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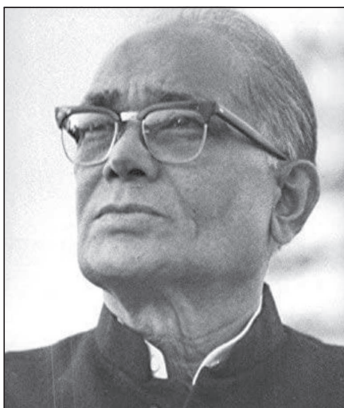
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J. P's Concept of Panchayati Raj

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan (popularly known as J. P.) was born in a village in Bihar on October 11, 1902. His public life started in 1921, when he joined Indian freedom movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Since then, freedom was one of the beacon lights of his life. He wrote, "This



Jayaprakash Narayan

freedom has become a passion of life and I shall not see it compromised for bread, for power, for security, for prosperity, for the glory of the State or for anything else."

In 1948 J. P. wrote a statement entitled '*Back to Mahatma*' shortly after his return from Europe and West Asia. Firstly he suggested the only way to inspire the people was to go back to Mahatma Gandhi. The leaders of the country must realise the game of power politics alone cannot deliver the welfare of the people. They should go to the people not to gather votes for political parties. They must go to the people to live and work with

them, to serve, guide and help them. J. P's second suggestion was that democratic socialist parties including Congress and the P. S. P. should join hands together on the basis of an agreed programme for building up a democratic socialist India. According to J. P., "Sarvodaya is a higher

and truer form of democratic socialism." J. P. pleads for replacement of parliamentary democracy by a new kind of polity which is more in consonance with India's tradition and with the real nature of man and community. He characterises it a communitarian or Partyless Democracy. As J. P. argues, "The problem of present-day civilisation is social integration. The problem is to put man in touch with man, so that they may live together in meaningful, understandable, controllable relationships. In short, the problem is to recreate the human community."

The political structure of



the community must correspond to its social structure which according to J. P., will consists of “self-governing, self-sufficient, agro-industrial, urbo-rural local communities.” The highest political institution of the local community should be village assembly *Gram Sabha*. All the adults of the community should be its members. The executive should be known as *Panchayat*. Its members should be selected by general consensus of opinion in the *Gram Sabha*. Nobody should stand for election for any office. The *Sabha* and the *Panchayat* should manage things that matter. It will be their duty to ensure that no one in the village goes without food, clothing and shelter. Every child receives primary education. Everyone receives primary medical care.

The next level of political structure, will be that of the regional community with *Gram Panchayats* integrated into *Panchayat Samiti*. Similarly the *Panchayat Samitis* of a district will be integrated into District Council, the District Councils integrated into the State Assembly and the State Assemblies integrated into National Parliament.

J. P. lays down certain conditions for the success of the *Panchayati Raj* or democratic decentralisation.

First, the education of the people in the widest sense of the term should be undertaken by the government and the non-government agencies.

Secondly, the political parties should refrain from interfering with the institution of *Panchayati Raj* for the purpose of gaining political power.

Thirdly, there should be real devolution of power to the *Panchayati Raj* and not a make-belief.

Fourthly, there should be an independent minimum financial support to the institution of *Panchayati Raj* at every level.

Fifthly, the institutions of *Panchayati Raj* should be able to exercise real authority over the civil servants under their charge who should be held fully accountable to them.

Sixthly, as for elections of the village panchayats, J. P. held the opinion that elections should be held without contest. He cautioned us; “Self-government through faction fighting should not be self-government, but self-ruination.”

Seventhly, it is also necessary that its day-to-day working is put outside the purview of the state governments. The necessary laws and rules must be framed by the state Legislatures.

J. P. firmly believed that there should be a new kind of economic structure to strengthen the political structure sketched above. In *Reconstruction of Indian Polity* 1959 he argues that people should voluntarily limit his wants. Other wise, greed of more and more will lead to mutual conflict, coercion, war. In *Swaraj*

for the People 1961, J. P. explains that the only way out is economic decentralisation. What would be essential features of a decentralised economy in India? J. P.'s arguments are explained below.

Firstly, such an economy must be a small-machine, labour-intensive economy.

Secondly, there must be a regional surveying and planning so that the resources of a particular region might be utilised to the full to satisfy the needs of the region.

Thirdly, a programme should be launched for rural industrialisation so that every small group of villages is developed as an agro-industrial community.

Fourthly, the organisational pattern of decentralised industry should be such as to keep it free from both bureaucratisation and exploitation.

Fifthly, the institution of *Panchayati Raj* should play an important part in the development of such an economy.

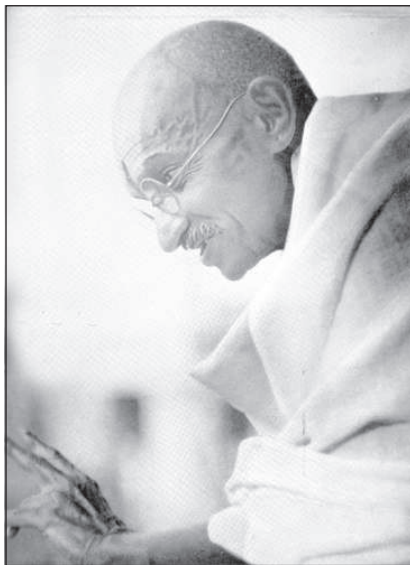
What J. P. is suggesting is a modern type of economy. In his essay in *Whither India* 1961, he argues that he has been pleading for a decentralised economy, not because it would be democratic, but also because it would provide immediate benefit to the masses by offering employment on a mass scale.



Over view of Vedchhi Intensive Area Scheme (VIAS) Gandhian Approach to Rural Development

By **G. Shah**
W. R. Chaturvadi

This study is an attempt to analyse and evaluate the Vedchhi Intensive Area Scheme (VIAS) in the Valod taluka of Surat District in Gujarat State (India). We have studied the working and the achievements of the VIAS during the last three decades with a view to assist the leaders of the VIAS to make the organisation more efficient and also examine the possibility of replicating



similar experiment elsewhere. The working and achievements of the VIAS are examined in relation to (1) its ideology and objectives; and (2) the nature and scope of rural development work provided by the larger system. No local community and action group can function in isolation from, and independently of, the larger social, economic and political system and the dominant ideology of the state and the nation. This has particularly to be taken into account by a reformist group like the VIAS which aims at rural development

without radically disturbing the existing frame work of political economy of the country and the state. However, we do not regard a voluntary agency as a mere instrument of the larger system with no capacity of its own to do innovative work. A voluntary agency allows some scope and elbow room for innovation in selecting its programmes and to carry them out efficiently. Therein lies

significance of a voluntary agency of the type we have studied.

The VIAS is an off-shoot of the Gandhian movement which started in Surat district in the early 'twenties'. In 1924, the centre for Khadi, social reform and educational activities, called *Ashrama* was started in the Vedchhi village of the Valod taluka by some Gandhians. The Vedchhi Ashrama initiated social reforms among the people of the surrounding area, and side by side carried on political activities for more than two decades till 1947. It inspired a

group of non-tribal youths of Valod to settle in their own village and to reconstruct the rural society according to the Gandhian model. The founders of the VIAS joined the Vedchhi Ashrama in the early 'fifties' as teachers, where they learnt their Gandhian philosophy and constructive work. Jugatram Dave, the leader of the Vedchhi Ashrama entrusted the responsibility for carrying out the Intensive Area Scheme sponsored by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission to this group, which came to be known as the Valod group. The name of the village Vedchhi has been associated with the Intensive Area Scheme to highlight the importance of Vedchhi as the Centre of Gandhian activities. Thus, the VIAS came into existence in 1954. Allubhai Shah and Bhikhubhai Vyas have been its trustees since its inception.

The VIAS is not just an implementing agency like a government department, or some rural development agencies sponsored these days by industrial and business houses. It has undertaken the task as a mission inspired by an explicit ideology. The VIAS' conception of an ideal society makes it qualitatively different from many other voluntary agencies working in rural areas. Its model is based mainly on the Gandhian, or Sarvodaya ideals. The ideal Gandhian rural community is a non-exploitative and non-exploited 'self-sufficient and self-reliant' community. The cardinal principles of Gandhian ideology are non-violence, harmony, and people's participation. It is opposed to both centralism, as well as capitalism. It aims at restructuring the present society into an

ideal one by working from below on the basis of local or decentralised planning.

The VIAS is controlled and run by a small group of five persons known as the core group or the Valod group. They all belong to Valod. They are from the upper-caste families—Brahmins and Baniyas of the upper and middle class landlords, middle peasants, or moneylenders-cum-traders. During their student days, they were influenced by Gandhi's call to the youth to settle in the villages and get involved in the work of rural reconstruction. They decided to settle in Valod and serve the area. However, one of them has left the area and settled in a big city. But he continues to provide the necessary assistance to the group. Another member of the group feels disillusioned with the current development activities of the VIAS. According to him, they do not hold out the possibility of significant social change. He is, therefore, no longer very active in the VIAS. The remaining three have kept alive their interest in the VIAS. Of these, at least two members have lived away from Valod for several years to pursue other activities. Thus, from the original group, only Allubhai has been left who has been associated with the VIAS continuous since its inception. He was the one who formally took up the responsibility of managing the Intensive Area Scheme in 1954. He may be regarded as the leader of the VIAS. He has conceived several programmes and provided guidance for their implementation. He directly controls and supervises the working of the entire organisation. He presides over all important meetings and provides direction and guidance to the workers at various levels.

He is well read and keeps himself up-to-date with development programmes or other parts of the state, and similar experiments elsewhere in the country. He is full of ideas and relatively more innovative and articulate. He has his own communication network and keeps track of all the details. He also holds discussions with the other leaders of the Valod group on various important issues relating to the VIAS.

There are three intermediate leaders. Two of them belong to upper castes and one is from a scheduled tribe. There are 24 workers on the periphery. A majority of them are natives of Valod, but only a few from Scheduled Tribes. Most of the heads of the institutions sponsored by the VIAS are non-tribals and come from outside the taluka. In this sense local leadership which can shoulder the responsibility of running the institutions has not yet emerged. No systematic efforts have been made so far to recruit and train local tribal leaders.

The intermediate and periphery workers are regular employees of the VIAS. Most of them are conscious of their position as employees rather than as voluntary workers. Among the workers in the periphery, many are field workers employed for specific projects. Their salaries are rather low. As different workers work in different institutions and projects, their salaries are not uniform. They are also subject to different rules and regulations. Such a disparity creates discontent among the workers. Since their employment is temporary, they leave the job as and when they find an attractive or stable alternative.

Although, all leaders of the VIAS carry out their assigned responsibilities,

commitment and involvement is greater among, the core and the intermediary leaders. Though the entire rank and file of the VIAS claims to be Gandhian, they differ in their views on several important issues. For example, they are not unanimous about the need to participate in political activities. Some of them firmly believe that voluntary agencies and Sarvodaya workers should remain apolitical. Others hold the opposite view and support involvement in the political process. A majority of them support the Congress (I). But a few sympathise with the Janta Party. Some of them strongly advocate the principles of harmony and nonviolence. But others openly advocate the path of struggle to achieve social justice. Theoretically they regard the problem of violence and nonviolence as irrelevant. Some endorse the slogan : 'Small is beautiful'. While for others, anything that provides employment to the people is beautiful. Despite all these differences, they have continued to work together. They frequently meet and discuss the new programmes they launch. But they hardly ever discuss the 'basic' issues, or the philosophy of the VIAS. Everyone is allowed to live by his convictions and to hold his views. This, in their view is the pragmatic and dynamic aspect of the VIAS. Heterogeneous approaches and views do not hamper working of the VIAS, so far as its developmental programmes are concerned. But we wonder whether they can stand unitedly as one group in the political field. Political differences among the leaders at various levels have started cropping up. And at present there is no effort to sort out these differences so as to

evolve a politically cohesive group.

The VIAS is a registered body, it has a written constitution; which defines the organisational structure and rights and responsibilities of each office-bearer. But the actual organisation of the VIAS does not conform to what is prescribed in the constitution, its organisation has continuously evolved to meet the changing requirements. The apex body is the Trustee Mandal, comprising of three persons : Jugatram Dave, Allubhai Shah and Bhikhubhai Vyas. Jugatram Dave provides a symbolic continuity with the Gandhian movement in the area which he had led since the 'twenties'. He does not take part in any organisational matter directly. That is regarded as the responsibility of those who are actively involved in the organisation. He gives advice whenever it is asked for. The remaining two members of the Trustee Mandal belong to the valod group and are very active in the organisation. Constitutionally, the position of the Trustee Mandal is advisory. But in reality it is obligatory for the Ayojan Samiti, the central body of the VIAS, to accept the advice of the Trustee Mandal. Though formally the Trustee Mandal hardly meets. The two leaders meet frequently and take decisions on all matters related to the organisation. The Ayajan Samiti consists of twelve persons. It elects the President and the Secretary every year. The position of the former is merely ornamental. One of the leaders of the core group is the Secretary. The members of the Samiti and its office bearers are by and large, selected by the two active members of the Trustee Mandal.

The VIAS has so far set up several

units. There are 3 middle and high schools, the Planning Centre, the Sarvodaya Planning and Training Centre, and the industrial complex-Udyog Vadi and Udyog Mandir, and the Antyodaya Centres. They function under its control. From the early seventies the various units are coordinated and controlled by the Planning Centre which also receives financial assistance from, foreign aid giving agencies". The VIAS has sponsored several other organisations which include two high schools, a papad rolling centre, a number of cooperative societies including a paper mill, etc. Most of these organisations work under the hegemony of the VIAS, but legally they are not under the control of the VIAS. They work as informal federal organisations. They may be called sister organisations. They enjoy autonomy in their decision making, recruitment, and day-to day functioning. Such an institutional arrangement has its advantages as well as dangers. Thanks to the loose organisational relationship between the VIAS and these sister organisations, a few from the latter have publicly disowned their link with the VIAS while others do not feel any obligation to given an account of its working to the VIAS. They virtually work independently. However, some of these organisations, though they enjoy a separate legal entity, work under the close control and supervision of the VIAS.

The major decisions of the VIAS are taken by the core group. The intermediate leaders are consulted before some of the decisions are taken. But the general feeling among them is that they are mostly involved in executing programmes. So far they have remained outside the decision making

process. This does not seem to be deliberate. In fact, the VIAS leaders make conscious efforts to involve them in the decision making process. They hold a meeting of the workers at least once a month to discuss various programmes, procedures, targets and the progress of various schemes. These meetings are also used to discuss the problems faced by the workers in carrying out programmes. A meeting of the representatives of all the institutions is held every month to review their accounts. In addition, meetings are also convened of workers engaged in a particular programme such as Antyodaya, poultry, milk Cooperative Societies, etc. However, it was observed that more often than not most of the workers on the periphery remain passive at these meetings. They merely receive instructions from above, give an account of their work, and occasionally present the problems faced by them in implementing a programme. Dialogues between the leaders at different levels, even on matters relating to the execution of programmes, has not yet started.

Free exchange of views on the basic approach of the VIAS and its programmatic contents seems in this context unthinkable. This is because there is a gap in terms of devotion and commitment between the core and intermediary leaders on the one hand, and workers on the periphery on the other. The latter are not fully involved in the activities of the VIAS. They regard these activities as merely a pan of their job. In this context, the formal meetings, although important, are not adequate for building an effective organisational bond between workers at various levels. The workers at

all levels need to be involved in the decision making process, even if that involves delay in implementation of programmes, and lowering of the targets. There is need for a sustained dialogue in a free atmosphere between the leaders at various levels to dispel the apprehensions and doubts of workers. They must have a sense of belonging and become one with the organisation.

For the optimum use of human and material resources, targets are of course important. But they should be realistic enough and take into consideration : (a) the socioeconomic and political forces operating within and outside the area; (b) preparedness of the people and their changing aspirations; (c) commitment and skills of the workers who carry out the programmes; (d) constraints of time, facilities, capabilities of the personnel and finance. Moreover, not only the qualitative aspect, but also the quantitative aspect; of the programme have also to be emphasised. The qualitative aspect requires understanding of market forces, capacity for detailed planning, coordination and patience to convince the beneficiaries. It may be added that the workers of the VIAS need to be trained to develop managerial and organisational skills. Needless to say that the management training has to be imparted in the context of the objectives of the organisation.

The VIAS can no longer rely on personal morality and individual commitment alone. They need specifically to lay down rules and regulations for regulating work behaviour, and prescribe the responsibilities of each member. Its size has

grown and activities increased many fold. People cannot work only on the basis of moral commitment. At least some economic incentives and security is needed to sustain the interest and commitment of workers. In order to reduce disparities in the remuneration of workers, those who get relatively more remuneration should be persuaded to donate at least 5 per cent of their income to the organisation. This could help tree VIAS to give more remuneration to those who get very little. That would also strengthen the emotional ties among the workers.

