

THE SOCIAL MILIEU IN INDIA AND DEVELOPMENT (I)

1.1. The Old Debate and the New Setting

From the earliest discussions during British times regarding the possibilities and prospects of economic and social progress in India the social aspects of the problem have figured quite prominently in the debate. Unfortunately the political and nationalistic considerations were imported into the discussion quite early and the subsequent debate became impassioned and of course distorted. That the Indian social milieu was radically different from the one found in England and Europe was a fact that could not be disputed. But the inferences that could be drawn from it could be, as the debate showed, completely opposite of one another. Viewing the Industrial Revolution in England and Europe, as a natural evolution from the preceding social and economic conditions, it was quite natural for British and foreign observers and scholars to conclude that since Indian conditions were radically different they could not be the basis or the source of a similar evolution. With one further step, it was easy to regard these conditions as obstacles to progress. In effect, unless Indians themselves changed these conditions (it was unthinkable to imagine a foreign government changing them) there was no possibility of progress. In emphasizing the refractory character of the Indian social milieu the critics pointed out that the Indian social milieu was characterised, on the individual level, by an other-worldly attitude, fatalism and passivity about happenings in the actual world and at the societal level by the caste system and the joint family system together with a social atmosphere surcharged with religious sentiments and thought. This resulted in a social ethos in which individualism was absent, there was great passivity and lack of initiative and commitment, no social mobility, etc., all inimical to a modern industrial society. The nationalists regarded this as a slur on the Indian people, their institutions and society and hypocritical excuse on the part of the rulers and the foreigners to shift the blame for the poverty and misery in India from themselves to the natives.

The nationalist reposte was that under the impact of the West the institutions of caste and joint family were fast disintegrating in

India and their adverse effects were either a thing of the past or a fast declining phenomenon. The passivity of the masses was a result rather than cause of their poverty and misery and it was foreign rule that was in the way of removing them. The same was true at the individual level. Historically the Hindus had displayed great achievements in the past in the intellectual and practical fields in spite of all the social conditions that could be listed as inimical to modern progress. The argument was thus historically false.

The biases of the arguments on the two sides are too obvious to be underlined. There is no need also to examine them in detail because after a quarter of a century of political independence and self-rule Indians can look at these problems in a more self-introspective manner. They have, it is significant, not shown any inclination to ignore these problems or to banish them out of the discussion. The above account of the old debate is just a brief background for more recent discussion of the relevant problems.

The New Setting : More than twenty-five years have elapsed since the attainment of political independence. Indian effort at economic and social development during all this period has not been inhibited by foreign rulers. Indians have had the fullest scope to develop in the way they liked and in the direction they chose for themselves. And yet the degree of progress attained has been unanimously held to be unsatisfactory. The battle against poverty has not been won and what is more, it does not seem as if that it is even going to be won. The dream of legislating progress by means of the abolition of caste, untouchability, etc and that of dissolving all social impediments to economic growth by putting emphasis on economic development through successive five year plans has largely been shattered. The persistence of inequalities, poverty, shortages, the lack of national and emotional integration, the growth of casteism, nepotism, corruption have again directed attention to social, institutional and structural factors in the Indian situation together with the economic ones. The talk is now not of economic development but development with social justice for which an all-sided revolution in all walks of life is said to be necessary. The study of social factors in the Indian setting in the context of all-sided socio-economic development with social justice has become an urgent necessity. Though the context is different, the new debate is not free

from the overtones of the old debate briefly summarised in the previous section. To deal with the new problem it may be necessary to deal with some aspects of the old one occasionally.

1.2 What is Wrong with Us

To bring the discussion to a focus we must begin by an attempt to formulate clearly what we think is wrong with us. Why is it that we are not succeeding in our efforts at economic development with social justice? I formulated the answer to this and such other questions in the following way a few years ago and I believe the passage of years has not made it necessary to alter it. Socio-economic development is economic growth plus social change. Development is, or should be, a self-sustaining process once begun. It builds upon itself. It is qualitative and touches most of the people, institutions, behaviour patterns values, etc in a country. It energises the people to undertake and carry out successfully the tasks of development on their own. However effectively a technical problem, like that of economic planning, is solved it cannot by itself bring about the rising tide of human endeavour, effort, daring, persistence, involvement and dedication which is the very essence of the process of self-sustaining development. This is what is lacking in India. We are not only non-aligned in foreign policy but also in personal work commitment and endeavour. We generally seem to act from a sense of duty (*dharma*), "the pale ash of a burnt out fire". There is very little sense of purpose or involvement. Our intellectual tradition is more theoretical than operational and, possibly as a result, we tend to believe too much in the power of the spoken or the written word. Steady hard work, though we do not say so, does not seem to us very attractive. In the famine of human endeavour that this gives rise to, it is no wonder that self-sustaining development is not generated. This apathy, passivity, lack of involvement, etc is not a recent development. It has been noted by prominent Indian leaders in the past. Ranade wrote long ago that our greatest enemy was the general apathy of the people. Tilak spoke about the slumber and indolence of his countrymen. The thoughts were, however, not allowed to surface prominently under the convenient doctrine that it was the effect of foreign rule and not an inherent characteristic of the Indian people. After

twenty-five and more years of independence that doctrine stands self-repudiated.

