

# **Exasperating Essays**

## **Exercises in Dialectical Method**

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#### **Introduction**

Occasional letters show that these essays (and the short story) still continue to attract some readers. Republication has been undertaken at their request in the hope that the demand is not restricted to those who voiced it. At any rate, the journals of the first publication are not readily accessible. Emendation, restricted to a minimum, was necessary because proofs were generally not shown to the author by the periodicals concerned. Substantial additions are given in square brackets. A note at the end contains a reference to the original publication and, where necessary, supplementary remarks to illustrate the main theme. Had the analysis not stood the test of time, had an occasional passage, which first read like an unlikely forecast of things to come, not been justified by the event, there would have been no point in dragging these writings out of their obscurity. The essential is the method followed, which is the method of dialectical materialism, called Marxism after the genius who first developed its theory and used it systematically as a tool.

Dialectical materialism holds that matter is primeval and the properties of matter are inexhaustible. Mind is an aspect of matter being a function of the brain, ideas, therefore, are not primary phenomena, but rather the reflection of material processes and changes upon human consciousness, which is itself

a material process. Therefore, ideas are formed ultimately out of human experience. Matter is not inert, but in a constant state of interaction and change; it is a complex of processes rather than an aggregate of things. In every stage, there resides an inherent quality of change, an “inner contradiction”; which leads eventually to a negation (not necessarily unique) of that stage or condition. The negation quite naturally, is again negated, but this does not mean a simple return to the original condition, rather to a totally different level. There is thus a fundamental unity of opposites. Mere change of quantity must eventually lead to a change of quality; quite often, this is an abrupt change after the quantity reaches some critical (“nodal”) value. Finally, life is a mode of existence of certain forms of matter, particularly those containing organic compounds such as proteins. Its characteristic mode of existence is that, to preserve its special quality as living matter, it has to interact with a suitable environment in a specific manner, at a certain minimum rate. Then, for non-isolated complete organisms, there is normally an increase in numbers (change of quantity) to a critical level. Non-living matter, on the contrary retains its characteristics best, the less it interacts with the environment.

On the level of human society, the environment is furnished to a considerable extent by the society itself. The rate and the quantity of interaction with natural surroundings depend upon the instruments of production, and the technique employed: food gathering, the pastoral life, agriculture, machine production. The distribution of the product among the various members of society is a matter for the relations of production, such as class division, ownership rights etc., whereof the forms are not determined simply by the economic level, nor immediately by the tools, but depend also upon the previous social history of the particular group of men. However, the tools are basic; feudalism or a bourgeoisie is not possible for stone-age people any more than is an atomic pile, or the differential calculus. The progress of mankind, and its history, thus depends upon the *means of production*, i.e. the actual tools and the productive relationships. Society is held together by the bonds of production.

It is not the purpose here to prove these elementary principles all over again, but rather to show how they can be and have been fruitfully applied to a certain class of important problems. To remain a living discipline, Marxism must continue to work successfully with newer discoveries in science (including archaeology), and must yield new valid results in history. Its importance lies not only in the interpretation of the past, but as a guide to

future action. By its correct use, men can make their own history consciously, rather than suffer it to be made as helpless spectators, or merely to study it after the event.

Certain opponents of Marxism dismiss it as an outworn economic dogma based upon 19th century prejudices. Marxism never was a dogma. There is no reason why its formulation in the 19th century should make it obsolete and wrong, any more than the discoveries of Gauss, Faraday, and Darwin, which have passed into the body of science. Those who sneer at its 19th century obsolescence cannot logically quote Mill, Burke, and Herbert Spencer with approval, nor pin their faith to the considerably older and decidedly more obscure *Bhagwad Gita*. The defense generally given is that the *Gita* and the Upanishads are Indian; that foreign ideas like Marxism are objectionable. This is generally argued in English, the foreign language common to educated Indians; and by persons who live under a mode of production (the bourgeois system) forcibly introduced by the foreigner into India. The objection, therefore, seems less to the foreign origin than to the ideas themselves, which might endanger class privilege. Marxism is said to be based open violence, upon the class-war, in which the very best people do not believe nowadays. They might as well proclaim that meteorology encourages storms by predicting them. No Marxist work contains incitement to war and specious arguments for senseless killing remotely comparable to those in the divine *Gita*.

From the opposite direction, the Indian official Marxists (thereafter called *OM*) have not failed to manifest their displeasure with an interloper's views. These form a decidedly mixed category, indescribable because of rapidly shifting views and even more rapid political permutations and combinations. The *OM* included at various times several factions of the CPI the Congress Socialists, the Royists, and numerous left splinter groups. Their standard objection has been that such writings are "controversial". If consistently pressed, this would also exclude the main work of Marx, Engels, Lenin, the best of Stalin and Mao Tse-tung. The only successful way of dealing with adverse views presented in all good faith is a careful detailed and factual answer. The *OM* Marxism has too often consisted of theological emphasis on the inviolable sanctity of the current party line, or irrelevant quotations from the classics.

Marxism cannot, even on the grounds of political expediency or party solidarity, be reduced to a rigid formalism like mathematics. Nor can it be

treated as a standard technique such as work on an automatic lathe. The material, when it is present in human society, has endless variations; the observer is himself part of the observed population, with which he interacts strongly and reciprocally. This means that the successful application of the theory needs the development of analytical power, the ability to pick out the essential factors in a given situation. This cannot be learned from books alone. The one way to learn it is by constant contact with the major sections of the people. For an intellectual, this means at least a few months spent in manual labor, to earn his livelihood as a member of the working class; not as a superior being, nor as a reformist, nor as a sentimental "progressive" visitor to the slums. The experience gained from living with worker and peasant, as one of them, has then to be constantly refreshed and regularly evaluated in the light of one's reading. For those who are prepared to do this, these essays might provide some encouragement, and food for thought. It is a great pleasure to thank the editors of the original publications. My thanks are also due to Mrs. V. V. Bhagwat and Mr. R. P. Nene for the trouble they have taken over this edition.

Deccan Queen,  
October 2. 1957.  
D. D. Kosambi

### The Function of Leadership in a Mass Movement

To what extent do "mere agitators" determine the course of a revolution? Would it be possible to suppress all such upheavals by the judicious and timely execution of a few people? Or is a change of nature inevitable when the inner contradictions of a system are manifest; and is the leadership inevitable too? Dialectical materialism leads us to the latter conclusion, but the nature of this inevitability has to be closely examined, even from a dialectical point of view.

This view claims that a change of quantity inevitably leads to a change of quality. Water cooled indefinitely will not remain a fluid, but must solidify into ice when enough heat has been lost; the same liquid, when it has absorbed enough heat, will be transformed into gas, steam. Similarly, when the contradictions latent in any form of production develop, the form of society will inevitably change. This is simple enough, but the circumstances that prevail at the critical point need further examination.

First, there is a minimum or threshold value below which no transformation can possibly take place. Secondly, this threshold value can be surpassed, sometimes to a surprising extent, if certain conditions, which are otherwise insignificant, do not obtain. To give an illustration: we can never get the solution of a given salt to solidify, i.e., change to a mass of crystals, unless the solution is concentrated. But supersaturated solutions can always be obtained with a little care. If a small crystal be added to such a supersaturated solution, the whole mass will crystallize, often with amazing rapidity. The small parent crystal, which does not appreciably increase the percentage of super saturation of the total solution, is necessary for crystallization. Moreover, some substances can exist in several distinct crystalline forms; then the type of parent crystal added will determine the form of crystallization for the whole mass.

I submit that this analogy explains the position of leadership in a social movement. Below the threshold level of objective conditions in the society as a whole, little can be done. But good leadership recognizes when this level has been surpassed, and can produce the desired transformation with very little super saturation. Of course, if the social forces are strong enough, they can overcome the handicap of an indifferent or even bad leadership, but the entire process of transformation must naturally take place at a correspondingly later stage of development.

It is this postulation that explains why the communist revolution was successful in Russia, but failed in Germany when, Marx and Engels expected it to occur first because of greater concentration of productivity. Trotsky, in his history of the Russian revolution, says, ".....Lenin was not a demiurge of the revolutionary process,...he merely entered into a chain of objective historic forces. But he was a great link in that chain." Our present analogy seems to me more constructive than that of a chain. Lenin recognized that the war of 1914 was a purely imperialist clash; he alone insisted upon carrying out the resolution of the second international, which suggested the conversion of such an outbreak into civil war. It was he, of all the socialists in Russia, who first recognized the true function of the soviets as the organ of the proletariat, and brushed aside the wobbling theorists who postulated an intermediate bourgeois-liberal democratic stage in the development of the revolution. His letter drove the communists to armed insurrection on November 7, 1917; the time was ripe for such procedure in the seizure of power, and probably no other method could then have been as effective. Not only in the beginning, but even in after years, when the

revolution had to be saved by strategic retreats such as unfavorable treaties with hostile aggressors and the New Economic Policy, Lenin showed what leadership can really accomplish. The older revolutionaries in Europe, i.e. Hungary, Germany, Italy etc. were lost not simply because the social conditions were relatively less favorable, but because the guiding spirits were less able. On the other hand, we may note that Lenin himself, in his Geneva exile, could not shake the complacent inertia of the Swiss working class.

Now there is another type of leadership (that we have often seen in history) which does not itself participate in the upheaval in a manner similar to the above example. We see this in most religious movements, which gain head suddenly, become revolutionary for a while, put a new set of rulers in power, and then settle down to a parasitic routine, all without the least apparent change of ideology. Of course, the change is there in practice, if not in theory. One can hardly expect the poor of any era to understand and to fight for abstract theological problems, which even learned bishops, could not settle. Why should the people of one age fight for Athanasius against the Arians while, a couple of centuries after the creed was established their descendants fought with much less vigor against Islam? The fact is not that there are periods of sudden theological understanding for the masses, but that the religious leadership knew how to stand firm on some point in a way that suddenly activated the social discontent. The analogy here is not with our supersaturated solutions, but rather with the position of catalysts in chemical reactions. Many reactions take place very slowly, or not at all, unless substances like sponge-platinum or kaolin are present. These substances remain unassimilated and undiminished after the reaction has been completed, but their presence does materially accelerate the reaction.

Finally, we have seen cases of leadership by dispersion as well as leadership that concentrates social forces. This often happens when a class not in power gains its predominance by uniting with a lower class, which it must normally exploit. In that case, methods have to be devised for the dissipation of the excess of energy available; methods that usually come with the label of "restoration of law and order". Some Marxists (of whom I am one) claim that a part of the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi must fall under this head. When the 1930 *Satyagraha* got out of hand and was about to be transformed into a fundamentally different movement by the no-rent and no-tax campaigns in 1932, he discovered the need for the uplift of our untouchables, and the whole movement was neatly sidetracked. At Rajkot

this year, he put himself at the head of a campaign that would have lighted a fire not easily put out in the handling of our social discontent; and that too was effectively sidetracked by newer and finer points in the theory of non-violence—points of a purely theological minuteness. Both of these had a precursor in the cancellation of the first civil disobedience movement after Chouri-Choura. But in the two later cases, it was quite clear that the forces of social change were scattered precisely at a stage when their continued focusing would have been dangerous to the class that wanted power, the Indian money-owners. This is not to say that the leadership was a deliberate, conscious act. That is why the Congress movement had its periods of glum depression. Its usefulness to the class mentioned was low in lust those times.

At least one difference exists between a social group and the solutions that we have used for the purposes of analogy: the lack of uniformity. The concentration in a social movement need not be the same throughout the whole region affected. This leads to two distinct types of development after the initial stages. Either the transformation that has taken place in a small portion will spread over the rest of the social group which again implies the existence of a minimum threshold value over the entire aggregation, or there will be produced a de-concentration, a rarefaction as it were, over the untransformed portion. In the latter case, the transformed portion must temporarily insulate itself, or again dissolve into its surroundings. I take it that this will explain why the Marxist revolution in one part of the world did not spread with the rapidity that was expected of it. Its very occurrence in that part sharpened the contradictions that existed elsewhere; but it threw hesitant leaders back into a reactionary attitude, because they had not themselves developed to the necessary level.

Fergusson & Willingdon College Magazine (Poona) 1939, pp. 6-9.

*One of the obvious conclusions is that when the major, immediate objective of the mass movement has been gained, both the people and the leadership must remain vigilant against the ripening of inner contradictions by studying the needs of the next stage. Class-reaction and the cult of personality can be avoided only by the broadest active participation of the whole people in the transformed movement, e.g. after a revolution, in self-government and in national planning. On the other hand, the very successes of national planning and resultant increase in the quantity of production—even socialist planning and socialist production--must inevitably lead to a change of quality in the leadership. This accounts at least in part for the 'de-Stalinization' policy of the U88R, which is non the second greatest industrial*

*country in the whole world, with the greatest output of trained technicians, engineers, and scientists.*

### **The Bourgeoisie Comes of Age in India**

The long-awaited publication of Jawaharlal Nehru's book' on India, past and present, has in many ways justified the great hopes raised by the author's distinguished record in the struggle for India's freedom, and by his active share in the struggle against war. His career is too well known for further comment here; those who do not know it would be well advised to read his Autobiography as well as this book. No person knows India better than Pundit Jawaharlal. He is able to express himself brilliantly both in Hindi and Urdu, as friends and admirers among Hindus as well as Muslims will admit. Most important of all, he has an intimate acquaintance with the British ruling class because of his education in England. The book in question is, therefore, a damning indictment of British rule in India; but more than that, its ambitious scope includes the history of India culturally as well as politically in a single perspective. The performance is all the more remarkable when it is considered that the work was essentially completed in jail under the most distressing circumstances, with full consciousness on the part of the author that a struggle against Hitlerism was being waged without his help, though he himself had always been an unswerving opponent of fascism and all that fascism represents. The very fact that so able a personality should be jailed without trial while a considerable number of British agents were foisted upon India to fight the war from the safety of office chairs had an unfortunate result for the Indian population; for while the British officials and a larger number of Indian business men filled their pockets with vast quantities of paper currency, the people at large had the benefit of inflation, famine, epidemics and shortages. To explain just what this means in terms understandable to an American is beyond the reach of any sensitive person who had the misfortune to be an eyewitness of the happenings in India during the war years.

The book cannot be too strongly recommended to the general reader. The present writer wishes to make it clear that he himself is a humble admirer of the author. This is to prevent misunderstanding for the bulk; of this communication is necessarily devoted to pointing out a certain number of flaws. For the ancient history of India, little need be said because such sources as we possess are extremely meager and their interpretation puzzles



even those who have devoted a lifetime to their study; on this same we need not hold the author responsible. In some ways it is unfortunate that he has not had the leisure to study Indian sources more critically and that he has relied so heavily upon comparatively popular accounts by British authors. This, however, may be condoned on the ground that Indian political prisoners hardly have reference libraries at their disposal.

One feature that may strike the reader as rather surprising is a curious attitude towards the much abused term "race" denunciation of racism and of imperialism occurs on p. 388 f., but on p. 387 we read: "psychology counts and racial memories are long". Just what racial memory means is not clear, particularly in the case of a country that had forgotten the splendid Mauryan and Gupta periods, including the very script of these times; that ascribes almost every cave of any date to the mythical Pandavas; and is capable of pointing out at prince Pratap Sinha, the statue of Outram (a butcher of the 1851 revolt) on the Esplanade at Calcutta. It was noticeable in the country that class memories are extremely short, or at any rate strikingly different from what Nehru imagines to be race memories. For example the British Commissions of Police in Bombay whose name was execrated for his incompetent or deliberately provocative handling of popular discontent at the end of January and February 1948 (ending in a real blood-bath in the working class areas of Bombay) was nevertheless a guest of honor in May, along with the Congress ministers, at the richest *Indian* weddings of the year in Bombay. On p. 431 we read: "old races develop that attitude [of quietism] to life." Just what this means is also not clear, for ethnologically there is no evidence that any race is older than any other. In fact if the sentence can be taken as applying to the Indian races, it is quite impossible to explain why quietism has been on the wane since 1940 at least, and has given place to the constant ferment of political activity in this country.

Far more serious to the present reviewer is the absence of the question "why." No attempt at history can be regarded as mature, which does not, within the framework of the author's ideology, make some attempt at analysis. For the ancient period we find considerable difficulty in explaining certain facts for the simple reason that the facts themselves are not always clear; but for the modern period it seems to me that the author's present approach cannot stand unchallenged. I may go further and venture the statement that this vague use of the term "race", the absence of the question as to why certain changes take place at certain times, are intimately bound up with another remarkable feature of the book the absence of a class

analysis. The author could have asked himself one question with the greatest of advantage, namely, *cui bono*; what is the class that called for or benefited by a certain change at a certain period of history? This might have clarified one issue noted by the author, that the British have fought desperately and till now effectively against granting India the same kind of social and political rights of which the English themselves are so proud in England. It is quite obvious that the class of Englishmen who fought for the suppression of local governments and civil liberties in India have also fought desperately against the lower classes in England; but when the pressure of the working class in England became too great the bourgeois front was breached in some one place and a local amelioration was won. Then the losing section of the bourgeoisie necessarily fought for the imposition of the same restriction against all other owners of means of production and ultimately put a good face on the whole matter, proclaiming that they, the rulers, had granted certain reforms of their own sweet free will. There was comparatively little class opposition from India as the British had taken every care to preserve as much feudal and religious prerogative as possible.

It may be further suggested that the absence of developed modern capital in the Muslim community as well as the great relative poverty of the Muslims in India might explain (as Nehru does not) both the case against the Muslim League (p. 466) and Muslim backwardness (p. 468) as well as the reactionary attitude of the Muslim upper classes in India. Nehru has himself pointed out (p. 437) that Indian businessmen demand exactly the same kind of protection in Ceylon, which they rightly resent having given to British business interests in India. He is undoubtedly aware of the fact that Indians in South Africa, backed whole-heartedly by the Indian trading community there, are fighting hard for equality; but for equality with the whites and not equality with the Negroes also. The absence of class analysis vitiates the peculiar presentation of provincial differences and growth of industry (p. 392-398). We read that the people of Gujarat, Kathiawar and Kutch were traders, manufacturers, merchants and seafarers from ancient times. Now it is undeniable that the great majority of people in just those districts are definitely not traders, although people from the localities mentioned occupy so prominent a place in the capitalistic section of India today. The reason is that early contact with Mohammedan traders enabled this small fraction to develop early contact with the British and thereby introduced them to a new system of production: that is, production based on machinery and modern capital. The best example of this perhaps is the tiny Parsi community which, in its original

situation in Gujarat, was one of the most shamefully oppressed of refugee minorities and is today one of the most advanced, cultured and powerful of communities in India, solely because of their adoption of modern industrial and finance capitalism. On the other hand the case is totally different with the Marwaris of Rajputana (p. 394-96) who did control finance and money lending in the old days but had no political rights whatsoever. If Nehru will take the trouble to look up the records he will see how often such moneylenders backed the British in the days of British expansion in India. Of course that may not lead him to realize a basic contemporary phenomenon: the change of pseudo-capital thus accumulated into modern productive money. The changeover is now actually so rapid that even the most backward and degenerate of Indians, the feudal prince lings, are becoming shareholders on a large scale. The days are gone when shares were issued at a face value of Rs. 30/- to be quoted today (1946) at well over Rs. 3,000/- or when a stock was issued at Rs. 100/-, of which Rs. 99/- was given back as a capital repayment, to give a dividend of over Rs. 150/- today being quoted at Rs. 2300/-. Those stocks had a much longer start in the race for modernization of industry, but the total volume of such capital was negligible and has now been tremendously increased by the conversion of primitive accumulation as well as by the uncontrolled inflation and profiteering of the war period.

