This social solidarity of the caste is further reinforced by generations of inter-marriage, common habits and customs such as wedding and funeral ceremonies, a common taste in food and mode of dress and above all a common group interest.

In economic terms, the caste system means a rigid division of labour according to caste, the social status of a particular caste depending on the type of work it performs. Thus, we have the Brahmins at the top of this social structure; they are the priests, philosophers and learned men, and at the bottom, the untouchables who have to perform the most menial tasks such as scavenging. While there are many castes in the middle who perform more or less the same work-agriculture—the division of labour becomes more rigid in the higher and lower levels of the social scale. Even in the middle groups, there are subtle distinctions of social status and job specialization that are of great interest to social scientists. These distinctions have continued and survived so far because of the unwritten, but none-the-less binding, dictates of society and tradition and because of the reluctance of the people of one caste to take to a profession of a caste lower than their own. On the other hand, they would not be allowed to take to a profession belonging to a higher caste. Generally speaking, people of one caste refuse to teach their profession to anyone other than their own members. There is thus a built-in mechanism of survival for each caste. The caste is at once a closed trade union and social organism. It is this combination of hereditary job specialization and social exclusiveness that has made the caste system so stable and enables it to withstand the onslaughts of social reformers and economic changes.

With the gradual growth of towns and cities in the nineteenth century, one would have expected that at least among the urban population where there is a certain amount of anonymity about a man's origin, the caste system would have lost its hold, that people who had left their ancestral homes in the villages and moved into a new and strange environment would have left their caste distinctions behind. But this has not been so. The hold of the caste system over the minds of men is such that it has followed them into the cities. Even 'low caste' people do not like to marry out of their caste. One of the first questions a man is asked is to which caste he belongs. Even if he tries to pass off as belonging to a higher caste-which he would not do generally—the habits and customs of a lifetime give him away. The only job he knows is that of his caste and that too exposes him. A man cannot say he has no caste; he must belong to some caste since he must have been born in one, and that label—irrespective of what he may do afterwards—sticks to him.

Obviously, it would be impossible to practice the caste system in a city exactly as it was practiced in the village. It is not possible to provide public transport separately for the different castes. Nor is it possible to provide separate water supply for the various communities. Thus, people who insist on separate wells for untouchables in the villages collect their water supply from the common municipal tap and do not enquire too closely about the antecedents of their neighbours in the queue. In any case, the social legislation embodied in the constitution has made such distinctions impossible.

Thus, while urbanization has tended to eliminate some of the rigidity of the caste system, the system itself has influenced urbanization in some peculiar ways. When a western form of education was introduced into India, the Brahmins were the first to take advantage of it. Thus, during the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, a majority of the jobs in the government as well as other professions like law, medicine, etc. were the monopoly of the brahmins who formed only a small percentage of the total population. This led to a certain amount of resentment on the part of the others and resulted in the reservation of posts in the government for various communities, reservation of seats in educational institutions and so on. When such reservation takes place, it means that the best people available are not always selected. Even assuming that all those selected on the basis of reservation satisfy the minimum requirements of the job, it does imply that many others who are equally, or even better qualified, have been rejected. This is not a satisfactory state of affairs for the morale of those who in spite of their ability have been left out because they happen to be born in a particular community. Nor is it good for the efficiency of the profession or service. On the other hand, if qualifications were the only criteria of selection, it would mean that those communities who are economically and socially backward would never have an opportunity to better their status. There is no escape from this dilemma until such time as there is full employment for all categories of people or the caste system itself becomes a thing of the past. In any case, it is obvious that in this respect at any rate, education and urbanization have tended to intensify caste differences rather than eliminate them.

There is another manner in which the caste system has perpetuated itself in towns and cities. All the sweepers employed by the municipalities are untouchables while most of the vegetarian hotels and restaurants are run by Brahmins—at least in the South. Anyone can eat in a Brahmin hotel, but if it were run by one of a lower caste, the higher caste people would not go there. Though the restriction on eating between castes has largely disappeared, the monopoly of the Brahmins in vegetarian catering continues and many restaurants in South India still display on the name boards 'Brahmin Coffee Club'. Sweepers are paid better wages than many classes of manual workers, but the profession has not attracted people of other castes. But if anyone were to attempt becoming a professional sweeper, it would not be surprising if there was resistance from the untouchables to such an intrusion upon their professional monopoly. In spite of the cosmopolitan nature of the cities, there are still Brahmin extensions and sweepers' colonies as distinct entities in towns.

The coming of industry has created a large number of new professions of various grades. The caste system has not provided for this development. Consequently we find people of different castes working side by side on the same group of machines or in the same department in industrial undertakings. They draw the same wages, use the same canteens without any distinction and are members of the same trade unions. Thus, caste has largely disappeared as far as the workspot is concerned. But it is generally found that those who have taken to industry are from the 'middle' caste groups and the proportion of the 'low' caste groups is small in comparison with their total population. Entry into industry as a worker has generally been through personal contacts and the 'low' caste groups have fewer opportunities of such contacts. It is also found that when once an individual enters industry; his friends and relations who come from the same caste as himself have greater opportunities of becoming industrial workers than others. Thus, it is not at all unusual to find people of a particular community predominating in one department of an industrial unit.

On the other hand, people of the higher castes-say, the Brahmins—are rarely to be found in industrial occupations on the shop floor while they may predominate in clerical and sometimes, supervisory personnel. This is partly due to the higher educational level of these people and partly due to the reluctance of the higher caste groups to take to manual labour.

Differences in social status of different occupations are to be found in almost every society. Even in highly industrialized communities, professional classes consider themselves socially superior to skilled craftsmen while they in turn regard themselves as superior to unskilled workers. A professor at a university commands greater respect in society than a businessman though he may earn very much less. Thus, while status differences exist in almost all societies, in most other countries, it is generally possible for an individual to rise in status through education, ability and hard work. The caste system does not provide any such avenues for individual aspirations. A man's profession was decided by his birth and there was nothing he could do to change it until recently. Even today when the constitution

of India assures freedom of opportunity for all, it is extremely difficult for a person of 'low' caste to rise to a high status in society.

This strict division of labour and talent into watertight compartments over many generations has resulted not only in social stagnation, but it has been an obstacle to economic development also. When one caste or community is given the monopoly of a particular kind of work and when they know that there is going to be no competition from anyone else, and when they know also that they cannot turn to any other profession, there is very little incentive for them to improve. The element of competition, which historically has been one of the prime factors of economic development, is removed and whatever work is available is shared between the members of the community. A parallel to this situation is to be found in modern industry when a highly integrated group of workmen deliberately restrict output so that one of them may not be considered surplus; or when one trade union objects to members of another union performing certain jobs. It is well known that under those conditions, productivity tends to fall. But when a whole society has distributed all the jobs to be done to hereditary groups, the effect can easily be imagined.

Historically, this may be one of the reasons why Indian craftsmen never attempted a quantitative increase in production but concentrated rather on intricate patterns complicated designs which tended to increase their skill and took a longer time to produce so that all the members of the caste could be fully employed. Thus while the caste system gave strength and stability to society during the long period before the industrial revolution when there were no changes in the methods of production, introduction of technological changes has found it totally inadequate to the changing social and economic needs.

Another manner in which the caste system has acted as a bar to economic development is by permanently destroying the ambition of whole groups of individuals. When the customs and taboos imposed by caste are strong, then people dare not do what they want to do. This leads to a permanent lack of aspiration which limits their horizons. A combination of ignorance and force of circumstances tends to reduce their wants to the bare necessities of existence and even if others are available they do not desire them since they have not cultivated a taste for those things. For a man who cannot read, a book is of no use. One who has never learnt to appreciate music will not go to a concert even if admission is free. Thus, it is a vicious circle. Lack of opportunity limits aspirations and lack of aspirations limits wants and the limitation of wants leads to lack of initiative.

When men have been brought up to believe that they are born into a particular caste and should therefore follow a particular profession, and when this idea has been ingrained into their minds for generations they have no incentive left to aspire for anything else. Even when economic pressures force them into other professions, their aspirations continue to be limited in a large number of cases to those of their caste, and not to those of the newly acquired profession. They do not attempt to earn more or to make use of the opportunities available to rise to a higher status in their methods of living. This lack of

aspiration is often revealed in a high rate of absenteeism among industrial workers-even in industries where the working conditions are good and the work is pleasant. It has also been found that as the wages go up, the rate of absenteeism also increases. It means that beyond a certain level, the workers are not interested in making money. While there may be other causes of absenteeism and while any generalization may not be wholly correct, nevertheless, the tendency cannot be overlooked.

Men have rights and expectations that depend not on their ability, initiative or service but on inherited status in society. Men of status are assured of it by birth while those without status cannot acquire it whatever they do. In either case it is a bar to initiative. The high do not need it but the low cannot use it even if they have it.

Ability and talent are not the monopoly of one particular caste or community. And yet, because of the caste system, the potential talent of whole communities has been completely suppressed for generations and has found no outlet in higher occupations and professions for which they might be suitable. The selection of people for higher professions has been from very small strata of society. While other economic and sociological factors such as education might also be responsible for this state of affairs, there is no denying the fact that the caste system is the major contributing factor.

Though there is considerable unemployment in India, there are certain occupations where there is an acute shortage of skilled workers. For example, in most towns and villages there is a shortage of masons, stone workers and carpenters. With the increase in the tempo of economic activity and the amount of building work going on in the country, this shortage has become quite acute in certain areas. But those who are unemployed-even young men newly seeking work-never consider learning these professions. They would rather work as unskilled labourers at a low rate of pay rather than take to one of these occupations which are comparatively well paid. To them, all brick-laying, plastering and stone work should be done by those of masons' caste and carpentry work by those of carpenters' caste. And they would not think of entering those professions.

Nor is this entirely their fault. If a young man wanted to learn a craft other than that of his caste, it would be extremely difficult for him to find a tutor. A mason would not teach his craft to anyone outside his caste, and even within the caste, he would take his own kith and kin as his apprentices. On the other hand, if an individual should learn the craft of another caste, it is also doubtful if he would find employment, because, people would say, "He can't be very good, because he isn't a real mason". In the industrial training institutes that have been recently set up by the Government for the training of skilled craftsmen in various trades, the carpentry classes are generally attended only by carpenters' sons, though the electrician's course may have people of different castes in it. It is not the individual who is responsible for this state of affairs, but the social values of the entire community.

There are three ways in which the economic barriers of caste can be overcome. One is through mobility. This may take the form of individual migration from a village to a city and as a result, a change from a traditional to a new industrial occupation. While migration does not necessarily guarantee such a change, particularly for skilled craftsmen such as barbers, washermen, leather workers, etc., it does create the possibilities of change. Or, it may take the form of mass migration as was the case in the Punjab after the partition of India. The Hindus and the Sikhs came to India after untold sufferings and with no resources. Yet, after only twenty years, most of them are well established as thriving and prosperous communities. They are engaged in farming as well as in small-scale industries in which they seem to excel others in India. It should be remembered that the people of the Punjab were given preference in the matter of recruitment to the Indian Army during the British days; and almost every family has had a soldier. This has had the effect of widening the horizons of the community as a whole and has made their members capable of adjustment to social and economic change.

Starting of industries in rural areas has a similar effect in that some people change their occupations and that change has repercussions on the entire community. But this is not so effective as a means of social change. In the first place, there are a number of handicaps in starting industries in rural areas. Secondly, a change from an agricultural to an industrial occupation without a change in environment does not produce major changes in social habits.

Education is one of the most unfailing methods of breaking the economic barriers of the caste system. An educated young man rarely takes to the profession of his caste. The educated son of a barber rarely becomes a barber; nor does the son of a farmer take to farming except in rare cases. Even a priest's son does not become a priest if he has had some education. All educated young men desire white-collared jobs. One of the major objectives of education for most people in India is not only economic and social betterment, but also 'freedom from the drudgery of manual labour'. While this may not be an altogether welcome attitude, nevertheless, it does help in breaking the economic barrier of caste.

But it should be remembered that the removal of economic barriers does not mean the automatic removal of social barriers also. It is nevertheless the first step. For a sustained improvement in standards of living, a high degree of vertical mobility is essential. A closed upper class, entrance to which can only be obtained by birth, prevents such vertical mobility. In societies where there has been a rapid growth over a long period-as in the United States for example—there has been a continuous upward mobility of people of merit, irrespective of their birth. Even if some families were the best when they acquired positions of responsibility and power, they cannot continue to maintain their ability over generations. Sons of brilliant fathers are not always brilliant. On the other hand, an upper class which allows its weaker members to fall into the lower strata of society and raises

others with ability to come up from below is constantly renewing itself both biologically and culturally. When such vertical mobility is easy, progress can be rapid.

3

The family is an important social institution in any society; consequently it influences every aspect of human activity. In primitive society, the concept of the family is very broad and includes a whole range of cousins and the average number in a family may be extremely large. It may perhaps be more properly termed as a clan. Land may be commonly owned and cultivated and there is a degree of communism within such a family system. This tribal approach to the family means social security for the weak and the old members, and the larger the number within the family group, the more effective is the security system.

But as society advances and grows richer in resources as well as skills, the concept of the family becomes more and more narrow. At low levels of income, members of a family must rally round to help each other. But as the standard of income rises, individuals are better able to protect themselves against misfortune. There is also greater difference in the earning capacity of the different members of the same family because; as society advances there is greater diversification of work and greater scope for planning and initiative. Those who get this larger income are naturally reluctant to share it among a large number of relatives. Also, with the economic progress of the society, the communities become larger and in the absence of a strong public opinion or social pressure which exists in smaller societies, it becomes difficult for distant relations to put forward their claims for economic assistance and protection.

The large family system has many advantages in societies which depend mainly on agriculture. But when industrialization is taking place it acts as a drag on development, for economic growth depends on initiative, and initiative is likely to be stifled if the individual has to share the gains of his effort with a number of others. It also acts as a disincentive to effort because it provides everyone with some form of protection against want. A strong degree of family loyalty may also be a bar to success in that the individual concerned may sacrifice his own chances of success, and consequently his contribution to the general economic growth for the sake of the other members of the family.

The joint family system in India, like the caste system, is very old and has been part of the social set-up for many generations. It may even be older than the caste system since the family as a unit of society goes back to prehistoric times. Like the caste system, the joint family has been considerably weakened by industrialization, though by no means completely eliminated. Those who are in positions of responsibility today have been brought up under this system, and their habits, behaviour patterns and attitudes have been formed under this system.

Among the lower strata of society, economic pressure has driven the younger members of many families to seek employment in the cities. The educated and the professional classes have had to live according to the exigencies of service and the members of these families may live as far apart as in Madras, Calcutta or Delhi. Among the wealthy classes, the tax structure has had considerable influence upon the break-up of the joint family. Because of the high rate of taxation for higher incomes, property is often divided among the male members of the family on the basis of the Hindu laws of inheritance, even before the sons are old enough to manage them. All these factors, combined with education, a desire for individual freedom and the general change in the social atmosphere have been responsible for the weakening of the joint family.

The characteristics of a joint family are easily summarized. The family consists of father and mother, sons and daughters-in-law, daughters (if unmarried or widowed) and grandchildren. The family property as well as income is held in common, and the expenditure of all the members of the family is met out of the common pool. Major decisions are taken by the head of the family mostly independently, but occasionally in consultation with the other senior members. Other members of the family are expected to abide by those decisions. The interests of the family as a group predominate over individual desires or interests. Each member of the family is expected to protect and help other members of the family who may need such help and protection, even if it means sacrificing long cherished personal ambitions. The elder brother may be asked to give up his studies—however brilliant he might be-and take a job in order to provide extra income for the family, may be to educate the younger brothers, to provide for medical expenses or for a sister's dowry. An individual in a joint family is judged, not by the brilliance of his personal achievements, but by the contribution he has made to the general welfare, status and prestige of the family as a whole. There is a sort of communism prevailing within the family group—each contributing according to his ability and receiving according to his needs. An individual is a member of the family group not because of his functional utility, but because of biological bonds and natural affection. It is this relationship that distinguishes the family from other social groups, and in a joint family it is broadened to include a number of other relations also. Thus, it is often found that distant relations who may be poor or elderly servants who are no longer in a position to work are nevertheless retained within the family group long after their period of useful service is over. And they are treated as members of the family rather than as servants. Thus, while there is considerable loss of personal freedom and initiative in a joint family group, there is security and affection for the weaker members of the family, a feeling of security against old age and want—important needs in a society where there is no social insurance of any kind. The feeling of loneliness in old age, which is a feature of European and American society today, is unknown in India. Nor do children suffer for want of affection or care since there is usually a host of relations to spoil them.

On the other hand, a child brought up in the atmosphere of a joint family tends to develop certain attitudes and patterns of behaviour because of the environmental situation within the family group. In the first place there is a multiplicity of authority as far as the child is concerned. Rewards and sanctions, praise and punishment are administered not only by its parents but by a number of people such as aunts and uncles, elder brothers or sisters, cousins and grandparents. In a fast changing society (and society in India is changing fairly quickly) there is likely to be a big difference in the ideas of different people—particularly different generations—regarding a child's upbringing. Consequently, the orders, instructions and advice given by the different members of the family are likely to be conflicting. Since a child's behaviour pattern is largely determined by a system of praise or criticism, in the absence of such a rigid system, the child's tendency is to adapt himself to any situation so that he may not be criticized or punished by any older member of the family. This is only possible in most cases by avoiding action altogether. It also enables the child to develop certain socio-political skills by which he gets round the various members of the family without necessarily accepting their views. Thus, if he is criticized by one senior member for a particular form of behaviour, instead of either justifying it on the basis of some past instruction or his desire for doing a thing, he usually approaches another member of the family likely to be sympathetic to such behaviour for protection and consolation. In such a situation, development of initiative is retarded, and an innate ability to get round people and problems instead of facing them is likely to be developed.

The development of these behaviour patterns is carried forward into adult life, and they are not conducive to an industrial work situation. Modern industry and administration demand initiative as well as co-operation with others in about equal measure. It demands the formulation of definite policies and their consistent implementation over a period of time and the taking of responsibility for their outcome. Mere ability to get round them or to avoid them altogether is not an asset.

In a joint family, though authority is generally exercised by the head of the family, the other members of the family also take adhoc decisions over many matters without reference to the head. The power to take such decisions depends upon the seniority and standing of the person concerned in the family hierarchy and his responsibility and contribution to the family welfare. Thus, a son, having an independent income and contributing all or a portion of it to the family, will have a greater say in family matters than another who may not be in such a position. But all the senior members of the family take decisions over minor matters some time or other. There is no division of responsibility or clarity of roles and there is a sort of informality which succeeds because of the cohesion that exists within the family.

This informality in decision-making as well as in relationships works successfully in a joint family because there is a high degree of cohesion within the family group and the members are bound together by ties of loyalty and affection. Individual interests are often

subordinated to the family interests. But when such relationships are extended to the industrial sphere where organizational clarity, delegation and responsibility are of primary importance for efficient working as well as good relationships, it leads to in-efficiency and frustration. The members of an industrial organisation are not bound together by the same ties of affection as the members of a family. They tend to think of their rights and privileges as individuals more than the interests of the organisation as a whole. Because of this and because of the larger size of the industrial group, it is impossible to achieve the same degree of cohesion. Therefore, where organizational clarity is lacking in industry, high efficiency is impossible of achievement.

4

Indian society is still largely rural. More than eighty percent of the population still lives in the villages. In the pre-industrial age, each of these villages was a self-contained unit, socially and economically. Their wants were fairly simple, and these were produced by the craftsmen of the village, plying their different trades. Socially, each member of the village community had his status and he remained there. But with the import of cheap machine-made goods from Europe in the nineteenth century and later, with the coming of industrialization in India itself, the economic self-sufficiency of the villages has been destroyed. But they still continue as compact social units and the relationships that operate are still those of the pre-industrial age. The various castes still live apart from each other, and social mingling is largely decided by tradition. The social legislation that has been enacted in India during the last twenty years and the spirit underlying such legislation has not had a great impression on the villages as yet. In such compact social units, changes are difficult to introduce and attitudes difficult to change. Anything new or unusual is looked upon with suspicion and anyone who is adventurous—especially if he comes from a lower caste—is considered an upstart. In such a static society, the dangers of non-conformism are quite considerable and the incentives for social progress are non-existent.

This age-long tradition of the Indian villages has made the attitudes and prejudices much stronger than in other countries. Other societies-particularly those in Europe—has undergone a number of changes during the last two thousand years or so. Beginning with the Roman Empire, the spread of Christianity, the feudal system of land ownership, the organisation of skilled craftsmen into strong guilds, and finally, the industrial revolution-each of these has been a great social revolution which brought about changes in the relationships between individuals and groups. And each one of these changes completely eliminated the previous society and replaced it by a new one. These changes meant a change in ideas, beliefs and attitudes of the people as a whole.

But the social organisation of rural India has remained unchanged for thousands of years. While this has meant a bar to economic and social progress in the past, today it is

likely to lead to a new danger. It is the danger of social disruption. Because of the spread of egalitarian ideas, because of increasing aspirations and because of economic pressures, there is a new ferment in rural areas. But while ideas have changed, attitudes and relationships still remain the same. When there is no correspondence between what people think is right and in their interests and what actually happens, the danger of social disruption is great. It is not only through economic reforms, but even more though social reforms that such disruption may be avoided, and smooth and rapid progress ensured.

But because of the strength and stability of the caste system, social relationships between individuals and groups in India have remained static for the past two thousand years. Wars, conquests and revolutions, while they might have laid waste the country, have left the social system unimpaired and unchanged. Preachers, religious reformers and philosophers—whether from within or outside the Hindu fold–have not made much impression on social relationships and patterns of behaviour. Many of the reformers within Hinduism were not so much concerned with the problems of society as with metaphysics. Even when new ideas with regard to social conduct were propagated, they did not have the effect of replacing older ideas, but rather of supplementing them and they continued to exist side by side. This has been going on for so many generations that we find today, the highest philosophy existing side by side with primitive beliefs and taboos and each man can take his pick of what he believes according to his understanding. Often we find that the same individual holds conflicting ideas and ideals. This is often explained by the statement that one is 'Kalacharam' (the way of culture or philosophy) and the other is 'Desacharam' (the way of the world) and it is possible to believe in both at the same time. Thus, though new philosophic concepts and ideas have been flowing into Hindu thought, the system of social organisation has remained unaltered and ancient attitudes and behaviour patterns have continued until the present day.

A tradition as old and as continuous as this is bound to be deeply entrenched in the minds of men and influences their every day activity. Habits and beliefs, which may seem to many as superstitious, cannot be eliminated merely by a process of logical reasoning. Logic is never more ineffective than when it is applied to long standing prejudices. One example of such a habit is to be found in the general faith in astrology and its related customs.

Even in the poorest homes, when a child is born, the time of birth is accurately noted down and its horoscope is cast by the local astrologer. No major decisions in the family such as wedding or the starting of a new business are taken without consulting the astrologer. Even after the decision is taken, any important activity should commence at an auspicious time and for this also, an astrologer is consulted. In starting on a new journey-such as going to Europe—the traveller must leave his house at an auspicious time and if it should not happen to coincide with the timing of the train or plane, then, he should spend the intervening period at a friend's house. Annual general meetings of many companies are fixed not only with reference to the Companies Act, but also with reference to the almanac.

Even some public functions are arranged in this manner though the fact is not usually advertised. In a recent analysis of matrimonial columns of an English daily, it was found that over 90 per cent of the advertisements insisted on a partner from the same caste, while nearly all of them wanted a comparison of horoscopes before the wedding. And these are not by people who are illiterate, but by educated middle class families working in various modern professions. Such considerations are so much a part of the daily life in India that they go unnoticed even by people who do not believe in them.

It is true that the spread of the modern type of education infused with scientific ideas and a humanistic and rational concept of life and the failure of the 'old' wisdom when tested against modern needs have led to a weakening of such superstitions. But even educated people are unable wholly to rid themselves of these ideas and find metaphysical arguments to reconcile their conflicting beliefs. Sometimes, men observe these things even if they do not believe in them for the sake of domestic peace and tranquility, for women on the whole are great believers in astrology and associated ceremonials and observances. It becomes a matter of habit and is passed on to the children. It is often due also to an irrational fear that in spite of what their reason tells them there may be something in it. Performing purification ceremonies and observing auspicious times etc., are not the result of positive belief but a form of insurance against any possible evil effects. In a society where most people conform, it takes considerable amount of courage to defy conventions. If something should go wrong by accident, others would point to it and say it was because he failed to observe some ritual or ceremony. It is easier and perhaps 'wiser' to take the line of least resistance and conform to 'Desacharam'.

The building up of a prosperous, industrial society involves not only changing the physical environment, but also creating attitudes and patterns of behaviour that are in consonance with the knowledge and wisdom available. If industrial development is to be brought about rapidly, the decisions of individuals as well as groups should be based on a clear appraisal of facts and logical reasoning, and not on prejudices of one sort or another. There are many situations in industry when conflicts arise between traditional attitudes and industrial requirements. In such cases, it is quite likely that the line of least resistance would be to act according to traditional attitudes.

This conflict between traditional attitudes and scientific reasoning is going on in India today; it is going on in the mind of every individual and influences all decisions. Traditional wisdom imposes itself on the quality of these decisions and the effort involved in taking a decision on an objective basis is tremendous.

