

# **THE VISION OF A NEW INDIA**

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Any discussion on the post-independence India must be preceded by insights into the legacy of colonial rule because of the inevitable impact of the latter on the former. Was the colonial rule a blessing or a curse for us, or a mixture of both? It had its eulogists and critics both among Englishmen and Indians. As early as 1833, Thomas Babington Macaulay had said in the British House of Commons:

It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown that system, that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government; that having become instructed in European knowledge, they may, in some future age, demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come, I know not; but never would I attempt to avert or retard it. Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Surendra Nath Banerjea, one of the early leaders of Indian National Congress, stressed the need for permanency of British imperial power as he thought

that English civilisation was “the noblest the world has ever seen” and “fraught with unspeakable blessings to the people of India.” Nirad C. Chaudhuri, “a dedicated imperialist,” while dedicating his autobiography to the memory of British empire in India, held that “all that was good and living within us was made, shaped and quickened” by the British rule. In fact, to the British rule India owes the introduction of Western Civilisation along with its values of liberty, rationality and science and technology, and many Indians regard the westernisation of Indian society as a blessing. Jawaharlal Nehru, an uncompromising critic of British imperialism, observed in his autobiography:

As a matter of fact the changes that have taken place in India during the last century or more have been world changes common to most countries in the East and West. The growth of Industrialism in Western Europe and later on in the rest of the world, brought nationalism and the strong unitary state in its train everywhere. The British can take credit for having first opened India’s window to the West and brought her one aspect of Western industrialism and science.

I feel sure that it was a good thing for India to come in contact with the scientific and industrial West. Science was the great gift of the West and India lacked this and without it she was doomed to decay.

To the British we must be grateful for one splendid gift of which they were the bearers, the gift of science and its rich offspring.

On the other hand, Mahatma Gandhi criticized westernisation of Indian society on both material and moral grounds. Industrialism, according to him, destroyed village arts and crafts, created unemployment and concentrated wealth in the hands of a few. He considered Indian civilisation to be “far superior” to the Western civilisation. The latter, he held, was immoral, degrading, irreligious and godless and made the Indians “emasculated”, “cowardly” and “effeminate.” He said:

The tendency of the Indian civilisation is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilisation is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is based on a belief in God. So understanding and so believing, it behoves every lover of India to cling to the old Indian civilisation, even as a child clings to the mother’s breast.

Swami Vivekananda regarded materialism of the West as a proof of the Westerners’ perseverance and capacity for hard work; he wanted to combine western materialism with Indian spiritualism. To a hungry man, he said, food was God, and spiritualism could not thrive in an atmosphere of poverty.

The British rule, its admirers claimed, gave India political unity, the rule of law, a just and efficient administration, and Western conceptions of parliament and personal liberties. About the progress of India under the British rule, a Joint Parliamentary Committee in mid-1930s observed in their report:

It can be claimed with certainty that in the period which has elapsed since 1858 when the crown assumed supremacy over all the territories of the East India Company, the educational and material progress of India has been greater than it was ever within her power to achieve during any other period of her long and chequered history.

The critics of British imperialism have accused the British rulers of having neglected and exploited India. H.N. Brailsford, an English observer, holds:

Through a century the English conquerors took upon their own shoulders the responsibility for governing this population. They dwelt amid its poverty, its ignorance, its physical misery and its helplessness and never dreamed of using the immense resources of the efficient machinery of government which they created to teach it, to heal it, to organise it out of its backwardness and inertia. They aggravated the pressure on the soil by hurrying the destruction of handicraft and by postponing the growth of industry. By suppressing, until our own day, all political initiative among the governed, they lamed its will and checked the working of its powers of adaptation; they violently changed its economic environment, yet they held in check the forces in Indian society that would have reacted to the new conditions and remodelled its structure.

Jawaharlal Nehru gave the following picture of India under the British rule:

A servile state, with its splendid strength

caged up, hardly daring to breathe freely governed by strangers from afar; her people poor beyond compare, short-lived and incapable of resisting disease and epidemic; illiteracy rampant; vast areas devoid of all sanitary or medical provision; unemployment on a prodigious scale, both among the middle classes and the masses.

The nationalist leaders of India used to contrast the slow progress or “arrested development” of the country under British rule with the rapid progress of Japan towards the closing years of the nineteenth century, Soviet Russia under Stalin’s leadership, of Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Pasha and of Italy under the Fascist government of Mussolini. Nehru held the view that although the British came to India “on the crest of a wave of new impulse in the world” in favour of modern science and technology, they did not realise the significance of the “mighty historic forces,” represented by them and tried to stifle India’s progress. He held that in the age of industrialism, technical progress would have come to India even without British rule and that without the foreigners’ stranglehold, India would have achieved greater progress.

The performance of the British rulers in India was determined by the character of their rule. It was an alien imperialistic rule, wedded to *laissez faire* doctrine. Gopal Krushna Gokhale described the British Government in India as, “a strongly centralised system” with a bureaucracy whose members (Englishmen) were not “permanently identified with

the interests of the people." He noted that while the English bureaucrats did not settle down in India so as to give her the benefit of their experience, the educated Indians, being excluded from power and responsibility, had no share and say in the management of the affairs of the country. The British rule was irresponsive and irresponsible and it dwarfed the Indians by excluding them from power and throwing their natural abilities to sheer disuse.

The British aimed at exploiting India economically while holding the reins of power in their hands. "The outstanding feature of British rule," said Nehru, "was their concentration on everything that went to strengthen their political and economic hold on the country. Everything else was incidental." The railways, posts and telegraphs, telephones and wireless were introduced by the British for strengthening the imperial hold. While India's indigenous industries were ruined during the British rule, the growth of modern industries did not take place with the required pace so as to meet the needs of the country. The colonial rulers were not favourably disposed towards the growth of modern industries, particularly heavy industries. They neglected technical education. After introducing the modern means of transport (railways and shipping), the British could not check the growth of industrial bourgeoisie in India and finally recognised it as a force to reckon with after the First World War. Because of economic and political struggle against colonialism, a strong industrial bourgeoisie grew in the country with an independent economic

and financial base. De-industrialisation during the colonial period resulted in overpressure on agriculture, which was primitive, backward and subject to vagaries of monsoon. In the early years of the twentieth century, 63.7 per cent of Indians depended on agriculture. After forty years, the figure rose to 70 per cent. The peasants in India were generally poor and famines were recurring phenomena. The colonial rulers did not give due importance to primary education and consequently, vast masses remained illiterate. Literacy was less than 10% in females and about 25% in males at the time of independence.

The colonial state was essentially a police state, little concerned with education, public health, and employment. Though in the early phase of their rule, colonial rulers introduced certain social reforms like abolition of suttee, slavery and infanticide and legalisation of widow marriage, later on they froze up social customs and supported "the disruptive, obscurantist, reactionary and opportunist elements in the country" directly as well as indirectly. On the whole, the British neglected the masses and patronised certain elements like princes and zamindars and vested interests who acted as the pillars of their rule.

The British rule and English education gave rise to English-educated middle class in India. Influenced by Western ideas, this class spearheaded several reform movements in the nineteenth century. The reform movements started at different times in several parts of the country. The following were the leading reform associations: Brahma Samaj (Bengal, 1828),

Prarthana Samaj (Mumbai, 1867), Arya Samaj (though founded at Mumbai in 1875, it became popular in Punjab and North India from 1877 onwards), Ramakrishna Mission (which became popular in Bengal towards the end of the nineteenth century), Satya Shodhak Samaj (Mumbai, 1873), Shri Narayan Dharma Paripalan Yogam (Kerala, 1890), Aligarh Movement among the Muslims (which was started by Sayyid Ahmad Khan in the 1860s) and the Ahmediya Movement of the Muslims of the Punjab (which started towards the end of the nineteenth century). These reform movements were rational, humanitarian and universalist in their approach and character. They aimed at reforming society and religion. The social reforms taken up by them were uplift and emancipation of women and included abolition of suttee, infanticide, child marriage and forced widowhood, removal of caste rigidity and untouchability, and spread of education. The leaders of these reform movements linked religion with social reform, because they wanted to defend their culture and maintain their identity against the Western intrusion. As Nehru said:

The rising middle classes were politically inclined and were not so much in search of a religion; but they wanted some cultural roots to cling on to, something that gave them assurance of their own worth, something that would reduce the sense of frustration and humiliation that foreign conquest and rule had produced.

In the field of religion, the reformers stressed the abolition of idolatry, polytheism, priestcraft, and



removal of superstitions. The Aligarh movement of the Muslims stood for liberal interpretation of *Quran*, abolition of polygamy, introduction of widow marriage and spread of Western education among the Muslims. The Ahmediya movement stood for fraternal relations among the people of different creeds and spread of Western liberal ideas.

The reform movements, also called Renaissance, focused on the cultural and psychological needs of the middle classes in the urban areas and failed to influence the illiterate and poor masses in the rural areas. In spite of universal and humanitarian outlook of the reformers these movements remained confined to particular castes and religions, could not cut across the social and administrative boundaries of the provinces, and failed to check the growth of communalism and sectarianism. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, in spite of his rational and liberal approach and early advocacy of Hindu-Muslim unity, ultimately proved to be the founding father of Muslim communalism. Swami Dayananda's advocacy for the extirpation of non-Hindu religions encouraged the growth of Hindu communalism.

Socio-religious reform movements were not anti-colonial because the reformers themselves believed British rule to be a providential dispensation. Colonial outlook continues to dominate India intellectually and culturally even today, five decades after independence. As Prof. Bipan Chandra says:

A very negative feature was the increasing colonisation of Indian intellectual life. If

compradorism prevailed anywhere, it was among the intellectuals. Even those who were politically anti-imperialist were quite often culturally colonised. Moreover, the system of education had a basic flaw—it did not inculcate rational, logical and critical thinking. Above all, the intelligentsia had yet to overcome a basic dichotomy of the colonial period: those who were modern in social and cultural aspects tended to neglect the colonial dimension of intellectual and cultural life and those who were opposed to colonisation of culture tended to ignore the negative aspects of tradition and to fall prey to revivalism. In any case even while evolving a powerful critique of the economics and politics of colonialism the Indian intelligentsia had failed to do so in case of colonial culture. The beginnings made in the nineteenth century had not been fully and creatively carried forward.

The Indian National Congress was started in 1885. To start with, it was a loyalistic association of the middle classes, aiming at piecemeal reforms. Owing to growing disillusionment of the intelligentsia with the reactionary and exploitative nature of the British rule, the Congress party transformed itself into a revolutionary organisation of the Indian masses, aiming at liberation of the country. The Congress party organised country-wide mass movements and formulated principles and programmes for establishing a democratic polity based on civil liberties, non-violence and equality of rights. Mahatma Gandhi prescribed a high sense of moral responsibility for the

successful operation of democracy. He said:

A born democrat is a born disciplinarian. Democracy comes naturally to him who is habituated normally to yield willing obedience to all laws, human or divine. . . . Let those who are ambitious to serve democracy qualify themselves by satisfying first this acid test of democracy. Moreover, a democrat must be utterly selfless. He must think and dream not in terms of self or party but only of democracy. Only then does he acquire the right of civil disobedience. . . . I value individual freedom but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to his present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have to learn to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well being of the whole society, enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member.

Gandhi visualised *Swaraj* and democracy in terms of the common man, the meanest of countrymen:

If we would see our dream of *Sarvodaya*, i.e., true democracy realised, we would regard the humblest and the lowest Indian as being equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the land. . . . Everybody would regard all as equal with oneself and hold them together in the silken net of love. No one would regard another as untouchable. We would hold as equal the toiling labourer and the rich capitalist.

Gandhi thought of empowering masses by introducing *Panchayatraj*. He said:

True democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village.

He further said:

*Swaraj* is to be attained by educating masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.

Gandhi's vision of democracy still remains to be translated into action. With the end of British rule, power did not come to Indian masses. Power was transferred from the British imperialists to the Indian bourgeoisie. As Robert W. Stern points out:

Neither Gandhi nor his *Satyagrahis* freed India. But the ongoing process of negotiations—occasionally interrupted but never terminated—that *Satyagraha* as a strategy of conflict resolution set in train and kept on course, helped to ensure that Congress would inherit from the British the foundation and skeletal superstructure more or less intact on which a bourgeois democratic state could be built. The civil bureaucracies, police forces and military were passed over virtually intact. There were no purges. Industry and infrastructure for further industrialisation, e.g., the railways, had been established and were intact. There were no expropriations. The political infrastructure—electorates, legislative assemblies, a legal system, ministries—on which a parliamentary democracy

could be built was embryonic but intact. There were no serious second thoughts about the appropriateness of bourgeois democracy for India. There was no serious inclination to class conflict as a political strategy for Congress in post-independence India. In pre-independence India, *Satyagraha* as enunciated and personified by Gandhi, his concomitant social and economic theories and political manoeuvrings within the Congress affirmed the desirability of class co-operation rather than class conflict as Congress *modus operandi*. Without such an affirmation, it seems unlikely that Gandhi could have effected the urban middle classes—land holding peasants alliance that was the Congress nationalist movement and became the Congress party. Without Gandhi it seems unlikely that Congress would have survived intact to become independent India's ruling party. Partition tore the Indian fabric at its edges, but otherwise left it intact. Gandhi, we know, did not want India to become a bourgeois democratic, capitalist, industrialised country; but he is rightly, if ironically, honoured as its founder.

Gandhi's mass movements which so strengthened the Congress party's negotiating position against the imperialist power, however, constitute an important element in the political culture and heritage of modern India.

The Congress party under Gandhi's leadership strove for communal harmony. Gandhi propagated religious tolerance and equal respect for all religions.

He promised equal treatment for all communities in free India. He said:

It has been said that Indian *Swaraj* will be the rule of the majority community, i.e., the Hindus. There could not be a greater mistake than that. If it were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it *Swaraj* and would fight it with all the strength at my command, for me Hind Swaraj is the rule of all people, is the rule of justice.

In spite of its secular stand, the Congress party failed to prevent the partition of India on communal lines because of the British policy of placating the Muslim communalist forces and acceptance of Jinnah's Two-Nation Theory and also because of the Congress party's failure to mobilise Muslim elite and masses in favour of national unity. Nevertheless, the Congress party accepted secularism as a cornerstone of the new political edifice of Indian Union. On secularism, Nehru declared in the Constituent Assembly:

As far as India is concerned, I can speak with certainty we shall proceed on secular and national lines in keeping with the powerful trends towards internationalism. . . . In the future India will be a land, as in the past, of many faiths, equally honoured and respected but of one national outlook.

Secularism was thus enshrined in the Indian Constitution but unreconciled communal forces within and outside the country continued to threaten

the integrity of the Indian nation. As Rasheeduddin Khan says:

After independence and the partition of the sub-continent, two formations emerged. In India triumphant nationalism, with secular overtones, continued to battle against irrepressible communalism—Hindu, Muslim and Sikh; while in Pakistan triumphant communalism with Islamic orientation, had choked the prospects of secular nationalism. In India, dominant secular nationalism is besieged by unreconciled communal forces. In Pakistan, entrenched Muslim communalism, now referred to as Islamic fundamentalism, subverted sporadic assertions of democratic secular aspirations. The continuing tussle between nationalism and communalism remains a major challenge in the process of secular nation-building in the sub-continent.

The nationalist movement in India was not only a movement for liberation from colonial rule but also a movement for socio-economic transformation. It aimed at eradication of poverty, ending of economic exploitation by liberation of masses from the stranglehold of the feudal classes (the Princes, Zamindars, Jagirdars, Talukdars) and moneylenders, and planning of industrial and agricultural development of the country. The nationalist leaders aimed at making the country economically self-reliant and prosperous. They organised movements among the peasants and workers. They resolved to end the economic exploitation of the masses through reduction in rent and

revenue, relief from agricultural indebtedness, control of moneylending, better wages and limited hours of work, protection for female labourers, recognition of the workers' and peasants' right to form trade unions, and state ownership of key industries. The socialists demanded abolition of princely order, Zamindari and capitalism. Though not a member of socialist wing, Nehru was very much inclined towards socialist ideology. He remarked in his presidential speech in the Lucknow session of Indian National Congress held in April 1936:

I see no way of ending the poverty, vast unemployment, degradation and subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. That involves vast revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, ending vested interests in the land and industry as well as the feudal autocratic Indian states system. That means ending private property, except in a restricted sense and replacement of the present profit system by the higher ideals of co-operative service.

While resolving to end economic exploitation through structural changes, Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose wanted rapid industrialisation through development of heavy industries. In 1938 the Indian National Congress set up a national planning committee under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru to plan the industrial development of the country. In *The Discovery of India*, Nehru wrote:

I am all for tractors and big machinery and  
I am convinced that the rapid industria-



lisation of India is essential to relieve the pressure on land, to combat poverty and raise standards of living, for defence and a variety of other purposes. But I am equally convinced that the most careful planning and adjustment are necessary if we are to reap the full benefit of industrialisation and avoid many of its dangers. This planning is necessary today in all countries of arrested growth, like China and India, which have strong traditions of their own.

Gandhi laid stress on the development of village industries and was opposed to the growth of machine-based industries on economic and moral grounds. He wrote:

Extinction of village industries would complete the ruin of the 7,00,000 villages of India. . . . Mechanisation is good when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India. I may not use a plough for digging a few square yards of a plot of land. The problem with us is not how to find leisure for the teeming millions inhabiting our villages. The problem is how to utilise their idle hours, which are equal to the working days of six months in the year. Strange as it may appear, every mill generally is a menace to the villagers. I have not worked out the figures, but I am quite safe in saying that every mill-hand does the work of at least ten labourers doing the same work in their villages. In other words, he earns more than he did in his village at the expense of ten fellow-villagers. Thus spinning and weaving

mills have deprived the villagers of a substantial means of livelihood. . . . the way to take work to the villagers is not through mechanisation but that it lies through revival of the industries they have hitherto followed.