Not only has Nehru neglected to take note of this accumulation, but he has also been unable to grasp just what this quantitative change has done qualitatively to the character of the Indian middle class, a class which may now be said to be firmly in the saddle. A few drops from the banquet (generally from the excess profits) have been scattered as a libation in the direction of education, scientific research, and charity; a considerable slackening of the ancient rigidity of manners, and unfortunately of morals also, is duly noticeable. Yet this is nothing compared to the principal characteristic of this class, the ravening greed which is now so obvious in the black market, in enormous bribes spent in making still more enormous profits, in speculation in shares and an increasingly callous disregard for the misery and even the lives of their fellow Indians. The progressive deterioration in the living conditions of our peasant workers (over 50 per cent of the population), of our factory labor and even the lower-paid office workers and intellectuals affords a striking contrast with the wealth that flows into the pockets of the upper middle class, though the gain may be camouflaged by the ostentatious simplicity of white *khaddar* (homespun) and the eternal Gandhi cap. The new constitution for India, in the gaining of

which Nehru and his friends have spent so many of the finest years of their lives in India, will come only as a recognition of the power of this newly expanded Indian middle class.

Actually the negotiations of the British Cabinet Mission are nothing if not recognition of the position of the new bourgeoisie in India. The old trusteeship theory no longer yields monopoly profits either by investment or by export; the British bourgeoisie, which must export and invest has admitted the necessity of coming to terms with their Indian counterpart, which needs capital goods. It is surely not without significance that the modern industrialists and financiers contribute to Congress (by which I mean the Indian National Congress Party in this note) funds, while the leadership of the Muslim League is on noticeable good terms with the Mohammedan owners of money in India; it may be suggested that one reason for the conflict between these two middle class political organizations is not only the fact that the Muslim minority forms one-third of the population of the country with less than one-tenth of its wealth, but further that the wealth in Muslim hands is based predominantly on barter pseudo-capital or semi-feudal agrarian production, both of which look for protection to the British.

In the light of all this, which Nehru does not acknowledge explicitly, it is interesting to note his comments on the Indian Communist Party (p.524 and 629). Nehru does not realize that the Indian Communist Party (never ideologically powerful had in 1941 been suppressed to the point of ineffectiveness and that their increasing force in Indian politics today, though still virtually negligible as against that of the bourgeoisie, is due solely to their having really gone down to the peasant workers and the very small industrial proletariat - two sections of the Indian population among which the Congress and the Muslim League both have much less influence today than they did before 1943. In speaking of the Congress Planning Committee (p. 482&1) it is curious to note that the findings of the Committee had apparently no influence whatsoever on the provincial Congress governments then functioning. Nehru might have studied with profit the differences between the Congress programme and the actual performance of the Congress ministries. There is no evidence at all that the Congresses constituted today is in the remotest danger of drifting (like its planning committee) towards socialism. With the Muslim League leadership, of course, it is difficult to observe anything except pure opportunism and reaction. Without going deeper into the statistics of capital investments, it may be stated-and verified by a reference, to the newspaper

advertisements of the period—that the years 1937-39, when the Congress ministries ruled, show in their particular provinces a considerable number of new enterprises being started. The investor certainly demonstrated his confidence in the Congress, whether or not the British and the Congress Planning Commission gave any attention to that aspect of the matter. Of course this cannot compare with the almost explosive increase in capital today.

In dealing with the stirring events of August 1942 (p. 579f.), Nehru has given the parliamentary side of the question in a straightforward manner. The external observer, however, may be struck by one noteworthy point, which has not even been visualized in the book. When the All India Congress Committee met at Bombay, the members knew that arrest was imminent and most of them had prepared for the event by setting their family affairs and personal finances in excellent order against all contingencies that might arise for the next year or two. What strikes this writer is remarkable is that not one of these worthy and able delegates, though aware that the British adversary was about to strike, ever thought of a plan of action for the Congress and for the nation as a whole. The general idea was “the Mahatma will give us a plan”: yet no especial impression was made by the Mahatma's speech just before the arrests—though that address to the assembled delegates on the eve of an anticipated popular explosion is not only not revolutionary in character, nor a plan of action of any sort, but seems, when taken objectively, to be on the same level as a comfortable after-dinner speech. Why is it that knowledge of popular dissatisfaction went hand in hand with the absence of a real plan of action? Does it mean, for example, that the characteristic thought then current among the Indian bourgeoisie had in effect permeated the Congress leadership? One may note that on a class basis the action was quite brilliant, no matter how futile it may have seemed on a national revolutionary scale. The panic of the British government and lading of all leaders absolved the Congress from any responsibility for the happenings of the ensuing year; at the same time the glamour of jail and concentration camp served to wipe out the so-so record of the Congress ministries in office, thereby restoring the full popularity of the organization among the masses. If the British won the war it was quite clear that the Congress had not favored Japan; if on the other hand the Japanese succeeded in conquering India (and they had only to attack immediately in force for the whole of the so-called defense system to crumble) they could certainly not accuse the Congress of having helped the British. Finally, the hatred from the mass repression fell upon the thick heads

of the bureaucracy, while having the discontent brought to a head and smashed wide open would certainly not injure the Indian bourgeoisie.

In this connection we may again recall Lenin's words that "only when the lower classes *do not want* the old and when the upper class *cannot continue in the old way* then only can the revolution be victorious. Its truth may be expressed in other words: Revolution is impossible without a national crisis affecting both the exploited and the exploiters." You look in vain in Nehru's book for any recognition of the undeniable fact that in 1942, while the toiling masses had begun to taste the utmost depths of misery and degradation, the Indian bourgeoisie was flourishing as never before. War contracts, high prices, the ability to do extensive black-marketing had given the financiers and industrialists what they wanted; furthermore even the lower middle classes who had normally been the spearhead of discontent in India had begun to experience an amelioration because of the great number of new clerical and office jobs created by the war and the expanding war economy. Taking cognizance of this and of the further truth that the British in India had consistently allowed investors to make an increasing amount of profit in this country, one may be able to account for the lack of a plan in 1942 and for the successive deadlocks that followed in spite of mass pressure in the direction of revolution.

History has thrust upon Nehru the mantle of leadership of a very powerful organization which still commands a greater mass support than any other in India, and which has shown by its unremitting and painful struggle that it is determined to capture political control of the entire subcontinent. But will Nehru's orientation towards Marxism change when the interests of the class which now backs Congress so heavily diverge from the interests of the poorer classes; or will his lack of a class analysis lead only to disillusionment? It would be silly to proclaim that Mahatma Gandhi than whom no more sincere person exists is a tool of the capitalists in India. But there is no other class in India today, except the new bourgeoisie, so strong, so powerfully organized, and so clever as to exploit for its own purposes whatever is profitable in the Mahatma's teachings and to reduce all dangerous enunciation to negative philosophical points. This bourgeoisie needs Nehru's leadership, just as India has needed the class itself. As I read the omens, the parting of the ways is clearly visible; what is not clear is the path Nehru himself will choose in that moment of agony.

Science and Society (New York), vol. X 1946, pp. 392-398.

*The OM thesis at this time was that the British would never transfer power to the Indian National Congress. The OM solution was that the Hindus and the Muslims, somehow equated to the Congress and the Muslim League, should unite to throw out the foreign imperialists. The question of the class structure behind the two parties was never openly raised, perhaps because the writings of W. Cantwell Smith led the OM to believe that the Muslim League was, in some mysterious way, at heart anti-British and on the road to socialism. One sure test of effective anti-imperialism, namely how many of the leaders were jailed or executed by the rulers of empire, was not applied. The intransigence and the open alliance with the British, so profitable to the leading personalities in the League, and the insistence upon the "two nations" theory were dutifully ignored. No emphasis has been laid upon the total disruption of advanced peasant movements in the Punjab and in Bengal by the 1947 separation of Pakistan. For that matter, the OM had dismissed the Satara peasant uprising (patri sarkar) of 1942-43 as pure banditry.*

### **On The Class Structure of India**

A hundred years ago, Karl Marx was a regular correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, one of the direct ancestors of today's *New York Herald-Tribune*. Among his communications was one, published on August 8, 1853, entitled "The Future Results of British Rule in India." Though he knew little of India's past, and though some of his predictions for the future have not been borne out by subsequent events, Marx nevertheless had a remarkably clear insight into the nature and potentialities of Indian society as it existed in his time. "[The British] destroyed [Hindu civilization]," he wrote, "by uprooting native industry, and by leveling all that was great and elevated in the native society." Political unity was imposed by the Indo-British army, strengthened by the telegraph, the free press, the railroad, and ordinary road that broke up village isolation—all noted by Marx as instruments of future progress. But he stated clearly:

All the English bourgeoisie may be forced to do will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the mass of the people, depending not only on the development of the productive powers, but of their appropriation by the people. But what they will not fail to do is to lay down the material premises for both. Has the bourgeoisie ever done more? Has it ever affected a progress without dragging individuals and people through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation?

The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the now ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the British yoke altogether. At all events, we may safely expect to see, at a more or less remote period, the regeneration of that great and interesting country....

A hundred years have passed, including nearly a decade of freedom from British rule. What is the situation today and the outlook for the period ahead?

One frequently hears the argument that India still has a backward economy combining elements of different historic social forms, that feudalism is still powerful, that the country has not outgrown its erstwhile colonial framework and that it is relapsing into the status of a dependency of the great imperialist powers, Great Britain and the United States.

We shall comment on these various questions as we proceed. But one point needs to be made with all emphasis at the outset. There can be no doubt, it seems to me, as to who rules India today is the Indian bourgeoisie. True, production is still overwhelmingly petty bourgeois in character. But this cannot be more than a transitory stage, and already the nature of the class in power casts a pervasive influence over the political intellectual and social life of the country.

#### THE DECLINE OF FEUDALISM

Feudalism's decline in India may be said to date from the inability of Indian feudalism to defend the country against British penetration. To be sure, the British conquered and held the country by means of an - Indian army paid from India's resources and under British discipline; though in this respect the feudal powers of the day were not so different as might at first appear, since their own armies, also maintained at Indian expense, were often staffed by European drill sergeants and artillery experts. The difference - and it was a crucial difference - was that the British paid all their soldiers regularly in cash every month, in war or peace, paying also for supplies acquired during the march or for the barracks. The contrast is pointed up by the opposing Indian factions that fought the Battle of Panipat (A.D. 1761). Ahmad Shah Durrani's soldiers mutinied after winning the battle because they had not been paid for years; while their opponents, the Marathas, maintained



themselves by looting the countryside. Faced with opposition of this kind, British-led arms were bound to triumph. (The same contrast-again involving the spoils of India, though indirectly- could be observed a few years later when the British defeated Napoleon in Spain; the French army lived off the countryside while the British used their superior wealth, much of it extracted from India, to pay the very Spaniards they were defending for all supplies.)

Indian feudalism tried its strength against the British bourgeoisie for the last time in the unsuccessful rebellion of 1857. Soon thereafter, the British abandoned their long-standing policy of liquidating feudal principalities and instead began to bolster up remaining regimes of this kind-provided they were weak enough to be dependent and hence compliant. Marx noted that the very same people who fought in the British Parliament against aristocratic privilege at home voted to maintain far worse rajahs and nabobs in India-as a matter of policy, for profit.

Despite British support, and in a sense because of it, Indian feudalism no longer had any independent strength and vitality of its own. Its economic basis had been ruined by the construction of railroads, the decay of village industry, the establishment of a system of fixed assessment of land values and payment of taxes in cash rather than in kind, the importation of commodities from England, and the introduction of mechanized production in Indian cities. The role of the village usurer changed. Previously he had been an integral part of the village economy, but he had been legally obliged to cancel a debt on which total repayment amounted to double the original loan: there was no redress against default since land could not be alienated nor could a feudal lord be brought to court. With British rule came survey and registry of land plots, cash taxes, cash crops for large-scale export to a world market (indigo, cotton, jute, tea, tobacco, opium), registration of debts and mortgages, alienability of the peasants' land--in a word, the framework within which land could gradually be converted into capitalist private property which the former usurer could acquire and rent out and exploit.

How thoroughly British rule undermined Indian feudalism has been dramatically demonstrated by events of recent years. The police action undertaken in 1948 by India's central government against Hyderabad, the largest and most powerful remaining feudal state, was over in two days. Political action in Travancore and Mysore, direct intervention in Junagadh and Kashmir, indirect intervention in Nepal, the absorption of Sikkim the jading of Saurashtra barons as common criminals- all these events showed

that feudal privilege meant nothing before the new paramount power, the Indian bourgeoisie.

It should not be overlooked, however, that the decline of Indian feudalism had another side to it--the partial amalgamation of the old ruling class into the new. Just as the rise of factories and mechanized production converted primitive barter into commodity production and the usurer's hoard into capital so too it opened a way for the feudal lord to join the capitalist class by turning his jewelry and his hoarded wealth into landed or productive capital. What the feudal lord could not do was to claim additional privileges not available to the ordinary investor, or any rights that would impede the free movement of Indian industrial or financial capital. This process of converting feudal lords into capitalists began relatively early: even before World War I, the Gaekwar of Baroda became one of the world's richest men by investing his large feudal revenues in factories, railways, and company shares.

Another process involving the liquidation of feudalism is exemplified by what has been happening since independence in the Gangetic basin. There the East India Company had created the class of Zamindars, tax collectors whose function was to extract tribute in kind from the peasants and convert it into cash payments to the company. As time went on, the Zamindars acquired the status and privileges of landholders and in return provided valuable political support for British rule. In recent years, a new class of capitalist landlords and well-to-do peasants of the kulak variety has been substituted for the Zamindars by legislative action (the Zamindars, of course, receiving compensation for their expropriated holdings).

Everywhere in India, by one means or another, feudal wealth has already become or is rapidly becoming capital, either of the owner or of his creditors. [Every feudalism known to history rested, in the final analysis, upon primitive handicraft production, and upon a special type of land ownership. The former of these is no longer basic in India, and the latter does not exist.] Talk of fighting feudalism today is on a level with talk of fighting dinosaurs. No part of the mechanism of coercion is now in feudal hands. The legislature is bourgeois (and petty bourgeois) in composition. The armed forces, the police, the judiciary are all directly under bourgeois control, where these functions would formerly have been carried out by feudal levies, retainers, or the feudal lords themselves. Even the beginnings of capitalist production in agriculture may be seen; notably the introduction

of tractor cultivation in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat, but with smaller manifestations all over the country, especially where industrial crops like cotton are grown and where transport conditions are exceptionally favorable.

The liquidation of Indian feudalism, then, is general and complete. But it is necessary to guard against drawing unwarranted conclusions from this undoubted fact. The older privilege is being replaced or expropriated only with the due compensation. No basic improvement has been effected in the condition of the rural population, still the overwhelming majority of the Indian nation. All agrarian reforms-community schemes, voluntary (*bhoodan*) redistribution of land scaling down of peasant indebtedness, counter-erosion measures, afforestation, and so forth-have turned out to be piddling. Hunger, unemployment, epidemic disease remains the permanent and massive features of Indian society. The sole achievements have been the elimination of older property forms (with recruitment of most former owners into the bourgeoisie) and the creation of a vast class of workers with no land and no prospect of absorption into industry as long as the social structure of India remains what it is.

#### BOURGEOISIE AND PETTY BOURGEOISIE.

Except possibly in a few negligible corners of recently integrated backward areas, Indian production today is bourgeois in the sense that commodity production is prevalent and even a small plot of land is valued and taxed in rupees. But it is still petty production, consisting for the most part of the growing of foodstuffs from smallholdings by primitive, inefficient methods; the produce is still largely consumed by the producer or in the locality of production. Nevertheless, the petty bourgeoisie, inhomogeneous as it is in all but its greed, completely dominates food production and, through middlemen, controls the supply to towns and cities. Though roads and other means of communication have increased, still the density of the transportation network is very low by American, British, or Japanese standards. The present national Five Year Plan estimates the annual national income at 90 billion rupees (one rupee equals 21 cents), which it proposes to increase to 100 billion by 1958. But the total value of all productive assets in private hands (excluding fields and houses for rent but including plantations) is estimated at more than 15 Million rupee, while the central and local governments' own facilities are worth more than 13 billion rupees in the held of transport, electricity, broadcasting and other means of communication, and so on. These figures prove conclusively the petty-bourgeois nature of the economy as a whole and indicate clearly that the industrialization of India

under bourgeois management can proceed only through tight co-operation between government and private capital.

Therefore, the fact that the government is the biggest capitalist, the main banker, the greatest employer, and the ultimate refuge or ineffable solace of the bootlicking intelligentsia makes for only a formal, superficial, difference. The main question to ask is: what special class-interest does this government serve? Whenever it seems to rise above the classes, or act against the bourgeois interests, does it go beyond regulating individual greed, or at most holding the balance between the petty and the big bourgeoisie? Do the government's ineffective food regulations and costly food imports mean anything beyond assuring the petty-bourgeois food-producer his pound of vital flesh while the cities are supplied with food cheap enough for the industrial laborers to maintain himself at subsistence level on the wages the factory owners are willing to pay? The government today is undoubtedly in the hands of the bigger bourgeoisie, a fact which is shown no less by its personnel than by its policies which favor Big Business and impose only such restraints as serve the interests of the sub-class as a whole and prevent any single capitalist group from dominating the rest. Moreover, there is no question that the big bourgeoisie wants industrialization.

In this connection, it is interesting to recall the economic plan hopefully drawn up (with the aid of tame economists) by the biggest capitalists and promulgated in 1944 (published at that time as a Penguin Special, No. S148). The scheme, to be financed from unspecified sources, called for a 500 per cent increase in industry, a 130 per cent increase in agriculture, and a 200 per cent increase in "services" within 15 years. The basic figures used by planners, however, related to the year 1932 and went hence way out of date. Not only did wartime inflation and its aftermath balloon the national income beyond the dreams of the capitalist planners, but also the planned agricultural output would not have sufficed to feed the population even at starvation levels (for some years after the war, India was obliged to impart a billion rupees worth of food annually and the imports still continue irregularly).

To a far greater extent than is generally realized, the big Indian bourgeoisie owes its present position to two war periods of heavy profit making. World War I gave Indian capital its first great impetus and initiated the process of Indianizing the bureaucracy. World War II vastly expanded the army and Indianized the officer corps; further, it swelled the tide of Indian

accumulation and enabled the capitalists, by rallying the masses behind the Congress Party, to complete the process of pushing the British out of the country. How great the accumulation was during the most recent war and postwar period of inflation is indicated by changes in the relative importance of different taxes as sources of revenue: the agricultural (land) tax now accounts for less than eight per cent of total state revenue as compared to 25 per cent in 1939, while taxes on what by Indian standards may be called luxury goods (including automobiles) rose from negligible importance to 17 per cent of the total in the same period. [The government asked in 1957 for appropriations about 100 times the central budget at the beginning of World War I]. The other side of the coin, as always in periods of marked inflation, has been a decline in the real income of workers and other low-income groups. It is interesting to note that the current national Five Year Plan aims to restore the general living standard of 1839-then universally recognized as totally inadequate-without, of course, curtailing the immense new power and wealth that have accrued to the bourgeoisie in the intervening years.

We encounter here one of the basic contradictions of the Indian economy, the decisive roadblock to rapid development under present conditions. The civilized moneymakers of advanced capitalist countries are accustomed to looking on a five percent return as something akin to a law of nature, but not so their Indian counterparts. The usual rate of return on black-market operations in recent years is 150 percent, and even the most respectable capitalists idea of a "reasonable" profit is anywhere from 9 to 20 percent. [The very same capitalists who ask for and obtain tariff protection for their manufactures even before beginning to produce them for the market do not hesitate to board smuggled gold and jewellery to the tune of (a reasonably estimated) 100 million rupees per year. This not only shows their contempt for their own government, its laws, and its plans for industrialization in the 'private sector', but further illustrates the petty bourgeois mentality even in the wealthiest Indians.]

This kind of profiteering, however, is incompatible with, the balanced development of India's economy as a whole. Seventy percent of the population still works on the land or lives on it, holdings being mostly less than two acre per family land cultivated by primitive methods. Wages are low and prevented from rising by the relative surplus population, which is always pressing for available jobs. In the countryside, at least 50 percent of the population is made up of landless laborers. These conditions spell low mass purchasing power and restricted markets. When even these restricted

markets are ruthlessly exploited by a capitalist class snatching at immediate maximum profits, the result can only be industrial stagnation and growing poverty.