The causes of this malaise lie deep in our cultural heritage and social structure however unpalatable this may be to us. We must face the bitter truth if we want to remedy the situation. An analysis of the causes will have to range over a wide field and range along many false trails that have been drawn across it. The search will have to be carried out at the personal or individual level and the societal level and each of these will have to be discussed on the ideological and the actual structural level, keeping in mind both the static and the dynamic aspects. This is a tall order and though ill-equipped for such a formidable task, I am going to attempt it, if not for anything else at least to provoke more capable minds to answer the questions that I shall be raising.

2.11 The Religious Aspect : Hinduism

In considering the religious background of Indian society we have primarily to consider Hinduism which is the religion of the overwhelming majority of the people in the country. Hinduism is one of the oldest religions of the world and has evolved over centuries. Evolution of religion is usually traced along the path of the rationalization of religious symbolism, for example, from pantheism to monotheism to the *advaita* doctrine. Such a philosophical evolution is quite evident in Hinduism. But along with such evolution we must consider how far these philosophical doctrines were translated into the mundane world of everyday affairs. Sociologists often describe the two as the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition or folkways or structural expression of ideological positions. We have to consider both these in regard to Hinduism.

But before this is done an overall view is necessary and in that respect Max Weber's analysis cannot be bettered. Weber found that in religion cultural values, personal motivation and social structure came together and this led him to make a subtle and complicated analysis of Hinduism : " Weber finds the notion of *dharmā*, religiously prescribed obligation, to be the core of Hinduism, especially in its deeper inner connection with the idea of *karmā*, the endless chain of causation working itself out in successive rebirths. The orthodox view is that whatever position one finds oneself in this life, is due

to the force of *karma* in previous existences and one's obligation is to fulfil the *dharma* of one's position so that one will improve one's chances in the next incarnation. The intellectuals, revolting against this notion, always sought escape from the wheel of rebirth through some sort of individualistic salvation. Weber shows how these conceptions hindered cultural rationalization beyond a certain point. On the one hand, they contributed to the development of special technologies appropriate to the *dharma* of each profession - "from construction technique to logic as the technology of proof and disproof to the technology of eroticism." - but at the same time they hindered the development of levels of generalization above the technological because of the fragmentation involved in the notion of occupational *dharma*. On the other hand, the intellectuals were so completely preoccupied with the problem of salvation that all philosophy was made subservient to this end.

"With respect to social structure, it is the *dharma* concept as integrated with the idea of caste, which is the key to the situation. In spite of the remarkable achievements, including economic achievements, of certain castes, there is always a limit imposed by the traditionalistic definition of the caste *dharma* itself. Further, the division of society into innumerable watertight compartments, while engendering a very stable integration of sorts, allows a minimum of flexibility and especially limits the generalization of political power, making the society a relatively easy prey to foreign conquest. The major religious movements which reject this mode of social organization either fall back into it, in the form of a new caste, or, as in the case of Buddhism, remain an individualistic and socially neglected group existing symbolically in relation to traditional society and unable to generate any really different mode of social organization.

"In terms of personality, the *dharma* idea results in the fragmentation of response directed to the external demands of ritual obligation on the one hand, or a passive withdrawal into mysticism and asceticism on the other. There is no basis for inner unification of personality, for action in response to the command of a transcendental God. The Indian alternatives tend to be action without unification and unification without action."¹

Regarding the structural reflection of this ideological ethos in

Hinduism Max Weber pointed out that among the historical religions examined by him—namely, Judaism, Islam, Christianity—Hinduism alone had achieved a total correspondence between the ideological ethos and the actual social life lived. “The single inwardly consistent interconnection of performance in the world with the extra-worldly soteriology was in the caste soteriology of Vedānta Brahmanism in India. Its conception of calling had to operate politically, socially, economically in an extraordinarily traditionalistic manner. However, it is the single logically closed form of ‘organismic’ holy and societal teaching which could occur.”²

2.12 Max Weber's analysis is, at the intellectual level, based on published and printed material regarding Hinduism and Hindu society. It is empirical only to the extent to which his sources were empirical. Yet, as Weber himself remarks, as the total Hindu ethos is a very integrated complex compared to any other religion, ideological and structural elements are much more mixed in Weber's analysis of Hinduism than in that of any other religion. Though for the convenience of discussion I treat each of the three aspects of this complex, namely, cultural values, personal motivations and social structure separately it should never be forgotten that they are inextricably intertwined and bound together supporting and reinforcing one another in that extraordinarily integrated complex. Of these three aspects the first is purely ideological and the third purely structural. The second lies in between but nearer to the third than the first because in so far as personality is a very slowly changing variable not amenable to quick change, it amounts to really a structural factor.