I would say that if the village perishes India will perish too. India will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost. The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialisation on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come. Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others.

For ending exploitation, Gandhi contemplated the transformation of the existing relation between princes and subjects, the Zamindars and tenants and capitalists and workers. He held that the princes, Zamindars and capitalists should use only that much of their wealth which was necessary for "an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others," and use the rest of wealth for the welfare of community. Gandhi said:

I want them to outgrow their greed and sense of possession, and to come down in spite of their wealth to the level of those who earn

their bread by labour. The labourer has to realise that the wealthy man is less owner of his wealth than the labourer is owner of his own, *viz.*, the power of work.

After independence, the princely order and Zamindari system were abolished. While seeking to achieve rapid industrialisation through public sector, the nationalist leadership retained capitalism as a system. An expanded middle class in the urban centres (consisting of industrialists and merchants) became the beneficiary of the policy of "mixed economy" followed by the Government. The retention and development of capitalism was due to the fact that in spite of the existence of a left-wing in the nationalist movement, the movement remained "confined within the broad parameters of bourgeois social development" and "the perspective of the capitalist character of modern economic development." Of course, a section of left-wing Congressmen broke away from Congress after independence to pursue an independent socialist course, and communist movement grew in certain areas like Kerala and West Bengal.

The leaders of the nationalist movement in India, such as Gandhi and Nehru, viewed the Indian nationalist movement as a part of the anti-imperialist struggle going on elsewhere in the world. Gandhi did not believe in isolated national independence; he believed in "healthy and dignified interdependence." He did not believe in selfish, narrow and exclusive nationalism. He said:

My patriotism is not an exclusive thing. It is all-embracing and I should reject that patriotism which sought to mount upon the distress or exploitation of other nationalities. The conception of my patriotism is nothing if it is not always, in every case without exception, consistent with the broadest good of humanity at large.

I want India's rise so that the whole world may benefit. I do not want India to rise on the ruins of other nations.

Gandhi held that human race could survive only through the establishment of an international society, based on non-violence. In keeping with Gandhi's commitment to non-violence and international amity, the nationalist Government adopted non-alignment, anti-colonialism, anti-apartheid, opposition to the arms race and military alliances and promotion of world peace as the basic cornerstones of its foreign policy. The Indian Government, at the time of independence and afterwards, made a special endeavour for the promotion of solidarity among Afro-Asian nations who, like India, had remained for quite a long period under the yoke of western colonialism. As Nehru remarked in the Asian Relation Conference, held at New Delhi in April 1947:

For too long have we all Asians been petitioners in Western courts and chancelleries. That story must now belong to the past. We propose to stand on our own feet and co-operate with all others who are prepared to co-operate with us. We do not intend to be the playthings of others.

To conclude, during the colonial era, the people of India, particularly its leaders, in spite of certain contradictions, envisaged the building of a new India, socially reformed and regenerated, culturally awakened, independent, democratic, secular, economically self-reliant and prosperous, ensuring distributive justice to all its citizens and living as a respectable member of the world community as well as striving for a just and peaceful international order.

# MORE ON VISION OF NEW INDIA

## TAGORE'S DREAM

Where the mind is without fear  
and the head is held high,  
Where knowledge is free;  
Where the world has not been broken up  
into fragments by narrow domestic walls;  
Where words come out from the depth of truth;  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms  
towards perfection;  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost  
its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;  
Where the mind is led forward by thee  
into every-widening thought and action—  
into that heaven of freedom,  
my father,  
let my country awake.

Santiniketan

Rabindranath Tagore

## VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE

Our mission is for the destitute, the poor, and the illiterate peasantry and labouring classes, and if, after everything has been done for them first, there is spare time, then only for the gentry. Those peasants and labouring people will be won over by love. . . . "One must raise oneself by one's own exertions"—this holds good in all spheres. We help them to help themselves. . . . The moment they will come to understand their own condition and feel the necessity of help and improvement, know that your work is taking effect and is in the right direction. . . . The peasants and labouring classes are in a moribund condition, so what is needed is that the moneyed people will only help them to regain their vitality, and nothing more. Then leave the peasants and labourers to look to their own problem, to grapple with and solve it.

It takes time, quite a long time, to make a healthy, strong, public opinion which will solve its own problems; and in the interim we shall have to wait. The whole problem of social reform, therefore, resolves itself into this: where are those who want reform? Make them first. Where are the people? The tyranny of a minority is the tyranny that the world ever sees. A few men who think that certain things are evil will not make a nation move. Why does not the nation move? First educate the nation, create your legislative body, and then the law will be forthcoming. First create the power, the sanction from which the law will spring. The kings are gone; where is the new sanction, the new power of the people? Bring it up. Therefore, even for social reform, the first duty is to educate the people, and you will have to wait till that time comes.

All the wealth of the world cannot help one little Indian village if the people are not taught to help themselves. Our work should be mainly educational, both moral and intellectual. Education is not the amount of information

that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library. . . . The ideal, therefore, is that we must have the whole education of our country, spiritual and secular, in our own hands, and it must be on national lines, through national methods as far as practical.

It was . . . said that if the masses were educated, the world would come to ruin. In India, especially, we meet with old fogies all over the land. They want to keep everything secret from the masses. These people come to the very satisfying conclusion that they are the *crime de la crime* of this universe. Do they say this for the good of society or blinded by their selfishness? . . . For the luxury of a handful of the rich, let millions of men and women remain submerged in the hell of want and abysmal depth of ignorance, for if they get wealth and education, society will be upset: Who constitute society? The millions or you, I and a few others of the upper classes? A nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses. . . . If we are to rise again, we shall have to do it . . . by spreading education among the masses. Educate and raise the masses, and thus alone a nation is possible. Our reformers do not see where the wound is.

Education, education, education alone! Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? Education was the answer I got.

The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education, to develop their lost individuality. . . . They are to be given ideas; their eyes are to be opened to what is going on in the world around them: and then they will work out their own salvation. Every nation, every man, and every woman must work out their own salvation. Give



them ideas—that is the only help they require, and then the rest must follow as the effect. Ours is to put the chemicals together, the crystallisation comes in the law of nature. Our duty is to put ideas into their heads, they will do the rest. This is what is to be done in India.

My plans are . . . to reach these masses in India. We have to follow the plan laid down by our ancestors, that is to bring all the ideals slowly down among the masses. Raise them slowly up, raise them to equality. Impart even secular knowledge through religion.

Suppose you start schools all over India for the poor, still you cannot educate them. How can you? The boy of four years would better go to the plough or to work, than to your school. . . . But if the mountain does not go to Mohammed, then Mohammed can come to the mountain. Why should not education go from door to door, say I. If a ploughman's boy cannot come to education, why not meet him at the plough, at the factory, just wherever he is? Go along with him, like his shadow.

The greater part of the education to the poor should be given orally, time is not yet ripe for schools. Try to set up a fund, buy some magic-lanterns, maps, globes, etc., and some chemicals. Get every evening a crowd of the poor and the low, even the Pariahs and lecture to them about religion first, and then teach them through the magic-lantern and other things, astronomy, geography, etc., in the dialect of the people.

Your duty at present is to go from one part of the country to another, from village to village, and make the people understand that mere sitting idly won't do any more. Make them understand their real condition and say, "O ye brothers, arise: awake: How much longer would you remain asleep!" Go and advise them how to improve their own condition, and make them comprehend the sublime truths of the *Shastras* (scriptures), by presenting them in a lucid and popular way. . . . Impress upon their minds that they have the same right to religion as the Brahmins. Initiate all,

even down to the Chandalas, in these fiery Mantras. Also instruct them, in simple words, about the necessities of life, and in trade, commerce, agriculture, etc.

It would be better if the people got a little technical education, so that they might find work and earn their bread, instead of dawdling about and crying for service. The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name? We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.

It is very difficult to understand why in this country so much difference is made between men and women, whereas the Vedanta declares that one and the same conscious Self is present in all beings. You always criticise the women, but say what have you done for their uplift.

All nations have attained greatness by paying proper respect to women. That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great, nor will ever be in future. If you do not raise the women, who are the living embodiment of the Divine Mother, don't think that you have any other way to rise.

They have many and grave problems, but none that are not to be solved by that magic word 'education'. Educate your women first and leave them to themselves; then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them. Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. Who are you to solve women's problems? Are you the Lord God? . . . Hands off!

Female education is to be spread with religion as its centre. All other training should be secondary to religion. Religious training, the formation of character and observance of the vow of celibacy—these should be attended to.

The women of India must grow and develop in the footprints of Sita, and that is the only way. Any attempt to

modernise our women, if it tries to take our women away from that ideal of Sita, is immediately a failure, as we see every day.

If the life of the women of this country be moulded in such fashion, then only will there be the reappearance of such ideal characters as Sita, Savitri and Gargi.

If the women are raised, then their children will by their noble actions glorify the name of the country—then will culture, knowledge, power, devotion awaken in the land.

Let me tell you, strength, strength is what we want. The remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness, but thinking of strength. What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face. That is what we want. And the first step in getting strength is to uphold the Upanishads, and believe—"I am the Soul." Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world. For centuries people have been taught theories of degradation. . . . Let them hear of the Atman—that even the lowest of the low have the Atman within, which never dies and never is born.

What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta, Brahmacharya as the guiding motto, and also *Shraddha* and faith in one's own self. Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts? It is absolutely necessary for you, instead of frittering away your energy and often talking of idle nonsense, to learn from the Englishman the idea of prompt obedience to leaders, the absence of jealousy; the indomitable perseverance, and the undying faith in himself. . . . Everyone should learn to obey before he can command. . . . Until this absence of jealousy and obedience to leaders are learnt by the Hindu, there will be no power of organisation. . . . India has to learn from

Europe the conquest of external nature, and Europe has to learn from India the conquest of internal nature. . . . We have developed one phase of humanity, and they another. It is the union of the two that is wanted.

Three things are necessary to make every man great, every nation great:

1. Conviction of the powers of goodness.
2. Absence of jealousy and suspicion.
3. Helping all who are trying to be and do good.

Let us wipe off first . . . the stain of jealousy. Be *jealous* of none. Be ready to lend a hand to every worker of good. Send a good thought for every being in the three worlds. To become broad, to go out, to amalgamate, to universalise, is the end of our aims. Nothing else is necessary but these—love, sincerity, and patience.

# MAHATMA GANDHI'S VISION OF SWARAJ

## The Ideal of Sarvodaya

A votary of Ahimsa cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula of the greatest good of the greatest number. He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realise the idea. He will, therefore, be willing to die, so that the others may live. He will serve himself with the rest, by himself dying. The greatest good of all inevitably includes the good of the greatest number and, therefore, he and the utilitarian will converge in many points in their career, but there does come a time when they must part company, and even work in opposite directions. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself. The absolutist will even sacrifice himself. (*Young India*, 9.12.1926)

If we would see our dream of *Sarvodaya*, i.e., true democracy realised, we would regard the humblest and lowest Indian as being equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the land. This presupposes that all are pure or will become pure if they are not. And purity must go hand-in-hand with wisdom. No one would then harbour any distinction between community and community, caste and outcaste. Everybody would regard all as equal with oneself and hold them together in the silken net of love. No one would regard another as untouchable. We would hold as equal the toiling labourer and the rich capitalist. Everybody would know how to earn an honest living by the sweat of one's brow and make no distinction between intellectual and physical labour. To hasten this consummation, we would voluntarily turn ourselves into scavengers. No one who has wisdom will ever touch opium, liquor or any intoxicants. Everybody would observe Swadeshi as the rule of life and regard every woman, not being his wife, as his mother, sister or daughter according to her age, never lust after her in his heart. He would be ready to lay down his life

when occasion demands it, never want to take another's life (*Harijan*, 18.1.1948).

### **"The India of My Dream"**

I shall strive for a constitution, which will release India from all thralldom and patronage, and give her, if need be, the right to sin. I shall work for an India, in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of the intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men. Since we shall be at peace with all the rest of the world, neither exploiting, nor being exploited, we should have the smallest army imaginable. All interests not in conflict with the interests of the dumb millions will be scrupulously respected, whether foreign or indigenous. Personally, I hate distinction between foreign and indigenous. This is the India of my dreams. . . . I shall be satisfied with nothing less (*Young India*, 10.9.1931).

### **Ideal Village**

I have not pictured a poverty-stricken India containing ignorant millions. I have pictured to myself an India continually progressing along the lines best suited to her genius. I do not, however, picture it as a third class or even a first class copy of the dying civilisation of the West.

If my dream is fulfilled, and every one of the seven lakhs of villages becomes a well-living republic in which there are no illiterates, in which no one is idle for want of work, in which everyone is usefully occupied and has nourishing food, well-ventilated dwellings, and sufficient Khadi for covering the body, and in which all the villagers know and observe the laws of hygiene and sanitation, such a State must have varied and increasing needs, which it must supply unless it would stagnate. . . .

What, however, according to my view, the State will not have is an army of B.A.'s and M.A.'s with their brains sapped with too much cramming and minds almost paralysed by the impossible attempt to speak and write Englishr like Englishmen. The majority of these have no work, no employment. And when they have the latter, it is usually clerkships at which most of the knowledge gained during their twelve years of High Schools and Colleges is of no use whatsoever to them (*Harijan*, 30.7.1938).

## **The Virtues of a Satyagrahi**

### (1) *The Importance of Means*

The clearest possible definition of the goal and its appreciation would fail to take us there, if we do not know and utilise the means of achieving it. I have, therefore, concerned myself principally with the conservation of the means and their progressive use. I know if we can take care of them, attainment of the goal is assured. I feel too that our progress towards the goal will be in exact proportion to the purity of our means.

This method may appear to be long, perhaps too long, but I am convinced that it is the shortest (*Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 17.9.1933).

### (2) *Duties, Not Rights*

If all simply insist on rights and no duties, there will be utter confusion and chaos. If instead of insisting on rights everyone does his duty, there will immediately be the rule of order established among mankind. If you apply this simple and universal rule to employers and labourers, landlords and tenants, the princes and their subjects, or the Hindus and the Muslims, you will find that the happiest relations can be established in all walks of life without creating disturbance and dislocation in life and business which you see in India as in the other parts of the world. What I call the law of *Satyagraha* is to be deduced from an appreciation of duties and rights flowing therefrom (*Harijan*, 6.7.1947).

### (3) *The Purity of Means*

People in the West generally hold that the whole duty of man is to promote the happiness of the majority of mankind, and happiness is supposed to mean only physical happiness and economic prosperity. If the laws of morality are broken in the conquest of this happiness, it does not matter very much. The consequences of this line of thinking are writ large on the face of Europe.

This exclusive search for physical and economic well-being prosecuted in disregard of morality is contrary to divine law, as some wise men in the West have shown. One of these was John Ruskin who contends in *Unto This Last* that men can be happy only if they obey the moral law.

Morality is an essential ingredient in all the faiths of the world, but apart from religion, our commonsense indicates the necessity of observing the moral law. Only by observing it can we hope to be happy (From Gandhiji's Introduction to his paraphrase of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, 1951, pp. IX-XI).

### (4) *Truth*

All our activities should be centred in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. When once this stage in the pilgrim's progress is reached, all other rules of correct living will come without effort, and obedience to them will be instinctive. But without Truth it is impossible to observe any principles or rules in life (From *Yeravda Mandir*, 1945, pp. 2-3).

### (5) *Non-Violence or Love*

Without Ahimsa it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which is the reverse? Nevertheless Ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so Ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later.



When once we have grasped this point, final victory is beyond question (*From Yeravda Mandir*, 1945, pp. 7-9).

#### (6) *Brahmacharya or Chastity*

Now for the definition—the meaning—of *Brahmacharya*. Its root meaning may be given thus: that conduct which puts one in touch with God. The conduct consists in the fullest control over all the senses. This is the true and relevant meaning of the word.

Popularly it has come to mean mere physical control over the organ of generation. This narrow meaning has debased *Brahmacharya* and made its practice all but impossible. Control over the organ of generation is impossible without proper control over all the senses. They are all interdependent. Mind on the lower plane is included in the senses. Without control over the mind mere physical control, even if it can be attained for a time, is of little or no use (*Harijan*, 13.6.1936).

#### (7) *Fearlessness*

Fearlessness is indispensable for the growth of the other noble qualities. However, can one seek Truth, or cherish Love, without Fearlessness? As Pritam says, "The path of Hari (the Lord) is the path of the brave, not of cowards." Hari here means Truth, and the brave are those armed with Fearlessness (*From Yeravda Mandir*, 1945; p. 27).

#### (8) *Non-Stealing*

It is impossible that a person should steal, and simultaneously claim to know Truth or cherish Love. Yet every one of us is consciously or unconsciously more or less guilty of theft. It is theft to take something in the belief that it is nobody's property. Things found on the roadside belong to the ruler or the local authority.

It is theft to take something from another even with his permission if we have no real need of it. We should not receive any single thing that we do not need. Theft of this description generally has food for its object. It is theft for me

to take any fruit that I do not need, or to take it in a larger quantity than is necessary. We are not always aware of our real needs, and most of us improperly multiply our wants, and thus unconsciously make thieves of ourselves. If we devote some thought to the subject, we shall find that we can get rid of quite a number of our wants. One who follows the observance of non-stealing will bring about a progressive reduction of his own wants. Much of the distressing poverty in this world has arisen out of breaches of the principle of non-stealing (*From Yerauda Mandir*, 1945, pp. 19-22).