The VIAS has developed an approach of planned development for the reconstruction of rural society. The core leaders of the VIAS learned their first lessons in local level planning in the late forties'. They were associated with a group of Gandhians who had prepared a plan in 1950 for the village Vedchhi to mobilise local human and material resources for village reconstruction on Gandhian lines. The VIAS subsequently prepared four plans for the taluka. The first plan was prepared in 1960. The main programmes and targets laid down in the plans were decided largely by the core leaders. The draft of the plans was formulated by outside 'experts'. Neither the intermediary leaders, nor the workers on the periphery, nor village level leaders participated in the preparation of these plans.

During the first phase between 1954 and 1960, the VIAS received grant from the Khadi and Village Industries Commission. The grant was meagre and did not all the VIAS to employ more than one full time worker. However, it helped

the VIAS to start a few village industries. The VIAS had no financial resources when the intensive area scheme came to an end. The VIAS started receiving grant from foreign aid giving agencies in the mid-sixties. The quantum of grant from these agencies slowly increased. Now it receives grants from CAA (Australia), FFHC (Australia), NOVIB (Netherlands), Oxfam (UK), CASA (Germany), Swiss Aid (Switzerland) and TUFU (Sweden). The VIAS has received Rs. 19,333 thousand from these aid giving agencies between 1962 and 1981. The VIAS also makes use of financial support available for development activities from various government agencies like SFDA, IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme), Commercial banks, the taluka panchayat, etc. SFDA and IRDP distributed Rs. 1754 thousand as subsidy, and Rs. 2405 thousand as loan during the period 1977 to 1981. The commercial banks, and the taluka panchayat, distributed Rs. 29367, and Rs. 229 thousand respectively as loan during the period 1977 to 1981. The VIAS, however, has raised little by way of financial resources from the taluka. It has mainly depended on outside resources for carrying through various educational and economic programmes.

For the VIAS, education is a major instrument of social change. It made efforts to start primary schools in each village. By now, all the villages, except two very small villages have primary schools. The VIAS started 5 residential middle schools in different parts of the taluka. There are two high schools, run by private managements. There are two Ashrama

schools run by other Gandhian agencies. A University has come into existence in the taluka under the auspices of the Vedchhi Ashrama. The VIAS has also recently started a college of Fine Arts. A few balwadis (pre-primary schools) function in the taluka. The VIAS had also been occasionally conducting adult education classes. During 1978-80, it concentrated on this programme and conducted 120 adult education classes. As a result the rate of literacy has gone up to 41 percent in the taluka which is still lower than the state average, but higher than the rate of literacy in most of the tribal taluka of the state.

Compulsory education for children in the group 6-15 years remains a distant dream. It may be noted that 40 percent of the children in this age group still do not attend school. And almost every other child of the landless is deprived of school education. It should also be mentioned that the middle schools run by the VIAS do not attract local students. An overwhelming (more than 70 per cent) number of students studying in these schools come from other talukas. These schools do not substantially differ from similar other residential schools. They follow the same curriculum. Thus, they are run more or less like other residential schools managed by other Gandhians. These schools are in no way unique or distinctive. This defeats the very purpose of these schools. If education is to work as an instrument of change, a different curriculum suitable for the aim in view would have to be evolved. However, the VIAS can probably do little to alter the situation as it has to rely on the government for funds to even maintain its institutions

and present activities. The government does not permit aided schools to follow a different syllabus. However, despite these limitations VIAS have developed some links with the community. This is not true of similar schools run by the other Gandhians.

During the last three decades the VIAS has undertaken several economic programmes to improve the economic conditions of the tribals in Valod. The core leaders have always been in search of new programmes. Unlike other Gandhians, they have no inhibition about programmes like fishery or poultry generally avoided by conservative Hindus. For the VIAS, any programme which provides economic gains to the poor is good. It has also shifted its target groups. For the first two decades, the VIAS planned for the whole taluka. However, in the early seventies, it realised that development programmes have largely benefited the economically better off strata of tribals and non-tribals. The small and marginal farmers, and landless labourers derived at best marginal benefits. In order to improve the situation, VIAS shifted its attention to the poorer and deprived sections. The Antyodaya programme was started in 1975. During the last six years it has covered under various economic programmes around 4000 of the 5000 Antyodaya households. However, these economic programmes are dependent upon the wider market forces over which the VIAS has no control. As the prices of essential commodities have increased the economic conditions of some of the Antyodaya families has improved only marginally. During this period about one thousand new families have slipped to the

level of Antyodaya families.

Agriculture development is one of the important on going programmes of the VIAS. However, it does not seek to seriously tackle the institutional problem of changing the land ownership structure. But in principle it accepts tenancy and lard ceiling legislation. It makes no serious efforts to implement the Minimum wages Act for Agricultural labourers. On the other hand, the VIAS popularised the use of modern technological inputs for improving agriculture during the last three decades. The VIAS organised meetings and demonstrations to persuade the cultivators to use chemical fertilizers, improved seeds, insecticides, etc. It was instrumental in helping the farmers to secure electric and diesel pump sets. It also arranged for subsidy and loans for the levelling of land. Consequently, the consumption of various modern agriculture inputs in the taluka has increased several fold over the years. The crop pattern has changed. Cultivators as increasingly shifting to commercial crops. Agricultural production per hectare has increased. But, the use of inputs and the rise in production are not stable. The use of chemical fertilizers, insecticides, improved seeds, etc. has not been constant. It may probably be due to extraneous reasons such as the distribution system, lack of availability and weather. At any rate, despite these programmes it is certain that there is no appreciable improvement in the economic conditions of the small and marginal tribal farmers. Many of them do not own even a pair of bullocks or an iron plough. They have no access to irrigation facilities round the year.

In order to provide a subsidiary source of income the VIAS has started a number of small scale industries with the financial support of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission. These industries include Khadi-spinning and weaving, soap manufacturing, handmade paper, oil pressing, printing press, etc. Some of these industries are more than two decades old. But as they do not provide even subsistence remuneration, the people do not take them seriously. In the absence of other gainful work, a few people do take to spinning or weaving. But they do not develop a sustained interest in this work. Hence, only a handful of persons have continued to spin or weave. In fact, no one from the taluka is engaged in whole time weaving. Other industries provide employment to hardly a dozen persons.

Under this Antyodaya programmes, the VIAS has been involved in the dairy development industry. With the financial assistance from government agencies like SFDA, Tribal Development Corporation and Commercial banks, the VIAS has helped poor cultivators to purchase milch cattle. But the experience so far has not been very encouraging, as it gives little supplementary income to the people. The VIAS had also undertaken poultry farming but without much success. It promoted two poultry cooperative societies. Both of them incurred losses and one of them had to close down.

The most successful programme in terms of generating sufficient income is papad rolling. It ensures on an average an income of Rs. 7.35 per day. This is more than the minimum wage prescribed for an agriculture labour. Papad production is

entirely market oriented and it follows the techniques of modern marketing and management. It has provided employment to many women of the scheduled castes and tribes.

The major shift in the VIAS economic programme is from small labour intensive to medium scale capital intensive industries. It has started a paper mill as a cooperative venture. The paper mill faces several initial problems related to managerial skills, raw material and market. Several difficulties would have to be overcome to make it viable. It will have to develop a commercial approach and apply modern management practices to make the venture a success.

In the context of the pace of economic development in the country and the performance of the voluntary agencies, the performance of the VIAS economic programmes can neither be said to be very encouraging, nor is it very disheartening. Most of the small scale industries programmes have not become viable. The income, they provide is very meagre. In fact it hardly contributes anything to the betterment of the economic conditions of the poorer people. One may take solace in the fact that perhaps because of these programmes starvation is not conspicuous in the taluka. At the same time, it has to be admitted that there is some improvement in agriculture production in Valod taluka, and the situation is not as bad as it is in many backward tribal talukas. But it is no better than that of the advanced tribal talukas. This is not solely because of inadequacy of the VIAS. The farmers of valod have to work under the constraints of the larger system. This also applies to dairy and poultry

fanning. They have to sell their products in urban markets.

Such activities have some potential for improving the agriculture output and developing small scale industries. But for that purpose production has to be directly linked with the market e. g. Lijjat papad. 'Quality control' and modern management techniques have to be developed. VIAS also needs to think dispassionately about some of the industries which cannot survive in a competitive market and consume a lot of energy of the leaders. It will have to scrap ambitious programmes and concentrate only on those which offer clear advantages in terms of marketing and remuneration.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the economic programmes the VIAS has made people aware of the available opportunities for economic advancement and has also helped them to avail of the benefits of such opportunities. Its role as an intermediary between the government bureaucracy and the rural people, has reduced the gap between the society and the polity. Its institutional network in the taluka has brought the officials and the people closer in a meaningful interaction in the sphere of 'development'. The presence of the VIAS workers in the area has made the government bureaucracy more responsive to the needs of the people, and careful in their dealings with them.

We also found that continued interaction between the people and the VIAS workers has infused greater confidence in them, and enhanced their participation in public affairs. They have become more enlightened and politically conscious, and now compete for positions

of power. A new leadership has emerged among the tribal people. Some of them hold positions of power in the panchayats, cooperatives and government. Ironically enough, a few of the young tribal leaders consider the VIAS as their rival. They complain that the local tribals were not getting positions in the VIAS. SUCH complaints are inevitable and indicative of the emergence of a new leadership with rising aspirations. This is a pointer to the fact that the efforts of the VIAS have not been completely wasted.

On the whole, the VIAS has made a perceptible impact on the taluka in relation to some aspects of community life as noted above. But it has certainly not been able to create, and at the moment it does not seem to be in the process of creating the Sarvodaya Samaj of Gandhi's concept. Obviously, it is impossible to prepare and implement a decentralised plan in a centralised economy. Economic activities in any area are linked with the market economy dominated by urban industrial houses. At the most one can participate in the market economy, and thereby, improve economic conditions of the area. The leaders of the VIAS need to recognise this reality, rather than be swept off their feet by forces which are in the habit of flying in the face of facts, and ignoring the reality as it exists.

Similarly, the VIAS has to accept that eve» effort aimed at improving the condition of the deprived sections will face resistance from the better off sections of the society both tribal and non-tribal. This may lead to tensions and conflicts between various social groups. And Valod cannot be an

exception. A few of the VIAS leaders have recognised the inevitability of conflict in any process of social change towards an egalitarian society. Vested interests resist such changes and cherish the hope of maintaining harmony and peace. Despite difference on such issues of basic approach VIAS workers have continued to work together. But they may not be able to hold together for long. At any rate, this will affect their commitment to work effectively for common goals. Thus, the VIAS has to seriously review its ideological position in the light of its experience and accordingly re-examine its goals.

Even for activities within the given socio-economic framework, the VIAS leaders would have to make serious efforts to mobilise local human and material resources for sustaining and enhancing development programmes. Probably the VIAS is in an ideal position to undertake this task at this stage of its development. The VIAS leaders have established their credibility and have an impressive record of performance. Therefore, it may not be difficult for them to find support for their efforts from the community. At any time the VIAS has to harness community resources and/or accumulate capital through savings and production, if it has to sustain its development efforts and stimulate people's participation. It cannot perpetually depend on government and other foreign agencies for financial support. It is not that such outside support may not be forthcoming. But such dependence will make them lose self-confidence. It would also retard the process of awakening among the people about their role in society.

The performance of the VIAS, however, is not poor when its working is compared with that of several other voluntary agencies. Most of them have drifted away from their declared objectives. The VJAS and similar other organisations in the area are reformist organisations. They are trying to carry out 'development' programme for 'modernising' the country within the given framework. The success on the VIAS is due to its core leaders who have consistently sustained their interest in rural development work. They are committed, honest and sensitive to the suffering of the masses. They are not against politics, but at the same time they are not in the race for political positions to satisfy personal ego. They are open and not dogmatic in their ideology and approach. They are always in search of new methods to change the rural society.

The VIAS has carried out development programmes according to its own capabilities and available resource. The limitations of these programmes are the limitations of the system, though, as mentioned above, there is some scope for the VIAS to improve its performance. However, the structure and working of the VIAS is not unique in the sense that it cannot be replicated elsewhere. What is needed is a team of committed and honest

local workers headed by a spirited and dynamic leadership.

Would such sustained efforts by voluntary groups like the VIAS bring about changes in rural society that would help build an egalitarian social order? This is a broad question, and may lead to polemics. At the moment we restrain ourselves to arrive at any judgement. However, suffice it to say here that such efforts certainly bring some socio-economic changes in the society, as has happened in Valod. They accelerate government efforts aimed at rural development. The rural poor can also get some benefits from such programmes. Special care has to be taken to continuously support and monitor these programmes. In short, the possibilities of piecemeal changes within the capitalist system are not yet fully exhausted, course, such changes cannot build an egalitarian social order of any kind Gandhian or socialist. One should be satisfied by the fact that whatever 'progress' is possible within the system can be attained by such dedicated groups. Without them, many of the development programmes of the government would, have remained largely on paper. Perhaps the conditions of the rural poor would have been more deplorable in the taluka than it is today. This is the achievement as well as the limitation of the VIAS.



The Lost Trails or some Thoughts on Pre-Independence Economics in India

R R Brahmananda

I

India has a very long history and we postulate that it will live through the future for an indefinite period. History consists of several facets or angles. Economic history is concerned with that aspect of history wherein the course of economic magnitudes through time are studied.

In this paper, we are concerned with thinking about the Indian economy from around the middle of the 19th Century till the advent of freedom. This is the period when the British Raj was in complete control of India and economic policies were being designed largely from Whitehall. The perceptions about the Indian economy were remotely obtained and very often the actual executives and administrators of the Raj in India had views which were not supported by the authorities in Britain. With the establishment of major universities, economics was being developed, though slowly, as an independent discipline. The education imparted was with the British background of broad liberalism in so far as Britain was concerned. The



scholars studying in India noted that the British administration in India was far from liberal and had not paid sufficient attention to the full development of the Indian economy. It is in this context that independent economic thinking of various strands started flowering in India. Gradually, the academic infrastructure grew and

specialised studies of different aspects of the Indian economy were getting prepared. At the same time, the nationalist movement with various shades was itself generating economic ideas which had their counterpart in academic thinking. In the following paper, which has been developed out of an earlier study by the author, a brief outline of major developments in Indian economic thinking during the period is presented. We have tried to delineate different schools, though at that time, the differences did not present themselves in a manner for sharp differentiation. One approach is to view the present as flowing from the past and this is an important angle in history. We have kept this approach in mind.

II

■ Two Schools :

The development of economic ideas in India during the pre-independence period under discussion can be conveniently divided, chronologically and analytically, into three stages. During the period of the latter half of the 19th Century as well as the beginning of the 20th Century, the central topic of economic discussion concerned itself with the overall nature of the effects of British rule in India. On this tended to emerge gradually two distinctive viewpoints or types of bias. The school of thought headed by Naoroji, termed as the Naoroji School, looked upon the British rule as the *causa causans* of India's growing backwardness. Naoroji and those who held similar views sought to place in the forefront the Indian point of view in matters of economic policy. Somewhat contemporaneously, the school headed by Ranade, termed as the Ranade School, drew attention to the various deficiencies in India's socio-economic structure as constituting the underlying real reason for India's lack of growth. Ranade sought to extricate the economic issues from the political. He influenced substantially the general form and content of Indian economic thinking on economic issues. State intervention was conceived as the means to overcome the deficiencies in India's economic institutions. The Ranade School generally concentrated upon the study of the detailed aspects of various economic phenomena through the historical and empirical methods. Each issue of economic policy was examined in its isolation. The need to evolve a general set of laws and various theories to explain or interpret the nature of the complicated inter-relationships

was underscored. It is to the Ranade tradition that we owe the origin of the general bias of the Indian thinkers, specially in the academic, in regard to State intervention. Ranade's essential contribution was to emphasise the need of modifying economic policy of *laissez faire* in the light of Indian institutional deficiencies. (I may mention that it was in the late Fifties of the 20th Century that I prepared a paper for the Columbia University drawing attention to the two Schools of thought as such. I circulated the paper to a number of senior scholars at that time. D. G. Karve wrote to me that I should also concentrate on the common elements in Naoroji and Ranade since the basis for division into two schools was not probably apparent to the scholars themselves. Karve asked me to go through the writings of G. V. Joshi. I had drawn attention to the aversion of Indian scholars to developing theoretical standpoints and this was appreciated by the late A. K. Dasgupta, who developed the idea of absence of attention to theory so conspicuous in Indian thinking as his theme in his seminal address to the Indian Economic Association's Chandigarh Conference in 1960. D. R. Gadgil, who I thought was a follower of the Ranade School, wrote appreciatingly of the paper and wanted to think more about the ideas mentioned in my paper. T. V Parvate, the great biographer of Gokhale, Ranade and Tilak, referred to my concept of two schools in his book on Ranade. Years later, he asked me to give the foreword to his book on Tilak. I still remember his visit to the Department in this connection. He was a giant scholar in the rich Maharashtrian tradition. I hope his three biographies will be published by the

Government of India, or by the ICSSR. Parvate had devoted his lifetime to collecting material for his biographies and his trilogy is a landmark in biographical literature in India or even in the world itself.