Hinduism and Hindu society have evolved and persisted over several centuries. As will be made clear later on in this discussion, the internal springs of change within Hindu society have been extremely weak, particularly at the structural level. Only the impact of other and different cultures from outside India could be, therefore, expected to bring about any noticeable and marked change, in the total complex. Two such impacts were those of Islam from the thirteenth century on and of the British from the eighteenth century. Of these the first does not amount to much. The second does to a greater degree. In dealing with the above aspects, therefore, I will try to indicate, as far as possible, the consequences of the British

in perspective separately and specifically though this may not always be possible.

Weber's analysis has been faulted as concentrating too much on the high level philosophical ideologies of the Hindu ethos and its 'other-worldliness' and neglecting the long-standing and parallel materialistic streams of thought in Hindu thinking and behaviour. In the same strain, it is pointed out that the highly philosophical Vedāntic concepts of 'advaita', 'Brahma', etc. could not have spread or percolated beyond the numerically small elite, mostly Brahmins and the remaining vast mass of peoples could not but have materialistic and "this-worldly" traditions of thought and behaviour. The distinction between the Great Tradition of the Vedānta philosophy and the Little Tradition of the folkways or *Lokāyata* or *Cārvāka* philosophy is emphasised in this connection.

The whole argument is superficial and totally faulty. I will begin with the last point, *Cārvāka* or *Lokāyat* philosophy. First, *lokāyata*, that is what is traditionally and actually practised and believed by the mass of the people, is a derisive name that has been given to the *Cārvāka darśana* of Hindu philosophy by its critics and is not at all what the folk beliefs and traditions reflect. *Cārvāka* is one of the *darśanas* of Hindu philosophy whose original texts are extinct or not yet discovered and which has been reconstructed from the quotations from it that have been given by its critics in their criticism. Judging from these quotations and their criticisms, the *Cārvāka darśana* is, first and foremost, a system of logic which accepts only empirical verification of any proposition as the only valid criterion of the proof of it. Even inference, unless repeatedly proved by direct experience, is unacceptable to it. With such a system of logic, there is naturally no place in *Cārvāka* philosophy for such concepts as, god, soul, the other world, rebirth cycle, etc., all concepts so vital and crucial to the Vedānta philosophy. The materialism of *cārvāka* philosophy is thus implied by its basic logic or rather logical postulates.

The need to obliterate this doctrine was urgent and obvious to the proponents of Vedānta philosophy and this they successfully did by all the means at their command. The fact that most of the original texts of the *Cārvāka darśana* are not available or discove-

red so far and that only those parts of it which the critics selected for refutation are available is itself an indication of one of the means possibly used in this attack. Another method was the one of 'giving the dog a bad name and hang it'. They characterised the Cārvāka *darśana* as one propounded and believed in by the ignorant masses who were too moroanic to grasp or understand the subtle and lofty Vedānta philosophy. It was natural and easy for the Brahmin elite, with the usual contempt of the elite for the masses, to deride the doctrine as *Lokāyata*, that which is prevalent among the ignorant masses and therefore naturally benighted.

It can be easily appreciated that the Cārvāka system of logic from which the Cārvāka philosophy was derived could not have been accepted whole heartedly by the masses. People have faiths, beliefs, myths, etc. which transcend logic, let alone the empirical logic of Cārvāka *darśana*. If the Cārvāka logic were to be followed, it would have been empirically obvious to the masses that a rocky or a sandy soil could not be made fertile by observing the fertility rites and practising the fertility cults that were to be found in the folk culture in India. Following Cārvāka logic they would have lost faith in them and would have had to abandon them. This never happened in the long history of the Hindu people. No primitive or mediaeval society could have done this and the Hindu society did not. The epithet *lokāyata* given to the materialistic philosophy or Cārvāka is meant as an abuse and should not be construed as one that reflected the ideology and behaviour of the masses.³

