

THE INTERFACE OF SWADESHI CULTURE AND TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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The present paper attempts to address three issues. First, technology in itself is value-free but assumes value when linked with social activities. Secondly, technology is not logically incompatible with Indian culture. Thirdly, Swadeshi culture is integral and spiritual in nature. It integrates technological society with cultural values. It also gives ontological basis to secular values of technological society.

The expression "technological society" needs a little clarification. The expression does not refer to any particular society of any technologically advanced country, It refers to the 'technical phenomenon'. It refers to the attitude and the frame of mind, which characterize the present day civilization. The present civilization of India has its roots in science and technology. It views technique above other things. It seeks for the most efficient and result oriented means in every field and in every walk of life. The expression 'technological society' has not been taken to denote 'machine Society'. In 19th century, the European industrial society understood 'technological society' as a machine society. But technological society is more than 'machine society'. In the industrial society, machines became source of alienation. In a 'technological society' technique integrates machines with society. Machine may alienate, technology is liberating. Thus, the expression 'technological society' refers to that mental attitude of the post-modern man, which has been influencing the life style of the people of different place in varying degrees.

The expression 'Swadeshi culture' denotes a set of values dear to Indians. Values have two dimensions. One in spiritual and other is secular.

Spiritual value is a set of goals or ideals. Secular values refer to interest, preference and choice, which are essentially changing. When we talk about Swadeshi culture, people may consider it as Indian moral values. Values are not necessarily moral. Indian culture transcends morality on higher planes of existence. In practical realm of existence, it concentrates on secular values.

The expression 'interface' refers to the views that Indian culture and technological society are not opposed to each other. Ordinarily, it is believed that Swadeshi culture and technological society are incoherent; culture is spiritualistic and value oriented while technology is mechanical. Values are useful at every step of human existence. The activities of individual and society should be in accordance with certain values or ideals. Man is essentially a value-conscious and value-pursuing being. Individual as well as society cherish some ideals or values. Human beings cultivate faith in values and also create new values. This fact has inspired me to give an interface of Indian culture and technological society.

The present human society is faced with a paradox. The paradox is due to the fact that if human society is technologically advanced, it is faced with evil, and if it is technologically backward, it is evil because man loses his manness. Technological backwardness also causes evil because man suffers and lives in poverty. It goes without saying that insufficient progress of technology is evil because it causes backwardness. The prime object of the invention of new technology is to get rid of backwardness. So naturally we have to choose technology as an instrument in order to ameliorate conditions of the suffering humanity. But there is an opposite view also that considers technological progress to be a great source of present evils prevailing in the society. But in spite of laudable achievements, a man of philosophic temperament can not deny the social evils of the past few decades. It is true that technological society is responsible for dehumanization and degeneration of culture. Technology has managed to throw human relations into disorder and chaos. On the other hand, communication technology has made it quite easy to develop relationship with other nations. Technology has changed human society and its values. It has been used for well-being of human society. In order to get rid of economic evils, we have to develop technology. Recent nuclear explosion in Pokharan has

established India as a nuclear power. The technology can be used for self-defense and development of the country. Our Late Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri gave the slogan "Jai Jawān, Jai Kisān". The present Prime Minister Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee added "Jai Vigyān" to the original slogan. He demarcated a new dimension and uttered "Jai Jawān, Jai Kisān and Jai Vigyān". This throws ample light on our choice of science and technology since India has chosen to become Nuclear.

In technological society, technology determines the direction of the development of society and its values. But seemingly, technological in itself is not value loaded. Technology is ethically neutral and value free. The benefits of technology are mainly the use to which it is put by man. It is neither good nor bad. The use of technology determines its values. We can not pass any value judgment relating to technological society, whether it is a good society or bad society. Mahatma Gandhi, the great champion of 'Swadeshi Culture' does admit in his famous book entitled "Hind Swaraj" that India can import technology and life saving drugs from foreign countries. It does not affect our Swadeshi ideology since life saving drugs and necessary technology are linked with the well-being of India. So it is possible for "Swadeshi Culture" to import technology and then try to assimilate it in indigenous culture. We can try to position imported technology in our own cultural fabric.

The Indian mindset is culture-bound. We are quite upright in culture. India can not cope with the great power of technologically advanced society. There are many questions related with the Indian culture and technological society. The conflict between Indian culture and technological society and the influence of technology upon the course of society and cultural life of India have been a great source of controversy. The main objective of this paper is to discuss the technological society and its bearings on the cultural identity of India. We are preparing to enter into 21st century. In this century, man can not live without technology. In 21st century life and society will be governed by technological relations. Technology advances rapidly. The technology which is useful today may not be useful tomorrow. If we do not prepare the new generation to adopt new technology and new values of life, the new generation will lag behind.

