

*THE EMERGENCY—THE WAY OUT

It is indeed presumptuous on my part to write on the Emergency : I am so far away from the centre of things. However, to be far away from the centre of things need not be a disadvantage. And though I have views different from those generally held in certain circles, in conversations with individuals and groups, I have been able to provoke discussion and thought, and sometimes even a certain degree of persuasion. It is these factors that have made me bold enough to put in writing my understanding of the Emergency.

(1) Some general considerations :

The understanding of the pre-Emergency situation, the Emergency situation, the continuation and development of the Emergency and the end of the Emergency are interrelated and not only in one direction. Not only does the past enable us to understand the present and the future, but the developments in the future have a bearing on our understanding of the past and also the reality of the past. If so, the way we develop the future is important in deciding what we shall make of the situation from the pre-Emergency period to the end of the Emergency.

(2) The Pre-Emergency situation :

All the sections of the society — the businessmen, the bureaucrats, the professionals, the politicians (the Prime Minister also was aware of this, and even if she wanted to do something about it, could not do anything about it; or did not know what to do about it) and the people — were corrupt. In fact with corruption went affluence and honour; and with honesty, hardship and ridicule. Every section wanted some other section to be honest. No section dared to be uncorrupt first lest it should lose its power and position.

However, the pressure of circumstances had created a situation in which the system could not absorb the ever increasing numbers of new entrants to the system. This development

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presented a two-fold opportunity; an opportunity for understanding; an opportunity for action. The development of the situation to the breaking point crystallises the situation and makes it less difficult to identify the roots of the trouble. The development also gave an opportunity for mobilisation of discontent and action. However, understanding and action need not go together. Those who understand need not act; and those who act may have wrong understanding, or may have no understanding. If action is without true understanding; it will be, whatever one's intentions, merely fishing in troubled waters; and it is very unlikely that it will bring about improvement. It may happen, though that its unintended consequences may be improvement or a serious worsening of the situation. And this is what happened in the context of our pre-Emergency situation.

(3) The mobilisation of discontent :

The situation was understood as one of corruption in high places spreading downwards to all levels and in all aspects of life. It was not asked why there was corruption in all places, or if it was asked, the answer was perceived to lie in the corrupt persons in high places. The problem therefore, was to remove the corrupt persons from high places; and replace them by honest people. (It was forgotten that many of the corrupt people today were honest at one time, and therefore it was not asked: how long will the new people remain honest ?) The temptation to make the best of the opportunity to mobilise the discontent was so great, that a consideration of these questions was thought to be unnecessary. And, therefore, the opportunity was seized to mobilise the discontent. This is what J. P. did, and with his prestige and personality he was to mobilise the discontent. The mobilisation having been achieved, it did not produce the desired result. Along with other factors, it only brought on the emergency. Even if it was not clear then, it should be clear now that the movement was wrong both in practice and theory.

(4) The causes of the failure :

(i) The practical aspect :

Whatever the subjective sincerity and honesty of some of the leaders of the movement (and some of them indisputably had these,) in terms of public morality they did not know what was

needed to fight corruption. First, in order to ask others to be uncorrupt, one should make oneself uncorrupt in some way. Second, the demand to make oneself uncorrupt should not demand too much; it should be a demand which many could fulfil, for example, the demand to give up one's bogus ration units; the demand to give up one's foreign watches. This sort of thing would create a mass awareness and a climate which would lead on to further developments. Instead, the leaders of the movement, J. P. among them, were very eager to get results and they accepted whatever kind of support they could get without examining its bonafides.

(ii) The theoretical aspect

However, the greater failure was in understanding the basis of corruption - that the society had lost consciousness of even the minimum objectives of its many institutions - educational, economic and social. In this situation, it is not easy to distinguish between what is corrupt and what is uncorrupt: Anything could be presented as corrupt or as uncorrupt according to one's interests and inclinations. For example, one might argue that one should select a teacher with high sophistication and the latest information, and on the other hand one might argue that such sophistication would be frustrating both to the teacher and the students. Thus, it was not the objectives of the institutions that provided the frame work within which selfinterest was sought rather the self interest conceived in the narrow and immediate sense was the frame work; and the objectives of the institutions had only a nominal place, or at best, a marginal place.

