

## PHILOSOPHY, DEVELOPMENT AND NATIONAL CRISIS\*

I am thankful to Professor R. Balasubramanian and the organising committee for inviting me to preside over the inauguration of this year's session of the Indian Philosophical Congress. Started by Professors S. Radhakrishnan, A. R. Wadia and others over half a century ago, the congress has been providing a valuable forum for an annual coming together of teachers of philosophy in our universities and colleges, for interchange of ideas and mutually acquainting themselves with what is being done in this country in the different areas of their subject. I am glad this session on the eve of a new decade - the 1980s - is meeting under the auspices of the Institute of Advanced Study in Philosophy of one of our oldest and premier universities, which has for a little over a quarter century done splendid work in translating and loyally expounding Advaita Vedanta and Saiva Siddhanta classics of unmatched profundity and lasting value. May I share with you all the hope that under Professor Balasubramanian's leadership this Institute will now march ahead devoting itself to a critical and comparative evaluation and constructive development of the seminal philosophical ideas in these ancient systems, which have a great deal to contribute to the techniques of the soul?

### I

I may be permitted to utilise this occasion for briefly expressing my views on a couple of problems which are of momentous contemporary importance to the people of this country, - problems on which philosophy can shed much light, to which it can possibly suggest alternate solutions, if it takes the help of other humanistic, social and natural sciences, and to which these latter appear incapable of providing effective solutions when not inspired by it.

A philosophy of this sort cannot be what Schopenhauer called "professors' philosophy by philosophy-professors", but an actual and effective philosophy which grasps the great facts of the time

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and understands and affects present-day life in its inmost depths. It must be aware of the predicaments, protests and aspirations of humanity. An exclusive study and exposition of past wisdom and transmission of it to present generation, an imitative continuation of what is thought and said elsewhere, or repetitive technical and specialised work interlinking abstract ideas or analysing ordinary language, cannot make us conscious of our present condition nor articulate an authentic idiom of *our* social and political existence. Philosophy must spring from our individuality, which is spiritual<sup>1</sup> as well as corporeal, and from our culture, which is social, political and economic. It must not be confined to a realm of its own, but take into account matters of public concern. Nourished by tradition, made productive by new insights, discoveries and investigations, while it may find justification for some of the components of a tradition or features of existing institutions, it should outline alternative futuristics, formulate new patterns of thought and conduct and inspire new endeavours. Making everyday life and experience meaningful, it must make our efforts as individual and social beings more fruitful. Philosophy must become an important element of society and state and in alliance with other sciences capable of laying down the norms and rules by which they may be directed, if they so choose. The unfortunate separation of philosophy from practical problems should be abolished and a connection established between the speculative theoretical and the methodological investigations and concrete tasks of personal, political and economic development. A purposeful quest in practical politics and economics for the good life and a better society is impossible without a theoretical generalisation of the tremendous problems with which concrete reality confronts us and a theoretical concept of the right ordering of society. Democracy, wrote De Tocqueville, cannot endure without a religion and philosophy; and not only Marx and Lenin, but also Dewey have asserted that there cannot be social reconstruction without a philosophy guiding it. Contemporary India is without praxiology<sup>1</sup> based upon philosophy. That is our failure.

A political and social role for philosophy is not alien to Indian tradition. Vyāsa not only effectively intervened a number of times in the higher politics of kauravas and pandavas, but

bequeathed to us sādharma Dharma and Rāja Dharma along with mokṣa Dharma. The foremost Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna did not isolate himself meditating on Emptiness, but wrote the *Suḥr̥lekḥā* and *Ratnāvalī* to guide the Sātavāhana emperor, and was his practical adviser too. The Jaina philosopher Hemacandra influenced the powerful Chaulukyan king Jayasimha, and was his successor Kumarapala's spiritual and political guide. It is said his influence on politics "may still be indirectly felt in India to the present day". Vidyāranya, head of a monastic establishment and one of the most brilliant exponents of Advaita Vedanta, inspired two reconverts from Islam to Hinduism to establish the kingdom of Vijayanagar. These three—Buddhist, Jaina and Hindu—while being metaphysicians and writers on moral philosophy used to give practical directions to kings on matters of state. Like them, a philosopher to have an authentic standing in actual life must deal with the problems of the time, apprehend economic, social and political realities and must seek to influence society through acts or ideas; they must at least make clarificatory, if not profound and far seeing, pronouncements on important questions of the day.