■ The Gandhian School :

The second stage in the economic discussions owes its direct inspiration to the various socio-economic movements carried out in the economy as part of the programmes of action of Gandhiji and other nationalist leaders. Gandhiji owed much to Naoroji, Gokhale and other nationalist leaders and inherited the viewpoint that in economic matters the Britishers did not keep India's interests in mind. In fact, Gandhiji would gently mock at Indian scholars presenting optimal policies, because he had realised that unless India became free, policies would never be formulated, primarily in the interest of India. When C. N. Vakil wrote his articles on poverty, Gandhiji published them in his weekly, and just pointed out as to who would implement the policies! Gandhiji actually wanted the Indian economy to develop in its own way without dependence of the Government on the postulate that the British would continue to rule India in the British interests. Gandhiji evolved a practical course of action based upon ideas not repugnant to his ideals of truth and non-violence which he cherished. It is in this context that his plea for *Swadeshism* and for the generation of the Khadi, Village and Small-scale Industries has to be understood. The tradition of tolerance and liberalism was an essential part of the framework of Gandhiji's ideas. He conceived the future of India in terms of an economic order in which there would be

maximum scope for decentralised initiative and the principle of voluntarism. He pleaded for moderation in regard to 'the goals of materialistic achievement and emphasised the importance of basing programmes of action upon the spontaneous and self-propelling urges of voluntary endeavour on the part of millions of individuals. He wanted to root out from the system the basic causes of class conflict which might tend to lead to various form of totalitarianism. The Gandhian School of ideas was developed further during the post-Independence period. It continues to be a fertile source of new ideas for Indian and western scholars, on environment, economic autonomy, poverty eradication, social justice, etc. Among the Indian academics during the period of the Raj, J. K. Mehta of the Allahabad University, was the lone scholar who tried to provide a fundamental counter to western economics by developing the concept of wantlessness. Mehta was the deepest Gandhian scholar of the period. His ideas went further than Hind Swaraj and he conceptualised Gandhiji's fundamental economic ideas in an abstract manner.

■ The Industrialisation School :

Gandhiji's ideas, however, came into sharp conflict with both the institutional school as well as the newly emerging but influential trend of thinkers who favoured rapid industrialisation and central planning as the only salvation for India's poverty. To the last category belong the ideas of Jawaharlal Nehru who was deeply influenced by the Soviet experiment, of M. Visvesvaraya who was influenced by America's achievements, and of Binoy Kumar Sarkar who was influenced by the achievements of Germany

and Japan. The idea of central planning as the means through which the problem of mass poverty and unemployment could be eradicated gathered strength during the period. But, the leader of the School in the political sphere. Nehru, had been subjected to the deep influence of Gandhiji as well as of the British liberalist tradition. He wanted a quick improvement in the standard of living and hence, realised the need of superior techniques. But, he also favoured the preservation of the atmosphere of freedom and voluntary self-initiative. The view of Nehru serves to point out the impressions of a leader who is conscious of the deep conflicts underlying the growth of State power in the matter of economic planning. The industrialisation school emphasised the need for India to build within heavy industries with a view to be self-sufficient in the wherewithals for industry.

■ The Planning Schools :

The third stage of the discussion consists of some unsystematic efforts in respect of drawing up of blueprints for the future. The discussion was mostly conducted prior to the and during the period of the Second World War. The lead was taken by the industrialists led by J. R. D. Tata and G. D. Birla. The Gandhians under the leadership of Sriman Narayan Agarwal prepared the Gandhian plan. These blueprints reflect the diverse points of view underlying the thinkers' combination of the ideal and the ideal means to achieve it. Here again., the conflicts between the Gandhian approach and the Planners' approach become obvious and marked in the particular contents of the different programmes. All along, the

academic tradition generally tended to confine itself to studies of particular institutions or economic categories. On national issues or on controversial matters, it tended to reflect, rather than lead, the prevailing sets of opinions. An exception to the general trend was the pattern of thought process of M. N. Roy who was among the very few who perceived the' deep conflicts underlying the divergent viewpoints and who also sought to bring out a reconciliation between State planning and decentralisation. Under Roy's leadership another plan, known as the People's plan, was prepared by Tarkunde and G. D. Parikh embodying his ideas. During the period of the close of the Second War, Subhas Chandra Bose and later Jawaharlal Nehru initiated blueprints for different sectors prepared by different experts on behalf of the National Planning Committee (NPC). The key economist associated with this was K. T. Shah. He was assisted in some portions of the NPC work by J. J. Anjaria.

A few words on the outstanding *work* of M. Visvesvaraya in the field of development economics and the relation of planning to the same. Visvesvaraya, a top most engineer of his period, had practical experience as Dewan of Mysore. He introduced periodic economic conferences to awaken interest of administrators and others to economic problems. Visvesvaraya's method was of a comparative study of levels of development of western countries, Japan and of India. By putting the information on different aspects of the economy of these countries, he found that the deficiency of India was in respect of the proportion of people engaged in industries which had high value added per unit of labour. He also noticed the

comparative differences in the levels of technical and general education and concluded that priority for the above had to be given in India. He then noticed the lack of interest in development in India and introduced the concept of homogenisation of attitudes and of institutionalisation of development agencies and impulses. The notion of Indianisation connoting a national will for uplifting the people through material development was evolved by him in 1920 itself. He wanted the people to be thrifty, to work hard and to absorb the habits of developed countries in regard to material pursuits. He was against superstitions and wanted religion to be confined to homes. He gave first importance to English language as the gateway to new technological ideas. He wanted the erosion of the caste system by making people work together and eat together. In 1920, he wrote the book titled “*Reconstructing India*”. In this, he tried to show to the British that by developing India materially, they would cease to depend on the U. S. This was a new approach to future development. But, the British did not learn from that book, otherwise the history of the two countries would have been different. In 1934, when ideas in the environment were more akin to his own, he wrote “*Planned Economy for India*”. In a sense whereas Nehru’s heart sided with Gandhi, his mind sided with Visvesvaraya. The roots of Nehru’s planning ideas can be seen in the influence of Visvesvaraya on Nehru. Like Visvesvaraya, Nehru believed that the forces of economic development would gradually wipe out superstition, bigotry and medieval attitudes and the age old social evils of India could be eroded because of the development of the economy. Unfortunately, this postulate

does not seem to have been valid. Like Visvesvaraya, Nehru also wanted a scientific temper to develop in India. The history of India after independence is a slow process towards the Utopias in human relations visualised by Nehru and Visvesvaraya. But, one must remember that Visvesvaraya was probably the first thinker in the world to have conceived of material development on modern technological lines along with required social attitudes as the heart of development economics. His book “*Reconstructing India*” written in 1920, probably is the first holistic work in the area of applied development from the angle of developing countries.

III

■ Nationalist Movements and Economics :

The trends in regard to economic thought have to be studied in the context of the nature of the problems confronting the economy at the time the thinkers flourished. We shall deal specifically with the economic ideas as they evolved in India since the advent of the British rule. Economics is a relatively young member to the family of sciences; the analysis of economic problems with specifically devised techniques, hypotheses and models began systematically more or less with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. In India it was only during the closing period of the 19th Century that systematic attention towards economic problems began to be paid. The discussion of economic ideas was conducted during most of the period with which we are concerned in an atmosphere of political subjugation. The close correlation between the growth of the nationalist movement and the evolution of economic ideas is indeed marked.

Dadabhai Naoroji, R. C. Dutt, Mahadev Govind Ranade, K. T. Telang, Subramanya Iyer (who founded the Hindu), Dinshaw Wacha, Gopal Krishna Gokhale were all connected with the Indian National Congress and participated actively in the promotion of economic ideas from a nationalist angle. It was Dinshaw Wacha who first propounded the need for systematic study of economics and statistics in India.

■ Effects of British Rule :

It may be interesting to obtain a broad picture of the change that took place in the Indian economy during the period of the rule of the East India Company and later on, that of the Crown in India. At the end of the 19th Century, India was famed throughout the world for her relative opulence. She was termed as the “land of gold” by statesman, travellers and poets. At the then known state of technical knowledge, India was also considered as the leading industrial country in the world. While here is no doubt that the average standard of living of the Indian was not absolutely so high for us to be proud of, nevertheless, there was an impression that the position of the people of India appeared to be generally superior to that of the people in other countries. Comparatively, India had both a relatively prosperous peasantry and a flourishing manufacturing sector. The products of her skilled craftsmen were in demand through the world. Naturally, India used to import annually large quantities of gold and other precious metals. The structure of economic organisation in India had been maintained intact over hundreds of years, despite vast political changes within her borders. The Moghul rulers particularly had introduced a number of innovations in

regard to fiscal administration. Land revenue was the chief source of revenue; and Government receipts were spent generally on administration and in some cases on various productive improvements like roads, public works, tanks etc. The advent of the East India Company and the gradual ascendancy of British power over the Indian scene soon transformed the picture of the Indian economy from one of enviable opulence to that of conspicuous poverty. This period witnessed a gradual decay of the towns and of the urban and rural handicrafts. This was highlighted in the works of R. C. Dutt. Those industries for which India had been traditionally renowned lost their markets. It was found that on account of the decline in the absolute number as well as relative proportion of the population depending upon non-farm sources of employment, the pressure on land increased. It may be noted that this was the same period during which Great Britain introduced important changes in her techniques of production in agriculture and in industry. She was transforming herself from a predominantly agricultural economy to a leading industrial nation in the world. It appeared that Britain tended to develop her industries at the cost of Indian industries. She levied very heavy import duties on imported Indian products and literally banned the export of plant and machinery. She employed various questionable and coercive methods in the matter of deskilling the highly trained Indian craftsmen. In many cases, workers were forced to work in British-owned factories. The power of economic patronage of the State developing upon the British on account of political suzerainty was positively utilised to

discourage the markets for Indian handicrafts and to render their use out of fashion. Numerous ways were resorted to popularise the products of Britain. India tended gradually to slip into the position of a predominantly agricultural colony of Britain.

■ Counterfactual Hypothetical Scenario :

One could have easily observed how at the same time that the economic position of India was deteriorating, that of Great Britain was improving by leaps and bounds. It would be natural to ask the question in this connection whether these two events were in some respects correlated with each other. How is it that India lost ground to the Britishers? Would it not have been possible for Indian craftsmen to switch over to newer techniques under normal circumstances? Would not a Government, interested in India's welfare and development of India's industries, hasten quick adoption of newer techniques which in turn would have transformed the economic scene? Would that not have enabled her to maintain her leadership in industries? Would it not have utilised measures of commercial and financial policy in order to maintain and strengthen India's position in the economic sphere? In other words, could the decline of India be solely due to the impact of British rule?

■ The Chief Economic Problem as Perceived during the British Period :

It appears as if the central economic problem since the 19th and part of the 20th Century was to provide an integrated explanation of why India was not growing, and why it was actually declining. The

Indian thinkers tried to establish what might be termed as an Indian point of view in regard to overall issues of economic policy. The broad pattern of ideas governing such an approach could easily be stated and perhaps appreciated. Whether at home or abroad, the Indian thinkers came into close contact with the knowledge of economic conditions obtaining in Britain. They were naturally conscious of the prosperity of Britain and the poverty of India. When they started assessing the effects of the British economic policy on India, they could ill afford to ignore the broad background premise that in its economic policies in India, Britain considered the safeguarding or the promotion of her interests to be relatively more important than those of India. At the official level both in India and in England, there could be no specifically Indian point of view. The question of a distinction between the interests of India and of Britain and the formulation of policies with a view to giving equal importance to the former did not suggest itself or appeal to the ruling authorities. Most of their effort was taken up towards providing proof of how the basic approach towards economic policy in India adopted by the Britishers was deeply coloured by the nature of the political relationship between the two countries. India's interests suffered by the errors of omission and commission in economic policies. If only India has been free, or if England had treated the welfare of Indians as of equal importance as that of her citizens, the economic position of India would have been substantially improved. They maintained that the change in India's economic face was essentially due to the deliberate effects of British rule. The

Naoroji School drew attention to the annual drain of wealth that was taking place constantly from India to Britain. Elaborate statistical calculations and historical studies were conducted with a view to proving the above point. Almost all the thinkers generally tended to be influenced by the technique of dynamic analysis of the English classical economists. By draining her of her wealth, Britain was reducing the employment capacity of India. The conspicuous form in which the drain manifested itself was in the exportable surplus in Indian trade, amounting annually (during Naoroji's time) to about Rs. 30 crores (approximately). This annual drain of wealth worked between 5 to 10 per cent of India's national income. The drain of this surplus impoverished India's agriculture, brought about a decline in her manufacturing industries, and gradually tended to sap her powers of recuperation. At the same time, the drain implied that India had to earn sufficient surplus in exports to pay for it. This meant that India's exports had to be more than otherwise, consequently pressing down the prices of export products. The terms of trade was not as favourable to India as it could have been. The Government of India depended largely on land revenue for its fiscal resources and the burden of the land revenue charges necessitated drawing down of stocks with a view to pay the tax. Such running down of stocks argued Naoroji made the economy vulnerable to droughts which became famines. Naoroji's theory was general and by proving the poverty of India he was able to link British growth with India's decline through the accumulated effects of the drain. In fact, capital imports to India were

sourced in the previous unrequited exports flowing to Britain. The British administration did not favour priority to irrigation development out of capital imports. But, it gave priority to railway development. The former would have increased domestic production and employment, whereas the latter only made more of marketable surplus flow towards exports and enabled larger imports to occur.

Indian economic thinking from the 19th Century till the advent of independence generated a number of original concept and theories in our subject. During the long period of British rule, these ideas could not be appreciated primarily because of the inferiority complex flowing from the British rule. In this brief survey I hope to draw attention to a few of these ideas which appear to me be of distinct prominent significance :

Let us scrutinize Naoroji's drain theory. The drain or the measure of annual outflow of wealth or income directly and or indirectly originated from the British rule. The annual flow arose because of high cost of administration of the India office at London, the assignment to India of the expenses of several wars, which had no relation to India as such, the outflow of charges for pensions etc. of the British personnel who had returned to England after serving in India, the interest charges on the debt assigned to India and raised in London presumably for the export of capital directly or indirectly under government aegis for India, and the payments of invisibles on account of shipping, insurance, etc. for services supposedly rendered by British companies to India. Naoroji's point was that the bulk of the very capital that was

supposed to be sent to India, etc. had itself being the result of earlier drains. Naoroji's main contribution was to show that the British administration have institutionalised the flow of annual payments as part of the balance of payments accounting. The measure of the annual flows constituted a significant portion of the income and surplus of India. This necessitated larger exports than otherwise, and caused the terms of trade to be potentially adverse to India. The payment of land revenue and other charges regularly yield a surplus to British administration to provide for the drain outflows necessitated the running down of stocks by farmers in India made them leave emergent of dependence on the vagaries of rainfall. The exposure to famines became greater than what would have been the case otherwise.

Apart from the above, the bulk of imports specially of consumption goods, because of British administration in India and demonstration effects deprived potential demand of local industries and products. The entire public finance had to be structured to suit the annual drain payments. Similar was the case in regard to exchange rate policies. Thus Naoroji's theory was large in respect of account for all aspects of the Indian economy. Naoroji also pointed out that all the British encouraged railway development to the neglect of irrigation. The drain concept generalised as above would have accounted for the underdevelopment of the Indian economy during the British rule.

■ The Indian Point of View :

On every issue of economic policy concerning India, these thinkers pointed out how the distinctive bias was more in favour

of the British than of the Indians. Hence, the objective of their writings was to bring to the forefront the point of view of India in each of the economic issues of the day. They generally did not question the framework of policy measures pursued in Britain to achieve her own interests. But, what they questioned was that a similar perspective was not kept in mind in regard to the economic interests of India. The pioneering work of Dadabhai Naoroji is picturesquely entitled "*Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*". In other words, in policy matters, the Britishers considered the Indians generally to be inferior in status as well as in the capacity to desire and absorb modern changes in the methods of production and organisation. Naoroji as mentioned earlier, was among the pioneers of the Nationalist Movement in India. In general, the bias introduced by Naoroji in the approach to economic issues continued to dominate most of the economic thinkers in the nationalist fold as well as some members of the academic tradition. Dutt supplied Naoroji's analysis with the required historical background. He drew a vivid picture of the process by which India was reduced from a position of relative opulence at the beginning of the 19th Century to that of abject poverty at the end of the period. The same point was supported by Digby and years later documented by Radhakamal Mukherjee.

