CHAPTER – VI
A preacher comes up to a farmer in his field and remarks, "mighty fine farm you and the Lord have made."
"Yep," replies the farmer, "but you should have seen it when He had it all to Himself."

I have the perfect solution to the problem but no solution to the problem that may arise out of the solution because I discovered the problem when I was looking for the solution!  

Two things are clear from the preceding chapters of our study: ab initio the natural environment is a contested terrain, between human and animal, and among humans both as to power and rights over land and people; and that for India the twentieth century began on an interesting note: it saw the apogee of the British Empire and at the same time the seeds of decolonisation sprouted. That is, India’s history, for the first time ever, witnessed the apogee of the ‘politics of power over land and people of India’ as well as the beginning of the ‘politics of rights over land and people of India’, more intensely since the 1920s. Against the colonial attempts to build and buttress dominance over India and her people, the Indian national movement, the freedom struggle, and the peasant movements and struggles were all expressions of politics of rights over land and people of India in the world political environment saturated with politics of power over land and people, i.e., Imperialism; also, the highest expression of colonialism.

Colonial politics of power over India’s political economy certainly affected the natural, as also the social environment of India. Ecosystem after ecosystem of India was colonised and transformed under the influence of the British colonial model of ‘private property’ in land, water and other natural resources. For example, in Andhra, converting wastelands into ‘reserved lands’ banned the custom of cultivating wastelands by villagers ‘without authority’. This extension of colonial politics of power and law to wastelands meant the exclusion of the poor. The state claimed a monopolistic right to alienate these lands, ‘under the wasteland sale rules’, basically to the propertied classes. The same was true for trees: these were converted into ‘reserved’ trees; the right to fell them was entrusted to the Forest Department, which in turn sold them ‘at higher rates than those

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1 Anon
2 Opinion subscribed to by this research scholar.
charged for unreserved trees.’ In 1862, the ‘use of teak or Satinwood for ploughs’ by the ryots was declared ‘clearly an abuse which should be checked.’ But this did not restrict the colonial state from selling this same wood to the same ryots on payment of seigniorage. The pre-colonial method of a collective village regulation of grazing lands was banned; the state now introduced a uniform tax on all kinds of grazing lands.4

The British colonial land policy opened India to the capital investment of the British capitalists, in plantations like tea, coffee, and indigo, in Coorg, Neelgiri and Ooty, in addition to the maximization of revenue collection and creation of a loyal feudal class to support them. Plantation industry, including commercialization of agriculture was forced on India for the sake of the international market. In the twentieth century India was even more closely linked with the world market. The cultivation of cash crops increased. It showed a great responsiveness to world market prices.5

Perhaps, with all their politics of power, ‘even if the British had converted India into a land flowing with milk and honey they would have been disliked’. Imperialism sears the soul, degrades the spirit and makes individuals small, the better to rule them. ‘Exclusiveness’ ‘divide and rule’, ‘discrimination’ are its hallmark; ‘fear and hate’, its allies. That is why colonial administration never is, and never can be, successful. Imperialism is a perpetual insult, for it assumes that the outsider has the right to rule the insiders who can not rule themselves; it is thus arrogant nationalism and inevitably begets an opposing nationalism.6 In particular, the sense of imperial mission nourished and encouraged notions of racial superiority. Jawaharlal Nehru noted in the British approach to India ‘the calm assurance of always being in the right’ resting upon faith in racial destiny. Any challenge to this assumption implicit as well as explicit touched on sensitive chords. Ripon was never forgiven for having as Viceroy permitted the ‘impropriety’ of Indian judges trying Europeans, his statue in Calcutta (now Kolkata) being financed by Indians alone, no European, A.P. Thornton recalled, ‘having contributed an anna towards

it'. As Lord Rosebery put it: ‘Imperialism is the spirit of rule, ascendancy or predominance’. Yet when the British left, there were no acrimonies between them and the Indians; though, among themselves the Indians ‘rioted’ to kill and/or get killed by each other over independence from British rule! During the period of our study, as through most of Indian history, agriculture was a way of life for most people. But agriculture is essentially exclusive; therefore, so are exclusive the rituals and traditions related to an agrarian culture. Therefore, no wonder then that it is true that most religions exclude people who do not share the faith from the mercies of God. But that is the business of Religion that was the main support of rajaneeti, i.e., of politics of power over land and people, and their “Do’s and Don’ts” all through history, including the colonial, and up to now: those who “Do” what they “Don’t”, and “Don’t” what they “Do” were automatically excluded from the mercies of their God. Rituals of a religion make it exclusive. Nevertheless, howsoever weak as tools, in the ultimate analysis, all religions seek to make man spiritual, embracing the entirety of existence and the interdependence of all its parts. In that sense all religions are inclusive. But religions do their business in the game of politics of power over land and people, i.e., rajaneeti, which is exclusive; therefore, socially divisive. Therefore, the story of India’s partition in 1947 is the story of the success of communal politics of power over land, people, and God. The undeniably ‘popular’ nature of the bulk of the ‘riots’, and the high degree of tacit sympathy for them among large sections of both communities, were indications of the depth of penetration of

9 In Spirals of Contention why India was partitioned in 1947, Routledge, 2008, Satish Saberwal studies ‘the long-term social and psychological processes that prepared the ground for the 1947 Partition of India works from a dual corpus: the historians’ for medieval and modern India, the sociologists’ for Indian society. Separateness between Hindus and Muslims grew reciprocally, with hardening religious identities and the growing frequency of incidents of conflict. These skirmishes had several dimensions: symbolic (like desecrating places of worship), societal (conversions), and physical (including violence against women).’ ‘these several forms of contention are part of a single frame, and a self-generative mechanism for the aggravation of antagonisms from the nineteenth century onwards. At its center were Indian actors working on Indian society; the colonial rulers, as well as the political domain, are on the margin. Yet the departing colonial rulers imposed even the framework of the Partition in 1947.

This was pure and simple communalism; but, perhaps without which no community in the days of politics of power over land and people in the history of India, albeit of the world, could have survived to this day; communalism, in the ultimate analysis, is communal politics of power over land and people and God.
communal sentiments and ways of thinking into everyday ‘common sense’, which had matured and developed, in the crucible of politics of power over land and people, i.e., rajatantra, albeit British Raj-tantra. The partition was the deepest wound of modern, if not all, times in the country’s physical-spiritual corpus. Amputation of the land, creation of exclusive boundaries between regions that culturally flowed into each other; migration of a stunning magnitude, displacement of masses and the cruel and ruthless bloodshed of innumerable citizens constitute the tapestry of this great human tragedy. Cities were changed for ever, families torn apart and individuals’ fates transformed beyond recognition. Anyway, the very survival of politics of caste and communal politics of power in the Republic of India was testimony to the grand success of the principles and means of politics of power over land and people, i.e., rajaneeti. But all this happened with the connivance of the people at large who have, all through history, learnt only to somehow survive in the game of politics of power over land and people. Ironically, as bemoaned by Jawaharlal Nehru, among others like Mahatma Gandhi, the British rule in India was facilitated by the support of the people of India, accompanied with ‘fear and hate’ for the British in varying degrees. The revolt of 1857 and its aftermath amply underlined this matter of fact.