## II

The most important question for independent India was identified by its two greatest leaders twentyfour years ago. On November 13, 1945 Gandhi wrote to Nehru: "The real question, according to you is how to bring about man's highest intellectual, economic, political and moral development. I agree. In this there should be an equal right and opportunity for all". Yet, a multidisciplinary approach inspired by philosophy has not so far been made to tackle the problem of an integral development of man and society in India. The reasons for this are two.

First, although political economy was considered by J. S. Mill, "a fragment of a greater whole, a branch of social philosophy interlinked with all the other branches", and by Nassau Senior, its first professor at Oxford, as one of the moral sciences, very soon it not only separated itself from politics and ceased to be a branch of social philosophy or one of the moral sciences, but became independent and usurped the rest of the social sciences, as Edward Copleston, Provost of Oriel College, feared it would when

it was admitted into Oxford's curriculum. Within a hundred years a stage was reached when a leading economist J. M. Keynes could declare in 1930 that economic necessity compels us to value means above ends and prefer the useful to the good, to pretend that "fair is foul and foul is fair", for "foul is useful and fair is not", and to have avarice, usury and precaution as our gods for another hundred years. According to Keynes' prognostication only about 2030 A. D., when he expected everybody to be rich, there could be a return to religion and traditional virtue and once more a valuation of ends above means and preference of the good to the useful<sup>2</sup>. While Keynes envisioned an utopia to be brought about by economic progress divorced from religion and morality, by 1972 when the first report of the Club of Rome was published, growth economics was replaced by scarcity economics and a doomsday syndrome and consequent apocalyptic hysteria manifested themselves. It is now realised that there would neither be utopia nor doomsday in the foreseeable future, and also that economics alone cannot provide a panacea to the world's troubles. E. H. Phelps Brown rightly pointed out that the contribution of economics in the last 25 years to the solution of the most pressing problems of the times has been small.<sup>3</sup> Once again it is seen, as it was by Adam Smith and Thorstein Veblen, that the primary human motives are not economic, but sociological. Economics can legitimately and usefully operate only within the framework of social and moral philosophy. While the central theme of Wassily Leontiff's report on development for the UN and Jacques Lesourne's report on the same subject for the OECD is that it is political and socio-economic constraints, not physical scarcities, which will limit the prospects of growth in the next half century, it is encouraging that the more recent latter report gives a lot of space to "Values" and thinks it is possible that "post-materialist" choices may gain ascendancy over "materialist" options. The sense of belonging to, self-esteem and self-realisation may prevail over the desire to always consume more and more. But the Indian State has so far exclusively based its planning on economics and has sought economic growth. It has ignored philosophers totally, and has been only dimly aware of the possibility of utilisation of social scientists other than economists and statisticians for purposes of planning. Indian philosophers by not concerning themselves with public affairs have caused others to

believe that philosophy has nothing to do with social and national life. Both must see that war and peace, equality and justice, freedom, social and political institutions, revolution and science raise philosophical issues. Philosophy must challenge the assumptions and goals of planning and formulate them afresh, while economics and statistics must realise that development involves philosophical questions like "What is the good life? What is the just society?" Only philosophy in close cooperation with other social sciences, science and technology can successfully plan for and achieve integral development. Every development planning team, as the economist Benjamin Higgins wrote, should include a philosopher. "Without a clear concept of the philosophy of development, the team becomes a simple *ad hoc* mission"<sup>4</sup>. But a philosopher without a broad acquaintance with other branches of knowledge and with concrete realities and without a desire to improve human living conditions, will have no role to play in such a team.

Second, the earlier prevalent conceptions of development were exclusively dominated by an economic and statistical approach.