The work of Naoroji falls under two strands. In his analysis of the effects of the British rule, Naoroji emphasized the need of Indianising the official point of view in policy matters. Such an approach has both negative as well as positive aspects. In its later aspect, it leads to the evolution of those

ideas and movements by means of which Indians could tend to reverse by themselves the ceaseless one-way traffic of economic growth from India to Britain. It is in this respect that the nationalist movements of Swadeshism as well as of the regeneration of Indian industries, both large and small-scale, have their significance. The economic aspects of the process of rediscovery and regeneration of India's recuperative and resilient capacity found a clear enunciation in the works of Gandhiji. If only the Indians could reduce their purchases of imported products and tended to encourage in its stead the products of indigenous industries, it could be possible to reduce the magnitude of the annual drain. In this connection, both Gokhale and Gandhiji concentrated upon the far-reaching implications of such a programme of action which, howsoever voluntary in character, could tend to provide a powerful impetus to a speedy development of India's incipient economic powers. The ideas of Gandhiji formed part and parcel of his general approach towards what he considered as the ideal socio-economic order. The Swadeshi movement of which the development of rural and small-scale industries, particularly of the spinning wheel, was a crucial part, marked only the first stage of experimentation of a whole series of inter-connected economic ideas emanating from the philosophical and spiritual approach of Gandhiji.

■ The Link with the National Movement :

Whereas the development of economic ideas based upon the establishment of an Indian point of view in regard to the economic policy and had necessarily to concentrate upon the economic implications and impact

of the British rule upon India, the approach adopted to study various economic issues had to be based upon the premise that had only India been free, she would have become prosperous. The Naoroji school, therefore, could not help getting mixed up with the magnificent political issues of the day. Hence, sufficient attention could not be given by these thinkers to the problem of how even within the orbit of the given political relationship, progress could be possible if certain adjustments could be brought about. Further, as it appeared that the Indian point of view in economic policy tended to look upon the British rule as not merely the most important but the sole reason for the backwardness of India, attention could not be focussed upon the characteristics of the economic structure within India itself as such, and whether as it existed it could have provided the basic stimuli for prosperity. This appeared to be significant gap in the state of economic thinking. Could the search light be turned inwards and a comparison of the pattern of inter-relationships made between India and the fast developing Britain? Could it be that the Indian economic scene suffered from serious deficiencies? In other words, could the economic background of India as it was affected by the various influences of the past be different from that in Britain? If the basic economic magnitudes on which dependence had to be made with a view to bringing about higher rates of economic prosperity themselves were conspicuous by their absence or by their relative obscurity in the general scene, the nature of the political inter-relationship between India and Britain could not have been the central reason for India's backwardness. In other words, more

attention had to be given towards the technical economic magnitudes and their relative strength and weakness in the country. The defect of the British policy in India, therefore, lay in the non-recognition and non-appreciation of the basic differences in the economic backgrounds in India and in Britain. This is where Ranade's work becomes important.

■ Ranade's Critique of *Laissez Fairs* :

Most Indian and British writers tended to be influenced by the basic assumptions underlying the classical political economy. The assumptions that the different economic categories tended to be perfectly mobile, that the influence of the market was all-pervasive, that the working of free competition would tend to bring about the desired adjustments, that there was somehow a natural tendency for different resources to allocate themselves in such a way that their individual returns and hence, the total returns could be the highest, that within the framework of competition and enterprise, the maximum rate of growth of wealth could be possible throughout the working of the economic categories, and hence, the policy of *laissez faire* would tend to be in the best interests of the economy, were part of the stock-in-trade of economists of the classical school. With the presupposition that the economic magnitudes behaved in a way these thinkers postulated, it was possible for economic policies to be wholly ineffective and misdirected in character. The fundamental fault therefore was in a non-understanding of the internal mechanics of the working of the Indian economy. It functions in a way somewhat distinctly different from the

British economy. Hence, the fault lay with the *analysis* rather than the motive.

■ Attack on Classical Political Economy :

The above was the viewpoint which was brought to forefront by Ranade. He tried to isolate the economic categories from the political and levelled a powerful attack upon classical political economy. The Indian economic scene was affected by custom, convention and religions and social influences. Most of the modern institutions in the form of the market for commodities as well as agencies for financial development did not exist. Agriculture was being oppressed by population pressure which tended to increase with time. The basic institutions which were a pre-condition of economic development had to be nurtured and fostered in the economy. Indian thinkers were asked by Ranade to devote more attention to the analysis of the various institutional categories in the Indian economy. The State was called upon to transform the working of the categories in such a way that the background in India could be similar to that in Britain. *Laissez faire* could work best in an atmosphere of free competition and enterprise. Ranade specifically bypassed the political issue and the economic effects thereof. Ranade's work was preceded by that of K. T. Telang, who was among the earliest in the world to put out a strong case for developmental protection. Telang showed that protection would increase.

■ Ganesh Venkatesh Joshi :

Ganesh Venkatesh Joshi was initially a disciple of Ranade. He was a brilliant economic analyst. He identified the Indian

problem as one of the pressures of surplus labour on agriculture and related occupations. Such labour had to be diverted to industry and modern industry. Such diversion would not lead to any diminution in the production in agriculture. But, modern industry could not develop in India unless selective protection to domestic industry was afforded for some years. At the same time, India had to build sufficient technical labour to work in modern industry. Joshi extended the concept of the drain to include diversion of profits from India by the domination of British public utilities and financial institutions in India. Joshi wanted these activities to be undertaken by Indians. In many respects Joshi had anticipated the idea of disguised unemployment and the drain due to payments for foreign technical labour and profits in utility services. Joshi was perceptive enough to anticipate the problem of capital shortage. He wanted domestic savings to be encouraged. He wanted the labour transferred from agriculture to industry to be maintained temporarily by a fund. Joshi did not respond to Naoroji's drain theory. But in effect he realised the need for capital to develop domestic industry. Joshi along with Gopal Krishna Gokhale wanted public expenditures to be strictly economised. Visvesvaraya, who was educated in Pune, developed his thesis of priority for industrial development by studying the economic development of the United States. Visvesvaraya was one of the earliest to present an empirical approach to India's economic problems and also a forerunner of the concept of economic planning, of which he was a strong votary.

■ The Ranade School's Triumph over the Naoroji School :

However, the general impact of Ranade's influence was that Indian academic thinkers dropped the discussions of the effects of the drain etc. These discussions entered the political sphere, but were underplayed in academic discussions. This was unfortunate in as much as attention tended to be concentrated upon relatively non-essential issues in the economic scene. With the disappearance of the political bias, the emphasis upon capital formation tended to be relegated to unimportance. The drain theorists had plenty of substance behind them, whereas the objective school of Ranade tended to emphasise the institutional deficiencies in India and ignored the general cause which was manifesting itself in subtle ways in the various sectors; It is now well known that immobilities, rigidities and long-established social customs and conventions, together with religious beliefs, tend to give way where the pace of economic growth is rapid enough. Within limits if the growth rate is meagre, the institutional deficiencies would tend to be more powerful, but the/ other *could only be so* because of the absence of *higher growth and not because of lack of it*. In other words, if only the annual drain had not reduced the general level of economic activity in India and adversely affected its capacity to grow, the picture of the economy would have been substantially different. To England the drain connoted an increased extent of availability of various types of commodities and/or purchasing power. This enabled a quick transformation of the English economy from an agricultural one to an industrial one. Whereas formerly during the period of the Mogul rule, the

impact of all the expenditure would have been felt internally, the picture changed at one stroke with the advent of the British rule. Chroniclers record how substantial amounts of various commodities tended to be shipped to Britain. This was a sort of a tribute paid by a subordinate country to a political ruler. To Britain this represented the availability of the critical surplus of real liquid capital with the aid of which it was possible for her to reduce the proportion of her population dependent upon land and to employ them in the manufacturing sector. Along with the protectionist and other measures which Britain pursued in England, it was possible for British cloth and other industries to grow rapidly. These industries when once gained relative superiority, in their turn, tended to drive the products of Indian handicrafts out of the markets both in the world and even in India. On account of the annual drain that was taking place, it would not have been possible for India to have switched over to the new techniques. The required surplus to enable this transformation was not there. No wonder, therefore, that with the drain and the concomitant policies of the British rulers, India was gradually transformed from a relatively prosperous country to one of abject poverty.

■ The Effects of the Neglect of the Drain :

It was in such a scene that objective thinkers like Ranade, Gokhale and Gadgil tended to concentrate their attention on endogenous causes. The scene itself would have been different had India not been drained of her surplus which would have been alternatively available for a higher rate of accumulation within. There is no doubt that the growing

poverty of India which was reflected in stationary or declining standards of living during the 19th and 20th centuries owes its origin ultimately to the ceaseless one-way traffic that was taking place. The objective thinkers did some valuable service in drawing attention to how things could be improved and at what particular points action on the home front could be taken. But, they appeared to be wholly on a wrong track in attributing the main cause of India's appalling poverty and her industrial decline to her institutional deficiencies. A parallel can be drawn in this connection. It was possible for the U. S. A., a new country to switch over to new techniques and initiate an industrial revolution at such a rapid pace after the Declaration of American Independence. Even in India itself, the post-Independence experience in economic planning revealed how the so-called institutional deficiencies are never a serious obstacle to growth. The central difficulty, *per contra*, is the deficiency in the amount of surplus available for capital formation.

■ Academic Work in Economics :

This, however, is not to deny that the academic thinkers had done plenty of useful work. What Ranade sought to create was, therefore, an Indian Economics—economics as applied to the Indian economic background. Ranade and his followers naturally tended to set their face against the abstract tradition of the deductive school. In their methodological pre-suppositions their views were the antipodes of Ricardo. The emphasis tended to be more upon historical studies related to the growth and development of particular institutions, the accumulation of facts, detailed statistical

and economic investigations in regard to the working of the different segments of the economy, analysis of events on the basis of how they would have been affected by the cumulative influence of various non-political forces, a comparative study of the effects of the various types of State interference and interventions in various countries; during this period, this has been the sum and substance of Indian Economics. The competent thinkers in this school eschewed their individual bias from their studies. Broadly, economics tended to align itself with sociology and anthropology. One can well understand how with such a great emphasis upon institutional economics, the academic tradition could hardly have bothered itself with the overall issues of economic policy except in a somewhat summary fashion. The past, rather than the present, minute categories, rather than the general scene attracted their attention, and whenever the discussion of the aggregative functioning of the economy and the types and characteristics of the economic order that had to be fashioned out through policies came up for discussion, most of the members of the academic tradition were taken unawares. No wonder the overall ideas in regard to the economic planning and the visions in regard to the characteristics of the social order which was worth striving for had generally to be provided from outside the academic tradition. It appeared as if it were the general influence of Ranade had somewhat a dampening effect upon the economic thinking itself. Actually, for the most of the work done very little new thought was necessary. And members of the academic tradition who were generally subject directly or indirectly to the

influences then currently prevalent in the British economic scene, continued to draw upon Western economics for their tools and equipment. Very modern tools were, as it were, being handled to tackle problems which were somewhat highly institutional in character.

■ Contributions of Indian Scholars :

The academic tradition has a long record of useful work—of course, within the orbit—in the economic sphere. It is, however, possible to mention only a few names in this connection: in the field of General Economic History, J. N. Sinha (early banking), T. Morison (economic transition), Vera Anstey (general economic history), Buchanan (development of capitalist enterprise), P. N. Banerjee (public finance in British period), and D. R. Gadgil (industrial history); in the field of Public Finance, Dinshaw Wachha (municipal finance), K. T. Shah (survey of public finances, also during the Second War), C. N. Vakil (development in public finances in India), J. C. Niyogi (income tax), J. C. Kumarappa (public finance during the Second War), V. K. R. V. Rao (income tax) and P. K. Wattal (financial administration); in the field of Industrial Economics, R. J. Thomas (industry during the Second War period), N. S. R. Sastry (industrial development from a statistical angle), Balkrishna (industrial decline in India), R. S. Lokanathan (industrial organisation), C. N. Vakil (growth of industry), and R. Balkrishna (productivity); in Agricultural Economics, Malcolm Darling (Punjab agriculture), Gilbert Slater (south Indian villages), Manilal Nanavati (rural problem), J. J. Anjaria (rural problem), K. C. Ramakrishnan (co-operative movement),

Narayanaswamy Naidu (south Indian agriculture), Radhakamal Mukerjee (environment), D. R. Gadgil (rural studies), Baljit Singh (agriculture and food) and B. N. Ganguli (agrarian relations); in the field of Population Studies, R K. Wattal (population problem), P. C. Gyanchand (teeming millions), Brij Narain (technical demographic analysis), B. N. Ganguli (population and regional aspects) and B. T. Ranadive (Malthusian angle on population), S. Chandrashekar (infant mortality); in the field of Industrial Labour, D. R. Gadgil (regulation of wages), B. Shiva Rao (labour movement) and R. R. Pillai (wages); in the field of Money, Banking and Credit Organisation, Findley Shirras (currency developments), C. N. Vakil (currency and prices, inflation during the Second War), S. K. Muranjan (currency and prices, banking development), B. Dasgupta (currency history), B. R. Ambedkar (currency history), Brij Narain (prices), Junankar (gold-exchange standard), Chablan (currency history), J. N. Sinha (currency and related development during the depression), S. K. Sarma (role of reserve bank), B. F. Madon (exchange problem), D. R. Samant (capital market), L. C. Jain (currency history, indigenous banking), M. M. Mulki (capital market), M. L. Tannan (banking), S. G. Panandikar (banking history), in the field of Fiscal Policy, V G. Kale (case for protection), John Matthai (tariffs), C. N. Vakil (Ottawa agreement), H. L. Dey (Case study of protection), B. R. Adarkar (effects of eighteen pence rate), B. N. Adarkar (devaluation), B. R. Shenoy (Post-War depression) and B. N. Ganguli (devaluation); in the field of National Income Studies, Dadabhai Naoroji (estimation of income), F.

J. Atkinson (estimation of income), V K. R. V Rao (estimation of income), Findley Shirras (poverty), K. T. Shah (estimation of income and wealth) and Khambatta (estimation of income and wealth), and in international economics, R C. Ray (trade history), Durga Prasad (trade history), B. K. Madan (trade history), Venkatasubbaiah (study of structural changes in trade) and B. R. Shenoy (effects of exchange rate changes). Indian economic problems were studied through series of textbooks on the Indian economy. The first text book was by Jadunath Sarkar, presenting a general account of the Indian economy. V G. Kale's two volumes of work on Indian Economics, and P. N. Banerjee's work on the same theme held the field for several years. The Jathar and Beri two volumes work on Indian economics was the most popular text for decades. One important characteristic of the academic tradition is the versatility of the senior thinkers. On them devolved the responsibility of opening up new fields of study. Most of them had their early training at the British or other Western Universities. All of them tended to be influenced by the historical and institutional approach. In this respect, they appear to have accepted Ranade's basic diagnosis of the economic ills of India. When we look at the development of economics in India, a few versatile authors hold the field. We may mention the names of K. T. Shah, V. K. R. V. Rao, D. R. Gadgil, Findley Shirras and Brij Narain in this connection. A great lacuna is the absence of attention to abstract treatment of Indian problems with improvised conceptualisation for the same. There are very few theoretical writings in the Indian tradition in the British period. A. K.

Dasgupta's work on Surplus, J. Ghosh's work on Profits, B. P. Adarkar's work on the theory of monetary policy, S. L. N. Simha's work on the Theory of Interest, B. R. Shenoy's work on Relative Price Levels, junankar's work on gold-exchange standard, and S. K. Muranjan's work on interest rates are the exceptions to the general non-theoretical tradition in Indian economics.

