

Modernisation Without Westernisation



D.B.Thengadi

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SURUCHI PRAKASHAN

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This is based on a speech delivered by Shri Dattopant Thengadi, an eminent thinker and prominent labour-leader, at a seminar organised by Bharat Vikas Parishad, New Delhi, on August 13, 1983.

We will feel amply rewarded if this publication initiates a public debate on the important issue of 'Modernisation without Westernisation'.

Suruchi Prakashan

We in this country have instinctively realised that 'the cultural wealth to which we are natural heirs belongs to the whole humanity, that it is India's obligation to offer to others the benefits of her unique culture and to accept from others their best'. We always welcomed healthy trends in other cultures. We have been constantly engaged "in a rich give and take with other peoples". We have been always "interpreting one civilisation to the other" and trying to find out what is common between them. In their sub-conscious minds Hindus have always felt that human misery anywhere constitutes a threat to human happiness everywhere.

Indians : Temperamentally Internationalists

We have never been isolationists. From times immemorial we have been maintaining intimate contacts with different peoples and trying to build bridges of understanding and friendship with them. Even in the recent past Bharat has sent abroad its saints, scholars, soldiers, scientists, technocrats, artists, artisans, professionals, traders, industrialists, and labourers who have been working conscientiously with the same end in view,—as our unofficial cultural ambassadors. Temperamentally, we are internationalists. For us, there is no incompatibility between nationalism and internationalism. In the onward march of human consciousness, nationalism is

a bridge between tribalism and humanism which, in its turn, is a long step ahead in the direction of universalism.

Not Foreign Nationalism

But this universalism,—or, to be ‘of the earth, earthy,’ internationalism must be distinguished clearly from foreign nationalism, —from intellectual sub-servience to foreign countries and cultures, from national self-oblivion and mental slavery.

Presumption of Intellectuals

We are all aware how our intellectuals are enamoured of westernism. For them, everything western is standard, everything Hindu sub-standard. For them, Shakespeare is not a Kalidas of Great Britain, nor Napoleon a Samudragupta of Europe, but Sardar Patel is Bismarck of India. ‘Geeta’ must be a great book, because Emerson said so. The Shakta and Tantra cults may not be so contemptible, because Sir John Woodroffe is championing their cause. How can Narendra and Ravindra receive due recognition from us until their merit is first recognised by some western authorities? White-man’s lordship over others must be construed as a conclusive proof of his cultural Superiority. Who is singing glory of the golden period of Hindu history under the Guptas, or under the Shailendra empire in South-East Asia which stood as a powerful bulwark against Chinese expansion for seven centuries? These are all idle gossips,—cock-and-bull stories. It was the Europeans and not the Hindus who reached American shores first. All talk about the advance of Hindu sciences in the

past must be non-sensical; how can sciences flourish on the eastern side of Ural ? History was standing still till the inauguration of European Renaissance. Sanskrit is a dead language, Latin the source of all knowledge. The Western Theories regarding Aryan race,—the original inhabitants of India, and chronological order of Indian history, may be purely hypothetical; but none can challenge their veracity, since they are proclaimed by western scholars. How can you even compare Kautilya with Machiavelli and Hindu law-givers with the constitutional pundits of the West ? It is fantastic to claim that the insight furnished by Patanjali is superior to the combined wisdom of Freud, Jung and Adler. It is inconceivable that as a social philosopher Samarth Ramdas was far ahead of his European contemporaries, such as, Hobbes, Locke, Descartes, Leibnitz and Spinoza. For all maladies, remedies can be provided only by the west. For solution of our socio-economic or political problems, our intellectuals rush to seek help from western theories. They have nothing to learn from their own culture; they can no longer depend upon the brilliance of their own intellect. No theory can be correct unless it is certified to be so by some western authority. If they get disillusioned by one western theory they will, instead of using their own intellect, rush in search of some other western theory which they can catch hold of. They may accept that Marx as well as Adam Smith, J. S. Mill, Ricardo and Malthus have become outdated. They may be sceptic about the relevance of Alfred Marshall, Wickell, Gunnar Myrdal and Keynes to the present day conditions. But they will stubbornly refuse

to conduct independent thinking in the light of their own national requirements. Instead, they will feel homely with the five stages of Economic Growth enunciated by Prof. Rostow and get busy in discussing whether we have reached his third 'take-off stage' so as to pass over to his fourth "drive to maturity" leading to the stage of High Mass Consumption.

This tendency is the natural consequence of their presumption that Westernisation is Modernisation.

The Propriety

The time is now ripe to question the validity of this presumption.

Hence the propriety of this seminar on 'Modernisation without Westernisation'.

"The Letter Killeth..."

But before we proceed to the subject of the discussion, it is essential to define clearly the meaning of the terms 'modernisation' and 'westernisation'.