Agrarian relations in India were of great importance for the economic, social and political development of the country. The most direct impact of British rule in India was on land, and the British colonial policies of politics of power over India and Indians were not primarily designed to promote economic growth in India. British Indian agrarian legislation was entirely political and not at all deliberated with a view to economic development. They often and insistently said so to themselves. Growth between 1800 and 1950 was thus slow and fitful, and many other parts of the world (including Japan’s

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* Winston Churchill, (who became the new Prime Minister on 10 May 1940 after the Congress ministries left office on 10 November 1939) described Hindu-Muslim antagonism as 'a bulwark of British rule in India', and noted that, were it to be resolved, their concord would result in 'the united communities joining in showing us the door'. Divide and rule had worked exceptionally well. Both sides now hated each other even more than they hated the British. Shortly before Churchill came to office, the Muslim League had, for the first time, voted in favour of a separate state of Pakistan. It was said that Jinnah had told a few close associates that the demand for Pakistan was a 'tactical move', rather than a serious aim. —Alex Von Tunzelmann, Indian Summer, The Secret History of the End of an Empire, Simon & Schuster, London, 2007, 109.

colonies in Taiwan and Korea) clearly did better than India.\textsuperscript{11} This was also true of most agrarian legislation after independence except for some measures for the consolidation of holdings, etc.\textsuperscript{12} The British organized rural society in India by means of legislation which they passed without paying much attention to Indian political interest. Before 1865 they relied mainly on executive measures and after 1935 provincial autonomy deprived them of their control over agrarian legislation that passed into the hands of Indian ministries and legislatures. However, most major acts concerning agrarian relations were passed between 1879 and 1908, and the basic framework established by them remained intact even after independence. Study of agrarian relations from 1935 onwards included the agrarian programme of the Indian National Congress and of other political organizations as a point of departure to show how they fitted in with the pattern set by the British or how they differed from it. It is a basic assumption of this study that the heritage of British agrarian legislation was so predominant that Indians could not get away from it, because they were to a large extent themselves the product of this heritage. There is a parallel to this in the evolution of the political constitution of India which was predetermined by British Indian reforms culminating in the Government of India Act of 1935 which remained the basis of the Indian constitution even after independence,\textsuperscript{13} excepting of course particularly the Preamble and the chapters on the fundamental rights as formulated by the Constituent Assembly, and so granted by the Constitution of India w.e.f. 26 January 1950.

In colonial India, with the detailed record of rights in the land came the settlement of the government demand either permanently or for periods sufficiently long to presumably relieve the revenue payer from the harassing anxiety of uncertainty. The system was largely adopted from the one already in existence but it was found possible to distribute the demand more evenly over the land and to reduce the burden in terms of produce. This process ‘to distribute the demand more evenly’ continued in the independent Republic of India under the name of land reforms: more even distribution of politics of power over land and people, not equal distribution of rights over land and people; the one


\textsuperscript{13} Dietmar Rothermund, ‘Preface’, op.cit.
unachievable, the other a distinct possibility. After the land reforms of independent India the interests of ex-landlords, rich peasants and non-agriculturist landholders became more or less identical as a consequence of earlier British policy which had the effect of leveling at the top of rural society, differentiating the middle strata and neglecting the lower strata. The effects of these changes were marked. Land acquired a value and the security for credit that it furnished appreciably, though presumably, mitigated the intensity of distress. Therefore, obviously, those who benefited from such arrangements could not but support the status quo. Therefore, it was less troublesome to leave each Province to deal with its own peculiar circumstances separately where politics of power over land and people was concerned. Nevertheless, 15 August 1947 changed both the history and geography of India, with very obvious impacts of the politics of partition on the sub-continent's natural and social resources.

We saw in Chapter I the various efforts towards consolidation of British colonial politics of power over India and the Indian people. The Indian nationalist demands in the central legislature are seen in Chapter II that reflected the Indian national will for independence. As the colonial state owed its origin primarily to mercantilist activities, the notion of 'science for profit' made an early appearance. Therefore, in chapters III and IV are seen that the desire to consolidate power and control over India and the Indian people was the raison d'être of education and research in British India. Chapter V attempts to reveal certain very ordinary, commonsense, universal environmental consciousness which make the so called new trajectories in environmental science old wine in a new case, though culturally distinct within the context of politics of power over land and people which definitely impacted the natural environment in its typical exclusive way.

Education, like history, can be both a cultural force and a disruptive one. In effect

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14 Dietmar Rothermund, ibid., 184.
* "I myself, in England, vote for the Labour Party because my father was a Radical; my father was a Radical because his father was a Liberal; my grandfather was a Liberal because his father was a Whig; and he was a Whig because his ancestors obtained abbey land from Henry VIII. Having derived my radicalism from such a mercenary source, shall I turn Conservative? The very idea appalls me." Bertrand Russell, 'On Politicians' (16 December 1931) in Hary Ruja, ed, Mortals and Others, Bertrand Russell's American Essays, 1931-1933, Volume I, Rupa & Co, 1978, 47-48.
perhaps, education is a liberating force, and educated people are liberated people, and liberated people question things. Universities encouraged the growth of a critical spirit and led to questioning of old values. Thus with the growth of education and political consciousness, the oppression and injustice in the colonial society appeared more glaring and intolerable. In other words, the result of the application and employment of education, the direction of progress itself, was the production of the non-colonial or, rather, the decolonial. 17 Since education is for hegemony, therefore, education in colonial India was for colonial hegemony.

Where agriculture was concerned, Lord Curzon had economic reasons and looked upon agricultural education as investment: agriculture, like every other money-earning interest, must rest upon education. In 1901, at the Simla Conference on Agricultural Education he condemned Saidapet and Poona for being too ‘theoretical’ than ‘utilitarian.’ 18 No wonder then that it was the commercial crop cotton that laid the foundations of the British colonial policy of education and research in agriculture as argued before. One may, however, admit here that an organized, systematic study of the themes covered by this study did not begin before the consolidation of the British empire in India; that the initiative for such studies came from the British rulers themselves was only in the nature of things suited to facilitate colonial hegemony. The survey reports of the various departments of the British Government of India, such as the Anthropological Survey, Botanical Survey, Zoological Survey, Geological Survey, Meteorological Survey, Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, Linguistic Survey, Survey of India, Department of Census Operations, are therefore, invaluable documents as sources of information in regard to the theme of this study, 19 including the reports of the various committees on commodities. So are invaluable as source material, the debates on the central theme of this study, i.e., land, in the central legislature of India during the defining moments in ‘anticipation of freedom’, as also of preparation for a Republic of India replacing thousands of years of Politics of Power, - (including the British colonial) - rajatantra with that of the Politics of Rights, prajatantra. The most striking feature that

marked the nationalist movement in India was the challenge of the great social plurality and heterogeneity which existed within the country. These continued to pose before the nationalists, problems of immense complexity during the period 1937-1957.