■ Contributions of British Scholars to Indian Economics :

British Civil Servants and Economists working in India in various capacities during the period of the British rule made several notable contributions to development of economics in India. Atkinson, a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society, was the statistical adviser to the Government of India in the Nineties of the 19th Century and the early portion of the Twentieth Century. He estimated for the first time, a measure of income and wealth of India for 1875 and 1895. He estimated agricultural income through the production approach and the rest of income through the incomes received approach. This was a novel method to work out estimates of national income and wealth. This approach has been followed even till today. Atkinson also worked out a detailed rainfall index based on regional data. His third contribution was to present a series of silver prices in India and also to work out an estimate of currency supply in India. Fred Harrison utilised the Stanley jevons approach to work out a series of money supply based on the rupee census data. He provided the first serious estimate of the money supply. Findley Shirras, who was the statistical adviser to the Government of India during the early part of the Twentieth

Century, applied his mind to study the problems of currency and finance in India. He also later produced a text book on public finance with Indian data. The latter work was considered as "Bastable served with Indian Curry" Shirras worked out a business activity index series for India. He also estimated the taxable capacity of India and compared it with that of other countries. He was also a pioneer in analysing empirically the poverty problem of India. Meek worked out a detailed statistical series of index numbers of production in India for a good portion of the Twentieth Century. Lees Smith from the London School of Economics was working as a teacher for Civil Servants in Mumbai Presidency. He wrote two books one on Indian Economics and one on Tariff Problems in India. He was the earliest to popularise the concept of Indian Economics and appreciated the great contribution of Ranade in this connection. T. Morison wrote a number of works on Economic Transition in India and on Industrial and Agricultural problems of India. He was critical of the Drain theory and argued that the payments were mostly on the invisibles account due to interest on British capital in India and other charges. Howard wrote a book on the Gold Standard for India. David Barbour, the Finance Member during the period of the abandonment of the silver standard, was an authority on bimetalism and he wrote on Indian developments during the later portion of the Nineteenth Century. A. M. Lindsay, an officer of the Presidency Bank of Bengal, was the original mind in the concept of the gold exchange standard. Keynes's first work was on Indian Currency and Finance and indirectly depended on Lindsay's ideas. One

must also remember the galaxy of distinguished currency controllers, who produced year by year, analytical accounts of the currency and related developments of the year. These reports are unique for India. The economics portions of the Moral and Material Progress Reports as well as the India Reports, which came later are also excellent accounts of the period. Stanley Reed initiated the India and Times of India Year Books, which contained valuable data for the period. Reed himself wrote on currency matters. One must also record the pioneering contributions of H. S. Jevons, Clark Warburton, Hamilton, Thompson, Percy Anstey and Vera Anstey in the field of development of economic studies in India. The British interests had also initiated two famous weeklies, *Capital and Commerce*, which presented studied commentaries on Indian industry, finance etc. These journals survived for a long period. *Capital* introduced the index of industrial activity on a monthly basis. *Indian Finance* was initiated by Indian interests and also provided commentaries, specialty on currency matters. *Eastern Economist* was initiated by the Birla group and introduced annual series on economic activity.

■ The Influence of the Naoroji School :

Did the Naoroji point of view have any echo in the academic tradition? No doubt, some members of the academic tradition continuously took upon themselves the responsibility of discovering and reasserting the Indian point of view underlying each one of the major policy issues during the period. The attitude of some of the Indian economists during the discussions connected in regard to the Ottawa Agreement and

Imperial Preference, in regard to the purpose and effects of Indian fiscal policy, in regard to various monetary and financial questions that used to crop up during the period, and particularly during the inflationary process in the course of the Second War, all this indicated that the torch handed over by Naoroji was kept continuously aflame. But, Naoroji had placed the central emphasis upon capital accumulation. Unless a systematic programme of action in this respect was initiated and worked out, India could never attain the full limits of her potentialities. However, this viewpoint tended to slip from the minds of most of the thinkers. Naoroji had intuitively placed at the forefront of Indian economists the problem of poverty and unemployment and had also suggested how rapid growth depended upon the magnitude of the surplus available for accumulation. The specific point of his criticism of the British rule stemmed from this hypothesis. It is, therefore, saddening to note the continuous neglect of the study of the dynamic factors and inter-relationships between them in the context of rapid economic growth. The dimension of capital accumulation tended to slip from the minds of most of the thinkers during the period. The lacuna in this respect was a serious handicap in the post-Independence period when State policy had to be used as an instrument to obtain rapid economic growth.

■ Early Work of Gandhi :

While there is no doubt that the academic tradition by itself contributed little towards the big economic controversies of the day, it is again to political leaders and social thinkers that we have to turn in order to

appreciate the trends in regard to the above. In this connection, the Naoroji tradition of concentration on aggregative economic policies and the analysis of the impact of political status upon our economic well-being continued to be manifest in the political circles with some collaboration, here and there, from the academic tradition. Naoroji had underscored the importance of pamphleting and vigorous propaganda in order to carry home the point to the concerned authorities and the public, and to assert and reassert the economic interests of India. The early portion of the work of Gandhiji falls into place when once this is appreciated. To Gandhiji the central problem was one of obtaining political freedom in as short a time as possible. This had its economic counterpart in the economic sphere. Schooled in the ideas of Naoroji and Dutt, he noted how British industrialisation was to a great extent at the cost of India and the process of transfer was going on. The Government in India wedded to the formulation of economic policies in which Indian interests counted for little, refused to interfere with it. The discussions regarding protection versus free trade could hence be only of academic interest. Could not the vast masses of India react on their own in such a way that the forces could be reversed? It is in this connection that the rationale of the *Swadeshi* movement has to be understood. The most conspicuous form in which the movement manifested was in regard to the boycott of imported cloth. This had a positive aspect in as much as it would lead to develop the local cottage and small-scale industries and units. Employment at home would tend to be increased. No doubt, this implied a certain sacrifice in terms of overall

consumer welfare, but in view of the relief that it brought to the millions of Indian rural masses, it was some- what worth the trouble. According to Gandhiji, a slight addition to the purchasing power of the latter would be substantial improvement under the circumstances. The influences exerted by Gandhiji has to be understood in the context in which the products of a good many of Indian industries as well as of handicrafts had to suffer for want of demand on account of the peculiar prejudice in favour of imported products. This was partly due to the influence of Western manners and customs in the lives of most of the educated, particularly among the middle classes. To Gandhiji the *Swadeshi* movement implied also a regeneration of the idea of self-respect. The blind imitation of the ways of the West was anathema to him, and in the economic scene, such an imitation had devastating effects. *Swadeshim* represented a *voluntary* reaction. It was as it were the vast masses had determined on their own to implement a policy of protection which the organised government refused even to consider.

■ Postulates of Gandhian Thinking :

In Gandhiji's mind the development of handicrafts and cottage industries represented something more than just a reaction. To him it also represented the possibility of the evolution of an economic society in which simplicity as against complexity, production for use as against profit, the sublimation of wants as against an increase in their number, a manageable and harmonious relationship between employers and employees as against strikes and other friction arising as a result of vast

congregations of workers in limited areas, all this and much more could be obtained if only the new economic order would tend to be characterised by a large number of small-scale enterprises. In this respect, Gandhiji was, as it were, providing an alternative vision and route to that of Marx. The best way to avoid the class conflict, according to him, was not to create the classes. This would also imply a certain extent of austerity in regard to one's idea of economic wants. All this, however, was to be based upon voluntarism. Such an economic order would have the maximum amount of decentralisation and would do away with the need of the growth of State power as well as of the capitalists. Gandhiji was not the first to develop these ideas. He had been deeply influenced by Ruskin. Some social visionaries all over the world have dreamt of some sort of a decentralised economic order in which there would be the minimum of external interference affecting the relationships of different individuals. This would not be possible if higher and higher standards of living were considered desirable for their own sake. An important idea of Gandhi was that society must aim first at the improvement in the welfare of the bottommost portions of society. This was social justice according to him. This idea has been independently developed by John Rawls in his seminal work on the Theory of justice.

A reference earlier has been made to J. K. Mehta. According to him western economics concentrates on the fulfilment of given wants under scarce resources. The wants however go on increasing with development and there is no way by which full satisfaction of wants can be achieved in

a dynamic society. It is a rat race without a finishing line according to Ranganath Bharadwaj. Mehta introduced the concept of sublimation of wants and of control over wants as the essence of philosophical enquiries in India and such countries. The 'Bliss' state can be obtained when there is an intersection between a rising material productivity curve which has a declining slope and a subjective satisfaction curve which also has the above shape. The subjective stationary state is reached when with given wants the marginal utility of income becomes nil. The objective stationary state obtains when the marginal productivity of primary factors also becomes nil. If the subjective stationary state continues to show diminishing utility possibilities, but the objective stationary state is already reached, there will be a residue of dissatisfaction about^ non-fulfilment of wants. What Mehta showed was that the subjective stationary state should soon reach zero marginal utility of income at low levels of consumption. Such a society would be a wantless society in the incremental sense. If all human beings have similar subjective states, there will be no inequality and no conflicts on that score. The eastern philosophy of controlling wants and of reaching Bliss states at low levels of consumption and utilisation of the productive possibilities will then remove the seed of economic conflicts in society. Mehta also showed that the concept of scarcity itself is subjective and hence the western conception of economics has only one concept that of unlimited wants. It is this that makes resources scarce. If wants are limited, the concept of scarcity of resources recedes. J. K. Mehta is one of the most original

thinkers in the history of economic science. And his approach can take away the types of conflicts which enters in the Marxian analysis. Gandhiji said that there is sufficient for everyone's need and not for everyone's greed. Mehta was showing a way of obtaining true *swaraj* against the flood of the influences of Americanisation of society. Indian economists have yet to reap the full benefits of the wisdom of J. K. Mehta.

■ Gandhi and Nehru :

Gandhiji could never subject his ideas to deep analysis. These issues were only the implications of a part of his gigantic work in several fields. To those, however, who were influenced by the tremendous economic progress achieved in the West and who tended to be influenced not merely by the Western system of political values but also by the nature of the goals pursued therein, the approach of Gandhiji was not satisfactory. It is in this category that we have to place Nehru, Gandhiji's greatest disciple. Nehru was influenced profoundly by the achievements of the planned economy in the Soviet Union. The immediate attainment of a higher standard of living for the masses was part of his scheme of ideas. Nehru deemed poverty as a fact to be ashamed of. State power, according to him, could be utilised with a view to raising the standard of living. This could not be possible unless the economy switched over to superior techniques of production. Old and obsolete methods of production and organisation had no place in a growing economy. Nehru was candid about his differences with Gandhiji in this regard, and it was partly because of his tremendous influence that the Congress Party entered

into the series of discussions on the needs and direction of economic planning. It was Nehru who put the planning idea in the minds of the political thinkers. But, whereas Nehru was influenced by the U. S. S. R., Visvesvaraya, an engineer-statesman, was attracted to the idea of planning as a result of the observations of the achievements in the United States. He worked out the possibilities of economic planning and devised various methods by which the State power could be utilised to build an industrial frame—working within the economy as quickly as possible. It was he who popularised the slogan, “Industrialise or perish”.

■ Impact of the Role of the State :

As, in general, the idea of the use of State power for the purpose of economic development would imply a series of conflict of various sorts between the different groups, some thinkers tended to be somewhat apprehensive of the possibility of planning landing the economy into some sort of a totalitarian framework. However good the desire to achieve a higher standard of living in a quick period, it had to be reconciled with the idea of obtaining it in the framework of a relatively free society. How could a reconciliation between the highly desirable Gandhian values with the need to develop a vast and complicated industrial framework, brought about? The discussion of these conflicts, however, tended to be somewhat submerged by the wave of enthusiasm for planning. But, if India became free the conflict between fundamental values and the need and pace of industrialisation would immediately make itself manifest. Indian thinkers generally had no clearcut answers to

these questions. The only thinker who somewhat tended to be unpopular in his lifetime but who concentrated his attention on these problems was M. N. Roy. Roy who was a dogmatic Marxist in his earlier days and had practical experience of the working of revolutions in various countries reacted sharply against Marx in his later days. He did not however accept the idea of austerity. He tended to solve the tangle by emphasising some sort of a decentralised framework for a number of important activities and along the path of development of some industries only in certain spheres. The technical implications of this solution were not examined by him. It appeared that Roy tended to accept, but to minimise the framework of the centres of pools of centralised power, economic or political.

■ Unsolved Issues :

And thus, when India became free, it was natural that the political party should concentrate upon the utilisation of State power for planned rapid development. But, the various controversies in regard to fundamental issues had not been revolved. A good many of the members of the political party were influenced by Gandhiji. Was the Gandhian economic order an ultimate goal or had to be introduced as quickly as possible? What was to be the place of the State power in the industrialisation programme? What had to be the emphasis to be accorded towards the egalitarian policies? Should the economy switch over to superior techniques or should it hold over the above process? How could growing State power be reconciled with the growing need of decentralisation? What were the basic constituents of a plan which are to be pushed

through in an economy of mass poverty and growing unemployment? What was to be the relative influence to be accorded to the present as against the future? Thus, on various issues controversy would naturally be rife. It was all right to formulate plans and blueprints and slur over the underlying conflicts between goals and means and over the priority amongst the different means when the responsibility of executing and implementing the plans had developed upon the dreamers and thinkers. With freedom came responsibility and the problem of adjustment of ends and means gained importance. If the plan was in process of the execution, naturally, the process and to bear some correlation with the ultimate dreams and ideals. Unfortunately, on all these issues the technical economists constituting the academic tradition had little to say. The problem of what determines the rate of growth of an economy and of the mechanism of how it would be possible to obtain a quick rate of growth with certain adjustments in economic policies was kept outside their purview. It was more the politicians rather than the economists that had been in the forefront of the adventure of planning. But, when plans had to be implemented in the post-freedom period various technical problems naturally arose. Herein, however, the services of the economists were indispensable. But, then, by traditional training these problems were somewhat new to the economists. So, naturally, if one finds a considerable amount of confusion and a bewildering extent of variety in the strands of thinking in the post-Independence period, one should not be surprised over much.

■ **Some concluding thoughts :**

What was the impact on post-independent India of the thinking in economics before the advent of freedom?

Certainly, there was abiding concern on removal of poverty as a central goal of post-independent development. But, whether industrialisation would do this was a big question. But, we emerged with a belief in a planned economy aiming at industrialisation as the way out. In currency matters, Ambedkar had shown that by controlling growth of money supply, the value of money could be preserved. He had also argued that by high growth rates of money, government would get a seignorage profit and he wanted this not to be used for any other purpose because that would create a vested interest in higher and higher growth rates of money. Ambedkar had shown the value of a stable price level as against a rising price level. We have still not understood Ambedkar's mission in this respect. Agriculture and rural development was emphasised by Gandhiji as also control over wants. But, we have strayed away from this path as well. Strict control over population growth was emphasised by B. T. Ranadive and Gyanchand. But, we have understood the significance only after considerable suffering. Even now we are far away from a stationary state in this respect. A wage-goods model with a balance between necessary

industries and agriculture was put forth as a sort of a harmonious path between the dream of Visvesvaraya and Nehru and Gandhiji's ideals. But, we have not realised its significance even now. J. K. Mehta had argued for the instrument of control over wants. But, we have succumbed to the American way of life. Education and work for society was emphasised by Visvesvaraya. Universal literacy has not yet been attained and the nation does not figure in our minds in the sphere of economics today. It is not that Indian scholars did not come out with original ideas suited to our conditions. Naoroji's drain continues in a different form even now because we want exports from agriculture etc., at low wages so that we can have elitist consumer goods for the consumption of a few. The present system of discouraging savings at home and depending on inflows from abroad is a negation of self-reliant development. But, full realisation of all these has not occurred. The missionary zeal of the great economists, specially in the pre-independence period has vanished from current economics in India. That of course is a tragedy and no wonder that some people argue that Indian economics must be thrown in the Arabian sea. Our minds have become so much Americanised that the better off think that the whole of Indian economics is nothing else but for the improvement of the better off!