"If you want to talk with me", said Voltaire, "define your terms". For any meaningful dialogue, this is essential, particularly when the topic under discussion is technical and the people are in the habit of using words in a rather loose sense. For correct thinking it is necessary to free oneself from tyranny of popular words which are often used in a loose manner. The havoc played by wrong translation of the term 'religion' into Indian languages as 'Dharma' is a glaring example of this fact. 'Communism' is translated as 'Samya Vada', though there is no 'commune' in 'Samya-vada' and no

‘samya’ in ‘Communism’. The translations of the terms ‘Astik’ and ‘Nastik’ as ‘theist’ and ‘atheist’ are also in the same category; these Sanskrit terms denote believer or non-believer in the Shrutis and Smritis,—they are not connected with belief or non-belief in God. The erroneous translation of the words ‘maya’ and ‘mithya’ as ‘illusion’ is yet another familiar example of this type. In course of time we are bound to realise that the translation of ‘Hindutwa’ as ‘Hinduism’ would render great disservice to the cause of ‘Hindutwa’ the correct English equivalent of which is ‘Hinduness’. Recently, two entirely different connotations were given in a public debate on Punjab for the Urdu word ‘Qaum’. The word ‘secular’ as being used in India today is yet another instance. ‘Secular’ means “something concerned with the affairs of this world, worldly, not sacred, not monastic, not ecclesiastical, temporal, profane, lay.” The Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences states : “Secularism in the philosophical sphere may be interpreted as revolt against theological and eventually against metaphysical absolutes and universals. In the political sphere, it came to mean that a temporal ruler was entitled to exercise power in his own right.” In other words it conveys a principle enunciated by Jesus : ‘Give to God what is God’s and to Caesar what is Caesar’s.’ Thus, what Pandit Nehru wanted to convey through the use of the term ‘secular’ was something different from what is generally understood by that term all over the world. The nearest equivalent of the Nehruian concept of ‘secular State’ would probably be ‘non-denominational State’, though I am mentioning this word for want of

any other more exact term. "The letter Killeth", remarked Jesus, and any public debate on technical subject is bound to result in confusion worst confounded, if the main terms used therein are not precisely defined.

'Modernisation'

Can we define 'Modernisation' ?

'Modern' means 'of the present and recent times' or 'characteristic of present or recent time'.

Conventionally, the term 'Modernism' denotes modern views or methods; tendency in matters of religious beliefs to subordinate tradition to harmony with modern thought, modern term or expression. In other words, it denotes modern usage, expression or trait; modern spirit or character; a tendency to adjust Christian dogma to the results of science and criticism. To modernise is to adapt to the present time, conditions, needs, language, or spelling; to adopt modern ways.

Obviously, this connotation is the natural consequence of the peculiar historical background of Europe. It becomes irrelevant in case of a country which had no Church, no organised priest-hood, no religious persecution, and no conflict between religions and sciences.

To non-European countries, therefore, 'Modernisation' should simply mean 'equipment to solve the problems and meet the challenges of modern times, with a view to ensure all-round progress in future.'

Westernisation Defined

And now, what is 'Westernisation'?

Broadly, it means 'making oriental people or country

to adopt ideas, ideals, institutions, systems, structures, living standards and values of life, of the West.'

Western or Eastern

But it is not so easy to identify what exactly is 'Western'. So far as the ever-expanding frontiers of human knowledge are concerned, it is noteworthy that 'truth' has no caste, no community, no party, no class, — no nation. It is invariably universal, though the first persons to come across or realise such 'truth' may be belonging to some nation or class or region. For example, can any one specify whether the following items are Western or Eastern ?

1. The well-known theorem of Pythagorus who was described by King Clement of Alexandria as "the pupil of a Brahmin".
2. The atomic theory of the West which was anticipated thousands of years ago by परमाणुवाद of कणाद.
3. Dialecticism of Hegel and Marx,—which was first envisaged and systematised by कपिल मुनि.
4. The fact that it is the Earth which moves round the Sun, and not the Sun around the Earth,—which was proved by Copernicus, and, more than one thousand years before Copernicus, by Arya Bhatta.
5. 'Materialism of Democratus—of which the first ever Sutra was written by बृहस्पति centuries back (असतो सत् अजायत) (out of non-existence emerged existence).
6. Scientific concepts of Space and Time explained by Einstein and enunciated first by Vedanta Philosophers.

7. The scientific definition of 'Matter' given for the first time to modern science by Heisenberg and to Hindus by पतञ्जलि.
8. The Relativity of Time and Space, the unity of the universe, a Space-Time Continuum, etc. established in ancient times by Vedic thinkers and proved in this century by Einstein.
9. The process of scientific philosophical thinking initiated by परमेश्वर प्रजापति of नासदीय सूक्त and climaxed by Einstein.

As H. G. Chernyshevsky observed, "the principles explained and proved by the present day sciences were already found and taken to be true by the Greek philosophers,—and much earlier—by the Indian thinkers."

All Knowledge Universal

To sum up :

All knowledge is universal; it is neither western nor eastern.

The same holds good about all sciences and technology. True the advance of the West in this direction commenced after the European Renaissance, and during this entire intervening period we could not register normal rate of progress for the simple reason that we were throughout engaged in the life-and-death struggle on a national plane; but it is an indisputable fact that Hindu Sciences and Hindu Arts had migrated to Greece, via Arabia and Persia, before the European Renaissance, which was preceded by the Dark Age of Europe. Newton once

remarked, "If I have been able to see further than others, it was because I stood on the shoulders of giants."

What is true of an individual, can be equally true of a nation. To-day we aspire to stand on the shoulders of the western giants; but the west could raise these giants because, during Renaissance, entire intelligentsia of Europe stood on the shoulders of Hindu giants. It is, therefore, unrealistic to describe any knowledge as western or 'eastern'; it is all universal.

Illusory Differentiation

Nor would it be realistic to describe the difference between the east and the west as that between belief and disbelief or theism and atheism,—though it is true that the west is predominantly materialistic. The theists in Bharat have no quarrel with the atheists of the west because the God the latter condemn is different from the God the former worship. Theirs is a Personal God, ours impersonal, without any name or form.

Formless, and therefore, capable of assuming or not assuming any form, in keeping with the taste, the aptitude, the requirement, the mental background and the level of understanding of each and every individual. Nameless, and therefore, capable of adopting or not adopting any name. No need, therefore, to be disturbed over their attack on the God-concept.