(i) Development was considered to be synonymous with economic growth based on a comparison of the GNP per capita of a country with that of a highly developed country. The concentration was on rapid growth and maximization of output. But this resulted in the stagnation of the incomes of the great majority of people, an appreciable improvement in the income of the most privileged social groups and the marginalisation of the masses. Nor was the gap in GNP reduced. For example, in 1972 the GNP per capita in USA was 5,590 and in 1977 it was 8,550 while in India in 1972 it was 110, and in 1977 it was 150. In 1977 after so many years of planning, among the 37 LICs of the World India occupied the 22nd place, only 15 countries were poorer than India. In the foreseeable future its GNP will not come anywhere near either the GNP of the industrialised countries (whose average GNP in 1977 was 6,980) or of the centrally planned economics (whose average GNP in 1977 was 1160) and one cannot even guess when, if at all, unemployment in India will drastically come down, for at the end of 1978 there were 126.78 lakhs registered unemployed. Yet, the report of

the Pearson Commission on International Development ( 1969 ) and the World Bank's World Development Report ( 1979 ) prescribe more or less the same strategies : agricultural and industrial growth, exports, and population control. The latter report has one new point viz. emphasis on improving performance in rural economy as the key to rapid employment expansion and swifter alleviation of poverty. But these cannot abolish the gross inequality and absolute poverty in LICs. An extroverted, mechanistic, neo malthusian growth based on statistics cannot remove these evils.

(ii) This leads us to what may be termed the human resources approach which places equal emphasis on the maximization of output as well as of employment. It seeks a strategy which would increase output by utilizing the unemployed and under-employed more effectively and which would develop human resources along with urban and rural sectors. Human resources development is conceived as preparation of a labour force, non-formal education and increase in rural oriented programmes. This means training a greater number and variety of workers in more diversified programmes and stimulating employment in hitherto neglected sectors. This too is development towards a cash economy wherein work role is the key to individual status and participation in the goods of society. It is an essentially economic approach, and employment creation is an economic criterion like the GNP growth. Total employment in a vast LIC would mean non or under utilization of technologies and economics of scale essential for success in international competitive markets. Only the latest technologies could generate the production and income which would create jobs for all.

But such technologies are less labour-intensive and highly expensive. How can a LIC afford them? Besides, such technologies and proper work-organization can produce more than is needed by all. So, why create more and more jobs instead of rearranging society so that all may share what can thus be produced, if at all a LIC can manage to afford the latest technologies and adopt proper work-organization methods ?

(iii) At last in 1970 the UN International Development Strategy for the II UN Development Decade proclaimed that "the ultimate purpose of development is to provide increasing

opportunities to all people for a better life. ——— Qualitative and structural changes in society must go hand in hand with rapid economic growth." It perceived that both social justice and productive efficiency required equitable distribution of income and wealth within a nation and among nations. This conception makes a progress over the other two, as it gives importance to equalisation, for just as liberty was the great moral imperative in the 19th century, in our time it is equality. Its added merit is that it recognises the importance of quality of life. This approach is almost the antithesis of the first. The first enjoined concentration on growth hoping that equitable income distribution would somehow follow, while this enjoins concentration on equitable distribution in development hoping that obstacles to rapid growth will be overcome gradually. Though certainly a more humane approach, it is not radical enough; because it does not appear to grasp the cause of underdevelopment.

(iv) The world Development Report (1979) of the World Bank states that "the economic health of the industrial countries is a key determinant of the growth prospects of developing nations", because the former are the principal markets for the exports of the latter and the main suppliers of external capital and technology for the latter (p. 4). So, the Report admits, the progress of developing countries *partly* depends on the international climate for world output trade and capital flows (p. 113) but others have shown that the former *mostly* if not wholly, depends on the latter. This means the economy of one group of countries conditions the development and expansion of another; there is, in other words, a relationship of interdependence among the countries of the world such that while some develop, others can only reflect their expansion. Underdevelopment has been produced by the dependence (not only economic, but political, intellectual and technological) of some dominated countries on the dominating countries, which exercise domination over the former directly or indirectly. Some Latin American thinkers were perhaps the first to recognise this fact.