গান্ধীজন রাখালচন্দ্র দে'র প্রতি শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি

জহর সেন

সত্য অখণ্ড, অবিভাজ্য। সমস্ত মানুষের অন্তরে সত্য একই রূপে প্রকাশিত। এর নাম একাত্মবোধ। সত্যানুসন্ধান হল একাত্মবোধের সাধনা। একাত্মবোধের মধ্য দিয়েই মানুষের ধর্মবোধ প্রকাশিত হয়। আরোপিত আচার ও আচরণবিধির সহজ নির্বিকার নির্বিচার অনুকরণের মধ্যে ধর্ম নেই। যাবতীয় ধর্মবোধের অন্তিম নির্যাস হল একাত্মবোধ। তা থেকেই নিষ্পন্ন হয় সত্য এবং স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত হয়ে ওঠে অহিংস আচরণ। গান্ধীদর্শনের এটাই হল মূল ভিত্তি। ‘সত্যের খোঁজ’ হল গান্ধী জীবনের সারকথা। এর অর্থ হল অন্তরের উপলব্ধি সত্যকে নিত্যকর্মে রূপায়িত করা এবং অন্তরে যে প্রত্যয় প্রতিষ্ঠিত ব্যবহারিক জীবনের ক্ষেত্রে তাকে প্রয়োগ করা। ‘সত্যের খোঁজ’ বলতে গান্ধীজি এটাই বুঝতেন।

প্রশ্ন উঠতে পারে, মানুষ তাঁর কর্তব্য অকর্তব্য কোন মানদণ্ডে বিচার করবে? প্রয়োজন ও পরিস্থিতির দৃষ্টিতে? না ধর্মবোধোদ্ভূত আদর্শের দৃষ্টিতে? যদি পরিস্থিতিই কর্তব্য কর্মের নির্ণায়ক হয়, তাহলে এক বিভ্রান্তি থেকে অন্য বিভ্রান্তির বেড়াজালে আবদ্ধ হয়ে থাকবো। কারণ পরিস্থিতি নিত্য পরিবর্তনশীল। যদি ধর্মবোধোদ্ভূত আদর্শকে প্রবর্তারা বলে মানি, তাহলে কল্যাণের পথ থেকে আমরা বিচ্যুত হব না। হিংসা অহিংসা দ্বন্দ্বোপকীর্ণ পথ খুঁজে নিতেও দ্বিধা থাকবে না। পৃথিবীময় হিংসা ছড়িয়ে আছে, তাই আরও গভীরভাবে অহিংসার কাছাকাছি পৌঁছতে হবে এটাই শ্রেয়, এটাই কাম্য। ঘরে আগুন লেগেছে। জল অপ্রচুর

বলেই কি নিশ্চিত হয়ে আগুনের মধ্যেই বসে থাকবো? অহিংসাই হবে আমাদের দৃঢ় আশ্রয়। মাঝে মাঝে অবশ্যই স্থলন হতে পারে। তাই বলে হিংসাকে সাদরে বরণ করে আত্মঘাতী হব না।

উপরে যেটুকু বিবৃত করলাম তা হল রাখালচন্দ্র দে'র গান্ধীপথ সম্পর্কে উপলব্ধিগম্য বিচার বিশ্লেষণ। এই বিচার বিশ্লেষণের আলোকেই তিনি লিখেছেন, “এ কারণেই মানুষের সর্বোচ্চ আধ্যাত্মিক ভাব থেকে নিম্নতম উদরান্ন পর্যন্ত সমস্ত আশা আকাঙ্ক্ষাগুলিই গান্ধীজির চিন্তা ভাবনা ও কার্যক্রমের মধ্যে আপনিই এসে পড়েছিল এত সহজে। বেদের সর্বোচ্চ ব্রহ্ম, বুদ্ধের অহিংসা, যীশুর প্রেম, খ্রীষ্টচৈতন্যের নিষ্ঠা, শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণদেবের সর্বধর্মসমন্বয়, বিবেকানন্দের শিবজ্ঞানে জীবসেবা সবই একাধারে বিধৃত হয়ে আছে এই ‘মহাত্মা’র মধ্যে” (‘গান্ধী দর্শনে এক বিহঙ্গ দৃষ্টি’, জাতীয় সমাচার, মহাত্মা গান্ধীর ১২৫ বর্ষ পূর্তি বিশেষ সংখ্যা, ভাদ্র-আশ্বিন ১৪০২, সেপ্টেম্বর-অক্টোবর ১৯৯৫, দশম বর্ষ, ১ম ও ২য় সংখ্যা, পৃ. ৭)। তাঁর আত্মজীবনীতে (বন্দীর জীবন স্মরণিকা, কলকাতা : সর্বোদয় প্রকাশন সমিতি, ১৯৭৪) তিনি অকুণ্ঠ ভাষায় প্রকাশ করেছেন গান্ধীপথের পরিণতি সম্পর্কে তাঁর হতাশা। স্বরাজ-অভিমুখী কর্মসূচিগুলি পরিণত হয়েছে প্রাণহীন অর্থহীন জীবাশ্মে। নয়ী তালিম রূপান্তরিত হয়েছে ‘বেসিক এডুকেশন’ রূপে। খাদি ও তাঁত পরিণত হয়েছে খাদি কমিশনে। হরিজন সেবা সরকারি সংস্থার কুক্ষিগত। গান্ধী সেবা প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলি সরকারি

আমলাতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থার নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন। লোকশক্তির গ্রামস্বরাজ গঠনের অযুত সম্ভাবনা বিলুপ্ত, কারণ তা এখন নিষ্ক্রিয় ও বন্ধ্য। তিনি প্রশ্ন তুলেছেন, “সংশোধিত গান্ধীবাদ সৃষ্টি করার ধৃষ্টতা আপনাদের কে শেখালো?”

মাস্টারদা অর্থাৎ সূর্য সেনের হাতেই তিনি দীক্ষিত হন স্বদেশী মন্ত্রে, সশস্ত্র বিপ্লবের মাধ্যমে ভারতবর্ষকে বিদেশি শাসনমুক্ত করার ব্রতে। মাস্টারদার প্রেরণাতে তাঁর অন্তরে জাগ্রত হয় সেবারতের আধ্যাত্মিক মহিমা। কারাবাসে তিনি বিপ্লবী হিসাবেই পরিচিত ছিলেন এবং গর্ববোধ করতেন বিপ্লবী অভিধায়। কারাবাস কালেই গান্ধী দর্শনের সঙ্গে পরিচিত হবার আগেই তাঁর উপলব্ধিতে মৌলিক পরিবর্তন ঘটে কিছু সাধারণ কিন্তু চমকপ্রদ অভিজ্ঞতার ফলে।

নাগাবীরা ছিল রাখালচন্দ্রের সঙ্গী বেতের কাজ শেখার ক্লাসে। সিদ্ধাপুরের এক গণগ্রামে সহজ সরল মারাঠি রাখাল। তাকে বোকা পেয়ে জেলের জমাদার, জেলার সবাই নিজেদের অনেক কাজ করিয়ে নিত মিথ্যা প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়ে। কিন্তু প্রতিশ্রুতি মতো জেলের মেয়াদ কমানো হয়নি বলে নাগাবীরা একেবারে কাজ বন্ধ করে দেয়। গান্ধীজির কথা সে শোনেনি বা জানত না। কিন্তু নির্বিরোধ প্রতিকার হিসাবে অহিংস অসহযোগের পথ বেছে নেয়। একদিন জেলের জমাদার তাকে বেদম প্রহার করে। রাখালচন্দ্র লিখেছেন, “জমাদার ক্ষান্ত হলে নাগাবীরা উঠল। গায়ের ধুলো বালি ঝাড়তে ঝাড়তে জমাদারকে বলছে—ঈগ নিনগে শাক বায়িতু? বেকাদের ইন্স, হোরিরি। নিন্স মনসিক্কে বাসনাগলু বি ডি বারদু। য্যাকে এম্বদেরে নানগে মতাই সলিক্কে নিন্সগে হুচ্চু কুম্মিগে জনম পুনঃ তক্কোল বেকাওগুদে। অর্থাৎ— এখন তোমার সাধ মিটেছে। না হয় আরো মেরে নাও। তোমার মনের বাসনা অপূর্ণ রেখোনা। কেন না, তোমার মনের বাসনা অপূর্ণ থাকলে গরীবের উপর অত্যাচার করতে তোমাকে আবার এই পাগলা কুত্তার

জন্ম নিতে হবে। তার কথায় না ছিল কোন উদ্ভাপ, না ছিল কোন বেদনার আভাস” (পৃ. ১০৯)। শাস্তি হিসাবে কামার এসে তার পায়ে বেড়ি পরিয়ে দেয়। এক জোয়ান এসে তাকে কাঁধে তুলে নিয়ে একেবারে নারকেল বাগানে রেখে আসল। অবিরাম তার মুখে ভজন ছিল “ভজ গুরু ধ্যানম, ভবহর ধ্যানম, ভব মবাধি ভয় বন্ধন তারক ধ্যানম ভজরে গুরু ধ্যানম।” নিরঙ্কর নির্বোধ রাখাল নাগাবীরার চরিত্রে রাখালচন্দ্র দেখেছিলেন একজন অকপট সাধু পুরুষের সমস্ত সদগুণ। একবার বেসিলারি ডিসেন্ট্রিতে আক্রান্ত হন রাখালচন্দ্র। সিদ্ধাপুরের সাধারণ কৃষকের ছেলে অমরাপ্লার সেবা ও উৎকর্ষার কথা তিনি ভুলতে পারেননি কোন দিনই। গ্রামের চৌকিদারের পক্ষে মিথ্যা সাক্ষী দিতে অস্বীকার করার জন্য অমরাপ্লার ছয় মাসের কারাদণ্ড হয়। অমরাপ্লার মতো নগণ্য কয়েদীর মহৎ জীবনে সান্নিধ্যে আসার সুযোগ পেয়েছিলেন বলে রাখালচন্দ্র গৌরববোধ করেছেন। ১৯৩০ সালে আইন অমান্য আন্দোলনে যোগ দেবার অপরাধে কারোয়ার জেলে আসেন শ্রীহনুমন্তরাও কৌজলগীর। তিনি কর্ণাটকের ছবলি জেলার একজন খ্যাতনামা উকিল ছিলেন। তাঁর কাছে রাখালচন্দ্র সংস্কৃত শেখেন ভারতীয় সংস্কৃতির মাধুর্য ও গভীরতা সম্বন্ধে তাঁর উপলব্ধির পরিধি হয় প্রসারিত।

১৯৩০ সালে কারোয়ার জেলে ডিস্ট্রিক্ট সিভিল সার্জন এবং জেল সুপারিন্টেন্ডেন্ট পদে যোগ দেন দক্ষিণ কর্ণাটকের রামরাও আন্নাপা কাল্লে। আচার্য ব্রজেন শীলের প্রেরণায় ড. কাল্লেইর জীবন ছিল সেবারত্রে সমর্পিত। ব্রজেন শীল তখন মহীশূর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে উপাচার্য ছিলেন। আহাম্মাদাব সিভিল হাসপাতালে তাঁর চিকিৎসা করেছিলেন ড. কাল্লে। আচার্য শীল তাঁকে প্রেরণা দিয়েছিলেন গীতা অধ্যয়ন, গীতা ধর্মের অনুশীলন এবং চিকিৎসা পেশাকে নিষ্কাম সেবারত্রে রূপে গ্রহণ করতে। আচার্য শীলের উপদেশ

মতো তিনি গভীরভাবে মগ্ন থেকেছেন টলস্টয়, পুস্কিন ও গোর্কী প্রমুখ অমর লেখকের সাহিত্য সৃষ্টির অধ্যয়নে।

একটি ঘটনায় রাখালচন্দ্রের ভাবনা চিন্তার মোড় ঘুরে যায়। রহেমান খাঁ নামে এক বৃদ্ধ, দুর্বল, কঙ্কালসার জমাদার সন্ধ্যার সময় একজন অল্পবয়স্ক কয়েদীকে ব্যাটন দিয়ে ঠেলে সেলে ঢুকবার চেষ্টা করছিল। সেই কয়েদী ছিল জুরাফ্রাস্ত। জেলের হাসপাতাল থেকে সে ওষুধ আনতে যাচ্ছিল। দৃশ্যটি সহ্য করতে না পেরে রাখালচন্দ্র সেই কয়েদীকে ছাড়াতে গিয়ে রহেমান খাঁকে ধাক্কা মারে। রহেমান খাঁ মাটিতে পড়ে যায়। পরের দিন একজন সত্যাগ্রহী রাখালচন্দ্রকে বলেন, রহেমান খাঁ হুকুমের চাকর। কর্তার হুকুমে সে চলে। সংগ্রামটা আসলে কর্তাদের বিরুদ্ধে। দেশ জুড়ে ছড়িয়ে আছে রহেমান খাঁর মতো অসংখ্য দরিদ্র মানুষ। তাদের সেবাই হচ্ছে সত্যাগ্রহীদের আসল কাজ। গভীরভাবে তিনি অনুভব করলেন একথার সারমর্ম। ঘরে যে আগুন লাগিয়েছে, তার পেছনেই আমরা ছুটেছি। কিন্তু আগুনে যারা পুড়ে মরছে তাদের বাঁচাবার কথা আমরা ভাবিনি। অন্য কারণেও তাঁর মনের মধ্যে তোড়পাড় চলেছিল। আন্দামান সেলুলার জেলে তাঁর সঙ্গে ছিলেন ডা. নারায়ণ রায়, নিরঞ্জন সেন প্রমুখ কয়েকজন কম্যুনিষ্ট পার্টির সদস্য। নিরন্তর তাঁরা মার্কসবাদের চর্চা করেছেন আর সচেতন হয়েছেন দল বাড়ানোর কাজে। তাঁদের আলাপ আলোচনায় দেশের সমস্যা ছিল গৌণ। তিনি সিদ্ধান্ত নিলেন, “... সারা জীবন যদি শুধু একটি রোগীর মুখে এক ফোঁটা জলমাত্র দিয়েই আমাকে ক্ষান্ত থাকতে হয়, আমি তাই করব। কিন্তু রাজনীতি নিয়ে কখনো

দেশের সেবা করব না” (পৃ. ১৭)।

গান্ধীপথে তাঁর প্রথম দীক্ষাগুরু ছিলেন কর্ণাটকের জনপ্রিয় নেতা ‘নায়ক মান্ডর’ শ্রীতিমল্লা শ্রীনিবাস নায়ক। ১৯৩৭ সালের পর জেল থেকে মুক্তি পেয়ে তিনি সম্পূর্ণভাবে গান্ধীজির কর্মপন্থায়, বিশেষ করে চরকার কাজে, আত্মনিয়োগ করেন। প্রথমে আশ্রয় নেন ধীরেন্দ্রনাথ দাশগুপ্ত পরিচালিত বিদ্যাশ্রমে, তারপর সিলেটের রাঙ্গিরকুল আশ্রমে। ১৯৫০ সালে জলপাইগুড়ি জেলার ধুপগুড়ি থানার অন্তর্গত একটি জঙ্গলাকীর্ণ গ্রামে তাঁর নিজস্ব আশ্রম প্রতিষ্ঠার কাজ শুরু হয়। ১৯৫৭ সালে স্বাবলম্বনের ভিত্তিতে জলপাইগুড়ি জেলায় প্রথম চরকার কাজ শুরু হয়েছিল। পরে আশ্রমে হাতে তৈরি কাগজ, বাঁশের দেশলাই তৈরি ও নয়া তালিমের কাজের মধ্য দিয়ে গান্ধী কর্মপন্থার নানা শাখা-প্রশাখা প্রসারিত হয়েছে রাখালচন্দ্রের উদ্যোগে।

১৯৮১ সালে তিনি শিখতে শুরু করেন ‘গীতার আলোকে জীবনদর্শন’। পুস্তিকাটি সর্বোদয় প্রকাশন সমিতি প্রকাশ করে ১৯৮১ সালের মার্চ মাসে। প্রস্তাবনায় তিনি লিখেছেন, “জীবনে কর্তব্য দুই প্রকারে স্থির করা যেতে পারে। এক, জীবন যাপনের, দুই জীবন সাধনের।” রাখালচন্দ্র জীবন সাধনের ব্রত বেছে নিয়েছিলেন। কর্মকে মাথায় বোঝা রূপে বহন করেননি, কর্মকে তরী করেই তিনি পরপারে চলে গেলেন। জীবন সাধনের ব্রতের মাধ্যমে আমাদের জানিয়ে দিলেন, “তপস্যাই কল্যাণের একমাত্র ধ্রুব আরত্রিক” (বন্দীর জীবন স্মরণিকা, পৃ. ১৩১)। গান্ধী পথে জীবন সাধনের এবং গীতার আলোকে জীবনদর্শনের সাকার ভাষ্য হলেন রাখালচন্দ্র দে।



অগ্নিযুগের বঙ্গ বীরাজনাদের বীরগাথা

স্বাধীনতার ৭৫ বর্ষ পূর্তির মহতী লগ্নে এই প্রবন্ধটি চারটি পর্যায়ে পত্রিকায় প্রকাশের মাধ্যমে বাংলার ৭৫ জন অগ্নিকন্যাদের প্রতি গান্ধী স্মারক সংগ্রহালয়ের বিশেষ অঙ্কার্থ্য নিবেদন।

চতুর্থ তথা শেষ পর্যায়

⇒ কল্পনা দত্ত (চট্টগ্রাম) :



চট্টগ্রাম জেলার শ্রীপুর গ্রামে কল্পনা দত্ত জন্মগ্রহণ করেছিলেন ১৯১৩ সালের ২৭ জুলাই। তাঁর পিতা বিনোদবিহারী দত্ত ও মাতা শোভনবালা দত্ত। ভারতের স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামের এক বিশিষ্ট নায়িকা ছিলেন

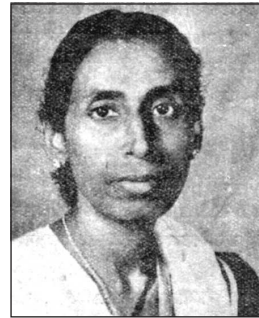
কল্পনা দত্ত। বেথুন কলেজে পড়ার সময় তাঁর বিপ্লবে হাতেখড়ি। চট্টগ্রাম অস্ত্রাগার দখল ও জালালাবাদের যুদ্ধের ঘটনায় উদ্বুদ্ধ হয়ে মাস্টারদা সূর্য সেনের বাহিনীতে তিনি যোগ দেন। প্রীতিলতা ওয়াদেদারের নেতৃত্বে ইউরোপিয়ান ক্লাব অভিযানে অংশ নেন তিনি। ফলস্বরূপ তাঁকে কারারুদ্ধ করা হয়। গান্ধীজির মধ্যস্থতায় পরবর্তী সময়ে তিনি জেল থেকে মুক্তি পান। স্বাধীন ভারতে নারী আন্দোলনে নেতৃত্ব দেন তিনি। কিছুদিন ইন্ডিয়ান স্ট্যাটিস্টিক্যাল ইনস্টিটিউটেও কর্মরত ছিলেন তিনি।