And indeed this is precisely what we observe in fact. Idle plant is widespread; night shifts have disappeared in most textile mills; other industries show machinery and equipment used to 50 percent of capacity or even less. It is the familiar capitalist dilemma, but in a peculiarly acute form: increase of poverty and idle resources but with no adequate incentives to invest in the expanded production, which is so desperately needed. This is the pass to which bourgeois rule has brought India. There is no apparent escape within the framework of the bourgeois mode of production. The situation was changed for a while by the “pump-priming” of the First Five-Year plan--a curious jump from a colonial to a pseudo-New-Deal economy; but future prospects are decidedly gloomier.]

#### COLONIALISM AND FOREIGN DOMINATION

In a sense the tragedy of the Indian bourgeoisie is that it came of age too late, at a time when the whole capitalist world was in a state of incurable crisis and when one-third of the globe had already abandoned capitalism forever. In fact, the Five Year Plans mentioned above are self-contradictory in that they are obviously inspired by the great successes of Soviet planning without, however, taking any account of the necessity of socialism to the achievement of these successes: effective planning cannot leave the private investor free to invest when and where he likes, as is done in India, nor can its main purpose be to assure him of profitable opportunities for the investment of his capital.

The Indian bourgeoisie cannot be compared to that of England at the time of the Industrial Revolution, nor to that of Japan during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, nor again to that of Germany from the time of Bismarck. There are no great advances in science that can be taken advantage of by a country with preponderant illiteracy and no colonies to exploit. Under the circumstances, as we have already seen, rapid industrialization runs into the insuperable obstacle of a narrowly restricted domestic market.

Do all these unfavorable facts mean that capitalist India must inevitably fall under the domination of foreign industrialists and financiers with their control over the shrinking capitalist world market? Must we see signs of such a relapse into colonial status when, for example, the Indian government

invites powerful foreign capitalist groups to invest in oil refineries on terms apparently more favorable than those granted Indian capital, including guarantees against nationalization?

The bogey of a new economic colonialism can be quickly disposed of. For one thing, the Indian bourgeoisie is no longer bound to deal with one particular foreign capitalist power, and the answer to stiff terms from the United States and Britain has already been found in the drive to recovery of Germany and Japan. The Indian government has invited Krupp-Demag to set up a steel plant; the Tata combine comes to quite reasonable terms with Krauss-Maffei for locomotive works and foundries, and with Daimler-Benz for equipment to manufacture diesel engine transport. The more advanced capitalist powers, in short, be played off against each other (and even better against the USSR), as they could not be in the days of British rule. And for another thing, the guarantees against nationalization granted to the great British and American oil monopolies are really no more than Indian Big Business itself enjoy. The only industries that have been nationalized in India are those which, in private hands, hinder the development of larger capital (for example, road transport in Bombay State, taken over without compensation) or those in which there was danger of big investors losing money (for example, the nationalization of civil aviation with heavy compensation to the former owners). The Indian bourgeoisie has taken its own precautions against genuine nationalization and hardly needs to give itself the formal guarantees demanded by foreign capitalists. [Perhaps, the strongest of these, and the most crippling to the supposedly planned advance towards socialism is the systematic creation of revenue deficits. The first deliberate step in this direction, taken as a sweeping measure in Bombay state (where the bourgeoisie is at its strongest) was the costly, wasteful and palpably inefficient prohibition policy. Now, deficit state budgets seem quite the normal fashion, while parallel outcries against the Five Year Plan become louder].

No, the invitation to foreign capital does not mean sudden, unaccountable lunacy on the part of those now in power, those who fought so desperately only a few years ago to remove foreign capitalist control from India. Entry is not permitted in fields where Indians have investments and mastery of technique, as for example in textiles. Even in the new fields opened up to the foreigners-fields in which Indians lack both know-how and the assurance of sufficiently large and quick returns to justify heavy investment - a "patriotic" strike or two could ruin the foreign enterprises should they ever become a

threat or a nuisance to the Indian bourgeoisie. Fissionable materials (uranium, monazite, ilmenite) which foreign interests wanted to buy at the price of dirt are being processed by a company financed by the government and directed by Tatas. (On the other hand, high-grade Indian manganese ore is still being exported unrefined for lack of a sufficiently strong profit incentive to Indian capital).

#### THE ALTERNATIVE.

Invitations to foreign capital, however, do have one function in addition to that of giving a fillip to industrialization (which could have been secured by inviting much more technical aid from the USSR and the People's Democracies). That additional function is to provide a measure of insurance against popular revolt. The Indian bourgeoisie shows unmistakable signs of fearing its own masses. The leading bourgeois party (the Congress) has not yet exhausted the reservoir of prestige built up during the period of its leadership in the struggle for national independence. In addition, the bourgeoisie controls the bureaucracy, the army, the police, the educational system, and the larger part of the press. And there are the opposition bourgeois parties, like the Praja-Socialists, which can be relied upon to talk Left and act Right, to win election on an anti-Congress platform and then turn around immediately after to a policy of co-operation with Congress politicians, as they did after the Travancore-Cochin elections last spring. Nevertheless, "defense" expenditures continue to take about two billion rupees a year, about half the central budget (and a half that the Five Year Plans do not even mention); and police expenditures mount strangely and rapidly under the direction of those who took power in the name of Gandhian non-violence. Extra legal ordinances, (against which the bourgeoisie protested so vigorously when the British first applied them to suppress rising Indian nationalism), are actually strengthened now for use against the working class; the Press Acts remain in force; and on the very eve of the first general election, important civil liberties were removed from a constitution on which the ink was scarcely dry.

All these factors together, however, will not prevent rapid disillusionment at promises unfulfilled, nor the inevitable mass protest against hunger, the ultimate Indian reality. There may come a time when the Indian army, officered by Indian bourgeois and aided by a transport system designed for an army of occupation, may not suffice. The Indian capitalists calculate, quite understandably, that it is safer to have foreigners interested so that they could be called upon to intervene with armed force in case of necessity.



But note that neither special political rights, nor monopolies, nor military bases have been given to any foreign power, and that even those (France and Portugal, backed by the United States and Britain), which still have pockets on Indian soil, are being vigorously pushed out, by popular action as well as by politico-diplomatic demands. Colonial status would mean foreign control of Indian raw materials and domination of the Indian market, both today unmistakably in the hands of the Indian capitalists themselves. And there is always the hope that a third world war will lead to even more fantastic profits for a neutral India--as the ruling class dreams of neutrality.

The solution for India, of course, would, be socialism, which alone can create a demand rising with the supply, a solution which can be utilized not only by advanced countries but by backward countries (as China is demonstrating), and without which planning is futile. But just as the Indian bourgeoisie imports the latest foreign machinery for production, so, when all else fails, the latest capitalist developments in politics will also be imported. And this means fascism, in the long run the only possible alternative to socialism. Already the talk in circles that count is of the need for a "strong man." And models are at hand, from nearby Thailand to faraway Egypt and Guatemala.

Monthly Review (New York), vol. 6, 1954, pp. 205-213.

*Nationalism, and its logical extension provincialism, are manifestations of the bourgeoisie. In the feudal period, the Peshwas defeated the Nizam more than once, but saw nothing wrong in leaving Marathi-speaking regions in the Nizam's possession. The political reorganization of India on a linguistic basis into new states was thus an index of bourgeoisie development and competition. The inviolability of private property as guaranteed by the Constitution no longer suffices. Each local bourgeoisie wants full political control over its own hinterland to safeguard investments and to exclude powerful competitors. This was seen in the bitter strife over the creation-not even by pretence of freely expressed public opinion, but by police action-of the new, enlarged, hybrid, anomalous, bi-lingual state of Bombay. The quarrel passed off as one between Gujarathi and Maharashtrian. The real fight, however, was between the veteran, entrenched capital of Bombay city, and the newer money of Ahmedabad. The Maharashtra petty-bourgeoisie remained characteristically helpless in disunity, to the end. Those who doubt that the big bourgeoisie can do what it likes with the government might give*

*some thought to the TELCO affairs being discussed publicly (for the first time) since September 5, 1951.*

*The chances of fascism have not been diminished by the 1967 election. These showed that the only state government able to show an honest, incorruptible, bourgeois administration, able to raise funds without deficit finance for an honest attempt to carry out the Nehru policy was led by the communists in Kerala. In addition, this regime had at least made a start towards dealing with the most serious fundamental questions: food, agrarian production, re-division of land employment, education, yet within the bourgeoisie framework, without touching bourgeois property relations. The dangers of this example cannot have escaped the brighter minds of the ruling class, whose cleverness far outstrips their honesty.*

### **On The Revolution in China**

No honest and reasonably alert visitor to China can fail to be impressed by the remarkable changes in the country and the people. The material advances shown by the new system since so recent a year as 1952 leap to the eye. New factories, mines, oil fields, steelworks, dams, co-operatives, roads, buses, hospitals, schools, cultural palaces, theatres have sprouted virtually overnight. Literacy is almost universal and the language is being reformed. The rise in the general standard of living is equally remarkable. The normal noonday meal even of the unskilled laborer now compares with his rare holiday feast in the old days. Conditions of work have improved out of all recognition. Coalmines in whose untimbered pits eight or ten famished peasant laborers dropped dead, or were killed by accident every day, have now death rates among the lowest in the world, and are decent places to work in, with excellent automatic machinery for the bulk of the production. The former, incredible stench and filth have disappeared from the workers' shuns, once the most dreadful in the whole world, and even the older hutments are free of vermin. But far more remarkable than all these are the changes among the people themselves. The current Chinese standard of honesty would have been astoundingly high in any country, even in pre-war Sweden. Shanghai, once notorious for the incidence of pilfering in spite of the watchful eyes of the foreign concession police, has not had a single petty crime reported for over ten months. After just two years of better living conditions, the children in the new workers' tenements show what socialism can mean; they are healthier, more cheerful, and rush spontaneously to

welcome the stranger without the least trace of shyness or rudeness. The unshakable calm, inner courtesy, love of culture, and fundamental good nature in all strata of Chinese society cannot be written off as 'national character' which has nothing to do with the revolution. The relaxed, well-adjusted Chinese of the People's Republic are not to be found in Hong Kong, or Formosa. Yet the mainland is under constant threat of attack from modern atomic bases scattered from Japan to Formosa, while the other two regions have a perpetual hood of, foreign gold poured into them to make them happy bastions of genuine Western Democracy.

The intelligentsia of Peking also shows a remarkable contrast with those of great cities in other countries. Their enthusiasm and animation, particularly among the younger intellectuals, compares favorably with the lack of interest and rather fearful attitude that seems to characterize their counterparts in New York, and the rather casual, almost inert, and often-lackadaisical approach to serious questions on the part of so many Muscovites. They certainly do not manifest the concentrated opportunism, thoroughgoing superficiality, and intolerable brag of the new middle-class Indian. Yet China is by no means a paradise. Serious new problems arise on every level, and have to be faced where other countries manage to ignore them or to deny their existence. Under these circumstances, why are the police so much less in evidence in new China than in most other countries, including the USA and the USSR? Why is there no counterpart to the un-American activities committee, no witch-hunting in any form? All criticism is carefully studied and sincerely welcomed if useful. People are now genuinely free to express any political opinion they like, including the belief that capitalism is superior to socialism. If they wish to study the speeches of Chiang Kai-shek, scrupulously accurate versions will be provided so that the reader can judge for himself what Chiang's ideas of democracy really meant. This freedom does not extend to certain types of action. The possible lover of "free enterprise" is not free to practice its most rapidly profitable aspects, to indulge in black-marketing, adulteration of goods, opium smuggling, and such unsocial activities. However, former Kuomintang generals are now employed in high and responsible administrative posts, as for example Fu Tso-yi, at present minister of water conservancy, in charge of important projects like the new dam construction in Sanmen gorge. Even Chiang Kai-shek will be given a similar position, if he dares to make his peace with his own countrymen. At the same time, those who fought against these two for so many bitter years are found in all ranks of the army, and at all levels of the government, but do not have to be coerced to agree to this strange return.

Their position is not remotely comparable to that of the best resistance fighters in Germany, France and Italy, who see the resurgence of the most hated elements to power, and the recession of the goal for which the anti-fascists had worked so long. Many enterprises function very well under joint state and private ownership. There is no question of surrender to capitalism; yet the capitalists have not been “liquidated” by shooting, but converted into useful citizens.

These features of contemporary Chinese society must be in some way, traceable to the course of its revolution, which we proceed to analyze, in order to explain this extraordinary new civilization.

Ultra-Marxists find that the Chinese revolution had a peasant basis and leadership and not a proletarian; hence, they conclude that the revolution cannot be socialist, or communist.

A view that need not be discussed seriously is that it is just one of the periodic upheavals which begin every three centuries or so in China as peasant revolts, to settle down after a change of regime; since the last such change came in 1644, with the Manchus, one was astrologically due now! Nevertheless, serious arguments are still heard that the Chinese revolution is only a long-overdue reform and modernization of a backward semi-colonial country; that socialism in China is merely a political slogan, very far from realization. This is the main question that will be discussed here: Is the Chinese revolution socialist or has some other description to be found for it? The discussion has to be in the context of a given world situation and the specific situation in the country. The answer will necessarily imply a great deal about imminent or necessary changes in the rest of Asia and other under-developed areas. Some tacit conclusions also follow about other methods of advance to socialism than by armed insurrection.

To avoid misunderstanding, it is necessary to define the fundamental terms. By revolution is meant the overthrow of a government by a major group of the governed, by methods regarded as illegal under the system existing before the overthrow. We have to exclude the mere *coup d'etat* when the group belongs essentially to the same governing class, as happens so often in South America. Changes of this nominal type are symptomatic of a large, passive, unresisting stratum among the governed. In South American countries, the real Americans (strangely called Indians) have hardly begun to figure on the political stage, and their very languages have yet be recognized to the extent of being taught in schools. A genuine revolution, as

distinguished from a change of regime, takes place only when the governed will not submit to the old way and the governing classes cannot carry on in the old way. This is the common factor to the American, French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions. Sometimes, the overthrow occurs in effect before its formal recognition, in which case the revolution appears a comparatively peaceful transfer of power. This happened in India and a few other British colonies, where local bourgeoisies had developed under British colonial rule, and a became much costlier to suppress their demand for political power than to surrender it on condition that bourgeois property rights were not to be touched. However, the struggle was, even then, regarded as illegal and the attempts to suppress it employed outright violence. Our definition excludes such developments as the Industrial Revolution, and the pseudo-revolutions by foreign intervention.

Socialism is the system where means of production are owned by society as whole, not private persons; and where opportunity and the rewards of labour are equitably proportioned under the slogan "equal pay for equal work". Communism is a more developed form under which each individual contributes to society according to his ability and receives a share of the social product according to his needs. Both of these imply a high degree of modern, mechanized, co-operative production before there can be more than a redistribution of poverty; but co-operative production is not by itself sufficient, for all factory production is possible only by the highest degree of social co-operation. Similarly, most societies recognize the needs of infants the ill, and the aged even when people in these categories can add little or nothing to the social produce; but that does not suffice to make those societies communist. In the strictest sense of the word, a "pure" socialist revolution is possible only when the productive capacity (surviving after the revolution) suffices for the needs of the whole population on the level that its citizens recognize as equitable. The only country where raw materials, installed machinery, power supply, and available technicians fulfill these conditions today is the USA, which has not had a revolution since Ins, when these conditions did not prevail and socialism was unknown. However, it is clear that the Soviet revolution at least is fundamentally different from the French or the American revolutions. So, let us agree to call a revolution 'socialist' when the new regime can, and plans to, progress directly to socialism without the necessity of further violent change in the government. In abstract theory, this would be possible in the USA, while Britain and India have openly proclaimed peaceful transition to socialism as their goal. The main question is whether the class in power wishes it, and tallies its

actions with political declarations, or whether the socialist aim (if professed) amounts only to a means of deceiving the electorate, by promises which cannot be fulfilled by the methods adopted.

One of the necessary (though not sufficient) conditions for a revolution to be socialist is that the power thereafter should not be in the hands of a minority class. The reason is simply that such a class cannot logically be expected to usher in a classless society. The Chinese revolution satisfies this condition. However, Marx and his followers had asked for a further condition, namely that the revolution should establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. This conclusion was drawn from the experience of the great French revolution, which had some hope of progressing to socialist liberty, equality, and fraternity as long as Robespierre lasted. It turned into reaction and military dictatorship as soon as the new urban bourgeoisie and their rural counterpart the peasants, had liquidated the privileges of feudal ownership and acquired control over the new forms of property. The further experience of 1848 and of the Paris Commune of 1870-71 did nothing to shake the conclusion. Nor did the Tai Ping rebellion in China, which would only have meant a change of dynasty but for foreign intervention. The Indian revolt of 1857 had nothing to offer but a renewal of feudal power.

The Paris Commune was lost precisely because the peasantry was not drawn into the struggle on the side of the workers. The Russian revolution was completed by the triple alliance of workers, soldiers and peasants. The fundamental contradiction between (the essentially cooperative) modern factory production and the essentially petty-bourgeois peasant production remained. It could not be solved, as in the USA, by methods that led ultimately to the creation of the Dust Bowl, price supports, and wanton destruction or senseless hoarding of "surplus" food by the state. The problem had to be solved quickly in the USSR, and a regular food supply ensured which could not be shaken by famine, epidemics, or foreign intervention. The solution was found in collectivization of the land, but under the guidance of people not themselves peasants, whose approach was generally doctrinaire, and methods often coercive. The new productive basis withstood the *cordon sanitaire* and the most deadly armed invasion of World War II. The very existence of the USSR was encouragement to socialist movements throughout the world, while new China could not have progressed so rapidly without - its protection against foreign intervention and its capital aid. However, in conjunction with the antagonistic external pressures, Soviet methods left the aberrant legacy of unhappiness, mistrust,

and espionage, twisting of the national character, which has slowly to be cleared out.

The Chinese revolution followed a totally different course. The workers' commune of Canton was brutally suppressed. Shanghai fell quickly to the Kuomintang forces only because of the great workers' rising planned and organized by Chou En-lai. The reward was the unparalleled bloodbath of 1927 in which about 50,000 workers and left-wing intellectuals were tortured and put to death by that pillar of Western Democracy Chiang Kai-shek whose latest writings bemoan his own naïve trust of communists and his great leniency. Comintern theorists wrote many futile theses about the workers' revolution. The sole effective action was organized by Mao Tse-tung and Chu Deh, on the basis of armed guerilla insurrection with peasant bands. To survive, the center of resistance had to be shifted, by means of the famous Long March, to the extreme hinterland of China, very far from any factory or proletarians. The communists did not enforce cooperative production in the areas under their control. The land was redistributed for petty, small-scale primitive production, and not all the land but only that portion owned by oppressive semi-feudal landlords who had run away from the vengeance of the peasantry. The complete land reform came in 1952. From 1938, the communists actually put the revolution in abeyance to cooperate in a common anti-Japanese front with Chiang. Impartial observers like Stilwell and Evans Carlson have made it clear that they fought the Japanese much more effectively than the Kuomintang. Does all this not smack of reformism, of the will to abandon socialism at the slightest excuse?

Actually the armed insurrection made the political work effective. The poorest peasant and landless agrarian worker had been psychologically conditioned during two thousand years of misrule to being kicked around by official warlord, landlord, and merchant. He now learned that his destiny rested in his own hands. Re-division of landlords' property united all the peasantry rich and poor, behind the regime. The new leaders lived a life of the utmost simplicity. Taxes were very light, and there was no speculation. As the Chinese workers were hardly a step removed from the peasants, they backed the communists solidly whenever they had the chance. The united anti-Japanese front drew all patriotic intellectuals and petty bourgeois into the struggle, and showed them that no other leadership could be effective. During the course of the struggle, the Red Army performed a feat that exceeds even the Long March in importance. It proved that a guerrilla force starting with the poorest weapons, but correctly based upon the people as a

whole, and properly led, could convert itself during the very course of the war into a full-fledged modern army, supplied with weapons and technicians taken over from the far better-equipped opponents. This, in fact, symbolizes the entire course of the Chinese revolution in its uninterrupted advance towards socialism.