This is so far as the argument based on the existence of the materialistic Cārvāka philosophy and its relation to the folkways or the Little Tradition is concerned. Let us now take up the argument about the gap in the Great and the Little Tradition in Hindu society. This gap was and is very small in Hindu society than in any other society and Weber was right in emphasizing that fact. The difference between orthodox religion (Great Tradition) and folk religion was largely in respect of language (Sanskrit instead of the regional Prakrit languages), elegance and subtlety of logic (highly philosophical and abstract as against simple and folksy), style (high flown as against simple), etc. rather than in respect of basic concepts or ideas or the philosophy as a whole. The Great Tradition (orthodox religious ideas and behaviour) consisted of the highly

logical *Advaita* philosophy, the core of Vedānta culture, was mainly confined to the Brahmins. It reached the society at large through the the great epics, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, and the subsequent *Purāṇas* culminating in the evolution and development of *Bhāgavata Dharma* (*Bhakti* cult) in and around the thirteenth century. It continues in that form even today. This mass religion, so to say, contains little new. It consists of the same main ideas of Vedānta philosophy like *dharma*, *karma*, cycle of births and rebirths, *māyā* or unrealness of this world, the importance of renunciation and *sanyāsa*, evils inherent in the pursuit of wealth and power, etc. There is hardly any difference, any gap in the value system of the great and the small traditions of Hindu society as a whole. There is no ideological disjuncture in Hindu society as has been alleged.⁴ And yet the rituals can differ as much as they can. The paradox is explained by the fact that Hinduism is not a religion in the Western sense of the term. It is a method of organizing society which has an overall homogeneity of value systems but at the same time a great tolerance of heterogeneous folkways of innumerable groups or castes. The castes, however, are not independent religious systems but parts of the larger Hindu system. Perhaps when the innumerable primitive groups were, when first admitted or absorbed in the expanding Hindu system, distinct religious systems of sorts but once they became parts of the total Hindu system and took their place in the caste hierarchy as it evolved they ceased to be separate and distinct religious entities. They could easily do so because their rituals, gods, etc. could be retained without any change within the total Hindu system. A heterogeneous society like this cannot come into being and persist without a great degree of religious tolerance and Hinduism possesses that tolerance to a great degree. This was possibly the cause or the consequence of another historical characteristic of Hindu society, namely, that the Hindu cultural entity was not tied to any political framework and the Brahmanic value system and structure of the caste system had not an organized, homogeneous, unified centre.⁵ As will be explained later this tolerance in Hindu society is one of the effective and powerful checks on any basic social change in that society.

2.21 Modern Ideological Reappraisal

With the British conquest of India and the establishment of British

rule, Indians began to be exposed to the impact of the West with much more intensity than before. The new system of education, introduced by the British, began to produce a band of scholars, thinkers, reformers, etc. who had imbibed, to varying degrees, the values, thoughts, philosophy, knowledge, etc. of the West. The fact of British conquest left no doubt in the minds of Indian people and particularly the educated elite, that the new civilization that the British represented was in many respects comparatively superior to their own and that in turn their own was in some respects defective. This prompted a fresh self-analysis and self-introspection both to discover and remedy the defects of the Indian system and also to discover the strong points of the new system brought to India by the British rulers. The intellectual reappraisal of Indian religion, culture, etc. began early in the nineteenth century and can be briefly described as follows.

The new Indian intellectuals realised early that only imitation of European ways was of limited use. The thrust of re-thinking, therefore, turned in the direction of a basic analysis of the social and religious order and the changes that need to be made in them to keep up with modern progress. A major attempt in the field was to search for new values in the old traditions and thoughts. There seemed a fair possibility that Indian thoughts and behaviour would develop more and more on the Western lines. But in this nothing new was happening. The rational scientific outlook that dominated Western civilization was also to be found in India's old traditions of learning. In regard to grammar and linguistics, for example, the Indian traditional systems were as rational and as scientific as the comparable European ones. In this field there was really nothing specifically European as such. Therefore in trying to assimilate European thought and modes of behaviour the Indian intellectuals felt that Indians have not to develop or imbibe any new values or intellectual and other capabilities. They could easily develop them from elements that were already present in their traditions and learning. Such a shift of emphasis should be easy to make. If the achievement of Indians remained limited that would be mainly due to their economic and social situation and system. These latter they must tackle energetically.

The main shortcomings of Indian people were : (1) The caste

system that had led to a deeper and more extensive social stratification than in Europe and the consequent absence of equality of economic and social status or opportunity. (2) The other-worldly attitude of the people which led them to regard the affairs and operations of this world as of subsidiary importance. There was, therefore, less effort and concern about the every day affairs of the world. (3) As the gaining of freedom from the endless cycle of births and deaths (*mukti*) was an individual affair and was strictly an individual's concern and goal, there was no stress on ideas or rules of behaviour, etc. regarding social duties or social responsibilities except within the narrow caste and kin circles. The best rule of conduct recommended for the individual was that of *sanyāsa* or renunciation of the world.