থেকে ১৯৩৭ সাল পর্যন্ত হিজলি ও অন্যান্য জেলে রাজবন্দী ছিলেন। ১৯৩৮ সালের ১২ এপ্রিল তাঁকে নিঃশর্তভাবে মুক্তি দেওয়া হয়।



⇒ প্রতিভা ভদ্র (রায়) (কুমিল্লা) :

কুমিল্লা শহরে ১৯১৪ সালের ১৬ জুলাই প্রতিভা ভদ্র জন্মগ্রহণ করেছিলেন। তাঁর পিতা অশ্বিনীকুমার ভদ্র ও মা মুণালিনী ভদ্র। ১৯২৯ সালের শেষভাগে তিনি অনুশীলন সমিতিতে যোগদান করেন। তিনি ১৯৩২



সাল পর্যন্ত পাড়ায় পাড়ায় ছোট ছোট সংঘ, লাঠি-ছোরা খেলা শিক্ষার ও কুচকাওয়াজের কেন্দ্র প্রভৃতি সংগঠন করেন। মহিলাদের মধ্যে বৈপ্লবিক কাজে সহানুভূতি সৃষ্টি করা, ফেরারী বিপ্লবীদের আশ্রয়

দেওয়া, অর্থ সংগ্রহ করা, অস্ত্রশস্ত্র ও গুপ্ত কাগজপত্র রাখার ব্যবস্থা করা, নিরাপদ ঠিকানায় খবর প্রদানের ব্যবস্থা ইত্যাদি দায়িত্বপূর্ণ কাজের ভার তাঁর উপর ছিল। ১৯৩২ সালে যখন তিনি কুমিল্লায় কলেজের দ্বিতীয়

⇒ কমলা চট্টোপাধ্যায় (মুখোপাধ্যায়) (কলকাতা) :

কমলা চট্টোপাধ্যায় ১৯১৩ সালে কলকাতায় জন্মগ্রহণ করেন। তিনি ময়মনসিংহের যুগান্তর বিপ্লবী দলের বিশিষ্ট কর্মী ছিলেন। কমলা চট্টোপাধ্যায় ১৯৩২ সাল

বার্ষিক শ্রেণির ছাত্রী ছিলেন তখন তাঁকে ডেটিনিউ করে হিজলি জেলে বন্দী রাখা হয় ১৯৩৬ সাল পর্যন্ত। তারপর স্বগৃহে অন্তরীণ থাকার পর ১৯৩৮ সালের ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসে তিনি মুক্তি পান। ১৯৪২ সালের আন্দোলনে যোগদান করায় তিনি গ্রেপ্তার হয়ে নিরাপত্তা বন্দী রূপে জেলে থাকেন ১৯৪৫ সালের আগস্ট পর্যন্ত। ১৯৪৬ সালে দাঙ্গার পর তিনি ত্রিপুরা জেলায় দাঙ্গাপীড়িতদের মধ্যে রিলিফের কাজ করেন। ১৯৪৬ সালে তিনি বিপ্লবী সমাজতন্ত্রী দলের প্রাদেশিক কমিটির সভ্য নির্বাচিত হন।

➤ ইন্দুমতি গোয়েঙ্কা (কলকাতা) :



ইন্দুমতি গোয়েঙ্কা ১৯১৪ সালে কলকাতায় জন্মগ্রহণ করেন। তাঁর পিতা ছিলেন বিখ্যাত সমাজসেবী পদ্মরাজ জৈন ও মাতা চন্দা দেবী। ১৯৩০ সালে কলকাতায় যখন ‘নারী সত্যাগ্রহ সমিতি’

আইন অমান্য আন্দোলন পরিচালনা করেন তখন কলকাতায় বাঙালি ও অবাঙালি বহু নারী দলে দলে এসে তাতে ঝাঁপিয়ে পড়েন। ইন্দুমতিও তাঁদের সঙ্গে এগিয়ে আসেন। সত্যাগ্রহী দলের সঙ্গে তিনি বড়বাজারে গিয়ে বিলিতি বস্ত্রের দোকানের সামনে পিকেটিং করতেন; বিলিতি কাপড় যোগাড় করে পোড়াতেন; দলে দলে মেয়েদের সঙ্গে সভা ও শোভাযাত্রা করতেন। তিনি নিজের নামে বেআইনি ইস্তাহার ছাপিয়ে পুলিশ কর্মচারীদের আবেদন জানান ব্রিটিশের চাকরি ছেড়ে স্বদেশসেবায় ব্রতী হবার জন্য। এই আবেদনের ফলে ইন্দুমতি গোয়েঙ্কাকে গ্রেপ্তার করা হয়। ১৯৩০ সালের ২৪ জুন তাঁকে নয় মাসের কারাদণ্ডে দণ্ডিত করা হয় তখন তাঁর বয়স ছিল মাত্র ষোলো। ১৯৩০ সালের আন্দোলনে নারীদের মধ্যে তিনিই প্রথম বাংলাদেশে কারাবরণ করেন।

➤ উজ্জ্বলা মজুমদার (ঢাকা) :

১৯১৪ সালের ২১ নভেম্বর ঢাকা শহরে উজ্জ্বলা মজুমদার জন্মগ্রহণ করেন। তাঁর পিতা সুরেশচন্দ্র মজুমদার। ১৯৩০-৩২ সাল বাংলার ইতিহাসে তথা ভারতের ইতিহাসে এনেছিলেন মহা



কর্ম সাধনার কাল। এই সময় উজ্জ্বলা ছাত্রীদের মধ্যে ও তরঙ্গীদের মধ্যে বিপ্লবের বীজ অঙ্কুরিত করে চলেছিলেন। তাঁদের বাড়ি তখন ছিল বিপ্লবীদের একটি আড্ডাস্থল। ১৯৩৪ সালের মে মাসে পুলিশের সমস্ত সতর্কতা উপেক্ষা করে কয়েকজন তরুণ ও একজন তরুণী দার্জিলিং এসে পৌঁছেছিলেন একটি দৃঢ়সংকল্প নিয়ে এবং সেই তরুণী ছিলেন উজ্জ্বলা মজুমদার। সেই দৃঢ়সংকল্প ছিল দার্জিলিংয়ের লেবং-এর মাঠে অনুষ্ঠিত একটি অনুষ্ঠানে উপস্থিত গভর্নর এন্ডারসনকে হত্যা করার সিদ্ধান্ত। এই ঘটনায় যুক্ত থাকার জন্য অবশেষে পুলিশ উজ্জ্বলা মজুমদারকে কলকাতার ভবানীপুরে শোভারানী দত্তের বাড়ি থেকে গ্রেপ্তার করে। উজ্জ্বলাকে প্রথমে নিয়ে আসা হয় কাশিয়াং জেলে এবং পরে দার্জিলিং জেলে। বিচারে উজ্জ্বলা মজুমদারের সাজা হয় ২০ বছরের সশ্রম কারাদণ্ড। হাইকোর্টের আপিলের রায়ে উজ্জ্বলা মজুমদারের ১৪ বছর সশ্রম কারাদণ্ডের আদেশ হয়। নানা জেলে পাঁচ বছর বন্দিদশা কাটানোর পর অবশেষে মহাত্মা গান্ধীর প্রচেষ্টায় অন্যান্য বন্দিদের সঙ্গে ঢাকা জেল থেকে ১৯৩৯ সালের এপ্রিল মাসে উজ্জ্বলা মজুমদার মুক্তি পান। এরপর চলে আসেন তিনি কলকাতায়। ১৯৪২ সালের আন্দোলনে যোগদান করায় তিনি পুনরায় গ্রেপ্তার হন। পুলিশ তাঁকে নিরাপত্তা আইনে বন্দী করে রেখে দেয় প্রেসিডেন্সি জেলে। ১৯৪৬ সালের ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসে তিনি মুক্তি পান।

➤ বনলতা সেন চক্রবর্তী (ফরিদপুর) :



১৯১৫ সালের ডিসেম্বর মাসে বনলতা সেন অবিভক্ত বাংলার ফরিদপুর জেলার কার্তিকপুর গ্রামে জন্মগ্রহণ করেন। তাঁর পিতা ছিলেন কালীপ্রসন্ন সেন ও মা ছিলেন সরোজিনী দেবী।

স্বদেশীভাবাপন্ন পরিবেশই তাঁর বাল্যকাল অতিবাহিত হয়। ছোটবেলা থেকেই তাঁর মায়ের মুখে শুনেছিলেন স্বদেশীযুগের বিপ্লবীদের নানা বীরগাথা। ১৯২১ সালে সংঘটিত অসহযোগ আন্দোলনের কাহিনি তাঁকে মোহিত করেছিল। সেই সময় তাঁর পরিবারের অনেক সদস্যই স্কুল-কলেজ পরিত্যাগ করে যোগ দেন অসহযোগ আন্দোলনে। ১৯২৫ সালে দেশবন্ধুর মৃত্যুর পর এবং ১৯২৯ সালে যতীন দাসের মৃত্যুর পর দেশব্যাপী যে শোক ও আলোড়ন তৈরি হয়, তাতে তিনি ভীষণভাবে ব্যথিত হন এবং দেশের কাজে নিজেকে নিয়োজিত করতে প্রেরণা লাভ করেন। ১৯৩০ সালে গান্ধীজির নেতৃত্বে সংঘটিত ‘লবণ আইন অমান্য আন্দোলন’ যখন প্রবলভাবে উত্তাল হয়ে ওঠে, সেই সময় বনলতা রাজনৈতিক ক্ষেত্রের প্রতি বিশেষভাবে আকর্ষিত হন এবং সেই সময় তিনি যোগদান করেন বিপ্লবী অনুশীলন সমিতিতে। টিটাগড় ষড়যন্ত্র, আন্তঃপ্রাদেশিক ষড়যন্ত্র প্রভৃতি ব্রিটিশ বিরোধী কার্যকলাপের সঙ্গে তাঁর নাম যুক্ত হয়। মহিলাদের একত্রিত করে স্বদেশী কর্মকাণ্ড পরিচালনা করবার উদ্দেশ্যে যোগদান করেন মহিলা কর্মী সংঘ, কংগ্রেস মহিলা সংঘ প্রভৃতি সংগঠনে। ১৯৩৭ সাল থেকে বনলতা অংশগ্রহণ করেন ‘বন্দীমুক্তি আন্দোলন’, ‘ছাত্র ফেডারেশন’ প্রভৃতি আন্দোলনগুলিতে। ‘অল বেঙ্গল গার্লস স্টুডেন্টস কমিটি’-র তিনি ছিলেন সম্পাদিকা। ১৯৩৯ সালে সুভাষচন্দ্র বসুর নেতৃত্বে যখন পৃথক কংগ্রেস পরিচালিত হয়, বনলতাও তখন সেখানে

যোগদান করেন। ১৯৪২ সালের আন্দোলনে একটি নির্দেশ অমান্যকারী শোভাযাত্রার পুরোভাগে নেতৃত্ব দিয়ে শোভাযাত্রা সহ অগ্রসর দলে ব্রিটিশ পুলিশ বাহিনী তাঁকে লাঠির আঘাতে আহত করে এবং তিনি গ্রেপ্তারবরণ করেন। প্রায় তিন বছর প্রেসিডেন্সি জেলে নিরাপত্তা বন্দি রূপে কারারুদ্ধ থাকার পর ১৯৪৫ সালে বনলতা সেন মুক্তি লাভ করেন।

➤ বনলতা দাশগুপ্ত (ঢাকা) :

জন্ম ১৯১৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দে ঢাকা জেলার বিদগাঁও নামক গ্রামে। পিতার নাম হেমচন্দ্র দাশগুপ্ত। পিতার নিকট থেকেই তিনি স্বদেশপ্রেম শিক্ষিত হন। বিপ্লবী আদর্শের সঙ্গে পরিচিত হয়ে



তিনি বুঝেছিলেন যে দেশকে স্বাধীন করতে হলে সশস্ত্র সংগ্রাম করতে হবে। ১৯৩৩ সালে কয়েকটি পিস্তল লুকিয়ে রাখার অপরাধে বনলতা গ্রেপ্তার হন। ১৯৩৬ সালে বনলতার মৃত্যু হয়।

➤ পারুল মুখার্জি (কলকাতা) :

১৯১৫ সালে কলকাতায় জন্মগ্রহণ করেন পারুল মুখার্জি। পিতার নাম গুরুপ্রসন্ন মুখার্জি এবং মাতার নাম মনোরমা দেবী। অনুশীলন দলের বিপ্লবী সদস্য অমূল্য মুখার্জি ছিলেন তাঁর বড় ভাই।



পারুল ১৯৩২-এ কুমিল্লায় নিজের গৃহে অন্তরীণ ছিলেন। টিটাগড়ে এক পল্লীতে গোপনে বাস করে তিনি নানাভাবে বিপ্লবীদের সাহায্য করতেন। সেইজন্য টিটাগড় ষড়যন্ত্র মামলায়

জড়িয়ে পড়ে তিন বছর সশ্রম কারাদণ্ডে দণ্ডিত হন। ১৯৩৯ সালে মহাত্মা গান্ধীর প্রচেষ্টায় অন্যান্য মহিলা রাজনৈতিক বন্দিদের সঙ্গে তিনিও মুক্তিলাভ করেন।

➔ নির্মলাবালা দেবী (চট্টগ্রাম) :



১৯১৫ সালে চট্টগ্রামের বেলীমাখব চক্রবর্তীর কন্যা হিসেবে জন্মগ্রহণ করেন নির্মলাবালা দেবী। তিনি যুগান্তর দলের একজন অন্যতম সদস্যা ছিলেন। ১৯৩৪ সালের ২ মে তাঁকে গ্রেপ্তার করা হয় এবং এর

পর ১৯৩৪ সালের ২৩ নভেম্বর বেঙ্গল সাপ্রেশন অফ টেররিস্ট আউটরেজেস অ্যাক্টের অধীনে তাঁর ছয় মাসের সশ্রম কারাদণ্ড হয়। ১৯৩৫ সালের ২৩ জানুয়ারি তাঁর উপর লব্ধ সমস্ত নিষেধাজ্ঞা প্রত্যাহার করা হয়। ১৯৩৫ সালের ২০ মার্চ চট্টগ্রামে তাঁকে গৃহবন্দী করে রাখা হয়। ১৯৩৬ সালের ১৬ মে তিনি নিশ্চলভাবে মুক্তি পান।

➔ মায়া ঘোষ :



১৯১৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দে দিল্লিতে জন্মগ্রহণ করেন মায়া ঘোষ। পিতার নাম যতীন্দ্রনাথ ঘোষ। মায়ার মামা অতুলকৃষ্ণ ঘোষ ও অমরকৃষ্ণ ঘোষ বিপ্লবী ক্রিয়াকাণ্ডের সঙ্গে যুক্ত

ছিলেন। তাছাড়া বিপ্লবী নেতা ডা. ভূপেন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত, হরিকুমার চক্রবর্তী, জীবনলাল চট্টোপাধ্যায় প্রমুখের সঙ্গে পরিচয় ছিল তাঁর। তাঁদের প্রভাবে মায়া ঘোষ রাজনীতির সঙ্গে জড়িয়ে পড়েন। ১৯৩০-এর আইন অমান্য এবং ১৯৪২-এ ‘ভারত ছাড়ো’ আন্দোলনে

তিনি ঝাঁপিয়ে পড়েন। সেইজন্য তাঁকে কয়েকবার কারাগারেও যেতে হয়। শেষ জীবনে তিনি বীরভূমে সাঁইথিয়ার একটি বালিকা বিদ্যালয়ে শিক্ষকতা করতেন।

➔ শান্তি ঘোষ ও সুনীতি চৌধুরী (কুমিল্লা) :

১৯১৬ সালের ২২ নভেম্বর শান্তি ঘোষ জন্মগ্রহণ করেছিলেন কলকাতায়। কিন্তু তিনি মানুষ হয়েছিলেন কুমিল্লায়। পিতা দেবেন্দ্রনাথ ঘোষ ছিলেন কুমিল্লা কলেজের প্রফেসর এবং তাঁর মাতা ছিলেন সলিলাবালা ঘোষ। ১৯১৭ সালের ২২ মে সুনীতি চৌধুরী জন্মগ্রহণ করেন কুমিল্লায়। তাঁর পিতা ছিলেন উমাচরণ চৌধুরী ও মাতা সুরসুন্দরী দেবী।