On the contrary, after the declaration by materialist philosophy that consciousness is the highest development of matter, and particularly with the advance of modern

science, the line of demarcation between the material and the non-material is becoming thinner and thinner, and is now almost vanishing. "The New Soviet Psychic Discoveries" by Henry Gris and William Dick also indicates the same fact. The conceptual journey from the purely physical nature through biological evolution encompassing instinct, intuition and impulse, to development of brain, intelligence, reason and rationalism, to extra-sensory perception, may or may not be factual, but it is certainly a fact that with the interconvertibility of matter and energy, matter has lost its basic character and is now exposed to the ideological onslaught of the Brahman, the ever-expanding. Against this background, one wonders whether a fight between Theism and Atheism is not in reality now over empty terms that have lost their original significance.

Thus this differentiation, which is sought to be highlighted by some religious authorities, does not stand the scrutiny of reason.

Essentially 'Human'

Instincts, impulses, urges, intelligence, sentiments, emotions,—even intuitions,—all these are essentially 'human'; they cannot be branded as 'western' or 'eastern'.

What then precisely is 'western' ?

Cultures—Different

Though human mind everywhere is essentially the same, it would be unrealistic to deny the fact that different societies have gone in the past through different situa-

tions and different historical courses of events, and these latter have left deep impact on collective mind of every society. Geography and History are main factors responsible for such differentiation.

For example, regarding India Vincent Smith says, "India, circled as she is by seas and mountains, is indisputably a geographical unit and as such rightly designated by one name. The type of civilization too has many features which differentiate it from all other regions of the world; while they are common to whole country in a degree sufficient to justify its treatment as a unit in the history of the social, religious and intellectual development of mankind."

Among other things, geo-political factors contribute substantially to such differentiations.

All such distinctive factors give rise to different cultures.

'Culture' Defined

The word 'culture' denotes a trend of impressions on the mind of a society which is peculiar to its own, and which, again, is the cumulative effect of its passion, emotion, thought, speech and action throughout its history. This trend of impressions cannot be the same in case of societies, say in Arabian deserts and Gangetic plains, in Germany which is a camp in the open field and Italy or isolated Great Britain, in young America or ancient India.

Special Characteristics

The modern west also has certain special characteristics of its own. For example, being predominantly

materialistic, it has evolved a value system with consumerism as its pivot and permissiveness its natural corollary.

‘Samskars’ A Superfluity

Being still under the influence of Newtonian science, the west clings to the myth that mind is only a super-structure on matter which is basic. Socio-economic structure is, therefore, basic, deserving our exclusive attention. The religion, culture, ethics, literature, arts, etc – all these constitute mere superstructure which will automatically undergo appropriate corresponding changes, once the socio-economic order is altered suitably. Mind need not be specially attended to, ‘samskars’ are a superfluity. The exclusive concern of all the modern western thought-system is the appropriate socio-economic transformation; they have no time to indulge in the subject of psychological transformation which will, they are convinced, take care of itself after the inauguration of new social order.

Homocentricism

Homocentricism is yet another special characteristic of the west. Humanism is no doubt preferable to self-centred individualism. Protagoras declared, “Man is the measure of everything”. Marx observed, “Man is the root of mankind”. Roy advocated reconstruction of the world as a commonwealth and fraternity of free men, by the collective endeavour of spiritually emancipated moral men. All this is laudable. But it treats our own, human species as the centre of entire existence, which is doing injustice to all other, non-

human species and components of the existence. Homocentricism is expressed in the realistic manner when a character in Maxim Gorky's play 'The Lower Depths' declares : "All Things are part of man; all Things are for man". "Man—that is the truth". Exploitation of man by a man cannot be tolerated; but exploitation of non-human beings by human beings can even be encouraged. Recently, we formulated universal charter of human rights; but non-human beings are entitled to no rights. They say that 'culture' is what we are and 'civilization' what we have.

Western Humanism —Not Adequately Humane

Because of its characteristic values of life, even humanism of the west could not be adequately humane. Firstly, it has been anti-God and homocentric. And, secondly, it could not generate an environment conducive to the growth of human harmony. Before the second world war nobody could have imagined that a document like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would at any time be even drafted. The various Covenants and Resolutions of U. N. Organisation and other international bodies on human rights constitute the basis of International Law which is moral rather than strictly legal in character. But notwithstanding the institutional framework of U. N. for this specific purpose, it is being generally realised that a real guarantee for the preservation of human rights, civil liberties and fundamental freedoms lies in the level of consciousness of a common man and in people-to-people relationship on the sound basis of international understanding. Even talk of mere rights in the western fashion

is not enough to achieve the desired goal. Mr. John Kleinig has rightly remarked: "Unless there is love, care and concern for others as individuals, in addition to the recognition of rights, there remains a moral lack in international relationships. There is something morally inadequate in doing something for another because it is the other's due. Actions motivated simply by the rights of others remain anonymous or impersonal, whereas if motivated by love, care or concern for the other, their focus is on the other's particularity. Only relations of the latter kind are morally adequate. They are person-specific, whereas rights are species-specific." Exclusive emphasis on 'rights' is one of the peculiar characteristics of the western value-system.