Though technology is value-free yet technology creates conditions

for new ways of life and its values. Values do change in accordance with the change in technology. We think that technology is an instrument in the service of humanity. By the phrase value-free, I mean that technology is neither evil nor good in itself. It is a means and not an end. It is use which makes technology either good or bad. The new technology facilitates to coin words and assign new meanings. Technology creates new values. It also formulates new language. It gives new meanings to words. Technology affects our value system and thus affects our culture. For example, Russell considers that "efficiency" and "speed" have emerged as new values with the growth of new technology. Efficiency is a value but is not moral value. Efficiency and speed are amoral. Efficiency and speed are values because they are valuable in life. With the change of technology, cultural values do change. B. D. Nag Choudhary observes, "Values erode, values change. A society adopts new values". This means that cultural progresses are in one sense determined by the technological progress and advancement. Technology does affect culture. In this regard, it may be mentioned that Leslie White has introduced the most important theory of "technological determinism". According to White, "not only technology determines the direction of cultural development, but it also determines the need of building social foundation." Technological society presuppose technological determinism. Technological determinism assumes that technological innovation is the driving force behind social change imposing its own logic. Talcott Parson enumerates the technology as a kind of capability on the part of the organization for a more effective control and necessary change in the physical environment in favour of human needs and demands". To say that technology is meant to change the society is just like saying that technology causes change in our value system. It is true that technology is the product of society and values are also product of society. The Indian technological society owes its present position to Indian cultural patterns.

The social development leads to the question of interface of technology and culture. In ordinary parlance, development can not be equated with economic progress. Development is a multi-dimensional process. It includes economic, social, political and cultural spheres. Development is an important factor for economic well-being. Technology has not been created and developed in isolation. The introduction of new technology is

also a cultural phenomenon. Technology directly affects cultural values and also behavior of human beings living in society. Technology is responsible for new ways of life and culture. It is true that the society which consumes more and exhausts nature is considered more advanced. This society is known as consumer society. Technological society in one sense is consumer society. In Indian context, development is not simple economic. It is integral development. Integral development means social, cultural and economic developments taken together. Development is a historical change. The society moves from one historical stage to another. In fact preparing the society for development is a historical necessity. The transfer of technology can be effective in the progress and development of Indian society. Technology should be in harmony with cultural conditions of Indian society.

The development is not a sapling, which may be brought from one nation and transplanted in another nation. Culture can depend on technique and not on technology. "We can survive without technology, we can't survive without technique. To say that technology and culture are not logically incompatible is to say that technology and culture are interface to each other. Culture presupposes techniques. System of technique is technology. "Thus, there can be no technique without culture, no culture without technique". The logical assumption would be that every culture has relied on a corresponding system of techniques. "Technique is nothing but the permanent and dynamic expression of an individual culture. Cultures can only express themselves or survive through technique. Thus, the so-called potterwasp is known for its technique in constructing what we human beings culturally recognize as pots, however, the small vessels are conclusion of technique, without it there would be no pot, propagation and no survival".

Technology introduces change in society. It is a positive device in the service of humanity. It is a means which can be properly used for the welfare of human being. By applying the latest laser technology we may help cure the cataract. However, laser could be used to guide a bomb. We can use satellites for education and cultural progress. We can also use them as a means to spread the destructive cultural and ideological patterns. Technology is a means in the service of human beings. It can help us to utilize natural resources in a better way. It can also play a positive role in safeguarding the cultural identity for the unity and survival of the nation.

Ramakant. Sinari observes, "Science and technology have invested man with power-they have fructified his 'will to power'. Man can use this power either to better and to prolong his survival or to annihilate himself".