5

It was on such a society that British rule was imposed. And along with the British rule came the English language, western ideas and later, gradual industrialization. The first

impact of western ideas on traditional Indian values was one of shock and bewilderment. Some people were impressed by the material superiority of the West and disillusioned at the ineffectiveness of their own ideas and civilization. They became slavish imitators of everything western and tried to ignore three thousand years of their past of which they were rather ashamed. On the other hand, others would have nothing to do with the new rulers, buried themselves deeper into their traditions and became more rigid and conservative.

But gradually, a truer perspective emerged. Indians in the nineteenth century began to see their own weaknesses and the advantages of adapting western ideas to suit Indian conditions. They realised the basic truth that the progress of a nation consisted in its ability to preserve what was good in its past and at the same time, integrate new ideas that are necessary for the future. Consequently, a number of reformist movements were started in the nineteenth century in India with the object of reforming Hinduism and purifying Indian society of many of its social evils. Almost all eminent Indians of the last century were imbued with the spirit of social reform and highly conscious of the weaknesses in Indian society. Beginning with Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a host of men and women faced social ostracism and ridicule from their countrymen, because they not only preached reform but exemplified it in their own lives and behaviour. Many societies were started for the regeneration of Indian society and these societies and their leaders played an important role in laying the foundations of new ethical and social values. But they could not go very far, because the resources at their disposal were limited and the government of the day was either hostile or indifferent to their efforts.

In the ultimate analysis, political power is necessary to enforce social reform. While voluntary movements might bring about a change of attitude in society, that changes has to be given legal status through legislative enactments in order to enforce them and to give them strength and permanence. But the British Government of the time—particularly after the revolution of 1857—refused to interfere in religious and social matters, and was interested in preserving the status quo. Consequently, the reformist movements spent themselves out without making a very big impact on society and the passion that went into social reform in the nineteenth century was transferred to the political arena in the twentieth century and social reform remained incomplete. In spite of Gandhiji's insistence on the importance of removing the evils from Indian society, to most public men, it was just an adjunct to political work.

It was also assumed by many people that economic changes and industrialization would automatically eliminate many of the social evils and therefore, much attention need not be paid to such reform. But the caste system and the attitudes it had created have belied such hopes and have shown remarkable powers of adjustment and survival in the new situation. In an industrial set-up, it reveals itself in new forms, often unrecognizable but definitely bearing the stamp of caste. The large number of complaints that are heard today

regarding the selections of students for admission to schools and colleges, regarding recruitment to the services and regarding the selection of candidates for election by the various political parties are but a few of the examples of the prevalence of the caste system in modern, industrial and democratic environment.

M.N. Srinivas, the well-known sociologist, writes:

> "During the last century or more, the institution of caste has found new fields of activity. The manner in which the British transferred political power to the Indians enabled caste to assume political functions. In Independent India, the provision of constitutional safeguards to the backward sections of the population, especially the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, has given a new lease of life to caste. It is hardly necessary to add that this contrasts with the aim of bringing about a casteless society which most political parties, including the Indian National Congress, profess."

A major contribution of the caste system to modern society is what might be termed the 'group mentality'. While 'groupism' may be based on regional, local or linguistic loyalties also, it is groups based on castes that are units of social and political action. In the traditional society, an individual considered himself primarily as a member of his caste. That was the social and economic frame work within which he operated. His fortunes were invariably tied with the fortunes of his caste. In the new situation in which he is placed, caste has been officially relegated to the background, though most people are still largely influenced by it. His common frame work of reference is not India, but the group to which he belongs.

Often an individual is a member of more than one such group. These groups frequently superimpose themselves on each other, creating a large number of sub-groups; each sub-group is in conflict with some and in co-operation with others depending on the circumstances and the issues involved. They support and sustain each other when their interests to coincide and oppose each other with equal ease when there is a conflict of interests. They form kaleidoscopic patterns at each minor change in the situation. Thus, in demanding the setting up of a steel plant by the central government, most of the people of the State are united irrespective of party affiliations. But in setting up an engineering college in one town or another within the State, there is rivalry between the towns. But when it comes to admissions to the college, there is demand for reservation of seats on the basis of communities or localities whichever happens to suit a particular group. On the other hand, at election time, they are divided on party lines, though communal considerations might operate in the selection of candidates and in the voting pattern. There was the case of a parliamentary candidate who in the last general elections emphasised the fact that his mother was a malayali lady in those areas of the town where there was a preponderance of malayalis, that his father was a Brahmin in the Brahmin areas and that his wife was an Andhrite in Telugu speaking villages! At non-election times, he claimed to be a true all-India type!

The group under the caste system had acquired social equilibrium through centuries of tradition and custom. But these new social groups do not have the sanction of tradition. Nor do they fulfil the needs of a modern society and help to produce a stable social equilibrium based on equality, democracy and the larger national objectives. On the other hand, they effectively prevent the achievement of a new social equilibrium through the creation of tensions and conflicts between groups.

'Groupism' within political parties has been a well recognised phenomenon and in many cases, the groups have been identified. But they exist in every walk of life. They are to be found in industrial concerns, among trade unions, in government service and even in social service organisations. Most of the time they operate unofficially and informally though they are often recognizable. But when the interests of the group are thwarted in any way, they often come to the surface as separate social entities.

This transference of the attitudes of the caste system to modern society has been responsible for the failure to create All-India types of people. The existence of such groups effectively thwarts the efficient functioning of organisation and the quick achievement of national objectives. In trying to satisfy the demands of these groups and keep them from becoming unduly troublesome, national resources are often wasted and policies and objectives compromised. They are also responsible for the creation of social tensions and for an agitation approach to the solution of problems. They exert pressures on politicians and leaders in various walks of life to act according to the requirements of one group or another. Sometimes when two groups in an organisation are at loggerheads, the entire organisation is paralysed and no work is done and everyone plans how to get rid of the troublesome members of the other group. It is said that a lecturer in one university was offered a professorship in another. But he refused it and remarked, 'No, I would rather stay here and fight it out till the end'.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BURDEN OF TRADITION

For the past lives in the present, the present,
In the future; linking the dead past
With the unborn future, linking
Receding memory with approaching desire
Through life and time.

1

In the last two chapters we have seen that society in India is dominated by a set of heterogeneous superstitions and ceremonials, divided into water-tight compartments of castes and creeds and influenced by a heavy burden of long and continuous tradition. Authoritarianism has been the rule at every level and because of the hierarchical nature of society it has taken deep roots in Indian mind and thought, and has become a matter of habit. It is this environment that determines the social values which are accepted and practiced by the community as a whole. There may be a few who rebel against their environment and its values. They are either social reformers who consider that society needs improving or criminals who find that the rules of society are too irksome. But by and large the vast majorities of people accept the values that society has evolved and practice them without protest. These social values form a guide to the habits and behaviour patterns of the people as a whole.

It is often assumed that because of education, because of the spread of egalitarian ideas and because of the introduction of democracy and spread of industrialization, these traditional ideas and values have disappeared, or are fast disappearing. Nothing can be farther from the truth. It is true that superficially many of these ideas seem to have receded to the background, but they survive in new and often in unrecognizable forms, and are consequently more difficult to isolate. In spite of all the talk about freedom and equality, millions of people in India live according to these traditional virtues, practise time-honoured customs cherish outmoded beliefs and assume attitudes handed down from their forefathers. The broad national outlook of any individual depends on the number of people to whom he can extend his sympathies, but the sympathies of the common man in India are confined to his caste or community, or at the most to the geographical or linguistic locality. They are not able to visualize or appreciate national problems and national requirements in a realistic or meaningful manner. They are the people who vote in elections and send

representatives to the State assemblies and parliament. A society that has always had respect for the high and contempt for the low cannot be expected to take egalitarian ideas seriously. A community that has revered faith and obedience for generations cannot develop a spirit of logical enquiry overnight just because economic and social progress demands it. Traditions and habits of thousands of years cannot be discarded overnight, and they have a habit of persisting long after they have outlived their usefulness. Loyalty to one's caste or locality cannot be replaced by loyalty to the nation, particularly when it affects one's immediate interests adversely.

Nor are these attitudes and beliefs confined to the large mass of uneducated people living in the villages of India. Among educated people, the superficial forms of these values have disappeared, but the attitudes born out of tradition persist and influence their behaviour.

It is on such a society that democracy, universal adult franchise and fundamental rights have been imposed. But the passing of a law does not change people's attitudes. The enactment of a law does not necessarily bring about a social change. It is only a great social awakening, a burning conviction of rights and an equally resolute determination to implement them irrespective of what it may cost, that can bring about a social revolution.

If all this were true, then it may be asked, "How is it that there has been no opposition when egalitarian ideas were incorporated into the constitution of India?" The reason is simple. The philosophical foundations of the traditional society were demolished when once western ideas were introduced into the country. Today, no one, except perhaps the most conservative, attempts to defend the caste system or untouchability. But it is still present in the national sub-consciousness, and influences our actions and behaviour. Active opposition to new ideas could be combated and overcome. But passive acquiescence, the inertia of centuries and indifference cannot be so easily defeated. This has been a special feature of Hinduism, and probably been responsible for its survival while many other ancient religions are dead and gone. From the time of Buddha to Gandhi, whenever a new religion or social philosopher rose to combat traditional ideas, Hinduism and Hindu society never offered much resistance. Often, the ideas were accepted and made a part and parcel of Hindu thought. The new philosopher was made into another God, temples were built in his honour, endowments were instituted and he was worshipped by all. But he was rarely followed. His ideas survived in musty manuscripts or palm leaves to be used for the intellectual polemics of learned pundits in later centuries rather than as living ideas for the progress of society. Even on those rare occasions when new ideas found their way into general acceptance and into social use, the old ones were never discarded. They have continued to exist side by side, each man adopting what suited him best. Thus we find that in Hindu society, most modern and sophisticated ideas prevailing side by side with primitive practices and beliefs. The result has been that society is not homogeneous, but only a conglomeration of faiths, beliefs and attitudes.

Modern ideas of equality and industrial growth cannot be relegated to musty manuscripts, because these social ideas have been accompanied by revolutionary changes in the methods of production. They have already affected the life of every individual in the country. Therefore, the traditional ideas have done the next best thing: they have imposed themselves on the new values and ethics and tried to perpetuate themselves through new institutions that industrialization and democracy have created.

There are many who believe that political democracy has been ineffective in changing patterns of social behaviour and only economic equality will bring about social change. But if traditional ethics have found ways of surviving political freedom and adult franchise, they will survive equally well under a socialistic pattern also.

Thus, the imposition of political freedom and democracy and industrialization on the traditional values has not wiped out the latter and the undisputed sway of the former. It has not led to the creation of a more homogeneous society which greater national consciousness and the subordination of local loyalties to the larger loyalty to the nation. Nor has it induced a greater desire for social change though it has roused people's aspirations for economic well being. The existence of these two sets of values side by side had created quite a few tragic-comic situations. Thus we find well known scientists and engineers dealing every day in their profession with the laws of science spending the evenings consulting horoscopes for their son's or daughter's weddings! Foundation stones for scientific laboratories have to be laid only at auspicious times. Annual general meetings have to be fixed, taking into account the "ragu kalam". A man spends his domestic and personal life under one set of conventions dictated by tradition and his working life is governed by a different set of conventions. These two roles are often mutually incompatible and some sort of an unhealthy compromise has to be worked out. Such a compromise need not always be in favour of the more rational system.

2

To help the members of one's family and one's relations who may be in need of help has generally been considered in India a social virtue. People often remark about a man who had done well for himself and who has given considerable help to his relations 'he is a tower of strength to all his relations' and is praised as a social benefactor. On the other hand, if he should fail to help his relations, he is thought to be selfish. In giving such help, the economic utility of those who receive it is never taken into account, since it is a form of social service rather than an economic consideration. An agriculturist never thinks of employing outsiders on his farm if his sons, brothers or nephews are available. Only after having exhausted the members of his family does he look for outsiders. Even then, he prefers members of his own caste. The loyalties and obligations of society demand that in economic matters, as in everything else, one should help members of one's own caste in preference to others. These

obligations do not cease to apply just because a person starts a new industry or becomes a member of a government department or principal of a college.

But when these values are extended to an industrial society, they become out of place and positively harmful. Employment in an industrial society is fundamentally on the basis of economic and functional utility of the individual concerned. The individual also places his own economic well being above that of others in the organisation and even above the organisation he serves. He is not bound by ties of loyalty, affection and blood relationship to the other members of the group as he is in a joint family. His motivations and aspirations are not those of an agricultural worker attached to his employer in the village. Even if they are so to start with, they soon change under the impact of industrial circumstances. He expects to be rewarded for good work and reprimanded for inefficiency. He does not like preferences to be shown on the basis of social relationships, though he may not be averse to them if they act in his favour! Efficiency and high morale in an industrial organisation demand that recruitment and promotion should be based on merit, and not on any other consideration.

All this should not be taken to mean that nepotism is confined only to the employer class. Employers and workers are both inheritors of the same traditions and their attitudes towards many of these problems are similar. It is just that the employers have greater opportunities. When first-line supervisors-who are themselves promoted from among workers—had the responsibility for recruitment in the early days of industrialization, many complaints were heard that they had filled their departments with their relatives. When a wealthy agriculturist starts an industry, his tenants and farm workers expect, as a matter of course, to be taken into the industry.

Consideration for caste, community and blood relationship persists at all levels and in all spheres of activity, whether it be industry, public service or politics. Among the more sophisticated, it has become fashionable to decry any preference shown on the basis of caste, but it still makes its influence felt in various subtle and indirect ways.

The prevalence of nepotism, affects an organisation in many ways. The presence of a relation of the boss in the lower rungs of the ladder is usually resented by the other employees. He is considered a spy who has direct access to the top and who is likely to carry tales about others. If, in addition to this, he happens to be inefficient, not only does he not contribute his share, but the others tend to feel that they need not be efficient. If he commits a mistake, it is often difficult for the boss to punish him because of extraneous considerations. On the other hand, if others are punished for similar faults, there is resentment against an obvious injustice. The net result is a lowering of morale and frustration in the organisation as a whole.

If, on the other hand, the topmost person in an organisation has acquired his position not by skill or by efficiency but merely by virtue of his birth or influence, then things

are even worse. This is particularly so in public organisations where the individual concerned has no financial stake involved. In the first place he is not capable of taking decisions. Delay in decision making is dangerous—for not making a decision is itself a decision, if a negative one-and is likely to have an influence on the march of events. In an emergency or crisis such a person loses his command over the situation. He is dependent on others for advice—usually his subordinates. Sometimes this may lead to corruption, but it always gives rise to a lowering of efficiency. The subordinates give conflicting advice and compete for the position of being a 'favourite'. Finally, it creates the impression among everyone concerned that the only way of getting ahead is not by acquiring training or skill, but by influence and right connections. Naturally people follow the method that they think yield results easily and quickly.

It is obvious therefore that the ethics of the caste system and the joint family are unsuitable for the industrial age. But yet, they persist, because what was considered by society, and is still considered to a large extent, as a virtue cannot be given up overnight and treated as undesirable habits. The human mind does not change so quickly, and mere logic has little effect in bringing about social changes. Anyone who has had anything to do with recruitment, promotions, admissions to colleges, etc., is only too well aware of the social pressures of different sorts to which he is subjected in order to make him give preference to a particular candidate or group of candidates. There are many subtle ways in which these pressures operate, and an individual must have a very high degree of detachment combined with a very strong willpower to be completely uninfluenced by such pressures. If anyone succeeds in achieving such impartiality, he soon becomes unpopular among his colleagues, but if he yields to such pressures, at least those of his colleagues whom he has helped will be his supporters and will certainly do him a good turn when they have an opportunity. Every community blames all the other communities for this state of affairs, but they have all inherited the same burden from the past.

There are of course a few cases where communal loyalties have been successfully transferred to an industrial situation through consistent encouragement to a particular community. Because of these loyalties, such organisations have been highly efficient. But it should be realised that in the changing pattern of India's sociological climate, such loyalties based on caste and community are on very unstable foundations and are likely to be upset by the slightest change in the social equilibrium.

3

Respect for seniority and age is a special feature of any hierarchical society and it is particularly so in India. This has also been reinforced by the joint family system in which power is generally concentrated in the oldest members of the family. They take major decisions in most families on domestic as well as business matters. Even when they are

physically incapacitated from taking an active part in affairs, they still expect to be consulted and their views accepted. It is not done to contradict them or even to express mild disagreement. Years of unchallenged authority creates in their minds a sense of infallibility which is often cloaked in an attitude of mock humility. This traditional respect for age and seniority is often transferred to industrial situations and to business organisations. It is given considerable importance in the attitude of public administration also. Many Indian businesses are run by family groups and the head of the family is also the head of the business organisation. In actual fact he may not even be a member of the board of directors. The managing director or the chairman of the board may be his son, younger brother or a nephew. But his is the power if not the glory, for he remains behind the scene and takes all the major and often even the minor decisions.

In the thirties and forties, Mahatma Gandhi was not even a four anna member of the Congress. Nevertheless, he took all the policy decisions of the party and the other leaders looked upto him to do so. This is a well known instance of the joint family system operating at the national level. He was the head—the father figure—of the Congress family and irrespective of who was president, his was the final authority. Netaji Subash Chandra Bose could perhaps be compared to a rebellious son who tried to assert himself against the authority of the head of the family. By the same analogy, the split in the Congress Party in 1969 could be compared to the break-up of a joint family when once the authority of the father figure—in this case Nehru—was removed. Because of the authoritarian nature of society in India and because of the type of responsibility that is generally delegated to juniors, Indian organisations seem to fall apart the moment such father figures are gone.

Even in other organisations which are not family concerns, respect for seniority and age persists because it is a part of the culture pattern of society. A senior engineer does not consult his junior on the usefulness of a new process (even though the younger man may be better qualified and may be thoroughly familiar with that process while the senior might not) because he considers it beneath his dignity. Similarly, the junior engineer does not offer his views because he feels it may be resented (though in some cases it may not be) and he may be considered impertinent and it may affect his future chances of promotion. The result is that the decision to use or not to use the process is taken on insufficient information regarding its utility. The quality of the decision suffers as a result. The junior is conscious of this and is often frustrated as a result. There are hundreds of similar situations where respect for seniority and age stands in the way of progressive decision making.

Even in a stable society where technological and social changes are few and far between, such control by older people is bound to have a cramping effect on the younger generation. But in a society that is fast changing—as in India today—this has a crippling effect on the young people. Often, the father is uneducated, narrow in his outlook on life. His horizons are necessarily limited and he does not realise the trend in which the world is moving. The son is educated, broad-minded, more objective. The senior man in industry

might have got there merely through experience, or age. But in a rapidly changing technological age, he is often ignorant of modern developments. And yet, in both cases, it is the senior people who take decisions which affect the younger generation and the organisation leading to undesirable results.

Another result of this respect for age is that promotions in India are almost always by seniority. This is particularly so in government service where promotions are governed by a complicated set of rules, and seniority is difficult to ignore. Needless to say, such a system is frustrating to enthusiastic, brilliant and hard working young men. The quickness with which a young man attains maturity in a business or profession depends partly on his knowledge and ability and partly on the nature of the responsibility that is entrusted to him. If responsibility is denied to him until such time as he himself is fairly well advanced in age, his knowledge often becomes rusty, his enthusiasm degenerates into mere routine and when at last he reaches a position of authority, he is reluctant to share it with his junior colleagues, and so the process goes on.

Progress in the past might have depended upon experience and philosophic thought. While these still have a high place in modern business and industrial life, what is even more necessary today is daring, experimentation and innovation based on the latest knowledge. It is generally considered that scientists do their best work before they are thirty-five. This is probably true of many other professions also, and the earlier the responsibility is placed on a man, the more fruitful his work is likely to be.

All this is not to suggest that there should be no respect for age; in any civilized society, there will always be respect for age and status. Nor does it mean that young people should be allowed to do just what they like! But it does mean that if economic progress is to be rapid, properly qualified young men should be entrusted with greater responsibilities; their advice should be sought before taking major decisions; that when once the responsibilities are given, they should not be lightly interfered with; and they should be encouraged to take initiative. In other words the older people should reign rather than rule.

We thus have a combination of unquestioned respect for age and a strong loyalty to one's caste and community in a modern industrial system which involves dealing with a large number of men and machines and which demands absolute impartiality. A man in charge of a job in industry should do what he thinks is right without his having to consult his seniors. He must take the responsibility for his decisions. He should be in a position to express his opinions freely without fear of offending his superiors. His loyalty must be to the organisation as a whole, and not to a few. We can thus see the contradiction between the modern executive requiring initiative, power of delegation, equality and impartiality, and running headlong into a tradition which opposes all these attributes.

The status of women in any society also has an effect on development. Women form half the total population, and whether they contribute to growth and progress or whether they are a burden on society depends upon whether they are treated as equals or as subordinates to men. If woman have equal rights in the domestic and social fields and if equal opportunities of education are provided, they too can contribute by their skill and knowledge to progress in various walks of life. On the other hand, if they suffer from a number of handicaps, then their talents cannot be fully utilized for the benefit of society.

In Hindu mythology and Indian literary tradition, woman are represented as being pure an ethereal and more virtuous than men. Higher standards of morality and behaviour are expected of them. Heroines of mythology are worshipped as goddesses. There have also been many women in Indian history who have distinguished themselves in various walks of life which are generally considered to be the prerogative of men. But in everyday life, women have always held a subordinate position. According to traditional custom, modesty carried to the point of timidity is considered to be their greatest virtue. A wife is expected to stand up if the husband comes into the room. She is supposed to eat only after her husband has finished his meal. Until recently she had no rights of inheritance, but only a right to protection.

On the other hand, women of lower castes and the working classes generally have always had to work for their living. That means they have always contributed to economic prosperity according to their ability and have therefore enjoyed greater freedom. But women from the middle and upper classes have considered it beneath their dignity to work outside the home. Men who did not hesitate to demand big dowries from their prospective fathers-in-law nevertheless considered it beneath family honour to have their wives and daughters working and earning a livelihood. Consequently until quite recently, women's contribution in the various professions has been very small. But thanks to the movement for Independence and the excellent examples set by a few distinguished women, the spread of education and the removal of some of the social inequalities through legislation, more and more women are entering various professions and beginning to contribute their share of creating wealth in one form or another.

However, at present and for some time to come, except in some specialized jobs such as nursing, teaching and medicine, the contribution of women towards economic progress can only be small. When millions of men are unemployed if a woman gets a job it only means that she prevents a man from getting that job. It is also quite likely that the men who are unemployed would resent a large-scale intrusion into their professions by women. But in the later stages of industrialization and when unemployment among men is reduced, significant increase in economic growth can be achieved if women are progressively employed in all types of jobs which their talents and training fit them.

Nevertheless, it is women who can changes social environment. The attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of children are conditioned more by the mothers than by the fathers, and often women have a greater say in social matters in the home. Therefore their education and training assumes great importance.

5

Paternalism is another social attitude that is prevalent in Indian industry. Paternalism in industry can be described as the attitude of employers to their workers, similar to that of parents towards their children. It is an attempt at transferring the feudal relationships of an agricultural society to an industrial situation. In a village in the old days, the chief land owner was not only an employer of most people in the village, but also their friend, philosopher and guide. He looked after their social needs and they consulted and obeyed him even in personal matters. It was his duty to care for them under all circumstances and in return, they never thought of leaving him and going to work for someone else. The development of this attitude in industry has been found in most countries in the early stages of industrialization.

Paternalism has two aspects. The first is benevolence; the employer makes him responsible for the welfare of those working under him in the same way as a father is responsible for the welfare of his children. The second is despotism; he expects his workers to accept his orders without question and to obey him in the same way as he expects obedience from his children. This combination of authoritarianism and benevolence can be highly successful under certain conditions and stages of development. In some countries—notably in Japan—it has been particularly successful in bringing about a sense of loyalty between workers and managements and has been mainly responsible for high productivity. When a worker is recruited in Japan, the managements generally do not think of sending him out except for very serious or extraordinary reasons. The worker on the other hand expects to spend the rest of his life working for that management. Even in a time economic depression, workers are rarely retrenched. The welfare of workers and their families is treated by the managements as an important part of their work, and no time, money or effort is spared for this purpose. One is impressed by the provision of dormitories, medical help, recreational and cultural activities arranged for the benefit of the workers and the way these facilities are being utilized by most of the workers. The methods of induction and training are such that the worker feels at home from the very first day and learns to feel proud of the factory and the management for whom he works. Because of this paternalistic character of Japan's industry, it was possible for that country to industrialise without much social disruption—a phenomenon that has followed industrialization in most other countries. For the same reason, in spite of the rapid growth of trade unions in post-war Japan, the nature of the relationship between managements and workers has not been seriously challenged.

But one should not lose sight of the authoritarian nature of paternalism. So long as the workers accept such authoritarian treatment willingly and so long as they do not question the bonafides of their employers, paternalism can be successful. But the moment the workers realise their rights and privileges and their strength in collective action, paternalism becomes extremely inefficient. The managements continue to be authoritarian in character. They are unable to understand the change that has come over their workers who up till then had been quite happy and contented. They attribute the discontent and the indiscipline to a few 'agitators' and feel that when once they are removed, things will go back to the old relationship. The workers, on the other hand, with all the enthusiasm of a new found freedom and strength are aggressive and question every action of the managements often merely to assert their rights. The result of these two opposing attitudes is a large number of disputes, frequent stoppage of work, poor industrial relations and low productivity.