The Fragmentary Approach

Again, the thinking of the west has always been compartmentalised, its approach fragmentary. (It was only during the second world war that western scientists began to appreciate the utility of inter-disciplinary approach) They fail to understand inter-relatedness and inter-dependence of all phenomena. In this globally interconnected world, physical, biological, psychological, social, political, economic, cultural or environmental phenomena are all inter-dependent. Problems confronting mankind are many and varied; but these are all different facets of a single crisis. As one learned author points out, whether we talk about cancer, crime, pollution, nuclear power, inflation or energy shortage, the dynamics underlying these problems are the same. The west has not yet realised this basic fact. For example,

they treat economics as an independent, autonomous subject, isolated from the rest of the totality. They cannot integrate with their quantitative economic analysis the qualitative factors leading to the understanding of the ecological, social and psychological dimensions of economic activity and the findings of the recent psychological research on people's behaviour as income-earners, consumers and investors. Indiscriminate addiction to "growth" without first defining the growth concept with reference to and in the light of other varieties of growth, has rendered all western schools of economics unrealistic and irrelevant. These economists must have received a jolt when Schumacker illustrated the value-dependence of economics by comparing two economic systems embodying entirely different values and goals. One is the Western materialist system, in which the "Standard of living" is measured by the amount of annual consumption and which therefore tries to achieve the maximum consumption along with an optimal pattern of production. The other is a system of Buddhist economics, based on the notions of "right livelihood" and the "Middle Path", in which the object is to achieve a maximum of human well-being with an optimal pattern of consumption. While the west could conceive of the indices of different material factors, will it be able to think of indices of human happiness and other social or psychological factors ?

Illustrative—Not Exhaustive

The points mentioned above are only illustrative, and not exhaustive. But they are enough to prove that

the west also has its own distinct characteristics.

The Impracticable

Does 'westernisation' mean following the west blindly in all such distinctive matters?

Is it practicable for us to blindly follow the west even if we mean to do so with all earnestness ?

Gurudev Tagore, who once remarked that "it is idle mendicancy to discard our own and beg for the foreign", while, at the same time "it is the abjectness of poverty to dwarf ourselves by rejecting the foreign", condemned India's imitation of the west. Imitation, he says, is "like dressing our skeleton with another man's skin, giving rise to eternal feuds between the skin and the bones at every moment." This would be impracticable as well as intolerable.

Status-quoism ?

The moment one expresses such views one is condemned by the interested parties as a status-quoist. It is not realised that most of our social reformers were staunch patriots—not at all inclined to get westernised. There can be progressivism without aping the west. These are two different processes, though sometimes slightly overlapping. For example, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, the keeper of Islam's holiest shrines in Mecca and Madina, said on June 7, 1983 that Islamic rules must be mended in keeping with the times. Now what he was suggesting to that open session of International Islamic Theologians' Conference in Mecca was radicalism; but

he was not placing before them the examples of King Amanulla of Afghanistan, Shah of Iran, or Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha of Turkey. In India, Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Satya Shodhak Samaj, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, Dravida Kazhaghham, National Church Movement, Scheduled Castes Federation, SNDP, or Muslim Satya Shodhak Samaj can be cited as brilliant examples of redicalism without westernism.

Ostrich-like Isolationism ?

The refusal to imitate can invite objection and misunderstanding for another reason also. It can be misconstrued as ostrich-like isolationism or irrational prejudice against the west. All the more so considering the fact that, as Gunnar Myrdal points out in his "Asian Drama", "After independence the close relations with the former metropolitan countries were preserved and in some respects intensified." But, in fact, such misunderstanding is baseless. We are not inimical to westerners. We remember with deep sense of gratitude the illustrious names of Annie Besant, Sister Nivedita, Romain Rolland, "Sri Ma" of Aurobindo Ashram, Mira Ben, Fenner Brockway, Arundale, Elvin Arnold Toynbee, Louis Fischer, Albert Schweitzer, Max Mueller, Schopenhauer, Garbe, Winternitz, and many others whose love for India and its culture has been a source of inspiration to us during the period of our trials and tribulations. Some eminent leaders of the oppressed, such as, Jomo Kenyatta, Caesar Schavez, Martin Luther King, Danilo Dolci, the recently publicised Gandhi of

Sicily and Benigno 'Ninoy' - Aquino of Philippines, have endeared themselves to Indian public mind because of their adherence to Gandhian ideals and methodology. This is an entirely different matter. It is in no way relevant to the problem of the blind aping of the west.

But does the term 'westernisation' imply such imitation? Or it has some different connotation? Sometimes connotations are evolved because of the particular contexts or situations.

The Connotation

International developments after the second world war and the problems of relationship between the developed and the developing countries have given a specific colour and connotation to the term 'westernisation'. It is no longer just an academic term; it has immediate practical implications.

'Westernisation'

When the term 'westernism' is used, what is meant is western cultures and western paradigm. And when we talk of 'Modernisation' with, or without, westernisation, we are in fact raising a question whether western paradigm should be accepted as a universal model of progress and development.

In the language of 'Homo Faber', should we restrict the models of modernity and the processes and sequences of modernisation to the experience of the western nations? Should we subdue vast and varied societies to

the totalitarianism of a single historical pattern ? History might pattern itself on the past, but is there any reason that it should pattern itself on the western past ? Even for the purposes of a more wholesome science, would it not be best to set no limits to the social and Sociological imaginations ?

‘Westernisation’ therefore, denotes acceptance of western paradigm as a universal model of progress.

Even as the diagnosis is half the cure, proper framing of the question helps substantially the finding out of the reply.