Celso Furtado, a leading economist of South America, thinks underdevelopment was the result of "the technical processes and the international division of labor commanded by the smaller number of societies that espoused the Industrial Revolution of

19th century." Thus development and underdevelopment are the two aspects of the same historical process involving the creation and spread of technology. This way of thinking pleads for an autonomous development process in the underdeveloped countries. Its "primary motivating factors" would be: "technical progress—capital accumulation — structural modifications due to demand and profile changes". A reverse of this sequence would constitute a dependent development process. As technical progress "is principally a matter of the quality of the available human factors," "the developmental level of a country is a function of the sum total of the investments made in human factors." So, according to Furtado, "the point of departure of the study of development should----- rather (be) the horizon of aspirations of the society in question."<sup>5</sup> This presupposes a philosophy which denies the right and destiny of a group or people to impose their domination over others, and affirms the right of all to liberation from domination, and self-determination. It expresses human solidarity of individuals as well as of people with one another, and affirms the complete and concrete living man.

J.F. Leuret put it beautifully : Development is thus a progress from a less human to a more human condition, and to have more in order to be more. (c. p. "Populorum Progressio") This is implied in Marx's idea in this *Mss.* that man is to be defined by what he is and not by what he has; and it can be traced to Hegel. As another French writer expressed, development is mental and social change which is achieved to the extent it prepares the way for reciprocity of consciousness through reciprocity of services (Francois Perroux). Influenced by Marxist and Existentialist thought ( especially Sartre, Fanon and Memmi), S. S. Adotevi has defined development as "a stage in the unending creation of mankind by man. As such, it is intimately linked with every aspect of human activity, from economic growth to man's interpretation of life and his value judgements."<sup>6</sup> Considering the basic cause of underdevelopment to be cultural alienation, Adotevi thinks cultural and national rebirth to be essential for development.

To sum up, morality must enter into the process of development; it is inappropriate to stop with the positing of goals, leave it to the politicians and planners to achieve them, and then pass judgements on the means by which they seek to achieve them.



Choices and strategies relating to development must be determined by our conception of values. We must plan for real well-being and not prepare or perpetuate what Paul Ricoeur called an "inhuman design for quantitative well-being." All this is not profoundly original. Fiftyfive years back, L. T. Hobhouse defined "social development as the development of men in their mutual relations.", identified it with ethical development, and described it as "advancing fulfilment".<sup>7</sup> One of the greatest anthropologists of our time, Claude Levi-Strauss, has observed that in India because of the non-availability of the basic conditions of life and the tremendous inequality which prevails, the human dimension has been destroyed and there is a permanent repudiation of the concept of human relations.<sup>8</sup> It should be our task to find out whether this is a fact, if so to what extent, and suggest a remedy if necessary. In the words of an ancient Indian text development should be : *prāṇa-ārāmam, mana-ānandam, śānti-samṛddham* (fulness of life, bliss of mind, and plentitude of peace). Let contemporary Indian Philosophy clarify these concepts and suggest ways of realising these ideals in life.

### III

Visitors to ancient India from Megasthenes through Fa-hien and I-tsing to Hsuan-tsang found much in Indian life, thought, character and institutions, which they liked, admired and praised; and certain aspects of these commended themselves to visitors to medieval India such as Alberuni, Bernier, Tavernier, Ibn Bātuta, Abdur Razzak, Varthema and Nuniz. But visitors to contemporary India like Levi-Strauss, Arthur Koestler, Ronald Segal, V. S. Naipaul, David Selbourne and Gunter Grass return back with more or less disgust and contempt. While Naipaul's condemnation of present-day Indian civilization as a "wounded" one, because it is, according to him, intellectually benighted, spiritually decadent and artistically imitative, is, of course, a grossly intemperate and unjust exaggeration regarding the civilization of a country which occupies in the world the first place in intelligence, the third in scientific and engineering manpower, the fourth in atomic energy and the tenth in the industrial front,<sup>9</sup> why is it that every critically observant and informed foreign intellectual goes back from India today with a low opin-

ion of its economic, political order and peoples' character and with the belief that its future is uncertain and perhaps hopeless? Can it be attributed to prejudice? On the other hand, has any Indian visitor of the same sort to Europe, America, the Soviet Union, China or Japan, returned back with a similar feeling of disgust and contempt and a sense of hopelessness regarding any of those countries? If not, what is the reason for it? Is it just colonial mentality, inferiority complex, or some other subjective feeling?