The welfare aspect of paternalism has never been strong in Indian industries except for a few notable exceptions, but managements have generally been authoritarian and have been reluctant to give up many of their prerogatives. On the other hand, there has been considerable awakening on the part of the workers during the past twenty-five years, followed by rapid growth in the trade union movement and a rise in the level of expectations as a result of Independence. Managements who were, until then, used to taking unilateral decisions on all matters could not adjust themselves to the new situation. This resulted in an abnormal number of disputes during the fifties. But with the gradual evolution of new equilibrium based on the legislation of the last few years, we may expect a reduction in the number of strikes and lock-outs and the building up of sound industrial relations. But under these conditions, which are essentially democratic in character, paternalism in its old form has no place; and welfare measures will be successful only if they are divorced from paternalistic attitudes.

Partly because of the paternalistic attitude which induces a sense of personal responsibility for the well-being of their relations and community people, and partly because of a false sense of generosity, many managements of industries in pre-war days recruited people with no regard to the efficiency or the number required. This was particularly so during the war years when wages were low and profits were high and a few additional workers or clerks did not affect the organisation very much since the total wage bill did not go up to any considerable extent. At the same time the managements felt that they were helping to provide jobs for poor and starving people. It was again the old feudal attitude of charity, of sharing what was available as wages among a large number of people, of not attaching importance to the functional utility of individuals.

But in the immediate post-war period, when minimum wages for all workers in various industries were fixed, these managements were in trouble as they had to pay higher wages to all their workers irrespective of the number they employed. There was a demand

for retrenchment from the managements which was opposed by the unions, thus creating a problem for everyone concerned. In some of the older industries like textiles, this problem of surplus workers recruited during or in the immediate postwar years is still a problem in some areas.

6

Another social attitude that is of relevance to productivity is the reluctance exhibited by most educated and even uneducated people in India to any form of manual labour. Engineering graduates, when they enter industry, expect to spend most of their working time at a desk. Or they walk round the departments and give oral instructions to those under them. But unless they have themselves worked on the machines, it is not possible for them to understand the problems that the workers have, and their instructions remain at a theoretical rather than a realistic level. The diploma holders, who it was first thought might take to working on the shop floor, have developed a similar attitude to that of the graduates and expect a desk, though perhaps a smaller one. Manual work is important even for those who are later going to be employed in purely brain work, from the point of view of training in the co-ordination of the hand and the eye with the brain and secondly from the point of view of developing a proper attitude in the young people towards those who may be permanently employed in manual work. The ability to use tools and instruments of various kinds is important to a man in industry at whatever level he may be operating. Only such knowledge backed by sound theoretical education enables him to improve those tools and machines and techniques on the basis of personal experience.

The desire to avoid manual labour is not peculiar to India. Even in industrialized countries, until quite recently, the ‘white collar’ workers considered themselves socially a step above the ‘blue collar’ workers, though economically they might not always have been as well off. Manual labour generally means hard physical work, low pay, low social status and very little skill or initiative. Though industrialization and improvement in working conditions, as these things change, so the difference between the two types of work has been reduced in advanced countries until now when these distinctions have practically disappeared. In India, manual labour still means in a large number of cases, all those things such as physical effort, low pay, etc. And in the peculiar social philosophy existing in India in the past, all manual labour was performed by people of the lower castes who had no opportunities of upward social mobility. Consequently, people of the higher castes have developed the attitude that all types of manual labour is socially degrading. And the lower castes, who unconsciously tend to imitate their superiors, try to give it up at the earliest possible opportunity.

Further, when labour is as cheap as it is in India and as plentiful, it is only natural that it should be looked down upon. A man drawing as low a salary as three hundred rupees a

month can employ a servant for about twenty rupees a month. Naturally, he is not only unused to any manual work in his home but thinks poorly of others who do it. Now that the wages of industrial workers are fairly high in comparison with others, there is less reluctance to take to factory work though other forms of manual work have not received a similar social upgrading.

This attitude takes different forms. Most jobs are passed down to the lowest possible level before they are performed. In factories, an engineer or a technician does not think of adjusting or setting a machine himself. Nor does he check it after it has been done by someone lower down. He considers that his job is to ask his subordinate to do it and in some cases explain to him how it is done. Even skilled workers demand assistance to be provided to do the unskilled part of the job. A man who has to climb the ladder to repair an electric wire wants another man to fetch the ladder for him. In vegetarian restaurants in South India there is usually one group of people who serve food and a different group to carry away the dirty dishes and clean the tables. Those who serve consider it beneath their professional status to remove the dirty dishes. In offices, this attitude is reflected in the existence of a large of number of peons carryings notes, files and glasses of water everywhere. If a piece of paper drops from the table, neither the boss, nor the typist who may be with him, would think of picking it up; the bell has to be rung, the peon summoned and instructed to pick up the piece of paper. Often, it is the peon who carries the brief case from the car to the office of the executive. Even the Junior-most officer expects to be provided with a peon as a matter of course. Their number has not been reduced in spite of the provision of inter-communicating systems in offices. In small offices in western countries, it is usual for the typist or clerk to make tea for the boss. But stenographers in India would be horrified if they were told that making tea was part of their daily routine—even if they are capable of making it. Similarly, an executive or an officer would be scandalized if it were suggested that he should have a cup of tea with his secretary! Thus a new caste system based on a new division of labour is beginning to take roots in our factories and offices also.

Partly because of the force of economic circumstances and partly due to the propaganda of the last few years regarding the dignity of manual labour, there has been a welcome change in this attitude. Educated young men are ashamed to admit that they do not like manual work. Training in the N.C.C. and the social service leagues of the various schools and colleges has also been responsible for this change of attitude to a certain extent. In fact it is quite fashionable for students to undertake some voluntary work during their holidays such as repairing a road in a village and have themselves photographed in the process. But to do voluntary work as a service during a short period is one thing; to do it for eight hours a day as a profession is another. And while open objection to manual labour has largely disappeared, it shows itself in more indirect and subtle forms. Nevertheless some young men with education are entering factories as workmen today. And if this gradual trend continues, and if these men are provided with adequate training facilities within the

industry so that they have opportunities of rising to higher levels in their jobs, it is bound to increase industrial efficiency. It will also provide a ladder for upward mobility for industrial workers through skill and craftsmanship which is totally lacking at present. Perhaps, the small beginning made in this direction will eventually develop into a desired state of affairs.

7

In all group endeavours, there should be some sort of a common philosophy of understanding between the various people comprising the group. It does not matter whether the group is small-such as people working together in a factory—or large, such as a whole nation. Nor does it mean that everyone should follow the same doctrine. But it is essential that each one professing a particular doctrine should practise it so that others would know what they may be expected to do in a given situation and may adjust themselves accordingly. Such an understanding is necessary for the success of any joint effort. It necessarily follows therefore that for any successful co-operative effort; there should be some compatibility between profession and practice.

It is of course idle to pretend that one's behaviour will be completely in consonance with one's beliefs under all circumstances. Only saints-and even they, rarely-are able to achieve such a feat. Our beliefs represent what we think is right conduct irrespective of the consequences; but our behaviour is governed not only by our ideals, but very largely by social pressures, obligations and loyalties, personal interests and past habits. There is therefore in most societies a gap between profession and practice. In stable societies where there is little change, this gap may be very small. But in societies which are in the process of change when new ideas are replacing old ones, but new habits have not yet been formed and the unconscious compulsion of old habits persists, the gap is likely to be fairly wide. In such a situation, all people do not change at the same time. Adjustment to a new culture pattern is always difficult and different people accept it at different rates of change depending upon their education, environment, and so on. That means that not only is the gap large, but the extent of the gap varies with different people. Often, there is a desire to let someone else try the new ideas in practice while we ourselves stick to the old ones. There is also the sneaking fear that the new ideas are perhaps not at all what they are made out to be. Hence, while paying lip service to new ideas, people tend to carry on as before.

So it is in India. In the conventional society today, considerable freedom of thought is permitted while absolute conformity in social matters is expected. Great emotional pressure is brought to bear on those who try not to conform, and they are often made helpless. In many spheres of activity, old ideas and beliefs are giving place to new ones. But the change in the adoption of methods and behaviour based on the new ideas is much slower. The con situation of India had laid down that no discrimination should be shown to any individual because of caste, colour or creed. But in actual practice, most private activity and quite a bit

of public activity is dominated by communal or religious considerations. Most people will honestly claim that they do not believe in the caste system, but will oppose strenuously any attempts on the part of their sons and daughters to marry outside their caste. Though most people would claim that they are not superstitious, they never think of fixing a date and time of a wedding or for a long journey, according to convenience but only according to the auspicious time. There have been instances of people criticizing astrology in public while consulting astrologers in private. People who have had scientific training and who know all about astronomy observe religious ceremonies associated with eclipses. Hundreds of such instances could be given to illustrate the wide gap that exists in India between ideas and behaviour.

This difference between theory and practice applies just as much to the economic and industrial sphere. Businessmen and industrialists who profess to believe in scientific methods of management do not often implement them in their own organisations. People who believe in selecting candidates by scientific methods often apply criteria such as caste, relationship, etc., in the actual selection. Most trade unionists profess to believe in a single union for each industry and yet, the multiplicity of unions has been increasing in the last few years. On the other hand, there have been cases where people have adapted their behaviour to suit their ideas and have been sorely disappointed because others had failed to follow them. It is the essential unpredictability in the situation that often leads to misunderstanding and frustration. It also has a subtle but important effect on all productive group activity. It affects the efficiency of individuals as well as groups. It stands in the way of developing common loyalties and codes of behaviour. When such codes are evolved through external pressure, they are accepted without criticism, but rarely implemented whole-heartedly. Criticism could be fought and overcome; but acceptance without conviction is difficult to overcome. It prevents the adjustment of individuals within a group to each other in relation to the common objectives of the group. The election of Jawaharlal Nehru, a confirmed agnostic, as the Prime Minister of India for a long period and the love and respect that was showered on him by a society that was essentially ritualistic and superstitions is a classical example of acceptance without conviction.

The reason for drawing attention to these aspects of behaviour is not to belittle the considerable amount of social progress that has been achieved, but rather to point out the divergence that still exists between even generally accepted ideas and behaviour. Nor does it mean that people in India are any hypocritical than those in the rest of the world. But it does bring to light the important sociological fact that in a society in which ideas are changing very fast, the gap between ideas and behaviour of ordinary people tends to increase and a common code of accepted behaviour is difficult to achieve. It shows the gap that exists between intellectual acceptance of ideas and emotional conviction.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE AGE OF AGITATION

For we are alone;
Each is a unit in himself, each is a cell,
Throbbing, gnawing, turning, each is a world
In himself—each is a world
With private worlds to win.

1

One of the weapons that a traditional Indian wife used to have in her armoury against her husband was fasting. Whenever the husband was rude, ill-treated her, or strayed from the virtuous path of holy matrimony, she invariably resorted to fasting. She would do all the house work, look after the children, cook and feed the husband or any old people in the house, but not eat her. It was surprising how often the recalcitrant or unyielding husband was made to give in after a few days of fasting by the wife. The weapon was successful mainly because, basically, there was love and affection between the partners.

Somehow, the idea of non-cooperation rather than active opposition to others seems to appeal to the Indian mind. Hinduism has never taken an aggressive, proselytizing attitude towards other religions. It either ignored them or occasionally made them a part of its own. When other religions began to convert Hindus to their fold, its resistance to them has been passive rather than active. While an individual is expected to conform to a rigid social pattern, his mind is more or less left free and each man forms his own concept of God. In such a situation the individual can best resist society, not by opposition, since opposition would be of no avail, but by non-participation so that his mind is left free and his conscience is satisfied. The combination of tolerance and a non-aggressive spirit on the one hand and individual freedom of belief and conscience on the other seems to result in a passive resistance rather than active opposition to disagreeable ideas and situations.

Mahatma Gandhi's principle of Satyagraha is only an extension on a national scale of the wife's weapon of fasting. However, Gandhiji perfected his weapon after considerable experimentation and soul searching. He realised that differences were bound to arise between groups and nations, and these differences might be so deep as to lead to war and hatred. As a pacifist, he was interested in developing an alternative to war—to replace hatred by love, and destruction and defeat of others by self-sacrifice. He did not visualize it as a weapon to be light-heartedly used by irresponsible people for doubtful causes or for furthering selfish interests.

But to most people who followed him, Satyagraha was a matter of expediency, not a matter of principle. They did not love their enemies as Gandhiji wanted them to do. Many of them would gladly have fought the British, if they could. In fact, a few of them were members of secret societies formed for the purpose of throwing bombs or derailing trains, before they decided to follow the apostle of non-violence.

Whenever a law is broken, there are usually two types of people who do so; those who break it out of a deep moral conviction that the law is wrong and those to whom the laws imposed by society are irksome. But whatever the reasons, law-breaking can become as much a matter of habit as discipline. People who were used to breaking laws for thirty years under British rule could not suddenly settle down and become law abiding citizens just because the laws were now enforced by their own government. Civil disobedience on a national scale created an atmosphere and an environment in which respect for law, the sanctity behind it, and the psychological checks that make people obey them were replaced by a certain degree of licence and a feeling that laws were meant to be broken. The social discipline that makes people conform was no longer a binding factor since law-breakers had first been raised to the status of heroes and later, to positions of power. The idea that defying a law and going to jail was an easy road to popularity and power had got into the sub-conscious minds of people with political ambitions of various degrees. The self-discipline that Gandhiji insisted on was not to be found in many of his followers. Before 1947, they broke the laws, not so much because they were wrong, but primarily because they were enacted by an alien government without the consent and participation of the people concerned. Even after 1947, the habit persists, and they defy laws which they do not like or because the laws happen to affect the interests of a particular group adversely or just because, they want to protest about something and exhibit their strength.

Many eminent liberal politicians of the twenties, notably V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, had warned Gandhiji about the long-term consequences of his non-co-operation movement. But those eminent men had no following among the masses, and while Gandhiji himself respected them and their opinions, his followers treated them as mouth-pieces of the British Raj.

Today, others who are not followers of Gandhiji and who do not share his concern for moral convictions have adopted the technique of civil disobedience, and have 'improved' it in many ways. During the last twenty years, various groups of people such as industrial workers, political parties, students, civil servants and even policemen have resorted to it in one form or another. Agitations have been started in support of linguistic provinces or border disputes between States, to abolish or postpone examinations, to solve industrial disputes and so on. They have even been started by one group of workers against another whose union or political complexion is not liked by the others. Stay-in-strikes, sit-down strikes, pen-down strikes, use of abusive language against individuals or groups in the opposite camp, picketing, stopping of buses and trams have all become part of what may be called an agitational approach to the solution of problems. Executives in industry, officials

of government, and principals of colleges have been imprisoned in their offices for hours and even days, and the police have been ineffective. When the history of the sixties comes to be written, it may well be referred to as the age of agitation.

Even agitations, started with peaceful intentions and methods, have a tendency to turn into mob violence within a short time. There are always a few people in every city who are watching out for such agitations; they take advantage of them for looting and arson, for setting private scores with their enemies or for the sheer pleasure of creating disorder. And the innocent and misguided people who started the agitation are flabbergasted, and blame everything on agents provocateur.

It has been reported that between 1947 and 1967, police had resorted to firing approximately two thousand times. They must also have used lathi charges and tear gas in a much larger number of cases. This number is probably greater than the number of police firings throughout the British rule in India. Since 1967, things have become much worse. The gherao has become the atom bomb of the agitational approach.

It may be that these agitations would have been started even without the background of Gandhiji's civil disobedience. The coming of freedom in 1947 released the inhibitions and feelings of repression from which people were suffering before Independence. They felt that now they were free, free to do anything they wanted to irrespective of its effect on others and on society. But what civil disobedience did was, first, to make people feel that law-breaking was a respectable occupation, second that it was an easy way to political success and third, that it could be indulged in without serious consequences.

It may be argued that during the last twenty years, aspirations of the people have gone up without a corresponding improvement in the standards of living and consequently, there is more frustration. In the British days, the people were more afraid of the consequences of protest, and when once they got their own government they cast away fear and voiced their grievances vociferously. It is also possible that those in power, used to authoritarian behaviour in the past, did not understand the mood and temper of the people and mishandled delicate situations. Officials and industrial managers, used to unquestioned acceptance of their orders in the past, failed to adjust themselves to the psychology of a free, democratic republic. It is also true that following World War II, there has been a restlessness pervading the whole world, and even in countries which have had a tradition of order and discipline for generations, there have been agitations and demonstrations of various sorts. This is particularly true of the sixties when the younger generations in general and university students in particular have voiced their protest in no uncertain manner in many West European countries against the ethics and the powers of the older generation. It may be that what has been happening in India is a part of this general world-wide restlessness.

While all these factors have no doubt contributed to the large number of agitations in India during the past two decades, what Satyagraha has done is to provide a moral

justification for them. The form of the Satyagraha has been taken without its spirit and many misguided individuals who participate in these agitations sincerely believe that they are following in the footsteps of Gandhiji. There are, however, certain basic differences between Satyagraha as practiced by Gandhiji and the agitations of the post-Gandhian era. In the first place, Gandhiji's civil disobedience movements, his fasts, etc., were started primarily out of a deep moral conviction, and the advancement of a specific objective was only a secondary consideration. But most of the agitations of the post-Gandhian days have been launched in support or regional, political or economic self-interests of a group. Secondly, Gandhiji's movement was not intended to hurt or embarrass his opponents in any way, but was a means of self-sacrifice and self-purification. But present-day agitations on the other hand are primarily intended to cause embarrassment and hurt the feelings of the opponents. The former was based on love, whilst the latter stems from hatred and malice. It may be that these agitations would have been started even without Satyagraha, but one wonders if these would have come about if Independence had been won as a result, not of jail-going, but through the sufferings and turmoil of a war which would have imposed its own discipline and behaviour on its participants.

But when all that has been said, the fundamental questions still remain. Though Gandhiji laid great emphasis on 'conversion' as opposed to 'compulsion', is not Satyagraha itself a form of compulsion? Where does coercion end and 'moral persuasion' begin? Is the distinction clear or always obvious? For example, is not fasting a form of coercion? Does anyone have a right to adopt such methods against a democratically elected government in order to make the majority accept a minority point of view? Finally, does even a saint as great and as well meaning as Gandhiji have a right to resort to such means?

Fasting or other forms of 'Satyagraha' do not encourage people to consider the problem dispassionately and come to a clear judgement. The issue gets confused and complicated with a whole lot of other moral and spiritual overtones and generates emotion and mystic fervour. But let Gandhiji's heir and faithful follower, Nehru speak:

"I watched the emotional upheaval of the country during the fast, and wondered more and more if this was the right method in politics. It seemed to be sheer revivalism, and clear thinking had not a ghost of a chance against it. All India, or most of it, started reverently at the Mahatma and expected him to perform miracle after miracle and put an end to untouchability and get Swaraj and so on—and did precious little itself! And Gandhiji did not encourage others to think; his insistence was only on purity and sacrifice. I felt that I was drifting further and further away from him mentally, in spite of my strong emotional attachment to him….. But was the way of faith the right way to train a nation? It might pay for a short while, but in the long run?"

In the long run, perhaps lesser and more selfish men have adopted a technique that was meant only for saints.

Another aspect of this situation is that the men who formed the government in 1947 were themselves leaders of such agitations, who had spent long years in prison until they came to power. In totalitarian countries, where leaders of successful agitations came to power, one of their first acts was generally to ensure that all opposition and consequently all agitations were completely eliminated. They did not hesitate to liquidate their own erstwhile comrades in arms if they thought that they posed a threat to their power in any way. But the leaders of India were men imbued with the spirit of democracy, and having known some suppression in the British days, they tended to look upon agitations with a certain amount of sympathy. They did not deal with them in a harsh or repressive manner. In fact they were not sufficiently firm in dealing with agitations, however unreasonable they were and tended to yield to people who defied the law.

Having come to power by popular vote, these leaders were perhaps afraid of losing their popularity because of the manner in which they dealt with agitators. It is obviously impossible for a democratic government to deal with agitations in the same way as a totalitarian government can. But it should be possible for a democratic government to accept a demand only if it is reasonable, and not otherwise, even before an agitation starts, and to refuse to yield if the demand is unreasonable. But the policy of the government in the last two decades has been rather like that of weak and vacillating parents who say 'no' to anything their child wants, but give in if the child starts yelling. To yield because of an agitation or the threat of an agitation is an encouragement to all potential agitators.

This policy of appeasement started with industrial workers when the employers were persuaded by the government to yield to demands in the interests of 'industrial peace'. In this case, there was justification in many cases since the workers' wages were low and their unions were not recognised. In those cases, it was not so much the concessions that were wrong as the manner of giving them. But slowly this policy spread to other spheres also. Beginning with the agitation for linguistic States, there have been a large number of national as well as local agitations many of which have been successful, not because of the justness of their demands, but because of the agitational and political pressures.

The result of this policy has been that over the past twenty years, a feeling has been created in the minds of people that an agitational approach will enable them to achieve their objectives irrespective of their merit. Such a feeling has had a snowballing effect. As each agitation succeeds, others are more confirmed in their thesis, and more agitations and counter agitations are started. Then, it is a question of who can organize the bigger agitation. The rival agitations in States over border disputes, over the establishment of steel plants and over the language issue are examples of this type. Who can paralyse normal life for a longer period? Who can set fire to more buses or trains or organize larger processions? These are the questions that the agitationists ask themselves and then proceed to answer

them in their own manner. Thus, an element of competition has developed with regard to these agitations.

In the early days, when both the central and state governments were strong and popular, it might have been possible to stop such agitations and inculcate a sense of order and discipline without losing their strength or popularity. The average Indian, taken individually, irrespective of status, is an intelligent being full of common sense and he would have understood the need for the maintenance of law and order. But the governments of the time, perhaps over a mistaken sense of magnanimity or because of the fear of driving the agitationists into the arms of other and more extremist parties, did not deal with them firmly. The use of physical force during the uprising or an agitation is an extremely tricky thing, and only an expert can decide when it should be resorted to. But unfortunately, the police, the only people who know how to control such situations, have been made powerless through instructions from above and because of politically motivated criticisms. Properly timed and carefully employed, a small amount of force may be sufficient. But used too late when the agitation has got out of hand, or used ineffectively in the wrong place, even a considerable use of force may not succeed in putting down the agitation. Generally speaking, ineffective and inadequate use of power, frequent and unjustified criticism of the police, release of persons convicted of serious crimes, have all given encouragement to further agitations.

3

A major aim of many of these agitations is sheer propaganda for a political party or a group within the party rather than the achievement of a specific objective. For example, agitations were started against the use of auto-rickshaws by owners of horse-drawn vehicles, against baby taxis by the owners of large taxis. Such agitations are essentially launched by political parties, and the people involved are misled into thinking that by such agitations, they could stop the march of progress. An agitation, whether it is started as a strike, hunger strike or just a procession shouting slogans, brings to the notice of the public, the organisation or the political party responsible for it, its objectives as well as its grievances. It is organized with a view to claim the support and sympathy of the public; bring in new members and so on. In the pre-Independence period, when the Congress had the monopoly of agitations, it became very popular. In those days, the leadership also ensured that the public did not suffer as a result of their agitations. The public were naturally sympathetic to the idea of Independence and the agitation had their support. It was not so much the agitation as the objective behind it that commanded sympathy.

Today, there are no such universal causes. When, for example, a trade union launches a strike for an increase in wages for industrial workers, the agricultural workers remark, ‘They get three times as much as we do; why should they go on strike for more

wages?' If an agitation is started because a worker is dismissed, some members of the public might be sympathetic, but others wonder whether the dismissed worker might not have done something to deserve his dismissal. Nor are many people interested in such issues unless they affect them. On the other hand, obstruction of traffic, closing of shops, tear gasing and lathi charge and occasional firing, upset the normal life of the public and the locality and the people are annoyed at the general lack of security. Therefore, agitations which are started with the idea of gaining strength do not often achieve their aim. What they do achieve is embarrassment to government, and confidence among their own followers who may be wavering, and anxiety for the people against whom the agitations are launched. If some of the parties which indulged in 'Bandhs' and other types of agitations were successful in the elections in 1967, it was not so much because of the agitations but rather because of the general dissatisfaction with the Government. An objective, nation-wide investigation on the effectiveness of agitations in making political parties popular should be interesting as well as useful.

A negative value of these agitations has been that they have enabled people and groups with inner frustrations of various sorts to get rid of them through shouting, fasting or stone-throwing. While this may be so for the rank and file, the leaders responsible for organizing these agitations are often shrewd, calculating people who agitate to gain political or some other advantage, and not because they are overcome by gross injustice.

4

How does this agitational approach affect economic progress?