The Relevance

Some of us may be probably thinking that this whole discussion is irrelevant in this land of the Hindus whose ancestors welcomed good thoughts from all the directions, and declared: ‘From sea to sea, over all the land, one nation.’ Hinduness which marks off those who share it, from the rest of the mankind, has certain special and unique characteristics. India has always stood for internationalism. In modern world, it is becoming increasingly difficult to perceive correct nature of internationalism, since different varieties of trans-national sectarianism and communalism appear frequently on the world-stage under the garb of internationalism. In fact, universalism is the distinct characteristic of Hindu Culture. At this stage, one is naturally reminded of Rabindranath Tagore’s ‘The Emigrant’, in which he says :

“My home is everywhere,
I am in search of it,
My country is in all countries,
I will struggle to attain it.”

(Incidentally, the younger generation may not be aware that long before the conception of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Rabindranath Tagore and Romain Rolland had published, as early as in 1921, a joint statement which proved to be a precursor of this U.N. Document.)

As Dr Radhakrishnan put it, “The aim of India has been to realise the one amongst the many, not by effacing the differences, but by retaining the differences and uniting them all. To perceive the one amongst the many, to forge unity in variety, has been its fundamental purpose.”

Being accustomed to visualising unity in the midst of diversity, Hindus are adept in adapting new ideas and structures from any quarter, and assimilating them in their body politic. They had realised that continual self-renewal is the price of glorious survival. In the light of the unchanging Universal Laws, they had, till before eleven centuries, an ever-changing social order. Through different smritis composed by moral leaders, old order changed from time to time, yielding place to the new, through a process of synthesis. Their catholicity ensured peaceful co-existence of different systems. Even Valentine Chirol said that Hinduism always remained singularly

fluid and that it "lends itself to the most divergent schools of thought, sometimes verging on pure theism and sometimes drifting into absolute atheism, but more often resolving themselves into universal pantheism". This characteristic inspired Max Mueller to say, "If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed its choicest gifts, most fully pondered on the greatest problems of life and has found solutions of some of them, which deserve the attention of even those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India. If I were to ask myself from what literature we, in Europe, may draw corrective which is most wanted in order to make our life more perfect, more universal, in fact, truly human, again I should point to India". Why should the Hindus, whose country, according to Marx, has been the source of European languages and European religions, and whose thought-leaders can talk of 'Hindu Spirit in Islamic body' or of a synthesis between Indian Spirit and Western Matter, be afraid of adopting anything good from the west? Has not our modern Seer said, "East and West could be reconciled in the pursuit of the highest and largest ideal, Spirit embrace Matter and Matter find its own true reality and the hidden Reality in all Things in the Spirit"?

Neither Simple, Nor Innocent

Let us understand clearly that the process of westernisation is not that simple or innocent. In the past, we have always enriched and strengthened our cultural identity and national personality, by adapting and

assimilating whatever good was found in foreign cultures, structures and systems. But everytime, it was a process of assimilation. The concept of 'westernisation' implies loss of cultural identity and national personality; it implies our own absorption in, and assimilation by, foreign culture. Even if there is something good which the west can sell us, should we purchase it by paying, as price, our own individuality? "Of what profit would it be, if you gain the kingdom of the earth, and, in the process, lose your soul?" asked Lord Jesus. This question is equally pertinent even in the present context.

Assimilation ? Yes. Loss of Identity ? No.

But 'Assimilation' negates the process of 'westernisation'. Our discussion centres round the problem of 'westernisation'.

The Genesis

What is the genesis of all this ?

History has witnessed rise and fall of many empires. During its hey-day, civilisation of every empire was accepted as standard by its satellites. After its fall, the glamour of its civilization used to fade out in course of a few decades. The distinguishing features of the withdrawal of white imperialism are (i) its sustained grip over its erstwhile colonies in intellectual and ideological matters—which is the natural outcome of its brain-washing propaganda during the imperial days and (ii) its determined effort to continue and tighten its strangle-

hold on the economies of these countries, which has given to a sort of tug-of-war between the northern white countries and the southern non-white countries that are part and parcel of the non-aligned movement.

Macaulay's Success

In India, the Macaulian campaign succeeded in selling to Hindu intellectuals the idea of 'white-man's-burden', in creating inferiority complex in their minds, and in convincing them that the European civilization is the only standard, ideal civilization. Every society or people in the world, we were told, has necessarily and inevitably to pass through the same stages of evolution which are characteristic of European history. Every Indian situation must be gauged by European standards, —there is no escape from this. For, we were told, western paradigm is the universal model of progress and development.

Growing Scepticism

Now, whether western paradigm can help westerners in achieving their cherished goals, is itself doubtful. There is growing scepticism in the west about the efficacy of its paradigm. The dazzling advance of science and technology, they are now realising, is not exactly an unmixed blessing. The rape of nature, with no consideration for either ecological factors or the fate of the future generations, is already becoming a boomerang. The technological development, unaccompanied by commensurate cultural elevation, is likely, they apprehend, to lead mankind to its total annihilation.

The Maladies

They have no doubt taken due cognisance of all the maladies their societies are suffering from. The chronic and degenerative "diseases of civilisation", such as, heart-disease, blood-pressure, cancer, STD, etc; severe depression, schizophrenia and other psychiatric disorders; rise in violent crimes, suicides, accidents, alcoholism, and drug addiction; rapid depletion of energy and natural resources, such as, coal, petroleum, natural gas, metals, forests, fish-reserves, oxygen, ozone, etc; a severe degradation of the natural environment affecting not only humans but also plants, animals, ecological systems and global climate, resulting in 'a nebulous veil of air-pollution' encircling the entire planet; high rate of inflation, massive unemployment and mal-distribution of wealth; stock piling of tens of thousands of nuclear weapons, costing the world over one billion dollars a day.

'Technological Ombudsman'

There are suggestions from some western scientists that 'Technological Ombudsman' manned by persons of high cultural level, be set up to restrain, guide and direct further development of technology in the west.