Regarding caste and social inequality inherent in a caste society, the new thinkers argued that in the very old days caste was determined not by birth but by skills, qualities and functions of individuals. In later times this had gradually ceased and the caste system had taken the present form. For modern times this had to be corrected by reviving the old values and traditions by which caste was not determined by birth. In regard to the other-worldly attitude of the Indian people and the ideal of *sanyāsa* for individual salvation, the new line of thought, argued particularly vigorously by Tilak, was that the advocating of *sanyāsa* or the renunciation of the world was not a proper interpretation of the ancient scriptures. The proper interpretation was that it was not necessary for individual salvation to become a *sanyāsi* by renouncing the world but only to develop the attitude of a *sanyāsi* i. e. of *niṣkāma karma* and then continue to act in the world for the good of others with that attitude without any longing for the fruits of that action. In other words, to do your duty for duty's sake. That was the true teaching of *Gītā*, *Karma Yoga*.

These attempts at reinvigorating the intellectual and philosophical climate by reinterpreting the old traditional thinking and concepts that have been summarised so far were partial and completely non-operational and theoretical. Even intellectually they were unsatisfactory because the new thinking did not say or prescribe to the passive Hindu individual what he should do but told him to develop a mental attitude with which he should do whatever he wanted to do. None

of the new thinkers prescribed or recommended to the individual the uninhibited and single minded pursuit of wealth, success, power etc. as desirable. Nor was the individual prescribed any duty regarding the social group or society in general to which he belonged. In the old traditional way of thinking and acting no social duties inhere to the individual except incidentally as things to be customarily done or fit to be done in particular circumstances and places. Nobody emphasized the duty of the individual to the society as a whole.

2 22. Indian Personality

Analyses of culture usually deal with the group rather than the individual. Yet culture can only be mediated through individual personalities. The study of common characteristics among people sharing the same culture adds an important dimension to our understanding of the culture and society. The relationship between culture and personality types may be described as a partial reflection of one another. Both culture and personality are abstractions and refer more to process than to things. "Broadly speaking culture is a way of life of a group of people, the configuration of all the more or less stereotyped patterns of learned behaviour handed down from one generation to the next through the means of language and imitation. Similarly, broadly defined, personality is a more or less enduring organization of forces within the individual associated with a complex of fairly consistent attitudes, values and modes of perception which account in part for the individual's consistency in behaviour." "When the focus is put on the similarities in personality characteristics among people sharing the same culture, it is not denied that personalities vary widely in a culture. All that is sought to be conveyed is that some kind of personality, a modal personality rather than a basic personality structure or national character, corresponds to each type of culture but evidently the correspondence is not one-to-one but partial. Within these limitations the study of personality in culture or culture in personality is certainly rewarding.

In the late sixties in a discussion of the non-economic factors in India's economic development I tried to bring in the information thrown up by a few personality studies in India and suggested that the light shed by them on our social and cultural situation may be

valuable from the point of view of bringing about social change of the requisite kind.⁷

I cited the studies of Taylor and Carstairs and the conclusion of Taylor that Orthodox Hinduism is "able to create a basic personality pattern in which personal initiative is replaced by the sense of conformity, in which responsibility is exercised without personal authority, in which security is associated with a sense of dependence and self-respect with a sense of helplessness, and in which opportunities for frustration and acute anxiety are minimised. It is a basic personality whose integration and stability are primarily a function of the cultural system to which it belongs and are not organized around any system by personal choices."⁸

The studies of Carstairs and Taylor were limited in time and scope and dealt with only one or two regions in the wide continent of India. It is now possible to study the personality question from a broader and a historical perspective because of the insightful study of P. Spratt.⁹ Spratt undertakes a detailed study of ancient literature legends, etc. to support his psychological analysis. One need not agree with everything that he says. But his analysis is very stimulating and suggestive and seems to fit certain things in India so well that it is worthwhile taking it seriously as a hypothesis.

Spratt argues that the Hindu psyche differs radically from the Occidental (European). Freud assumes two kinds of psychic energy, libido and aggressiveness. Broadly as between Hindu and European, these two psychic forces are interchanged. In Europe the punitive¹⁰ personality type is normal, the narcissistic exceptional. In India the narcissistic type is common, the punitive exceptional. The outstanding peculiarities of the Hindu personality type can be accounted for on the assumption that it is distinguished by the related characteristics of narcissism, a mother fixation, and a weak suppression of the infant's anal attachments. Only a community of narcissists could have discovered Yoga. But this achievement, by making the Yogi the ideal personality type, must have established once and for all the predominance of narcissism.

A society composed of individuals who are chiefly of the narcissistic type¹¹ will tend to differ in organization and institutions from societies in which punitives predominate. According to psychoanaly-

tical theory the child in its early years assimilates current ideals and example of adults, and these form the ego-ideal. Actual behaviour falls short of the ideal, but the ego is spurred on by the super ego, which is an unconscious image of the aggressive side of authority, especially the father; the super-ego draws its strength from the subject's own aggressiveness. The conscience is thus a charge of aggressiveness directed against the ego and forcing it to try to live up to its ideals. The emotion which is engendered is that of guilt. (This is in the punitive type of the West.)