### (9) *Non-Possession*

Non-possession is allied to non-stealing. A thing not originally stolen must nevertheless be classified as stolen property, if we possess it without needing it. Possession implies provision for the future. A seeker after Truth, a follower of the law of Love, cannot hold anything against tomorrow. God never stores for the morrow. He never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. If therefore we repose faith in His providence, we should rest assured that He will give us everyday our daily bread, meaning everything that we require. Saints and devotees, who have lived in such faith, have always derived a justification for it from their experience. Our ignorance or negligence of the Divine Law, which gives to man from day to day his daily bread and no more, has given rise to inequalities with all the miseries attendant upon them. The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need, and which are therefore neglected and wasted; while millions are starved to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession only of what he needed, no one would be in want, and all would live in contentment. As it is, the rich are discontented no less than the poor. The poor man would fain become a millionaire, and the millionaire a multimillionaire. The rich should take the initiative in dispossession with a view to a universal diffusion of the spirit of contentment. If only they keep their own property within moderate limits, the starving will be easily fed, and will learn the lesson of contentment along with the rich.

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From the standpoint of pure Truth, the body too is a possession. We thus arrive at the ideal of total renunciation, and learn to use the body for the purposes of service so long as it exists, so much so that service, and not bread, becomes with us the staff of life. We eat and drink, sleep and wake, for service alone. Such an attitude of mind brings us real happiness (*From Yeravda Mandir*, 1934, pp. 23-25).

#### (10) *Restraint in Food and Drink*

Abstemiousness from intoxicating drinks and drugs, and from all kinds of foods, especially meat, is undoubtedly a great aid to the evolution of the spirit, but it is by no means an end in itself. Many a man eating meat and with everybody but living in the fear of God is nearer his freedom than a man religiously abstaining from meat and many other things but blaspheming God in everyone of his acts (*Young India*, 6.10.1921).

Ahimsa is not a mere matter of dietetics, it transcends it. What a man eats or drinks matters little, it is the self-denial, the self-restraint behind it that matters. By all means practise as much restraint in the choice of the articles of your diet as you like. The restraint is commendable, even necessary, but it touches only the fringe of Ahimsa. A man may allow himself a wide latitude in the matter of diet and yet may be a personification of Ahimsa and compel our homage, if his heart overflows with love and melts at another's woe, and has been purged of all passions. On the other hand, a man always overscrupulous in diet is an utter stranger to Ahimsa and a pitiful wretch if he is a slave to selfishness and passions and is hard of heart (*Young India*, 6.9.1928).

#### (11) *Renunciation and Self-Sacrifice*

Renunciation does not mean abandoning the world and retiring into the forest. The spirit of renunciation should rule all the activities of life. A householder does not cease to be one if he regards life as a duty rather than as an indulgence. A merchant, who operates in the sacrificial

spirit, will have crores passing through his hands, but he will, if he follows the law, use his abilities for service. He will therefore not cheat or speculate, will lead a simple life, will not injure a living soul and will lose millions rather than harm anybody (*From Yeravda Mandir*, 1945, pp. 57-70).

There should be no sorrow felt over one's sacrifice. That sacrifice which causes pain, loses its sacred character and will break down under stress. One gives up things that one considers to be injurious and therefore there should be pleasure attendant upon giving up (*Young India*, 15.7.1926).

### (12) *Bread Labour*

How can a man, who does not do body labour, have the right to eat? 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread', says the Bible. A millionaire cannot carry on for long, and will soon get tired of his life, if he rolls in his bed all day long, and is even helped to his food. He, therefore, induces hunger by exercise, and helps himself to the food he eats. If everyone, whether rich or poor, has thus to take exercise in some shape or form, why should it not assume the form of productive, i.e., Bread labour? No one asks the cultivator to take breathing exercise or to work his muscles. And more than nine-tenths of humanity lives by tilling the soil. How much happier, healthier and more peaceful would the world become, if the remaining tenth followed the example of the overwhelming majority, at least to the extent of labouring enough for their food. And many hardships, connected with agriculture, would be easily redressed, if such people took a hand in it. Again invidious distinctions of rank would be abolished, when everyone without exception acknowledged the obligation of bread labour. It is common to all the Varnas. There is a worldwide conflict between capital and labour, and the poor envy the rich. If all worked for their bread, distinctions of rank would be obliterated, the rich would still be there, but they would deem themselves only trustees of their property, and would use it mainly in the public interest (*From Yeravda Mandir*, 1945, pp. 35-37).

### (13) *Swadeshi*

The broad definition of Swadeshi is the use of all home-made things to the exclusion of foreign things, in so far as such use is necessary for the protection of home-industry, more especially those industries without which India will become pauperised. In my opinion, therefore, Swadeshi which excludes the use of everything foreign no matter how beneficent it may be, and irrespective of the fact that it impoverishes nobody, is a narrow interpretation of Swadeshi. (*Young India*, 17.6.1926).

### (14) *Respect for All Religions*

Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal? In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals (*Hind Swaraj*, 1946, pp. 35-36).

Even as a tree has a single trunk, but many branches and leaves, so there is one true and perfect Religion, but it becomes many, as it passes through the human medium. The one Religion is beyond all speech. Imperfect men put it into such language as they can command, and their words are interpreted by other men equally imperfect. Whose interpretation is to be held to be the right one? Everybody is right from his own standpoint, but it is not impossible that everybody is wrong. Hence, the necessity of tolerance, which does not mean indifference to one's own faith, but a more intelligent and purer love for it. Tolerance gives us spiritual insight, which is as far from fanaticism as the north pole from the south. True knowledge of religion breaks down the barriers between faith and faith (*From Yeravda Mandir*, 1945, pp. 38-40).

### (15) *Anti-Untouchability*

None can be born untouchable, as all are sparks of one and the same Fire. It is wrong to treat certain human beings as untouchables from birth.

This observance is not fulfilled merely by making friends with 'untouchables', but by loving all life as our own selves. Removal of untouchability means love for, and service of the whole world, and thus merges into Ahimsa. Removal of untouchability spells the breaking down of barriers between man and man, and between the various orders of Being. We find such barriers erected everywhere in the world (*From Yeravda Mandir*, 1945, pp. 31, 33, 34).

## AUROBINDO'S RELIGION OF HUMANITY

A spiritual religion of humanity is the hope of the future. By this is not meant what is ordinarily called a universal religion, a system, a thing of creed and intellectual belief and dogma and outward rite. Mankind has tried unity by that means; it has failed and deserved to fail, because there can be no universal religious system, one in mental creed and vital form. The inner spirit is indeed one, but more than any other the spiritual life insists on freedom and variation in its self-expression and means of development. A religion of humanity means the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one, that humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth, that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here. It implies a growing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring about a kingdom of this divine Spirit upon earth. By its growth within us oneness with our fellow-men will become the leading principle of all our life, not merely a principle of co-operation but a deeper brotherhood, a real and an inner sense of unity and equality and a common life. There must be the realisation by the individual that only in the life of his fellow-men is his own life complete. There must be the realisation by the race that only on the free and full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness be founded. There must be too a discipline and a way of salvation in accordance with this religion, that is to say, a means by which it can be developed by each man within himself, so that it may be developed in the life of the race. To go into all that this implies would be too large a subject to be entered upon here; it is enough to point out that in this direction lies the eventual road. No doubt, if this is only an idea like the rest, it will go the way of all ideas. But if it is at all a truth of our being, then it must be the truth to which all is moving and in it must be found the

means of a fundamental, an inner, a complete, a real human unity which would be the one secure base of a unification of human life. A spiritual oneness which would create a psychological oneness not dependent upon any intellectual or outward uniformity and compel a oneness of life not bound up with its mechanical means of unification, but ready always to enrich its secure unity by a free inner variation and a freely varied outer self-expression, this would be the basis for a higher type of human existence.

Could such realisation develop rapidly in mankind, we might then solve the problem of unification in a deeper and truer way from the inner truth to the outer forms. Until then, the attempt to bring it about by mechanical means must proceed. But the higher hope of humanity lies in the growing number of men who will realise this truth and seek to develop it in themselves, so that when the mind of man is ready to escape from its mechanical bent—perhaps when it finds that its mechanical solutions are all temporary and disappointing—the truth of the Spirit may step in and lead humanity to the path of its highest possible happiness and perfection.



## NEHRU'S TRYST WITH DESTINY

— *Jawaharlal Nehru*

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.

At the dawn of history India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her successes and her failures. Through good and ill fortune alike she has never lost sight of that quest or forgotten the ideals which gave her strength. We end today a period of ill fortune and India discovers herself again. The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us. Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?

Freedom and power bring responsibility. That responsibility rests upon this Assembly, a sovereign body representing the sovereign people of India. Before the birth of freedom we have endured all the pains of labour and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless the past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now.

That future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we might fulfil the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India

means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.

And so we have to labour and to work and work hard to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for anyone of them to imagine that it can live apart. Peace has been said to be indivisible, so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and so also is disaster in this one world that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.

To the people of India, whose representatives we are, we make appeal to join us with faith and confidence in this great adventure. This is no time for petty and destructive criticism, no time for ill will or blaming others. We have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell.

I beg to move, Sir,

“That it be resolved that:

(1) After the last stroke of midnight, all members of the Constituent Assembly present on the occasion do take the following pledge:

At this solemn moment when the people of India, through suffering and sacrifice, have secured freedom, I . . . a member of the Constituent Assembly of India, do dedicate myself in all humility to the service of India and her people to the end that this ancient land attain her rightful place in the world and make her full and willing contribution to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind.

(2) Members who are not present on this occasion to take the pledge (with such verbal changes as the President may prescribe) at the time they next attend a session of the Assembly.”

—*Speech in the Constituent Assembly  
of India, 15 August 1947*

## **THE GREAT TASK BEFORE US**

**—Lal Bahadur Shastri**

... There comes a time in the life of every nation when it stands at the cross-roads of history and must choose which way to go. But for us there need be no difficulty or hesitation, no looking to right or left. Our way is straight and clear—the building up of a socialist democracy at home with freedom and prosperity for all, and the maintenance of world peace and friendship with all nations abroad. To that straight road and to these shining ideals we re-dedicate ourselves today.

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Among the major tasks before us none is of greater importance for our strength and stability than the task of building up the unity and solidarity of our people. Our country has often stood as a solid rock in the face of common danger and there is a deep underlying unity which runs like a golden thread through all our seeming diversity. But we should not take national unity and solidarity for granted, nor can we afford to be complacent, for, there have been occasions when unfortunate and disturbing divisions, some of them accompanied by violence, have appeared in our society. . . . Let people in different parts of the country, however strong their feelings might be on particular issues, never forget that they are Indians first, and that all differences must be resolved within the unalterable framework of one nation and one country. Let us make every endeavour to foster this feeling of oneness and to carry forward the work of national integration started with the National Integration Conference in 1961.

The way political democracy has functioned in our country is surely a great achievement. . . . There is something in our cultural heritage too. I have particularly in view that enduring strand in Indian life which can be best described as respect for human personality and the

spirit of tolerance. I have no doubt in my mind that it is by methods of persuasion and mutual accommodation, and by a constant search for areas of agreement as basis for action, that democracy can be worked. It is in this spirit that I shall devote myself to the duties and responsibilities of the office I have been called upon to fill.

Of all the problems facing us, none is more distressing than that of the dire poverty in which tens of millions of our countrymen continue to live. How I wish I were able to lighten the burden of poverty on our people. I cannot forget particularly the claims of the most backward sections like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, who had suffered neglect, and had to endure disabilities for many centuries. It would be my proud privilege to work for the establishment of a more just social order.

At the moment we are in the process of building up our defences. The burden is a heavy one, but recent events have left us with no choice. There can be no letting up in these preparations, but we are determined that these should not affect our first and foremost priority—the development of our economy.

The main question before us is of execution of our plans and policies and how to introduce the necessary vigour and efficiency required for it.

This naturally takes me to the problem of efficiency and integrity in the administration. Our public services have on the whole responded well to the numerous calls that have been made upon them since Independence. But there is a widespread feeling—which I share—that extensive reform of the administration is essential if the tasks of economic development and social reconstruction are to be accomplished. Apart from this, it is essential in a democracy that the public services should be sensitive to the feelings and sentiments of individual citizens. They should under all circumstances function not only with formal courtesy but in a spirit of service, sympathy and humanity. The administrative organisation and its methods and processes must be modernised if it is to become an effective

instrument of economic change. I shall do my best to have systematic attention paid to these major problems and I shall apply myself closely to the problem of administrative reforms in its various aspects.

I know that our people are full of enthusiasm and are prepared to undergo many sacrifices in order to keep the nation stable and strong. But sometimes their impatience gets the better of them and then there are unfortunate happenings which cause pain to everyone. Discipline and united action are the source of real strength to the nation. May I also appeal to the members of the various political parties to lend us a helping hand in the task of national reconstruction. The Press can also play a very useful role as indeed it has been doing all this time. It has enjoyed a position of strength and influence and I have no doubt that its influence will always be exercised for the public good. We are all different elements working in different ways towards a common goal—the service of the people. I shall respect these differences, but I shall continue to lay emphasis on the oneness of our objective.

In the realm of foreign affairs we shall continue to seek friendship and develop our relations with all countries irrespective of their ideologies or political systems. Non-alignment will continue to be the fundamental basis of our approach to world problems and our relations with other countries. It will be our special endeavour to further strengthen our relations with neighbouring countries. With most of our neighbours we have friendly and co-operative relations. We have problems with some of them which we would like to settle peacefully and amicably on an equitable and honourable basis.

India and Pakistan are two great countries linked together by common history and tradition. It is their natural destiny to be friends and to enter into close co-operation in many fields. Goodwill and friendship and mutual co-operation between these countries will not only be of immense benefit to them but will make a great contribution to peace and prosperity in Asia.

For too long have India and Pakistan been at odds with each other. The unfortunate relations between the two countries have somehow had their repercussions on the relations between communities in the two countries, giving rise to tragic human problems. We must reverse the tide. This will require determination and good sense on the part of the Governments and peoples of both India and Pakistan. President Ayub Khan's recent broadcast showed both wisdom and understanding and it has come just at the appropriate time. However, a great deal of patience will be necessary.

It had always been our desire to establish friendly relations with China. But all our efforts were nullified by the Government of People's Republic of China, China has wronged us and deeply offended our Government and people by her premeditated aggression against us. Despite our strong feelings about this aggression, we have shown our desire for a peaceful settlement by accepting *in toto* the Colombo proposals. We adhere to them and it is for China to reconsider her attitude towards these proposals and to give up the anti-India campaign that has been carried on in China itself and amongst our friends in Asia and Africa.

For the greater part of this century the names of Gandhi and Nehru have been symbols of the movement of subject people for freedom from colonial domination. We who have gone through our own struggle for freedom cannot but look with sympathy at peoples struggling for freedom anywhere. Our country has, for many years, been a stout champion of the freedom of dependent nations at the United Nations and elsewhere in the councils of nations. Unfortunately there are still some parts of the world where colonialism remains and where large sections of people are denied freedom and fundamental rights. We would consider it our moral duty to lend every support to the ending of colonialism and imperialism so that all peoples everywhere are free to mould their own destiny.

... We conceive of Afro-Asian solidarity not as an end in itself but as a means for achieving certain noble objectives.

These are to work for the freedom of the peoples of Asia and Africa, to build up the area of peace and understanding among all nations and to promote economic growth and higher living standards. We seek no leadership of the Afro-Asian group. We are content to be humble collaborators with the sister nations of Africa and Asia in the common cause of world peace and freedom of peoples.

We have always been a staunch supporter of the United Nations. As a member of that august body India has undertaken its full measure of responsibility in all aspects of United Nations activities. My Government reaffirms its unflinching support for the United Nations. The United Nations is the one hope of the world for bringing peace and freedom to humanity. Towards the achievement of these goals India has played an active role in the past and will continue to do the same in the future.

The problem of problems that faces mankind today is the achievement of peace and disarmament. For countless generations mankind has been yearning for peace. The supreme task facing the United Nations is to ensure not only that war is banished but that war is made impossible. . . . We pledge ourselves, in co-operation with other peaceful nations of the world, to continue to work for the realisation of this ideal.

. . . Let us then bend ourselves to the great task before us—an India free, prosperous and strong and a world at peace and without war—these would be the most fitting memorials to Gandhiji and Jawaharlal.

*(Broadcast to the Nation,  
11 June 1964)*



## THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE

— *Vinoba Bhave*

Ultimately it has to be the dedication of one's all for the well-being of all. Those who have must look upon those who have not as a mother looks upon her hungry child. She feeds it before she feeds herself, she starves before she allows it to starve. Let those who possess the strength, skill and knowledge of producing wealth, or the power of holding it, dedicate them to the service of the poor. I desire that the love necessary for doing this is generated in the heart of everyone.

Thought-force has no limitations. The light of a new idea often brings about a radical change in a man's life. We have seen great men, the power of whose thoughts has transformed the lives of others. It was with this idea of igniting the spark of thought in others that I accepted even small donations. And when Vaman-like I accepted land from the rich, God blessed and assured them that they need no longer run away to the cities to save their lives. It meant that by accepting lands from them, I generated a healthy thought in their minds. There are good and evil thoughts in the minds of everyone. And when a good thought enters the mind, it starts a struggle with evil thoughts. Ultimately, the good thought wins. It might take time, but there is no reason to think that the donors are hypocrites. I grant that these donors must have committed many acts of injustice in coming by the thousands of acres of land. How is it possible for an individual to acquire so much land justly? But in the hearts of even these people, there will now start a struggle and they will begin to think of the injustices they have committed. God will grant them wisdom and they will give up doing wrong. This is how a change of heart takes place in man.

The time has come when we should enlarge our hearts and part with our belongings to others. Giving is a divine

weapon. Base weapons cannot stand before it. They melt away before it, because they are made of selfishness, and not of universality or equality, like a divine weapon.