For independent India, in the sense of nation building, the University Education Commission headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan stated, among several other things:

> The universities as the makers of the future cannot persist in the old patterns, however valid they may have been in their own day. With the increasing complexity of society and its shifting pattern, universities have to change their objectives and methods, if they are to function effectively in our national life. A policy of drift in the vague hope of that, if the universities are granted full autonomy and are permitted to pursue their own ends with intelligence and imagination, higher education will take care of itself, will not take us to the future we want. We must develop a comprehensive positive policy within the limits of which there should be ample scope for pioneering and experimentation. 20

Thus during the second decade of our study we had the extreme good fortune to have the occasion to present to ourselves a pattern and philosophy of education of such universal and fundamental worth, with ample scope for pioneering and experimentation, that it might well have served as the type for bringing into being the new India -Sovereign Democratic Republic of India. But that was not to be: rajaneeti of land reforms, i.e., politics of power over land and people, albeit over reformed land and people, continued to be taught by the Indian schools and universities even in the Republic of India, not prajaneeti, i.e., politics of rights over land and people! So colonialism in its most fundamental continued; perhaps, there is no post-colonial India as such, though there does exist a post-British colonial India, euphemistically named Sovereign Democratic Republic of India. Within the then given world scenario saturated with politics of power over land and people, i.e., rajaneeti, India did become Sovereign, but internally it was neither democratic nor a republic, because a democratic republic, i.e., a prajatantra, needed prajaneeti, not rajaneeti, prajadharma, not rajadharma to run its affairs. Ample scope ought to have been given in the already positive educational policy of the Republic of India for this pioneering experimentation in her history in the new context of a republic, prajatantra. The Constituent Assembly debated and gave the Preamble and guaranteed the fundamental rights, including the fundamental right to property in land in the Constitution of the Republic of India. But from day one -26 January 1950- precious

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time and resources of the budding Republic were wasted on the politics of land reforms, knowing it pretty well that fragmentation of agricultural holdings was uneconomic.

**INDIA'S TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURE AND ECOLOGICAL BALANCE**

Nevertheless, the period 1937-1957 saw the conversion of India from a satellite of the British economy to a welfare economy whose principal concern were the people of India. It will be perfectly in order, therefore, to perceive the importance and necessity and, therefore, the direction of the researches in agriculture influenced by the different contexts and differing interests of colonial (pre-republic) and post-colonial (Republic of) India. After all, “because state interest in agriculture became more direct than ever after 1947; and the need to analyze agricultural trends in the light of colonial and national policies added new force to historical study”. As has been noted, current research indicated that the ecological consequences of intensified traditional agriculture were not necessarily benign, and well preceded colonialism. For example, Sumit Guha, in a study of ‘the history of institutions, especially property institutions’ and the use of biotic resources in the eighteenth century western Maharashtra, showed that the fodder and grazing needs of domesticate bovines made significant demands on the environment, and led to active contests over its control. The intellectual historian Donald Worster.

* Redistributing land covered a wide gamut of possibilities, from ceilings and land redistribution through tenancy reform and demands for administrative regularization (for example, records of rights) that could reduce exploitation. Land redistribution in recent years has become objectively and politically more difficult. Given India’s man-land ratio and agrarian class distribution, politically feasible ceilings followed by land redistribution can make only a marginal contribution to the overall condition of the landless poor. Left parties favouring redistribution have learned that success may be failure, that redistribution may, as in Kerala, translate tenants into petty landlords, whose bourgeois consciousness and interests lead them to vote for non-left parties that, *inter alia*, refuse to support, sometimes oppose, the interest of agricultural wage workers. On the other hand, land redistribution and rights have remained an effective slogan among democratic socialist and populist parties, who appeal to smallholders and tenants. The agrarian politics of the late Devraj Urs, Karpoori Thakur, and Sharad Pawar in Karnataka, Bihar, and Maharashtra were based on such an approach. Parties seeking support among less participant, have-not constituencies near the bottom of the rural pyramid against parties based on support from arrive, satisfied, or vested economic classes are likely to keep the land redistribution strategy alive. Lloyd I. Rudolph & Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Realm of Ideas, Inquiry and Theory, Explaining Indian Democracy. A Fifty-year Perspective, 1956-2006*, OUP, 2008, 18.

Only about 30 per cent of Scheduled Castes in rural areas had access to fixed capital assets such as agricultural land and non-land capital assets. Even those who owned land had small plots, which were economically unviable. Consequently their income was very low with around 35 per cent of them being below the poverty line. –Y. Chenna Rao, Member Secretary, ICHR, New Delhi, quoting the 1999-2000 National Sample Survey: ‘Dalits still face exclusion’, *The Hindu*, Thursday, 7.2.2008, 3.


22 Sumit Guha, ‘claims on the commons: Political power and natural resources in pre-colonial India’, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 39, 2&3, 2002, 189.
rejecting the view of progress in science as separated from the rest of cultural history, prefers to approach scientific ideas as products of specific cultural conditions; and, often finds that scientific “truth” is more a matter of contemporary personal and social needs because ecology “has never been far removed from the messy, shifting, hurly-burly world of human values”; also, that ecologists hold views about ecology that reflect their cultural experience and background. He demonstrates this effect in each period of the history of the discipline, because science and society are always interacting. We believe with him that different cultures can produce different scientific traditions: like colonial and post-colonial, the pre-/Republic of India. The Government of free India took steps to improve agricultural methods in two ways: first, by initiating several schemes of research through ICAR, and second, by advising on and actually subsidizing various schemes for improved methods, such as better facilities for irrigation, introduction of new types of agricultural implements, distribution of improved seeds and manures to the cultivators.