Progress demands concerted, co-operative action at all levels. At the national level, there should be a broad understanding and appreciation of the details of the policy that has been worked out. Any difference should be resolved by discussion, and when once an agreement has been reached there should be no further argument. This calls for an atmosphere of order and stability where people can work and produce without let or hindrance. When a difference or dispute arises, it has to be settled through an objective discussion of merits with the help of experts or through arbitration which everyone must accept willingly and co-operate in its implementation. A sense of security, a confidence that others will respect one's work and one's bonafides, a desire to further common objectives, an ability to minimize differences and emphasise common needs are all necessary ingredients for economic progress. An agitational approach on the other hand runs counter to all these attitudes. It thrives on emphasizing differences and separatism and making them appear larger than they are. It completely ignores common objectives or interests. It rouses in the minds of people feelings of hostility that come in the way united action. A negative attitude is created even between people who have no conflicting interests and between government and people.

The prosperity of a modern society is decided not so much by the brilliance and hard work of a few individuals, but by the ability of people to co-operate for a common objective. As science and technology have progressed, one of its major effects has been to increase the size of organisations. The armies of Alexander and Julius Caesar were minute when compared to the millions of men controlled by General Eisenhower towards the end of the Second World War. The number of people employed as civil servants in the heyday of the Roman Empire or by Akbar the Great was probably a very small fraction of the number employed by the Government of India today. A company likes the General Electric in the United States or, say, Tatas in India, employs thousands and thousands of people. Even medium sized companies employ up to five thousand workers. It means that the efficiency of these organisations depends not only on the kind of technology they employ, but largely on the ability of people to co-operate and work together for a common cause. A constructive approach in which the major objective of the organisation are accepted and given priority over the interests of individuals or groups is essential. This does not mean that the individual and his rights or interests should be ignored. But it does impose a limit beyond which the interests of individuals and groups should not be allowed to jeopardize common interests. While this is true of organisations, it is far more true of the nation as a whole.

In large organisations of an all-India nature, there are almost always groups and cliques based on regional, linguistic, caste or other considerations. These groups are vitally interested in protecting and furthering their group interests, rather than the objective of the organisation. Because of the nature of the society in India, these groups live in separate water-tight compartments. Any action that is taken, or any policy decision that is made, is judged by how it affects the groups. While most of the time these groups work unofficially, they come to the surface, the moment they feel their interests are threatened. Such groups are often responsible—directly or indirectly—for an agitational approach. A glaring example of this is the existence of multiple trade unions in the same factory. In such a situation it is impossible to mould people into a socially cohesive group with common ideals, common purpose and common enthusiasm.

The effect of the agitational approach is that it is not conducive to a positive attitude necessary for any large scale co-operative effort. Even when there are no agitations in progress, there is no active co-operation. The other group is always suspect. Groups of people working in government, industries or other organisations are always suspicious of each other.

Different groups are permanently at loggerheads with each other. There is no peace and co-operation that is so vital for progress, only a respite between one agitation and the next. The government does not trust the businessmen and the businessmen constantly complain against government. Rival trade unions fight against each other when they are not fighting against employers or government. The disputes between States regarding border

adjustments and the sharing of river waters ensure that there will be no co-operation between them.

The agitational approach gives too much prominence to minor problems and sectional interests, and not enough importance to major problems and national issues. Short-term demands take precedence over long-term interests. It creates a lop-sided sense of values. Thus, we find that the border disputes between two States generate more heat and bitterness than the Chinese aggression on our borders. The agitation for the ban on cow slaughter just before elections in 1967 was far greater in importance than any agitation on behalf of the starving people of Bihar at the same time.

5

Apart from hindering economic progress, the greatest casualty of the agitational approach has been discipline in public life. It makes people think only of their rights, and not of their responsibilities or obligations. There is no consideration for other people's rights or feelings.

An agitational approach depends for its success on numbers. Any kind of public demonstration is noticed, talked about and published only if it can muster a big enough crowd. So larger groups indulge in demonstrations more often than smaller groups. Since success of an agitation is also dependent on its size, and not on the justness of its demands, this confers an unfair advantage on larger groups. There is no equality of opportunism, as one writer put it. An individual cannot indulge in this form of protest, however just his cause might be. It is of course possible for an individual to go on a fast and thus draw public attention to his demand. But unless he has the support of a large group or unless he is sufficiently well known, his fast usually goes unnoticed. Large groups on the other hand are able to hold the entire community to ransom by going on strike, by paralyzing public transport, by forcing the shops to close and by hooliganism.

Discipline in a democratic society is the voluntary acceptance of authority and observance of its rules, regulations and traditions. It is not a negation of democracy but an essential part of its success. If authority makes a mistake, democracy provides the means of rectifying that mistake and even for making drastic changes when authority has been grossly misused. It is perhaps inevitable that an individual or a group should come into conflict with authority some time or other, but in a democracy, such conflicts should be capable of being resolved without violent agitation. In case of unresolved disputes, there are courts of law, tribunals, arbitration boards, etc., all of which are designed to bring about an orderly way of life and the maintenance of the rule of law and the rights of individuals and groups. In a dynamic society, rules, regulations and policies are under constant revision and even the constitution can be amended if there is sufficient demand.

But agitations of the type we have witnessed in India in the last few years are a complete negation of this democratic process and an attempt at introducing the law of the jungle in place of the rule of law. The agitational approach has spread even into the legislatures in the country. Ministers, who are supposed to maintain the rule of law, have themselves been breaking the law and courting arrest in neighbouring States. Some State governments themselves have been supporting and encouraging intimidatory activities by groups of their supporters. At least one chief minister had stated that the policy of his government would be to carry on agitation and administration side by side. While such an inherently contradictory policy might be helpful in strengthening the party in power, it cannot possibly be successful either in providing a stable government or in ensuring economic progress. Political parties and groups in various States are organizing 'Senas' of their own and giving them military training of a sort. Any democratic government is naturally shy of taking decisions on controversial issues and displeasing one section of the population. This has been particularly true of the Indian government who has always delayed such decision till the last possible moment when the decision has been more or less forced on them by the march of events. In spite of the overwhelming majority that the Ruling Congress has won in mid-term elections, it seems to be a prisoner of indecision as far as putting down violent agitations and ensuring order is concerned. But the relentless march of events and circumstances cannot be halted for the convenience of governments.

Looking at all this, one is reminded of the situation in Germany before Hitler came to power when private armies were fighting in the streets and the duly constituted government was powerless to stop it. This has made many people wonder whether democracy is a suitable form of government for India. There is no doubt that if this process of defiance of law by large groups continues unchecked, there may be a collapse of the democratic process and the worst fears of the political pessimists may be realised. Today, it is no longer a question of the agitational approach being a handicap to economic progress alone. It is now a matter of whether it will lead to the disintegration of the democratic way of life and the disintegration of India as a nation.

Speaking to the nation on the eve of Republic Day in 1967, Dr.Radhakrishnan, President of India, observed.

"The unruly behaviour of some members in our legislatures, the factions, caste disputes and political rivalries that have disrupted many a State, fasts unto death and threats of self-immolation, riots and sabotage directed at almost every one, from vice-chancellor to student leaders, have raised in many minds doubts the stability of a united, democratic India. Internal differences are crippling our democracy as sectional interests and regional pressures are increasing.

All public questions require to be decided on principles of justice and equity and not as a result of pressure politics and such other methods of blackmail. If every group wishes to have its way by insisting on its own solution of small disputes which are raised into national

issues, Government will get weakened…….. We make the prospect of revolution inescapable by acquiescing in such conduct."

No comment seems to be called for.

6

The agitational approach leads to a lack of respect for law and duly constituted authority, and has also resulted in another form of licence. In any town, there are thousands of people who have occupied public land belonging to the State for private purposes. It is understandable if people without homes to live, or without work to do, were to park themselves on public land because they have nowhere else to go. But most of the people who have occupied public land are people who have done so in the hope of having that land assigned to them at a later date through agitation and political pressures. In many cases, they have occupied the land to carry on a business activity. They have erected structures to house small shops selling cigarettes, betel-nuts, etc., or cycle repair shops or tea shops. These shops thrive extremely well, because they incur no overheads; they do not pay any rent; they do not pay sales tax or property tax or income-tax, though many of them might be eligible. They carry on an unfair competition against honest shopkeepers who pay their taxes and observe other regulations like the shop assistants' act, and so on. Often, the public are inconvenienced by these shops because they project on to the road, and cycles are parked in front of them obstructing pedestrians and posing a danger to the traffic. They lie often between some private property and a main road so that the person who owns the land is denied access to the road directly. These way-side shops are perhaps the worst form of capitalistic enterprise that one can come across anywhere in the world. And yet, if an attempt were made to make these people vacate the land they have occupied, agitations are started with the help of political parties professing socialism!

Similarly, in most towns and cities, there are certain rules with regard to the use of loud speakers. But nonetheless, they keep blaring at all hours of the day or night disturbing public peace and cause a thorough nuisance to those who want to study, sleep or rest. The smaller the political meeting, the more insignificant a wedding, the more decrepit the coffee shop, the noisier the loud speakers blare. Complaints with regard to this nuisance are not taken very seriously by the authorities since the biggest culprits are the political parties, particularly at election time.

It has been argued that in an under-developed country where the majority of the people are illiterate and with an increasing population leading a marginal existence, enforcement of such laws is neither possible nor even desirable. It has also been argued that in a socialist democracy, people who have no land have the right to occupy public land. That is a perverted view of socialism. Government can certainly distribute available land to deserving people. They can also introduce legislation for redistribution of private lands.

Similarly, people have a right to demand work, adequate wages and other facilities. But in no society should individuals or private groups be permitted to take possession of public land that belongs to the nation on their own initiative and claim it as their own. The fact that the people who do it are poor does not make it either democracy or socialism.

If India is to progress in the future better than she has done in the past, it is essential to bring about a psychological change in attitudes and approaches to problems. It is necessary to enlarge people's horizon so that their sympathy and understanding will extend to the whole country, and not to their region, locality or party. But more than anything else, there can be no economic progress and individual freedom and security without political stability.

7

In every aspect of public life today, there seems to be conflict. In the social, political and economic fields, people are at loggerheads. To those engaged in constructive activities, such conflict seems pointless and misguided, and yet the fact remains that conflicts are there and these are often created by intelligent people. It is impossible to ignore them. Why is it that in spite of the progress that humanity has made over the past so many centuries, we are still in such a situation? Why is it that in spite of the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of centuries, in spite of the tremendous development of science and technology, the world in general and India in particular is still at loggerheads? Perhaps one has to look a little deeper for the cause of these conflicts.

The first cause is the aspiration gap - the gap between what people expect and what they actually receive or achieve. If a man's aspirations are completely fulfilled, then he tends to become indolent or lazy. On the other hand, if they are not realised and if any hope of realizing them recedes, then he becomes frustrated. For rapid economic and social progress, aspiration should always be just a little ahead of achievement, but always realizable with a little more effort or time. During the past few decades science and technology have made it possible for even the poorest and lowliest in the world to have a decent standard of life. But because of unhelpful attitudes and organizational failures and because of our inability to spread knowledge and skills among the vast majority of the population, it has not been possible to achieve it. After more than two decades of Independence, to the under-privileged, the good life seems as far away as ever. Economic and social frustrations have always been causes of agitation throughout history. Inner frustrations in the social anatomy, like boils in the human anatomy, have a way of erupting at unexpected times and places.

The second may be called the generation gap—the gap between one generation and another. This has nothing to do either with family planning or having children rather late in life. The generation gap does not depend so much on the generation as on attitudes of mind. When science and technology advances rapidly, when changes are taking place day by

day, it is only natural that the thinking of people of different age groups should necessarily be different. In periods of rapid change this gap widens as it is at present. Unless some sort of social adjustment is possible, the generation gap also leads to frustration among the younger generation and rebellion among them.

Thirdly, we have the communication gap. We no longer seem to be able to understand each other. When we use words to groups of people, they do not understand the same thing by the very same words. Ideas have totally different associations between different groups. While the vast accumulation of knowledge and the high degree of specialization needed in a modern society have something to do with the communication gap, nevertheless it is essentially our failure to listen and to understand that is responsible for this. It is necessary that people should learn to talk to each other than talk at each other. They should learn the art of listening and understanding. Shiva is supposed to have had a third eye for destroying evil. Man should perhaps develop a third ear in order to listen to the inner sounds and feelings of language and the meaning of words. A communication gap is perhaps the most crucial of all because the first step in bridging any misunderstanding is through proper communication.

As human civilization has advanced throughout the ages, the size of the viable economic group has been increasing. The original group was the family which was later expanded into the tribe and later still to larger and larger communities until they become small or large nations. This expansion has depended upon various factors such as language, geography, religion, military conquest, technology, and so on. With the rapid growth of science and technology and in particular with the development of nuclear sciences and automation, we have today the emergence of super States such as the United States and the Soviet Union and lately China. Modern technology demands vast resources in men and material for raid development and the smaller nations cannot afford to develop in these areas. No nation other than the United States or the Soviet Union has the resources to embark upon an over-ambitious space research programme. Consequently, there is a move to unite the whole of Western Europe into a super State.

Throughout history men have identified themselves with these groups. They have felt that their fate and their future and what they cherished were all linked with the fortunes of the group and if the group should suffer defeat or calamity then they could not escape it. On the other hand, if the group grew prosperous then they too would get a share of this prosperity. The more complete such identification, the more cohesive is the group; the more determined its efforts, the greater its capacity in war or peace. Such group identification is a matter of economic and political self-interest, cultural and social integration and above all, a feeling of psychological belongingness. All of us identify ourselves with a group. It may be our family, caste or community, or it may be the nation.

Now the question arises, “With what group do people in India identify themselves? Do they identify themselves as Indians?” Because of the diffused nature of Hindu beliefs and

because of the caste system there has always been an identification gap in India which has prevented Indians from uniting at crucial moments in their history. The presence of other religionists in large numbers and the number of languages in the country has tended to widen this gap still further. People in India identify themselves as Indians in theory, but in practise, they pride themselves of the fact that they belong to a particular region or speak a particular language or belong to a particular community. As science and technology advances, the groups are supposed to become larger and mobilize more and more people. A culture advances; we are supposed to extend our sympathies and understanding to larger and larger numbers of people. But what we actually find is that this identification with the group is becoming narrower. While our needs proceed in one direction, our social belongingness seems to progress in the opposite direction.

The bridging of the identification gap has to be done through education, through social reform and through enlightened and dedicated leadership. Unfortunately in India, apart from the regional, social and linguistic environment and its consequences, a major cause for the widening of the identification gap and its serious results is to be found in the failure of leadership after Independence, particularly at the middle and lower levels.

Leadership in modern India has developed in three distinct stages. In the first stage the leaders were essentially intellectuals who were the products of western civilization and the English language, but who at the same time were familiar with the highest thoughts in Hindu tradition. They were essentially men of wisdom, interested in the social and economic progress of the country, but their discussions and arguments were beyond the understanding of the ordinary people. As such their following was confined to the educated few and they did not make any impression on the masses.

But with the advent of Gandhiji, the type of national leadership underwent a radical change. While Gandhiji could discuss and argue with the older type of leaders in their own plane, he was essentially a leader of the masses. He spoke the language of the masses, crated a consciousness of nationhood among them, brought home to them their failings and weaknesses and gave them a purpose as well as a method of action. They followed him not because they agreed with him or even understood everything he said, but because he was a great man and a saint. He made people feel better for having followed him and he made them feel they were Indians. His leadership was closely followed by that of Nehru and again people followed him because he was a symbol of sacrifice, and he embodied an ideal rather than because they understood and agreed with what he said. These leaders could preach or practise unpopular concepts, criticize their followers and still be undisputed leaders.

Since Independence, however, the type of leadership has again undergone a change. A new class of people, semi-educated, numerically strong and highly conscious of their

rights within the narrow confines of their class, religion or locality, has come into being. While they call themselves Indians and while they have a vague loyalty to India as a concept, their interests - political, social, economic and cultural - are tied to narrower concepts and local needs. This group of people has imposed their own compulsions on leadership. A leader who does not in some way reflect their aspirations and ambitions soon finds himself without a following. These new leaders no longer lead their followers or attempt to preach unpopular but necessary ideas as their predecessors had done. They no longer decide what is good for the nation and persuade their following to accept their views on major issues. On the other hand, they merely reflect the wishes of the dominant masses. The more adventurous among them go one step further and discover new regional or linguistic interests or grievances in order to make themselves popular and ensure continuity of their leadership. In furthering such regional or communal causes, the new leadership uses, not the language of persuasion and democracy, but the vocabulary of war. They exaggerate and magnify minor differences into major disputes. They adopt extreme positions which are irreconcilable with national interests or with conflicting regional interests. They talk of bloodshed and sacrifice, and of fighting unto death in order to achieve their aims or at least to achieve popularity.

Consequently, leadership has become highly regionalized in post-independent India. The federal structure of the Indian constitution and the limited ambition of acquiring power in the States by many of the regional leaders have also strengthened this shift towards regionalism. The emergence of regional parties such as the DMK, the Akali Dal and the Shiv Sena are indications of this trend, though the DMK has achieved a level of maturity and is playing a significant role in All-India politics. In pre-independent India, most of the leaders were All-India types with no regional loyalties though they necessarily came from different regions. The alignment of forces among those leaders was neither regional nor linguistic but was essentially ideology or policy-oriented. But in the post-independence period, even All-India leaders have had to depend on a regional base for their influence at All-India level. Kamaraj in Tamil Nadu, Chavan in Maharashtra, Morarji Desai in Gujarat and Jagjivan Ram from among the backward classes, are examples of All-India leaders who depend on a regional or communal base for their influence at the national level. The eclipse of Kamaraj since 1967 can be directly attributed to the Congress losing the elections in Tamil Nadu that year. Similarly, leaders of All-India status such as Kripalani and Krishna Menon have found that national leadership without a regional base is like a house without a foundation.

With the split in the Congress and the consequent realignment of forces, regional leaders and parties have emerged more powerful. They have been able to extract large concessions from the central government as the price for their co-operation and support. While this may be good in the short-term interests of the States concerned, it is highly questionable whether it is in the long-term interests of the nation as a whole. Resources, if they are inefficiently utilized, are likely to become a liability even for those people on whose

behalf they had been expended. In the present political climate in India, one may expect the regional parties to grow strong for some time to come.

Thus, we see that by and large, leadership in India today and in the near future, necessarily has to voice regional interests as distinct from, and often opposed to, national interests or the interests of the other regions or groups. This seems to be inevitable for their survival as leaders. While regional leaders and regional parties openly advocate such interests, All-India leaders and parties are in a dilemma. Such a situation also makes unity difficult in All-India parties when many leaders are torn between party loyalty on the one hand and regional loyalty on the other. They have to be more circumspect in their views, laying emphasis on local needs and demands when they are in their own regions and talking of national interests as being supreme when they are outside their regions. They talk vaguely of the need for compromise without really producing an agreeable solution. This kind of tight-rope walking and attempting to play a dual role has often made national leadership ineffective and vacillating in their decisions at crucial moments, thus leading to a sense of instability in the country.

The new leaders who have emerged as a result of the changed political situation are men who are not prepared to give selfless dedicated service for the cause of an ideal or for the regeneration of the country. They are men who have learned to speak the language of Gandhiji, but at the same time advocate narrow interests and group loyalties. In a democracy, it is necessary to have leaders-at least a few—who are prepared to sacrifice their career for the sake of a principle or over a major issue, however unpopular their stand might be. Unfortunately, in India we have not had a single leader (except perhaps Lal Bahadur Sashtri) who has been willing to sacrifice his power and popularity for the sake of an unpopular cause. History might vindicate such a stand, but for most leaders, success at the next election is more important than the vindication of history. No one has sacrificed his office except when there was hope of a bigger office. The recent defections and re-defections in almost every State after the 1967 elections and the scramble of parties for forming united fronts of various sorts have made a mockery of the political ideologies they represent. No more glaring example of the failure of leadership can be found anywhere.

Another failure on the part of leadership is in not anticipating the growth of these regional interests and providing for it through a proper training of leaders at the lower levels. A foreign expert once remarked about Indian industry, “You have good generals and soldiers in Indian industry, but you are weak at the sergeants’ level”. This is perhaps even more true of the Indian political scene. It is the leader at the village and the local level who has to mould the thoughts and aspirations of the people and give them a purposeful and constructive direction. It is his responsibility to make his followers identify themselves with the nation irrespective of political affiliations. Failing such direction from their leadership, the people have imposed their own norms and standards on the leaders.

CHAPTER FIVE

LONG ROAD FROM SWADESHI

We have travelled far from the days
When we turned the spinning wheel
And felt proud of our loin cloth.

1

In the early years of this century, one of the favourite pastimes of the Indian nationalists was to burn British goods, more particularly cloth from Lancashire. Later, under Gandhiji's leadership , burning and boycott of British goods took a more positive turn when people were urged to buy only swadeshi goods i.e., goods made within the country. Khadi—hand-spun and hand-woven cloth—became the uniform of the nationalists and their sympathisers. The spinning wheel became a symbol of the national movement and a weapon of war, and a very effective weapon it was too. It was a symbol of resurgent nationalism expressing a desire for economic self-reliance. As a result, Indian industries got a little boost especially the textile industry. While there were many reasons for the downfall of the Lancashire textile industry after the First World War from its pre-eminent position in world trade, certainly, one of the reasons was the swadeshi movement in India. When Gandhiji visited Lancashire during his trip to England for the Round Table Conference, at least one section of people wanted to stage a black flag demonstration.

The freedom movement in India in the twenties and thirties was dominated by the personality and the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. It was not so much a political ideology as a movement for the spiritual as well as the economic regeneration of the nation that he advocated.

The basic tenets of Gandhism are easily summarized. Above all, Gandhiji insisted on truth and non-violence. Satyagraha based on self-sacrifice and love of one's enemies was the method he used in preference to other forms of conflict, warfare or agitation in achieving his objectives. He identified himself with the masses of India and advocated simplicity and austerity in every aspect of private and public life. Luxury of any sort and ostentation in any form were to be completely avoided. The central core of Gandhian philosophy, as far as economic regeneration was concerned, was based on three aspects: elimination or at least avoidance of machine civilization, emphasis on swadeshi, and simplicity in daily life. The products and processes of the industrial revolution were considered satanic not only because they were responsible for India's slavery and misery

but also because they had made men slaves of machines. Consequently, Gandhiji was totally opposed to the establishment of large-scale industries, and believed that all Man's requirements should be produced by the village craftsmen through cottage industries. The simplification of one's wants meant that people could do without the products of the machine age. If an article could not be made within the country, Gandhiji urged that we should do without it rather than buy it from abroad. Limiting one's wants to bare essentials was the central core of his economic thesis.

Many followed Gandhiji because he was a saint in the reformist tradition of Hinduism. Some believed in his philosophy and tried to practise it to the extent possible. But millions of others followed him because he was a leader of the masses, because of his magnetic personality and because he had a method of action that could be successfully used against the British government, and not because they believed in his teachings. But most of them, as his followers, could not oppose him and many paid lip service without conviction. The effects of such a hypocritical attitude have boomeranged in the post-independent period.

Since Independence, however, a subtle, imperceptible, but nevertheless significant change, has taken place in this regard. The swadeshi movement was essentially idealistic in character, based on the development of cottage industries, on the deliberate controlling of one's wants and on leading a simple and austere life based on the self-sufficiency of each village. Even to maintain cottage industries and ensure their efficiency, certain basic industries like electricity generation is essential. Further, the structure of a modern state cannot endure on the foundations of a village economy. Nor can the growing needs of a large population be met by the craftsmen of the villages. It is also not possible to persuade millions of people to lead a simple life and do without many of the things that only modern industry can produce. Their increasing aspirations for a better standard of life cannot be fulfilled under conditions of a rural economy. Gandhiji's closest associate and India's first Prime Minister, Nehru himself had great reservations about following such a course. It was therefore inevitable that the new leaders of India should decide to establish large basic industries which would ultimately feed innumerable consumer industries.

When once this decision was taken, the old philosophy of swadeshi and self-reliance could no longer be sustained. India did not - and in many cases still does not – possess the equipment, resources or the technical and scientific knowledge necessary for the establishment of diverse types of large-scale industries such as iron and steel, machine tools, fertilizers, etc. Nor did she have the capital necessary for starting such industries. As a result, two words came into prominence in the context of Indian industrialization in the post-independence period. They are, 'aid' and 'collaboration'.

In view of the profound effect that foreign aid and foreign collaboration have had not only on Indian economy, but also on Indian temperament, they should be considered in some detail.

The type of collaboration would naturally differ with the level of industrial development of the country concerned. In the pre-independence period, it was the subsidiary form of company that predominated. The pattern changed after Independence with minority participation companies coming into prominence. This was again followed by the formation of companies seeking technical collaboration mainly for purposes of expansion and diversification. It is only natural that a colonial power ruling a developing country would generally dominate the sphere of foreign collaboration in the initial stages. Consequently, the United Kingdom accounted for a large number of collaboration agreements in the early stages, but her share has been declining in the later years.

In the first place, it should be admitted that India could not have industrialized herself to the extent that she has done without external assistance. Foreign aid has been instrumental in the growth of certain vital industries essential for further economic development. It has resulted in bringing into the country a large volume of advanced technical know-how and managerial and organizational skills and expertise. Some of the results obtained through technical collaboration have been gained at a lower cost and within a much shorter time than it would have taken to develop them in India itself. A large number of highly complex industries such as machine tools, electronics, chemicals and pharmaceuticals have been established. Some of them are said to be the most modern in the world – far more modern than anything to be seen even in the advanced countries. A number of industries producing a wide range of sophisticated consumer goods have also been set up. The effect of all this has been to broaden the industrial base, provide employment, improve skills and develop technical know-how and increase the value of the Gross National Product—at least until the recession came in the way.