When a gift is given, we may hope that it will generate purity of mind, motherly love, feelings of brotherhood and friendliness and love for the poor. When a person begins to feel concerned for another, a feeling of equality manifests itself, and feelings of hatred and enmity are unable to survive. Enmity has no absolute existence. Like light, virtue is power, a positive substance. Sin is like darkness, without any power of its own. It is negative—absence of substance. Carry light to age-long darkness and the latter will disappear in no time. Similarly when virtue makes its appearance, hatred and enmity cannot exist in its presence. This Bhoodan Yajna (Land-gifts Mission) is an application of Non-Violence, an experiment in transformation of life itself. I am only an instrument in the hands of Him, Who is the Lord of all ages, like even those who give and those who will receive the gifts. It is a phenomenon inspired by God. For how otherwise can people, who fight even for a foot of land, be inspired to give away hundreds of acres of land freely? My appeal to all and everywhere is to take this as a thing which God desires them to do, and bequeath their lands to the landless liberally and lovingly.

Let me repeat in this connection what I said once before. Non-violence is not opposed to science, it wants fully to avail itself of it. Science can transform this earth into heaven. It can do so only in combination with non-violence. If science and violence are joined together, the world will be shattered to pieces.

There was a time when issues were decided by war in the form of duels. But the age of duels is gone. War began with duels, but the system did not work; so thousands began to fight against thousands; and when even that did not prove enough, lakhs gathered on either side, and each party vied with the other in increasing its number of combatants. And we have reached the time when not lakhs but crores participate in war. The choice now is either to

prepare for total war, or abandon violence altogether, and accept non-violence. That alone is the problem man is faced with today.

... People talk of the Russian revolution. America presents an example of a revolution of another type. But looking at both these countries, I find that neither type of revolution is in accordance with the genius of India. They are not in accord with our traditions and culture. I firmly believe that India should be able to evolve, consistent with her ideals, a new type of revolution, based purely on love. If people begin to donate lands of their own free will, readily and generously, the whole atmosphere will undergo a sudden change in the twinkling of an eye, and India might well show the way to a new era of freedom, love and happiness for the whole world. This sacrifice embodies this great aspiration and, speaking for myself, I am convinced that this aspiration is going to be fulfilled. I, therefore, urge all of you, whether you are a member of the Congress, a Socialist, a Praja Party man, or an independent, to ponder over this problem, and realise the value of the Land-gifts Mission. Other things may be left to take their due course, but this one brooks no delay. It is a desideratum to which all must attend. If it is done, India will save herself and the world too, for our action will have trailed a path to freedom and peace which the world may see and tread.

... I hold to the belief that the moment we succeed in creating a society free from exploitation, the intellectual and spiritual talent of the people of India, which lies obscured at present, will shine forth. We, the believers of *Sarvodaya*, therefore, have vowed that we will change the present structure of society. I have absolute belief in this mission, otherwise I could not have approached you to give away your lands so openly and unreservedly. I realise that God has rewarded my effort more than I deserve. I have no cause for complaint. All that I have to do is to explain the idea to the people.

## THE NEED FOR MORAL AND SOCIAL REGENERATION

— *Jayprakash Narayan*

In present society, with the hold of religion gone, faith in God shaken, moral values discarded as dead-weights of the dark ages of history, in short, with materialism enthroned in men's hearts, are there any incentives to goodness left? Indeed, has the question any relevance at all to present facts, problems and ideals of human society?

In spite of what may broadly be described as the materialist climate of present society, men everywhere are engaged, in their different ways, in creating a heaven upon earth—in remaking, refining, perfecting human society. These efforts, even the most idealistic and ambitious, such as Communism of its original conception, seem, however, to be shipwrecking on one obdurate rock—human baseness. It is clearer today than ever that social reconstruction is impossible without human reconstruction. Society cannot be good unless individual men are good, and particularly those men who form the elite of society.

Here then is the crux of the modern problem. Men wish to create, if not an ideal, at least a good society. Modern science and technology make that task far easier than ever before. But men lack the tools with which to make themselves. And the ideals are forgotten, and they begin to fight for power, position, spoils, bringing down the whole edifice of the new society.

Therefore, the problem of human goodness is of supreme moment today. The individual asks today why he should be good. There is no God, no soul, no morality, no life hereafter, no cycle of birth and death. He is merely an organism of matter, fortuitously brought into being, and destined soon to dissolve into the infinite ocean of matter. He sees all around him evil succeed—corruption, profiteering, lying, deception, cruelty, power politics, violence. He asks

naturally why he should be virtuous. Our social norms of today and the materialist philosophy which rules the affairs of men answer back: he need not. The cleverer he is, the more gifted, the more courageously he practises the new amorality, and in the toils of this amorality the dreams and aspirations of human kind become warped and twisted.

... In a material civilisation man has no rational incentive to be good. ... I feel convinced, therefore, that man must go beyond the material to find the incentives to goodness. As a corollary, I feel further that the task of social reconstruction cannot succeed under the inspiration of a materialist philosophy.

It may be asked if any social conditioning is at all necessary for men to acquire goodness. Is not man decent?

Yes and no.

Man is a socio-organic being. He is partly the product of "nature" and partly that of society. What man is by nature cannot be said with certainty. In deed, the very concepts of good and bad are supernatural or superorganic. There is nothing good or bad in nature. Human nature, apart from the instincts of self and race preservation, is most likely of a neutral character which acquires moral tones in accordance with social conditioning.

It is true that in every society most men are decent and good. These men go through life without being called upon to make any vital moral judgements. Their routine of life runs within narrow circles, and custom and tradition answer for them the questions concerning right and wrong.

But, first, these harmless decent men are apt, under social stimuli, to turn suddenly wild and vicious.

Secondly, what is vital for the character of society, and for the direction of its growth, is not so much the character of the inert mass as that of the elite. It is the philosophy and action of this group of the select that determine the destinies of men. To the extent the elite becomes godless or amoral, to that extent evil overtakes the human race.

... We all want to change the structure of our society. We would like to build up Sarvodaya Society as soon as possible. The problem is: how are we to build such a Sarvodaya Society in our country?



... The people have realised that through State power and legal methods we cannot build Sarvodaya Society. Maybe, the State power can build up a Socialist society. It certainly cannot make real the conception of Sarvodaya on this earth.



The main idea is that we should bring about a revolution in people's thoughts. That is not likely to take place through enactments, through legislatures. We have at last got at a point where we can take a final stand and that is the idea of Bhoodan and Sampattidan. Here is an opportunity for everyone to take some part if he is willing to leave his property rights fully, or if he cannot do that, partly. Thus revolutionary ideas spread through the country.

There is a great difference between violent revolution and non-violent revolution. The latter is entirely dependent upon mobilising the sanction of the enlightened masses. In a scheme of non-violent revolution greatest emphasis is upon changing the views of the people and their methods of behaviour in society. In a violent revolution it is the power of the State, with all its vast appendages, which plays a decisive role. . . .

... It is not possible to achieve any success through developing the power of the State. The real method lies in developing the power of the masses, and their moral strength. We have before us the slogan of Welfare State. I would like the Sarvodaya workers to fully understand the various concepts which seem to be jumbled up in this much talked of Welfare State. It is a slow-moving conception of changing society into a Socialistic one.

## DISCOVER YOUR HERITAGE

- ❑ The *Vedas* are the oldest Sanskrit literature. Four in number, they are the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sam Veda* and the *Atharva Veda*. More than 3,000 years old, they contain, among others, hymns composed in praise of every element and force of Nature.
- ❑ The *Mahabharata*, with one lakh verses, authored by sage-poet Vedavyasa, is considered the longest poem in the world.
- ❑ The *Bhagvad Gita*, although a part of the *Mahabharata*, is a complete book in itself. It is a poem of seven hundred verses, written in the form of a dialogue. It has been translated into about 60 languages of the world.
- ❑ *Panchatantra* is the oldest collection of fables in Sanskrit. Among its two hundred versions, are the famous *Aesop's Fables*.
- ❑ Kalidasa is acknowledged as the greatest poet and dramatist of Sanskrit literature. When the English translation of his drama *Abhijnyan Shakuntalam* appeared in Europe, it created a sensation of sorts among the intellectuals.
- ❑ *Arthashastra*, the science of political economy, of the fourth century BC, is considered the oldest treatise on government and economics. It was written by Kautilya, also known as 'Chanakya'. *Arthashastra* deals with a vast variety of subjects and covers almost every aspect of the theory and practice of government.
- ❑ Ayurveda is India's 3,000 years old system of medicine. Its name is derived from the Sanskrit *ayur* meaning 'life', and *veda* meaning 'knowledge', that is, 'the knowledge of life'. Ayurveda is second only to homoeopathy in its popularity as an alternative system of medicine.
- ❑ Charaka, one of the best known physicians in Indian Ayurvedic medicine, knew the fundamentals of genetics

some 2,000 years ago. For instance, he knew the factors determining the sex of a child.

- ❑ Sushruta is regarded as the 'father of plastic surgery'. He devised an artificial nose more than 2,500 years ago in India. He also performed eye operations for cataract.
- ❑ Homoeopathy, which was developed in Germany in the early 19th century, has over ten lakh practitioners in India today—more than anywhere else in the world. There are about 138 homoeopathic colleges spread all over the country at present. The Calcutta Homoeopathic Medical College and Hospital, founded in 1881, is the oldest and biggest in India.
- ❑ Prafulla Chandra Ray is considered the 'father of modern chemistry' in India. He converted the waste cattle bones into a medicinal compound from which a nerve tonic was made in 1896. The Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works, now one of the biggest chemical firms in the country, was started by him.
- ❑ Jagdish Chandra Bose was one of the pioneers of modern science in India. Though more famous as a biologist, he was a great physicist as well. His discovery of radio waves entitles him to be called the inventor of wireless telegraphy.
- ❑ Astronomy is the oldest scientific discipline man has known. India has produced a galaxy of astronomers. Indian astronomers contributed to the study of planets and their motions. Calculating planetary orbits led to developments in mathematics—the use of decimal system—which revolutionised astrophysics. Aryabhatta (AD 476) was the first astronomer in the world to arrive at the currently accepted theory that the earth is round and that it rotates on its own axis and revolves around the Sun, thus causing day and night. He was also the first to approximate the value of  $\pi$  to 3.1416 (the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter). Brahmagupta (AD 598) was the first to use mathematics to solve problems in astronomy.



- ❑ Meghnad Saha (1893-1959) did wonder about the stars and became a famous astrophysicist. He put forward a formula that enabled astronomers to know the temperature, pressure and many other aspects of the Sun and stars. The formula proved to be a breakthrough in astrophysics.
- ❑ The Vainu Bappu telescope, named after the great astronomer, at Kavalur in Tamil Nadu, is the largest optical telescope used by astrophysicists in Asia. Astrophysics is a branch of physics that deals with heavenly bodies. The largest steerable radio telescope, indigenously designed and built, is at Udagamandalam (Ooty) in Tamil Nadu.

# INDIA IN A CHANGING WORLD

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The United Nations Organisation was founded on culmination of the Second World War for promoting international peace and security. Though not independent at that time, India was one of the founding members of UNO. The end of the Second World War saw rapid decolonisation of the Afro-Asian countries. India became the first Asian country to attain liberation from colonial rule. As an independent nation, under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, India committed herself to world peace, anti-colonialism and anti-racialism. Article 51 of the Constitution of the Indian Union enjoins the Government of India to work for international peace and security. India has served UNO by being the Chairman of Korean Commission and sending troops to Congo and Gaza. In a treaty, signed in mid-1950s between India and China, the two countries formulated the five principles known as *Panchsheel* as an alternative to war and destruction. The five principles are: (1) Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, (2) Non-aggression, (3) Non-interference in each others'

internal affairs, (4) Equality and mutual benefit, (5) Peaceful co-existence.

The doctrine of *Panchsheel* was formulated against the background of the Cold War which had started soon after the Second World War. The Cold War had the following three components: (1) ideological conflict between Soviet Russia and Anglo-American capitalist bloc, (2) attempts on the part of the two superpowers—USA and USSR—to have allies and satellites, and (3) nuclear arms race between USA and USSR. Containment of Communism and Soviet Russia became the most dominant objective of the US foreign policy after the Second World War. Keeping this objective in view, USA concluded alliances of Asian states, such as Baghdad Pact, SEATO and CENTO. The US policymakers situated South Asia within their global strategy of anti-Soviet and anti-Communist containment. In such a situation, India along with Yugoslavia, Egypt and Indonesia, took the lead in initiating the non-aligned movement. Non-alignment was mainly viewed as an attempt to create “an international buffer between the Cold War Blocs.” From moral point of view, it was considered to be an alternative to the traditional concept of balance of power and alliance politics. Some observers viewed it as “a logical necessity from the point of view of India’s economic development.” However, Non-aligned movement became a widely popular movement.

In the post-war period, Stalin, the Soviet dictator, professed the dictum of inevitable conflict between Communist and Capitalist blocs. Consequently, anti-

Communism became "the dominant factor behind the US government's post-war geo-strategic thinking and actions." As John Kenneth Galbraith writes:

For most of the 71 years since the Russian Revolution, this was the capitalist's ever-present ever-gnawing worry. The most stalwart believers in capitalism, perhaps especially those most strongly committed, lived with the vision of an eventual socialist/communist take-over. It was in their subconscious as the wave of the future. American conservatives were always somewhat more committed to the Marxian threat than were contemporary Marxists.

Socialism or Communism has played certain useful roles in history. It has checked the growth of Fascism and Nazism. It has given impetus to popular, democratic and anti-imperialist movements. Under the influence of Socialism, the Great Depression of 1930s and Keynes' doctrine, Capitalism has undergone changes. Pure *laissez faire* has become outdated. The capitalist states have accepted responsibility for "maintaining a tolerable level of employment and economic growth." They have accepted rather reluctantly the notion of Welfare State, and recognised the importance of their intervention and role in certain areas, such as housing, transportation, health care and banking.

While Capitalism has undergone these changes, the defects of Socialism have also become glaringly evident. As confessed by the Soviet leaders like Khrushchev, Mikoyan and others in the Communist

regimes of Soviet Russia and East European countries, bureaucratic terror prevailed under which "individual liberty was ruthlessly suppressed and people shot and imprisoned on a mass scale." The bureaucracy in the Socialist system became heavy, stolid, unresponsive and inefficient. Socialist economy also failed to accommodate "the multitude of products, designs, and services that reflect consumer wants." With the collapse of Socialism in Russia and East European countries and introduction of market mechanism in socialist China, Socialism is no longer regarded as an alternative model of development.

The defects of Capitalism are no less glaring than those of Socialism. Unemployment, excess capacity, over-accumulation, poverty amidst plenty are the necessary features of Capitalism "even where it works best—in the advanced imperialist countries." Unemployment has become chronic in most of western countries. Market economy has also failed to provide adequate goods and services in such areas as housing, transportation and medical care.

Capitalist economy does not automatically ensure political liberty. Failure of liberal democracy in Italy and Germany gave rise to the emergence of Fascism and Nazism. A democratic state might also be anti-democratic and imperialistic in its dealings with other states. Internally democratic Britain was the greatest colonial power on earth. After the end of Second World War, USA has directly and indirectly been responsible for repression, brutality and anti-democratic behaviour in other countries. In terms of

frequency, she has more than doubled the number of Soviet military interventions abroad.

The concept of inevitable conflict between capitalist and communist systems created a tense atmosphere in which weapons culture flourished on both the sides. The race for armaments, particularly nuclear armaments, went on at the cost of development and welfare not only in relatively poorer Soviet Russia but also in affluent USA. Consequently, USA who was the world's largest creditor at the beginning of the present century became the world's largest debtor in 1980s. About the damaging social effect of USA's manufacture of nuclear armaments, Galbraith writes:

In the US public support for the voiceless poor of the great cities, for low-cost housing, for education expenditure, for much-needed maintenance of roads, bridges and other infrastructure (as regrettably it is called) and for environmental protection and control and retrieval of industrial wastes, was either eliminated or kept far below the level of obvious, even urgent need.

In the meantime with less military expenditure, countries such as Japan and Germany who suffered terribly as a result of the Second World War have been able to attain "phoenix-like recovery."

The superpower rivalry had implications for India mainly in terms of her national security and to a lesser extent in terms of ideology. USA's military pact with Pakistan and support to her on the Kashmir issue forced India to lean towards Soviet Russia.

Soviet Russia with veto power gave invaluable support to India on Kashmir question in the Security Council.

During China's invasion of India in 1962, Soviet Russia remained neutral and India got armaments from USA. But, subsequent developments such as rift between China and Soviet Russia, friendship between China and Pakistan, China's opposition to the independence of Bangladesh and USA's reluctance to support India on the issue of Bangladeshi refugees distanced India from USA and India came closer to USSR. As a result, India signed a treaty of peace, friendship and co-operation with USSR prior to liberating Bangladesh.

India became conscious of her security needs more than ever before after suffering humiliating defeat at the hands of China in 1962. India systematically started to build up her military capacity to meet any future challenge from Pakistan and China. Besides acquiring military hardware from USSR, India launched a number of indigenous programmes to manufacture weapons, tanks, guns, ships, submarines and aircraft. She also successfully launched projects to develop missile and satellite technology.

In the 1960s there was thaw in the Cold War. Consequently, Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was signed by USA, USSR and more than sixty countries. One hundred and seventy-eight countries to-date have become signatories to the treaty. India has not signed the treaty, as both China and Pakistan have nuclear ambitions. China, however, became a signatory to this treaty in 1991 after stockpiling

nuclear armaments. Pakistan has always frantically tried to acquire nuclear capability. India till recently had kept her nuclear options open after successfully conducting an underground nuclear explosion in the desert of Rajasthan in 1974. India's compulsions to manufacture nuclear weapons are aimed to deter China and Pakistan. As Amitabh Mattoo holds,

If India were to give up its nuclear option, unilaterally or otherwise, it would also mean that it has decided to play second fiddle to nuclear China for all time to come. Threats from China may seem unreal today, but it is almost inevitable that there will be a conflict of interests in future as both India and China seek to compete for power and influence in Asia. To an extent it has already started happening in Myanmar. True, it is difficult to conceive of any real scenario in which China could gain by nuclear intimidation. But what must be recognised is that China's nuclear might will give it a major psychological advantage which will make it impossible for New Delhi even to conceive of a relationship of equality with Beijing. Is that a future we want for our country?