The Postcolonial discourses of development in India continued to reflect the tension between those who emphasized industrialization at all costs and those who thought that, because industrial growth depended on adequate and reliable supplies of food, the first task of the new nation-state should be to raise agricultural productivity through the application of scientific knowledge. This tension was evident in the very first Five-Year Plan (1951-56), and foundation of the phase of Indian politics which gave the phrase ‘socialization of loss, privatization of profit’. For our purpose however, the Draft Outline of the First Plan, a discussion document, made agriculture, rural development, irrigation, and power its centrepiece, assigning 43 percent of total expenditure to these concerns. It stated that “the shortage of food and raw materials is at present the weakest point in the country’s economy” and that continuing shortages in this sector would inhibit a faster tempo of development in the future. The Draft Outline stressed the need for increased irrigation and the application of chemical fertilizer to improve yields, as well as the advantages of intensive agrarian development: “Those areas should be selected where, on account of irrigation facilities or assured rainfall, additional effort is likely to produce the

24 Reply of Minister of Agriculture Shri Jairamdas Daulatram to * Q. No. 361 Re. Improvement in Agricultural Methods and Funds to Bihar Province for Irrigation Purposes by Shri Ramnarayan Singh, CAILD, 20.2.1948, 987-89.
more substantial results".25

Farming of the environment for food, whether agriculture, fishing, etc., makes extensive ecological impacts on land, water, air and biodiversity, and has had several important but opposing effects on biological diversity. It reduces the extent of natural areas and the diversity of ecosystems and wild species they contain; and it develops, over centuries of domestication and adaptation, an agro-biological diversity made of the multiple landraces of crops and breeds of livestock.26 Extension of area under cultivation has been the most significant factor behind the decline in forest area (apart from the decline of tree cover in areas designated as forest areas, due to industrial demand)27 because agriculture usually depends on a few specialized plant species. whereas a natural ecosystem, or “biome,” represents a diversity of plants and animals that interact and live in a natural balance - that is, until the balance is disturbed by humans or by climatic change.28

BACKSEAT TO AGRICULTURE IN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

Agriculture is humanity’s mother economy. It was with this realization that when India became independent that Jawaharlal Nehru asserted: ‘everything could wait but not agriculture’. As the planning era commenced in 1951, the development of a viable and productive agricultural economy was accorded a place of priority. The foremost task was to ensure food security for the future generation. Agricultural research and developmental activities were, therefore, directed towards the attainment of this task.29 However, more and better food meant more extensive and intensive exploitation of the natural environment. Anyway, as argued in the introduction, modern historians, albeit environmental historians, largely occupied themselves with extending the drain theory to forests, and landscapes during the colonial period. They usually saw the scientific

29 N.S. Randhawa, ‘Agricultural Research and Education for Productive Agriculture’, in 40 Years of Agricultural Research and Education in India. ICAR, New Delhi, 1989, 8.

It was the result of these efforts that brought Green Revolution that solved the basic food requirement of the country. It has helped to keep the growth rate of food production matching with the demographic growth rate of the country.
forestry project as an ecological watershed that represented the growth of modern capitalism and led to the exclusion of people from forests. This was done by establishing state monopoly over forests and changing the forest cover through monoculture practices that resulted in the reduction of forest diversity. This in turn resulted in exclusion from forests leading to loss in livelihood and destitution of the tribals. This analysis is not only relevant to the colonial times but also the post-colonial times where scientific forestry is seen as a legacy of a centralised colonial administration. In any case there were already eminent works on agriculture being done.

**INTENSIFICATION OF AGRICULTURE AND IMPACT ON INDIAN SOCIETY**

An analysis of the process of economic change in modern India is central to an understanding of the country’s history before and after 15 August 1947. As we have seen, numerous specialist studies exist on some part of this process — on agricultural development in a peasant society, the imperial impact on colonial income, industrialization and business history, the implementation of state planning after 1947. Analysed in the context of historical change in agriculture, trade and manufacture, and the relations between business, the economy and the state during the period of our study, the contours of the post-war world order, both political and technological, impressed themselves on the Indian leadership. Therefore, with the culmination of the struggle for freedom from colonialism on 15 August 1947, independent India, suffused with techno-optimism, embarked on the struggle for freedom from poverty and want. Food, as ever, remained the basic necessity; therefore, agriculture continued to receive attention in the national planning process. Therefore, ‘the success of the agriculture-based first Five-Year plan’ should not be forgotten. It was a period of slow reconstruction, of long-range planning, of a gradual evolution of relations and structures: the first phase of transition towards a more equitable Indian society, far removed from the fundamental right to property in land as inalienable/inexchangeable as, say the fundamental right to vote.

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32 Partha Chatterjee, ‘Jawaharlal Nehru and the Decade after Freedom’, *The Indian Historical Review*, Volume VI, Number 1-2, 237.
During the development decades 1950s-1960s, modernization and development emerged as the main ideological consensus. The independent nation-State, therefore, envisaged modernization as the key to the process of social, economic and political development. Modernization and industrialization of ‘traditional’ and ‘agrarian’ Indian society became the process of ‘catching up’ with the developed countries. As is well known, during 1950s, import substitution industrialization was carried out as the strategy of developing strong capital goods infrastructure, by centralized planning. Agriculture and rural economy were assigned passive and secondary role to industry, in the process of ‘inevitable’ structural transformation of primarily semi-agrarian Indian conditions. Economic growth, achieved by the way of industrialization, was expected to ‘trickle-down’ to the poor people. However, increasing instances and deepening of rural poverty necessitated the realization that in India, economic development, had to walk on ‘two legs’ (to use Mao’s term) of industrial-urban and agricultural-rural sector. Consequently, during 1960s technological changes in the form of High Yield Variety seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and mechanization of agriculture were introduced in rural areas, known as Green Revolution. Acute fragmentations of holdings perhaps were also one big reason of uneconomic yield of food crops.

I do not know what the condition in all parts of India is but I can confidently say about my province of Bombay that the fragmentation has reached the limit beyond which it cannot possibly go and even today it has reached the disastrous limit.

Nevertheless, independent India began planned fragmentation, of holdings, called land

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* An important facet of progress in agriculture is its success in eradication of its critical dependence on imported foodgrains. In the 1950s nearly 5% of the total foodgrains available in the country were imported. This dependence worsened during the 1960s when two severe drought years led to a sharp increase in import of foodgrains. Indian agriculture has progressed a long way from an era of frequent droughts and vulnerability to food shortages to becoming a significant exporter of agricultural commodities. This has been possible due to persistent efforts at harnessing the potential of land and water resources for agricultural purposes. Indian agriculture, which grew at the rate of about 1 per cent per annum during the fifty years before independence, has grown at the rate of about 3 per cent per annum in the post independence era. -I.P. Abrol, ‘Agriculture’ in R.K. Sinha ed, *India 2025. Social, Economic and Political Stability*, Shipra, 2004,196.

Nevertheless, the greenery of the Green Revolution was at the cost of the granary of the natural environment; though the total geographical area must of necessity maintain a balance each for forestry, agricultural and non-agricultural purposes.