Wrong Values

Ignoring the fact that everything in the west is only in an experimental stage, and not yet tested by time, we rushed to appreciate and applaud their values of life based upon materialism, consumerism (if not exactly hedonism), homo-centricism, and unalloyed individuali-

sm. Now it is being realised that these are precisely the values that are responsible for disintegration and disorganisation of individual, family and social life in the United States which is full of large crowds of solitary, self-alienated individuals.

Their systems are showing signs of decay and decline.

Euphoria of Capitalism

“The wealth of Nations” represented euphoria of the new era of capitalism. Now John Maynard Keynes, one of the most important saviours of capitalism, is inclined to observe, “The decadent international but individualistic capitalism in the hands of which we found ourselves after the (first world) war is not a success. It is not intelligent, it is not just, it is not virtuous,—and it does not deliver the goods. In short, we dislike it and we are beginning to despise it.”

Western Parliamentary Democracy

The failure of the western parliamentary democracy is obvious.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn has rightly remarked that ‘the western democracies to-day are in a state of political crisis and spiritual confusion’. His sad commentary on the party system is expressed in his pertinent question: “Are there no extra-party or strictly ‘non-party’ paths of national development?”

In our country, Mahatma Gandhi, Revered Shri Guruji, Acharya Vinobaji, Lok Nayak Jayaprakashji and other great thinkers have already expressed their scepticism

about this western system. Shri M. N. Roy, who was an authority on all western institutions, came to conclude,—in the light of the principles enunciated in his 22 Thesis and the Manifesto that party politics was inconsistent with the ideal of democracy and that it was liable to degenerate into power politics. Within the limits of formal parliamentarism, based on atomised electorates, individual citizens are not enabled to stand out in sovereign dignity. This can be done only when the pyramidal structure of the state is raised on a foundation of organised local democracy, and the State coincides with the entire society, he said. Dispassionate thinkers from the west are also arriving at the same conclusion.

Success of Socialism ?

It is difficult to point out where and in which manner socialism has succeeded in the west. As C. E. M Joad observed, socialism is a hat that has lost its shape because everyone wears it. Even in the cradle of western parliamentary democracy and trade unionism, socialism has already lost its glamour and grip on public mind,—this is evident from the recent victory of Mrs. Thatcher. Again, according to scientific socialists, socialism is irrelevant in case of third world countries since economic abundance is an essential pre-requisite for socialism. In 'The German Ideology' Marx wrote that the high "development of productive forces is absolutely necessary as a practical premise" (for socialism). And in a country with the highest economic abundance, i.e. the United States, the total number of socialists does not exceed 10,000 to-day.

Failure of Communism

Communism, which presented itself as the better alternative, has also failed miserably.

We are not saying so simply because many predictions of Marx have not come true. We know that correctness or otherwise of predictions cannot be the sole criterion to determine validity of any doctrine. We are in agreement with Antonio Gramsci, Gyorgi-Lukacs and Mao Zedong when they say that failure to predict the future does not affect the validity of Marxism. This validity we seek to judge by its own merit.

Condemnation of Yugoslavia in 1948, exhibition of Russian Military might in East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968) and Afghanistan (1979); new understanding of the world-situation by Pollit, Gollan, Togliatti, Longo, Berlinguer, Carillo and other leaders of Eurocommunism; the end of a dream of uni-central communist world; deviation from the basic tenets of Marxism by ruling communist parties; desertions by idealists like Kostler, Djilas, Roy, Debray and others; workers' revolts in Poland and other East European countries, public expression of disillusionment by the leaders of the Italian and the Spanish communist parties, and the reactionary rise of indecisive New left,—all these are unmistakable indications of the decay of communism, though the house that has taken a century and a half to come up, will take some more time to demolish itself.

A Search

A few, but saner elements in the west are already in

search of a new path, a new value-system, a new culture, a new paradigm.

The goal or objective that has failed the West cannot be helpful to the East.

The Myth Exploded

The myth of universality of European experience is also exploded. Mohmed Kutub, the historian, has rightly remarked, "The different stages of economic evolution infer communist society and slavery, capitalism, and then the final communism, that is, final communist society. When it is dialectical materialism, described as a common phenomenon in the history of the mankind, really it has no existence whatsoever, outside the European history. These stages were never passed through, by any people outside Europe."

Self Reliance—Inevitable

This remark is much more relevant and significant in case of this ancient Hindu Nation. There is room to suspect that propagation of this myth of universality is inspired by a subtle, diplomatic move to perpetuate economic and ideological imperialism even after the loss of political empires. The Third World countries are realising progressively the futility of the North-South dialogue, and the inevitability of the goal of self-reliance. This goal makes it imperative to change the model of development also.

Exercise In Futility

For, unfortunately for the Third World countries,

history is not going to repeat itself in precisely the same manner.

A few commendable coincidences that culminated in the inauguration of Industrial Revolution; newly grown geo-political importance of sea-routes during the pre-aeroplane era; internal, domestic pre-occupation of powers governing countries with abundant raw material and market-potentialities; circumstances favourable for empire-building by naval powers; practicability of sustaining domestic economy on the strength of exploitation of colonies,—all these circumstances are not going to be repeated for the benefit of the Third World countries. The prosperity of the white nations was built upon the foundations which will not be available now to the non-white countries. Hence, the futility of imitating western example, and accepting the western paradigm as a model.

Needed a new Goal

It is, therefore, essential to set a new goal or objective for all national striving in Southern countries, keeping in view the failure of western paradigm as well as the significant difference in the historical courses of events.