— *Telegraph*, 5.6.1995

In spite of pressure from five nuclear powers—USA, Russia, Britain, France and China—to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, India has refused to be a signatory as the treaty fails to address India's security concerns and does not provide any time frame for "total and global" destruction of nuclear weapons. The Indian Ambassador at UNO,



Ms. Arundhati Ghose observed:

Continued nuclear weapons development and proliferation in our region which raises security concerns for us were in no way addressed by the text (of the treaty).

Some people have opined that the nuclear weapons policy of India is not really related to her security concerns. Indian politicians, bureaucrats and scientists have kept nuclear options open assuming that a nuclear India would command a high degree of international respect and possibly get a permanent seat in the Security Council like China. As Pramit Pal Chaudhuri holds:

The autarkic, isolationist India of the past 50 years needed atomic geegaws to feel good about itself. Nuclear self-sufficiency is import substitution for the ego. Twenty-first century India will be wasting its time if it looks to rockets and reactors, bombs and aircraft carriers to get it into the big time. The first prerequisite of an embryonic superpower is for Indians to be able to recognise the new currency of power (*Telegraph*, 28.6.1996).

I.K. Gujral, during his tenure as Prime Minister, raised the question of a permanent seat for India in the Security Council without inducting nuclear weapons, which was supported in certain quarters, including the US Congress. The next Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has made India a nuclear power. Some of the richest nations of the world like Japan and Germany do not evince any interest in the nuclear

weapons. Brazil and South Africa have dismantled their nuclear arsenals. Some say that after signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, India can manufacture nuclear weapons but should not test them. There are suggestions in some quarters for a national debate on nuclear policy and for dialogue with Pakistan to make the subcontinent a nuclear weapons-free zone. It may be noted here that USA's continued pampering of Pakistan has bedevilled the relation between India and Pakistan. For selling her products in China's vast markets, USA has also been pampering China in spite of the fact that she conducted her forty-fifth nuclear test on 29 July 1996 when forty-four nations' negotiations for Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty were in progress at Geneva.

India's military preparations, nuclear or non-nuclear, to meet the challenge of China and Pakistan have caused a tremendous drain on her resources and greatly hampered her developmental works. Looking at this competition, Ashok Mitra observes:

It hardly needs any recourse to intellectual callisthenics to arrive at the frightening conclusion. Should this deadly game of India increasing its defence allocation because Pakistan has raised it and *vice versa* go on and on, a time will come when both countries will exhaust their national income in entirety on defence spending alone. Hardly any resource will be left in the kitty, not just for development, but for sheer survival either.

With the collapse of Soviet Russia the world has become unipolar and non-alignment has lost its

relevance. While Soviet Russia is non-existent, USA has not yet been able to value India as a strategic ally. In the changing world scenario, India's place will be determined by her domestic achievements and compulsions and relations with neighbouring states in South Asia. India has to be economically self-reliant and militarily strong for commanding respect abroad. At the same time aggressive postures should be strictly avoided in normal circumstances.

In the years ahead the world will face in deeper magnitude the following crises—population explosion, environmental degradation and pollution, scarcity of resources and energy crisis. India with her large and alarmingly expanding population will be the worst sufferer of each of these crises. The population of India which is 94 crores now is growing at the rate of 2% a year. If the population explosion is not checked by birth control, it will give rise to infanticide, destructive wars, and misery for all except a powerful minority. Population explosion and exploitation and misuse of nature are responsible for the environmental degradation. Environmental stress is "determined by how many people, how much each person consumes and how much environmental damage that consumption entails." Population explosion will have much worse effect on urban areas than that on rural areas. Urban areas will face acute housing shortage, increased number of slums and squatters' settlements and more and more transport problems. In addition, unemployment and poverty will increase crimes in urban areas. The growth

of population and poverty of the people will also aggravate the housing problem in rural areas.

In the cities, air pollution caused by vehicles and factories would give rise to respiratory troubles, asthma, heart disease, cancer, and neurological problems. It is said that Delhi has today become the fourth largest polluted city of the world because of environmental pollution. Today, "the accumulation of pollutants in the atmosphere has long exceeded its capacity to cleanse itself." Scientists warn that the accumulation of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gases" in the atmosphere would lead to global warming and create ozone holes. According to a report of the Chinese Environmental Protection Agency, by 2050 AD, global warming will lead to the rise of sea levels, and inundation of 92,000 square kilometres of China's coast including that country's key centres of economic boom, such as Shanghai and Guangzhou. Protection of the world's atmosphere has now become a global responsibility. This can be achieved by reduction of emissions and dependence on fossil fuel and growth of forests. Unfortunately, there is want of global consensus and planning on this matter.

The problem of pollution and scarcity of water has become another crisis. The daily flow of untreated toxic waste products into the rivers has polluted them. The major rivers of India such as the Ganga and Jumna are highly polluted today. "The quality of Hooghly water and Eden gardens air," says Ramachandra Guha, "are representative of conditions in all Indian cities." In Delhi, everyday 515,000 kilo

litres of toxic waste water and 380 million litres of untreated sewage are being discharged into Jumna. There has been an alarming drop in the groundwater level because of the excessive and uncontrolled exploitation of the same. There is an acute shortage of safe water for drinking and domestic use.

The forests which absorb carbon dioxide, give life-giving oxygen and supply rains as well as many useful herbs and materials are being destroyed for the purpose of cultivation, habitation and urbanisation. In India, because of rapid deforestation forests may completely disappear in the coming years. The destruction of forests and natural environment without proper replenishment are likely to give rise to social tension because of sharp conflicts between competing groups of resource users. Side by side with deforestation, degradation and desertification of land is taking place at a rapid rate because of erosion, salinisation, waterlogging and use of fertilisers. According to UNEP estimate, at present, one-third of the world's land surface is threatened with desertification. According to the agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan, in India, "Altogether 166 million hectares out of a total area of 235 million hectares of arable land are assessed to be degraded." The present per capita arable land in the country is less than 0.2 hectares as against the desirable per capita minimum of 0.5 hectares. The use of pesticides in cultivation has also posed a menace, because these substances are entering into our bodies through the cereals, pulses, vegetable oil, fruits, vegetables, milk, milk products, meat, poultry, fish, etc.

In the twenty-first century, fossilised sources of energy such as coal and petrol will be exhausted. Alternative sources of energy such as nuclear energy would have to be found out or we would have to depend upon traditional sources of energy—water and plant. In fact, the survival of human race on earth depends upon the preservation and proper replenishment of plant and water resources.

# INTERNAL TRENDS

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Liberation from colonial rule offered the Indian leadership the challenge of a multitude of problems—political, economic and social—and the opportunity of building up a new India. The following national goals were enshrined in the constitution—a sovereign, democratic, secular and socialist republic, justice (social, economic and political), liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and opportunity and fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of nation.

## **Political Trends**

Democracy with universal adult franchise in spite of mass illiteracy and ignorance has been a great achievement of the Indian leadership and people in the post-independence era. But the building of a unified nation on the basis of ideals of democracy, secularism, social justice, economic development and distributive equity has been beset with many pitfalls. In practice, it has not been possible to assimilate “regionally diverse and linguistically plural, religious communities, which are further divided in terms of

class, income-cum-professional strata and political loyalties, into a pattern of national integration." The present national scenario is thus described by Prof. Bipan Chandra:

The inspiration and ideological-political structuring provided by the national liberation struggle are increasingly receding; the Congress party is directionless and in shambles; the secular opposition parties and groups are unable to cohere; the left is dissipated and bereft of any fresh ideas; communal parties and groups are growing and becoming respectable; the bureaucracy is demoralised and politicised, *i.e.*, it caters to whosoever is in power; the intelligentsia has defaulted and abdicated its social role, nor is any more trusted by the people—it is increasingly becoming irrelevant; the bourgeoisie has grown rapidly but has lost cohesion—this is signified by the absence of a dominant leadership of the class; the working class is fragmented by a multiplicity of trade union centres as also by the pattern of industrial development . . . the vast mass of agricultural labourers and poor peasants are completely disorganised and atomised.

The Indian political system has been stagnating for some time and rapidly disintegrating in the last few years. It has been losing its moral authority among the people. It has perhaps even become dysfunctional. It tends to corrode everything and everyone it touches. Increasingly it weighs heavily on civil society and acts as a noose around it.



The forces of nationalism, democracy development and social equity and justice are unable to put forward a fresh agenda. Those who are inspired by Gandhi-Nehru framework are failing to adapt and develop it to meet the challenges, posed by the very successes and failures of this framework as also by the massive changes the world has undergone in the last two decades or so.

The democratic polity in India has been confronted with challenges like communalism (majority as well as minority), religious fundamentalism, casteism, ethnic problem, regional imbalance, regionalism, separatism, secession, linguistic problem and political instability.

Three brands of communalism—Hindu, Muslim and Sikh—have come out prominently in the national life of India. Hindu communalism in its extreme form contemplates the establishment of a *Hindu Rashtra* (a Hindu theocracy in which the non-Hindus will be treated as second grade citizens). Muslim communalism aims at separate identity of Muslims through Muslim Personal Law, obedience to *Shariat* and opposition to uniform civil code. Sikh communalism in its extreme form went to the extent of demanding a sovereign state of Khalistan. Communalism is distinct from attachment to a religion or religiosity. It is a negative ideology, aiming at politicising a religious community, opposed to other communities and unity of nation. It is opposed to the nationally accepted ideal of secularism which seeks to separate religion from politics while allowing every individual religious

freedom in private life and giving equal regard to all religions. Communalism weakens the nation, causes disharmony in social life and diverts the attention of people from basic problems like poverty, illiteracy and disease.

Communalism as an ideology with definite goals has not originated from the masses—Hindu, Muslim or Sikh—who can, however, be communally mobilised by the convinced communalists. Our past experiences of Shah Bano case, attacks on a secular Muslim academic, Mushirul Hasan, in Jamia Milia Islamia University, demolition of Babri Masjid, and the opposition of Muslim fundamentalists to Taslima Nasreen in Bangladesh, show that certain interest groups nourish and nurture communalism; they want to make capital out of their religious identity without judging issues impartially. Explaining the growth of communalism among the Muslims, Firoz Bakht Ahmed writes:

According to Mr. Farooq Ahmed, editor of the Urdu weekly, *Kashif*, Muslims began to live in a system of uninstitutionalised apartheid. Muslims and Hindus went in separate ways, to their own enclaves. Political middlemen emerged concomitantly, posing as interlocutors for the communities, picking on emotional issues that would tighten their stranglehold and divert attention from economic issues.

As a result, India has periodically witnessed communal flare-ups over issues such as the *Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi* imbroglio, the Jamia Milia agitation, the Shah Bano

case and the Salman Rushdie affair. These issues are of no relevance to the poor illiterate Muslim. Their real problems, according to the journalist Mr. Saeed Naqvi, concern jobs, educational backwardness, particularly for women and the communalisation of the police force. None of these problems has been addressed by Muslim religious leaders who pretend to be the spokesmen for their community.

According to Mr. Zafar Jung, a member of the Delhi Waqf Board, Muslims ought to have surrendered the Babri Mosque in the interests of peace and communal harmony, thereby exerting a moral pressure on the Hindus. He argues that the Vishwa Hindu Parishad itself may have turned out to be the *masjid's* protector, had the ball been in its court. Once Muslims were convinced (that) Hindus were not out to humiliate them, they would have joined in the building of a grand Ramajnamabhoomi temple.

But this was not to be. The main reason for communal disharmony is that Muslim leaders remained mere power-brokers. They sought state patronage by paying lip service to the problems of the Muslim community. Burdened by the populist rhetoric of its leaders and the militancy of ill-educated clerics and youths, the Muslim community now stands at the crossroads.

M. Aslam holds that the integration of Muslims into secular fabric has been hampered by the role of the traditional Muslim leaders and the influence of Muslim fundamentalists. The political parties with

secular credentials have wooed the Muslim fundamentalists for getting support of the Muslim voters in elections, as has been found in Shah Bano case. Shah Bano, an old Muslim woman and mother of five children, had been deserted by her husband Mohammad Ahmed Khan who went for a younger woman. She sued her husband for alimony. The lower courts gave judgement in her favour. But her husband pleaded that the case was within the purview of Muslim Personal Law and beyond the jurisdiction of civil courts. He carried the legal battle to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court finally ruled that maintenance to a divorced wife was governed by Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code (Cr. P.C.), according to which a divorced wife was entitled to financial relief regardless of her religion. The orthodox Muslims saw in this judgement a prelude to uniform civil code and urged the Muslims to protest against the judgement and even slandered Shah Bano as un-Islamic. The Rajiv Gandhi Government yielded to the pressure of orthodox Muslims and got the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act passed, which placed the Muslim women beyond the purview of Section 125, and rendered the Supreme Court's ruling in Shah Bano case untenable. Shah Bano's loss was a loss for Muslim women, and a victory for the Muslim orthodoxy. The "secular" Government of Rajiv Gandhi became instrumental in creating such a state of affairs. Impartial Muslims are aware of the game that is being played on them by the "Secular" political parties and Muslim religio-feudal leadership.

The demolition of Babri mosque, an outrageous and illegal act which Hindu communalists would call a spontaneous act of the masses, appears to be politically motivated; the whole thing appears to have been planned to rouse Hindu sentiments in favour of the Hindutva ideology. In the 1996 and 1998 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress and the Janata Dal (the leading partner of United Front) leaders raised their slogan of secularism against the Hindutva ideology of Bharatiya Janata Party. The secularist propaganda does not appear to have significantly influenced the electorate. In the 1996 elections, Bharatiya Janata Party emerged as the largest single party and formed government which soon fell after 13 days because of the defeat on confidence vote. Thereafter, the United Front formed government with the support of Congress from outside. On the eve of the 1998 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress President Sitaram Kesari, in a bid to woo the Muslim electorate, apologised to them for the failure of the Congress government at the centre (led by P.V. Narasimha Rao) to prevent the demolition of the Babri mosque at Ayodhya. Bharatiya Janata Party again came out as the largest single party in the elections of 1998 and formed government with the support of regional parties. Because of fractured electoral verdict and lack of absolute majority in the Lok Sabha, the BJP softened its stand on contentious issues like the building of Ram temple at Ayodhya, abrogation of Kashmir's special status, uniform civil code and cow slaughter.

Just as communalism is politicisation of religion and religious identity, casteism is politicisation of caste. Casteism owes its origin to the policy of reservation, introduced by the colonial government. During colonial era, reservation had been introduced for Scheduled Castes, backward tribes and intermediary backward castes (in South India). The Constitution of the Indian Union provides for reservation in case of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other socially and educationally backward classes. Since independence various South Indian states have introduced reservation in case of all these three categories. During his tenure as Prime Minister in the Janata Government in 1989, V.P. Singh took steps to implement reservation for other backward castes on a national scale on the basis of Mandal Commission's recommendation. Against this step, there was a bitter reaction from certain sections of the population. Casteism has played an important role in the electoral politics. Political parties such as Bahujan Samaj Party and Samajwadi Party have been formed along caste lines by backward castes for gaining political power. Some have viewed casteism as an evil, as it tends to perpetuate caste system, which is based on inequality, discrimination and oppression—a system which our social reformers have all along been trying to abolish. The way V.P. Singh and Janata Government gave a national character to caste-based politics, it has converted all-India caste divide into two hostile groups. According to V.P. Singh caste-based politics has enabled backward castes to achieve

social justice through political power. Rajni Kothari, a political scientist, supports politicisation of caste in the following words:

Considerable change is involved in all this with caste getting politicised and politics being inhabited by caste identities and animosities that are expressing themselves following the growing challenge from the bottom of the caste system to the hegemonistic structures at the top and at intermediate levels. I had, more than twenty years ago, summed this all up thus: casteism in politics is no more and no less than politicisation of caste. Today with the far greater quickening of the process of politicisation, transforming the very functioning of the caste system, pushing out its ritual and hierarchical dimensions and replacing them by struggles for ascendancy and equality through staking claim to power I would like to repeat that summation with still greater confidence. Then I was reading into our social reality, what appeared to be immanent in it. Today it is already happening—the transformation of caste and caste consciousness under the impact of democratic politics and class conflict.

Caste, in short, designed in one age to be a custodian of tradition can become a harbinger of change in another. This depends on the growth of the politicisation of a political strategy aimed at social transformation. To me it seems that this process has already begun and is under way.

The politicisation of caste may lead to disharmony

and tension in social life and in distorted form may hamper national integration. Today the politicians are playing caste cards for getting votes. V.P. Singh's mandalisation of Indian politics was based on the political arithmetic of reducing the support base of Bharatiya Janata Party to a minority of upper caste Hindus.

Integration of tribals, who constitute seven per cent of the population of the country inhabiting different regions, in the mainstream of national life poses a serious problem. They have been exploited in the past by non-tribals through moneylending, bonded labour and land alienation. The process of development, political and economic, has not reached tribal masses. Moreover, at various levels there is absence of meaningful communication between the Government and the tribal people. Of late, some articulate people have emerged among the tribals. They are keen on maintaining the identity of tribals. Agitations, such as Jharkhand in Bihar and Bodoland in Assam, are being carried on to create homelands for certain tribal groups.

Growth of regionalism and regional imbalance has posed obstacles to harmonious nation-building. From the beginning of the present century, regional feelings have developed along linguistic lines. Formation of linguistic provinces has led to inter-state boundary conflicts. There is inter-state inequality in the spheres of industrial development. Balanced regional development has been difficult because some states are being allocated larger amounts in per capita terms at the cost of others.