The peasant in a capitalist environment has necessarily to be a petty bourgeois, but not necessarily one in an ancient, backward, pre-bourgeois country, which is overpopulated relatively to the available food supply. In such a country, it is absolutely futile to wait for a full development of the bourgeois mode, the creation of a large and strong proletariat, then a strong workers' party, and finally a socialist revolution in our sense of the word. The new bourgeoisie in such a country will fall very far behind the creative role of the first bourgeoisies such as in England. Specifically, China had simultaneously the worst features of the old feudalism on land, imperialist-colonial intervention by foreign powers, and an indigenous fascism based on strong internal monopoly of weakly developed capital. The monopoly, in fact, was of the notorious Four Families (Chiang, Soong, Kung, Chen), who reduced all other private capitalists to their servants and the whole administration to their lackeys. The heaviest profits came directly from bleeding the people, without industrialization.

The essential point is very simple. No revolution as defined above) today in a backward country has any chance of effectiveness, or even of survival, unless it is planned and carried out as a socialist revolution. Industrialization is not a prerequisite of socialism in such countries, as so many theorists continue to believe, but the very converse is necessary. The advanced non-socialist countries (taken together) are over-producing, in the sense that their markets lack the purchasing power necessary to absorb the full-capacity product. The existence of cheap (but inefficient) labour and raw materials: in the underdeveloped areas cannot but aggravate this fundamental economic contradiction. Technical advances like automation increases the stress. The strong possibility that the USSR can and will supply capital goods to all backward countries, socialist or not, to develop without the domination of foreign capital also brings the crisis nearer. The only solution is to begin with a socialist revolution so that effective demand rises indefinitely, and planning makes overproduction impossible.

One lesson that might be drawn from China is the correct socialist approach to the cult of mere bigness in a backward country. The USSR, with its



different historical background, and the urgent need to establish the first base for socialism, without external aid and in the face of a deadly, unremittingly hostile environment, had to industrialize regardless of cost. This meant human cost, in the absence of capital aid, but the viability of socialist production was proved. In China, the same pace of industrialization would have meant intolerable shortage of consumer goods at a time when immediate relief had to be shown from the incredible misery into which the Kuomintang and the Four Families (with US aid) had plunged the country. It would also mean serious unemployment, at least an "excess of manpower", in the interim period, not to speak of heavy waste of capital assets in short supply. So, their immediate plans are being modified so as to encourage cooperative handicraft production and unmechanized agriculture in tune with basic industrialization. They can utilize the stored experience of the remarkably successful Gung Ho industrial cooperatives set up during the anti-Japanese war in the remotest hinterland. This contrasts with the heavy opposition aroused by even the trifling, slap-dash cooperation announced by the Indian government. Certainly, the Chinese would not set up the Amber Charkha hand-spinning scheme, had they so powerfully developed a textile industry as India and such ample foreign aid. The dam in the gorges of the Yangtze will be bigger than those in most Indian schemes. But in a country that has a monsoon, the essential is to hold the rainwater back as long as possible, to prevent quick erosion of valuable topsoil. That is, flood control and efficient food production in India would be far better served by a hundred thousand, properly coordinated, small dams rather than a few big ones costing more. The Chinese have their own schemes for atomic energy research, but for use, not empty prestige. In India, the money poured out could have been much better utilized in harnessing the decidedly more abundant solar energy, which only blasts the country over eight months or more of the year. All we have achieved so far is a remarkably useless sun-cooker. Both countries have to cope with a dense population and high birth rate, but birth control propaganda catches on quickly in China, because the people know that in old age, they will have comfortable maintenance from their cooperative group, even when there are no children. To plan the population without planning how the population is to make a reasonably decent living is as ridiculous as it is futile. Thus, when one speaks of many different paths leading to socialism, it is necessary to ask, "what sort of socialism?" Germany produced National Socialism under Hitler; the socialist government in France attacked Egypt for the sake of the Suez Canal Company, and did not hesitate to continue the brutal war of colonial repression in Algeria.

The Chinese method had one advantage over all others, including the Russian, in that the confidence of the food producers, with accurate knowledge and full control of the food supply, were assured from the start over an increasingly larger area. The art of genuine persuasion were mastered by the technique developed in the Yen-an days, when not more than a third of the local councils and committees were allowed to consist of communist party members. Go-operation has caught on very well, without the least show of force on the part of the state among the peasants. For example, during the lean months at the end of winter, peasant cooperatives about Peking (which have not enough land for the necessary surplus) send many of their members out to work at transport, carpentry, and odd jobs. Till last year, the individual kept 15 out of the average monthly wages of 50 Yuan earned by such labor, and put the rest into the cooperative. Now, without any suggestion from the government, all the money is voluntarily put into the common fund, and each family assigned enough (by the cooperative) for its needs during those three hard months of the year. Contrast this with other countries in Asia. The Indian five-year plan allots about 11% of the total plan budget to heavy industry, and effectively spends less. The rest goes in services, ancillary plant, transport, power supply, irrigation and the like, which does not touch private monopoly in food production (which can be broken only by a tax in kind and efficient grain storage); nor in most consumer goods, nor some very important heavy industry. The Indian state has absolute power and uses it to settle questions like the linguistic division of Bombay state by tear gas and bullets instead of the logical democratic plebiscite and ballot. It is openly admitted that this all-powerful state is powerless to collect evaded tares, to curb inflation, to control food prices, or to raise money by expropriation of the primitive accumulation of money-lender, landlord, and profiteer, in place of sales and consumer taxes. This amounts to a confession that the classes in power have not the least desire for socialism, and will not allow their profits to be touched even if it means the failure of industrialization. The remaining Asian countries, including those in the Middle East, and Turkey have found insurmountable obstacles of every type on the road to industrialization. The moral should be reasonably clear.

Monthly Review (New York), 1951.

*M.N.Roy, writing on Revolution and Counter-revolution In China (1946) to justify those actions of his that had led to his expulsion from the Comintern, reached the conclusion that the Chinese revolution did not follow a pattern,*

*which could be approved by Marxists. He said that the “so-called Communist Party of China” preferred to base itself on the village paupers, necessarily inclined towards banditry’. “Having learned from experience, the Communists in China today are communists only in name”. The refusal to learn anything from experience, and the insistence upon keeping the name unsullied by effective action are characteristic of Roy's type of OM. While accusing the communist leaders in China of “relapse into opportunism which may be justified as clever strategy”, Roy had not discovered the existence of Mao Tse-tung in 1930, and even in 1946 dismissed Chairman Mao's united national front as another ‘doctrinaire preoccupation.’ The task of the revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries now (1946) is to establish Radical Democracy'-a task in which Roy himself failed dismally on his return to India while the bourgeois colonial struggle was being fought out and won under the leadership of the Congress, without benefit of Roy. As late as 1951, the CPI portentously reserved final judgment upon the Chinese revolution, on the grounds that the whole affair might turn out to be reformist in character, compared with the purity of the struggle in India. Other Indians, formerly OM continue to ignore China, and devote their energies to such urgent problems as the woes of Yugoslavia or Hungary. Therefore, it might be of some use to re-examine the content and meaning of a socialist revolution. Otherwise, it is fatally easy to slip into a form of "socialism" which lacks everything except the name. It is to be feared that recent developments in India and frantic appeal for dollar aid imply this trend in the ruling class and its party. It does require a peculiar genius to undercut socialism while supposedly building it by peaceful methods, but the country might be happier if such talent were more innocuously utilized.*

## **Science and Freedom**

In 1949, I saw that American scientists and intellectuals were greatly worried about the question of scientific freedom, meaning thereby freedom for the scientist to do what he liked while being paid by big business, war departments, or universities whose funds tended to come more and more from one or the other source. These gentlemen, living in a society where he who pays the piper insists upon calling the tune, did not seem to realize that science was no longer independent' as in the days when modern machine production was still expanding at the lower stage of technical development, and the scientist who made the most essential discoveries was looked upon

as a harmless individual toying with bits of wire, chemicals, perhaps collecting odd specimens in out of the many places. The scientist now is part of a far more closely integrated, tightly exploited, social system; he lives much more comfortably than Faraday, but at the same time under the necessity of producing regular output of patent able or advertising value, while avoiding all dangerous social or philosophical ideas. As a result, the worthies I mention were quite worried about the lack of scienti8e freedom in a planned society, but only indirectly and perhaps subconsciously as to what was actually happening to their own freedom in an age and time of extensive witch-hunting, where being called a communist was far more dangerous than being caught red-handed in a fraud or robbery.

These considerations, however, are mentioned only because they lead one astray from the main facts. There is an intimate connection between science and freedom, the individual freedom of the scientist being only a small corollary. *Freedom is the recognition of necessity; science is the cognition of necessity.* The first is the classical Marxist definition of freedom, to which I have added my own definition of science. Let us look closer into the implications.

As an illustration, consider the simple idea of flying. I am told that our ancestors in India had mastered some mysterious secrets of yoga whereby they could fly hundreds of miles in an instant. I don't believe it; these are flights of the fancy rather than of the body. Attempts to imitate the birds had very limited success, but gliders were more successful. Then came the posing of the elements of the problem, namely sources of power, methods of propulsion, laws of aerodynamics – all scientific and experimental truths. Mankind was not free to fly till the flying machine was invented. Today, anyone can fly without yoga-provided he has the means to enter an airplane. This, as society and its property relations are constituted, implies that either he owns the plane, or someone who does allows him admission; ultimately, the question is whether or not our flying human has money, i.e. the necessary control over means of production. In the abstract, nothing prevents him from sprouting a pair of wings and flying off like a bird; or from becoming a yogi and soaring into the atmosphere by mere exercise of will power. Such freedoms nevertheless, are illusory; necessity compels man to find other, more feasible technical methods.

Take a commoner case, of eyesight. Five hundred years ago, extreme short sight or extreme far sight would have been regarded as varieties of

blindness; they were written off as afflictions from heaven, or concomitants of old age. Glasses have to be invented for the restoration to normal sight of such people. This means today the science of optics, some knowledge of eye-structure, of glass, including its chemistry, lens-grinding technique, factories, and workshops. There are still many people who suffer from eye-defects that could easily be corrected by glasses; they are legally free to wear glasses. Only lack of funds prevents them. In India the number of pairs of glasses really necessary but not available would run into the millions.

We observe, then, that to recognize the necessity implies scientific experiment; in addition, there is a technical level, which cannot be divorced from the experimental. Finally, there is a social structure that is not only intimately connected with the technical level, but also conditions the freedom of the individual by introducing a *social* necessity that in the abstract seems unnecessary but exists nevertheless.

Some of my statements about science are not likely to be disputed; that science knows only one test, that of validity, of material proof. Science is nothing if it does not work in practice. Science is direct investigation of properties of matter, hence materialistic. Scientific results are independent of the individual who carries out the experiment, in the sense that the same action gives identical results. Finally, as the search for cause and their effects, science is cumulative: *science is the history of science*. Every scientific discovery of any importance is absorbed into the body of human scientific knowledge, to be used thereafter. Schoolboys can repeat Galileo's experiments, and first year college students learn more mathematics than Newton knew; the young students must go through much the same mental processes, stripped of inessentials and repeated according to modern points of view when they study. But they do not have to read Galileo's dialogues, nor the *Principia*. Here science differs essentially from the arts, for in painting, the modern painter need not study the prehistoric bisons in the cave of Altamira, nor the poet read Kalidasa. On the other hand, we can appreciate works of art and literature of all ages, for they are not subsumed in their successors in the manner of scientific discovery. Aesthetically, they have a survival value, a lack of obsolescence that the scientific work lack. However, not all aesthetic effects have this survival value; the rapidly changing fashions that most ruling classes drink necessary in their garments become as quickly ridiculous.

The other statements may also be briefly illustrated. Two painters painting the same scene will produce substantially different pictures; two people clicking the shutter of the same camera pointed at the same object will not. The fruits of ritual depend upon the rank of the celebrant, and only the king, medicine man, shamans or Brahmin have the power or the right to draw down certain benefits for mankind; science tells us that these supposed benefits are imaginary, and fertility of the soil is better obtained by special agro techniques, chemical fertilizers, and so on, than by fertility rite. Moreover, the chemicals and techniques work in the same way independently of who applies them.

Now I give these examples deliberately, because both art and ritual performed at one time the functions that have been displaced by scientific observation. Primitive ritual was a substitute for what we now call scientific theory though primitive technique was correct in India the menstrual tabu is still observed, though dying out in the cities, where the hurly-burly of industrial life deprived it of all meaning. Our workmen worship their tools on one day in the year, a custom not without charm, which can be traced back to the oldest known time; but lathes, turbines, electric motors and railway trains have made it clear that there is none of the workman's personal *mana* that resides in the tool. I note in the market that the humble vegetable vendor make the first sale of the day with a humble salutation to the balances and to the goddess Bhavani; the share market speculator may spend considerable sums on astrologers, but doesn't neglect the market quotations, and relies upon study of trends and corners in shares, stocks, bonds, and such modern financial jugglery which is absent in his and the astrologer's scripture. The millions that bathe even now at the time of a solar eclipse can point with pride to the fact that their prayers have been successful that the sun has always been freed from the jaw of the demon who swallows him; but astronomical theory which predicts the eclipse to the minute has crept into our traditional *pancanga* almanacs, through the Western ephemerides, so that people cannot really believe in what has come to be an obsolete practice. *In science, practice and theory cannot be divorced.* This does not mean that scientists have never held a wrong theory, but only that they keep on making better and better approximations to the truth, knowing that there is no anal truth simply because the properties of matter are infinite and inexhaustible. In ritual no one dares make an experiment; the older the precept the more sure its grip.

Religion develops from ritual when primitive society acquires a class structure, a tighter organization of its originally varied components into a larger whole. This need not be elaborated here. What most of us do not realize is that science is also a social development; that the scientific method is not eternal and that science came into being only when the new close structure of society made it necessary. Of course, science really comes into its own with the machine age, which cannot develop without science and which in turn contributes highly useful technical aid to scientific discovery. But the fundamental inner connection is that machine production, like science, is cumulative. The machine accumulates human labor time towards the fulfillment of a specific human purpose. Yet modern science, as we know it, came into being before the machine age, and for the same purpose, namely to serve the new social needs. *Modern science is the creation of the bourgeoisie.*

One of the major contributions of science is that it separates theory from technique, specifically from productive technique. If you look at our village workmen, you find them still producing excellent work with quite inferior tools simply because the workman masters the individual tool, makes it an extension of his person. Only he can handle the particular bit of metal efficiently enough to obtain good results. But his production is not standardized. If he makes two complicated devices of the same type, the parts will not be interchangeable, though both may have the same design and function. In the modern factory, on the other hand, the lathe or the loom is independent of the person handling it, just as the scientific experiment is independent of the experimenter, provided in each case the worker has the minimum efficiency necessary to keep the mechanism from damage. A village weaver is whole ages and social layers apart from the village potter; a worker on the assembly line can easily shift from one type of factory to another. In the case of the handicrafts-man, theory is not divorced from the tool; his knowledge is acquired as well as expressed through his fingers. The result is that the transmission of such knowledge is slow, craft workers tend to form into closed guilds (in India small sub-castes), and a long apprenticeship is necessary for the production of more workmen, their numbers and production being severely limited. This was the situation in Renaissance Europe, for example, when considerable accumulation of money with the merchant princes (and its overflow) made it necessary to find new methods of making money grow. The older usury was limited in scope: more than a certain profit could not be extracted from the debtors tied to the older mode of production. Confiscating the mortgaged tools of a

craftsman may lead to starvation for him and his family but the tools are unproductive bits of metal and wood to the usurers. There is needed a new class which can produce goods efficiently without long training, and whose surplus labor can be appropriated by an employer. This turns the mere usurer into a capitalist, the craftsman into a proletarian. But to manage such enterprises, there is needed some theory of material processes that works in practice, and serves the managing class which does not handle the tools of production. This is precisely the role of science. If you look into Galileo's researches, for example, you will find them concerned with such practical things as why pumps don't suck up water above a certain height --which leads to hydrostatics, and also to better pumps. Accurate time keeping is made possible by his observations upon the pendulum; but it is factory production, where many men have to be brought together simultaneously for coordinated labor, that needs accurate time-keeping; not cottage industries. Galileo cast or recast horoscopes, rather badly. His astronomy was revolutionary because he turned a telescope upon the heavens, to interpret what he saw in a perfectly natural manner. The man in the moon disappeared, to be replaced by mountains. But what made his astronomy dangerous was the fact that it shook a system of the universe taken for granted by the ruling class and by the church that served it; by implication, the rest of the social system was also laid open to challenge, something that no man is free to do without risk.

Science is not mere accumulation of experimental data. No experiment is great unless it settles some disputed theory; no theory is a striking advance unless it explains puzzling experimental data, or forecasts the results of unperformed experiments. But one has only to look at the way the scientific center of Europe has shifted to see the intimate connection between science and production, between the coming to power of a new bourgeoisie and the local age of discovery. Leeuwenhoek was a janitor in Delft who ground his own lenses and made the first good microscopes, which he turned upon drops of water and the smallest insects. It was the Royal Society of London that sent its secretary to visit him, and published his papers, just as they published Redi's communications against the doctrine of spontaneous generation, which helped solve the very practical problem of food storage. But the idea of giving credits to him who publishes first is comparatively new. Even Newton did not like to give away his discoveries light-heartedly, and the further back we go the stronger we find the tendency to keep a precious secret concealed as a monopoly. It is the social mode of production that changes the fashion, though private ownership of the means still insists



upon patents, cartels, and monopolies at level of technique and manufacture. Now is it an accident that the very century during which two revolutions placed the bourgeoisie in power in England produced Newton? How is it that the French revolution, which cleared off the rubbish of feudalism in France saw the greatest of French and European scientists: Lagrange, Laplace, Ampere, Berthelot? They rose with the bourgeoisie and survived Napoleon. Gauss, the great name in German science, appears on the scene at about the time the German bourgeoisie becomes the real power in its own country; and he is not alone. If we wrote all these off as accidents, we should be in the ridiculous position of denying the possibility of a scientific basis for the origins of science, by taking the history of science as a Series of fortunate coincidences, though science is its own history and has always progressed by seeking the reason behind suspicious coincidences. I might go further and say that Greek science was (in spite of all the admiration lavished upon it, and in spite of its logical method having served as inspiration to the Renaissance) not science in the modern sense at all, but pseudo-science, much as Greek and Roman capital can at best be called pseudo-capital in spite of modern imperialist tendencies and actions. The aim of Great science was to reduce all phenomena to reasoning from the techniques that had originated the very discoveries. That too was a social necessity, for in classical society the work was done by slaves, whose existence was taken as a law of nature, a necessity which reflected itself in the scientific outlook of the time.

This should dispose of the idea that science is the creation of gifted individuals, thinking for purely' scientific purposes along problems which came to them out of some realm of the mind. There are gifted individuals in every age and society, but the manner in which they exercise their gifts depends upon the environment, just as much as the language in which they choose to do their thinking. It is as impossible for the mind to exist without thought as for the body to exist without motion.