The Hindu conscience differs markedly from this. The ego-ideal is formed in the same way, but the big charge of inward directed libido, love for the self, gives it a more idealistic character. In the narcissistic type the inward directed aggressiveness is weak : the super-ego is weak. The Hindu strives to act rightly, or to improve himself, not so much out of love for himself and derivatively for the ideal. If the European conscience is a product of fear, the Hindu conscience is a product of pride. The Hindu's principal moral emotion is aspiration. But if in any individual this aspiration is weak, and the gap between ideal and achievement is wide, the weak super-ego does not cause the subject any distress. The Hindu psyche is not free from guilt but it is the guilt arising from the fear of the operation of an impersonal law, *Karma*, implanted not in early infancy but in later childhood through verbal teaching, and in consequence less deeply felt.

The majority of narcissists respect high ideals but will need little temptation to abandon them. As their outward oriented ego is weak, their attachment to the community, beyond the kinship group, is weak as compared to that of the punitive. A nation of narcissists will show weak patriotism and public spirit.

The attitudes of punitives and narcissists towards rulers differ appreciably. Both adopt the attitude of the son of the respective type to the father. The punitive feelings will be relatively intense but ambivalent. He will be either strongly attached or hostile to the ruler, and in many people these feelings can replace each other quickly. This explains the political instability, or the marked political polarization of most punitive societies. On the other hand, the strong attachment to a common head enables punitives to form large political communities in contrast to narcissists whose attachment to a

leader outside the kinship group is weak. A typical narcissist, though he hopes for benefits and tries to gain them by submission, will less readily undertake positive action for the ruler. He tends towards political indifference. But his allegiance seldom wavers so long as the ruler's power seems to be secure. The politics of a narcissist in society is therefore likely to be stable. There will be few changes of ruler initiated by popular movements, and relatively few by palace intrigue. Because of the weak attachment to the ruler Hindu states will be weak vis-a-vis other states or minorities of different mental type. It is a fact of history that Hindu rule is stable internally but weak in opposing attack from without.

Narcissists probably show little of the punitive's revolt against the heritage of his forefathers. This is true in matters of literacy and artistic styles. India shows nothing comparable to the rapid changes of taste which distinguish the artistic history of the West, or the excessive depreciation of the work of previous generation often followed by a rehabilitation a generation later, which results from the hostility to the father. Protest against caste has been endemic since Buddha but it has been always in the spirit of Vivekananda not an aggressive desire to pull down the privileged castes but an aspiration to equal their spiritual attainments. The effect has of course been quite slight. Buddhism in fact, like all reforming movements, shared the narcissistic character of the parent society and therefore effected very little changes. This is equally true of the *Bhakti* movement. It lacks conspicuously in aggressiveness.

In a society of narcissists a small proportion of the citizens will be narcissists of the type in whom the libido cathects on the ego-ideal. Of these, some will be concerned only with spiritual matters, but some will cherish an ego-ideal of an outgoing character. Some may be of the projective extrovert type. These will hold the highest ideals and will be public spirited, just, balanced; in short the best type of citizens. They will differ from all but a few of the best type of punitives in that the punitive normally needs an enemy, whereas the projective extrovert and the other high type of narcissists are benevolent towards everybody. The punitive is typically a nationalist whereas the higher type of narcissist is a world citizen.

When narcissism is carried to the extreme point, the concentra-

tion of all the libido upon the ego endows it with all value and deprives it of all other objects of value. The subject feels a total lack of interest in external objects and normal life (*Vairāgya*). This state has to be attained by voluntary effort, Yoga, which is long and arduous. For the typical Yogi and other ascetics this is the final state. However, a step beyond is possible. When in this state ego appears to be the only object that exists, the ego may then identify itself with the world; it may expand, as it were, to include everything within itself. As the Upaniṣads put it, "that art thou". With the identification of the ego and the world the process is not complete. The final step which the Yogi does not take, is to direct upon the world the love which is directed upon the ego. (*niskāma karma*, *Ārhat*, *sthitaprajña*). This situation resembles that of the extrovert but differs from it in two respects: (i) Unlike the extrovert he does not have preferences. He is impartially balanced. (ii) His attachment to the world differs in quality from that of the extrovert. It is relatively cool, passionless, that of the artist perhaps than that of the lover.

The relative cultural sterility of India in recent centuries is due to the weakness of the revolt against the father i. e. against the ideas of the past, and the weakness of the creative impulses. Cultural activity may be the work of almost pure libido, for example, the work of projective extroverts like Kālidāsa and Tagore. But much cultural activity contains an appreciable aggressive element. This is especially true in science, even pure science. The desire to understand seems to derive in part from the desire to dominate.