Not satisfied with the present constitutional status of centre-state relations, some state governments like the DMK Government in Tamil Nadu, Marxist Government in West Bengal, and the Akali Party of Punjab have demanded greater autonomy for the states. A number of regional political parties such as DMK, National Conference (Kashmir), Telugu Desam, Akali, Assam Gana Parishad, Tamil Manila Congress, Shiv Sena, Haryana Vikas Party have come up. In the 1996 Lok Sabha elections, they fared better than national political parties like Congress and Janata Dal. The CPM, though an ideology-based party, has remained confined to West Bengal. Marginalisation of national parties threatens the government at the centre with political instability, as has been found after the Lok Sabha elections of 1996 and 1998. In the 1998 Lok Sabha elections, the regional parties more or less maintained their earlier hold on the electorate, the Congress party managed to retrieve itself from total collapse, the United Front was thoroughly marginalised and crippled and Bharatiya Janata Party emerged as the largest party, but short of absolute majority. Consequently, a shaky government was formed by the BJP leader A.B. Vajpayee on the basis of an alliance between the BJP and the regional parties (such as AIADMK, Trinamul Congress, etc.) and issue-based support of Telugu Desam, National Conference (Kashmir) and Assam Gana Parishad. There was a basic contradiction in this alliance which came to surface many times, because BJP dreamt of a homogeneous India while its regional allies were committed to regional issues. Some viewed the BJP-

led coalition as a turning point, signalling the break-up of old consensus and emergence of a new one. Evidently, the era of coalition seems to have arrived, but the parties and groups who coalesced before and after 1998 elections failed to provide a credible and stable framework of governance.

Terrorist activities, based on separatist or secessionist plans, went on for years in Punjab and are continuing in Kashmir and Assam. In Kashmir for years the Government could not conduct elections for Parliament as well as for the State Legislature owing to the lawless situation caused by terrorist activities. Bomb explosions have taken place even in cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Calcutta through terrorist plans.

If terrorism and violence triumph, the operation of secular democracy will be jeopardised. The empowerment of the people which is the essence of democracy can be realised only through a non-violent social order. Criminalisation of politics has been going on at a rapid pace. A lot of violence is seen at the time of elections. It is alleged that some politicians are themselves criminals or parties to criminal activities.

There is a deplorable lack of people's participation in the political and developmental processes. Lack of public spirit among the masses and the apathy of intelligentsia have made the political system a handmaid of the corrupt politicians and vested interests. People's participation in the political process is seen only at the time of elections. People do not vote by assessing the policies, programmes and performance of political parties. They vote either for a

change or for an issue roused by public hysteria. The way political parties and politicians are making alliances for victory at polls and for capturing power and the way people are expressing their anti-incumbency sentiments in the elections show the absence of ideological commitment among the politicians as well as the electorate. There is a growing cynicism about the political system which has failed to command moral authority among the people.

Corruption and money power have gripped the political system. Numerous scams and deals involving bribery, indicate the involvement of top politicians, bureaucrats and their relations in illicit financial transactions. There is a growing unholy nexus among politicians, businessmen, bureaucrats and criminals. For many politicians, politics has become a means to acquire power and wealth. Bureaucracy has become lethargic, inefficient and corrupt. There is no work culture, because people are lethargic and those who are at the helm of affairs value sycophancy and compliance and not actual work. In his autobiography written by Jawaharlal Nehru during the freedom struggle, he expressed the following hope about bureaucracy in post-independence era:

The new India must be served by earnest, efficient workers who have an ardent faith in the cause they serve and are bent on achievement, and work for the joy and glory of it and not for the attraction of high salaries. The money motive must be reduced to a minimum.

The hope has remained unrealised.

## **Economic Trends**

India inherited from the colonial rule an economy which had remained under the stranglehold of British capital for generations. At the time of independence, the Indian agriculture was in a stagnant condition with a very low per capita production; the Indian industry had a limited base, mostly consisting of light labour-intensive consumer goods industries; poverty and illiteracy were rampant among the masses. The basic objective of the Indian leadership after independence was to attain self-reliance in industry and agriculture and distributive justice through planning. Although the Congress party officially committed itself to the ideal of socialistic pattern of society and democratic socialism, and constitutionally proclaimed India a socialist country, it followed a mixed economy which was a mixture of capitalism and public sector and welfare economics. Nehru explained his policy towards capitalists in the following words:

As long as these industries are kept going and are employing many people, we would rather use our resources for developing new projects and employing more people. If these industries are well-managed privately, we see no need for nationalisation at any time.

While most of the consumer goods industries remained in the private sector, the public sector undertook power production, irrigation, heavy industry, transport and communication. The government

recognised and emphasised the role of private sector and provided loans and other aids to the capitalists. But at the same time private sector was made subject to the government's control. The opening of an industry in private sector required a licence. Expansion of an existing unit required clearance from the government. Import of new equipment, raw materials and spares required government's approval. Fixation of the price of products was also subjected to government's formal or informal control. In public sector, private capitalists played their role through the contract system. To help the growth of industrialisation within the country, the government imposed restrictions on imports.

To make the economy self-generating, restrictions were imposed on the investment of foreign capital in private sector. But the government became heavily dependent on foreign technology and foreign loans because of want of technical know-how and resources within the country for the development of industries in public sector. Of course, their ultimate objective was to produce indigenous capital goods and machinery for the purpose of import substitution.

Though the government, headed by Nehru, laid great emphasis on industries, particularly heavy industries, important changes in agrarian sector were also introduced. First, attempts were made to revolutionise land relations in the villages by the abolition of Zamindari and intermediary system and introduction of tenancy reforms. Secondly, to attain self-sufficiency in agricultural production, irrigation

projects were taken up and farmers provided with improved seeds, fertilisers and insecticides at subsidised rates. Thirdly, to foster the all-round development of villages Community Development Blocks, Co-operative Societies and Panchayat Raj were introduced. Fourthly, measures were taken to regulate moneylending and save the peasants from exploitation by moneylenders. Fifthly, some measures were adopted for development of the small scale industries. Sixthly, the government assumed special responsibility for the development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Considerable economic growth has taken place through planning since independence. During the first three decades, the annual growth rate was 3.5 per cent. During the fourth decade, it was 5 per cent. India's industrial base has been widened and diversified. At the time of independence, industries mostly produced cotton and jute textiles; metal, cement and engineering industries were in their infancy. Today industries manufacture a variety of consumer goods such as automobiles, electronics, refrigerators, washing machines, and all important industrial raw materials such as metals, metal alloys, fertilisers, petro-chemicals, electrical and non-electrical machinery and transport equipment. The indigenous industrial entrepreneur class has grown and new industrial centres have emerged.

In agriculture too, self-sufficiency has been attained through irrigation facilities and use of fertilisers and insecticides and price-support. The

agricultural growth took place at the rate of 2.54 per cent from 1950 to 1995, and at the rate of 3.5 per cent from 1985 to 1990. The country has made a remarkable breakthrough in wheat production. Because of growth of food production and efficient public distribution system, famines or periods of food scarcity have been mostly minimised.

The economic growth has, however, failed to achieve the desired socio-economic transformation, *i.e.*, the goal of development, based on distributive justice. While the rich have become richer, the poor have benefited much less from economic development. There is concentration of wealth among the largest twenty business houses who control twenty-five per cent of the net assets of the private corporate sector. On the whole, the upper twenty per cent of the rural and urban households earn fifty per cent of India's income and consume fifty per cent of the goods. The per capita income has not increased satisfactorily. About the condition of poor Indian masses, Robert W. Stern writes:

Through all its shifts in emphasis—from aid to trade, from capital accumulation to technical assistance, from despair to dependency and so forth—development economics has tended to measure and evaluate change in per capita terms. And in these terms, India's poverty is almost though not quite changeless. The world's largest national pool of poor people is in India and the amelioration of their poverty has been slight. What I am suggesting here is that India's development is not taking place per capita. It

is taking place in the upper quintile of its households. The poor outnumber the middle classes, but the poor are not the directors of change, nor its leading participants and certainly not its major beneficiaries. Neither are they likely to become so—not through proletarian revolution whose occurrence in the foreseeable future becomes increasingly unlikely as bourgeois revolution proceeds; not by “direct action” campaigns, *e.g.*, general strikes; not by capturing the instrumentalities of parliamentary democracy—nor by dragging bourgeois revolution to a halt with the inertia of their poverty. The poor are not uniformly passive. In sections, they are increasingly assertive, non-violently and violently. Indian governments are aware of their assertiveness and, when pressed respond to it. The poor affect the course of change and its pace, including the pace of embourgeoisment. But the engine of change is in the hands of the middle classes. Substantial changes in Indian society are in the upper quintile and up into the upper quintile. From these changes, there have been varying trickle-down effects, which in general become thinner as they filter downward.

Population explosion has been an important factor responsible for keeping the per capita income at a lower level. As Jawaharlal Nehru said: “To plan when population growth is unchecked is like building a house where the ground is constantly flooded.”

Inflation, poverty and unemployment have been the constant features of Indian economic life. Deficit



financing, indirect taxation, and circulation of black money have caused inflation. The manpower is not properly mobilised for developmental work. There is lack of employment opportunities for the people in the villages. In the urban areas, capital-intensive industries give employment to a limited number of skilled people. Unemployment is found both among the educated and uneducated. Due to want of link between education and vocation, many among the youth find it impossible to employ themselves on coming out of colleges and universities.

Throughout the eighties, the Indian Government had to incur heavy expenditure because of investment in public sector—sixfold increase in subsidy (from Rs. 3,000 crore to Rs. 18,000 crore) and fourfold increase in defence expenditure (from Rs. 3800 crore to Rs. 16,000 crore). Such heavy expenditure caused budget deficits, huge external and internal public debt, and balance of payments deficit with the rest of the world. The balance of payments position worsened owing to non-improvement in exports. In early 1990s, India's indebtedness abroad was \$75 billion which was more than four times India's annual export earnings. The poor performance in the public sector was an important factor responsible for this economic crisis. Owing to inefficient management, overmanning, wastage of resources and corruption, the public sector could not finance fresh investments from internal sources and depended on borrowed funds. On the other hand, private sector showed enormous profits despite the official restrictions imposed on it.

In early 1990s, when P.V. Narasimha Rao became the Prime Minister, India was facing an unprecedented foreign exchange crisis. The crisis was further aggravated by a sharp rise in oil prices and withdrawal of foreign currency deposits. The foreign exchange reserves fell to an all-time low of \$1.1 billion. In this situation, under pressure from World Bank, International Monetary Fund and other foreign governments, who were approached for financial assistance to manage the balance of payments problem, the Indian government introduced a package of economic reforms, known as the New Economic Policy. The important features of this New Economic Policy are as follows:

- (1) Restrictions on investment of capital by foreign companies (multinationals) were withdrawn. Liberal terms (including import liberalisation) were promised to them.
- (2) Drastic cuts were made in food and fertiliser subsidies on the ground that such subsidies helped only the rich farmers.
- (3) Budgetary provision for investment in public sector was reduced.
- (4) Bureaucratic control on private sector was relaxed. Trade, technology and capital inflow were liberalised. It was left to the states to introduce de-regulation and liberalisation.
- (5) While encouraging the investment of capital (foreign and Indian) in the private sector, the Government wanted public sector to operate

on commercial principles, *i.e.*, without budgetary support.

The New Economic Policy has been summed up in three words—globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation. According to C.T. Kurien the New Economic Policy is based on three “valid contentions” :

- (1) The Indian economy has been excessively bureaucratised and needs to be liberalised.
- (2) Many public sector enterprises are in bad shape and have to be re-structured.
- (3) Markets can play a more prominent role in the Indian economy.

Though by applying the market mechanism we can regulate our economy in certain ways, we cannot ensure through this mechanism all supplies and services which a modern welfare state is required to provide to its citizens. Through market we cannot alleviate poverty or solve the problem of unemployment. Under no circumstances, the public sector can be dismantled.

About the investment of foreign capital and integration of India into global economy, both optimistic and pessimistic opinions have been expressed. The optimistic view is that free trade and free flow of capital and technology will foster healthy industrial growth and hasten technological upgradation. On the pessimistic side, the view is expressed that the backward economy of India would be subordinated to the metropolitan capital; that the

foreign companies instead of promoting technological upgradation may perpetuate technological backwardness; that they will invest capital in such areas where they can earn profit, and not where India actually needs; that they would invest capital on their terms. Hence we have to be cautious and well-informed while allowing foreign companies to invest their capital. We have to bear in mind that our development is ultimately dependent on mobilisation of our resources—human and natural. Foreign capital can only act as a catalyst of development.

While the full implications of the policy of economic liberalisation are yet to come out, it has so far produced only mixed results and has been found to be far from being a panacea for the country's economic ills. Liberalisation has led to the restructuring of economy in the industrial, financial and external trade sectors. Foreign exchange reserves have increased. The liberalised policies on foreign exchange transactions have checked capital flight from India by making it less attractive to hold money abroad. The industrial growth rate has shown upward trend, notwithstanding occasional dips attributed to infrastructural constraints and high rate of interest. Exports increased sharply during the initial years of liberalisation, though there has been a significant fall since then. We must realise that economic liberalisation can help our economy only if the sluggish economy is invigorated and growth rate and exports are raised.

Liberalisation has yielded limited success with regard to inflation. For the first few years, *i.e.*, till

June 1996, the annual rate of inflation remained below five per cent. Thereafter, increase in the price of crude petroleum and the continuous rise in the wholesale price index have threatened to raise the rate of inflation. The inflation caused by hike in the price of crude can be checked by raising the price of petroleum products, but the real cause of our concern today is the rise in the price of wheat and rice, which can only be checked by the healthy growth of agriculture.

Liberalisation has failed to attract investment of foreign capital to the extent it was expected. The prevailing political uncertainty partly explains the reluctance of the foreign investors to invest capital in India. The BJP-led coalition at the centre raised suspicions regarding further investment of foreign capital as the BJP is emotively committed to Swadeshi. Unstable coalition governments, which are going to be the order of the day, may deter entrepreneurs from taking up new investment projects.

Liberalisation, it is now realised, can at best benefit the urban middle classes; it cannot solve the problems of poverty and unemployment in urban and particularly rural areas. Unemployment has increased and the proportion of the population living below the poverty line has gone up since initiation of liberalisation. It is now realised that no programme of economic liberalisation can succeed unless the state plays a promotional role in agriculture and provides such essential services in rural areas as drinking water, sanitation, roads, rural credit, irrigation, subsidised supply of food, fertilisers and agricultural

machinery. The benefits of economic development should be shared as widely as possible. The state should act as a powerful interlocutor on behalf of the deprived interests in democracy. No government worth the name can ignore its responsibility towards the masses on the pretext of economic compulsions. As Jawaharlal Nehru observed:

The service of India means the service of millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity.

It has been possible for our planners and policymakers to pay adequate attention to the villages where the vast majority of our people live. In fact, the problems of rural areas are of such a magnitude and nature that they can be solved basically through the localised efforts of the people living in rural areas. At macro level or government level, the following steps have already been taken—abolition of Zamindari or feudal intermediary system, implementation of river valley projects, large scale production of fertilisers, and introduction of community development and intensive area development programmes. The green revolution in the country, particularly in the states of Punjab, Haryana, UP and Tamil Nadu, has made the country self-sufficient in food production. The peasants have been able to sell their agricultural surplus in the market and improve their standards of living by purchasing consumer goods. Consequently, a tremendous monetisation of agricultural economy has taken place.

We should not, however, feel complacent about our agricultural production. If population goes on increasing, it will be difficult to maintain the per capita availability of foodgrains. The land reforms and green revolution have given more benefits to the rich landowners or capitalist farmers than to the landless cultivators. The rich farmers have been able to avail facilities, provided by the Government, such as seeds, fertilisers, irrigation, credit, marketing opportunities and loans. The middle and poor peasants have failed to compete with them. Their economic condition has worsened as a result of unequal competition.

We have not been able to implement certain much-needed agrarian reforms. Holdings have to be consolidated. Fragmentation of holdings has made agricultural improvement impossible, particularly in eastern India.

We need diversification of agriculture through optimum use of land and water. Preservation and development of land and water resources and afforestation have, therefore, become a great necessity.

The quality of life and standards of living have remained deplorable for many in the villages. Lack of adequate housing, lack of good roads, and absence of drainage, sanitation and sewerage are problems yet to be solved. Fuel remains an acute problem in the villages. The installation of biogas plants can solve this problem as well as provide manure.

Poverty and unemployment are longstanding problems in the villages. Agriculture only provides seasonal employment. Some observers are of the

opinion that in a labour-surplus country like India, agriculture and labour-intensive industries should have been given priority over capital-intensive industries. Employment opportunity can be created in the villages through diversification of agriculture, development of animal husbandry, irrigation works, afforestation, soil conservation, small scale industries and sanitation. Now due to lack of employment opportunities in the villages, people are flocking to urban centres in search of jobs. This exodus from villages to cities may give rise to shortage of labour in the villages.

Though after independence we have set up universities specialising in agriculture and animal husbandry, the gamut of knowledge emanating from them hardly reaches the villagers. Our education system has not been properly geared to produce expert farmers, foresters, dairymen, irrigation specialists and nutritionists, etc.

### **Social Trends**

The pluralist Indian society, divided along the lines of religion, caste, ethnicity, class, and income is today undergoing a process of transformation, ridden with tension and conflict, because of operation of multiplicity of forces such as westernisation, modernisation, urbanisation, industrialisation, mobility (social and occupational), growth of mass media like radio, cinema and television, and democratisation. The outcome of the operation of these forces in a traditional society is a bundle of contradictions. The



most fundamental contradiction is between the traditional pattern and the modernist approach. On the one hand, in inter-caste relations the notions of ascribed status and hierarchy are under attack and the observance of ritual purity and pollution is being eroded in public institutions, public transport systems, and in urban and industrial areas. On the other hand, grouping or party formation (political and non-political) is taking place along the lines of castes, and conflicts are taking place particularly in rural areas because of increasing assertion of right to equality by socially backward or submerged classes. However, on the whole, modern horizontal class formation is cutting down the traditional vertical caste groups. While gender discrimination is under attack, feminists are opposing the domestication and subjugation of women and there is increasing appearance of women in public life in different capacities; on the other hand, women (even though educated) are being subjected to torture at home, and restrictions are being imposed on their social exposures and interaction on the plea of guarding their 'chastity' or 'purity'.