There are still people in India who speculate upon the relative merits of Sankara's and Ramanuja's philosophy, though they do not thereby presume to acquire the prominence of those two founders. If I repeat Newton's experiment with the prism, I shall get the same results, but certainly not the same credit as a scientist or founder of optics. *The weight, the significance of a scientific discovery depends solely upon its importance to society.* This is why the college student, knowing more mathematics than all of Newton's contemporaries, is still not a prodigy. A discovery that has been assimilated is reduced to the level of useful technique. A discovery made before it is

socially necessary gains no weight and social necessity is often dependent for its recognition upon the class in power Leonardo da Vinci, whose 500th anniversary is now being celebrated is the most famous example of this. He still served feudal masters, who were not interested, for example, in the manufacture of pins (from which Leonardo expected to make a fortune), and who used his mechanical talents for stage effects. A hundred years later, his fame as an artist would have been far less than an inventor. That social development, both in technique and in needs of production, evoked scientific discovery long before the days of organized research is clear from the independent and simultaneous discoveries made so often in the history of science. For example, the liquefaction of gases, so long considered impossibility, was done by two different people in France at once. The Raman effect, whose theory is still imperfect, was discovered simultaneously in the USSR and India. The credit rightly belongs to Raman, who realized at once that while the rest of the world had been looking for an atomic effect, this was a molecular phenomenon. The experiments he devised proved it, and gave us a valuable technique of analysis, which does not change the substance.

But occasionally, as with Priestley, the conflict between the scientist and the class that dominates society becomes too great for the individual and for his discoveries to gain proper recognition. This is not a characteristic merely of the bourgeois period. During the Middle Ages, we find Europeans tuning to meditation, the monastic life, and theological speculation. Such tendencies were highly respected and advertised with the assistance of an occasional miracle. However, the theology was not independent of the class structure of contemporary society: dangerous speculations led a man to the stake. Not only feudal rulers, but the later merchant classes used theology, Protestantism in the latter case. The early saints and martyrs, upon whose reputation the church was apparently founded, did not suffice in the later period. When the Church itself became a great holder of feudal property, abbeys and bishoprics turned into the prerogatives of particular rich families, or groups of families; this happened, incidentally even with Buddhism as may be seen from the history of the Barmecides, or of the few ruling families of Tibet till its recent liberation, or from the history of the richer monasteries in Ceylon. The foundations of Sankara, Ramanuja, and even a real people's saint like Tukarama are now chiefly preoccupied with methods of increasing their wealth retaining outworn prerogatives, avoiding taxes. The wealthy Church in Europe needed the Inquisition to support its claims; that holy office found Galileo's thought dangerous. The crusade were

diverted to strange aims, such as the conquest of Constantinople, and the suppression of a popular movement in the Albigeois. The Index Expurgatorious shows the church's attitude towards certain type of advanced thinking, while the last Spanish civil conflict demonstrated what steps the church in Spain, as Spain's greatest owner of property, was capable of taking against a democratic government.

A fairly close parallel could be drawn on the thesis that *science is the theology of the bourgeoisie*; at least it replaces theology whenever the bourgeoisie-capitalist mode of production displaces the feudal. The scientist must remain comparatively poor like the monk, but is admired, admitted to the board of the capitalist baron just as the cleric was to that of the feudal lord. His discoveries must be patent-able, but he rarely makes the millions; Pasteur and Faraday received a beggarly pittance of the profit made from their discoveries. A press agent may make the scientist's miracles known, but only if they are acceptable to the lord of the press, hence to the ruling class. And most striking of all, in the period of decay, witch-hunting is as prominent in its own way as with the end of feudalism.

Though a creation of the bourgeoisie, science is not its monopoly, and need not decay with the bourgeoisie. The art of dancing began as part of ritual, but is now one of society's aesthetic pleasures even though the witch doctors who initiated it have mostly vanished. Music is no longer necessary to promote the growth of plants; even as I write, I can hear the primitive rhythm of tom-toms and ancient chants being practiced at midnight -- not for better crops but for the sake of some relief from the daily grind of life by people who are milkmen, factory workers, and house-servants. Sculpture does not mean the underground mysteries of pre-historic French grottos; the Parthenon statuary is admired in the British Museum, but no longer worshipped. There is no reason for science to remain bound any longer to the decaying class that brought it into existence four centuries ago. The scientist needs this freedom most of all, namely freedom from servitude to a particular class. Only in science planned for the benefit of all mankind, not for bacteriological, atomic, psychological or other mass warfare can the scientist be really free. He belongs to the forefront of that great tradition by which mankind raised itself above the beasts, first gathering and storing, then growing its own food; finding sources of energy outside its muscular efforts in the taming of fire, harnessing animals, wind, water, electricity, and the atomic nucleus. But if he serves the class that grows food scientifically and then dumps it in the ocean while millions starve all over the world, if he

believes that the world is over-populated and the atom-bomb a blessing that will perpetuate his own comfort, he is moving in a retrograde orbit, on a level no beast could achieve, a level below that of a tribal witch-doctor.

After all, how does science analyze necessity? The sciences are usually divided into the exact and the descriptive, according to their being based upon a mathematical theory or not. This distinction has faded away because the biological sciences have begun to feel the need for exact numerical prediction, while physics and chemistry have discovered that, on the level of the individual particle, exact prediction is not possible as with the movement of the solar system. Both have found the new mathematical technique, based upon the theory of probability that they need. In the final analysis, science acts by changing its scene of activity. It may be objected that astronomy does not change the planets or the stars; is it not purely a science of observation? Astronomy first became a science by observing the changes in the position of heavenly bodies. Further progress was possible only when the light that reaches the astronomer was changed by being gathered into telescope, broken up by passage through spectrographs, or twisted by polarimeters. Parallel observations of changes, say in metallic vapors, in the laboratory enabled conclusions to be drawn about the internal constitution of the stars. There is no science without change.

If this be admitted, we are near the end of the inquiry, the reason why the scientist in a capitalist society to-day feels hemmed in and confined is that the class he serves fears the consequences of change such as has already taken place over a great part of the world's surface. The question of the desirability of such change cannot be discussed dispassionately, cannot be approached in a scientific manner, by the supposedly 'free' scientist. The only test would be to see the two systems in peaceful competition, to see which one collapses of its own weight, succumbs to its own internal contradictions. But the scientist who says that this should be done finds himself without a job if he is on the wrong side of the "iron curtain". The real task is to change society, to turn the light of scientific inquiry upon the foundations of social structure. Are classes necessary, and in particular, what is the necessity for the bourgeoisie now? But it is precisely from cognition of this great problem of the day that the scientist is barred if a small class should happen to rule his country. Perhaps the crisis cannot be considered immediate in new democracies like India, where the bourgeoisie is itself a new class? This is incorrect. The new class did not develop its own science any more than it invented its own Indian steam engine and motorcar. Just as

they import the best paying machinery, the science they need is also imported in ready-made form. They are also ready to import any political ideology that serves their end. This means that instead of the centuries of development from medieval to modern as in Europe we can expect at best decades in India, under the leadership of a bourgeois-capitalist class that has only re-oriented but not lost its colonial mentality.

Monthly Review (New York), vol. 4, 1962, pp. 200-205, with additions, as printed here, in *Vijnan-Karmee*, vol. IV, October 1953, pp. 5-11.

### **On The Trial of Sokrates**

In the year 399 B.C., an Athenian dikastery, consisting of a panel of 500 citizens, sentenced to death an aged compatriot named Sokrates. Two accounts of the case have come down to us, both by pupils and admirers of the accused: Plato and Xenophon. A comparison shows that the first at least is colored by the literary ability of the reporter. It is reasonably clear from both that Sokrates did not defend himself on legalitarian grounds, but on those of what might be called the rights of man as regards freedom of speech. The legal aspect of the case can be seen fully discussed in any book that deals with *causes celebres*; the trial, in fact is usually the first of any historically arranged series of famous trials. All jurists, Lord Birkenhead among them, come--rather shamefacedly to be sure - to the conclusion that as the law existed in that age, the verdict was justified.

What gives the trial its interest is not the constitutional problem but the personality of the philosopher himself, which has grown enormously with the passing of centuries. Plato considered him the wisest, justest, and best of all men that he had ever known (concluding sentence of Phaedon); but there was no public regret at his death in Athens, or elsewhere in Greece. The arch-driveller Plutarch did not see fit to include him for biographical purposes among the great men of antiquity (not that this proves very much, as Epaminondas is also omitted). But the trial has an aspect of martyrdom, inasmuch as the prisoner at the bar deliberately baited the jury and took a high tone with his judges; he preferred the alternative of a death sentence to that of stopping to teach and discuss; moreover, the law as administered

gave him a certain amount of time in which escape into exile was possible, and actually arranged by his friends, but refused indignantly by himself. He waited thirty days in prison with chains on his legs, and calmly drank off his cup of poison at the end.

The nature of the charge was that Sokrates was a perverter of youth. This looks startling, but is true in that those who listened to him were more apt to be young men than old, and that their respect for established institutions was almost certain to be dissolved by his methods. It is of interest to Marxists that his method was the dialectic one, questioning and cross questioning, showing up the contradictions in a plausible and even accepted statement till, by a succession of negations, some sort of a valid conclusion was reached. By this, he is given the position of the very founder of moral philosophy, as he raised questions on every sort of ethical problem that could affect any person. Nothing of his has survived except what appears through Plato's Dialogues; on the other hand, Plato, Boswell-like, has allowed his own views, if he had any, to appear only through the mouth of his Guru. But there is no doubt that Sokrates's questionings dispersed the mist of vague belief that surrounded the mind of the citizens-at-large in Athens, as it surrounds those of citizens-at-large anywhere today.

Arguments on the trial have too often been based on the susceptibility of democracy to weaknesses of the crowd-mind. Most historians take up one position or the other in this matter, for or against democracy. Even our own Jawaharlal draws the conclusion, "Evidently governments do not like people who are always trying to find out things; they do not like the search for truth" (*Glimpses of World History vol. I, p. 88*). This view would seem quite natural considering the political circumstances of the date of writing and the government of the day in India. But I propose to examine the matter a little closer, as regards the trial in question.

Athens can hardly be called a democracy in the modern sense of the word, as the vast mass of the population had little in the way of political power. The slaves, women, and foreign traders or foreign craftsmen (the metics) had no rights to speak of, though the last class did receive a much fairer deal by law than elsewhere-which accounts for a great deal of Athens's progress in industry and trade. The citizen population was roughly graded by income, though old tribal divisions persisted and were revised as necessary. Taxes were also graded, and office was usually restricted to the wealthiest, who had to pay very heavily for it by bearing the costs of entertaining the whole (free) populace at certain annual festivities. Legal power vested in the

citizens as a body; they alone had the right to bear arms; every citizen had to serve by turn also as a paid juror, the vote of the jury being binding in both civil and criminal cases upon the magistrate. The whole constitution after Kleisthenes implies a high degree of culture in the male citizen population, and understanding of the laws, particularly as there were no lawyers even for court business. This contention is borne out by the brilliant literature of the period, best of all by the dramas of the age which were meant for the entertainment of the general public, but have remained a model of the art for all times.

The philosopher was aged seventy at the time of his trial, and had led an exemplary public life except for his unfortunate habit of “perverting youth”. He began life as sculptor, but left the field, to Pheidias and others of that rank, to betake himself to an incessant examination of the foundations of every possible contemporary belief. This did not improve his material circumstances, as he despised the sophists (to whose class he nevertheless belonged) who charged a fee for teaching the arts of examination and defense of any cause, so necessary in view of the forensic duties of every Athenian citizen; it decidedly soured the temper of his spouse Xantippe, who has had no sympathy at all from history for managing the household on a minute and irregular income. Sokrates fought with vigor and distinction on the battlefield of Delium. At the naval battle of Arginusac eight commanders allowed the joy of victory to blind them to the necessity of rescuing more than a thousand citizens drowning upon some of the shattered hulks of the Athenian navy; after their return, they were impeached by mass-trial, contrary to law which called for individual trial; only one of the responsible men present dared to hold out for law against public sentiment: Sokrates. One might think that this made him a marked man to the Athenian rabble; but when, a little later, Kritias had established the aristocratic dictatorship of the Thirty at Athens, Sokrates again refused his compliance to an illegal and unjust order. Let us add that throughout his life, he had been a friend of "the very best people". At this stage, his trial apparently becomes quite incomprehensible.

One fact is ignored by both jurists and philosophers. The whole generation before the death of Sokrates had been taken up in a disastrous war: the Peloponnesian war. This was an out-and-out imperialistic clash, begun under the leadership of the moderate imperialist Perikles, the great statesman of Athens. The contradiction it was meant to resolve was the rise of a new mercantile class in opposition to the landed aristocracy; and that of limited

power for an individual at home with unlimited power abroad. Athenian private enterprise, beginning as industrial pseudo-capital, had penetrated the Aegean hinterland very rapidly, and citizens not only owned mines in outlying places, but controlled trade routes, managed private armies, owned small forts, and interfered as much as necessary in the local governments of the less-developed regions such as Macedonia. The islands near Athens had formed a maritime league for defense against Persia; Athens exploited the other members of the league as shamelessly as possible, and inevitably ran into a war with Sparta, hegemon of the land-league. Both sides forgot their original purpose, and called in the help of the Persians. This twenty-seven year war of attrition finished the obstreperous common citizenry of Athens, and finished Athens as a powerful state. In and just after this period there were two violent attempts at dictatorship of the aristocracy: the Four Hundred and the Thirty, with a bloody restoration of the "democracy" each time. And the notable circumstance here is that the oligarchs forgot that they were enemies of the Spartans, and called in Spartan aid to suppress their own democratic citizenry. This was granted very willingly, as the Spartans were thoroughgoing oligarchs on their own account, who naturally hated democracy in any form. One imperialism fighting, other, but helping dictatorship to establish itself in a rival state is not a new phenomenon.

Now Sokrates is supposed to have been willing to teach anyone or enter into a discussion with him, regardless of rank or wealth. Yet, if we look into the dialogues of Plato, our only sources of information, we find a curious emphasis on just one class of people: the extreme aristocrats who misdirected the steadier imperialism of Perikles, and who later tried again and again for a *coup d'état*. Kritias was the leader of the Thirty, and he is not only mentioned several times, besides having a fragmentary dialogue in his own name, but left the impression upon the Athenian citizens that Sokrates had taught him his actions. Another in the same category, so far as public rumor went, is Alcibiades, the handsome and noble (Καλὸς κ' ὀρθῆς) son of the aristocrat Kimon. This youngster, from all records, was the closest friend of Sokrates. The *Symposium* of Plato bears testimony to this, and for some unknown reason, is considered by many litterateurs as a high water mark of civilization (cf. Clive Bell: *Civilization*). Alcibiades reduced every question to a personal one, and was a ruinous friend and a deadly enemy to both the Athenians and the Spartans by turn. The Athenians exiled him for his treachery; the Spartans eventually sentenced him to death without a trial. In personal character, he can oddly be described as a bounder, in spite of the admiration he excited in Greek



bosoms. His undoubted military ability was never used in a good cause or in a reliable manner. There is, by the way, a Platonic dialogue named *Alkibiades*.

To mention just one other name, familiar to readers of the *Dialogues*, we take Nikias, the successor to Perikles. He was responsible for the most disastrous venture in the whole course of the Peloponnesian war: the Sicilian expedition. He lost his own life in it, being put to death by the Spartans when taken, with 7000 men. The flower of the Athenian armed forces, their best general (Demosthenes) and almost the whole of the regular navy were wiped out in an expedition of the type against which Perikles had earlier left a clear warning.

Had this enterprise succeeded as originally planned, it would have led to a dictatorship or at least an oligarchy at Athens itself. Alkibiades had a hand in this too, as he had gone over to the Spartan side at the time, and was responsible ultimately for directing operations in a manner that proved fatal to Athens. Both Alkibiades and Nikias were in political control of Athens when the Athenians (416 B.C.) took the island of Melos, giving an argument that stands to this day as a statement of pure, naked imperialism (Thucydides, Book V, 85-116). The proposal after the conquest was that all men of military age be put to death, and the women and children sold into slavery! But Nikias and his fellow aristocrats were, in spite of the war, friendly with the Spartans, pro-Spartan at times and hated the men of the people like Kleon, or Hyperbolus the lamp-seller's son, who rose to power in Athens on the strength of their persuasiveness, without the backing of birth, tradition, prestige, or landed inheritance.

I do not say that the Sokratic teaching was alone responsible for the actions of these men, but I do maintain that the rugged individualism to which the Sokratic dialectic could be such tremendous encouragement was undoubtedly to the advantage of the ruling classes, or of the would-be dictators, as against the citizens in a group. If the Republic of Plato, supposedly a narrative from the mouth of Sokrates himself, be any guide, the Sokratic ideal of a state was not the Athenian democracy. The training given there would have been nearer to that of the Spartans, and useful primarily for war. That a people trained for war without common ownership of the means of production will ultimately be tempted to fight for conquest and dominion is never thought of. It has been remarked that Sokrates himself would never have been tolerated for more than a week in his own Republic. It is also recorded that the common man tended to be suspicious of the Sokratic

dialectic on its own grounds; it probably made him out a fool. Let me point out that the chief disciple of Sokrates, Plato, was allowed to continue teaching afterwards at Athens, and lived to a ripe old age himself; yet, in his youth, he had been directly involved in the temporarily successful attempt of Kritias and the Thirty at setting up a dictatorship, only to withdraw at an early stage when the differences between the ideal and the practice of an aristocratic rule became manifest.

It is clear, then, that the verdict against Sokrates was not brought about by the vulgar multitude, but by responsible people of his own day. The structure of society had not been essentially altered, except that the forces that demanded an imperialist expansion had been severely crippled by a long war and two rebellions. His condemnation did not cause a furor even among the aristocrats, for they had nothing more to gain from him except long after he was dead, when his case was useful as an argument against democracy. But there is a very important moral that I have kept till the last: Sokrates behaved as he did because, in his own words, he was guided by an inner voice; a divine, or daemonic message was conveyed to him in times of stress, and he never allowed fear of the consequences to divert him from obedience. It is unfortunate that a person of his intelligence, ability, uprightness, and courage was told nothing by the Gandhian inner voice about the condition of the masses at large; about changing the means of production; about allowing workers (slaves) to participate in that sort of liberty which had already brought such an access of vigor to the Creeks as to enable them to hold out against the much more powerful Persian empire. The inner voice could have told him nothing about the far distant future: that liberalism in 19th century England would flourish because of Crote's close study of Athens in his days; that a study of the classics would be an important political asset for both democrats and reactionaries. But I do think that the inner voice should have made it clear to him that a certain class of people would twist his teaching to their own profits as against the well being of the body politic. And when the attempts of this class failed, the class itself was content to look on while the sadly damaged state gave him a choice between keeping quiet or being executed.

Fergusson & Willingdon College Magazine, July 1939, pp. 1-6.

As regards Sokrates and his background, the reader will find much better information in:

- (1) A. D. Winspear and T. Silverberg: *Who Was Socrates* (New York, 1943),
- (2) Benjamin Farrington: *Greek Science* (2 vol.) Pelican Books.

(3) A. D. Winspear: *The Genesis of Plato's Thought* (New York, 1940).

### **The Decline of Buddhism In India**

The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Chuang (830 A.D.) saw images that had sunk into the damp Indian soil, and was told local prophecies to the effect that the religion of the Teacher would vanish completely when the image had sunk out of sight altogether. Shashanka, king of Bengal who had systematically destroyed Buddhist religious structures, cut down and burned the sacred tree at Gaya under which the Buddha had attained enlightenment twelve centuries earlier.

The tree was soon nursed back to growth from a sprout discovered by Purnavarman, the last descendant of Ashoka. Harsha repulsed Shashanka, restored the devastated Buddhist foundations, and built many new ones. Monasteries by the thousand still housed and fed a vast army of monk. The richly endowed University of Nalanda was at the zenith of its fame. All seemed well.

The real damage came from within, and may be discerned in the report of the same Chinese traveler, though he was perhaps not conscious of what his words signified: “(The Buddhist scholar who) can explain three classes (of sacred texts) has allotted to him different servants to attend and obey him.... He who can explain five classes is then allotted an elephant carriage. He who can explain six classes of books is given a surrounding escort.... If one of the assembly distinguish himself (in disputations) by refined language, subtle investigation, deep penetration, and severe logic, then he is mounted on an elephant covered with precious ornaments, and conducted by a numerous suite to the gates of the abbey. If, on the contrary, one of the disputants breaks down in his argument, or uses poor and inelegant phrases, or if he violates a rule in logic, they proceed to disfigure his face with red and white, and cover his body with dirt and dust, and then carry him off to some deserted spot or leave him in a ditch. Thus they distinguish between the meritorious and the worthless, between the wise and the foolish.”