Man is always trying to develop new techniques. Therefore, our culture necessitates evasion of extremes in using the natural resources. The appropriate use of technology should be made so that we would not be affected with its negative outcome. Gabriel Marcel has called this "technological mentality". The very birth of technology represents the rise of urge of full freedom in Human consciousness. The growth of technology enhances man's ability to release himself from nature-oriented evil. Safeguarding Indian culture and its identity does not mean to go away from the current technology. It is inevitable for human existence to accept the realities of the present technological society. "Technologically advanced societies have solved many of the problems, e.g. hunger, disease, poverty, epidemics, illiteracy, physical discontent, lack of means of communication, and movement". In one sense technology protects cultural identity. Technology constitutes the reality of time. Our goal must be to protect our cultural identity by using the gifts of technology. We should not sacrifice the culture for the sake of technology. If one looks at technology as a machine and the principle of work then it is value-free. But if one looks at the minute details of human activities which take place in life with the use of technology, the answer will be that technology is a part of life. It is a part of culture. Arnold Pacey has considered three different aspects of technology.:

1. The organizational aspect constituting of the activity of designers, engineers, consumers and labour unions.
2. The technical aspect which is limited to technology, that is skill and know-how-tools and machines.
3. The cultural aspect means goals, values and moral rules, beliefs in progress, affecting the creativity of designers.

Arnold Pacey believed that people use technology in its concept and sometimes with its limited meaning. When technology is presented in a limited way, the cultural values and the organizational factors related to it assume for it the shape of an alien factor. In this case, technology is known

in its complete technical sense. If technology is taken as a part of life, then we can not say that technology is value-free. We think technology has direct and indirect impact on values, tradition and the human life. Technology actually transforms cultural values. Technology is a means for change in our civilizations. Ramakant Sinari upholds, "The twentieth century technological culture has compelled a change in our view of the individual, he is looked upon as a function, as a mere one of them as one not necessarily with an *âtman* or a human face". A direct interface between culture and technology exists and both of them affect the other in a sequential manner. In advanced societies which are the birth place of technology, it is attempted that social and cultural organizations be put in line with technological development. Here we have interface of culture with the present day technological society. To a critical philosopher, this attempt may sound obscure. Indian culture which is grounded in spirituality can not be compatible with technological society. It is difficult to bring Indian culture close to technological society. We simply uphold that culture whether Indian or Western is not incompatible with technology. The present study is initiated with the conviction that technology is a part of Indian culture. The present day values in India are largely shaped under the influence of technological society.

The absence of logical incompatibility between the values cherished in a technological society and those endorsed by Indian culture can be worked out in two ways:

1. By showing that there is some kind of compatibility between technology and culture.
2. By demonstrating that culture can in its own ways, lessen to some extent the negative effects of technology.

This is a fact that science and technology occupy a place of immense importance in post-modern Indian society. The problem is how Indian culture can accommodate technology without going astray. How Indian culture can at one and the same time satisfy Indian tradition and technology? This brings into the consideration as to under what conditions technological society can be interface into Indian culture without destroying its inner harmony. In traditional societies like Indian, the situation is more complicated

because technology will be made an alien entity which appears an independent system in the face of existing cultural system. Culture determines the way in which individuals identify and recognize one another within their own social spheres of action. Indian culture and its value system constitute the factors of social harmony of Indian pluralistic society. Indian value system gives a special cultural identity to Indian society. In the process of social evolution and change, which emanates from the introduction of value and models of foreign technologies, the Indian cultural systems in entirety are attacked. Therefore, the main risk lies in the endangering of Indian cultural identity, which is rooted in tradition. The development of communication technology, the ability to record and transmit sounds and images over any distance have changed the value system. It has changed the face of contemporary Indian culture. With the enormous development in communication technology, the culture has enormously changed. The mass is not culturally neutral. This reflects the thinking, the idea, and the value. Communication technology serves as the channel of transmitting values or ways of life.

The promotion of technology in India is not fully indigenous activity. We have three options in the face of modern technology.

1. The first option is its total acceptance of foreign technology without taking into account tradition bound Indian culture.
2. The second option is total rejection of any type of foreign technology.
3. The third option is selection of relevant technologies which have greater conformity with the socio-cultural and economic conditions of India i.e., the selection of appropriate technology.

India by making proper and positive use of technology, has succeeded in bringing about a fundamental change in the ways of the people's mentality. Technology is being employed for fulfilling specific human needs. It is forcing man to continuously adjust to its impact. Ramakant Sinari observes, "Instead of technology, being developed to meet the design of the society, it is shaping the organization and structure of a society and human relations in it". Technology has brought change in our educational system. It has helped to popularize family planning. The T. V. has promoted health care in villages. It has created understanding among different nations.