But in achieving these objectives, the cost that has been paid should also be taken into consideration.

When aid is given freely, there is a desire to spend it freely, to plan on a grand scale, to include items that might have otherwise been left out and to impress those who have given such aid. The people who spend the money are not going to be there in most cases when it comes to returning the loan, and so they are not bothered very much about repayment. It is still a long way off. A considerable amount of money is also spent on the salaries and the living costs of foreign experts who are part of the aid. Advice of the foreign experts is given pride of place in decision-making with regard to these projects and many of

these experts, used to a more lavish scale of expenditure in their own countries, cannot often visualize the kind of economies that are possible or necessary in India. There is not the same control over, and economy in, expenditure as there would have been if the money was coming out of our own pockets.

Aid is often given by advanced countries, not so much with a view to the independent economic development of the receiving nations, but more to win friends and influence people and to get more trade from the receiving country. The receiving country also has a tendency to use such aid for political purposes. Since most of the aid is given on a government-to-government basis, aid makes the task of the rulers of the receiving country somewhat easier since they can use such aid for development purposes and claim credit for things that have been achieved through foreign loans. Thus, even when properly used, foreign aid tends to help the party in power. This irritates the opposition parties and they are inclined to criticize the aid programmes and the aid giving countries. Thus, we find the left-wing parties in India criticizing aid from the United States and Western Europe while the right wing parties criticize aid from the Soviet Union. While the ruling party may think of aid as a means of economic development, the opposition parties view it as an attempt to keep the ruling party in power.

Another factor about aid is that it has a snowballing effect. When once development is based largely on aid, then, the faster the development, the greater the aid that is required. Aid has to be repaid sometime or other and when that time comes, it is generally found that the economy has not yet reached a 'self generating stage' that one was hoping for. Therefore, more aid is required, not only for further development, but also for the repayment of old loans and interest charges. India has perhaps reached this stage of development at present.

While the above are some of the major handicaps of receiving aid, collaboration on specific projects-particularly industrial manufacturing projects-either between governments or between private parties poses somewhat different problems.

The profitability of any industry in India in the past two decades has depended not so much on industrial efficiency or commercial competence, but on getting the right kind of collaboration and on leaving everything to foreign experts. Naturally, there has been a scramble among industrialists to get any kind of collaboration they can. And when once the foreign exchange part of the capital requirements and the technical know-how are assured, the government can always be persuaded to issue a licence and grant other facilities such as rupee loans, tariff protection for the product, etc. If the government should refuse their request for any reason, a hue and cry is raised saying that so much foreign exchange that

was there for the asking has been allowed to go waste and an industry that would have contributed greatly to the national economy has not been established because of government's indifference.

If an industrialist were to get foreign technical assistance in starting a new factory, it is easier for him to obtain an industrial licence. In fact, in the past, industrialists have often been encouraged to seek foreign collaboration by ministers and senior officials. In the notices that are published in newspapers regarding share subscription for companies, the fact that a foreign company is collaborating or giving technical aid is given a prominent place because the public will subscribe to the share capital more easily if the company can assure prospective shareholders of such help. If a product is advertised with a foreign brand name, or as manufactured in collaboration with a well known foreign company, it is easier to market it. All this is an indication of the distance India has travelled from swadeshi spirit of pre-independence days.

Many industries built with foreign collaboration might be admirably suited to those countries where they were developed. They are designed for the raw material available in those countries, the process suited to those raw materials and a technology that is based on indigenous know-how. But when they are transplanted into a completely new environment, their advantages may not be equally admirable. In India many such industries started with foreign collaboration rely on imported raw materials. Instead of self-reliance, this has imposed a permanent dependence. In the difficult period before devaluation of rupee in 1966, many such industries came to a near stop for lack of raw materials. In many cases, spare parts for machinery and equipment have also to be imported. The justification that is usually advanced for entering into such collaboration is that the products of these industries are essential and therefore, it is much better and cheaper to import the raw materials rather than finished products. This might have been so, but local scientific investigation and survey might have suggested more suitable methods of manufacture with indigenous raw materials though such a procedure might have taken a little longer. As it is, local research is thwarted, because the product is already being manufactured in the country.

Many collaboration agreements provide a clause whereby the Indian counterpart cannot pass on the technical knowledge he has gained to other companies in India. It means that either the company has a monopoly of the product within the country, or if another factory has to be started for the manufacture of the same product, a new collaboration has to be entered into with some other country or company abroad with perhaps a new process and a new set of raw materials, equipment, etc. This procedure is not only expensive from the foreign exchange point of view, but it also means that the country is not manufacturing a product in the most economic way or by the most suitable process, but by a number of different processes, competing against each other. Thus we have steel plants in collaboration with West Germany, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, each with its

own technology. To manufacture a product for which indigenous technology is not available, one collaboration might perhaps be necessary. But it should be possible not only to use that technology for building other plants, but also develop it to suit Indian conditions, and perhaps even to export it at a later stage. This is exactly what Japan has done.

Many of the collaboration agreements also contain a clause for passing on of any further developments abroad to the Indian company. As a result, industries started with foreign collaboration do not invest any money in research but the royalties they pay help to subsidise research in other countries. They do not do even minor investigative work to set right problems and improve productivity. All such work is delegated to the foreign technical experts who are readily available for the purpose. Therefore, these industries do not pose any scientific or technological challenge to scientists within the country. Science and industry remain in separate compartments in India, one tending to be highly academic and the other, rather commercial; but one would have thought that rapid industrialization would have brought the two closer together. But in fact, because of the number of foreign technical aid agreements, industries have not made use of whatever scientific talent that is available within the country. Not faced with any meaningful industrial problems demanding urgent solutions, our scientists have tended to concentrate in the past on problems of an academic nature. All this has resulted in making the gulf between the scientists and industries wider than before. Recent attempts to bring them together and enable laboratories to serve the cause of industrial development have been commendable, but the results are not yet significant in any way.

The declared objective of technical collaboration is not only rapid industrialization, but also technical self-reliance after the initial period of passing on of technical knowledge of over. However, many industries which entered into technical collaboration agreements in the late forties or early fifties have come back for a renewal of these agreements on the ground that they still need to buy technical know-how from abroad! That such a situation exists in these companies even after fifteen to twenty years of collaboration and profitable working is indicative of the fact that the second objective of technical aid has not been fulfilled. Dependence has become a matter of habit, and these industries have failed to establish their own research and development services which would have enabled them to have dispensed with further collaboration. If, on the other hand, these agreements were not renewed, it would create a technological vacuum and it will be some time before Indian technology can fill it.

In some cases, even when technical knowledge had been available within the country, we have had to seek foreign collaboration because of the lack of financial resources for purchase of equipment from abroad. When a foreign government or company comes forward to give financial assistance, they are naturally interested that their own process, technical know-how and experts should be utilized, that their own designers should be in charge of designing, planning and installing the plant. They also insist that since their

process is covered by patents, it should not be copied or modified in any way or that their trade name and label should not be changed. The result is that a plant is put up in the country without our own top technicians participating in it except in a routine capacity and without their being able to develop it further. No change can be made in the process since it is patented by a foreign company and only loaned to its Indian collaborator. If a process to manufacture the same product were to be developed within the country, it does not easily find a promoter since the product is already being made in India with foreign collaboration and the vested interests do not encourage the commercial exploitation of an indigenous process. Therefore, as far as that product is concerned development within the country is at a standstill and any progress can only be through what the foreign collaborator can provide usually at an increasing cost.

Foreign technicians are employed to install and run industries started with foreign collaboration and to train Indian engineers to take over from them at a later stage. These technicians are paid very much higher salaries, given better facilities and accorded a higher social status than their Indian counterparts. They are allowed to bring their own cars, refrigerators, etc., which are the envy of even their employers in India. Often, their salaries in India are free of income tax. It may be that coming from affluent societies and living in foreign countries, they have to be necessarily given such facilities. In pre-Independence days, any partiality shown towards the foreigner was always attributed to an alien government. But it can no longer be so. And given the same facilities for training and experience, the Indian technicians have proved to be as good as anyone else. Further, managements in India - particularly in the public sector—are reluctant to part with foreign experts even after the Indian engineers have been well trained, and are competent to run the factories. This is because there is always a fear that something might go wrong, and particularly in the public sector, the chief executive is likely to face a lot of public criticism. This policy does not give the Indian engineers the maturity and the confidence necessary to run these industries and try out new and original ideas of their own. Similarly, foreign experts are periodically invited by government and private industries to advise them on specific problems. Little effort is made to see whether the problems can be solved without such assistance. And the views of such experts are given undue importance while similar suggestions of local experts are often ignored. All this has a demoralizing effect on Indian engineers, gives them a sense of inferiority and affects their efficiency.

The cost of products manufactured in India in collaboration with foreign companies is often higher than the imported cost of the same goods. This is because the cost of collaboration is very high and such factories are often over-capitalized for the production levels they are able to reach. The reason is that these factories are often laid out for a particular production level. But that level is not achieved either because India does not, and for some time cannot, utilize the full production, and under the terms of the collaboration its products cannot be exported to compete with their parent company’s products, or full production is not achieved because some indigenous components on which the industry

depends are not available or because of inadequate raw material supply. The result is that high overhead costs are spread over a smaller volume of production.

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But what we are primarily concerned with is not so much the economic and political implications of receiving foreign aid and foreign collaboration, but its social and psychological consequences. From this point of view, the results have perhaps been more damaging from a long-term point of view. Foreign aid has created national attitudes and patterns of behaviour that are neither conducive to self-reliance and progress nor compatible with self-respect. To many of our industrialists and to public sector enterprises, collaboration with a foreign company or foreign government has become a way of life rather than a necessary evil. A collaboration or an aid agreement is often hailed as an achievement instead of being considered as a reflection of India's technical or financial inadequacy.

Receiving aid has become a matter of habit and even national planning is done taking into account the anticipated quantum of foreign aid so that if foreign governments are unable to give the expected aid, the entire plan goes astray. In speeches and newspaper articles, aid is considered and talked about as if it were a right, and foreign agencies and governments are criticized if the anticipated aid is not forthcoming. At the same time, in order to exhibit our pride and demonstrate our self-respect, it is made clear that we will not accept 'aid with strings' whatever that might mean. The 'aid' mentality has permeated among our people so much that even illiterate villagers, faced with severe food shortage, enquire innocently, 'Why doesn't America send us more grains? Have the rains failed in America also?' The psychology of dependence seems to have permeated the social and economic fabric of India. We seem to have become like the arrogant beggars who sit in front of temples and not only demand alms from the pilgrims but curse them if they fail to get what they expect. But we forget that pilgrims who visit temples give alms, not so much to help the beggars as to ensure their own salvation.

The large dependence on external help, instead of making us feels rather ashamed and goading us into greater efforts at self reliance, has tended to make us complacent. The first five year plan was intended to make us self-sufficient in food and our then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, told us that at the end of the Plan period we would not import any food, even if it meant starvation. But at the end of three plans, we were still importing food! In spite of the Green Revolution, we are still woefully short of agricultural commodities such as cotton. This weakening of the national will towards self-reliance can be largely attributed to the considerable foreign aid we have received in the past.

This feeling of dependence is not only with regard to external help, but within the country itself people are always turning to the government for help even in those areas where it should be possible for them to help themselves through voluntary co-operative

effort. The initiative for such effort has to come from among the people themselves, but partly because of the social environment in which we live and social organisations through which we operate and partly because of inadequate encouragement and appreciation from official quarters, such initiative has not been found except in rare cases.

Foreign collaboration has often meant that those in charge of such industries are able to import motor cars and other luxury items in one way or another. With acute shortage of foreign exchange and the ban on many imported items, they have become extremely valuable and have resulted in a new set of status symbols. Imported luxury items are priced far beyond their utility or their value. American cars costing perhaps 2,500 dollars in the United States are sold by auction by the State Trading Corporation to industrialists and businessmen at about a lakh of rupees each. The fact that a government organisation makes a profit on these transactions does not make it any more desirable. And afterwards, applications are made for the import of spare parts for these cars as they are not produced in India. And the government cannot refuse these applications since they themselves have sold the cars in the first place! To own any imported item not easily available in the country such as a new camera, a fancy transistor or a tape recorder is a matter of pride and joy.

With the introduction of the 'P' form and other restrictions, foreign travel too has acquired the glamour of forbidden fruit. To go abroad for any reason whatever—be it studies, business or medical treatment or a government delegation—is considered to confer an honour on the traveller irrespective of the need. People, who can afford it, go to any lengths to wangle a 'P' form. They discover unknown diseases for which treatment is available only in London or New York; they discover long-lost relations in Hongkong or Bangkok. If an industrialist or senior government official could introduce into his conversation, some such phrase as 'When I was in Paris last week……..", immediately his words acquire greater weight, and he is listened to with greater interest and respect. The relaxation of the 'P' form permitting people who have not been abroad for three years to travel seems to have merely whetted the appetite. One often hears people say, "It was a wonderful party last night; only Scotch was served".

Nor is that love of foreign things confined only to the upper strata of society. If one walks down the main thoroughfares of any large city in India, the pavement shops are full of all types of imported goods being sold at exorbitant prices. Imported razor blades, soap and hair oil, shaving cream and various other personal requirements, all of which are made in India and are of good quality, are offered for sale. Occasionally, even such items as electric razors, radios and tape recorders are sold. While the fortunate few can afford to indulge their taste for shopping Switzerland or Germany, the common man derives the same satisfaction from these shops in the fond hope that he is getting full value for his money.

There is no doubt that many new products made in India are not as good as the corresponding imported goods. But if people complain, the shop-keeper explains glibly that it is because 'the proportion of foreign components in the product has been brought down by the order of the government'. But what is surprising is that even some industrialists

should give such excuses for the deficiencies of their products. Or, they say that the raw material is not up to standard. Thus, a vicious circle is created, the distributor blaming the manufacturer who blames the raw material supplier who blames the government for refusing to allow some items of import. And the people accept such excuses and go after imported products at exorbitant prices in the black market. The cost to the nation of such an attitude, both of the manufacturer and the consumer, must be tremendous.

With the present level of technical knowledge and competence in India, there is no reason why an indigenously made product should in any way be inferior to the imported product. It may be that in a few cases involving a high degree of automation and control, or where certain finishes enhance quality, the processes are not available in India either because of patent restrictions or because they are secret processes. In fact, there are many companies in India who have established a reputation for quality and who export their goods to sophisticated markets abroad. With suitable quality control over raw materials as well as the manufacturing process and good inspection procedures, it should be possible to turn out products that are functionally reliable, though their finish or design may not be as good as the imported ones. Even designs can be improved if good industrial artists are employed.

Therefore, if products made in India are not of good quality, it is not because of lack of competence. It is often due to indifference on the part of the manufacturer, who has been protected through tariff barriers on the one hand and a seller's market on the other. It is also due to the indifference of the consumer who assumes Indian products to be of poor quality and does not complain, but goes after imported goods. And it is occasionally due to organizational failure either within the company or between industry and government.

Only a group of people proud of their skill and craftsmanship and knowledge can produce quality goods, not those who accept second-rate performance without question, or assume blindly that imported products are always superior. If India was an exporter of cotton textiles to most parts of the world for the past five thousand years, it was because of the skill and the artistry of her craftsmen, the diligence and consciousness with which they perfected and improved that skill from generation to generation. The same feeling of pride in good workmanship should be transferred into our industrial structure at all levels from top management to the junior most worker if we are to improve our products and develop a true spirit of swadeshi.

The swadeshi spirit that was generated during the pre-independence period was based, not on pride in quality and craftsmanship but on being able to do without such goods. But the new swadeshi spirit should be based not on austerity which is rather unnatural for most of the people, but on pride in one's competence to do as well as anyone else and even better.

But it is the degeneration in our thinking, attitude and behaviour that is a handicap to further progress than the economic, political or technological implications of foreign aid.

The question naturally arises, what of the future? In view of what has been said above, should India give up foreign aid altogether from now on?

Apart from anything else, India has travelled too far on an aid-based economy to retrace her steps. A reversal at this stage would mean a considerable amount of dislocation and disruption and going back on many of the projects on which money and effort has been spent. It would also mean that the massive loans we have taken in the past would have to be repaid through our own resources which might well nigh prove impossible. But it certainly in necessary to re-examine our attitude towards aid and its implications and re-orient our policies towards a maximum of self-help and self-sacrifice and a minimum of foreign aid.

In spite of everything that has been said above, foreign assistance, particularly technical assistance, can be extremely valuable provided it is used with discrimination and not as a substitute for developing our own resources or competence; and provided it is not allowed to pervert our thinking and behaviour. It should be resorted to only if indigenous technology is either not available or cannot be developed within a short period of time and if the industry is of vital importance to the national economy. Foreign help should be only to supplement local resources rather than to supersede them. Indian engineers and technologists should be fully associated with such schemes so that they can study, understand and develop the process further. No foreign assistance agreement should contain any clause which retards technological development within the country in any way.

Japan, in the early stages of her industrialization, received considerable amount of foreign technical assistance from abroad. Even today, the Japanese industrialists do not hesitate to seek foreign technical help if it will further their economy and if it cannot be developed within the country in a short period of time. But when they receive such assistance for the manufacture of a particular product, they do not seek any further help for the manufacture of the same product. From then on, they develop it further and make their own technological contribution to it.

Apart from all this, our psychological attitude towards aid should change. There should be a vast national campaign for creating quality consciousness, pride and confidence in one’s own efforts and a desire to improve them, a feeling of self-reliance in the true sense of the word and a longing to experiment and to innovate. There should be no fear of making mistakes, since no progress can be achieved without some mistakes. Mistakes become expensive only when we do not learn from them, not otherwise. Above all, there should be a great national effort at establishing new status symbols and criteria for prestige instead of basing them on imported symbols.

Perhaps it is worthwhile asking ourselves the question, “What would have happened if no foreign aid were available?” If India had no sterling balances in 1947 and if there had been no sizable import of technical know-how from abroad, “Would it have meant that we would not have been able to industrialise?” It would certainly have meant that we would not have many of the sophisticated and up-to-date factories that we possess today. It may be that in the early stages—say, the first ten years—the tempo of industrialization would have been slower. But our scientists and engineers would not have remained idle. They would have had a greater opportunity and a bigger challenge. Naturally, they would have made mistakes, perhaps, even big mistakes in some cases. And the factories and the machines they built would not have been as sophisticated or up-to-date as the imported ones. Instead of steel plants producing two million tons per year, they might have built smaller ones. The machine tools they produced might not have been automatic. Perhaps, the quality of the products might not have been very good to begin with. The social costs of such industrialization might also have been very high, because it would have called for greater sacrifices on the part of the people. But such a policy would have resulted in two incalculable benefits. One is the pride and joy of achievement that the individual and the nation get when they attempt something new and worthwhile and achieve it without external assistance and succeed after a tremendous effort. The creation of such a feeling will further strengthen the desire for co-operative effort, create cohesiveness and bring people together for a common purpose. The second great benefit would have been the confidence that comes out of achievement. It is such confidence that spurs people to attempt bigger things. Therefore, while the tempo of industrialization might have been slower in the early stages and perhaps costlier, these two very invaluable long-term benefits would have been gained. It would also have meant that the burden of foreign loans that weighs so heavily on the nation at present would not have been there, and self-reliance might have come much more quickly.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SPIRIT OF INNOVATION

Between the receding darkness of a passing night
And the bright glare of the morning sun,
We are lost. Divergent changing light
Plays tricks on our vision, but reason and logic
Are still a long way off;

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Scientific research is not new to India. A number of institutions set up by the Government of India such as the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, the Indian Council of Medical Research and so on, have been in existence for many years. Many university laboratories also have built up a tradition of fundamental research. An Indian scientist working in India won the Nobel prize for physics nearly forty years ago. During the last twenty years, research effort in India has received considerable momentum, thanks to the enthusiasm of our late Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru. The Atomic Energy Commission has also done commendable work under the dynamic leadership of late Dr. Bhabha. A string of national laboratories have been set up in various discipline under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. In addition, a number of co-operative research institutions have been started through the joint efforts of the industries and the government. Considerable volume of scientific work has been turned out in these laboratories and some of it, at any rate, has received high praise. But if we look at the impact of this work on our industry, one is forced to admit that it is not significant. Almost the entire technical know-how used in our industry today is of foreign origin. Every day one hears of a new collaboration with some foreign firm for the manufacture of certain products.

The question of the contribution of Indian science to economic and social development has been in the forefront of public discussion during the last few years. It has been said that while research expenditure has increased more than five times in the past ten years, the benefits have not been commensurate with the investment. In the first place, it must be realised that the effective increase in expenditure is very much less because of the decreasing value of the rupee during the same period. Secondly, a large portion of this expenditure has gone into building what might be called the infra-structure, that is, buildings, equipment and other facilities. Thirdly, investment in research is essentially a long-term investment and one in which the results cannot be predicted as in other types of economic activity. There is often no direct relationship between investment in a particular

area and the results achieved in quantitative terms. In certain areas at any rate-such as the break-through in agriculture and in the control of diseases-there have been significant gains.

Nevertheless, the effective contribution of science and technology to economic and social progress is of fundamental importance. High standards of living in the more advanced countries have a direct relationship with the development of science and technology and its rapid application. Therefore, a consideration of factors that are inhibitive to such effective contribution in our country is very relevant.

First and foremost is the role of research as understood by the scientists on the one hand and as understood by the average industrialists on the other. There was a time when scientific research was the monopoly of a few dedicated and gifted men who had to face many difficulties in order to quench their thirst for knowledge. These scientists were not concerned with the results of their enquiry. Pursuit of knowledge was in itself a sufficient inducement for them. Many of these scientists either had patrons to support them or were spending whatever money they had in order to pursue their favourite pastime. Because of the conflict between traditional ethics and the new scientific knowledge, scientists in Europe were sometimes persecuted. Thus, Galileo had to go before the inquisition in order to maintain the supremacy of the results of rational experimentation over traditional beliefs. Lavoisier was guillotined and Rumford was imprisoned and banished. Persecution of this type in the past has made scientists highly conscious of the need for freedom in their pursuit of knowledge. This tradition is strongly ingrained in every scientist and he is always afraid that his freedom might be taken away from him either by government agencies or by industrial tycoons.

Today, scientific research is an expensive affair that no individual can afford. Money for research comes from government or industry. The link between science and industry today is a well recognised fact. Further, the social purpose of science and the social responsibility of scientists have been realised in recent years. But the tradition of the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake still persists and even today many scientists are not too bothered with regard to the utilization of the knowledge gained. A scientist who is doing fundamental research that has no economic utility considers himself intellectually superior to the industrial research worker. The industrialist on the other hand is one who makes balance sheets once a year and if he invests any money in research, he would like to get a quick return. If scientific research within the country does not help an industrialist to produce a product quickly or to improve industrial production or quality, he looks for such help from other countries either through technical assistance or technical collaboration. Thus, every time a technological problem crops up or a new product has to be manufactured or a new industry is to be set up, the natural question of the industrialists and

the tax-payer is, 'Why are our laboratories not doing anything about it?' The concept of the role of science as understood by the scientists and as understood by the common man is different. It is unfortunate that this difference is much more marked in India than in other countries. If research is to make any useful contribution to our industrial progress, it is very necessary that the scientists must place the social purpose of science in the forefront and the common man should know the scope as well as the limitations of research.

Because of this divergency of purpose, industry and research institutions in India have lived poles apart in the past. There was no common ground on which they could meet and discuss. One often does not understand the other. The recent efforts to bring about a closer understanding between scientists and industrialists is a step in the right direction, but the very fact that such efforts have had to be made at the highest level is an indication of the fact that there has been no meaningful dialogue between these two groups in the past. What is true of research organisations is also true of universities. Universities have tended to be highly academic and not sufficiently realistic with regard to the demands of industry and commerce.

3

One of the basic features of Industrial Research in India is that it is largely government-financed and managed. Apart from a few laboratories established by private companies and some industrial research associations sponsored mainly by the textile industry, almost all industrial research is conducted in the national laboratories established by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). In the advanced countries of the West, Industrial Research is carried out largely in laboratories of private companies. While the laboratories run by the State may undertake research of a general nature, research for the solution of specific problems or for the development of processes or products is taken up by private laboratories and there is often great competition between different manufacturers to perfect a product or process through research and development ahead of their competitors. On the other hand, in socialistic countries, such as the Soviet Union, research as well as industry is state-managed, and the state-run laboratories work in very close co-operation with state-run industries. For them, there is no other choice. India is the only country where industry is largely in private hands while industrial research is almost entirely state-managed and financed. This peculiarity, which is partly the result of historical circumstances and partly the result of the level of economic development, must be taken into account in any consideration of the progress of industrial research in India. Public sector industries on the other hand are mostly established with foreign collaboration and have not had much opportunity of using indigenous technology. But even here, the approach has been disappointing.