This was surely not the way merit had been judged in the days of the Buddha. The original function of the ever-wandering almsmen had been to explain the way of righteousness to all, in the simplest possible words, and the languages of the common people. The new class of disputatious residents

of wealthy monasteries cared nothing for the villagers whose surplus product maintained them in luxury. The original rules laid down and followed by the Buddha had permitted only the mendicant's trifling possessions without even the touch of gold, silver or ornaments. The Buddhas of Ajanta are depicted wearing jewelled crowns, or seated upon the costliest thrones.

Similarly, the old Buddhism had turned Ashoka away from war to the path of peace. His edicts state that the army would henceforth be used only for spectacles and parades. The devout emperor Harsha, on the other hand, managed to reconcile war with Buddhism just as he reconciled his worship of the Sun god and Maheshwar. Harsha's army increased during thirty years of constant, aggressive warfare, to 64000 elephants, 104000 cavalry, and a still larger number of foot soldiers. He was Buddhist enough to forgive the assassin whom he had disarmed, when the assembled kings and nobles demanded the death punishment. The common people, who had to pay for his wars and for the triumphal pageantry, might have preferred his putting the assassin to death and idling less people on fewer battlefields.

In a word, Buddhism had become uneconomic. The innumerable monasteries and their pampered inmates were a counterpart of the costly military establishment. Buddhism had, from the very beginning, favored the growth of a universal monarchy, which would stop petty warfare. The Buddha is *chakkravartin*, spiritual counterpart of the emperor. But such great, personally administered empires had themselves become uneconomic; Harsha's was about the last of the sort in India. Thereafter, kingdoms were much smaller till feudalism from below gave the state a new basis of feudal landowners. The administration gradually drifted into the hands of a feudal hierarchy growing from below with new (feudal) property rights in land.

The village defeated both the empire and the organized religion that accompanied it. The self-contained village was hereafter the norm of production. Taxes had to be collected in kind, and consumed locally, for there was not enough trade to allow their conversion into cash. Transport of grain and raw material over long distances would have been most difficult under medieval Indian conditions. Harsha traveled constantly with court and army, through his extensive domains. The Chinese pilgrim states that Indians rarely used coins for trade, which was conducted by barter. This seems confirmed by the absence of coins struck by Harsha, which contrasts with the tremendous hoards of punch-merited coins that had circulated under the Mauryans.

Buddhism owed its initial success precisely to its fulfillment of a great social need. Society in the Gangetic basin of the 8th century B.C. was not organized into peaceful villagers producing mostly for themselves. The much thinner population was divided into a set of warring semi-tribal principalities and some tribes not yet on the level of agrarian production with the plough. Vedic Brahminism and tribal cults were fit only for the pastoral tribe at war with all neighbors. The Vedic animal sacrifices were far too onerous for a developing agrarian economy. The thin pre-Mauryan settlement required trade in metals, salt, and cloth over long distances, which could not be conducted without the protection of a powerful state. The passage from a group of tribes to a universal society, therefore, needed a new social philosophy.

That the universal monarchy and the religion of the universal society were parallel is proved by the rise of both in Magadha, at about the same time. Not only Buddhism, but also numerous other contemporary Magadhan sects preached about the same thing: the Jains, Ajivikas, and others all denied the validity of Vedic sacrifice, and the need for killing. Buddhism accompanied and protected the first traders into wild country, peopled by savage tribes. This is shown by the ancient monuments at Junnar, Karle, Nasik, Ajanta, and elsewhere on the junctions of primitive trade routes.

The major civilizing function of Buddhism had ended by the seventh century A.D. The ahimsa doctrine was universally admitted, if not practiced. Vedic sacrifices had been abandoned except by some rare princeling whose revivalist attempt had little effect upon the general economy. The new problem was to induce docility in the village cultivators, without an excessive use of force. This was done by religion, but not by Buddhism. The class structure in the villages appeared as caste, always scorned by the Buddhists. Primitive tribesmen were enrolled as new castes. Both tribesman and peasant relied heavily upon ritual, which the Buddhist monk was forbidden to practice; ritual remained a monopoly of the Brahmin.

Moreover, the Brahmin at that time was a pioneer who could stimulate production, for he had a good working calendar for predicting the times of ploughing, sowing, and harvest. He knew something of new crops, and trade possibilities. He was not a drain upon production as had been his sacrificing ancestors, or the large Buddhist monasteries. A compromise could also be

affected by making the Buddha an *avatara* of Vishnu. So formal Buddhism inevitably faded away.

Its main lesson need never be lost: that good thoughts require cultivation and training of the mind by the individual's personal efforts, no less carefully than good singing that of the voice or craftsmanship that of the hand. The value of the thoughts, on the other hand, is to be judged by the social advance, which they encourage.

From the Times of India, May 24, 1956, by kind permission of the editor; the title has been changed from "Buddhism in history" and minor corrections made. The topic may be pursued further, by those interested, in my book: *Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, 1956).

### **The Kanpur Road**

He sat there in his doorway like some great idol. A sad, benign smile—a smile of pleasure, not necessity — on that strong brown face heightened the impression. But his stiff white beard, parted and curled away from the middle, wide shoulders that bore their years lightly, the shining medals strung across a mighty chest, all showed a fighter.

"Sardar", for I saw that such was his rank, "do you know the Kanpur Road?"

"Aye, *baba* (my son). I have a scar for every mile of the way."

"Yon fought in the Mutiny?"

"A little."

"No, I know better, Tell me about it. Please?"

"Nay, there is nothing to tell. We held the enemy while the main body retreated. Yes, even as you say, it was there I earned this star. How? There was little to do. The heart ached more than the arm after it was done. A rebel cut down the brigadier as he and I were reconnoitering one night. I fought and killed that rebel with this same worn sword. I carried the brigadier to his own men. It was not very hard. What has the heart to do with it? It was my own brother that I killed. It could not have been otherwise. Had I not eaten British salt? Had I not given my word to defend them against whatsoever enemy? Were they not, at least then, outnumbered, without hope? Then could I, a Sikh, have done otherwise? But I buried my brother first with his sword in his hand. And I would not dress the wound that he gave me on the cheek. So, it festered. Now the left side of my face cannot smile, nor show

any emotion at all. The star I wear, not to show others my glory, but to remind myself of my grief. But I digress.....”

He never did show me the Kanpur Road. But he did tell a great deal about himself to the wide-eyed youngster before him. He had campaigned in Abyssinia with Napier, entered Kabul and Kandahar with Roberts, fought in almost every out post of the desert, mountains, swamp, and wilderness that mark India's savage frontier. His choice was ever the desperate enterprise, the forlorn hope, the lonely task. When, at the end of each campaign, the inevitable medal came to be pinned upon his chest, his thoughts always went back to his first decoration, the award for fratricidal loyalty. Then the great, livid scar began to hurt again, his face tightened up more than ever into a frozen bronze mask. The coldness with which his extraordinary commissions were carried out, the lack of warmth with which he received the medals, the chill stare with which he met all praise, caused acute discomfort to his officers which made them transfer him from division to division. Thus it was that his sword opened the first secure path for the grimy civilization of Birmingham, Manchester, and Sheffield in many an unhappy comer of the world. When, finally, the time came for retirement, he accepted from the Government, as a reward for the loyalty that he had ever shown to the salt that he had eaten, a gift of land near Kanpur; far away from his native Punjab, but as near as possible to his brother's unmarked grave.

As I listened to him, I forgot the parched earth, the dust-haze that seemed the smoke of an all-consuming fire. I forgot the pain of hunger, the terror in my green young soul at the unknown future that was in store for me even if I managed to reach the city of Kanpur. The dispirited peasantry, drifting aimlessly in the background between the repellent poles of a countryside squeezed out by famine and the newly opened factories at Kanpur glutted with cheap labor, no longer numbed me with the fright that came from the sharp consciousness that I, too, was one of them. After all, I thought, I can always find the road to Kanpur, but where could I meet mother such as Sardar Govind Singh as honorable a man as ever obeyed his code? He was worthy to have gazed upon those pure-souled heroes and demi-gods of our mythological antiquity who fought their superhuman battles with mysterious weapons to turn back the forces of darkness from the rule of this world. He was worthy to have stood with King Pauravas on that fateful day when the tricky maneuvers of Yavana invaders prevailed against simple bravery. Our village schoolteacher, now dead of starvation and cholera had told me the story. The invaders did not fight man to man; one could not come to grips

with them. A sudden flank attack by their cavalry wiped out the Indian chariots upset the elephants. Before order could be restored, there appeared on the plain a fearful engine of destruction, the Macedonian phalanx: sixteen thousand men locked into a precise, compact formation by their enormous twenty-one-foot spears. The shattering impact of their charge swept away the rabble. Yet dauntless king Pauravas held out with a loyal handful on a lonely knoll by the riverside till it became clear that all was indeed lost. The bravery of his defense, the matchless dignity of his surrender, wrung words of admiration from the youthful conqueror; Alexander converted a noble foe into a loyal friend by restoring his lands and adding to them. Even, so, thought I, had Govind Singh come by tokens of appreciation and a gift of land from our modern conquerors.

But it was not he who showed me the road to Kanpur.

I repassed this scene of a childhood memory in 1938 and thought it symbolic that the Sardar never did guide me to my destination. The way I had traveled through the intervening years would never have been his way. My struggles, too, had been in many lands, but chiefly in classrooms, laboratories, and factories. I did volunteer for the Republican army in Spain, only to reach Franco's prison without being able to fire a single effective round on the actual field of battle. I had neither medals nor land. My scars had been seared into my mind by the turmoil of social upheavals. The first of these scars was earned on Boston Common the night they electrocuted Sacco and Vanzetti. In fact, what had brought me again to Kanpur was gigantic strike, and I knew that it was not our leadership, nor the heroic efforts of the workers that had been the decisive factor in our victory. We won primarily because the capital and capitalists ranged against us were foreign, not Indian. [My reward, which came soon afterwards when leading a strike against our own mill owners at Ahmedabad, turned out to be jail and tuberculosis.]

The peasants of that region recalled the grim Sardar only as a master more oppressive than the usual run of landlords. They brushed aside my queries as to the declining years and manner of death of such a person. Something of my reputation must have spread out from Kanpur, because I was asked again and again, "You have helped the mill-hands obtain higher wages; but what of a better deal for the farm laborer? Your speeches foretold the day when the *mazdur* would take over his factory; when will the *kisan* own the land he cultivates? And the light of hope that shone from within upon toil-worn faces made it clear that Govind Singh had not only killed a brother, but had



dealt mortal wounds to his own historic period, cutting at long centuries of stagnant agricultural production. The regions he had helped to open up were now held not by armies of occupation but by the far deadlier grip of banks and factories. To me, his memory was like a beacon pointing out a deserted road, the road of abstract loyalty and unthinking courage. We had to follow another path, in order to free both worker and peasant from slavery to human masters, to the machine, and to the soil.

*Govind Singh had never eaten British salt; only Indian salt taxed by the British. The lands that Alexander bestowed upon King Pauravas were Indian land that could never have been garrisoned by the conquerors' mutinous soldiers.*

[My place was not with the heroes, but with the rabble, with the men who had been pressed into the ranks by force of arms, or force of hunger, with nothing to fight or work for and little to gain; whose function in the epics was to be slaughtered by the heroes; whose role, according to the historians, was to provide a mere background for the deeds of great men. The heroes of a money-lending society rose from the people at the expense of the people; I could rise only with the common people.]

Ferguson & Willingdon College Magazine, Poona, 1939, pp. 10-12

The initial two-thirds of this story was written as and 'English A' theme at Harvard in 1924.

## **The Quality of Renunciation in Bhartrihari's Poetry**

Even the comprehensive work of Winternitz (*Geschichte d. Indischen Literatur* III, 137-145) gives us next to no definite information about the person of Bhartrihari, one of the greatest of all Indian poets and the first to be presented to the West. The reason is simply that no substantial information exists that would seem convincing to any critical mind. The poet could not have been a king, nor the brother of Vikramaditya, whatever the fabulists narrate. That he was not a Buddhist is clear from the ardent and perhaps sincere vedantic verses in praise of Shiva that occur in his *Centuries* (V.11591 etc.). His identity with the author of the Bhattikavya, or with the grammarian, or with the royal disciple of Gorakshanatha is very doubtful. Some of these negations need no proof; others will be justified later in

passing. Only the uniformity of Indian tradition remains to assure us of the existence of a single person who wrote the Nitishataka(N), the Vairagyashataka (V.) ,and the Shringarashataka. Certainly, these works in their present form, whether the work of one or of many authors, succeed in creating a marked impression of a pronounced literary physiognomy.

It is the Bhartrihari or the pseudo-Bhartrihari, or even the Bhartrihari syndicate of the N. and the V. that I mean to analyze here as a literary personality without further discussing the vexed question of his existence. The nature of the dissection must, therefore, deal less with the author as a historical personage than with the total mass of literary tradition handed down to us in his name; it will also affect the class of people whose extraordinary powers of appreciation enabled them to preserve a dazzling poetical treasure while completely erasing the author's biography. Well in keeping with the lopsided traditions of this uncritically appreciative class is the (sixth) edition, cited here, of the N. and the V. by M. R. Kale, still so popular as a text in our schools and colleges. Kale's own able Sanskrit commentary, with the slipshod printing of the text itself, and his positively gruesome English translation (which can be used only as a powerful argument against the employment of English as medium of instruction in India) are all completely characteristic. In what follows N., N'. and V., V' indicate the verses that Kale takes as authentic and as apocryphal in the two books respectively.

## II

It must be understood at the very outset that the poet is worthy of any critic's efforts: that he is his great poet. When confronted with the lines written and the sentiments expressed by some the world's greatest poets, the comparison will not always be in his favor. But let it be clear that at the very least he sustains the comparison, as no second-rate poet would, without fading immediately into obscurity. Many in India have tried to imitate his verses, without even approaching his success. If for nothing else, Bhartrihari would deserve a place in the front rank of world literature for his consummate handling of so difficult a language as Sanskrit. Variety, ease, facility, clarity, emphasis, and, when necessary, ornate imagery an, all at his command without degenerating into the mere rank floridity of later "poet's poet". Few could exceed the force of his epigrams, the finality with which the sentiment is rounded out in many of his concluding half-lines. No ordinary versifier could possibly write such polished phrases, the translator's despair as: "Life leaks away like water from a cracked jug" (V.39) (आयुः परिस्रवति भिन्नघटादिवाम्भः

); “unsipped , at moonrise, the potion of the fair one's tenderlips; our youth has passed away fruitless like a light (burning) in an empty house” (V.47: कान्तकोमलपल्लवाधररसः पीतो न चन्द्रोदये तारुण्यं गतमेव निष्फलमहो शून्सालये दीपवत् ।।); “how lovely the beloved's face stained with hot, scintillating tears of anger” (V.80: कोपोपाहितबाष्पाबिन्दुतरलं रम्यं प्रियाया मुखम् ). The senseless and sometimes revolting mannerisms such as the ever ferocious lion, the rutting elephant (N.29, 30, 38), and the mythical rain-thirsty *chataka* bird are unhappily too discernible, but not fatal as they would have been to a lesser craftsman. It would be difficult to match the sweetness of (N. 51; apocryphal):

रे रे चातक सावधानमनसा मित्र क्षण श्रयाताम्  
 अम्भोदा बहवो हि सन्ति गगने सर्वेऽपि नैतादृशः  
 केचिद्वृष्टिभिरार्द्रयन्ति वसुधां गर्जन्ति केचिद्वृथा  
 यं यं पश्यसि तस्य तस्य पुरतो मा ब्रूहि दीनं वचः

"O friend rain-bird, listen carefully for a moment (to my advice). There are many clouds in the sky, but they are not all alike. Some drench the earth with their downpour, and some just thunder in vain; don't beg pitifully from every one that you see."

In fact, our Bhartrihari must have been not only a poet by-profession, but one fully conscious of the nobility and permanence of his calling. According to him, if a good poet went unrewarded, it was the heavy-witted king and not the poet himself who was at fault (N. 15). He speaks in the first person when matching a king's neglect with his own royal scorn (V.52, 53). Poetry confers immortality:

जयन्ति ते सुकृतिनो रससिद्धाः कवीश्रराः  
 नास्ति येषां यशःकाये जरामरणजं भयम्

"Victorious are the great poets, masters of sentiments and emotions, alchemists possessed of the elixir of life; the body of their fame fears neither senility nor death." (N. 24). Here the poet transcends time and space to join a kindred spirit, Dante, in his reliance on fame as a second life (cf. the *seconda morte*): "If I should be a timid friend to Truth, I fear to lose my life among those who will call this time antiquity" (Par. XVII, 118-120: e s' /io al vero son timido amioo/temo di perder viver tra coloro/che questo tempo chiameranno antico.).

Unfortunately, our hero does not always show the same foursquare stance to the blows of fortune as does Dante (In sto ben tetragono ai colpi della fortuna"). Both speak of the misery of enforced voyage in strange places, the bitter taste of stranger's bread (Tu pmverai si come sa di sale/lo pane altrui e come e duro calle/lo scendere, l'salir per Paltrui scale. Par. XVII, 58-60). But Dante's exile was due to a firm stand by his civic principles (*Epistole*, XII), a refusal of amnesty with even: the slightest tinge of dishonor. Bhartrihari claims only the motivation of greed, and his chief lament is that there was, after all, no real gain: (V.4).

भ्रान्तं देशमनेकदुर्गविषमं प्राप्तं न किञ्चित्फलं  
 त्यक्त्वा जातिकुलाभिमानमुचितं सेवा कृता निष्फला ।  
 भुक्तं मानविवर्जितं परगृहेष्वाषडकया काकवत्  
 तृष्णे जृमीसि पापकर्मनिरते नाद्यापि संतुष्यसि ॥

"I wandered through difficult mountainous territory quite fruitlessly, rendered service after jettisoning proper pride of class and family-- unrewarded; with a complete abandon of self respect, I ate in strangers' houses with the timidity of a crow (picking up scraps); and thou, o sin-loving greed, waxest and art not yet satisfied."

Our poet claims to have tried other trades: dug for treasure, smelted ores, crossed the ocean, served kings, slept in cemeteries to fulfil magic rites; and he begs greed to leave him because he gained never a penny (V.3). By contrast with the divine restlessness of Dante's Ulysses (Inf. XXVI, 113-120) Bhartrihari's efforts as well as his renunciation seem ignoble, earth-bound. No sense of adventure, none of the true explorer's the exhilaration of visiting absolutely unknown territory, the joy of treading where no human foot had trod before (non ki vogliate negar l'esperienza/di retro al sol del mondo senza gente) seems ever to have moved any Indian poet who he survived the passage of time. Rather than with Dante, one is led to compare Bhartrihari with that thoroughly earthy figure of the Italian Renaissance, Benvenuto Cellini; and here again our poet suffers by the comparison. Cellini too served princes, crossed the Alps, worked with metals-without actually smelting ores, and tried necromancy by night (*Vita*, I, xiii). But whatever he gained or lost, he had no regrets, remained always the whole man, the typical Renaissance figure concentrating all his energies on the task in hand. And he took pleasure in the effort, whether the end was merely the satisfaction of his lust or the production of a masterpiece in the history of art. The world was

always the richer for his activities; even his autobiography, with its blunt, forthright, unadorned prose remains a masterpiece of its kind.