During the nationalist movement, because of the Gandhian de-sexualised approach, a large number of women took part in the movement. This could be possible because of Gandhi's stress on non-violence and restraint in all fields including man-woman relations. In the post-independence era, partly because of growth of education and social consciousness and partly because of economic compulsions

more and more women are seeking employment outside home (in the Government, public as well as private sectors). In spite of social prejudices, women are also entering into professions like defence, law, medicine, cinema, and business enterprises.

In the traditional joint family system prevalent in the rural society, women were being subjected to seclusion and subjugation in their husbands' homes. In modern nuclear families of the urban areas women are free from such restrictions. But as the society becomes more and more urbanised, tensions in the marital life increase resulting in separations and divorces as found in the west. In our culture, the stigma against the remarriage of divorcee women still remains quite strong. As a result of entry into male-dominated public life, women are being exposed to certain risks like sexual abuse, harassment and slander.

In spite of constitutional equality and protective laws, Hindu women are not able to assert their rights in the patriarchal male-dominated society in many cases. As held by late Indira Gandhi, the general texture of our society does not permit women to actually benefit from the rights which are theirs in theory. In some cases, housewives are misusing the protective laws against their husbands. Unequal status of women is inherent in Hindu tradition. The evil of dowry is linked with the virtual denial of property share to women. The fate of Muslim women is worse than that of their Hindu counterparts, subjected as they are to polygamy and easy divorce,

as provided in Muslim Personal Law. They are also denied alimony in case of divorce.

If women remain educationally backward and socially subjugated, they will not be able to meaningfully participate in the developmental process. Women are still lagging behind men in literacy. According to the 1991 Census, at national level, female literacy is 39.42 per cent as compared with male literacy of 63.68 per cent. Female literacy is the highest in Kerala (65.73%). It is said that because of equality of sexes and high female literacy and labour participation, women of Kerala have been able to participate in the development process as well as bring down the fertility rate. Fortunately, at present, female literacy is increasing faster than male literacy.

In the modern consumerist male-dominated society, woman is being sexually exploited through advertisement, cinema and the practice of prostitution in urban areas. As observed by Indraneel Mukherjee:

“In a society conditioned and constructed by the male gaze, any advertisement using the image of a woman sells better and faster than the one which does without such tactics. The underlying assumption is that both the articles and the image are consumer products. In order to maintain and consolidate its own (Male) regime, women had to be marginalised as the Other. When centuries of marginalisation could not suppress voices of protest, grouped together in the movement called *feminism*, patriarchy started to appropriate, hegemonise and homogenise everything it had signified as the Other.”

Women are insecure and subjected to discrimination. Woman workers are sexually harassed and exploited. Widowhood, divorce and single status make women vulnerable to sexual advance. Society attaches weight to women's chastity while tolerating men's promiscuity. Widowers can marry, but not widows. While educating children, parents discriminate between male and female children. Many female infants die because of parental negligence. Recently, people have started killing female foetus. Women are more vulnerable to the consequences of poverty and malnutrition than men. There is inter-linkage between poverty and the low rate of literacy among women. In spite of Equal Remuneration Act of 1976, women are paid less wages in unorganised sectors.

Women's problems are, however, receiving increasing attention from government, social workers, political parties and researchers. While efforts are being made to empower them by special measures, women have started organisations to fight for equality of status and rights. Feminism is defined as the "principle that women should have political, economic and social rights equal to those of men." Of late, the feminists have demanded reservation of 33 per cent of posts in government and seats in the legislatures for improving women's social status through political and administrative empowerment. While political parties are supporting this demand in principle, doubts have been expressed whether such a measure will help women in general or those who are already socially and educationally advanced and distort or disturb the

harmonious relation between men and women in family and society.

As a result of industrialisation and urbanisation and green revolution, a constantly growing middle class is emerging in urban and rural areas. This class which dominates industry, politics, business and bureaucracy is mostly enjoying the benefits of development. As Robert W. Stern says:

... Indian society is changing rapidly and... the dominant pattern of change is bourgeois revolution. Its primary causes are in the Indian variants of capitalist economic growth and democratic political development and in the responses to these from an Indian society that antedates them. The basic characteristics of bourgeois revolution in India are: increasing hegemony of the middle classes—rural and urban, national and provincial—in virtually all spheres of Indian society; increasing embourgeoisment of Indians, their interests and values; and the establishment of new institutions and the maintenance or refurbishment of old ones that foster bourgeois hegemony and embourgeoisment. . . . the upper twenty per cent of India's rural households operate about sixty per cent of its agricultural land; and that the upper twenty per cent of its rural and urban households earn about fifty per cent of India's income and consume about fifty per cent of its goods.

The bourgeoisie can be divided into various classes on the basis of profession, income and strata. The upper class in bourgeoisie "live a life of opulence, with

every comfort that money can buy and with spare resources that they do not know how to use.”

The growth of urbanisation and industrialisation has resulted in the deterioration of urban environment, put pressure and strain on public utilities, roads, means of transport, accommodation, sanitation, schools, hostels and recreational facilities and created acute housing problem as well as slums. The lumpen proletariat, living in slums, face abject poverty, and problems of unemployment, housing, sanitation, health and education. Cut off from traditional moorings, and unable to adapt to the urban ethos, they are living in cultural void.

Problems of urban life such as bad housing, overcrowding, tension, and frustration have engendered such social evils as disintegration of family life, crime, delinquency, alcoholism and prostitution.

The reluctance of intelligentsia to play any active or creative role in social life and politics and their consequent alienation from the masses have been an unhealthy social trend in the post-independence era. They seek jobs, crave for social prestige and status and are anxious for fellowships and foreign travel. Very few intellectuals are found in politics which is dominated by “power-hungry non-intellectuals, lacking any vision of a better and more meaningful life.” Consequently, the society has been “denuded of an encompassing vision of a creatively resurgent Indian society,” and “a definite and well-defined sense

of direction" and has become subject to expediency, ad-hocism and uncertainty.

A consumerist culture is growing among the people. People want to have magnificent bungalows, cars, and other amenities and luxuries of life. The lower ranks in the bourgeoisie, not to speak of the lower middle classes in the urban and lower areas, find it difficult to afford all amenities and luxuries because of inflationary trends.

In spite of growth of science and technology, scientific temper or outlook has not been inculcated. Religion holds sway on the lives of even intellectuals and scientists, because it caters to their psychological needs, gives solace in frustration—the natural product of competitive social life—and fills void in their lives. Many Indian intellectuals are schizophrenic in nature; publicly they profess scientific outlook, and privately they need the help of a superhuman power. A.R. Desai gives the following description of Indian bourgeoisie:

This elite, comprising the upper and upper-middle strata, has been elaborating a hybrid culture which is decadently luxuriant, which is modern in form but conservative and status-preserving in essence, which is exhibiting itself through a display of glittering apparels made of nylons, shark skin, decarons and rayons, with their standardised tailored Business, Ambassadorial, Executive, diplomatic and other new status-patterned styles for the males and vanity bags, puffs, lip-sticks, long-nails and ornamental attires for the women on one hand and petty caste,

religious and superstitious life and feudal world outlook on the other. Thus an urban upper cultural tradition has been emerging which is predominantly hybrid, sophisticated, isolated from the masses, revivalist in essence, double-faced and basically combining the authoritarian upper class values with upper caste values of both capitalist and feudal India respectively.

In this age of internationalism—where time and space have been conquered by aeroplanes and electronic media like radio and television—many educated youths in India are turning to western pop music and dance, cabaret, and orchestra, even though attempts have been made since independence through Governmental agencies and patronage to preserve traditional art forms (classical as well as popular) and crafts. Traditional dance forms like Kathak (from north), Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi and Kathakali (from south), Odissi and Chhau (from Orissa) and Manipuri (from Manipur) are being given publicity at national and international forums (in India Festivals organised abroad). These art forms have, however, been de-contextualised. They have been taken away from their traditional seats and are being performed in urban auditoriums.

### **Educational Trends**

In the field of education today we can boast of certain remarkable achievements in comparison to the state of education in colonial India. While at independence only a minor section of our population (10%) was



literate, today more than fifty per cent of the people are literate. A very encouraging aspect of growth of literacy is comparatively higher rate of growth of literacy among women, who are still lagging behind men. Schools (primary and secondary) and colleges have increased to such proportions that education is now available at doorstep and is no longer as costly as it used to be in the colonial period when such institutions were much fewer. During the colonial period, scientific and technical education was denied due weightage. Today India has an impressively large pool of scientists and technologists; of course many of our scientists, doctors and engineers are migrating abroad where they get higher salary and better working conditions. Growth of education has accelerated the growth of socio-political consciousness, as a result of which persons belonging to backward sections and areas of earlier days are coming forward to play their role in public life. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, though still lagging behind, have made considerable progress in education because of stipends and reservations. In the post-independence era, a craze for education was noticed among all sections of society because of the impression that education would bring employment in government and public sector. In fact, because of the developmental works undertaken by government after independence many more employment opportunities were created. The rural middle class wanted to supplement their progressively diminishing income from land and raise social status and prestige through education. With the passage of time certain problems

have cropped up in education, and education itself has created problems for the society.

With quantitative expansion, there has been dilution of standards in education. Many educational institutions lack adequate teaching facilities like libraries, laboratories, trained and competent teachers. In many private educational institutions, teachers are appointed on payment of donation and paid paltry salaries.

Education has created the problem of educated unemployment. The number of jobs available falls far short of the demand, created by the expansion of education. Actually the benefits of higher learning and superior jobs that the poor seek from education are available almost exclusively to the products of a small number of good schools and colleges. The comparatively small number of good jobs in managerial, administrative and senior professional ranks usually go to those educated in these select institutions. Of the large number of products of the remaining educational institutions, only a minority gets employment mostly in lower grades in the government and public and private sectors. Our educational system produces "a vast, largely unproductive consumer class whose needs the toiling masses must fulfil through sweat and tears." Instead of fostering work culture and dignity of labour, education tends to promote the habit of "avoidance of work." Our educational system is pouring "a massive stream of young graduates with a strong urban bias." Not equipped for any specific technical undertaking

and failing to get any gainful employment, they become socially useless and ideal targets for exploitation by anti-social forces instead of contributing to socio-economic development.

The products of our technical institutions generally seek employment in government, public sector and private corporate sector instead of taking up independent vocations. In practice, there is no link between education and the economic needs of the society. Education has not been properly vocationalised. Mahatma Gandhi, with the help of educational experts like Dr. Zakir Hussain, devised the system of Basic Education, keeping the socio-economic needs and ethos of rural India in view. He set up a committee for science for villages, which included the Nobel Laureate scientist Sir C.V. Raman. After independence, we did not make serious experiments in Basic Education. We virtually rejected it as anti-academic. Our intelligentsia adopted double standards in regard to Basic Education. While Gandhi envisaged this system for all, the intelligentsia and elite left it "for the children of 'other' people."

Our examination system has proved to be a farce in many cases because of cheating in examinations and evaluation.

The medium of instruction has remained a vexing problem in education. If English remains the medium of instruction, it would be difficult to assimilate modern scientific knowledge and progressive literature, the chasm between the intelligentsia and masses will be perpetuated, and the Indians will be

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culturally denationalised. We have failed to adopt Hindi as the common medium of higher education and official *lingua franca* because of opposition to it in south. The Official Language (Amendment) Act 1967 provides that English would be used in addition to Hindi for all official purposes of the Union and English would be used as the language of communication between the Union and a State which has not adopted Hindi. This Act has given any State Legislature the right to veto the discontinuance of English. National Policy of Education in 1968 stated that while regional languages should be developed, the study of English deserved to be specially strengthened. This stance was continued in the Draft National Policy of 1979 and National Policy of Education in 1986. English has stayed and will probably stay. Strong feelings in favour of English as well as Hindi are noticed. Persons of certain social categories all over India prefer to communicate entirely in English in all circumstances. On the other hand, some Hindi zealots expect even foreigners to speak Hindi. The position of Hindi has been strengthened by enrichment of its literature through translations, commercial films and popular television serials like *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*. At present we have three media of instruction—English, Hindi and the respective regional languages. In UPSC examinations both English, Hindi and regional languages have been adopted as the medium. The confusing and dubious language policy of the government has certain grave implications. Those who have acquired good grounding in English through

education in English medium schools have an edge over those who have read through the medium of vernaculars in the schools. The latter in most cases show lack of competence (both written and spoken) in English. Those studying through Hindi medium have also an edge over those studying through regional languages. The lack of a common medium of instruction in higher education will render inter-state exchange and communication difficult.

Expenditure on education has caused a heavy drain on the resources of state in the post-independence era. The tuition fees paid by the students constitute a very small portion of the entire educational expenditure. The industries and other private bodies have not come out to shoulder a significant portion of educational responsibility. Some privately run engineering, medical and other technical institutions collect huge capitation fees at the time of entrance. A poor country like India cannot afford to devote so much resources to an unproductive educational system. In a situation like ours education ought to be productive and self-supporting, as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi.

# THE WAY OUT

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Ideas, dreams and visions melt away when put to the test of reality. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, our social reformers, saints, visionaries and revolutionaries set before the nation certain ideals and goals, the realisation of which has today become an arduous task. The task of building an ideal social order calls for sustained efforts, integrity and sacrifice. If we indulge in indolence, selfish rivalries, nihilism and cynicism, we shall doom ourselves and posterity to disintegration and destruction.

Today humanity seems to be at the crossroads. On the one hand, there is hope of unprecedented progress and prosperity for mankind. Science and technology has opened the vista of material development. The twentieth century science has given us aeroplanes, television, electronics, computer science and biotechnology. In the twenty-first century science may give still more inventions and help man to tap alternative sources of energy. Internationalism has become the order of the day. Efforts are being made through UNO, UNESCO and other allied agencies to promote international peace, security and co-operation. On

the other hand, there is fear of total annihilation. The fear of thermonuclear war still looms large in everyone's mind. Technological progress has brought about environmental degradation and pollution. Population explosion has been taking place in the developing countries of Asia and Africa. Poverty, malnutrition and diseases (like cancer and Aids) threaten us. India has attained certain levels of scientific and technological advancement, and is trying very hard to keep pace with the West. But paucity of resources, and alarming growth of population and defence expenditure have posed formidable barriers to the technological and material progress. Even if science and technology advances in India, chances of their applications being available to common man appear remote. To live in the modern world as a respectable member of world community we have to toil hard to attain self-sufficiency, prosperity and strength. We have to play a positive role in the promotion of international peace, security and co-operation. We have to carry on efforts to maintain good relations with our neighbours. As Professor S. Radhakrishnan, our former President, says:

As in a democratic state, in a democratic world we should settle our differences by negotiation, discussion and reach decisions which reconcile conflicting interests by a process of mutual give and take. Out of the turmoil and trouble of our time there may emerge a new social order, based on moral principles and spiritual values which will draw together men of alien races and varied

traditions. We may develop a sustained way of living as members of the world community. With a common conscience, a common understanding, we will establish peace and prosperity in the world. Wars between nations will then become as obsolete as duels between individuals.

“War,” said Jawaharlal Nehru, “does not solve any major issue and therefore all problems, however difficult and intricate, should be approached peacefully.” Mahatma Gandhi experimented with the technique of conflict resolution through non-violence in the national sphere; in the presentday world the technique has to be applied to the inter-state relations.

The colonial rulers tried to drive home to us on ulterior as well as pragmatic considerations that in the pluralistic society of India talk of unity was absurd. But from hoary past the notion of geographical unity has prevailed; attempts were made at cultural as well as political levels to forge harmony and unity. Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanical religions have been all-India religions. Religious leaders like Shankar, Chaitanya and Nanak did not recognise any political boundary while carrying on their religious activities. In the pre-Muslim period, rulers like Ashoka, Kharavela and Harsha sought to promote religious harmony and coexistence. During the Mughal period, Akbar entertained the experts of different religions including Christianity with a liberal and open mind, and endowment to Brahmans, “Yogis” and temples by Moghul rulers including Aurangzeb have been recorded. About the early Indian rulers’



policy towards different religious sects, Professor Romila Thapar holds the following view:

Interestingly, however, state patronage was bestowed in substantial amounts to a range of what may otherwise have even been conflicting religious sects and institutions. The Mauryan emperor, Ashoka encourages respect for both the "brahmana" and the "shramana," although elsewhere the relation between the two is compared to that between the mongoose and the snake. . . .

Cultural pluralism and its protection were accepted as the duty of the king. His protection of "dharma" was not religion in the modern sense for it enveloped the entire range of social obligations of which religious ritual was a part. This, however, is not what is meant by a secular society. Secularism is not expressed merely by the state protecting and ensuring the coexistence of religions. But, where there is evidence of this from the past, it increases the potential for locating those historical activities which would be conducive to the encouragement of the secular today.

Within the framework of a single geographical entity, cultural diversity and syncretism have been the twin trends of our history. While political unity has been temporary, cultural syncretism has prevailed although. In 1992, two noted Bengali historians (Rajat Kanta Ray and B.N. Mukherji) propounded a view in the daily *Telegraph* that attempts should be made to form a confederation of India, Pakistan and

Bangladesh, while ensuring the autonomy and free growth of regional and cultural diversities. Ray holds that the formation of the confederation with free travel, freely convertible currency and common trade zone on the model of United States of Europe will solve the problems of Muslim minorities in India, Hindu minorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh and bring about the Union of Kashmir as an autonomous state. He says:

In the past India was a civilisation, not a nation. It is still possible to restore the unity of Indian civilisation while giving up the strenuous and self-bleeding exercise of national integration. In this respect, the Indian subcontinent is in a condition not so dissimilar to Europe, which, too, is rooted in a common civilisation, though politically divided into many states. If a United States of Europe is being envisaged, why not a confederation of Indo-Ganges?