In 1965 appeared Ronald Segal's *The Crisis of India* in which he forecast a terrifying future for India. A few days ago one of our most perceptive journalists (Dr. G. K. Reddy) wrote about the present Indian crisis which, according to him, contained all the elements of a crisis of character, of purpose and of confidence, and which defied a precise definition because "it is largely a surface phenomenon of declining values in a politically permissive atmosphere".<sup>10</sup> If a "crisis" is defined as a situation the contradictions and incongruities of which cannot be resolved without bringing about changes which will lead to a new type of social order, it is not surprising that India has been in a "crisis" for quite a long time. It will not be resolved till a new type of social order arises. But as one of our most distinguished economists, Professor D. T. Lakadwala, pointed out, "at this time we seem to have a paralysis of national will and do not seem prepared to pull ourselves out of the depressing situation"<sup>11</sup>. Nothing short of total national regeneration can resolve this crisis.

On August 14 this year a high dignity expressed deep concern at the stresses and strains to which the "noble ideals of morality and conduct in public life have been subjected in recent times," and regretted that "never before had principles been compromised and basic values of life threatened with such contempt." On December 14 he pontificated in a broadcast: "Let us rise above petty considerations and bear in mind that in the ultimate analysis national interest is above everything else----- Let us subordinate short term gains to our long term national interest." On November 30, another high dignitary voiced his "disgust" with "the happenings in the country" and announced: "The country is sunk. We have to salvage it." Now let us not ask to what

extent these very important persons themselves have risen above the considerations of caste, community and region and have set worthy examples to others, remembering the Upaniṣadic admonition that only the irreproachable actions (anavadyāni karmāni), the good deeds (sucaritāni), of elders are to be revered and practised and not the others. An ailing physician may diagnose rightly and prescribe the proper medicine; and one's practice need not necessarily conform to one's good precepts. In this case the analysis of the situation by these VIPs appears to be correct and the country can be 'salvaged' only by following their sound advice, viz., putting national interest above everything else. This can be done only when to use Confucian idiom—virtue is renovated.

Now ours, unfortunately, is a soft state, a Kleptocratic society and a chrematistic culture. These have to be transformed. It is the task of moral and social philosophy to find the way or ways for doing this. Some of the ways already suggested may be briefly mentioned.

(i) As Simone Weil wrote, it would not be sufficient to merely direct the people towards the good, they have to be provided with necessary motives for realising it. Otherwise it would be like lighting an oil lamp without putting oil into it. "A method for breathing inspiration into a people" has to be found if a nation has to be regenerated. Motives for effective action must be created through an educational method inspired by the conception of a certain form of human perfection. The unique source of salvation and greatness for a nation lies, according to her, in regaining contact with its genius in the depths of its distress. A true conception of greatness, a proper sentiment of justice, devaluation of money and religious inspiration would lead us to a worthy conception of human perfection. For this one must have the strongest possible roots in the wide universe and this would be possible when the spiritual nature of work is realised, and this in turn is possible if one is rooted really, actively and naturally in the life of a community<sup>12</sup> (ii) Sir Richard Livingstone thought virtue can be inculcated through moral education, which is "impossible without the habitual vision of greatness" (Whitehead) which we find in the Bible, literature and history; but then, he added, virtue is to be acquired only by practising it

(Aristotle). (iii) While Kant equated being moral with being a rational and free being who follows rules in a rational discriminating manner, Hegel believed that man could be made moral by making spiritual nature habitual, which, for him, meant renunciation of oneself and doing obedient service to the social whole. In recent years R. S. Peters took over the Kantian idea and discussed how to develop an autonomous type of character by initiation into the traditions of traditional thought, and Scheffer discussed how to achieve person modification (his jargon for personal transformation) by getting one to behave according to norms. (iv) Here the question which Myrdal raised is relevant can there be intellectual and moral conversion—a change in attitudes—without changing social institutions? He thinks this is the basic dilemma and challenge of Indian politics. It may be recalled that while Gandhi thought that the individual's internal transformation and his moral and spiritual improvement should come first and that thereby the social environment could be changed, Nehru held that the social environment must first be changed and that only then can the moral man be achieved. Consequently Gandhi spoke of non-violent conversion and Nehru of coercion.<sup>13</sup> Schweitzer's ideas are closer to Gandhi's. Ethical and spiritual progress must only be an internal process; institutions and science can not contribute to them. The individual is the sole agent for restoration of civilization. Individuals must think independently, produce new spiritual-ethical ideas and work for their diffusion. When unobtrusive general changes take place in the dispositions of many individuals and thereby a new tone of mind comes into being in them, Schweitzer thinks, it will gradually influence the collective. Free, thinking men can be the pioneers of progress; they should, he says, think out ideals, then fit them to the realities of life in such a way they influence most effectively the circumstances of the time.