Old age brings no peace of mind to our poet nor any real repentance for the misdeeds of youth: only regret for pleasures no longer accessible: -

गात्रं संकुचितं गतिर्विगलिता भ्रष्टा च दन्तावालेर्  
दृष्टिर्नश्यति वर्धते बधिरता वक्त्रं च लालायते ।  
वाक्यं नाद्रियते च बान्ध्वजनो भार्या न शुश्रूषते  
हा कष्टं पुरुषस्य जीर्णवयसः पुत्रोअप्यमित्रायते ॥

वर्णं सितं शिरसि वीक्ष्य शिरोरुहाणां सीनं जरापरिभवस्य यदेव पुंसाम् ।  
आरोपितास्थिशकलं परिहृत्य यान्ति चण्डालकूपमिव दूरतरं तरुण्यः ॥

“The body is contracted, the gait totters, teeth fall out, eyesight is lost deafness increases, and the mouth slobbers. Relatives no longer respect one's utterance, one's wife neglects her care; alas for the travails of old age when even the son becomes unfriendly (V.74). On seeing white hair on the head, the white flag of a man's surrender to old age, the girls avoid you from afar as they would a well for untouchables marked by its bundle of (bleached) bones (hung on top as a warning)" (V. 75). All these sentiments ring painfully true but, as means of inspiring renunciation, rather ignoble. Even that most thorough going of rakes, Casanova, took old age more gracefully than this.

We know of at least one great European poet who felt in his ripe old age the pangs of unrequited love, the mortification of having his advances repulsed by a young maiden. Further, Goethe was also dependent on a petty court and served, in various capacities, the princeling of Weimar. He actually did the many things Bhartrihari only claims to have done, and had an excellent technical knowledge of many trades--mining and refining ores among them. Goethe had a tremendous literary store and mastery of much verse forms, some of which he was the first to introduce into his own language. From such a person, one might expect something similar to the two *slokas* cited above, and yet one finds this:

Ueber alien Gipfeln  
Ist Rub.  
In allen Wipfeln  
Spurest du

Kaum einen Hauch;  
Die Vogelein schweigen im Walde  
Warte nur, balde  
Ruhesh du auch

Over all the peaks is peace,  
in all the tree-tops can'st thou  
discern hardly the stir of a  
breath; the little birds fall  
silent in the woods. But  
wait, thou too shalt soon have thy rest.

This famous "Wandrer's Nachtlied" conveys its message in the simplest possible language. Night must fall and with it will come rest for the wanderer, whether it be rest from the wandering of a day or the final rest from the long journey of a whole lifetime. Goethe's Faust, blind and near death, still plans with his last remaining spark of life the vast project of draining a fenland (*Faust*, II, Act V, 11559-11586) and thinks that the achievement of this service to his people might be the finest moment of his life. But it is to be noted that Faust hates the very idea of renunciation; for him activity is life itself; therefore he typifies the restless German of the age of industrial expansion following Goethe, just as Dante's Ulysses foreshadows all the great trade-seeking explorers of the Renaissance. Renunciation is, after all, a form of negation; and negation is the function of Mephistopheles: Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint!

But surely the comparison with an European poet of so recent a date is hardly fair to Bhartrihari, because of the difference in the means of production of their respective environments. So let us first look at the poetry of Sa'di, also an oriental poet, one who lived in a world whose means of production could not have been unrecognizably different from those that prevailed in the time of the Indian. As both addressed essentially the same type of audience, the similarities between them are profound. Sadi's *Karima* is filled with maxims comparable to those of the N., and written with a clarity that dooms it likewise to use as a school text. Some resemblance of phrase might even seem too close to be purely accidental:

(N. 70) भवन्ति नम्रास्तरवः फलोद्भ्रमै = *nehad shakh pur mevah sar bar zamin.*

The tree or the branch loaded with fruit becomes humble, bows down to the ground. Perhaps, Sa'di's traditional visit to the court of Delhi might have something to do with this concordance, though this is not the place for tracing the origin of the particular phrase or of other resemblance between the two poems. What must interest us much more is the striking difference between the two poets. With the use of simpler language, the Persian (*Gulistan*) is far more vivid and colorful, more of a human being because of the range of his sympathies and experience. He did not wander for sordid motives but for the love of travel and adventure. He knew the routine of courts, of camps, and of caravans. His figures of speech do not disdain even the trader's vocabulary. Bhartrihari mentions trade and agriculture only once (N. 107), and then shows about as much acquaintance with them as he does with aviation when in the very next line - he mentions the possibility of "passing birdlike through the broad sky, with the utmost effort." (अकाशं विपुलं प्रयातु खगवत्कृत्वा प्रयत्नं परम् ) besides, the moral of the couplet is that the force of destiny is superior to all human endeavor. As a good Muslim, Sa'di must have believed in destiny, but the tough old man who could chide his soul for not having lost its childishness at the age of forty (*chehal sal 'umre 'azizat guzasht mizaje, to az hale tifli nagasht*) would hardly have given up so easily.

Comparing Bhartrihari with foreign poets can only lead to defects in the structure of his philosophy. No criticism can be called substantial that does not judge on author on the basis of his own axioms, within the bane-work of the author's own implicit universe of discourse. For this purpose, the N. is of very little value, since what maxims it does contain are of a lower middleclass outlook on life; and there is no real arrangement or unification, in spite of various efforts by commentators, that could show the full contours of a pragmatic philosophy. As a guide to action the N. is practically useless. The sensuous love-poetry of the Shringara would be better, but no one dares take it as the author's highest effort, whatever its beauty of expression. In fact, the point even of those lascivious vases is supposed to be the vanity of mere enjoyment, preparation for a - final renunciation of the worldly life. I take the liberty of doubting this common assumption, because I for one find it difficult to say, in many cases, without a conscious effort of memory and on the basis of internal evidence alone, to which of the three centuries a given *sloka* belongs. Let us, therefore, not take any of the three centuries as characteristic, but rather look critically at Bhartrihari's *summuman bonum*: let us see with dear and unprejudiced eyes just what sort of *vairagya* the poet desires: (V. 99)

गंडातीरे हिमगिरिशिलाकद्धपद्यमानस्य  
ब्रह्मध्यानाभ्यसनविधिना योगनिद्रां गतस्य ।  
किं तैर्भाव्यं मम सुदिवसैर्यत्र ते निर्विषडःकाः  
कण्डूयन्ते जरठहरिणाः स्वाडःमडे मदीये ॥

“Fixed in the *padmasana* seat upon a Himalayan slab on the banks of the Ganges, lost in a yogic trance in the contemplation of the Eternal shall I ever see those blessed days, when old untimid stags rub their bodies against mine?” Now, clearly, this is not the utterance of a man who has actually tried the joys of yogic contemplation, but of one who feels how happy he might be if he achieved it, in the yet distant future. The composer of these lines still hankers after physical sensation, such as that of the stags rubbing themselves against him: sensation, which would be completely inhibited by any really successful trance, yogic or otherwise. The perfect yogi must, as in all Indian tradition, beg his food, wear rags (V.68, V.100); in addition, Bhartrihari wants the performance to take place at Banaras, (कन्थाकुचिताः प्रविश्य भवनद्वाराणि वाराणसीरथ्यापङ्क्तषु पाणिपात्रपतितां भिक्षामपेक्षामहे ।।). The begging and the rags are apparently an end in itself, an actual part of the final achievement. The Buddhist almsman on the other hand was made to beg for entirely different reasons, at least by the founder of the religion. He was to have no attachment to any sacred place; begging was necessary to prevent the accumulation of property and the return of worldly attachments therewith. The Buddhist monk was originally supposed to be a wandering public teacher, one whose function was to educate society in a new social doctrine. Bhartrihari's is a purely individual effort which could never have been adopted by the whole of society; one which does not involve any social obligations, not even a thought for that unfortunate portion of the population which has no such renunciatory yearnings and is therefore condemned to produce the grub that the yogi must beg and to weave the original cloth from which the yogi's garment of rags must be pieced together.

The real nature of this renunciation becomes clearer when we look at its fruits (V. 95, cf. V: 31).

मही रम्या शय्या विपुलमुपधनं भुजलता  
वितानं चाकाशं व्यजनमनुकूलोअयमनिलः ।  
स्फुट्पीपश्रन्द्रो विरतिवनितासडमुदितः  
सुखं शान्तः शेते मुनिरतनुभूतिर्नृप इव ॥



“The earth an attractive bed, his arm an ample pillow, the sky a canopy, the breeze a serviceable fan, the moon for a bright lamp and detachment his mistress, the peaceful ash-besmeared ascetic sleeps as happy as any king.” That is, our ascetic at bedtime fairly wallows in all the pleasures of the worldly life, which he claims to have renounced, down to a mistress. Only, instead of the real thing, he has substitutes. I-tsing wrote of a Bhartrihari who alternated no less than seven times between the pleasures of worldly and monastic life, and Winternitz: believes the legend to be derived from the history of our poet. But the couplet lust cited seems at best to indicate neither the monastic ideal nor a full share of worldly enjoyment; only the satisfaction of a man who utilizes his contemplative life to find palatable substitutes for what he has missed during his pursuit of the *vita activa*. A look at the *Dhammapada* shows how the real thing should have gone:

सुसुख वत जीवाम येसं नो नत्थि किंजनम्  
पीतिभक्खा भविस्साम देवा आभस्सरा यथा ।।

"Happily shall we live, those who have nothing at all; on the food of universal love, we shall become like the *abhassara* gods." (At best V' 16, which is the only verse I can find of Buddhist type, has a very faint resemblance to this.) By contrast, Bhartrihari's can only be called “*Ersatz-Entsagung*”. One should no longer be surprised on finding that this renunciation is not recommended for all: (V. 67.)

अग्रे गीतं सरसकवयः पार्श्वतो दाक्षिणास्याः  
पृष्ठे लीलावलयरणितं चामरग्राहिणीनाम् ।  
यद्यस्त्येवं कुरु भवरसास्वादने लम्पटत्वं  
नो चेच्चेतः प्रविश सहसा निर्विकल्पे समाधौ ।।

"If, before you, you have the songs of accomplished southern poets and behind you the tinkle of ornaments worn by whisk-bearing attendant, maidens, then be a glutton for worldly pleasures; but if you haven't these things, o mind, hasten to enter into undisturbed contemplation”. That is, if you are a king and can make a good thing of it, carry on; otherwise, give up the pleasures of the world, which are beyond your reach! At the very least, this should dispose of the legend that Bhartrihari actually was a king; one feels that he would have taken his own advice and carried on.

## V

Starting with praise and recognition of a high literary position, we have kicked Bhartrihari all the way down the literary ladder. Before closing this note, we have to raise him up again to his proper level, to show that whatever his failures by his own or by any other standards, he does achieve one outstanding success which explains the survival of his poetry and which gives him an indisputable claim to greatness.

I hope that I have dismissed the superstition that the East is naturally more philosophical than the West, and in particular that it is Bhartrihari's professed philosophy that makes for his greatness. As a matter of fact, for appreciation of pure intellectual beauty, none of his verses will compare with Shelly's Ode; Keats is more of a kindred spirit. Horace shows a far deeper appreciation of the duties and of the lasting pleasures of life, pleasures that do not lead to the renunciation of satiety or of non-attainment. But then Horace knew what it meant to renounce the wide range of careers offered to any well connected Roman by the early empire, and to achieve a proper renunciation by concentrating, not without effort, upon his poetry; so, he also knew enough to envy the "tough guts of the peasants". Virgil planned and began, if he did not live to complete, what would probably have been the most grandiose of the world's literary masterpieces; but the author of the Aeneids was still enough of a rustic to write good poetry in the *Georgics*. In a different medium, Holbein's dance of death (Totentanz) expresses more real philosophy than one can easily distil out of the Centuries. Sometimes, it seems to me that more philosophical content than in a dozen Slokas is expressed by Holbein's single diminutive woodcut of a toil-bent peasant behind his plough, helped on by compassionate Death towards a shining city on the sunset horizon. Certainly Giotto's campanile and its relief's convey more to me of the worthiness of human life in its various possible fields of endeavor than does the whole of the N.

Nevertheless, I repeat, Bhartrihari is a great poet for what he does succeed in portraying. He is unmistakably the Indian intellectual of his period, limited by caste and tradition in fields of activity and therefore limited in his real grip on life. The only alternatives open to any member of his class seem to have been the attainment of patronage at court, or retirement to the life of an almsman. The inner conflict the contradiction latent in the very position of this class could not have been made clearer than by the poet's verses. This also explains the "popularity" of the verse themselves in the face of far superior and more philosophically inclined doctrine available in all Indian

literary forms. That is, precisely this class was, and still is, interested in the preservation of Bhartrihari's poetry.

The varying aspects of such class-life naturally render any orderly arrangement of the subject matter superfluous, and had hitherto made it impossible to do anything in the way of stripping the quasi-philosophic renunciatory guise from the writings themselves. Had the limited aspirations, the general futility of that class-life been made explicit and unmistakable, a more complete negation presented beyond the "renunciation", the poetry would have become intolerable to the class itself, and would not have survived. The poetical physiognomy of Bhartrihari is actually the physiognomy of the Indian intelligentsia of an age that has not yet passed away.

We might illustrate this in detail by inspecting Bhartrihari's attitude towards women. They have a bank lustful attraction for him, which he reveals with gusto. A young nymph crushed the act of love (N.44: सुस्तमृदिता बालवनिता), a beautiful woman's breasts and thighs (V. 46: रामापीनपयोधरोरुयुगलं devastating glances (V. 48: आलोलायतलोचना युवतयः), N. 85: कान्ताकटाक्षविशिखा: generate attraction, admiration, desire, which he can never conceal even in these two Centuries. The third, of course is devoted almost exclusively to the topic with an appetite that makes Ovid seem pale and colorless in comparison. Entrancing maidens (N. 104: सविभ्रमा युवतयः) are among the fine gifts of good fortune! There is no over spiced Hellenistic aberration here, and certainly no Freudian repression of the libido; not even Archilochus could have been more frank and unashamed as to his weaknesses. One can only pity the miserable pedagogue who, even in the strongly anaesthetic atmosphere of a modern Indian class-room, has the completely unenviable task of paraphrasing in an un-erotic and decent manner, to a mixed class of adolescent boys and girls, such juicy bits as: V'.27: तन्वङ्गया विपुले नितम्बफलके न क्रीडितं लीलया।

By degrees, excess and satiety creep in, women become snares and temptations, (V.65, V'.9, 19, 20, 34, 38-44) to be treated with hydriotaphic avoidance (V'.19: नार्यः श्मशानघटिक इव वर्जनीयाः।।): The logical destiny of this attitude is to lead to absolute disgust for what once seemed charming-and may again become irresistible (V.17): स्रवन्मूत्रकिल्ल करिवरशिरःज्ञनर्धि जघनम् etc., which should be compared for repulsive effect with Juvenal's description of the female after finishing her gladiatorial exercises. But there is always the notable distinction that the Roman wants a cure for the social evils of his

time, whereas the Indian only looks to his own individual salvation. There seems in Bhartrihari to be not even the consciousness of the fact that woman is herself a human being, has her share of this world's sufferings, and might also feel the need for renunciation, for freedom from her own peculiar sorrows and problems.

Yet, the picture so far is not only incomplete, it is actually false to the poet's own sentiments. One stanza breaks with quite incredible force through the general impression hitherto produced to give the unbiased reader a profound if brief glimpse of the truth usually missed by professional critics and litterateurs, true but not very worthy members of Bhartrihari's own class. (V.22:)

दीना दीनमुखैः सदैव शिशुकैराकृष्टजीर्णाम्बरा  
क्रोशदिः क्षुधितैर्निरन्नाविधुरा दृश्या चेदोहिनी ।  
यांचाभङ्गभयेन गददगलत् – त्रुव्यदिलीनाक्षरं  
को देहीति वदेत्सद्गधजठरस्यार्थे मनस्वी पुमान् ॥

"If he did not visualize his wife as sad-faced, unfed, miserable, with her worn raiment constantly tugged at by pitiful hungry, crying children, what man of self-respect would ever beg for the sake of his own accursed belly, in quavering, broken words that die in his very throat for fear of refusal?" (cf. also V'.12)

This betrays the real fear of the poet's life, the grim specter of starvation that confronts hi and his family unless he can beg his way into favor. No member of the modern un-propertied, technically incompetent, intelligentsia in this country can read the lines without a shudder; those who talk of the peculiar situation of the *Bhodralok* in Bengal might consider whether the same dread does not stalk them too. Surely, this is not the obvious attitude for a man who shuttled between the court and the monastery, who alternately enjoyed and repented of his enjoyment of life. The solitary effort shows a far deeper feeling for the family tie than would be proven by a whole new Century on the virtues of a householder's life. Even in bourgeois-capitalist countries, the dread of unemployment is always the most potent factor in the maintenance of an outworn productive system; with what greater force must: this motive have acted when the capitalist forms of production had not cast their shadow upon India, and no real employment existed for our intelligentsia apart from the favor of a wealthy patron or resort to the alms bowl?

The promiscuity of the Centuries is not so much a characteristic of this country as of the class and of certain forms of artistic temperament; it exists to as great an extent in the West except that ho one there ever has had the courage to express it so frankly. For the rest, Bhartrihari did know something about women of pleasure, as he mentions *varangana* (N.47), *panyangana* (V.68). And he did not live in a society that professed belief in the ideal of monogamy, whatever may have been its general practice. So, his single lapse into sincere consideration for wife and children seems all the more significant by sheer contrast.

Whether or not it might seem to us a proper subject for poetry or social philosophy, the appreciation of a little wealth and the extreme dread of poverty are quite convincing in our poet's words. "All those identical limbs, the same actions, that undamaged intellect and the very speech: yet how strange, that without the warmth of wealth, the same man becomes instantaneously someone else" (N.40):

तानीन्द्रियाणि सकलानि तदेव कर्म  
सा बुद्धिरप्रतिहता वचनं तदेव ।  
अर्थोष्मणा विरहितः पुरुषः स एव  
त्वन्धः क्षणेन भवतीति विचित्रमेतत् ॥

(Also, N. 39, 41, 44, 49). This is even more strikingly put in an epigram which the editor relegates to the apocrypha: An exhausted penniless being rushes to the cemetery and begs a corpse to rise and take oh his load of poverty for an instant, in order that he might enjoy forever its death-born happiness; but the corpse, knowing that death was far, far better than poverty, is silent! (V'18):

उत्तिष्ठ क्षणमेकमुदहं गुरुं दारिद्र्यमारं सखे  
श्रान्तस्तावदहं चिरं मरणजं सेवे त्वदीयं सुखम्  
इत्युक्तो धनवर्जितेन सहसा गत्वा श्मशाने शवो  
दारिद्र्यान्मरणं वरं वरमिति ज्ञात्वेव तुष्णीं स्थितः ॥

From this economic oppression, escape was possible only by the sudden accession of wealth, or renunciation of all such desire. For the first, there were no regular social paths; no success stories of the "From Log Cabin To White House" type, nothing to interest Horatio Alger. Only luck can bring a windfall; hence the general fatalistic bent, at its strongest in N. 90-108. On the other hand, renunciation too requires strength of character not usually developed by our penurious intellectual. Either the gain of wealth or

successful renunciation me impossible for the entire class as such without a complete social revolution; even the individual achieving either thereby manages to declass himself. So, we have a more practical way of escape, the purely literary expression of sensual enjoyment (which in actual practice would be impossible except for one of considerable means); or, its continuation, an equally literary expression of the joys of renunciation. Bhartrihari's verse does not express the supposed "dual personality of the Indian", forever oscillating between two extreme poles: renunciation of the senses and their voluptuous gratification. It is on the contrary, and par excellence, literature of escape. Bhartrihari's philosophical beauty is just a facade erected by the members of his class, to mask their real use of his poetry.