All of us are quite conversant with the Hindu goal of life, and the ways and means to achieve the same. I need not, therefore, waste your valuable time covering the same familiar ground.

Distinctive Characteristics

For the purpose of this discussion, it is immaterial whether someone accepts the cultural superiority of Hindus, or not. But all have unanimously recognised that

Hindu culture has its own distinctive characteristics. We know how a visit to India is considered as a pilgrimage by enlightened humanists from all parts of the globe,—whether it is grandson of Henry Ford or daughter of Stalin. I will be drifting in the province of philosophy, if I try to state Hindu goal, Hindu view and an ideal Hindu Scheme of life. But that is hardly necessary here.

Wanted Our Own Model

I, therefore, straightway proceed to assert that we must conceive of our model of progress and development, in the light of our own culture, our past traditions, present requirements, and aspirations for the future. We should study in depth the western paradigm, and benefit from it wherever possible, but not accept it as our model for future. To some of you this approach may appear to be academic (if not other-worldly), and emotional (if not sentimental). To those accustomed to safe-sailing, this may appear to be a leap in the dark—an indiscreet move towards uncharted sea or untrodden path. But it is nothing of the sort. Apart from our own cultural heritage and rich historical experience, we have before us examples and experiments of some non-white countries, such as, say, Japan or Mao's China. Japan, we learn, has kept its cultural traditions in tact, while exposing itself selectively to western technology; and Mao, who is credited with sinification of Marxism itself, had guts to proclaim that 'Modernisation is not Westernisation'.

Direct The Technologists

The southern countries will find themselves more capable than what the northern ones would have them

believe, if only they relieve themselves of their inferiority complex, and commit themselves to mutual co-operation. The experience of tiny Biafra should inspire them. Whatever be the level of their human and material resources, they can certainly choose their own industrial strategy, and draw their own industrial map. They can follow, reconciling efficiency with employment, the motto of 'production by masses', and so far as possible, the Intermediate or Appropriate Technology of Dr. Schumacker. Being new entrants, they can, right from the beginning, adopt an integrated approach on ecology, economics and ethics. Their native Technologists, whatever be their number, can be required—

To study thoroughly and assimilate industrial technology all over the world;

To locate and introduce such parts of Foreign Technology as are suited to local conditions;

To introduce, for the benefit of artisans, reasonably adaptable changes in the traditional techniques of production, without incurring the risk of increase in unemployment of workers, wastage of available managerial and technical skill, and complete decapitalisation of the existing means of production; and

To evolve indigenous technology with great emphasis on decentralisation of the processes of production, with the help of power, —with home, instead of factory, as a centre of production.

Adopt New Values

They will have, further, to give up the western values of life, and (i) evolve a coordinated system of Wage

differentials and status-differentials which would ensure reconciliation of equality with incentive, in view of the fact that if values of life are purely economic or materialistic, equitable distribution of wealth would remain incompatible with incentive for highest individual development and (ii) generate, consequently, the psychological, cultural environment in which there would invariably be an inverse ratio between social status and personal wealth.

New Science Movement

In India, it is heartening to note that the foreign inspired attempts to delink modern science from culture are being opposed by some of the eminent scientists. Recently, Raja Ramanna, Chairman-designate, Atomic Energy Commission, exposed the hollowness of the argument, that to speak of a synthesis between science and spiritualism is nothing but obscurantism and revivalism. In a paper read in a Seminar organised by Bharatiya Vichar Kendra in co-operation with other institutions at Trivandrum on the last 24th June, Shri K. I. Vasu of the Indian Institute of science at Bangalore, made an important announcement. He spelt out the philosophy of the 'Swadeshi Science Movement' launched by him. In his concluding paragraph he says : "In this venture, there is an urgent need to reorient the national priorities in scientific research, development and education. This calls for a national science and technology policy and national science and technology plan. The essential element of such a policy and plan would be truly Swadeshi in spirit and fully Swadeshi in execution. Only such a Swadeshi

Science Movement can make our Nationhood fulfilled, our ruralism protected, our culture preserved and the whole world served."

This is an auspicious beginning of a gigantic task, though, presently, it is on a modest scale.

Swadeshi Technological Movement,

Similarly Claude Alvares and Dharampal have been striving hard to initiate the Swadeshi Technological Movement, though they have not named it thus so far. Claude Alvares believes that every culture has its own paradigm and model of progress and that development of technology should be suited to the character of such paradigm and model.

India is the third largest scientific community of the world. If properly motivated, our scientists and technologists can certainly accomplish this task.

Lack of National Will

By God's grace, to us are available all the factors that go to make any country great. The human, the material and the intellectual resources. We are second to none in all these matters.

What is lacking is the requisite national will, leading to national unity.

Not the lack of potentialities, mind you, but the lack of will and unity.

Shri Guruji on New Order

Stressing this point Revered Shri Guruji said, "Once the life-stream of Unity begins to flow freely in all the

veins of our body-politic the various limbs of our national life will automatically begin to function actively and harmoniously for the welfare of the Nation as a whole. Such a living and growing society will preserve out of its multitude of old systems and patterns, whatever is essential and conducive to its progressive march, throw off those as have outlived their utility and evolve new systems in their place. No one need shed tears at the passing of the old orders, nor shirk to welcome the new order of things. That is the nature of all living and growing organisms. As a tree grows, ripe leaves and dry twigs fall off making way for fresh growth. The main thing to bear in mind is to see that the life sap of oneness permeates all parts of our social set-up. Every system or pattern will live or change or even entirely disappear according as it nourishes that life sap or not. Hence it is useless in the present social context to discuss about the future of all such systems. The supreme call of the time is to revive the spirit of inherent unity and the awareness of its life-purpose in our society. All other things will take care of themselves."