১৯৩০ সালে কুমিল্লায় চলেছিল আইন অমান্য আন্দোলন। জনতার উপরে ইংরেজের অত্যাচার কুমিল্লার সমস্ত কিশোর ও যুবমনকে প্রচণ্ড একটি ঘা দিয়ে ফিরছিল। তার চেউ এসে ধাক্কা দিতে লাগলো শান্তি, সুনীতি প্রমুখকেও। তাঁদের মনে হতো ইংরেজ তাড়াতে পারলে তবেই আসবে আমাদের দেশের মঙ্গল। তাঁরা চমৎকার লাঠি ও ছোরা খেলা শিখে নিলেন। তারপর অভ্যাস করতে লাগলেন রিভলভার ছুঁড়তে ময়নামতি পাহাড়ে গিয়ে। পাড়ায় পাড়ায় লাঠি-ছোরা শেখাবার ও বিপ্লবাত্মক পুস্তক পড়বার মধ্যে দিয়ে তাঁরা সংগঠন করে চলেছিলেন। বিপ্লবী দলের নেতারা সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ করেন যে শান্তি ও সুনীতি কুমিল্লা জেলার ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট স্টিফেন্সকে গুলি করে

ব্রিটিশ গভর্নমেন্টকে চরম আঘাত হানবেন। ১৯৩১ সালের ১৪ ডিসেম্বর সকালে শান্তি ও সুনীতি দুজনেই প্রবেশ করেন জেলা ম্যাজিস্ট্রেটের কুঠিতে। দায়িত্ব পালনের সুযোগ সমাগত দেখে শান্তি ও সুনীতি গুলি ছুঁড়লেন ম্যাজিস্ট্রেটের দিকে। ম্যাজিস্ট্রেটের প্রাণহীন দেহ ভুলুগ্ঠিত হল। মুহূর্তের মধ্যেই তাঁরা দুজনে পুলিশের হাতে ধরা পড়লেন। তাঁদের নিয়ে যাওয়া হল কুমিল্লা জেলে। কয়েকদিন পরেই তাঁদের দুজনকেই নিয়ে আসা হয় কলকাতার আলিপুর সেন্ট্রাল জেলে। মামলা শুরু হয় ১৯৩২ সালের ১৮ জানুয়ারি। অবশেষে ১৯৩২ সালের ২৭ জানুয়ারি শান্তি-সুনীতি সমগ্র সত্তা কেন্দ্রীভূত করে যখন অপেক্ষা করছিলেন ফাঁসির আদেশ শুনবার জন্য তখন তাঁরা দণ্ডদেশ শুনলেন যাবজ্জীবন দ্বীপান্তরের। বিচারের আদেশ তাঁদের অফুরন্ত উৎসাহভরা প্রাণে সেই মুহূর্তে নিরাশাবোধই করেছিল। কিন্তু তাঁরা যে ছিলেন সেই সময় মাত্র ১৪-১৫ বছরের কিশোরী নাবালিকা।

➔ উষা মুখার্জি (কলকাতা) :



১৯১৮ সালে কলকাতায় জন্মগ্রহণ করেন উষা মুখার্জি। তাঁর পিতা গুরুপ্রসন্ন মুখার্জি, মাতা মনোরমা দেবী এবং তিনি ছিলেন অনুশীলন দলের বিখ্যাত বিপ্লবী নেতা অমূল্য মুখার্জি ও পারুল মুখার্জির ছোট বোন।

লাঠি-ছোরা খেলতে, কুচকাওয়াজ করতে তিনি ছোটবেলা থেকেই অভ্যস্ত হয়ে উঠেছিলেন। ১৯৩৪ সালে পুলিশ তাঁকে গ্রেপ্তার করে হিজলী জেলে রাজবন্দী রূপে আটকে রাখে। ১৯৩৭ সালে তিনি মুক্তি পান।

➔ কিরণ চক্রবর্তী (ঢাকা) :

১৯২১ সালে কিরণ চক্রবর্তী অবিভক্ত বাংলার ঢাকা জেলার নারায়ণগঞ্জে জন্মগ্রহণ করেন। তাঁর বাবা হীরালাল চক্রবর্তী ও মা স্বর্ণপ্রভা দেবী উভয়েই নানান



স্বদেশী কর্মকাণ্ডের সঙ্গে যুক্ত ছিলেন। মূলত স্বদেশীয়ানার পরিবেশে বড় হতে হতে কিরণও সেই প্রকার কর্মকাণ্ডের সঙ্গে যুক্ত হবার জন্য ছোট বয়স থেকেই উদ্বুদ্ধ হন। খুব অল্প বয়সেই কিরণ যোগ

দেন আর.এস.পি নামক একটি বিপ্লবী দলে। একজন দক্ষ কর্মী সংগঠক হিসেবে তিনি প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন লাঠি-ছোরা খেলার একটি প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্র এবং তাঁর মূল প্রশিক্ষণ হিসেবে তরুণ-তরুণীদের সেই খেলায় পারদর্শী রূপে গড়ে উদ্ভূত হন। তাঁর এরূপ নানাবিধ স্বদেশী কর্মকাণ্ডের জন্য ১৯৪১-৪২ সালে কিরণ নিজগৃহে অন্তরীণ ছিলেন। ১৯৪২ সালে ‘ভারত ছাড়ো’ আন্দোলনের সময় তাঁর নিকট আত্মীয়রা যখন কারারুদ্ধ হন, অন্তরীণ অবস্থাতেই কিরণই তখন ঐ অঞ্চলে আন্দোলন পরিচালনার দায়িত্বভার গ্রহণ করেন। ১৯৪২ সালের শেষ পর্যায়ে তিনি একদিন থানায় হাজিরা দিতে গেলে তাঁকে গ্রেপ্তার করা হয় এবং একজন নিরাপত্তা বন্দীরূপে তাঁকে ঢাকার কারাগারে স্থানান্তরিত করা হয়। পরবর্তী সময়ে তাঁকে দিনাজপুর ও প্রেসিডেন্সি জেলেও রাখা হয়। ১৯৪৫ সালে কিরণ চক্রবর্তী কারাগার থেকে মুক্তি পান।

➔ ভক্তি ঘোষ (বাঁকুড়া) :

১৯২৩ সালে ভক্তি ঘোষ জন্মগ্রহণ করেন বাঁকুড়া জেলায়। তাঁর পিতা ছিলেন কিশোরী সিন্ধা। তিনি ছাত্রী সংগঠনের একজন অন্যতম সদস্যা ছিলেন। ১৯৪২ সালে ‘ভারত ছাড়ো’ আন্দোলনে তিনি সক্রিয়ভাবে অংশগ্রহণ করেন।



➔ বেলা মিত্র (কলকাতা) :



নেতাজি সুভাষচন্দ্র বসুর ভ্রাতুষ্পুত্রী এবং সুরেশচন্দ্র বসুর কন্যা হলেন বেলা মিত্র। ১৯৩০ সালে ভাগলপুরে মাতুলালয়ে তাঁর জন্ম। যশোরের হরিদাস মিত্র ছিলেন বেলার স্বামী। দ্বিতীয়

মহাযুদ্ধকালে যখন ব্রিটিশ সরকার অত্যন্ত বিব্রত ছিলেন তখনই নেতাজি ব্রিটিশ শাসকদের শক্তি প্রয়োগ করে দেশ থেকে বিতাড়িত করতে চান। এই সময় তাঁর আজাদ হিন্দ বাহিনীর কিছু গুপ্তচর পূর্ব এশিয়া থেকে কোনারক মন্দিরের নিকট ওঠেন। তাঁদের উদ্দেশ্য ছিল হরিদাস মিত্রের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ স্থাপন করা। হরিদাস মিত্র এই কাজে দ্বিধাবোধ করলেও বেলা তাঁকে দেশসেবার কাজে অনুপ্রাণিত করেন। হরিদাস মিত্র ওই গুপ্তচরদের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করেন এবং কলকাতা থেকে গোপনে সিঙ্গাপুরে নেতাজির সঙ্গে সংযোগ রক্ষা করে চলতে থাকেন। কিন্তু শেষে হরিদাস মিত্র ও গুপ্তচরদের কাজে লিপ্ত আরও ২১ জন গ্রেপ্তার হন। বিচারে তাঁদের মৃত্যুদণ্ড হয়। বেলা মিত্র তখন মহাত্মা গান্ধীর শরণাপন্ন হন। গান্ধীজি বড়লাটকে অনুরোধ করে তাঁদের মৃত্যুদণ্ড বন্ধ করার ব্যবস্থা করেন। তখন বন্দীদের যাবজ্জীবন দ্বীপান্তরের আদেশ হয়। ১৯৪৭ সালের ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসে বেলা মিত্র গঠন করেন ‘ঝাঁসির রানী’ বাহিনী। দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়ায় নেতাজির ‘ঝাঁসি রেজিমেন্ট’-এর আদর্শে। তিনি ছিলেন তাঁর সর্বাধিনায়িকা। বাংলাদেশের কয়েকটি স্থানে এর শাখা প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছিল।

➔ যমুনা ঘোষ (ঢাকা) :

ঢাকা জেলার বিক্রমপুরের মালিকান্দা গ্রামে জন্মগ্রহণ করেন যমুনা ঘোষ। তাঁর পিতা পূর্ণচন্দ্র ঘোষ ও মাতা

বীণাপানি দেবী। শৈশবে তিনি পিতৃ-মাতৃহীনা হন। ১৯২৯ সালে তিনি কুমিল্লার নিবেদিতা স্কুলের শিক্ষয়ত্রী হয়ে চলে আসেন সেখানে। ১৯৩১ সালে লাভণ্যলতা চন্দ কুমিল্লা অভয় আশ্রমে ‘কন্যা শিক্ষালয়’ প্রতিষ্ঠা করলে যমুনা ঘোষ যোগ দেন সেই শিক্ষালয়ে। ১৯৩২ সালে আইন অমান্য আন্দোলনের সময় অভয় আশ্রমকে বেআইনী ঘোষণা করা হয়। লাভণ্যলতা চন্দ প্রমুখকে গ্রেপ্তারের পর আন্দোলনে যোগ দেওয়ার ফলে যমুনা ঘোষের পনেরো মাসের কারাদণ্ড হয়। মুক্তির পর আন্দোলন পরিচালনা করার অপরাধে পুনরায় তাঁর সাজা হয়। ১৯৩৩ সালে তিনি জেল থেকে মুক্তি পান। ১৯৪০ সালে কুমিল্লায় ফিরে গিয়ে পুনরায় তিনি কন্যা শিক্ষালয়ে কাজ শুরু করেন। ১৯৪২ সালের আন্দোলনে অংশগ্রহণ করায় তাঁকে নিরাপত্তা বন্দী হিসেবে এক বছর জেলে আটক করা হয় এবং ১৯৪৩ সালে তিনি মুক্তি পান। জেল থেকে মুক্তি লাভের পর তিনি পুনরায় লাভণ্যলতা চন্দের সঙ্গে রিলিফের কাজ ও বুনিয়াদি শিক্ষার কাজ শুরু করেন।



➔ হেলেনা দত্ত (ঢাকা) :



ঢাকা জেলার কালিগঞ্জ গ্রামে জন্মগ্রহণ করেন হেলেনা দত্ত। তাঁর বাবা ছিলেন মুকুন্দলাল গুণ ও মা শৈলবালা গুণ। ১৯২৬ সালে তিনি ঢাকা ইডেন হাইস্কুলে ভর্তি হন। ঐ স্কুলের বোডিং-এ তিনি

থাকতেন। ১৯২৮ সালে বিপ্লবী নেত্রী লীলা নাগের পরিচালিত ‘দিপালী ছাত্রীসংঘ’-র তিনি সভ্য হন। তিনি খুব গোপনে লাঠি ও ছোরা খেলা শিখতে থাকেন এবং ঐ স্কুলে দিপালী ছাত্রী সংঘ পরিচালনা করেন। সংঘের মেয়েদেরও তিনি লাঠি-ছোরা খেলা শিক্ষা দিতেন। ১৯৩০ সালে দিপালী সংঘের একটি বার্ষিক সম্মেলনে লীলা নাগের সঙ্গে তাঁর পরিচয় ঘটে। তারপর তিনি ‘শ্রীসঙ্ঘ’ নামক বিপ্লবী দলে যোগদান করেন। ১৯৩৩ সালের জানুয়ারি মাসে তিনি কলকাতা থেকে রিভলবার নিয়ে ঢাকা চলে যান। কিন্তু ঢাকাতে তাঁর থাকা নিরাপদ নয় মনে করে তিনি কলকাতার বরানগরে তাঁর মামাবাড়িতে চলে আসেন ১৯৩৩ সালের ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসে। ১২ ফেব্রুয়ারি তাঁকে পুলিশ গ্রেপ্তার করে এবং তাঁর সঙ্গে তাঁর মামারবাড়ির সকলকেই গ্রেপ্তার করে ও বাড়ি পুলিশের হেফাজতে থাকে। তাঁকে ২৮ দিন লালবাজার হাজতে রাখার পর ডেটিনিউ করে বন্দি রাখা হয় হিজলি প্রভৃতি জেলে প্রায় পাঁচ বছর। ১৯৩৭ সালের ডিসেম্বর মাসে তিনি মুক্তি পান। এর পরেও পুনরায় ১৯৩২ সালের আন্দোলনে যোগদান করায় তাঁকে অসুস্থতার কারণে প্রথমে দুই মাসের জন্য স্বগৃহে অন্তরীণ রাখা হয় এবং পরে ১৯৪৩ সালের ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসে নিরাপত্তা বন্দী রূপে তাঁকে ঢাকা ও প্রেসিডেন্সি জেলে আটক রাখা হয়। ১৯৪৫ সালে সেপ্টেম্বর মাসে তিনি জেল থেকে মুক্তি পান।

➔ উর্মিলা দেবী (ঢাকা) :



ঢাকা জেলার বিক্রমপুরে তেলিরবাগ গ্রামে উর্মিলা দেবী জন্মগ্রহণ করেন। তাঁর পিতার নাম ভুবনমোহন দাস এবং মাতা নিস্তারিণী দেবী। তিনি দেশবন্ধু চিত্তরঞ্জন দাসের ছোট ভগ্নী।

১৯২১ সালের ৭ ডিসেম্বর বড়বাজারে খন্দর বিক্রি করতে এবং ২৪ ডিসেম্বর যখন প্রিন্স অফ ওয়েলস কলকাতায় আসবেন সেদিন হরতাল ঘোষণা করবার জন্য উর্মিলা দেবী প্রচারের কাজে অবতীর্ণ হন। ফলস্বরূপ তাঁকে গ্রেপ্তার করা হয়। দেশবন্ধুর প্রেরণায় উর্মিলা দেবী মহিলাদের মধ্যে সংগঠনের কাজ করতে থাকেন। ১৯২১ সালে তিনি ‘নারী কর্মমন্দির’ প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন এই প্রতিষ্ঠানের লক্ষ্য ছিল চরকা ও খন্দর জনপ্রিয় করা এবং দেশাত্মবোধ ও স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলনের উদ্দেশ্যে প্রচার করা। ১৯৩০ সালে লবণ আইন অমান্য আন্দোলনের সময় ‘নারী সত্যগ্রহ সমিতি’ গঠিত হয়। উর্মিলা দেবী এই সমিতির সভানেত্রী ছিলেন। তিনি সেই সময় আইন অমান্য করে কারাবরণ করেন।

➔ সিদ্ধুবালা মাইতি (মেদিনীপুর) :

সিদ্ধুবালা মাইতি ছিলেন মেদিনীপুর জেলার অধরচন্দ্র মাইতির স্ত্রী। ১৯৪২ সালের ২৭ অক্টোবর পলাতক কংগ্রেস স্বেচ্ছাসেবকদের সম্মানের অজুহাতে অভিযানকারী পুলিশের দল তাঁর বাড়িতে প্রবেশ



করে। তাঁকে একা পেয়ে দুই পুলিশ সদস্য তাঁকে ধর্ষণ করে। ১৯৪৩ সালের ৯ জানুয়ারি অভিযানকারী পুলিশের পুলিশ সদস্যদের দ্বারা তিনি পুনরায় ধর্ষণের শিকার হন। পরবর্তী সময়ে ১৯৪৩ সালের ১৮ জানুয়ারি তিনি আত্মহননের পথ বেছে নেন।

(সমাপ্ত)



**Religion is the manifestation
of the Divinity already in man.**

Swami Vivekananda

The most wonderful idea that India has yet to give to the world is : Ekam Sad Vipra Vahudha Vadanti—"That which exists is One; sages call it by various names." That has been the theme, and the working out of the whole of this life-problem of the nation is the working out of that theme—Ekam Sad Vipra Vahudha Vadanti.

I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his Law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of every one.

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