How does one account for vigorous cultural activity in some past periods? The key is the projective extrovert. The necessary condition for the flowering of Hindu culture is the occurrence of a large number of projective extroverts. Their outlook is universalistic, not nationalistic, impractically idealistic. The ordinary men of the narcissist type introject the figure of such leader and he raises them to a high level of public spirit, which they can no longer sustain when he is gone. This latter is also promoted by the characteristic parochialism of the majority of the narcissists of the lower type.

The unconscious convictions of the narcissists inspire the characteristic fantasy of the bureaucrat. He feels himself to be universally benevolent, endowed with omniscience and omni-competence; sitting

at the controls of society, wiping the tears from every eye and steering the state to utopia. Bureaucracy expresses the non-aggressive superiority feeling of the narcissist and the desire to exercise unostentatious power. The urge to expand the state power and to establish this bureaucratic order was persistent in Hindu history but it had to contend with the parochialism which is also characteristic of narcissism. And on the whole local influences prevailed.

Spratt's detailed analysis of the modal Indian personality is based on historical and literary texts as well as on the empirical inquiries of recent date such as those of Taylor and Carstairs. It is a highly suggestive and insightful picture of culture in personality or personality in culture. And this is an aspect of the Indian cultural ethos and structure that had not been touched in the old debate. But that was because the study of personality in culture is a recent development. That is more the reason why we should take cognizance of it in our analysis. It illuminates the structural aspect of the human material that is generally produced by the culture and which in turn perpetuates it from generation to generation.

It is interesting to note, in this connection, that to the increasing prevalence of the narcissistic character has been traced the increasing social disorder in the U. S. A. in recent years by some psychoanalysts. Simon Sobo¹² writes : " Narcissism, in affluent Western societies, ordinarily reaches peak in adolescence and young adulthood. It is when it is extended too long into life, and remains too intense, unformulated and unrealizable, that we think of it as a problem."

He describes the main characteristics of the narcissistic character which closely parallels the description given by Spratt. " The narcissistic character finds it difficult to love. His main concern is to be loved. Other people disappoint him as does his own concept of himself. He wants and waits for perfection, finding all else unsustaining. He cannot accept the plainness, the greyiness of reality and can only exist with possibilities. True " reality " is found in his imagination of how life could be, and soon this transforms itself into how it should be...the narcissist seeks to have his own vision of the world judged perfect."

" Those with difficult narcissistic problems can only imagine peace when they have become what they are not, when they are

recognized for their fantasies of what they could be. They must gain paradise or remain in hell. When their feet become grounded on earth, they are in turmoil. They feel frail, too close to the common fate awaiting them beneath the soil. They dream of being the child's superman who can fly, they are waiting (in Leonard Cohen's lyrical words) 'for the sky to surrender'."

2.23 Social Structure

The three basic institutions of Hindu social structure were the caste system, the family and the village community which had evolved through centuries. Complex considerations of ritual pollution and purity kept the castes distinct and apart, through rules governing intermarriage, commensality, occupation and other patterns of interaction. The socio-economic pattern of the largely self sufficient village system integrated them to a certain degree but divisive rather than unifying tendencies prevailed. The family system was well integrated into this overall pattern. There was little room for the individual who had his duties (*dharma*) prescribed to him on his birth in any caste and the sanctions against not following that *dharma* were divine. The individual's duties were primarily to his family (ancestors), to his caste and to his village in that order of priority. The only escape out of this structure of obligations and duties was through *sanyāsa*, the renunciation of the world. One could be an individual only by abandoning the world. Individual in the society was, in the Hindu system, a contradiction in terms.

The successful maintenance and continuation of the caste hierarchy could not have been possible without there being in the social structure a certain latitude for change and movement. This was provided by, what has recently come to be known as, the Sanskritization process, a process to be historically found in all parts of India. It broadly signifies the upward mobility of castes within the total caste structure. When a low Hindu caste acquired wealth and/or political power, it tried to change its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the image of a high, frequently twice-born caste and thus tried to get included in the bracket of the high castes. The new status had to be sanctioned by the political power, which was its traditional function. This so-called Sanskritization process brought about only positional change within the overall caste structure and was not a structural change.¹³

There were no other internal springs of action or change in this social structure leading towards any structural change nor could any have arisen, as they actually did not, within the overall functioning of that structure. The only possibility of structural change could arise from some external impact. The earliest impact of an alien culture/religion on India was that of Islam. Under the impact of this aggressively proselyting religion Hinduism shrank into itself and became even more rigid than before to preserve itself. But apart from this, the impact was very limited. Islamic rulers, perhaps a little more mercantile-minded than the Hindu rulers, did bring to India their interest and skill in the development of roads, communications, markets, etc, together with irrigation and horticultural techniques. But these were of too feeble a strength to bring about any structural change in Hindu society. On the contrary, Islamic society seemed to have been overwhelmed by the Hindu social system by successfully implanting the institution of caste into Islamic society and helping the evolution of a caste system in it though not in all particulars.