Now we are in a position to say that there does exist some sort of compatibility between the value endorsed by Indian culture and cherished by technological society. In Indian culture secular values and spiritual values are not opposed. In Hindu tradition, Dharmashastra and Mokshashastra are not incompatible. The secular values are relegated to worldly status. But this is quite clear that even in secular culture, the spiritual attitude pervades. The Vedānta philosophy is the bedrock of Indian spiritual culture. The secular culture refers to technological society. The secular culture refers to technological society. The spiritual culture gives ontological basis to secular or technological culture. The secular culture of technological society assumes a general spiritual dimension or ontological basis. On technological level, Indian attitude can be summed up as the attitude of impersonality. It is an attitude of the man rising above his own person. The value, which emerges in a technological society, is the value of impersonality. There is a basic character of the functioning of technique, and these, in turn lead to impersonality.

The tendency towards impersonality sets in a process of dehumanization. The dehumanizing effects of technology are taken as the negative effects of the technological society. Dehumanization is taking away from man his manness. It reduces man to the status of machine. It stifles creativity. Technological society makes life mechanical and artificial. The process of dehumanization upsets the person of a man. In Vedāntic spiritual culture, man has to transcend his ego. It is also a kind of 'superb dehumanization' when man transcends himself. But Indian philosopher and critic may point out that it is not proper to describe the process of transcendence as 'superb dehumanization'. In transcendence man does not negate man but sublimates himself to higher plane of existence. In Vedāntic culture, the lower aspect of man is suppressed and transcended. The Technological process of dehumanisation takes away from man his manness as such. The dehumanized individual is merely a bundle of reactions. The Indian spiritual culture gives creativity a full play. The spiritual process attempts to realize the essence of man. Technological culture robs the essence of man. Techniques eliminate creativity. In technological society technique tends to determine everything. In Indian culture, the human existence has been given an ontological foundation. The cult of spiritualization

is not negative. But in technological society dehumanization is negative.

A philosopher may point out that any attempt to draw a line of interface between technological society and Indian culture is far fetched because they belong to two different dimensions of human existence. This objection requires a little consideration. Technology and culture both are concerned with man and society. Both attempt to contribute in social development. Social development has two aspects one is economic development and other is cultural. Technology takes care of economic development. Culture is rooted in value system. But this is a misconception that technology and culture are not interface to each other. The technological development cause change in our value system. Moreover, Spiritual values give ontological dimension to technological society.

Indian culture is integral in nature. Now the integration may be turned outward or may turn inward. These two ways are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to emphasize either the outward character of integration or the inner character of integration. Social integration is integration turned outward. Self-integration is integration turned inward. Technology integrates society. Culture is self-integrating. Technology is concerned with man's world, and therefore its aim is to have integrated social reality. The integration that it attempts is social. Indian culture is spiritualistic and the integrations that it values is self-integration. Thus, it can be argued that it is not proper to say that Indian culture is far removed from the technological ways of the modern times. Margaret Chatterjee observes, "India has her own scientific traditions without which the people could not have survived over centuries and of which we have evidence today, for example, in indigenous systems of medicine which have a long ancestry.

Here we can make an attempt to demonstrate that Indian cultural values can be relevant for the technological society. Philosophers and social scientists have spoken about the negative effects of technology. Technological society is characterized as full of environmental pollution, deterioration of the quality of life, threat to the beauty and balance of nature and ecological imbalances are cited as examples of the negative effects of technological society. But we are here concerned with the technological effects at the level of human sensibility, because it is at that level that Indian culture can be relevant. Technology persistently causes

alienation and estrangement. It upsets the established order and uproots man from his moorings. This is apparent also in developing countries like India where lure of industrialization, urbanization and computerization have upset the life-styles of the Indian society. It has led to the disappearance of privacy and of personal human relationship. Technology is causing social and psychological tension. The life is becoming more and more mechanized. The man has lost zest for living. Man creates technology but in course of time man becomes dependent on technology. When technology is controlled and utilized by man for social well-being then, it is useful. But when technology becomes, the master of man then it is bad. There is need to overcome the sense of being overwhelmed by technology. Here Indian culture can be of great help. Indian culture can help man to get rid of dehumanization. Indian culture being spiritual in nature attempts to shift its importance from technique to man.

In technological society, man leads a mechanical life. Man is under bondage of technology. The negative effect of technological society is a sense of estrangement. Technology has taken away from human being his sense of humanness. Technological society does not know how to get rid of dehumanization, Swadeshi culture can save humanity from estrangement and dehumanization. The life becomes meaningless in the wake of mechanical life style. The Swadeshi culture can give meaning to human life by sublimating man's existence to higher plane. The integral cultures of India can establish harmony between ontological and secular and otherworldly and this worldly notions of values. I think that the integral Philosophy of India presupposes interface of Swadeshi culture and technology in the post-modern society.

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