(iii) On account of the foregoing factors, the movement became an agitation with no power to improve, but a great power to disrupt. This provided the authorities with considerable justification for drastically dealing with the situation.

(5) The Emergency :

(i) Apart from the judgement of the Allahabad High Court there was sufficient justification for the declaration of Emergency. The judgement of the Allahabad High Court greatly increased the power of the agitation to disrupt, and made it imperative in the interests of the State and the Society as a whole. This judgement

is independent of the motive of the Prime Minister in declaring the Emergency (One's judgement of the motives of the PM will depend on several factors.) To serve her own interests could have been the sole or the main motive of the Prime Minister. Equally well, her sole or main motive could have been to secure the interests of the State and the Society. Very likely, both these motives were present, not merely existing side by side but organically interconnected in a complex way. Surely, the theoretical or the practical political point of the debate is considerably limited.

(ii) But what right did the Prime Minister have to declare the Emergency, if she was herself a part of the corrupt system and perhaps its leader? (At least, she could not prevent corruption.) But who or what provides such a right? The right was provided by the readiness to seize the opportunity; or rather, to make situation into an opportunity and the acceptance of all the risks that go along with it; and by the fact that there was no one else ready to seize the opportunity or to accept the risks.

(iii) This right was further strengthened by the enunciation of the twenty-point programme. It is true that it was not something very new. What was new was that the programme mobilised attention on some of the minimum objectives the society should attain. Also, the machinery of the State and, to a small extent of the party was set in motion towards the fulfilment of the programme. Thus the Emergency, the use of force, focussed attention on the minimum objectives of the Society, and met a need which the agitation against corruption failed to meet by creating a moral awareness of these minimum objectives.

(iv) As part of the twenty-point programme, measures have been taken which have brought about very welcome relief, welcome to almost all sections of society (the most important exception being the intellectuals); and worthwhile results have followed in the economic and the social fields.

6 A. The objections to the Emergency or the Problems of the Emergency.

However, the welcome to the Emergency is not universal, and objections have been raised to it on several grounds.

(i) On the ground of the negation of democracy.

The most serious objection to the Emergency has been that it has meant the suspension of fundamental rights, the negation of democracy. But this objection should not be accepted at its face-value; it needs to be examined. The fundamental rights never functioned as democratic rights — the right to participate in the articulation of the consciousness of the society, and thus to help in the formulation of the policies of the state and other institutions and to give direction to them. This was done, if at all, marginally. Rather, the fundamental rights were used to guard the interests, at best of the fifty millions as against the interests of the 550 millions; that is to guard the interests of those who were benefitting from the system, from the conspiracy. The elite of this country — the intellectuals, the administrators, the executives, the businessmen, the industrialists, and the politicians — have salvaged their conscience by speaking about the poor of the country, and have feathered their nest by framing policies which do not keep the poor of this country even remotely in mind. This is the system and the conspiracy. Consider the developments in various fields like education, agriculture, transport, industry housing and this should become very clear. Whatever might or might not have been the subjective intentions, objectively the fundamental rights functioned as a cover for the interests of the few. There is no reason to believe that the restoration of these rights will lead to any different results — this is said not to advocate a long or permanent suspension of the rights, but to point out that the way out of the Emergency is not through the restoration of the fundamental rights.

(ii) On the ground of deleterious effects.

The Prime Minister was brought up in a certain tradition, and therefore, she may not have dictatorial intentions; but the country may not be in such a happy position on future occasion. Other parties and their leaders may use this precedent to establish dictatorial governments. The effect of the Emergency on the younger generation is also likely to produce similar trends.

(iii) On the grounds of the misuse of the Emergency.

There is a grave danger that the emergency will be misused to settle the personal scores, prejudices and conflicts. This is not

only a danger, but actuality, and one can argue only about its extent.

(6) B. Considering the objections.

(i) To answer the second objection first, one must clarify and understand the circumstances which led to the declaration of the Emergency. There was an absence of consciousness of the minimum objectives of the society. Only the existence of such or similar conditions would justify the imposition of such restrictions—not only now, but also in the future. This must be clearly understood and emphasised. (The possible misuse of antibiotics should not prevent us from using them when the real need has arisen.)