34 Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta (Bombay Central Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural) on the Means whereby the present prosperous Agricultural Conditions might be used for the Permanent Rehabilitation of Agriculture in India, LAD, 10.3.1943, Vol. I, 10 February -10 March 1943, 956.
reforms.

‘ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE’ IN INDIA

The relation of man to his environment is the relation of the historian to his theme. Therefore, borrowing E. H. Carr’s celebrated question, ‘what is history?’ from his acclaimed reflections on the theory of history and the role of the historian, when we attempt to answer ‘what is environmental history?’ our answer, consciously or unconsciously, reflects our own position in time, and forms part of our answer to the broader question what view we take of the society in which we live. Scientists, social scientists, historians, including other researchers, all are “engaged in different branches of the same study: the study of man and his environment, of the effects of man on his environment and of his environment on man,” only that agriculture was the most effecting, and effected upon. Almost similarly perhaps, as Ainslie T. Embree maintained, “it would probably be possible to show that almost every British institution introduced into India in the nineteenth century had some effect on landholding.” Vidal de la Blache, founder of the French disciplines of geography did much to relate geography to French identity, saying that the ‘history of a people is inseparable from the land it inhabits’, and ‘the land itself becomes a kind of medal on which the effigy of a people is struck’. This perspective was one that necessarily militates against separating nature from history and human culture, and stresses the interaction between the two. Thus, for example, in the course of the colonial period in India, ‘in subordination to empire, agriculture changed as a subject of study with the state’s changing power over knowledge.’ In any case, it is a truism to say that the humans learnt from their natural environment, as there are hidden treasures of knowledge in our environment, in the oceans, bio-reserves and deserts, in the plant and animal life. In primitive society every individual, to survive, needed to have definite knowledge of his environment, i.e., of the forces of nature and of the plants and animals around him. Perhaps it was ordained at the

36 Ibid., 86.

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beginning of the world that certain signs should pre-figure certain events:—

during the time the boy had spent in the fields of Andalusia, he had become used to learning which path he should take by observing the ground and the sky. He had discovered that the presence of a certain bird meant that a snake was nearby, and that a certain shrub was a sign that there was water in the area. The sheep have taught him that.  

Deficiencies of the soil in nitrogen and mineral plants foods reveal themselves to the practical eye in the course of any journey in almost any part of the world. The landscape itself reveals the natural deficiencies of the soil. For example, 'the traveller in South Africa looks almost in vain for the deep-green colouration which betokens nitrogen plenty, and only when he visits the fruit growing districts does he see in the almost black-green colour of the foliage of the orange groves that there at least is no stint in the use of nitrogen'. In Plato’s Cosmogony, for example, ‘time and the heavens came into existence at the same instant. God made the sun so that animals could learn arithmetic – without the succession of days and nights, one supposes, we should not have thought of numbers.'  

In the Indian tradition, Surapala, as seen in Chapter V, carefully recorded several plant species and the ecological conditions under which they grew. Thus he noted that occurrence of certain plant species could be used as indicators for crop production, animal production, water availability, and other attributes. For example, Surapala referred to seven species of trees considered as indicators of specific crop production areas due to their natural occurrence on land. These tree species are: Ficus benghalensis for barley, Diospyros tomentosa for a rice variety that matured in 60 days, Ficus religiosa for all types of crops, Syzygium cuminii for growing black gram and sesame, Albizia lebbek for green gram, Madhuca indica for growing wheat, and Alstonia scholaris for barley production; that the occurrence of Butea monosperma indicated the presence of elephants, asvakarna of horses, Stereospermum suaveolens of cows, and plantains of abundance of goats.  


*Nevertheless, in search of food for security of life, the humans - one of the innumerable parasites on the earth - have so continually modified and altered the natural environment, from early historic times to the present, that today ‘animals have largely lost their importance in our imaginative picture of the world, in which the humans stand comparatively alone as masters of a mainly lifeless and largely subservient*
increase his production. 'It is wonderful, too, how much is known of rotation, the system of “mixed crops,” and of fallowing.' The cultivator was also aware of the importance of using manure in the fields. Therefore, his agricultural production was quite impressive under the existing conditions. Nevertheless, in the colonial/post colonial/pre/Republic of India and absence of Politics of Rights because of the presence of Politics of Power:

Thus stealth and force were deployed to constantly threaten the valuable biotic resources preserved by king and commoner alike. The constant vigilance needed for successful preservation would be costly in time, money and occasionally blood, and all too often, therefore, free commons might end up being the default option.’ Again, “Biotic resources were therefore eminently seen as quasi-property, open to arbitrary seizure and use ... The contests over the spontaneous produce of the land—contests in which the superior force of kingly authority was met with the weapons of the weak -stealth, evasion and cunning.

Walter C. Neale concluded his paper on Land Is To Rule thus:

I conclude with an illustration of the importance of power, if not of the essentially political character of village life. An early settlement officer in a district of Oudh asked cultivators if they had an occupancy right to the land they tilled. They replied that they definitely did have an hereditary right of occupancy. The officer pursued his inquiries, asking if it were possible for the zamindar to evict a cultivator. The cultivators immediately replied that, of course, it was possible for a zamindar to evict cultivators: “The man in power can do anything.”

Consequently, politics of power over land and people, and largely, therefore, the agricultural landholders and farmers, not obviously the landless, were the concerns of the central legislative assembly for the aristocratic families were losing property in land. For example, moving the Resolution Re Civil Court Decrees and Proceedings against Agriculturists in the Legislative Assembly on 10 September 1931, Seth Haji Abdoola Haroon (Sind: Muhammadan Rural) said:

The existence of the debt and the inability of the agriculturists to pay it have been suicidal to the best interests of the country. Land is rapidly passing out of the hands of the agriculturists into those of non-agriculturists. In my constituency of Sind 40 percent of the land has passed into the hands of moneylenders. In the United Provinces, as my colleague Maulvi Sir Muhammad Yakub says, the aristocratic families

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are rapidly vanishing owing to heavy indebtedness, and their property is passing into the hands of upstart money-lenders.\(^{48}\)

As already indicated, the report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture (1926) stood as a guide for almost any aspect of Indian agriculture during this period. The labours of the Imperial/Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in fostering and co-ordinating research over a period of years made available detailed and authoritative information on the technique of agricultural improvement for application by the provinces on which rested the responsibility of carrying through schemes of agricultural development. The result of the “Grow More Food” campaign on the whole was disappointing. The Eastern Economist ‘complained that this Grow More Food Campaign and the targets fixed by the Government of India there under are not being pursued vigorously’.\(^{49}\) Although Sir Pheroze Kharegat, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, in responding to this complain defended:

It is perfectly possible, Sir. But I may explain that in the first three years of the Grow More Food Campaign we were able to secure an average annual increased production of three million tons, which has been accepted by the provinces who always have a tendency to minimise their production. It is perfectly true that in 1945-46, being a famine year, production was very much below the average.\(^{50}\)

During the period of our study, work in agricultural sectors ranged from the totally academic pursuits of research and teaching to inspection and other supervisory work to commercial activities of establishing farms, plantations, orchards and carrying on exports of produce from them. Agriculture became highly scientific, sophisticated and mechanized by the standards of the period under focus, and consequently more impacting on the environment than before. For example, the improvements made in the Andamans Islands in the direction of agricultural expansion, reclamation of cultivable wastelands all over India, etc. during the period of our study provide an interesting example of how agriculture impacted environment. The Agriculture Department in the Andamans began to function on proper lines only in April 1951. Within two years, 450 acres of forestland were brought under cultivation. Sixteen types of improved paddy seeds, salt water resistant varieties of paddy, improved strains of sugarcane from Coimbatore, seeds of

\(^{48}\) 'Resolution Re. Civil Court Decrees and Proceedings against Agriculturists' in the name of Sir Abdulla Suhrawardy moved by Seth Haji Abdoola Haroon (Sind: Muhammadan Rural) on 10 September 1931 LAD, Vol. V, 1-22 September 1931, 200.

\(^{49}\) Cited by Prof. N.G. Ranga in the course of the debate on the * Question No.1097 Re. Grow More Food Campaign by Mr. Ahmed E.H. Jaffer, LAD, 21.3.1947, 2274.

\(^{50}\) Response of Sir Pheroze Kharegat to Prof. N.G. Ranga, Ibid.
exotic and indigenous vegetables, Potato, Arhar, Urad, Mung, Tobacco, Til, Jute, Mesta, Sunhemp, Sea Island and Kidney cotton, pineapples, grafts of citrus fruits, mango, Guava, Chiku, grape, grape fruit and Bilimbi were imported, acclimatized and distributed to public. Five demonstration and experimental Farms were opened to raise seeds and seedlings to cater to the needs of the cultivators. Terrace cultivation was introduced in preference to jhum cultivation in the newly opened areas and on hillsides. Compost making and the use of green manure, Bone Meal, Super phosphates, oil cakes, etc. were introduced. Control of insects and pests of farm crops on modern lines was attempted successfully. Intercropping Coconut plantations with Cotton, Arhar, Banana, Cashewnut and Sunhemp was introduced and improved strains of coconuts were grown increasingly. As a result of the development activities, the interested cultivators harvested two crops of paddy in one year and a new variety of paddy, which matured in 70 days and gave 4 crops in a year, was distributed amongst them. Representative cultivators from individual villages were given training in modern methods of agriculture, manufacturing of Gur and sugar from coconut plants and sugarcane, and preparation of squashes, Chatnis and Marmalade as cottage industries. More so, acreage of Waste Lands brought under cultivation in the various states by the State Tractor Organisations during the period 1951-52 to 1955-56 was approximately 1895 thousand acres, while during the same period the Central Tractor Organisation (C.T.O.) reclaimed a total area of 14,60,044 acres for cultivation. The major part of the area reclaimed by the C. T. O. consisted of land already in the possession of private cultivators and the question of settling people on those lands did not arise. For the resettlement of landless agricultural workers, the Government of India established Central Mechanized Farm of 10,000 acres in Sultanpur Tehsil of Bhopal State in September 1953. Of the 500 families of landless agricultural workers settled on the farm, 200 were from the Bhopal State itself. Thus the extent of environmental change in India, due to agricultural practices during and since the colonial rule is difficult to overstate. For example, the settlement officer reported from

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51 The improvements made in the Andamans Islands in the direction of agricultural expansion, etc, Vide answer to * Q. No. 944, Annexure No. 42, Appendix VI to HOPD, Third Session, 1953, 497.
52 Statement showing Acreage of Waste Lands Brought under Cultivation by the State Tractor Organisations during the period 1951-52 to 1953-36, Vide answer to Q. No. 1252 (a), 3.9.1956, Annexure No. 41, Appendix X to LSD, Thirteenth Session, 1956, 1094.
Mymensingh in 1919 that cultivation had 'almost reached its full limits'; that during 1938-40 the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal concluded that the 'fundamental reason' for the difficulties of the rural population was that there was simply 'not enough land to go around'.

Environment, Imperialism and Westernisation

From the mid-fifteenth to the mid-twentieth century, many Western nations openly pursued a policy of aggressive imperialism - imposing, by force of arms, their common economic, political, administrative, and religious culture on Asian (and African, and Australian, and American) peoples. Granted, most Asian nations are no longer literally Western colonies. But few former victims of Western imperialism have returned to pre-colonial ways. That would imply, in effect, a return to the past. In a world reduced to a global village by contemporary communications and transportation technologies, multinational corporations, and nuclear arms, a return to the past may not even be a genuine option for any but the most geographically isolated peoples. For most, it is sink or swim. Moreover, in the world as it exists today, "progress" and "development" mean industrialisation. In addition, industrialisation, even if pursued in a climate of anti-Western rhetoric, entails Westernisation nonetheless. All the Asian environmental ills, after all, are either directly caused by originally Western technology (e.g. heavy metals pollution) or aggravated by it (e.g., soil erosion).

Change and Continuity

While colonialism did seriously disrupt the ecological and social fabric of the subcontinent, yet despite the rapid spurt in industrialization after independence, preindustrial ways of life were not completely extinguished – communities of hunters and gatherers, swidden cultivators, pastoralists, subsistence peasants and artisans still

55 On an all-India basis even in 1960, the agricultural sector employed in part or in full 74 per cent of the population; in the case of industry, 11 per cent of the population was engaged in small-scale and large-scale industries. - A.P.J Abdul Kalam, Ignited Minds: Unleashing the Power within India, Penguin Books, 2002, 125-26.
56 According to recent estimates of the National Sample Survey Organisation, of the 20.66 crore estimated households in the country, 72% or 14.81 crore are in rural areas. ‘Durables Caravan Hits a Rural Snag’, The Economic Times, Thursday, 26 May 2005, New Delhi, 1.
continued, though against ever greater odds, their traditional modes of resource use. As noted before, the British Government in India early recognised the political significance of a social order based on economic superiority in terms of land-holding, with potentiality to serve the imperial links. At Independence, therefore, the Republic of India inherited a semi-feudal agrarian structure brought up on Politics of Power over Land and People, i.e., rajatantra, or perhaps, to put it more appropriately and contemporaneously, on the British Raj-tantra and consequently with onerous tenure arrangements over substantial areas. Most of the problems we face have their roots in the past. We have many survivals of ancient, medieval, and later times persisting in modern India. The old norms, values, social customs, and ritualistic practices are so deeply ingrained in the minds of the people that they cannot easily themselves get rid of them. Unfortunately, these survivals inhibit the development of the individual and the country, and were deliberately fostered in colonial times. India cannot develop rapidly unless such vestiges of the past are eradicated from its society. The caste system and sectarianism hinder the democratic integration and development of India. Caste barriers and prejudices do not allow even educated individuals to appreciate the dignity of manual labour and hamper our unification for a common cause. Though women have been enfranchised, their age-old social subordination prevents them from playing their due role in society, and this is true too of the other lower sections of Indian society. Studying the past helps us to deeply examine the roots of these prejudices and discover the causes that sustain the caste system, subordinate women, and promote narrow religious sectarianism. The study of