## VI

Bhartrihari, then, is the poet of his class; a class that had not fulfilled its function, and a poet who, try as he might, could not but lay bare the class yearnings and weaknesses. This at once explains his success and his failure. But he is not a poet of the people. The Indian poets who made a real and lasting place for themselves in the hearts of the people come from the people themselves, and not from this narrow helpless stratum shut off from the masses by birth, training occupation or the lack of it, language and culture. Those poets spoke the languages of the people, addressed themselves to the people and not to the court. Every child knows their names and every peasant their songs. Even our intellectuals or scholiasts and editors, try to suck a little of their vital blood. Kabir, Tukarama, Tulasidasa: what portion of the country does not possess its own poet of the sort? But only one Bhartrihari sufficed, because the intelligentsia could and in fact needs must take the trouble to learn his language; and he had put their case in words that could not be matched. This class was perhaps the most convenient tool of the ruling power; whether indigenous or foreign in the enslavement of the Indian people. To a considerable extent, it still maintains this anomalous position.

One of my critics holds that all Sanskrit literature is impersonal; that neither Bhartrihari's nor any other Indian poet of unknown biography can be judged by what he claims to have done, in his own verses. This would be relevant if my critique were directed towards the private life, and wt the writings alone of Bhartrihari. After all "impersonality" is a characteristic of all literature, not especially of Indian poetry. The great author need only project himself into an experience, not necessarily have had the experience itself; as witness

so many touching passages relating the thoughts and behavior of a character on the point of death. But the mechanism of this projection, the images and phrases which the writer utilizes, must unconsciously reflect structure of the society in which he functions, must inevitably bear the stamp of the class to which he belongs.

That Bhartrihari must have been a brahmin seems reasonably certain. His most convincing figures of speech are brahmanical (N. 42,48). The king's wrath burns even those who serve him, as the fire might its officiating priest (N. 57: होतारमपि जुह्वानं स्पृष्टो दहति पावकः ।।)

When begging, the pious high-caste people whose doorways are blackened with the smoke of many sacrificial fires are to be approached by preference (V. 24: न्यायगर्मद्विजहुतहुतभुग्धूमधूस्रोपकझटम ।) What is the point of reading scriptures (V. 72: किं वेदैः स्मृतिभिः पुराणपठनैः शास्त्रैर्महाविस्तरैः), when realizing the inner joy is the proper "activity" for man? If there be wealth, all the virtues and caste itself might go to the nether world (N. 39: जतिर्यातु रसातलम्). By contrast with these, the rare mention of the kshatriya's profession seems ridiculous, such as "splitting elephants' heads with the sword" (V. 47: खडगाग्रै करिकुम्भपीठदलनैर्नाकं न नीतं यश ।).

But he must have been a brahmin of a comparatively late period. Certainly, he could not have belonged to that earliest of all stages when the brahmins were yet to develop as an integral part of the social system; when they were still fugitives in the woods, living spiritually on the exaggerated memories of a culture destroyed by fighting invaders (later to become the kshatriya caste) and subsisting upon roots, wild fruit, cattle. This period, however, left its mark on the language in the form of two bits of wish-thinking: the cow and the vine that fulfil all desire: *kamndhenu* and *kalpalata*; these are reflected in the advice our poet gives to the king as to the best means of exploiting the earth (N. 48). Even the later ideal of retiring to a sylvan life after having enjoyed that of a householder is absent in Bhartrihari's, whose renunciation hardly rises above complete aesthetic paralysis (V.97, V'. 8, 29: N. 81). He can only have belonged to the period after the Mauryan "universal monarchy", after the brahmins had saturated all petty royal courts as ministers and advisers, had saturated the lower social strata as priests, had finished their chief contribution to religious and productive organization by outmoding the age of great monasteries, and were at the beginning of their last great phase, a literary expansion of secular type. This can hardly have been much before the fourth century A.D., and might not have taken place simultaneously over the whole country. Any attempt to assign a very early

date for Bhartrihari would have to cope with the reference to the ten incarnations of Vishnu (N. 100: विष्णुर्येन दशावतारगहने क्षिप्तो महासंकटे ।) and to the hermaphrodite Shiva (V. 18: प्रियतमादेहार्धहारी हरः.) The authenticity of these two stanzas can be challenged, as also of the Shringara verse दिश वनहरिणीम्यो, which extols the pale golden complexion of Shaka maidens. But the word *samanta*, originally “neighbor” can only mean “feudal baron” in V. 42. This usage, though current in the 6th century, would be difficult to establish before the Gupta period. Therefore, the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD would be the earliest reasonable period for the Bhartrihari who saw this beginning of Indian feudalism, but no empire of any size.

At no period had the brahmin caste, whether priests or not, a position fully comparable with that of the Roman clergy. It lacked the organization, the popular recruitment that gave possibility of close contact with the masses; it could never have performed the function of sheltering the germination of new productive forms concentrated in the free ecclesiastical cities, which meant the end of feudalism in Europe. It had never a regular and official means of livelihood. At best, the caste was like the mistletoe: a beautiful parasite regarded with superstitious reverence by the multitude, but whose unlimited proliferation was at least a symptom if not the cause of decay.

The greatness of an author does not lie in mere handling of words. Indeed, the finest craftsmanship of such manipulation is impossible without the expression of a new class basis. This does not mean that every writer who seeks enduring fame must express only the glory of the dictatorship of the proletariat: it is doubtful if Shakespeare could have grasped the meaning of the word (proletariat) itself except perhaps as a mass of Calibans. But in Shakespeare's day there were other classes, the new trading gentry for example, that had begun to force their way to the front and had yet to become, in their turn, obstacles to human progress. One must remember that, during the course of its struggle against the old, every new class tends to assimilate and identify itself with the entire oppressed section of the human race—to take its own victory as the total desideratum of the process of civilization. In our own day and country, we have seen the worst aspect of this phenomenon only too often. How many talk of India and its needs when they are really making a case for a little greater share of the spoils for themselves and their minute group?

[This brings us, in passing, to the problem of literature for a classless society, after a socialist revolution. How is it that the new literature in those



countries where such revolution have been completed does not yet show the same relative power in the way of new authors and impressive new literary forms that may be seen with the earlier social changes? In a previous case, the new class had formed in the womb of the old, and had begun to express its new ideals, needs, and aspirations in literary form precisely because political expression was not feasible at the earliest stage. This is manifestly impossible in a true socialist revolution where the common working class people the vast and often-illiterate majority, must necessarily assume power. The transition has never been smooth, according to modern history, but on the contrary the result of the grimmest possible social and economic disasters. The urgent problem before such a post-revolutionary society is to overtake and to surpass the anti-socialist but technically more advanced countries. At the same time, there is a costly struggle with this hostile environment, which constantly attempts to crush the dangerous innovation, to strangle the new social forms. Nothing in all extant literature was composed in or for a society without division into antagonistic classes - not even the utopias that visualized such societies. The writers who continue to function in the new society bear the stamp of the old. Even the 'progressive' writers cannot help the smell of decay which they carry from the rotting away of the class that supplied their models, to which they generally belonged, and towards which they were oriented in their formative years. This inner contradiction, which leads so often to the dismal 'boy-loves-tractor' school of literature, is not to be cured by party directives, nor by fiery resolutions at writers' conferences. The cure can only come through the fully developed literary taste of the entire new society, which means universal literacy, and full availability of the classical writing in that particular language. The development of new art forms end the changed relative position of literature has also to be considered. The cinema, television, radio should have, at last on occasion, produced scripts that could be additions to literature. But the deadly influence of the newspaper with its advertising meant to sell any goods for private profit, its processing of news to sail shoddy ideas for class profit, and the sensation-mongering that sells the paper while diverting attention from serious cracks in the foundations of the social structure all these have completely changed the function of written word even in bourgeois society. The new society in some way, have to link its aesthetic problems directly to those of production. New social art forms must develop radically different way, just as dance, music, poetry, drama, painting and sculpture developed out of primitive, pre-class fertility rites, initiation ceremonies, and sympathetic magic. It is difficult to imagine Plato's "music and gymnastics" in a modern factory, because we have not

yet begun to develop the units and forms of real social production that will dominate the future, and therefore not even visualized the innate harmony and the unforced natural rhythm that must accompany such production.]

The great poet in a class society must not only express the position and aspirations of an important class, but must also transcend the class barriers, whether explicitly or implicitly. He must lay bare some portion of the structure of society, pointing the way to its future negation. (Where, Bhartrihari fails to do this effectively his greatness is fictitious, loaned to him by the class itself). *This is most easily done in the period of class emergence* and explains why, in so many great literatures, the greatest names come at the beginning and not at the end of their historical development; why the Alexandrians could only gloss the Homeric epics, wt create them. It also explains the power of such writing to attract readers' centuries after the society that was heralded arose, flourished, and passed away. Often the newly developing class takes so much time to assume its rightful place that the new poet has little chance of contemporary material success, and passes his life in obscurity.

We know nothing of Homer's biography; the cultured Elizabethan set cared little for Shakespeare's. Not having been a writer of epics, narratives, or dramas for the amusement of a court might therefore, explain the veil cast over Bhartrihari's life and the dominant note of frustration that sounds so distinctly throughout the V. (V. 25, 7-9, 11, 12, 16, 23, 46, 48 etc.)

बोद्धारो मत्सरग्रस्ताः प्रभवः स्मयदूषिताः ।  
अबोधोपहताश्रान्ये जीर्णमडः सुभाषितम् ॥

“The learned are consumed by jealousy, the lords (of the earth) are tainted with pride; the rest are doomed by ignorance, and so wilt my epigrams within me” (V. 2). For due appreciation, the poet necessarily had to await the rise of a Sanskrit-knowing and yet numerous class. That Bhartrihari lived at the period of the emergence of this peculiarly unemployed Indian intelligentsia would thus seem intrinsically probable, but one can hardly insist upon it, seeing that the author's very existence is in doubt!

But there can be no doubt as to his transcendent powers. In closing the V., he bids farewell to the very elements that made and reared him, and from whom he gained the pure knowledge that enables him to merge into the Eternal: (V.101).

मातर्मेदिनि तात मारुत सखे तेजः सुबन्धो जल  
भ्रातर्व्योम निबद्ध एष भवतामन्त्यः प्रणामान्जलिः  
युष्मत्संगवशोपजातसुकृतोद्रेकस्फुरनिर्मल –  
ज्ञानापास्तसमस्तमोहमहिमा लीये परे ब्राह्मणि ।।

Through the mouth of the chained and tortured Prometheus, Aeschylus calls upon the elements to bear witness to a great injustice perpetrated by the highest gods:

O holy earth, O mother mine,  
O sky that biddest speed along  
Thy vault the common light divine  
Be witness to my wrong.  
(Morshead's translation)

The Indian asks for far less. Having forgotten his petty lusts, trifling fears, vain longings, he speaks to his relations the elements, with the loving and noble humility of a St. Francis of Assisi a gentle word in that final moment of the ultimate sublimation of personality.

Fergusson & Willingdon College Magazine (Poona), 1941. Under the pseudonym "Vidyarthi" Reprinted with minor changes in Bharatiya Vidya vol. IV 49-62.

## **Imperialism and Peace**

We do not have, today, the peace yearned for by millions all over the world. In Korea we see a full-scale modern war waged relentlessly against an entire nation whose one wish, for centuries has been unity, with independence from foreign aggression. In Malaya and Indo-China two decaying imperial powers struggle desperately to maintain the privileges of an outworn colonial system over the opposition of people who will no longer be denied freedom. Military operations in Greece, Indonesia, Kashmir, Palestine, have shown us for five years other facets of the same militant activity.

Yet the supporters of pence have a power, which can stop this violence and bloodshed. For all these wars and acts of aggression-even the war in Korea-have been waged in the name of establishing peace. At first, we were given various mutually contradictory reasons why the Koreans were to be saved from themselves. Then we were told that General Mac-Arthur meant to supply the aggressive leadership, which is all that Asiatics can appreciate. He seems to think that we Asiatics will naturally appreciate saturation bombing of peaceful villages, destruction of schools and hospitals, savage reprisals against civilians and prisoners of war. But this is an error. What we do appreciate is that his utterances show quite clearly who is the real aggressor in Korea. We Asiatics also belong to the human race; we also are made of flesh and blood; we tread the same earth, breathe the same air.

The peace we want means true democracy. The experience of millennia has shown us that no other kind of peace will last. No man shall claim to be another's master whether by divine right, the right of birth, the right of armed conquest, or the right vested in accumulated private property. Such rights can only be exercised by fraud and violence against the vast majority of the people, by destroying the very foundations of peace, namely, truth and justice. The lowest in the land must raise himself to full stature as an individual member of a great society. He must exercise in full, by actual participation in governing himself and others, his right to receive according to his needs, his duty to contribute according to his ability. Formal recourse to the ballot box for a periodic but ineffective change of masters will not suffice.

The stale proclamations of all imperialism, from Rome to the present day, have again been proved false in the British, French, and Dutch empires. The people of China rejected, in favor of democracy, the aggressive leadership of Chiang Kai-shek was so amply supplied with foreign arms and money. But the only lesson imperialism can draw from these rebuffs is that puppets are unreliable, that open intervention is a far better road to conquest--provided the other side is poorly armed. The Pax Romana and the Pax Britannica should now be replaced by a dollar peace, the Pax Americana. Tacitus gave a candid opinion of a contemporary Roman emperor: "He made a desert and called it peace." A modern historian might say of Hitler: "He waged total war, and called it peace." This kind of "peace" did not succeed in Europe, nor will it in any other part of the world.

Let us trace this crazy logic to its source. The issue of peace or war does not depend upon a single individual who is ostensibly at the helm of a nation, but upon the dominant class, which really holds the power. We are all convinced of the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt's liberalism and sincere desire for world peace. Yet in attempting to "quarantine the aggressor" in Spain, he only helped to destroy the democratic victims of fascist aggression. Hitler's advance into Czechoslovakia went unchecked, as did Mussolini's into Abyssinia, Japan's into China. We can trace this kind of aggression right back to World War I and its aftermath, to the grim intervention against the young Soviet Union which had sounded the can for peace at its very birth. There is indeed a broad continuity of policy against peace and against democracy. This undercurrent has never changed its direction, no matter what appears on the surface. Leaders like Mr. Churchill just carry out the interests of the dominant class and would get nowhere without its backing; they are merely a symptom, not the main cause.

Look at another aspect of this underlying policy. Ploughing cotton back into the soil, burning up or dumping millions of tons of food into the ocean were desperation measures introduced at the beginning of Roosevelt's New Deal. Instead of changing the ownership of the means of production, or designing a better distribution mechanism, these transitional measures rapidly became a permanent feature of the American way of life. The United States government began regularly to pay subsidies to produce food, which was then destroyed to keep prices up. Up to 1950, American farmers were paid by their government to destroy mountainous heaps of potatoes and to feed to livestock wheat produced by the most modern farming technique; at the same time, Canadian wheat was being imported into the United States because, even after paying the protective tariff, it was cheaper than the subsidized American product. This insane economic system shows exactly the same kind of twisted logic as that of modern imperialism which wages war in the name of peace and calls any move towards peace an act of warlike aggression, which bombs people indiscriminately to save them from Communism.

The crooked roots of imperialism lie deep in the need for profits and ever more profits-for the benefit of a few monopolists. The "American way of life" did not solve the world problem of the great depression of 1929-33. In the United States this was solved by World War II. But only for a short time. Korea shows that the next step is to start a new war to stave off another depression. The one lesson of the last depression, which stuck, is that profits

can be kept up by creating shortages where they do not and need not exist. War materials are produced for destruction. Producing them restricts consumer goods, which increases profits in double ratio. Any logic that proves the necessity of war is the correct logic for imperialism and for Big Business, which now go hand in hand. Mere contradictions do not matter for this sort of lunatic thinking where production of food is no longer the method of raising man above the animals, but merely a way of making profit while millions starve.

Let us now consider the deeper fact that food is itself a weapon - negative weapon, but no less deadly than the atom bomb for bacteriological warfare. A bomb or a bullet shortens a man's life. The lack of proper nourishment also shortens a man's expectation of life by a calculable number of years, even when there is no actual famine or death by starvation. Deprive a man of food and you make him prey not only to hunger but to disease; do it year after year, generation after generation, and you produce a race whose minds and bodies are stunted, tortured, warped, deformed. You produce monstrous superstitions twisted social systems. Destroying stockpiles of food is the same kind of action as building up stockpiles of atom bomb.

But the war waged by means of food is different in one very important respect from national and colonial aggression. It is war against the whole of humanity except that tiny portion to whom food is a negligibly small item of expenditure, war also against millions of *American* workers. In a word, it is class war, and all other wars of today stem from attempts to turn it outward. Even the Romans knew that the safest way to avoid inner conflict, to quiet the demands of their own citizens, was to attempt new conquests.

Quite apart from the destructiveness of total war, the crooked logic of Big Business and warmongers is fatal to the clear thinking needed for science. The arguments that modern science originates with the bourgeoisie, that the enormous funds devoted to war research are a great stimulus to science are vicious. The scientific outlook came into being when the bourgeoisie was a new progressive class, struggling for power against feudal and clerical reaction. Science is cumulative, as is large-scale mechanized production, which congeals the result of human labor and technical skill in increasingly large and more efficient machines.

But for modern capitalists, a class in decay, the findings of science (apart from profit-making techniques) have become dangerous; and so it becomes necessary for them to coerce the scientist to restrict his activity. That is one

reason for vast expenditure on secret atomic research, for putting third-raters in control to bring big-business monopoly to the laboratory. The broad co-operation and pooling of knowledge, which made scientific progress so rapid, is destroyed. Finally the individual scientist is openly and brutally enslaved for political reasoning. Science cannot flourish behind barbed wire; no matter how much money the war offices may pay to "loyal" mediocrity. Freedom is the recognition of necessity; science is the investigation, the analysis, and the cognition of necessity. Science and freedom always march together. The war mentality, which destroys freedom, must necessarily destroy science.

The scientist by himself can neither start nor stop a war. Modern war has to be fought by millions in uniform and greater numbers in fields and factories. But a scientific analysis of the causes of war, if convincing to the people at large, could be an effective as well as a democratic force for peace. We have to make it clear to the common people of the world that any aggression anywhere is, in the last analysis, war against them. We have to tell them not to be misled by the familiar but insidious whisper: "Things were better when we had a war." This is just like a criminal drug peddler saying to his victim: "See how much better it was for you when you had the drug than when you sobered up afterwards. Buy another dose." The real problem is how to straighten out our thinking and to change our economy, to transfer control of all production to society as a whole. Only then can we have real democracy and lasting peace.

It must be understood quite clearly that the war between nations, World War III, is not inevitable and can be stopped by pressure of public opinion. The inner conflict, the class war, on the other hand, must be settled within each country without foreign armed intervention. The peace movement cannot deny to any people the right to revolution (including counter-revolution), nor even the right to wage civil war. It can only demand that no nation's armed forces should go into action upon foreign territory. That is aggression even when done under cover of "defense", restoration of law and order, or a forced vote in the United Nations. The purpose of the United Nations was to settle all international differences without war, not to provide a joint flag for the ancient imperialist "police actions". If unchecked, such an adventure is a clear invitation to the aggressor to initiate the next world war, as can be seen by the history of appeasement during the 1930's.

But there is one important difference between that period and the present. There were then large powers such as the British Empire and the United States, which could assume a position of formal neutrality while fascism was being built up as a military and political counterpoise to Communism. Even as this formal neutrality is impossible today; only mass action by the common people of the world remains as the bulwark of peace.

Monthly Review (New York) 8, 1961, pp. 45-59.

*Colonial liberation greatly promotes world peace because it wipes out the great tension between the imperial power and the subject people, and because it does away with the outcry for colonies by the "have-not" nations of the west. The previous exploiting nation will actually profit, for it would logically be the best source of help for the liberated colony to develop its own resources on a free and equal basis. This is because of long contact, cultural influences, and local knowledge. The loss to the small group of people who monopolized colonial profits and made money out of armaments would be negligible as compared to the national savings in armaments and the total profit by the new trade. The sole condition for all these mutual benefits is that liberation should take place before the colonial population is enraged beyond all limits. The British seem to have learned this lesson (except in places like Kenya where there is virtually no strong native bourgeoisie), whereas the French show by their behavior in Algeria that the lesson of Vietnam has not yet gone home.*