(v) P. A. Sorokin carried on a good deal of research and bestowed much thought on the moral transformation of man and man-made universe. This can be achieved, he concluded, by changing human egos, values and group affiliations, and by control of the conscious and unconscious biological drives by adaptation of the techniques of (a) Yoga, (b) Christian monasticism and (c) secular brotherhood communities or altruistic groups.

He has his own practical plan to realize the ideal of pacified humanity, as a number of others have. (vi) Most drastic and innovative of all is the behavioural technology of B. F. Skinner. This consists in conditioning the human being who is now free to be aggressive, immoral and destructive. When appropriately conditioned he would be free only to love, care, and be sympathetic and compassionate; and the capacities for these are his natural endowment, his genetic inheritance. Skinner thinks it is possible and desirable to design a new world and new culture. This, of course, is possible only by replacing human freedom with benevolent control over man, his conduct and his environment. Such a world may not be liked by us, but it will be by those who live in it.<sup>14</sup> In addition to modification of environment, this way of thinking finds nothing wrong in physically and chemically intervening into the central nervous system in order to transform a human being into one who is only capable of being good. Whether behavioural technology is possible on a large-scale and whether it is desirable and moral,—these are again questions which philosophy must tackle.

The question whether moral education is of any use in our society deserves discussion. Knowledge of moral rules of conduct does not entail their being followed; only in authoritarian societies where they are strictly enforced their knowledge is effective. Only by participation in social life and work can moral traits be acquired; and the only effective way of moral instruction is to learn by living. This the view of Dewey and Froebel, almost similar to the Aristotelean view already mentioned. Studies by Hartshorne and May, Havinghurst and others and Hendry showed that there was little correlation between moral education and moral behaviour; and Kohlberge's investigation makes it doubtful whether moral character can be instilled as a good habit by training. What then is the solution? I have indicated these various issues to show that it is possible for us to engage ourselves in new lines of work which are of great relevance in solving the present national crisis.

I am delighted this session of our Congress is being presided by professor S. S. Barlingay. He has made important contributions to logic, social philosophy and analysis of concepts, and has endeavoured to be a Gandhian not only in theory but in life. He

has helped in establishing and running peoples' colleges in the old Nizam's state, and has the great distinction of building up the philosophy department of Poona University as the leading one in Western India. Undoubtedly he is one of our most eminent colleagues. Under his presidency this session should prove to be a highly successful one.

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#### NOTES

1. "a general theory of efficient action"
2. Keynes, "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren" (1930), in *Essays in Persuasion* (1932).
3. Presidential Address to the Royal Economic Society,
4. **Economic Development, Problems, Principles and Policies** (1968), p. 369.
5. **Obstacles to Development in Latin America**, New York, 1970. pp. XVI, 139, 197, 136.  
Some theorists of dependence advocate gradual disengagement of underdeveloped countries from the world market which, in their view, is the real obstacle to development. But this seems to be an impractical solution.
6. **A Critical Look at Development - Some Young People's Views**, Unesco' 1973. Adotevi is e Dahomian sociologist and man of letters.
7. **Social Development**, London, 1924, pp. 76, 89, 87
8. **Tristes Tropiques**, Penguins, 1976, pp. 183, 174, 171.
9. This was the position in May 1978.
10. **The Hindu**, December 2, 1979.
11. Shri Ram Memorial Lecture, December 13, 1979.
12. **The Need for Roots**, Boston, 1955.
13. J. Nehru, **An Autobiograpoy**, London, 1958, pp. 521-3-551.
14. **Beyond Freedom and Dignity**, 1971.