The British impact was deeper and apparently more far-reaching. The development of modern means of communication and an efficient impersonal bureaucratic government administrative system in India under the British, destroyed the old self-sufficiency and autonomy of the village system. Economically the village economy became much more integrated with the total economy of the country through the development and working of the market economy. Administratively the village *panāyats* lost their old autonomy and became cogs in the bigger centralized wheel of administration. But even so the villages continued to be caste-ridden and the village caste hierarchy and the social life that went with it was only superficially affected. With the conferment of the right of private property in land the British bequeathed by a misunderstanding of the traditional system of the rights in land, gave rise to a land hierarchy which was parallel with the caste hierarchy. The twin hierarchies mutually strengthened one another. The British also refused to perform the traditional function of political power in a caste system, that of altering and sanctioning the 'Sanskritization' process which naturally clogged its functioning and imparted additional rigidity to the caste system. On the other hand some measures that British rule adopted,

like equality before law, etc. eroded the caste system to a certain degree. As a whole, however, the British impact did not result in any marked structural change in the caste structure in India. Moreover, communalism and casteism, as we know them today, is exclusively a product of British rule.

It was a commonly held view that society at the time of British conquest was characterized by the joint family system and that it began to disintegrate under the British impact. This view has been recently found to be incorrect. The picture of the Hindu society in pre-British days, as predominantly consisting of joint or extended families, was built out of deductive reasoning from the Hindu scriptures describing and defining the Hindu family system in the abstract. It had no empirical basis. The picture was conjured up from the "homemade models of the Hindu literati, British law courts and judges and the new class of lawyers. That the Hindu law dealt with the family as a coparsonary unit in respect of family property was taken as the basis for inferring that as a household or a living unit also the Hindu family was joint or extended."¹⁴ Empirical data mostly belonging to the British period (census etc.) showed decisively that the Hindu family as a living unit or a household had always been small in size and more nuclear, though in respect of property it was a coparsonary or an extended unit. The picture of a disintegrating joint family system under the impact of British rule is therefore a myth. The Hindu family system continued largely unaffected under the British impact.

The social structure of Hindu society as constituted by the three basic institutions of the village community, the caste structure and the family system were only marginally affected by British impact. There was hardly any structural change in any of them so far as social matters were concerned.

Gokhale Institute of Politics
and Economics, Pune

N. V. Sovani

Notes

1. Robert N. Cellah, Review of "*The Religion of India : The Sociology of Hinduism*" by Max Weber translated by Hans

- H. Certh and Don Martindate, American Sociological Review, Vo.24, No.5, October 1959, pp. 731-733.
2. Max Weber, *op cit.* p. 333
3. Kurundkar, Narhar; ' Lokāyata ' Māgovā; Deshmuk & Co; Pune 1967
4. Dr. Bellah errs in describing Hindu Society as subject to such an ideological disjuncture and even more so in tracing the tolerance of Hindu societies to this disjuncture. He writes : "An overtolerent religion is one that fails to communicate its message to important group in society and possibly assents in their adherence to heterogeneous and often less developed orientations. Perhaps the extreme case is Hinduism, which left the mass of the Indian people hermetically sealed in caste-bound religious systems, only rare and usually ineffectively challenged through movements based on Hindu religious universalism." " Epilogue " in *Religion and Progress in Modern Asia*, 1965, Free Press, New York, p. 191.
5. S. N. Eisenstadt in *Tradition, Change and Modernity* John Wiley, New York 1973; pp 280-306.
6. V. Barnouw, *Culture and Personality*, Dorsey Horrewood (Illi) 1963; Chapter 1
7. N. V. Sovani; " Non-economic Aspects of India's Economic Development " in *Administration and Economic Development in India*, (Ed.) Braibanti and Spengler, Duke University Press, Durham, 1963.
8. Quoted in *op-cit.*, p 267.
9. *On Hindu Culture and Personality : A Psychological Study*, 1966
10. By punitive is meant the psychic type in which much aggressiveness is erected against the ego generating a guilt feeling.
11. According to theory, in every Psyche a certain quantum of libido is directed upon the ego. This condition is established in the first months of life and some trace of it remains : this is called primary narcissism. But in some cases a big charge

of libido is cathected on the ego. This is secondary narcissism. The normal Hindu psyche shows secondary narcissism. p. 5.

12. "Narcissism and Social Disorder". *The Yate Review*, Summer, 1975.
13. M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, Allied, Bombay, 1966 p.93.
14. S. A. M. Shah, *The Household Dimension of Family in India* Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1973