(ii) Fundamental rights can function democratically only within a framework of objectives for the various institutions, even a framework of competing objectives. When that does not exist by tradition or reflection, the fundamental rights become the instruments of the self-interest of a small minority

(iii) There can be no doubt about the need to minimise the misuse of the emergency powers for settling personal scores, etc. and means must be devised to attain that purpose.

(6) C. The real objection

If the imposition of emergency is justified if the risks of the impositions of the emergency are less than the risks of not imposing the emergency—then the objections we have considered are not good objections. The real objection to Emergency could be to the manner of its operation. If its operation makes it more necessary, then its operation is objectionable. If its operation makes it less necessary, then it is not objectionable. To make the emergency unnecessary, it is enough that the programme of the Emergency be fulfilled; it is much more important that the people should be involved in the fulfilment of the programme and become conscious of, besides their personal ends, the objectives of institutions.

In so far as its operation is fundamentally based on the bureaucracy and the police, the people will have to accept their authority and force will determine the objectives of the society and the social institutions. This will not develop the moral aware-

ness of the society; and so the Emergency will continue to be necessary. If this is not to happen, ways and means have to be found to associate the people with the fulfilment of the programme and the formulation of the objectives of the society and the social institutions. This will impose on people the discipline of the objectives, and not of the authority of the bureaucracy or the police. This will put the various sections of the society to the test regarding their sincerity in transforming the system. How is this to be brought about ?

(7) How to make the Emergency unnecessary ?

(i) Association of the people in the enforcement of the Emergency :

There must be ways in which people can take an active part in the enforcement of the emergency situation and the achievement of the objectives of the emergency situation. This would mean the undertaking of such voluntary programmes as the surrender of bogus ration units; the boycott of smuggled goods; the prevention of waste say in hostels; the development of right attitudes towards social and economic offenders; the social disapproval of large families and so on. It would also mean the devising of ways and means by which a check could be exercised also on the malpractices in the very enforcement of the emergency — letting people off or letting them off lightly for financial or other considerations; as also continuing the corrupt practices that have existed so far. He would indeed be bold who could say that these have disappeared, or even that they will disappear in course of time. Nonetheless, these need to be checked.

(ii) The need for formulation of goals of other Institutions :

To create an awareness of the goals of institutions and to foster people's participation, it is necessary to formulate programmes of educational, economic transport and other institutions with reference to the minimum objectives they should attain (just as the twenty-point programme has done in economic matters for the State). The reasons for emphasising the minimum objectives are —

- (a) That even the awareness that institutions have objective has been lost,**

- (b) There will be some agreement about the minimum objectives, and
- (c) The attainment of these objectives will lay the foundations of these institutions for further development. For example, in the case of education, instead of formulating the ideal objectives; it would be worth while to formulate minimum objectives; say, a limited determined attempt to make our problems the content of our education. (This has to be distinguished from making only *our* data the content of "*their*" problems)

(iii) The difficulties

However, there are difficulties in bringing about the two results mentioned above in this section. I shall mention, what according to me are two important difficulties. One is that those who are enjoying the powers of the Emergency, may deny participation to the people for one reason or another. But in the final analysis it will be for the perpetuation of the Emergency or the perpetuation of their own power. And it is this that is the real and the most serious misuse of the Emergency, and not the misuse involved in settling personal scores.

The other important difficulty is on account of the attitude of the intellectuals. The intellectualist understanding of the Emergency is negative; and according to them nothing much can be done unless the fundamental rights are restored, elections take place (may be under new constitutional safeguards) and the situation is normalised. Until such time as this takes place, the only thing that they are prepared to do is to grumble. But to think that this is the way out of the emergency, as I have tried to say, is a misunderstanding. It is a noncommittal response seeking to have advantage of both the worlds—opposing supporting. In reality it is neither, and is likely to lead to confusion and disaster. It is the surest way to either military dictatorship or chaos or both.