Ever the Same, yet Different

In 'The Sacred Thread', J. L. Brockington conveys the same view when he observes, "Tradition (for Hindus) is not always just what it seems, but has constantly been undergoing reinterpretation to accomodate new understandings and changed circumstances. Innovation is not the enemy of tradition but that by which it maintains its relevance. Hinduism does not reject the old in favour of the new, but blends the two, expressing new dilemmas in

traditional language and accomodating fresh insights to established viewpoints. The ability to adapt itself to changing circumstances has been a mark of Hinduism throughout its history, and the unifying factor bringing together its many diverse threads lies in their common history within this unique weaving together of tradition and innovation. Hinduism is ever the same, yet different."

Unprecedented Crisis

The awakening of the national will is essential not only for accomplishing the task of national reconstruction but even for fulfilment of the global mission of the Hindu nation as envisaged by Shri Guruji. After his demise, the world situation has been fast deteriorating. There is a growing awareness among western intellectuals that 'at the beginning of the last two decades of our century, we find ourselves in a state of profound, world-wide, complex, multi-dimensional crisis whose facts touch every aspect of our lives—our health and livelihood, the quality of our environment and our social relationships, our economy, technology and politics. It is a crisis of intellectual, moral and spiritual dimensions; a crisis of a scale and urgency unprecedented in recorded human history. For the first time we have to face the very real threat of extinction of the human race and of all life on this planet.'

As Dorothy Sayers, one of the finest commentators on Dante as well as on modern society has said :

"That the Inferno is a picture of human society in a state of sin and corruption, everybody will readily agree. And since we are today fairly well convinced that society

is in a bad way and not necessarily evolving in the direction of perfectibility, we find it easy enough to recognise the various stages by which the deep of corruption is reached. Futility; lack of a living faith; the drift into loose morality, greedy consumption, financial irresponsibility, and uncontrolled bad temper; a self-opinionated and obstinate individualism, violence, sterility, and lack of reverence for life and property including one's own; the exploitation of sex, the debasing of language by advertisement and propaganda, the commercialising of religion, the pandering to superstition and the conditioning of people's minds by mass-hysteria and 'spell-binding' of all kinds, venality and string-pulling in public affairs, hypocrisy, dishonesty in material things, intellectual dishonesty, the fomenting of discord (class against class, nation against nation) for what one can get out of it, the falsification and destruction of all the means of communication; the exploitation of the lowest and stupidest mass-emotions; treachery even to the fundamentals of kinship, country, the chosen friend, and the sworn allegiance; these are the all-too-recognisable stages that lead to the cold death of society and the extinguishing of all civilised relations."

Capra, one of the eminent modern thinkers, believes that the westerners so far favoured rational knowledge over intuitive wisdom, science over religion, competition over cooperation, exploitation of natural resources over conservation,.....and that these factors, among others, have led to a profound cultural imbalance which lies at the very root of our current crisis,—an imbalance in our thoughts and feelings, our values and attitudes, and our

social and political structures. "The Current crisis," he says, "is a transition from sensate culture. As individuals, as a society, as a civilisation, and as a planetary ecosystem, we are reaching the turning point."

Western Paradigm Inadequate

Can the western paradigm help the perplexed humanity at this "turning point"?

The learned author says, "What we need, then, is a new "paradigm"—a new vision of reality; a fundamental change in our thoughts, perceptions and values".

Does it not mean that for resolution of this unprecedented crisis in human history, the western paradigm is too inadequate an instrument ?

This should serve as a warning and a lesson for all those who fondly hope and believe that modernisation is nothing but westernisation.

The Views of Scholars

The views expressed by scholars of Hindu Culture deserve special attention in this context.

Toynbee

There is a view that India is facing today all types of problems that are confronting the humanity, but of all the countries India alone has the ability to overcome these difficulties because of her inherent aptitude to visualise unity in the midst of diversity. Consequently, India alone can show a new and the right path to the distressed world. That is the conviction of Arnold Toynbee.

Woodroffe

Sir John Woodroffe is confident that cultural ideas of the Hindus will pass over into the west, the spirit of their ancient culture will persist, whatever happens in future to the race which evolved them. No doubt, there are some people in India who, "in this period of transition and scepticism due to foreign influence, believe in none of such things and who are as materialist, though often less usefully so, than any Western". But where can India "gain strength to save Herself, except from Her own cultural inheritance? The universal assertion and adoption by all peoples of the noble and essential principles of Her spiritual civilisation would lead to a world-peace."

Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo who had clearly visualised the nature of the impending world crisis declared confidently : " she (India) can, if she will, give a new and decisive turn to the problems over which all mankind is labouring and stumbling, for the clue to their solutions is there in her ancient knowledge".

Shri Guruji

Shri Guruji observed, "It is the grand world-unifying thought of Hindus alone that can supply the abiding basis for human brotherhood, that knowledge of the Inner Spirit which will charge the human mind with the sublime urge to toil for the happiness of mankind, while opening out full and free scope for every small life-speciality on the face of the earth to grow to its full stature".

Means and Ends

To modernise or not to modernise is not the main or the more relevant question before the mankind today. Modernisation is only the means and not an end in itself. What is the end, the ultimate goal ? According to Dharma, it is the complete, solidified, unintermittent, eternal happiness of all. To the extent to which modernisation is helpful for this purpose it is welcome. But if this supreme goal is to be achieved through the instrumentality of modernisation, we must cease to identify it with westernisation.