* The “lowered” castes as Braj Ranjan Mani calls them while reconstructing Silenced Histories in his Debrahmanising History, Dominance and Resistance in Indian Society, Manohar, 2005, Cynthia Stephen, ‘Book Review’, Insight-Young Voices, Feb-March 2008, Vol. 1 No. 1, Delhi-110049, 44-45. But perhaps-who knows? - in the history of Politics of Power over Land and People, the so called Lower sections of the pre-republic India were, in fact, the “lowered” castes who had managed to lose their power over land and people!

* A recent study by Ghanshyam Shah, Harsh Mander, Sukhadeo Thorat, Satish Deshpande and Anita Baviskar, Untouchability in Rural India, New Delhi, 2006 on untouchability in rural India, covering 560 villages in 11 states, found that public health workers refused to visit Dalit homes in 33 percent of villages, Dalits were prevented from entering police stations in 28 percent of villages, Dalit children had to sit separately while eating in 38 percent of government schools, Dalits did not get mail delivered to their homes in 24 percent of villages, and Dalits were denied access to water sources in 48 percent of villages because of segregation and untouchability practices. Another record shows that 27 officially registered atrocities are being committed against Dalits everyday, police often prevent Dalits from entering police
India's past is, therefore, relevant not only in understanding the true nature of the past but also to understanding the nature of the obstacles that hamper India's progress as a nation. In any case, agriculture, in the ultimate analysis, is the right to 'live on' land, i.e., the fundamental right to property in land. Therefore, besides impacting the natural environment, it also impacted the human social environment. For example, as mentioned above, in the course of Indian history, agriculture created its own typical agrarian property relations and consequent social structures, more or less with similar dominant characteristics elsewhere also: the divine right of kingship, the belief in the divinely appointed hierarchy of social grades, the importance of respect from inferiors to superiors, the patriarchal society, the right of primogeniture, the agrarian caste system/social structure, the male-child syndrome, female infanticide, etc.

Every age and every society has gone far to protect the interests of the landowning agricultural class. Why? Obviously because the profession of agriculture is such that it has from times immemorial stood in need of protection: agriculture is impossible unless there are means of preventing trespass and the theft of crops. Hence, agrarian laws representing, in the main, the interests of landowners and the agricultural class. So far as the distribution of the produce of the agrarian society was concerned, was it surprising that the politics of power over land and people, based as it was, in the ultimate analysis, on manual technology, necessarily carried with it as a consequence, that the produce of labour should be apportioned almost in an inverse ratio to the labour - the largest portions to those who never worked at all, the next largest to those whose work was almost nominal, and so on in a descending scale, the remuneration dwindling as the work grew harder and more disagreeable until the most fatiguing and exhausting bodily labour could not count with certainty on being able to earn the necessaries of life? All these...

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characteristics – all these attributes of ‘a tribute-gathering personalized kingship’ more or less, continued to exist in India all through the period of our study. That is to say that king, land and people are all correlated. Although on 15 August 1947, with the transition from a dependent to an independent status, they acquired a new meaning in a new political context in India. However, unfortunately, for reasons of history, land reforms have been an important agenda of our development strategy since Independence. It was not only a programme for equity but economic development as well. Thus development discourse shared a great deal with the notions of progress commonly employed during the colonial period. In the discussions and debates that surrounded “progress” during the colonial era, agriculture, the primary source of employment, occupied a very prominent, if unfavourable, position. The shape to the present land and agrarian policies was comprehensively provided in the basic documents/reports of the Congress Economic Programme Committee (1948) and the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee (1949), popularly known as the Kumarappa Committee. The Indian political leaders, who promised ‘land to the tillers’ during our long battle for freedom, engaged themselves in a 14-year-long legislative debate from 1936, when, the Congress Party came to power in a majority of provinces, till the adoption of the Constitution in 1950. According to the Constitution, the provincial governments were to legislate on all matters related to land administration, which many find to be one of the major reasons for distorted and variable performance in the field of land reforms in free India. Not to wonder then at the outcome perhaps, because the post-1947 Indian polity inherited the basic economic infrastructure and the institutions of governance, including the structural format, forged by the British. Although most of these institutions, which emerged during the British rule, have undergone radical changes in the aftermath of freedom. Now the question that is addressed is whether the old institutions of governance could be effective under a

completely new socio-economic and political milieu. Was the rajaneeti of rajatantra, i.e., Politics of Power compatible with prajatantra, i.e., Politics of Rights? Nevertheless, ‘politics’ continues to be rajaneeti, that is, ‘Pursuit of Power’, not of ‘Rights’ in the Republic of India. But India’s anti-colonial struggle was not just a political struggle for ending British raj. It was a comprehensive and inclusive movement for national awakening, which sought to unite the country on the basis of a secular and egalitarian agenda i.e., prajatantra. This agenda was predicated on a clear rejection of the centuries-old legacy of caste oppression, patriarchy and cruelty to marginalized groups: all inescapable consequences of politics of power over land and people. It was the anti-colonial movement that put into motion the process through which a pre-modern civilization could make a transition to modern nationhood: that is, to politics of rights over land and people. With land as the original capital, the ownership and control of land was highly concentrated in a relatively few landlords and intermediaries. The State whose land reforms were the most publicised in India was the U.P., which passed in 1950 its famous U.P. Zamindari Abolition Act. Five years later, a comprehensive sample survey reported, for whatever the results might be worth, that 10 per cent of the families in the villages continued to own 50 per cent of the land. In effect, it meant that we wanted English rule without the Englishman. “You want the tiger’s nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English…. This is not the Swaraj that I want”. The challenge that Mahatma Gandhi posed before his “reader” then was daunting: it was “to learn, and to teach others, that we do not want the tyranny of either English rule or Indian rule”.