In the early years following the formation of the CSIR, it was assumed that when once the research laboratories were established and they started functioning, their contribution to industrial development would be significant and more or less automatic. Perhaps, the nature of relationships and the organisations that are required in order to bring about a rapid application of scientific knowledge to industrial production were not realised at that time. Recent experience in India has clearly indicated that lack of such relationships can be a great handicap to the application of science to industrial development.

The relationship between the growth of science and industrial development is a complex phenomenon. It depends on the co-operation between laboratories and industries, on the existence of a suitable socio-economic climate in which there is an increasing desire for the use of scientific knowledge to industrial production, the social compulsions that act on the scientists and industrialists and the organizational pattern for the conversion of scientific knowledge to usable form. Great Britain has always been in the forefront of scientific research and has perhaps produced more Nobel Prize winners in pure science in proportion to its population than any other country in the world. But while Britain has been pre-eminent in science, she is economically and industrially not in a very strong position. On the other hand, Japan, which does not have any claims to pre-eminence in science, has been highly successful in the use of scientific knowledge for industrial growth. The conversion of scientific knowledge for industrial development depends first and foremost on a clear definition of specific technological objectives and a realization of the need to fulfil those objectives; secondly, on the development processes, and their objective evaluation and the necessary engineering skill to build pilot plants and design prototypes. Finally, it also involves the desire on the part of industrialists to invest money in indigenous processes, even if there is an element of risk.

In recent years, there has been some criticism of the role of science in India and its contribution to industrial development. It has been suggested that science in India has failed to meet the needs of the nation in terms of the development of technical know-how and self-sufficiency in scientific aspects. It is necessary to examine this criticism in some detail and see where the fault lies.

In the first place, the CSIR has to maintain more than thirty laboratories of diverse disciplines, products and industries. In addition, it is providing financial assistance in the form of grants-in-aid to co-operative research associations, fellowships in universities and colleges, and so on. While investment in industrial research had been increasing steadily, nevertheless, the resources at the disposal of the CSIR are totally inadequate to meet all these needs. The UNESCO Conference on the Application of Science and Technology in Asia held in New Delhi in August 1968 recommended to the governments of developing nations to increase their research and development expenditure to 1 per cent of their Gross

National product within a decade. While this recommendation is important and necessary, it will lead to a greater tempo of economic growth only if the areas of research and development are carefully selected taking into account the needs and resources available and the results of such effort fully implemented. There are no proven criteria or tested methods for the selection of these areas, but nevertheless efforts should be made to choose the areas through investigation and analysis. Without such selectiveness, even if the resources were increased, it is extremely doubtful whether any significant contribution to industrial development can come about unless certain major policy decisions are taken at the same time with regard to the utilization of resources.

So far as industrial research is concerned, no allocation of priorities has been drawn up at the highest level. Even if the resources were much greater, it is difficult for science, particularly in an under-developed country, such as India, to make a significant contribution to all aspects of economic and industrial activity. It is, therefore, necessary that certain priorities should be allocated taking into account the economic and social needs of the nation and the critical areas in which it is necessary to attain self-sufficiency at the earliest possible opportunity. Such a decision on priorities cannot obviously be taken by scientists—certainly not by scientists alone. It will have to be done at the highest political level. Perhaps the new National Committee on Science and Technology whose creation has been announced by the Government will be able to identify major areas of technical importance, allocate priorities with specific objectives and co-ordinate the work of research and development for maximum results.

Having taken a decision on priorities, adequate funds should be made available for those priorities to be fulfilled within specified time targets. All other demands should be rigorously left out or postponed until such time as additional funds are available. Only such a rigid allocation of priorities and setting apart funds on that basis would enable scientists to have specific objectives which they can pursue without any other diversions.

Scientific research in the Soviet Union is an instance of the allocation of such priorities. They have allotted priorities for space research, nuclear physics and computer technology. Massive investments have been made in these areas in terms of talent and resources in order to reach existing or even higher levels of technology than in the United States. But in almost all other areas, research has been given secondary importance and can be considered to be ordinary when compared to other advanced countries. A similar policy with regard to the selection to the selection of a few areas to the exclusion of others is essential if science is to make any significant contribution to development in India.

The lack of priorities at the highest level permeates down to the laboratories also. A large number of laboratories have been established in the past and new departments set up within them without any serious consideration of their function in relation to industry and

without giving them specific industrial research targets. Similarly, within each laboratory departments are created, again without reference to the industrial needs but more because such departments exist in similar laboratories elsewhere in the world.

The second factor which has been responsible for the poor contribution of science to industrial development is the intellectual and social distance that separates our laboratories from industrial organisations. Traditionally, industries in India have tended to rely on foreign technical know-how and the last twenty years have, if anything only increased this reliance. While it may be necessary to depend on foreign technical know-how in certain areas, it is also essential for industries to make use of indigenous know-how where possible and it is desirable that our laboratories should be used for the purpose of servicing, consultation and further development. In spite of various sporadic efforts made from time to time, the social distance that separates our laboratories and our industrial organisations is still very wide. Many of our scientists have an academic approach to problems and do not carry out their studies in sufficient depth in order to make their results meaningful from the point of view of commercial exploitation. There is also a reluctance on the part of many scientists to enter the industrial field for consultation and test their knowledge against the touchstone of technological and commercial success.

When certain processes are developed in our laboratories, there is at present no means of assessing their commercial potentiality or their value in terms of national economy. Often, it is a matter of dispute between scientists in the laboratory on the one hand and industrialists who may be manufacturing the product by an imported process on the other. Lack of research and development departments in industries is a great handicap in this respect. Setting up of suitable machinery for the objective evaluation of such processes in terms of national requirements is very essential, and in the case of those processes which are considered commercially viable, development should be carried right through to commercial manufacture by a company either in the private or in the public sector. This lack of facilities for evaluation and exploitation is another factor that has been inhibitive to the effective functioning of our laboratories. In actual fact, what has been happening is that a number of laboratories have set up small pilot plants and are participating in what may be described as manufacturing activities. This tends to take away the time of the scientist to the detriment of his scientific pursuit. It also means that problems of industrial relations, purchase and sales, and so on, which should not normally be the functions of scientists, have to be carried out by them.

Another aspect that is of relevance to the application of industrial research is the large number of collaboration agreements that have been entered into between Indian industry and foreign companies for the supply of technical know-how. Many of these collaboration agreements contain a clause for passing on further developments also to the Indian company. This means that industries started with foreign collaboration do not invest

money in research in India, but the royalty they pay helps to subsidise research in other countries. They do not do even minor investigative work as all such work is given to foreign technical experts who are readily available for the purpose. Therefore, these industries do not pose any scientific or technological challenges to scientists within the country. Because of the large number of such agreements, industries have not made use of whatever scientific talent is available within the country. Not faced with meaningful, industrial problems demanding urgent solutions, our scientists have tended to concentrate in the past on problems of an academic nature. If meaningful use is to be made of industrial research within the country, there should be a close integration and co-ordination between imported know-how and indigenous development.

Consultation is a vital and necessary part of any industrial laboratory work in that it brings a scientist into close contact with the industry and enables him to understand and appreciate the problems of the industry and thus makes his research more realistic and meaningful. It also enables the industrialist and the engineers to acquire greater confidence in the scientists and makes them more receptive to the results of research and it helps in immediate improvement in productivity or quality of the industry concerned. Therefore, consultation should be a vital and necessary part of any industrial laboratory. One of the reasons for the close relationship that exists between research associations and industries is due to the large amount of consultation work they are called upon to undertake.

Another inhibiting factor is the high degree of taxation on industries and industrial products. An example that Mr. J. R.D. Tata gave sometime ago is of relevance here. He said that between 1959 and 1964 the cost of production of a Tata-Mercedes truck had gone down by Rs. 355/- due to the improved production methods in spite of increasing labour, raw material and other costs. However, in the same period Government taxes had gone up by Rs. 6780/- and the cost of imported materials and components by Rs. 739/- so that to the consumer the truck cost Rs. 37,619/- in 1964 as against Rs. 30,455/- in 1959. Under the circumstances, when research gives only a marginal benefit which is easily wiped out either through taxation or through a change in the price of materials, industry will have no incentive to invest in research.

Finally, we have been living in an economy of shortages. Most commodities can be sold, whatever the price and whatever the quality. Neither the pressures of competition which act as incentive to research in democratic countries nor the pressures of compulsion which force industries to make use of research in totalitarian states are present in India. Only time can solve many of these problems. But some solution is necessary before research can have a significant impact on the future of our industry.

In the application of science and technology to industrial progress, education plays a very important part. Education gives an individual a knowledge of the external world, widens his horizons, brings him into contact with a whole new world of ideas, develops the power of logical thinking and transforms the world of traditional prejudices and taboos. Scientific and technological education improves a man's skill, develops a scientific attitude and enables the creation of a sociological climate in which science can thrive and technology prospers.

Education is also a means of overcoming the economic barrier imposed by the caste system. An educated man needs not necessarily practise the profession of his caste. He can take to any profession that his education and training might make him suitable. Thus, education of the right type is useful not only in the spread of science and technology but also in changing the traditional environment.

During the last two decades, there has been considerable expansion in the facilities for training of scientists, engineers and technologists. The number of engineering colleges as well as the number of engineering students in each college has increased phenomenally. According to one estimate, India is turning out the same number of engineers as the United Kingdom. And yet, if we look at the overall industrial capacity, our country is nowhere near the capacity of the United Kingdom. In the development of science and technology and their application, mere increase in the number of engineering graduates and diploma holders is not enough. It depends on a great variety of other factors.

According to the census of 1960-61, only about 15 per cent of total population of India could read and write. In this context, literacy does not necessarily mean education since the criterion used is only the person's ability to sign his name in any one of the Indian languages. If a more rigorous criterion were applied, the percentage would be even lower. While there has undoubtedly been an improvement since 1960-61, nevertheless, it may be some decades before illiteracy is completely eradicated in India.

Further, the application of science and technology also depends on the quality of education. Education in India has always tended to be highly academic and theoretical. When western type of education was introduced into India, it was primarily with the idea of producing junior civil servants for the British government, and consequently the education was very bookish. The low estimate in which all forms of manual labour has been held has meant that an educated man never attempted to use his hands except in the performance of the most necessary functions. When an illiterate peasant in an Indian village decides to send his son to high school or college, it is solely with the idea that he will get out of the 'drudgery of manual labour'.

Recent attempts at making education more broad-based and craft-oriented seem to have lowered its quality in terms of academic knowledge without improving it in other respects. The basic education scheme which was devised by Mahatma Gandhi was intended to impart education through a craft. According to this system, all knowledge is taught through a basic craft, which is useful, such as spinning, weaving, carpentry and so on. The pupil is supposed to have learnt to co-ordinate the movement of his hands and eyes with the brain and learn the dignity of manual labour besides knowing a craft that he might practise in later life. But basic education has failed to create among the pupils that joy that one gets through physical endeavour. Further, the intention of parents who educate their children is to enable them to get away from manual work so that the aims of the parents are opposed to the objectives of the educational system. Moreover, the craft, that is taught most often is hand-spinning which is wholly the work of the women when it is practiced as a profession, and not very remunerative. As a result of all these factors, basic education has not been a success and has been ineffective in achieving its purpose.

Further, there are a number of handicaps in imparting science education to children in India. The social environment in most homes is not conducive to the development of science. A boy may be taught at school that eclipses are caused by the shadow of the moon or the earth obstructing the light from the sun. But at home, he is told that it is an evil time when Rahu swallows the moon or the sun and he should fast and take a purificatory bath before breaking fast. Many such instances can be given of the diametrically opposed views of the two attitudes and most people perhaps believe in one and practise another. But such a situation does not and cannot foster the spirit of logical enquiry and the acceptance of deductive reasoning.

In advanced countries, products of science and technology are a matter of everyday knowledge and experience to children. Every house has electric cookers, water heaters, washing machines, radio and television sets, etc. Most families have motor cars, and the children become familiar not only with their use but also with their principles of operation. They often watch and even help their fathers in repairing or adjusting these gadgets and learn to do it themselves. They have their own bicycles at a very young age and jobs like mending a puncture are a matter of routine for them. Their parents usually have a minimum of education and are generally in a position to satisfy the children’s curiosity over a wide range of topics. Most of them are also sufficiently well-to do to be able to buy interesting books of knowledge for their children which, while satisfying their curiosity, also create a thirst for further knowledge. The schools are also much better equipped than in India, and science museums, art galleries and libraries are easily accessible. The toys that are given to children are not only things to play with, but are also educative. All these facilities enable the children to acquire a vast amount of general knowledge, to become familiar with the subjects they are going to study later and to develop any special talents that they may have. Above all, they kindle the spark of curiosity in them that is so essential for learning.

In India, on the other hand, the majority of the parents of school-going children are illiterate and they are unable to satisfy the curiosity of their children about anything except the most immediate surroundings and the simple things around them. Nor is their curiosity satisfied when they go to school. Most schools are poorly equipped and the teachers so badly paid that in many cases they take to subsidiary occupations in order to augment their income; the classes are over-crowded and the emphasis is always on passing examinations rather than on acquiring knowledge. Very little time is spent either is satisfying the natural interest of children in external things or to develop their powers of thinking. Except in big cities, there are no museums or art galleries which the children can visit. Set lessons have to be learnt and reproduced in the examinations. There is no attempt to foster an understanding, appreciation or liking for any particular subject that is taught. Only rarely does a boy or girl cultivate a passion for a particular subject in his or her schools days.

Consequently, the education that the average child receives has no reality as far as he is concerned. It is no way related to his social background or to his limited experience of the external world as he sees it. This is particularly so in learning subjects such as physics or chemistry; a boy learns these subjects not as something familiar that is related to everyday life, but as something strange and unreal that has to be mastered merely for the sake of getting through his examinations, and then mercifully forgotten.

The result of all this when a boy is ready to leave high school at the age of about fifteen or sixteen, intellectually, he is less mature than his counterpart in more advanced countries. His general knowledge is also poor. He has not had an opportunity to develop special interests in any field of activity that would enable him to make an intelligent decision on the choice of a career. That decision therefore is taken not by himself, but by his parents.

Such a decision is based on one important consideration which is the spectre of unemployment that haunts every young man from a middle class or a working class family in India. Hence if the parents of the boy can afford to educate him further, it is in those fields in which employment is easy to find. Since Independence, because of the rapid industrialization of the country, the demand for engineers has been increasing at a much faster rate than the supply. Consequently, the rush into the engineering colleges has been phenomenal. Young men who walked proudly into the portals of law colleges about thirty or forty years ago are now even more eager for their sons and grandsons to get into the engineering colleges irrespective of the interest or aptitude of the boys. Increasing unemployment among engineers has reduced the rush into engineering colleges in the last few years leading to disappointment and frustration among students.

Boys in advanced countries study engineering primarily because of their interests in the subject and with the full knowledge of what engineering as a profession means. In some countries—such as West Germany and the Soviet Russia—boys who desire to enter an

engineering degree course have to put in at least a year's practical work as ordinary workers in a workshop before they are given admission. Many of the boys in India join engineering colleges without any conception or even interest in the profession that is going to be their life's work. They are not familiar with some of the simple tools and equipment used in workshops. Therefore, they naturally take longer time to get themselves acclimatised to an engineering atmosphere. A deep and abiding interest in the subject can only come much later.

There are also other handicaps that beset a student of engineering or technology in India. Industry and technological institutions seem to live poles apart. Each does not know what the other is doing. In advanced countries, professors and lecturers from educational institutions are in constant contact with industry, advising them, solving their technical problems, conducting research on their behalf and recommending suitable people for jobs. Similarly, the industries are always in touch with the colleges. Specialists in industry are invited to give talks to the students and staff on technological problems with which they are engaged. They visit the colleges often for discussions, for testing work of a special nature, and so on. There is a constant flow of information between industries on the one hand and technical colleges on the other which brings a sense of realism into education and makes the students understand that they are studying the various subjects not merely to pass the examinations, but essentially for use in Industry. At the same time, such communication keeps the industry abreast of the latest scientific developments.

Facilities for practical training either during the holidays or after graduation are few in India, and there are no organized apprenticeship courses except in a few large industries. In recent years, the demand for engineers has been so great that everyone has been able to find employment. Even those who have failed in their examinations have sometimes managed to get an engineer's job though at a slightly lower salary. Consequently, the incentive for training and for improving their practical knowledge and relating it to their academic training has been absent. There has also been a very rapid expansion of technological education in the country. This has inevitably meant a shortage of equipment as well as trained staff in colleges. Another obstacle to the rapid development of engineering graduates is the social barrier that separates the engineer and the workmen on the shop floor. The workmen are often highly skilled craftsmen who know their job thoroughly from practical point of view, though perhaps in a very narrow sense. The graduate from an engineering college knows the theory behind the functioning of various types of machines, but does not know the potentialities and limitations of any of them in detail. Only a close association between these two would enable one to understand, appreciate and absorb the knowledge that the other possesses. But because of the gulf in the social background, such interaction does not generally take place. The young engineer—rather proud of his newly acquired degree or diploma—considers himself socially superior to the workmen. Their lack of education, family background, lack of contacts outside the

factory, etc., form a barrier to good understanding between the two. The engineer feels it beneath his dignity to learn from a subordinate whose social standing is very much below him. And the skilled worker allows his superior to continue in his ignorance.

Further, the desire on the part of most people to receive higher training has resulted in a large proportion of graduates and a shortage of people at the foremen level. According to the report of the Education Commission, "Despite repeated exhortation, it is unfortunately still widely felt that vocational education at the school level is an inferior form of education, fit only for those who fail in general education and the last choice of parents and students". A consequence of this has been that many graduate engineers are holding jobs which can be done equally well by technicians. Needless to say, this is wastage of educational effort on the one hand and leads to frustration on the part of graduates on the other.

5

The prerequisite for the development and growth of science and technology depends not only on the type and quality of education but also on the prestige and status of scientists and engineers and on their remuneration.

In the power structure that has emerged in India since Independence a new caste system has taken has taken shape though as yet in an informal manner. In this new hierarchy, the politicians are the Brahmins with power to dispense governmental favours just as the priests claim to dispense divine favours. The civil servants are the Kshatriyas responsible for action and holding executive power just as in the past. The businessmen and the industrialists are the vaisyas. They remain where they have always been, depending on the goodwill of the two higher castes for their prosperity. But today, the sudras are the intellectuals. The scientists and engineers and technologists and even economists have to carry out the orders given by the other three castes. No doubt occasionally, a scientist or economist finds himself at the higher decision-making levels. But this is the exception rather than the rule. Even in these cases, the elevation is due to the political skills exhibited by the individuals rather than because of their professional competence. For the most part, instead of expressing free, independent and objective opinions on problems and situations in the light of their knowledge and wisdom, the scientists have become merely props to support the views of one or other of the people above them. The tragedy of the situation lies in the fact that many of the intellectuals seem to have accepted this situation without protest. Consequently, scientific objectivity on national problems has been one of the major casualties during the last few decades.

In India, except in rare cases, only young men from middle and upper classes have opportunities of going to the universities and all professional men come from the same higher strata of society. But an administrative or political career carries far greater prestige than a brilliant scientific career. This exists in many societies, but it is specially marked in India. Scientists and engineers are not often admitted into the dominant social groups. This is probably due to the tradition of colonial administration in which the civil servant was all-powerful. In the later half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the prayer and longing of many parents were that their sons should enter the I.C.S. This tradition still persists in India. Consequently, there is a tendency for brilliant science graduates to enter the administrative services. Even when they choose a scientific career, they try to deviate as soon as possible towards the administration of science rather than research and its application or science teaching. Thus, we find a preponderance of scientists in what may be described as non-productive jobs from a scientific point of view.

Because of the greater prestige and authority of the administrator, procedures and attitudes such as conformity to precedents, refusal to take risks, etc., are more prevalent even amongst science administrators who are sometimes themselves scientists. Often, scientists have to carry an excess of administrative work and when they do not, they have to go through the process of getting things sanctioned through a chain of officials who do not often appreciate the needs of scientific or technological work. The ability to fill up forms in the right manner becomes more important than the ability to do research or competence in teaching.

Basically, modern governments have to play two conflicting roles, that of providing stability and being the means of inducing change at the same time. Providing stability and maintaining law and order is the traditional role of government. Its success depends on adhering to precedents, observing rules and regulations and enforcing conformity, and is carried out by administrators. On the other hand, inducing change which is the new role that most governments have undertaken depends on innovation and experimentation and an objective study of problems rather than dependence on tradition. This work has generally to be undertaken by scientists of one sort or another. In a changing society, when the administrator plays the dominant role in comparison with the scientist or when the two are at loggerheads, the new role of governments cannot be successfully played. This is particularly so in those organs of government which are intended for promoting change.

Further, it is generally found that in any conflict between politicians and administrators on the one hand and intellectuals on the other, the former usually come out successful. Scientists, technologists and men of learning in general, in spite of their high intellect and competence, are frequently unable to understand or appreciate the complex motivations of people in politics, administration or business. They do not always possess the social skills of manoeuvrability because of their logical and analytical approach to problems.

This makes them look like simpletons in the eyes of their more wily colleagues. But such outwitting and manoeuvrability, while it places the scientist in a bad light, are not qualities that are necessary or desirable for economic or technological progress.

6

But the fundamental problem of utilising science and technology for human welfare is related to the existence of the innovative spirit. This again demands a reasoning attitude both towards Nature and towards social relationships. It is the questioning mind that produces new ideas and consequently tends to be non-conformist, while the mind that believes and accepts the established order without question tends to strengthen and stabilize the status-quo. Therefore, in any society dominated by religion, the logical mind is suspected partly because it might lead towards scepticism and agnosticism and partly because it might be the beginning of a rebellion against authority. It is not that belief in reason is inconsistent with belief in God. But such an idea is generally accepted only in a mature democratic society.

Anyhow, if we accept that a spirit of logical enquiry should be widely prevalent in order to bring about a large number of innovations, it follows then that in societies where such an attitude prevails rapid economic progress would be possible if it does not exist, progress would be retarded to that extent.

Early Indian philosophers—just as early Greek philosophers—had a very sobering contact with the problems of everyday life. They observed Nature and drew their deducations from what they saw. Early Hindu literature is full of minute observations of Nature, and their comments are penetrating. They never could have developed the science of astronomy and mathematics to the extent that they did, if they had not been animated by a spirit of logical reasoning. But later philosophers displayed a sophistication and intellectual arrogance that was unknown to their forbears. To them, metaphysical exercise was what counted. If observation was inconsistent with metaphysics, then it was considered that observation must be wrong since metaphysics was indisputable and supreme knowledge. This intellectual arrogance and exclusiveness was reinforced by the social system in which knowledge was regarded as the prerogative of the few and the vast multitude had no access to it. Knowledge was preserved in the language of the elite—Sanskrit—to which the ordinary people had no access and gradually it became a dead language. Even the learned were not encouraged to think for themselves in the later periods of Indian history. But for a few noble exceptions—such as Sankaracharya and Ramanuja—the rest were commentators and communicators of an ancient wisdom, rather that thinkers in their own right, Knowledge thus became fossilized. Philosophy lost its freshness and got itself entangled in a mass of ceremonials and observances as far as the common man was

concerned. He had to accept and propitiate these things on the basis of a belief which was beyond question. It was not that the scientific method—the method of observation, experiment and deduction—was unknown in Hindu philosophy. It was known and applied to spiritual problems. It was turned inward to analyse one's soul and its relationship with the ultimate. It never concerned itself with the down-to-earth problems of everyday life. And the method of logical reasoning never permeated down to the common man.

A similar situation existed in Europe also. From the beginning of the Christian era till about the fifteenth century, all knowledge and learning were confined to the monasteries. Access to knowledge was only through a study of Greek and Latin. But partly through the coming of the renaissance and partly through the spread of Protestantism, a new spirit began to pervade Europe. Copernicus, Galileo and Newton in the scientific field and Francis Bacon in the realm of philosophy brought back the scientific method of enquiry to the problems of everyday life. Francis Bacon was the first philosopher to point out the advantage of the scientific method. Since those early days, what began as a trickle of hesitant experimentation has gone on increasing until it has become a flood in the twentieth century. The scientific method became so much part of the culture of Europe that craftsmen who had followed traditional occupations such as spinning and weaving began to apply these methods to the improvement of their tools and brought about a whole lot of innovations that resulted in the industrial revolution. John Kay, the inventor of the flying shuttle, was a reed maker by profession. Samuel Crompton who developed the spinning mule was a farmer and a weaver. The locomotive was invented by George Stephenson who worked in a coal-mine. These people were not scientists or philosophers. They were only craftsmen who were profoundly influenced by the prevailing spirit and who constantly asked themselves 'Why', 'How' and 'why Not'. Thus, the spirit of enquiry led to the growth of science on the one hand and the development of the means of production on the other, until they coalesced in the later half of the nineteenth century when science began to be increasingly used to the problems of industrial production. The spread of the method of observation, experiment and deduction is perhaps the major reason why the industrial revolution started in Europe and that continent was able to dominate the rest of the world during the last four centuries.

When a scientific approach is lacking and when men's minds are dominated by unreasoning belief, the critical faculty has no opportunity to develop. It is only the existence of a critical faculty that enables an individual or a group to undertake an objective evaluation of things, ideas and people, to accept those that are desirable and reject those that are useless. The lack of a well-developed critical faculty leads to blind worship of ideas or people on the one hand and to equally unreasonable condemnation on the other. This again is not conducive to progress.