What is more, the intellectuals must realise what they owe to the society something more than grumbling. In all honesty, they should either oppose the emergency or support it. If they want to follow the former course, they must begin their planning though I think it is unlikely that they would succeed in getting

any mass support. If they want to support the Emergency, then they must turn the twenty-point programme into a people's programme. Whichever of these two courses is adopted, it will clarify the situation. What are the issues the government is concerned with—its own power or the programme? What are the supporters of the government concerned with—the bandwagon or the programme? What are the critics of the government concerned with—slogans or the programme? This crystallisation will help the country to face its problems with purpose and confidence.

(8) The Programme

If I am right, then the most fruitful course, is to create a minimum programme in various fields and institutions. In this, the Sammelan of the Acharyas can play no small part.* And even in the implementation of the programme they have a role to play. By accepting this role, they can create a consciousness of the minimum objectives of institutions; they can restore the moral foundations of the community; they can help create a situation where the Emergency will have become unnecessary. Surely, this is the best way both of supporting and of defeating the Emergency. (For some further considerations on the programme Please see the appendix.)

9. Some general considerations once again :

The entire exercise of writing this paper presupposes that our problem is basically at the level of society and not at the level of the State. It is true that the state and the society are inseparably interrelated. However, it is also true that a community's ills may be primarily due either to the ills of the society or to the ills of the State. And our understanding also which is the primary factor will determine the remedy we seek. In my view, our ills are primarily not of the State; therefore, changes in the state machinery or its operations are not likely to meet the situation. In my view, our problems are primarily of the society. If this is so, the Emergency, which operates mainly on the state power, can meet the situation only for a very short period. For a more

* It was the consensus of the Acharyas that stimulated me to put down these thoughts on paper.

fundamental and long term change, the changes must be brought about with public support. If I am right, then the Acharyas and intellectuals have a very important role to play. The role they play will determine not only what the future will be but also what the past will be.

AN APPENDIX :

Some further remarks on method :

I am very conscious of the fact that I have not worked out a programme; and without a workable programme my whole argument is seriously affected. One reason I have not done so is that I cannot do so except perhaps in the field of education; only in the field of education, do I have an intimate knowledge to be able to give a programme. Here I shall give some main points of a programme in higher education, and work out a more detailed programme later on.

(i) The most fundamental problem in our education is to orient its content towards our problems. This does not mean giving Indian content to somebody else's problems. A true perception of our problems requires both an understanding of the present situation and an understanding of the future one is striving for. (It is important to point out that the understanding of the present and the understanding of the future are not independent but organically related and they mutually influence and even determine each other.)

(ii) About the future we are striving for there are two important questions :

(a) are we planning a future for 600 millions or for 16 millions ?

(b) are we envisaging the future inevitably in terms of the contemporary West or is there an alternative ? The answers to these two questions are not independent of each other.

(iii) Whatever the answers; orienting the content of our syllabi is not a mechanical problem, but a creative problem. One cannot order people to be creative, but one can facilitate creativity. This can be done by introducing at the post-graduate

level experimental courses directed towards attaining the orientation. Such experimentation should be with reference to only one or two subjects. This will mean flexibility in the planning and sanctioning of such courses.

(a) It is important to note the limited nature of the experiment. It is to be there only at the postgraduate level. It is not to be with reference to the entire course, but only one or two courses. The power to do good is in any case limited for many reasons; this approach reduces the almost unlimited power to do harm.

(b) If the thinking behind this proposal is right, in the absence of the right orientation, other proposals for reform either lose their point or become mere diversions and evasions; e. g. the proposals for the semester system, the examination system, the M. Phil. programme, the Multi-disciplinary and the interdisciplinary programme and so on. Thus the programme of orientation has to be limited in this sense also.

(c) Yet, this is only the beginning. The experiment could be expanded in two important directions. One, at the end of a year the teachers of courses that fall into a group should be brought together to discuss and plan out essays or a book. This makes material available even for our undergraduate courses. Two; when certain successes are gained; the number of experimental courses can be increased.

(d) It has the great merit that the orientation should not begin with a view to embarrass the government. In this situation of mutual loss of credibility, attempts have to be made so that credibility is re-established. Where this point is not borne in mind, there are bound to be misgivings about the practicability of any programme to involve people in a voluntary programme.

(iv) Even in the field of education, we have discussed here only one proposal to bring out some general features which it is necessary to keep in mind.

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