As things stand today, we are a secular and democratic nation. Secularism and democracy ensure the unity of nation. The imperative need for unity of the nation is being threatened by the forces of communalism, casteism, ethnic problems, regionalism, secessionism, and terrorism.

According to economistic and reductionist approach, with the growth of education, industrialisation and economic development and organisation of class-based association the hold of communalism on the minds of people would be weakened. But experience shows that economic development has

accelerated the growth of communal forces instead of weakening them. Prof. Bipan Chandra holds that, "a powerful political ideological campaign should be organised against communalism" for "bringing home to the people the falsity of communal assumptions, of communal logic and of communal answers." He holds that "those who handle ideas, *i.e.*, teachers, journalists and others who work in the media, political parties, professional associations, trade unions, *kisan* sabhas and other voluntary groups" should combat communalism at "the ideological-cultural plane." Prof. K.N. Panikkar recommends a two-pronged secular offensive against communalism—the advance of communally convinced people must be stopped and the consciousness of communally mobilised people should be retrieved.

The so-called 'secular' political parties and their leaders have adopted two strategies against communalism. First, they emphasise the unity and equality of all religions on the basis of "their moral precepts and humanist underpinnings." In this approach it is not possible to separate religion from politics, education and other secular spheres. Secondly, while adopting "a secular rational ideology of political culture and statecraft" they "leave the question of reconciliation of religions and belief patterns to voluntary social action and accommodation."

To combat communalism, secularism has to operate in three spheres:

- (1) Harmony among religious communities is to be established in politics.
- (2) Harmony among religious communities is to be established in social life.
- (3) Enlightened humanism should triumph over religion-dominated ethos.

The state should play a very active and prompt role in curbing communal violence. The state agencies should be impartial in tackling communal disturbances. It is alleged that the hooligans or *goondas* who cause communal riots in cities enjoy political patronage which militates against the true spirit of secularism.

While allowing every individual or community to follow his or their own vision of truth and ultimate reality, we have to learn to live in fraternity through strong secular institutions like colleges, universities, banks, hospitals, professional associations and newspapers. The survival of our civil society depends on the coexistence of secular and religious institutions. As Andre Beteille observes:

If civil society is pluralistic and tolerant in its very nature, then it would be absurd for it to wish to expel religious institutions from its fold or to denigrate its beliefs as a form of false consciousness. Our constitution is based, I believe, wisely on the separation between religion and politics and on their mutual toleration. Civil society must find ways of creating and nurturing secular institutions, but that objective is likely to be

hindered rather than helped by the adoption of a militantly secular ideology.

It is impossible to combat communalism by political means. Politicians secular or communal (Hindu or Muslim) are found to be patently hypocritical in the handling of communal problems. We can effectively combat communalism, as Mahatma Gandhi tried to do, by a change of attitude, cultivation of tolerance or openness to criticism and a new orientation of society and culture. How can Hindus and Muslims live in harmony? The Hindus should give up their notions of ritualistic purity or impurity and treatment of Muslims as "unclean aliens." They should try to keep up the powerful syncretic trend of their culture. The Muslims should give up their overemphasis on religious identity, minoritism and exclusiveness, accept a secular uniform civil code, accept the pre-Islamic culture of India as their own like the Muslims of Persia and Indonesia and completely identify themselves with the national mainstream.

In modern class-based society with occupational mobility and non-observance of caste rituals and rigidities, casteist ideology appears irrelevant. More and more voluntary associations, based on professional interests and public causes, should be formed to combat casteism in public life.

Tribals should be protected from exploitation by the dominant populations from outside. They should maintain their identity and build up their own leadership for developmental works. Meaningful

communication should be established with the tribals, and gradually they should be brought into the mainstream of national life.

Regional economic imbalances should be removed by removing disparities in allocation of funds for developmental works.

Under no circumstances the state should yield to the forces of violence, but the socio-economic roots of violence should be found out and eradicated. The hooligans are a part of the society. Hooliganism or violence of any sort has a sociological background.

Against the background of collapse of communism in Russia and the introduction of New Economic Policy by P.V. Narasimha Rao the debate on public versus private sector has assumed a new dimension. On the one hand, there is talk of virtues of privatisation and globalisation, and glorification of market forces. On the other hand, apprehension of dangers of privatisation and globalisation is expressed. In today's global as well as Indian economic pattern, dichotomy between the public sector and private sector is neither possible nor desirable. Though market forces provide incentive for individual initiative to operate within the framework of demand and supply, they are not capable of meeting all the needs of modern society. State intervention in the economic life of nation has become a necessity. Public sector has been operating within the capitalist system, because private capital is unable to provide resources for certain massive developed industries (particularly those of strategic and military importance). Private monopolies require

help from the state. The state has to regulate the economic life of the nation for maintaining economic stability. Of course, in the capitalist system public enterprise plays the role of "filling the interstices of private business." On the other hand, socialist economics has failed to function entirely through the state agencies. Success of any industry, public or private, depends on the management of human relations and motivation. As John Kenneth Galbraith writes:

In these years in both systems it has become profoundly evident that there is no salvation in fixed rules—fully committed ideological faith. Each system has had to make concessions to the deeper reality of economic life and human motivation. The reality is that neither capitalism nor socialism in its avowed form works in an effective or even a socially tolerable fashion.

In an ideal society, public sector and private sector should coexist, supplement and compete with each other in producing quality goods and providing adequate benefits to the employees who should be hard working, honest and efficient. As Pitrim A. Sorokin observes:

When economic functions can be faithfully and competently discharged by both private persons or groups and the state government, both systems can harmoniously coexist, each specialising in the particular fields in which, under the given conditions, it meets the economic needs of society more successfully.

But when the proponents of each system of economy are impelled mainly by their selfish interests and hence fail to meet successfully the requirements of society, each group attempts to achieve a monopoly, becomes intolerant in its claims and counterclaims and resorts to coercion and even civil war, to the great detriment of society as a whole. Such are the main lines of reconstruction of economic and occupational institutions dictated by the goal of peace and a creative social order.

In Indian situation, mixed economy should continue. There is, however, need for restructuring public sector and redefining government's relation with public and private sectors. Public sector enterprises should be autonomous and free from government interference. Some mechanism should be devised to monitor the overall performance and make the management accountable for its performance in public sector. Public sector enterprises should be economically viable and able to generate resources for further investment. Corruption, wastage, inefficiency and overemployment should be done away with. Private sector, while discharging its professional obligation towards the shareholders, should properly perform its social responsibility towards the employees, creditors, consumers, community and the state. They should ensure good salary and conditions of work to the employees, and should not evade the payment of tax. If Mahatma Gandhi's trusteeship theory is followed in true spirit, the private sector will work in public interest. According to this theory, any



asset, physical, intellectual or otherwise is held by its owner as a trustee for the benefit of the whole society. He can only draw from his assets what is barely necessary for his own living. He has no right to use more than what he actually needs.

In the modern democratic and welfarist society the concept of company has undergone change. W.T. Gosset, former Vice-President and general counsel for the Ford Motor Company, says:

The modern large corporation is in some respects a public institution and is one of the key economic units in our society; it holds power in trust for the whole community; its action and often its statements have a determining effect upon the interests of customers, shareholders, suppliers and employees. But the measure of its effectiveness in public affairs is the degree to which its policy reflects the values, objectives, aspirations and reservations of society as a whole.

The state's relation with the private sector is of crucial importance in boosting its performance as well as determining its social responsibility. The traditional *laissez faire* theory of state's non-intervention in the sphere of economic activity is outdated. The state may not or should not interfere with market forces. But the state can and should help the private sector through credit facilities and favourable interest rates. India should follow the example of Japan, Korea and Taiwan with regard to the state's policy towards the private sector. In these countries through purposive

state intervention it has been possible to foster the growth of private sector as well as bring it within the larger programme of macro-economic development and stability. The state can identify thrust areas for development, identify promising entrepreneurs and help them to acquire technical know-how and establish efficient productive units.

The state should at the same time protect the general public from fraudulence and malpractices in the private sector. The state should look into the enforcement of factory laws, meant for protecting the workers' rights. Trade union laws should be modified to maintain a proper balance between the workers' interests and efficiency in management. Disputes between the management and employees should be settled through arbitration.

Indian industries, public and private, should raise the quality of their goods so as to create a favourable demand in the international market. While slackening restrictions on imports, if we cannot raise exports, we will invite balance of payments crisis. Import of luxury goods should be restricted.

Import of foreign capital and technology is a challenge to our efforts to develop independent technology. If technological upgradation is an imperative necessity, we have to absorb imported technology through "a strong, farsighted and sustained programme."

Technological upgradation will reduce the employment potential in industries and government. We have to create employment opportunities through

rural development. Employment opportunities in the rural areas will check overcrowding in cities. Rural electrification and development of transport and communication, and increase in mobility have brought the villages closer to urban centres and the emergence of mini-urban centres has narrowed the gap between the urban centres and villages.

Rural development calls for consolidation of holdings, improvement of irrigation facilities, diversification of agriculture (horticulture, poultry, pisciculture, and dairy farming), improvement of roads and housing, sanitation and social forestry, development of small scale and cottage industries, and expansion of education and medical facilities. More and more biogas (Gobar gas) plants should be established to solve the fuel problem in the villages.

As majority of our people live in the villages, Mahatma Gandhi laid special stress on the rural uplift and tried to check the urban orientation of youth. Mere macro-level planning and allocation of funds is not enough to foster the village uplift. Local efforts and participation of the people in the development process are essential. That is why Gandhi laid stress on Panchayat Raj which was meant to empower people at the lowest hierarchy as well as involve them in the development process.

Population explosion and deterioration of environment in urban as well as rural areas have become common phenomena. In checking these forces, people should co-operate with the government.

Irrespective of religious distinctions, people should accept population control as a national imperative.

In the process of social change, a conflict between tradition and modernisation has become visible. Advocates of modernisation construe any attempt to establish link with tradition and cultural heritage as revivalistic and detrimental to progress. But neither we can nor we should break away completely from tradition. Society is a continuous process. The experience and wisdom of our ancestors is a part of our social culture. We should seek to appreciate and assimilate the spirit and norms of tradition. In certain areas our traditional values have to be given abiding importance; they have deeper meaning and significance than those of modern norms. While denying freedom to women, our traditional culture had deified woman as *Shakti* (energy) and respected woman as mother, sister and daughter, and emphasised the maintenance of cordial relations between brothers and sisters for harmony in family life. Modern consumerist culture has reduced woman to a sex symbol. The traditional culture laid stress on restraint, which is of great importance in modern society, ridden with conflict and tension. While modernising and secularising social life we have to establish a "creative and critical link with our cultural heritage and tradition." Tradition has to be valued and assessed not for hindering but for helping the process of humanisation and modernisation. In our own time we have seen how Mahatma Gandhi used tradition as an instrument of social reconstruction.

We should change our attitude towards women. Discrimination against women must stop. They must be treated as equal with men in social life. But the women should be conscious of their natural role and responsibilities in family and society. They should create a happy atmosphere at home. They should properly discharge their "special and sole prerogative" of "bringing up the infants of the race." A child's earliest socialisation begins with his or her mother. Women can, therefore, inculcate human values in the children better than men. Man and woman are complementary to each other. The feminists should, therefore, give up anti-male, anti-child, anti-family and anti-feminine attitude. Values of restraint should be cultivated in social life to counteract male chauvinism and give a dignified treatment to women. Women should also assert themselves for maintaining their dignity as individuals and playing their rightful role in social life.

Cutting across all social and communal differences, women should start autonomous movements to emancipate themselves from oppression and to raise themselves socially. Women should not be deprived of their basic human rights on any plea, religious or social. They should seek to safeguard their marital status through a uniform civil code irrespective of religious differences. Secular political parties should extend their support in this matter to women's movements and protect individual women such as Sheinaz Sheikh and Shah Bano against social persecution.

Educational system should be made responsive to social needs. Values of community life should be inculcated in the students at school. Schools must be organically connected with all worthy aspects of community life. Teachers inspired by the aims of education must devise ways and means for their implementation. Education must permeate the students with the spirit of service and equip them with "the instruments of self-direction." False values of book-learning and competitive success should be done away with. In the field of higher education, quality must be given precedence over quantity. Education should be vocationalised to create opportunities for self-employment. Such vocations, which are especially useful in the context of rural society should be taught to the students. Industries must come forward to establish technical and vocational institutions to relieve the financial burden of the government. Just as students should interact with community, the community around the school should take interest in the development of the school in a meaningful and purposeful way.

In India people generally expect everything from government. But if the people fail the government, and do not participate in the process of transformation, no government can deliver the goods. At the government level, only macro-planning is possible. The implementation of the plans requires an alert and active community. Social work and activism are necessary. Among the Indian states, Kerala has undergone a miraculous transformation, achieved full

literary and good health care facilities through social activism and pressure exerted on the government by the public.

The country needs an army of genuine social workers. Those who feel for the society must work for it instead of remaining passive onlookers. Social service and work automatically entail hard work, suffering and sacrifice. There are three types of men in society—(1) majority of the people are harmless but not alive to social commitments, (2) a few are dangerously egoistic and parasitical, (3) still fewer are genuinely selfless and socially committed who can suffer and make sacrifices. Genuinely selfless and socially committed persons like Mahatma Gandhi can exercise their moral influence on society and lead the society in the right direction. Moral values like selflessness, love of truth and non-violence, self-restraint, dignity of labour, and spirit of fellow feeling, service and sacrifice are of paramount importance for the society. If the society is morally regenerated, all other improvements will follow automatically.

# POSTSCRIPT

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Since the completion of the manuscript of this booklet, certain developments with grave implications for the country's future have taken place. First, at a time, when our economy has become stagnant because of recession in domestic industry, fall in agricultural production and exports (not compensated by reduction of imports) and acute unemployment in the organised sector, political instability has begun to loom large. In April, 1999 twelfth Lok Sabha was dissolved and elections were scheduled to be held in the autumn as a sequel to the withdrawal of support from the BJP-led coalition government by Jayalalitha's AIADMK party, defeat of the Vajpayee government in the confidence vote by a margin of one vote and the failure of the opposition parties to form an alternative government. While the BJP-led coalition government fell because of its own contradictions, Congress and other Opposition parties could not unite to form a new government. The Congress party, led by Sonia Gandhi, wanted to form a minority government, expecting support from constituents of former United Front, which was opposed by Mulayam Singh, the



Samajwadi leader, and Chandrasekhar, the former Prime Minister who wanted to form a coalition government with Jyoti Basu, the Marxist Chief Minister of West Bengal, as the Prime Minister, in which Congress would be either a partner or a prop from outside; Mulayam Singh stoutly refused to support the Congress(I) minority government. The inevitable result has been fresh elections. Three elections in three years! Frequent elections are a heavy drain on the country's exchequer and a symptom of the deeper malaise, i.e., political instability. The present equation among the political parties does not seem to favour a viable coalition government after the election. The political parties and politicians must get rid of their irresponsibility and unaccountability. They should realise the simple truth that toppling a government implies the responsibility to provide an alternative government. Another unfortunate development in recent months is the arms race between India and Pakistan in respect of nuclear weaponisation and missile test. In May 1998 the Vajpayee government conducted five nuclear explosions at Pokhran (in Rajasthan) (where twenty-four years ago the Indira Gandhi government had conducted a nuclear test) in reply to Pakistan's Ghauri-I Missile test. Pakistan replied back by conducting some nuclear tests at Chaghai in Baluchistan. After this show of nuclear teeth from both the sides, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee went on a goodwill visit to Lahore by bus in February 1999. At Lahore Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif (Prime Minister of

Pakistan) signed a joint declaration in which they agreed not to use nuclear weapons against each other and settle all disputes by peaceful means. Soon after the loss of confidence in Lok Sabha in April, 1999 the Vajpayee government conducted Agni-II missile test to which Pakistan replied by Ghauri-II missile test. In the last week of May, 1999 conflict between India and Pakistan took place over the infiltration of Pakistan-backed terrorists into the Kargil sector of Kashmir. Arms race between India and Pakistan is linked with dispute over Kashmir. In both the countries there are hardliners who support arms race, nuclear weaponisation and a war over Kashmir, if necessary. But peace-loving people in both the countries view arms race as a drain on the resources of their respective countries; they want to avoid war and seek settlement of all disputes by peaceful means. In India the policy of nuclear weaponisation has been opposed on the following grounds: it has worsened the already strained relations between India and Pakistan and exposed them to the horrors of a nuclear conflagration; it has damaged India's image and reputation as a peace-loving country; it has added to the country's economic malaise as a result of the application of economic sanctions by U.S.A.; it has made India more vulnerable to external pressure and invited U.S. intervention in nuclear matters between India and Pakistan and it has adversely affected the Sino-Indian relations. The ideological opponents of BJP view nuclear weaponisation as the outcome of the party's plan to give nuclear teeth to Hindu Rashtra as has

been demanded by the RSS from 1950's. But the Vajpayee government has justified its policy as a logical culmination of India's nuclear energy programme and policy. In Parliament, Vajpayee described Pokhran II as a continuation of the policies that put India on the path of self-reliance and as a gift of the Indian scientists and engineers to the nation. In fact, the governments of India and Pakistan have been preparing over the years for nuclear weaponisation and now profess to view it as a deterrent against war. Vajpayee government had floated the doctrine of "minimum credible nuclear deterrent." At Lahore the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan declared that "the nuclear dimension of the security environment of the two countries adds to their responsibility for avoidance of conflict;" they agreed to "take immediate steps for reducing the risk of accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons." However, many people in India and Pakistan know well that nuclear weapons offer no security guarantee; they are only a drain on the national resources.