At present, the spirit of logical enquiry is not widely prevalent in India. Even those who have received a scientific education have to carry the burden of a contradictory tradition. The social pressures around them make them act not always in accordance with logical reasoning but rather in response to some time-honoured beliefs. This conflict between what may be described as traditional or conventional values and scientific training has been constantly going on in the minds of many people in India. Until such time as the spirit of logical enquiry becomes part and parcel of our mental make-up and we act according to it as a matter of habit, a large number of original innovations and ideas cannot be expected.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SOME CONTRADICTONS

Standing between two worlds,
We are in two minds—turning
Now towards the East and now towards
The West—trying in vain
To reconcile the irreconcilable;
Action and reaction neutralizing
Each other—leaving behind
Only a precipitate of bitterness.

1

At the entrance to one of the armament factories in South India is a statue of Gandhiji–flanked on either side by two old cannons from the nineteenth century. The factory is an old one and the guns had been placed there by the British, perhaps when the factory was started, to infuse a sense of fear and awe among the population. The bust of Gandhiji had been placed by the Indian government. One would have thought that an armament factory was a singularly inappropriate place for a statue of the leading pacifist of modern times. This attempt to bring together the apostle of non-violence and the manufacture of modern armaments is but a minor example of the efforts in India to reconcile ideas which are diametrically opposed to each other. That no one has so far publicly commented on the propriety of this is an indication of the extent of self-deception that we practise on ourselves. This type of self-delusion has resulted in a number of contradictions in our policy as well as in our thinking during the last twenty years. And these conflicting policies have the effect of nullifying each other resulting in a slowing down of progress.

2

India is a democracy in which all citizens are supposed to be equal and yet our attitudes and behaviour, particularly of those in power, are authoritarian rather than democratic. Executives in business and industrial organisations, heads of public institutions, civil servants and politicians exhibit an authoritarian attitude as a matter of custom, tradition and habit without bothering to think about the effects of such an attitude on their colleagues and subordinates. Small differences in salary, power or position become extremely important from the point of view of a man’s status and how he addresses other people.

In English, as in most other European languages, the personal pronoun ‘you’ is used whether one is addressing a prince or a pauper. While titles may be used in some countries where monarchies still exist, the respect and dignity of the lower levels of people are not affected in any way. In most Indian languages however, there are five or six different forms of saying ‘you’, the particular form that is used depending on the relative social position of the people concerned. Most of these forms are in common daily use. This in itself is a clear indication of the hierarchical nature of society in India. The introduction of democracy and the spread of the egalitarian ideas seem to have done nothing to eliminate these social inequalities.

In all organized societies, some form of hierarchy is inevitable. It is necessary in order to allocate responsibilities, areas of activity and to facilitate communication. But in a truly democratic society, the existence of a hierarchy does not interfere with the freedom of action, dignity and self-respect of people at whatever level they may operate. The use of first names in the United States between people of different levels in an organisation and the use of the common appellation ‘comrade’ by everyone in the Soviet Union are indications of the implicit equality of people in those societies.

In a hierarchical society, status whether achieved or inherited, is of far greater importance than the intrinsic worth of a person. As soon as an individual becomes a minister, his speeches are reported in full and his opinions on all kinds of subjects become news-worthy. Even for a deputy minister, police escort has to be provided when he travels. In meetings and discussions, people are expected to defer to the views of their seniors. The collector of a district has to be president of all social and cultural organisations in the district though he is often an over-worked civil servant with very little spare time for such activities. In all these aspects, we have inherited the attitudes of colonialism, but have continued to cherish and preserve them mainly because they happen to fit into our own past attitudes.

Democracy is not a mere grafting of a parliamentary system of government on to a traditional society. It is a way of life which recognizes the brotherhood of Man, permitting free and frank discussion and consultation at every level of decision-making. It respects the dignity of all individuals and provides opportunities for their economic and cultural growth as well as social satisfaction. But we have in India, a democratic system of government operated and maintained by a hierarchical society that is changing far too slowly for the needs of social progress. This conflict between our basic attitudes and the organizational frame work of democracy, if allowed to continue, will endanger the successful working of democracy itself.

In the policies initiated and pursued by the Government of India there are a number of contradictions that have led to failure on the economic front.

One of the major objectives of the policy of the Government of India and the various State Governments are to increase agricultural production. Vast sums of money have been spent in the construction of dams and canals for irrigation, in digging wells in drought affected areas and for the provision of better seeds and efficient farming methods. Large sums have also been invested in establishing fertilizer factories, and various types of package plans have been introduced in selected areas. In spite of all these efforts, increase in agricultural production has not been commensurate with the needs of the country. In fact, the present economic difficulties faced by the country can be largely attributed to failure on the agricultural front. The green revolution, about which so much has been said in the last two years, has not succeeded in solving major agricultural problems. The food shortage, followed by sharp increases in prices, has resulted in economic distress to the middle and working class people. Scarcity of cotton, sugarcane, jute, etc., has seriously affected the economy of agro-based industries as well as exports. As a result, high priority is being given to agricultural production to get a higher yield per acre in the coming years.

And yet, another aspect of government's agricultural policy, namely ceiling on land holdings, runs counter to the policy of increasing agricultural production.

To the small farmer in India, agriculture is not so much a profession as a way of life. He does not take to farming as a choice between various professions or out of interest or training. He was born into it as his father was, and he expects to die as a small farmer only. He has inherited his land as well as his agricultural knowledge from his father. Consequently, his methods are conservative and he does not adopt new methods of farming easily. He has neither the motivation nor the capacity for investment that are necessary for successful farming. With the large-scale introduction of new seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, farm management has become a fairly complex technique and demands a high level of competence and knowledge. It is rare for a small farmer to possess such competence. On the contrary, he remembers too many droughts and floods that have belied his hopes not only during his lifetime but also during the lives of his ancestors. His mind is dominated by these natural calamities of the past and as a result he is not easily assured by optimism for the future. He is therefore afraid to invest money in farming—even if he has any money to invest. He resorts to subsistence farming, limiting his investments to a minimum and being satisfied with a low yield per acre. There are no doubt exceptions to this, but by and large the small farmer in India depends on subsistence farming.

If he has any ambitions at all, it is to educate his sons so that they might get out of the "drudgery" of agriculture and get a job in a town.

The Japanese farmer is often cited as an example of how small farmers can achieve high yields. But the motivation, attitude, education, competence and financial stability of a Japanese farmer are very different from those of his Indian counterpart and to proceed on the basis of the Japanese example would be extremely misleading. But even in Japan, after a brief period of land reform instituted by General MacArthur, they had to revert, and the government encouraged the richer farmers to enlarge their farms because they permitted mechanization, more economic operations and better farming methods. In other countries such as Philippines, Italy, etc., also, introduction of land ceilings has not been particularly successful in raising agricultural productivity and prosperity.

On the other hand, the large farmer in India is more efficient. He has been able to save money and is in a position to invest more into agriculture and get a better yield. He can withstand a bad harvest without having to mortgage his land. He is often able to reduce the cost of cultivation by using mechanical methods which are possible because of the large size of his farm. He is generally educated and can take to modern farming methods easily. Consequently, he gets a better yield per acre than the small farmer. Here again, there are bound to be exceptions-such as absentee landlords who know nothing about farming—but on the whole, other things being equal, it will be found that at least in India, larger farms record better yields per acre than the small ones. An objective study of the yield per acre in relation to the size of the farm would provide interesting results.

Further, if a large farmer has any undeveloped land, he generally has the resources to develop it—by levelling, putting in new soil, digging a well, and so on. A small farmer, even if he has the initiative and the will to do so, has to depend on borrowing money from the money-lender or on government loans and subsidies. And if after all that effort, he has one or two bad harvests, he would be forced to sell the land. But a large farmer will only develop his land provided he is assured that the land will not be taken away from him and he will be allowed to reap the benefit of his effort and initiative.

The effect of the land ceiling acts in many States has been that the large farmers have had to surrender their surplus lands. They have naturally not given up their best lands. These have generally been fallow lands with no irrigation facilities and needing large investments for development. Quite a lot of such lands have not yet been reallotted to landless labourers, but even when they have been allotted, the people to whom they have been given have not got the resources to develop them, nor has any provision been made to provide such resources. In some cases, the lands that have been surrendered have been leased to the original owners (though under different names) because it has not been possible to find people prepared to take them on lease. Therefore, the original owners instead of paying land tax on the land they have surrendered pay an annual rent!

There have also been a number of cases in which, anticipating land ceiling acts, families have divided the property among the various members including new born babies so as to avoid having to give up any land. While they have thus temporarily avoided having to surrender land, nevertheless their confidence has been shaken since there have been threats of further reduction in land ceilings. Therefore, many large farmers have stopped making any capital investment to improve the land.

The net result has been that land which might have been developed and used for production purposes by their original owners; if they had been assured of security of ownership now remains fallow with no chance of being developed except at an exorbitant cost to the government.

It should also be realised that the desire for 'land ownership', which was once an aspiration of all peasants in the villages, is no longer as important as it used to be. Today, landless villagers with initiative and education are more interested in migrating to the cities and getting jobs in factories than in acquiring a few acres of land in the village. The love of high wages, the bright glare for the neon lights, the attractive cinema posters, the blare of the loud speakers and coffee clubs are attracting young men from the villages into the cities. In any case, if such land hunger really existed, it is not going to be satisfied, because the availability of land is limited while those wanting it are too many. Today, improving the standard of living in the villages will produce greater satisfaction among the people than re-distribution of land.

Therefore, the ends of social justice for the villages would be better served if all-out efforts were made to increase the productivity of land, if a comprehensive scheme of crop insurance were introduced, if better facilities were provided and better wages paid to agricultural workers and if an agricultural income-tax were introduced to mop up the surplus wealth of the prosperous agriculturists. All this is not to say that the small farmer should be wiped out. He should certainly be given special assistance in order to become prosperous, but the advantages of large holdings need not be sacrificed for the sake of a doubtful egalitarianism.

As it is, the objective of increased agricultural production is largely offset by the fixing of ceilings on land holdings.

4

Large-scale industrialisation on a national scale has been another of the primary objectives set before the country. A strong self-reliant industrial base has been recognised as one of the basic needs of a modern State. In our planning in the past, an all-out effort has been made to build large basic industries such as iron and steel, machine tools, petro-chemical industries, and so on. In fact, we have preferred to establish large steel plants on the ground that in the long run they are more economic than small ones, though small ones might have been built by our own engineers without any collaboration, while for large steel

plants, considerable amount of financial as well as technical aid has been necessary. This commitment to total large-scale industrialization and all that it implies has been complete and is irreversible.

While large-scale industrialization is preferred on one side, un-economic and unremunerative cottage industries are encouraged on the other. A vast organisation has been built up and many millions of rupees have been spent in developing cottage industries like hand-spinning and Ambar Charka. The cost of yarn produced by the Ambar Charka is very much more than mill-produced yarn of equivalent count, the cotton used by Ambar Charka is more expensive and at the end of it all, the Ambar Charka spinners earn very little.

This highly expensive scheme has been undertaken to provide employment in the villages. That unemployment is a serious problem, there can be no doubt. But why was this particular measure undertaken in preference to others which might be more economic? If unemployment is the problem that is to be solved, why did not we set up smaller steel plants which would employ more people per ton of production than larger ones? Perhaps, the explanation is to be found in the sentiment that has grown round hand-spinning during the last forty years and the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. This association has created around hand-spinning a halo of spiritual heritage and it is a nation's tribute to the father of the nation for failing to come upto his expectations in fulfilling his ideas.

Wherever cottage industries have been successful, it is so not because of the cheapness of their products or their functional utility, but only because of the uniqueness of designs and special qualities of workmanship. One cannot imagine a banares saree or an ivory carving from Trivandrum being mass-produced. If they were, they would lose their value. But when handicrafts attempt to compete with machines in areas in which the latter are eminently suitable, all that can happen is that cottage industries will wage a losing battle and gradually fade out. Another area where cottage industries can be successful is when they serve as feeder industries to large-scale or medium-sized industries. The watch manufacturing industry in Switzerland is a good example of this. Such decentralization is helpful in many ways. Cottage industries can be successful only when they are complementary to large-scale industry and when production can be decentralized without loss of efficiency. At the same time cottage industries should also use power and precision machines if they are to be feeders to large-scale industries making highly sophisticated products.

Contradictions of this nature have arisen mainly because many economic decisions have been taken for political reasons and policies have been framed with a view to their popularity rather than with a view to solution of problems. There are many kinds of political factors that have influenced decision-making in the economic sphere during the past twenty-five years.

The first of these is what may be called international considerations. Because of the neutral policy of the government as between Communist and the democratic blocks, it has been felt that we ought to have collaboration with both the communist countries as well as democratic countries in every sphere of economic activity. Thus, we have collaboration for steel plants with the USSR, the United Kingdom and with West Germany, with different types of technology, with engineers trained in different countries and by different methods. And when a fourth plant was started, collaboration had to be sought again. There is a suspicion in the public mind that in taking major decisions regarding national policies on industrialization, such international considerations do play an important part.

The second aspect of economic decision-making is the influence of political ideologies. For examples, our sentimental attachment to Gandhian philosophy is largely responsible for the importance that has been given in the past to Ambar Charka spinning and handloom weaving. The size of the steel plants has been decided not with regard to their economy but with a view to having them in the public sector rather than in the private sector. Whatever may be the truth or otherwise of the influence of such political factors on economic decision-making, there is a feeling in the public mind that these factors have had such influence, and lack of consistency on the part of government has only reinforced such suspicions.

Regional political considerations have also played a major part in economic decision-making. The need for the development of all regions in the country to ensure a balanced growth cannot be overemphasized. But such regional developments should also take into account the natural resources and the climate conditions of the region in locating particular types of industries so that maximum benefits are derived from such regional development for the country as a whole. But in fact, what has actually been happening is that every district in the country wants a textile mill to be set up in their region irrespective of climate suitability or raw material availability. Often, whether a particular district or a taluk has a mill or not depends more on the influence of the local member of Parliament than on anything else. Such regional political considerations have naturally led to rivalry among various regions, for example with regard to the location of steel plants in Vizagapatnam, Salem, etc.

If such conflicts are to be avoided and maximum benefit is to be derived from investments in industrialization, it is essential that economic decisions should be taken on economic and social considerations alone, and not for political reasons.

Then, there are a number of contradictions that are inherent in the situation and for which no real solutions are possible. These have arisen mainly because India is trying to industrialise at a time when new social philosophies have assumed importance and industrialization has to be combined with concern for human welfare and human dignity. To ignore these new ideas is neither possible nor desirable. At the time when European nations industrialized themselves in the early part of the nineteenth century, human welfare was given scant respect except perhaps by a few visionaries. Low wages, long working hours,

employment of children and bad working conditions were the order of the day. There were no factories act or any of the social legislative measures that are taken for granted today. There were no trade unions, and strikes were illegal, Thus, while the social consciousness with regard to the inhumanities of the early industrial age was not largely developed, it did mean that the social costs of industrialization were lower and consequently industrialization could be more rapid in those countries.

Today we are industrializing India and trying to enforce human welfare at the same time. Minimum wages on the basis of cost of living, good working conditions, security of employment, health insurance and provident fund and a host of other schemes have ensured some degree of welfare to industrial workers. Many large factories have invested considerable amounts of money in housing and other forms of social welfare for their workers. While these are essential and while no civilized government can afford to ignore these measures, nevertheless the fact remains that these have increased the social costs of industrialization.

Similarly, we are trying to implement ideas of economic equality side by side with rapid industrialization. In a developing country where income of the government through taxation per head on population tends to be low, a major amount of tax collection is realised from a small number of people at the top of the economic ladder. The savings for the country as a whole are extremely low, and again the people who are able to save and invest for further development are the few affluent ones at the top. If the total income in the country were equally divided between the entire populations, there would be no savings at all. Under these circumstances, in order to enable maximum savings for the private sector and higher levels of taxation for government revenues, certain inequalities between different sections of society are not only inevitable but desirable. However, in implementing ideas of economic equality through nationalization, through higher and higher levels of taxation, the objectives of maximum savings and investment and development run counter to the ideas of equality and social justice.

Another difficulty arises because of the necessity to develop basic industries and the need to provide consumer goods to the people at the same time. From a long-term point of view it is essential to have basic industries like Iron and Steel, Power Generation, Chemicals and Fertilisers, Machine Tools, etc., which will form the foundation for other industries. Without such basic industries, it is impossible to be self-reliant in the economic sense. But the starting of basic industries involves huge investment in capital resources. They take a long time to come to fruition and even longer for the common man to feel the effect of these in his daily life. Money has been expended with no tangible return in the form of goods or services. These have resulted in inflation on the economic front and frustration on the political front. On the other hand, if greater investment was made in consumer industries, the laying of the foundations of self-sufficiency would be delayed to that extent. In a developing economy, with a shortage of capital resources and technical knowhow, the

allocation of priorities as between basic and intermediate and consumer industries is always a tricky problem and so it has been in India up till now.

In the first three Five Year Plans, considerable emphasis was laid on the development of basic industries with the result that there is an acute shortage of consumer goods in India. Now that the basic infra-structure has been built, it may be necessary in the future to give greater priority to some of the consumer industries. Further, our planning in the past has mainly consisted in fixing certain adhoc targets and allocating resources on this basis. No serious attempts were made to ensure that these targets were realistic and the resources were available to achieve them. It is also necessary to measure performance not against expenditure as is being done at present but on the basis of achievement.

In a planned economy, control and direction of industry is inevitable. When the available resources are limited, some form of control becomes necessary. Consequently, the system of import licences, quotas, allotments, etc., has become an integral part of Indian economy. There is usually a scramble for these permits and most industrialists and businessmen spend a large part of their time and energy in making out a case for their requirements of materials or equipment in short supply. Often, the profitability of an organisation is determined not by its efficiency, but by the allotment of materials it manages to get. The system of permits is often highly centralized and unduly cumbersome so that even for minor requirements, people have to travel long distances to Delhi or to one of the State capitals. Further, frequent changes in import policies and issue of licenses have created considerable hardship to genuine manufactures. All this has led to a certain amount of corruption, and a group of people have come into existence that thrive not by real manufacturing or distributing, but merely by their ability to get licenses or by cornering commodities in short supply to make profits.

The successful operation of a vast system of controls and permits is an extremely difficult task, and is governed by a number of factors. The levels of integrity, and sense of public duty, both among officials as well as the public, the degree of satisfaction that the average businessman has with regard to their working, whether they are simple or unduly cumbersome in operation and whether they satisfy the essential requirements of industry are some of the aspects on which their successful working depends. Many of these are intangible factors that are difficult to measure. However, an objective assessment of these factors is impossible because these controls have become the centre of political controversy.

6

An industrialist in India today is looked upon with a certain amount of suspicion by the common man as well as at the policy making levels of the government. This suspicion, reinforced by the ideas of socialism and nationalization, has penetrated the thinking of the twentieth century in many countries. It is in the air, so to speak. He is looked upon as one

who profits at the expense of society. And the few business men who might have indulged in questionable activities to make money are cited as examples. When the common man thinks of industrialization, he does not do so in terms of the public or private sector, but only in terms of individual industrialists he might know or might have heard of. To him, industrialization means increasing the power and the wealth of the capitalists. The industrialists' lack of patriotism and social awareness is very often taken for granted. The problems they have to face and the risks they have to run are not generally known to the public.

The feeling of suspicion and lack of understanding between the industrialists and the business men on the one hand and the government on the other is not of recent origin. During the British period, the British civil servants in India found themselves in an awkward situation because the interests of Indian industry and the British export trade were often opposed to each other. The Indian business men naturally suspected the civil servants of favouring their European counterparts. The European business men in India had far greater access to government because of political influence and social contacts at higher levels. The civil servants also looked with suspicion on industrialists who supported the national movement. The British rule in India was essentially a government of civil servants, and there was a vast difference in the approach to problems between business men and civil servants. Subsequently, this suspicion was shared by the Indian civil servant also who saw the business men making lots of money, sometimes with very little education or social grace, while he himself, after a brilliant academic career, was working for a very modest salary.

One would have expected the situation to have improved after Independence. But unfortunately, business acquired a bad public image during the war years and immediate post-war period when some people made huge profits taking advantage of a shortage of consumer goods in the country. The members of the party that came to power looked upon themselves as martyrs in the cause of Independence, and there was condescension towards the business community. This was particularly so in the case of the late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who implied in many of his speeches that business was not a very important activity and often portrayed business men as being selfish and not particularly conscientious. It was generally assumed in government circles that business men were wrong until proved to be right. Industrialists on the other hand found that many people in positions and power and authority did not understand the problems of industry and commerce. They feared that their position and their future were not stable or secure with threats of nationalization and increased taxation. Therefore, they became apathetic and tried to please those in power in order to get minor concessions. As a body they also failed to pursue comprehensive policies and accept the social responsibilities that are theirs in a modern society. Consequently, there is still a considerable amount of suspicion and mistrust on both sides.

In such a political climate, the industrialists, though they may earn money, lack the psychological stimulus necessary for high morale and efficient performance. Considerable

emphasis has been laid in recent years by industrial psychologists on the need for psychological incentives in industry. But as we go up the economic scale and as the need for more money becomes less, psychological satisfaction plays an even greater part. Thus, they are very important for industrialists. The need to be appreciated, the desire to belong, the need to be complemented on good work done is just as important for executives in office as it is for the workers on the shop floor. And just as it is important for workers to have job security, so the executives must feel secure in their positions of responsibility if they are to work efficiently. Frequent talk of nationalization of one industry or another has been responsible for a lot of worry, anxiety and lack of enthusiasm on the part of managements of private industries. The feeling of insecurity and the lack of appreciation of their efforts reveals itself sometimes in the form of an aggressive criticism of the public sector. Sometimes it also shows itself in an attitude of 'earn as much as you can while you can, for tomorrow we may be nationalized'. Thus, the expansion or modernization of industry is occasionally neglected because of this fear.

Under these circumstances one would have expected the public sector industries to fare better than the private sector in its relations with the public as well as parliament and government. But this has not been so. The public sector managements have been criticized just as much as private managements though for different reasons. This criticism has had the effect of thwarting the initiative and enthusiasm of public sector executives and in many cases has prevented them from taking bold decisions.

There is naturally a difference in attitude and approach between government administration on the one hand and industrial management (whether public or private) on the other. Successful administration consists in sticking to established methods and procedures and in following precedents. The effects of the decisions of an administrator may be known after many years. Therefore, delays in decision-making in administration do not affect to the same extent. Successful industrial management on the other hand depends not so much on following precedents, but on the ability to adjust oneself to a constantly changing technology as well as economic situation. The effects of the decisions of industrial managers are very quickly felt.

Therefore, there is always a difference in approach between administrators at the ministry who take long time over simple decisions and industrial managers of public sector enterprises who are always waiting for these decisions. It is essential, in order to improve public sector efficiency, to give greater autonomy to industrial executives in the first place and secondly to bring administration in tune with the requirements of industrial decision making.

It is also necessary that executives, whether in private or in public sector, should be given certain psychological incentives in order to improve their performance.

Many of these contradictions have arisen because we have adopted an ideological approach to problems as a national policy. This approach has however, nothing to do with ideals. Every society places before itself certain ideals to which it tries to live up. The ideological approach is an attitude of mind that is opposed to pragmatic or realistic approach. It does not take into account human weaknesses or capabilities, variations due to environment and other factors. It assumes that because an idea is theoretically correct it would be practically implementable also. It is also taken for granted that because an idea is successful in one area or at one time it would be equally successful everywhere under all times.

This ideological approach to the solution of practical problems is also due to the divergence between thought and action that is characteristic of Indian society. This dichotomy does not matter when such difference is confined to philosophical matters or when one's social behaviour is restricted by a strict code. But when the discipline imposed on social behaviour and public activity is relaxed and when one acquires the power to act, then the implementation of an ideological attitude leads to various kinds of awkward and difficult situations while the ideology itself is not in any way fulfilled.

Perhaps the classical example of the ideological approach is to be found in the attempts to introduce prohibition in the various States in India during the past twenty-five years. Most right-minded people would agree that drinking is an evil, particularly when consumed in excess. It is also true that many poor families in India have been ruined because of liquor. But is prohibition the best way of eradicating this evil? It is well known that prohibition has not been a success wherever and whenever it was introduced in other countries. In the United States, for example, it led to various other types of crimes and the effects of such crimes lasted long after prohibition was removed.

Having accepted prohibition as an ideal and imposed a total ban, exceptions have been made for the benefit of foreigners living in India, for tourists, and on medical grounds for Indians and for the defence services. Some States have introduced total prohibition, others have introduced dry days. At one time in New Delhi, one could drink in one's bed-room in a hotel but not at the bar which was reserved for foreigners. Some States have begun relaxing or abolishing prohibition altogether. As a result of all this, drinking, which at one time was merely considered bad, has now acquired the glamour of a forbidden fruit and perhaps a larger percentage of Indians drinks today than ever before. And the country as a whole has become an area of legal, social and ethical contradictions.

Another manner in which this ideological attitude operates is in the solution of social and economic problems. Instead of isolating the problems and finding solutions for them, attempts are repeatedly made at evolving principles for the solution of problems for which principles are extremely difficult to set forth. Because of the dynamic nature of these problems a principle that has been enunciated today may no longer hold good tomorrow and one that is formulated for one place may not be applicable to another. Consequently, a

number of exceptions are also made at the same time, making the original principle meaningless.

Recently, a report on wage determination in a particular industry began as follows:

"An industry which cannot afford to pay a living wage as defined by the Fair Wages Committee has no business to exist".

It will be noticed that a fundamental principle has been laid down in this sentence. It has a noble and high sounding sentiment, but the report went on,

> "However, since a number of industrial units already exist which do not pay a living wage and which if forced to do so, will have to close down throwing a large number of workers out of employment, we recommend that lower wages may be paid in these units".

And the report proceeded to make so many exemptions that the final wage pattern as it emerged was extremely complicated and led to problems of interpretation and disputes. A simpler procedure might have been to fix wages in each factory taking into account the local conditions and made as well as the views of local representatives of management and labour.

Similarly, with regard to the annual bonus payable to workers in industrial establishments, in spite of the number of formulae that have been evolved and the tribunals and commissions that have formulated principles governing the payment of bonus culminating in the bonus act, it has not been possible to bring about peace in this field of industrial relations. Prior to Deepavali in 1971 some of the textile unions went on a nation-wide strike to demand a minimum bonus of 8 1/3 percent even in companies that have sustained loss. Considerable amount of time and money has been spent both by managements and unions in going to courts and has helped in the development of a highly legalistic approach in an area that is essentially socio-economic. All this is not to say that principles have no place or that workmen's lot should not be improved. But a more pragmatic approach might have achieved the objective better and at a less cost and also brought about greater maturity and a spirit of compromise between parties.

Perhaps an example from Japan, a highly pragmatic country, may not be out of place here. When large departmental stores were springing up in all the major cities of Japan in the fifties, the small traders were naturally affected and they protested against growth of these mass distribution organisations. The Japanese government therefore requested each municipality to tackle the situation. Each town appointed a Committee of ten people of equal numbers of departmental stores representatives and small traders. But the largest number in the Committee was representatives of consumers and independent economists. The Committee regulated the growth of departmental stores in their respective towns according to the needs of the population and the services rendered by the small traders in

each area. No principles for the growth of departmental stores were evolved at a national level and no theories on mass distribution as against personalized distribution were enunciated and the problem was solved finally and realistically without any propaganda, agitation or political under-currents.

One can easily imagine what might happen in India if a similar situation were to arise. In various towns, there will be meetings and processions and hartals by small traders against the 'unfair' growth of departmental stores. Various political parties will support these agitations and questions will be asked in Parliament and in the State Legislatures. When all these have reached a stage when the government is bound to take notice, the minister responsible will announce the formation of a Committee presided over perhaps by a retired high court judge. The departmental stores and small traders will be fully represented with perhaps the addition of an economist and a member of parliament. The Committee will be asked to submit a report in about six month's time.

But it will take three months before office accommodation is found for the Committee, a secretary and other office staff are appointed and the first meeting is held. Considerable amount of the time of the Chairman will also be taken in the early stages in getting things like stationery, office furniture, etc., from various government resources. At the very first meeting, there will be some preliminary objections by one member or other with regard to the terms of reference and the Chairman will be asked to write a letter to the minister asking for clarification on certain points. Further, in view of the comprehensive nature of the enquiry and in view of the fact that three months or more had already elapsed, it will be pointed out that six months would be too short a period for the Committee to complete its work and that time for the submission of the report may be extended by one year.

The second and perhaps the third meetings of the Committee would be held to prepare questionnaire and distribute it to all concerned interests in the country. This might take as long as six months. Then the Committee will tour the various important towns in the country to study the situation first-hand and record evidence. Since the members of the Committee are usually busy people with their own responsibilities, the meetings cannot be held too frequently and it would be necessary to apply for further extension of time. But finally, perhaps at the end of two years since the Committee was appointed, a whole mass of data would have been collected in the form of answers to questionnaires and in the form of recorded evidence. Meanwhile the ministry would get impatient and request the Chairman to expedite the report and point out that no further extension of time might be possible. Then the Committee would get down to the job of drafting the report and making their recommendations. There would generally be no time to study and digest the data and mass of evidence that have been collected and there would be a lot of behind-the-scene activity between the departmental stores representatives and small traders. If the horse-trading is successful, there might be a unanimous report. If not, one side or the other will record a minute of dissent. But whatever the results, the recommendations of the

Committee would be too vague and general and difficult to implement in any specific situation. They would often consist of first principles and might conceivably run something like this,

> 'In a developing economy it is inevitable that mass production of goods should lead to more efficient distribution of goods and the growth of departmental stores is in keeping with this objective".
>
> "But at the same time we have kept in view the monopolistic tendencies that are growing in the country and are anxious to ensure that these tendencies should not spread to the sphere of distribution".
>
> "We have also kept in view the interests of the large number of small traders in the country in order to ensure that they are not unceremoniously deprived of their legitimate avocation through unfair competition".
>
> "The ultimate interests of the consuming public have also been kept in view in coming to these conclusions".
>
> and so on.

There are no doubts many areas where the evolution of certain basic principles is important. But the ideological approach makes a fetish of it even in those areas where it is neither possible nor desirable to evolve such principles. In this approach, decisions are always taken at a very high level with many other considerations playing a part. They are not often applicable to the situation and are often taken too late. It is a well known fact that the lower the level of decision-making, the more realistic it is and quicker and easier would it is to implement it. This is particularly so in the socio-economic context where things are changing fast and decisions should suit these changing needs. Another drawback of the ideological approach is that since decisions are taken on the basis of 'principles', those who do not accept those 'principles' oppose the decisions as a matter of course. Instead of the difference being one of opinions, it becomes a matter of right and wrong. The aggrieved party in such a situation feels a sense of injustice instead of merely being disappointed. Each side sticks to its 'principles' and consequently, a solution to the problem becomes more difficult.

While there are many national problems facing India, there are no national solutions for them. The solution will often depend on the area as well as the socio-economic context in which the problem has arisen. The ideological approach fails to recognise this self-evident truth and tries to impose national solutions, thus creating further problems.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMING UP

But the earth is made no richer
By mixing it with blood;
Nor is it make purer
By washing it with tears.
Blood and tears are wasted on the soil;
It should be tended, loved and nurtured,
And the ravages mended
Before it can yield.

I

In attempting to probe into the deep-rooted causes that have retarded progress in India, it is inevitable that the situation should appear much worse than it actually is, because the positive factors that contribute to progress have not been taken into account. Although such an analysis is extremely interesting and intellectually satisfying it will be useful only if it leads to some action based on the conclusions that would help to remedy the situation and eliminate the inhibitive factors in society.

To reach action-oriented conclusions is easy where technical or even economic factors are concerned. Any reformation in this area might affect the economic self-interest of individuals or groups, and therefore they may resist it. But this antagonism is not always basic and can be overcome through preventive measures and intelligent compromises so that people are not unduly agitated. However, when social, psychological and religious factors are involved, the course of action is neither easy nor simple. Even when the remedy is obvious, it is fraught with complexities, because it touches the deepest feelings and affects the inner-most interests of people, and so they resist it more stubbornly than they would oppose any economic changes. Logic and reason do not play a part in such a situation, since their opposition is based on beliefs and a fundamental sense of right and wrong which is often inherited. Under these circumstances, a strong appeal through the emotions of people alone is likely to bring about the desired change quickly. If a change in spiritual attitudes is to take place, only a spiritual appeal will have any effect. All successful religious reformers have relied for their success on emotional appeal rather than logical reasoning. The influence of Mahatma Gandhi can be explained by the fact that his appeal was essentially to spiritual values.

It has already been repeated that one of the basic inhibitive factors to progress in India springs from the nature of the Hindu society-from the vast divergence in belief and social behaviour. Society is heterogeneous. Even in such superficial things as food, dress, etc., there is considerable variation leading to differentiation between group and group. Consequently, the ability to co-operate successfully in any group-effort is reduced. On the other hand, this heterogeneity sometimes tends to breed active non-cooperation. Therefore, if this factor has to be eliminated, the first step is the creation of a homogenous society. These should be harmony in social, cultural and spiritual areas.

One of the ways of achieving homogeneity is society is through collective suffering. Great suffering generates lasting sympathy and understanding and promotes identity of interests between the victims, provided such suffering can serve as the foundation of common achievement when once the suffering is over. Many nations have been born as a result of common misfortune from an imperialist aggressor. The Jews have been welded together into a strong united nation, irrespective of their social origin or background, not only because of their religion but because of the common suffering they had endured for generations in Europe culminating in the tortures of Hitler.

India too was subject to the imperialism by Great Britain for a period of one hundred and fifty years and it was resisted by the people. But because of the techno-cultural superiority of the ruling power, there was a love-hate relationship between Britain and Indian – hating them as rulers and imitating them and learning from them at the same time. It was one of the most intelligent imperialisms in the history of the world and it did not use more force than was necessary over their subjects except perhaps in a few rare instances. Anyhow, the sense of common identity created by British rule has not been adequate to last through the testing years of Independence. Perhaps we had not suffered enough.

In the absence of an identity of purpose arising from common suffering, homogeneity can be created through common beliefs, similarity in social customs and manners and an identity of values. Sampathy and understanding and a sense of oneness cannot be developed by mere reasoning, but only through a passionate attachment to common ideas and values. If such ideas and values are to be created in an essentially heterogeneous society, it can be done only through religious reform. Because, most of the heterogeneity in India can be traced basically to religious causes and consequently, any other reform is bound to be superficial and will not influence the fundamental attitudes of individuals and groups.

In recent years, half-hearted attempts have been made at reducing economic inequalities. But economic equality does not mean economic prosperity, since poverty can

be shared in the same way as wealth. Homogeneity has to be ensured in social, cultural and spiritual fields. When once this is assured, any diversity which may be superficial will provide a richness to social life; but diversity in the absence of homogeneity only leads to diffusion and disintegration.

Therefore, if homogeneity in the society in India has to be created, it has to be only through religious and social reform of the Hindu society. A revolution has to be set moving in the minds of people not only to create a uniform attitude and sense of values but also to bring these in line with modern scientific and humanistic concepts. The reformation has to be as far-reaching and as important as Christian reformation in the sixteenth century. A Messiah of Hinduism – a new Avatar – has to be born to root out the evils that have overtaken Hindu society and help to preserve the good. He has to restore the spirit of enquiry and dedication and the oneness of the human spirit that characterized early Hindu thought, but which has since been covered by many layers of ritual and superstition. But this destruction of evil has to be essentially in the minds of men.

Even from a purely religious point of view, such a reform is long overdue. Ritualistic religion has never been more meaningless and futile than it is today. The present-day leaders of Hindu thought are slavish interpreters of an ancient wisdom and not social philosophers with ideas that are relevant to modern needs. Fundamentally, they are not interested in action-oriented reform of society, but only in the preservation of diffuse and ancient ideals. Consequently, most educated Hindus today are agnostics at heart. They follow customs and traditions either because of habit or because of domestic and social pressures, but they have no positive belief. It may be that some of them are afraid that there may be something in all the ritual and temple-going and being prudent men who love their families; they observe these just as form of insurance. But when once they lose their faith in such observances, there is at present very little to sustain them spiritually, and they tend to become atheists.

An atheist who arrives at his lack of faith as a result of philosophic reasoning is usually one of the most ethical persons in the world. But an atheist who becomes one because he has lost faith in ritual and superstition tends also to lose his sense of moral values sustained by ritualism. To put it in other words, when an individual practices certain virtues, not because he thinks they are right, but because he is afraid of divine retribution, he is likely to give up those virtues if he finds that divine power is nothing more than a myth. This is what is happening in India today, and society as a whole is losing the values it once cherished.

The religious reformation has often been the precursor not only of economic progress, but of great achievements in history. The reformation in Christianity released the intellectual energies of people and led ultimately to the spirit of enquiry, to the industrial

revolution and to the dominance of Europe over the whole world for three centuries. The founding of Islam was responsible for the achievements of Arabs for many centuries. Therefore, from every point of view religious reform on a vast national scale is necessary requirement for social and economic progress.

All this should be taken to mean that what is advocated is an aggressive, revivalist type of Hinduism taking a belligerent attitude towards other creeds. Secularism can, and should be, the core of Indian social philosophy. What is essential is a reformation from within the Hindu-fold, a cleansing of the collective Hindu soul before they could unite with, and set an example to, other religionists. It is impossible to think of the oneness of India, much less the unity of mankind, when people within one group are divided among themselves.

Such a reform would automatically eliminate the contradictions in Hindu society that have been at the root of many of the evils in India today. It would bring about some correspondence between thought and action and consequently promote greater understanding between different groups. It will enable us not only to cultivate an ethical, but realistic, approach to problems but also to evolve a common code of conduct and social behaviour understood and accepted by all.

The only difficulty is that religious reform, particularly of such a sweeping nature as in envisaged, cannot be made to order. It is said that whenever the need becomes urgent, great religious reformers are born. There is no doubt that the need is present, here and now.

3

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, a number of eminent Indians, imbued with a spirit of social service and highly conscious of the weakness of the Indian social system, devoted their lives to social reforms. Beginning with Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a host of men and women faced social ostracism and redicule from their countrymen because they not only preached reform but exemplified it in their own lives and behaviour. Many societies were started for the re-generation of Indian society and these men and societies played an important role in laying the foundations of new ethical and social values. But they could not go very far because the resources at their disposal were extremely limited and the government of the day was either indifferent or even hostile to their efforts. In the ultimate analysis, political power is necessary to enforce any social reform and gradually, the emphasis shifted to politics. It was realised that political freedom was a basic requirement before significant progress in other fields could be made. In the twentieth century this realization drew the most eminent Indians into the political arena to the exclusion of other

types of public activity. Thus, Gandhiji, who was essentially a moral philosopher, became the leader of the most intense political activity the country had ever witnessed. The result was that social reform and social problems received less attention in spite of Gandhiji's insistence. To most public men, it was just an adjunct to political work.

But even after Independence, the temptation of political power has kept many people from turning their attention to social problems. In a society that is dominated by traditional values, active social reform is an unpopular occupation and leaders whose primary motive is to acquire power by popular vote will rarely risk espousing unpopular causes. They would rather make use of those traditional attitudes for their own benefit. There is also a feeling that now that an elected government is in power they will do everything that is necessary in all spheres of activity and all that the public need to do is to vote once every five years. While the moral and ethical basis of the traditional society has been largely destroyed, nevertheless the attitudes and behaviours still conform to the traditional pattern and have not adjusted themselves to the modern requirements. Therefore, if the social environment is to change rapidly, leaders of thought in the country should devote greater attention to these problems and some at least among them should make it their life's work.

Social reform in this context has to start with beliefs and customs and attitudes of people. Only a change in these areas will bring about lasting changes in society and social development.

From primitive times, man's allegiance and loyalties have gradually expanded from his clan or family to the village, caste, region and ultimately to the nation. In fact, a person's cultural maturity can be judged by the number of people to whom he can extend his sympathies and with whom he feels as one. There are in India, today, a host of conflicting allegiances and loyalties. These groups are based on caste, religion, language, region, etc. Most people consider themselves members of such groups rather than as citizens of a nation. Loyalty and sympathy to such groups necessarily involves hostility to other groups formed on a similar basis and having the same characteristics. Often, an individual is subject at the same time to more than one loyalty and consequently he does not know how to act. He is confused and consequently becomes ineffective. Or, the time and energies of people which could be used in constructive activity are wasted in fruitless controversies over trivial and meaningless problems.

If we are to build a homogeneous society with common loyalties, it is necessary that these conflicting allegiances should be reconciled where possible and altogether eliminated in case where such harmonizing is not possible. Some allegiances can be reconciled, provided they operate in their proper spheres and do not interfere in areas that are really outside their scope. For example, religion defines essentially Man's relationship to God. From a socio-ethical point of view there is no significant difference between one religion and another and it should be possible to harmonise religion with national allegiance. On the

other hand, the caste system is something that can never be reconciled to national requirements. So long as it exists, the loyalties of many people are bound to be divided. Contradictory demands are made on their sympathies as between caste and society at large. Industrialization has to some extent destroyed the economic basis of the caste system but the social basis is still largely intact and in fact influences industrialization. Inter-caste marriages are sufficiently rare enough to be talked about and even reported in the Press. And yet, no leader of eminence has come forward to propagate the idea that inter-caste marriages should be deliberately, consciously and consistently encouraged. There is no other manner by which the social basis of the caste system can be eliminated and unless and until that happens, it will continue to exercise its influence on society.

4

It is also obvious that in the economic and social progress of a developing nation, human resources are the most important. No doubt, raw materials, financial investment and technology are necessary. But in the absence of the skills and techniques as well as the right attitudes and values, goods use cannot be made of the other resources. This is particularly true of India, a large nation confronted with complex and challenging problems.

In the development of human resources three things are important. The first is knowledge. Knowledge can be of two kinds. One is general knowledge, the ability to read and write, knowledge of the world and of one's own country, its background and culture and at least a vague idea of the social and cultural developments that are taking place the world over. Such knowledge among the entire population is necessary for the successful functioning of any civilized modern society. The second type of knowledge is the skill and competence that enables an individual to practice a trade or profession, to earn his living and at the same time to contribute to the economic strength of the society. In imparting such knowledge, it is necessary to have knowledge of various levels, the more brilliant acquiring a great depth of knowledge while the others get adequate knowledge to perform their jobs. There should also be a great diversity in the varieties and types of knowledge so that there is balanced development in the various areas of economic and social activity.

The second factor in the development of human resources is a sense of values. These values should satisfy the ethical, social and spiritual needs of the community, and must be accepted by all as a basis of behaviour. Every dynamic society in every age has produced a few eccentrics who question the established values. This is a good thing since it forces society to assess their own norms and standards, but a large measure of correspondence of a common sense of values by society as a whole is essential for progress.

The third factor is a sense of belonging. It is this sense of oneness with the nation that makes an individual into a useful citizen and enables him to play his role in a democratic society. This is essential for all group activity. In modern society, very little progress is possible without active co-operation between large groups of people, and unless

we can create a sense of individual fulfilment out of common achievements, fruitful co-operation between people will not be possible.

Attempts have been made in the past two decades to improve the skills and techniques of people. Many technological institutions of different levels for craftsmen, engineers and technologists have been established, and a large number of people have been trained in these institutions. The spread of general education has also improved rapidly through the opening of schools and colleges, not only in the cities but often in the rural areas. However, this has so far touched only a fringe of the problem.

In the development of the other two factors viz., the creation of a sense of values and a feeling of belonging, nothing has been done so far. Even the report of the Fourth Five Year Plan refers only very briefly to the development of human resources as such. The conflicting harangues of political leaders about discipline and patriotism have not helped matters in the absence of any worthwhile examples. It has only made people highly cynical about the future.

If human resources are to be harnessed in order to make progress more rapid, it is necessary that a vast plan for developing people should be drawn up on a national scale. While religious and social reform may be necessary in the evolution of a sense of values, only vast training on national scale would bring about the feeling of belonging and the feeling of participation in a common effort. In the past, training has been used primarily as a means of imparting knowledge. That training can be used to bring about a change in attitude and to create a sense of identity is a fairly modern concept. Such an approach to training has been successfully used in industrial establishments in order to create a sense of belonging among workers and weld them into a co-operative team. For a country like India, such training on a vast scale is one of the inescapable pre-requisites of rapid progress.

Training in group dynamics to leaders at all levels is an important aspect in creating the sense of belonging. The art of compromise and the art of working together, the ability to sacrifice minor advantages for the sake of achieving major objectives can all be taught through such training. While it may not be possible to eliminate local loyalties, it is certainly possible to make local loyalties and national allegiance complementary rather than contradictory. In societies such as the Soviet Union where they have attempted to create homogeneity out of diverse elements, such training on a national scale has been given considerable importance. But while this has been achieved in these countries under a totalitarian regime in the form of brain-washing, it is possible to undertake such development under democratic conditions and through free and frank discussions. Unless a vast effort towards the development of the human resources is made, the economic and industrial plans that are formulated and on which thousands of crores of rupees are spent will not yield the results that they are expected to produce. In the ultimate analysis, investment in human material will yield richer dividends from a long term point of view than investment in any other area.

During the last twenty-five years a gradual but steady degeneration has set into our society. It has permeated every aspect of our social, cultural, economic, and political life. One would have though that the advent of freedom would have brought out the best in the collective wisdom of our nation in order to build for ourselves a united, determined and homogeneous society progressing towards a common goal. But it seems to have exposed the worst in ourselves. The sudden acquisition of power has turned our heads in the wrong direction.

The high moral rectitude that Mahatma Gandhi insisted on in every one of his followers has been conspicuous by its absence since his death. But this has not prevented a form of moral arrogance from permeating our minds and we started preaching sermons to everyone else on national and international behaviour. But our own behaviour has often been suspect.

No one is exempt from this state of moral decay. At least, the exceptions can be easily counted. It is not the fault of a single profession or group though each group blames everyone else for the state of affairs. We talk of dedication and sacrifice and yet are unscrupulous enough to use any means to attain power, influence or wealth. We talk of discipline and yet encourage our followers to break the law in order to gain popularity. We change sides in order to gain minor advantages. We let down our own colleagues in order to secure a higher foot-hold in the hierarchy of leadership. We exploit linguistic, caste and religious differences for our personal advancement. Our only objective seems to be to gain power or influence at all costs and then to retain it. Those of us who have refused to resort to such tactics have found ourselves left behind. If particular groups or individuals have not indulged to a great extent in such practices, it is probably because they have not had equal opportunities.

The common people, the workers, the peasants and the unemployed who have no power or influence except through their leaders have had to adjust themselves to this situation. There is always a tendency in every one of us to imitate our superiors and so the rest of the population follows the leaders in their standards of conduct and behaviour. In any case, selfishness is not the monopoly of any particular group and it has been easy for the others to fall into the groove of frustated agitation.

And so we have a society in which norms of public life and social responsibilities have been degenerating steadily. The socio-economic problems posed by unemployment and increased cost of living have further aggravated the situation. The common men—the peasant, the worker, the clerk and the unemployed—have all become cynical, and when their frustration goes beyond a certain point, they decide to do something about it in the only way they know—some form of protest. There are always leaders who turn such discontent to their political advantage.

Today violence has become commonplace. It has been so in many periods of Indian history. But the peculiarity of the present situation lies in the fact that it has become a philosophy. A large number of people are advocating violence as a way of bringing about social and economic changes. Even this is not unique. The tragedy of the situation lies in the fact that those who profess to believe in and uphold democratic methods of bringing about change are powerless to oppose violence. They seem almost afraid to do so, and some of them at any rate do not hesitate to take advantage of such violence when it suits them. The law-makers are often the law-breakers also.

Protest has become the normal way of life. In the frequent alignment and re-alignment of forces and in the constant shifting of loyalties, the only factor that emerges triumphant is self-interest—individual or narrow group-interest. There are no discussions and compromises over problems, only arguments. There are no universal causes that people believe in, only a conflict of political ideologies. There is no peace and goodwill, only a respite between one agitation and the next. The sense of values which until recently have been taken for granted as being permanent are no longer accepted.

Spiritually there is no positive faith, only a fear of what may lie hereafter. Religion is a form of insurance against future calamities, either material or spiritual. The old values are gone, the new ones still to come. Men have lost their sense of identity and common purpose. Ashamed of the past, afraid of the future, they live eternally in the present, in the fleeting moments of frustration and desire.

There is no one to preach the philosophy of hard work and co-operation; no one to advocate a spirit of dedication or sacrifice. But there are many who discover short-cuts to prosperity, at least for themselves.

A slow poison has been eating into the soul of India. Acquisition of power and the promise of prosperity seems to have made that poison more potent. Today, it is threatening not only our future progress but even our very existence as a nation. It is high time the warning was heeded.

And yet, it is not very long ago that we were prepared to sacrifice our personal interests for the sake of public causes. Ordinary men and women went to jail with no thought of reward or recognition in order to gain Independence. They were inspired by something bigger than themselves. Most men considered that their reputation for honesty and integrity was more important than money or power. Learning and wisdom were respected more than influence or position. If these things had happened before, they can happen again. But the environment has to be created through conscious and sustained effort.

For too long, we have pinned our faith on slogans, we have been prescribing time-honoured stock remedies for our ills and we have been promising ourselves that they would work in the long run. If they don't work, more of the same medicine is given. We have forgotten that in the long run, situations change. Today the slogans have become

meaningless and hollow; the medicines stale, leaving behind only a residue of disappointment.

If we are to get out of this morass of self-deception into which we have fallen, we have to forget time-worn platitudes and stock remedies and do a considerable amount of honest thinking about our problems, attitudes and values. It has to be done in all honesty, humility and objectivity. Such soul-searching is likely to be painful, individually and collectively. It is likely to lead us into new paths we have not trodden before. But however painful it may be, this has to be done if we are to reverse the trends that have been so pronounced in Indian society in the recent past. Needless to say, this has to be done by the intellectuals who have to set the pace. Intellectual ferment has always been the precursor of great progress in world history. Thinkers must first create the ideas that are socially relevant for their time and place before they can be implemented. Theirs is the burden; others can only follow.

This book is a small contribution towards such soul-searching.

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