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* His inventions, Satyagraha and Sarvodaya often identified the state as the problem, not the solution. Today we are living at a peak of celebration of the market as the epitome of civil society; it is said to be an answer to state pathologies. Without denying the market, Gandhi realized that individuals would have to limit consumption and pursuit of self-interest if society was to protect itself from the alienation of unrestrained commodification. –Lloyd Rudolph, ‘Postmodern Gandhi’, Gandhi Marg, Volume 27 Number 1, April-June 2005, 101-104.
The interesting journey of Indian polity, which for hundreds of years in Indian history was dominantly based on rajatantra, i.e. Politics of Power over Land and People, along the new path where ‘the voice of the people is the voice of God’ i.e. prajatantra or janatantra or lokatantra or ganatantra or ‘government of the people, by the people, for the people’ of India begun on 15 August 1947 is on. But is rajaneeti of Politics of Power compatible with prajatantra committed to an egalitarian social order with the view to secure to all Indian citizens justice, social, economic and political, and so many other good things of life? Perhaps, never before in Indian history, including the pre-colonial rajatantra, and the colonial British Raj-tantra, any such commitment was made. Perhaps no such commitment could be made in a pre-industrial/modern agrarian society; perhaps, there was not ‘capital’ (i.e., land) enough to be egalitarian about despite ‘a certain nebulous and utterly utopian ideal of a just kingship in which the raja protected and looked after the praja and the latter, in return, gave him unquestioned loyalty’. For example, in the traditional ‘ideal’ rajatantra with the resultant ‘ideal’ rajaneeti of the Ram Rajya, the king was divine and maryadapurushottama, the ideal man; and the ideal king. Yet, in reality, the king was to take recourse to his self-interest by expanding his territory, protecting himself against and successfully dealing with the enemies, taking recourse to various expedients of even dubious character. Interestingly enough, such sense of realism and preoccupation with self-interest were regarded as the very rajadharma of the king.69 The seed of British imperialism germinated in the agricultural fields of India; and, imperialism was the highest expression of rajaneeti of the rajatantra i.e., ‘divide and rule’, and realpolitik based on balance-of-power arguments over land and people, with its consequent twin concomitants, fear and hate. However, perhaps, the compulsions and the objectives of the British Empire made it impossible to have anything like a ‘representative body’ in India. Perhaps, in those times of social hierarchy by birth or race largely based, in the ultimate analysis, on the quantum of property in land, an elected representative body -like, for example, the Lok Sabha of free India- was unthinkable. Even among Indian national leaders, for instance, there were some so steadfast in their opposition to the principle of election that they opposed it even for such

bodies as the Local Boards and the Municipalities. Perhaps, if values, whether of the
divine or human kind, were for universal application, they had to be first, and foremost,
applied in the immediate neighbourhood everywhere. Politics of power over land and
people is bound to be exclusive and, therefore, divisive. For example, while the East
India Company was engaged in carving out an Empire in India in the disturbed times of
mutual strife and conflict among those who had set themselves as independent rulers in
the declining days of the Mughal Empire, the fundamental policy of the Governors
appointed on behalf of the Company in India was to take advantage of such conflicts and
strifes and see to it that Indians did not combine against the British. It was one of the
objectives of the Company’s officers to prevent a combination between the Marathas, the
Nizam and the Nawab of Carnatac, and later between Hyderabad and Tipoo Sultan. ‘It is
true’, said W.M. Torrens, ‘to use the words of Malcolm, that “Hindustan could never
have been subdued but by the help of her own children.” At first, it was Nizam against
Arcot and Arcot against Nizam, then Mahratta against Muslim, and Afghan against
Hindu,
and, eventually, Hindu against Muslim. Nevertheless, in the process of transition
from ‘divide and rule’ to ‘divide and quit’ (‘Let them fight’) of the British Raj-neeti, or
rajaneti as such, free India took the most decisive and radical step of ‘revolutionary
significance’ by enacting, adopting, and giving “to ourselves this Constitution” on the
twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, for which, perhaps, the whole of India’s freedom
struggle and the national movement, including the peasant movement were introductory
statements. In the context of their panoramic history largely woven around rajatantra,
i.e., Politics of Power over Land and People, i.e., rajaneeti from the Mauryas up to the
end of the British Raj, Indians thus transformed this ancient country into a prajatantra,
in which national goals involved leapfrogging from a state of economic backwardness and
social disabilities – attempting to achieve in a few decades a change which historically
took centuries in other lands. This involved innovation at all levels, including in the form
or process of government. For example, the government was there to see that politics of
rights, and not politics of power over land and people prevailed; and the Science Policy

70 Manoranjan Jha, Role of Central Legislature in the Freedom Struggle, National Book Trust, India, New
Delhi, 1972.
71 Rajendra Prasad, India Divided, Amol Publications (India), 1986, 88.
72 Shibanikinkar Chaube, Constituent Assembly of India, Springboard of Revolution, People’s Publishing
Resolution of 1958 of the Government of India illuminated clearly and concisely the relationship of science to national goals.73 In the Republic of India, science was for social action; and the object of prajatantra was prajaneeti, the happiness of the citizens, not the glory of ‘rulers’ as in the rajaneeti of the rajatantra. History is replete with examples of the latter’s hunger for ‘power’ which is insatiable, while the former’s hunger for ‘rights’ remains irredeemable. During the period (1937-1957) of this study, the greatest Indian nationalist demand and message perhaps was this: ‘each serve the other, and live to see your cause succeed; not die and/or kill for it without the patience of caring whether it succeeded.’ But, in any language, perhaps, this is the crux of prajaneeti, not rajaneeti; for the latter teaches ‘divide and rule’ and ‘fear and hate’; the former, ‘unite and live’, ‘fearlessly and hatelessly’. Perhaps, the latter celebrates the State, the former, the civil society.

Sovereign Democratic Republic of India

Speaking on 17th December 1946 on the RESOLUTION RE: AIMS AND OBJECTS moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on the fifth day (13th Dec. 1946) of the first session of the Constituent Assembly, Seth Govind Das (C.P. and Berar: General) said:

The Resolution speaks of a Republic. There may be a difference of opinion whether the Republic should be a democratic republic or a socialist republic. But, to discuss it at this juncture, would be meaningless. Whenever the world is need of a thing it creates it. Keeping in view the condition of the world and the plight of India, we can say that our republic will be both democratic and socialist. I desire to tell the people, who feel chary of socialism and tremble at hearing of its tenets, that not only the people who have nothing are miserable but the people who possess everything, are also in sorrow. The former are miserable because they labour under the desire to possess everything and the latter are unhappy because they have to resort to hundreds and thousands of knaveries and evasions. They perform acts that are not in the least considered fair in the eyes of justice. If these people, while ignoring justice, pretend to protect and champion it, I tell you, they never get true happiness. I am myself of the people who possess everything; but I feel that if true peace is to be realized, it can only be realized through socialism. No other system can give us true peace. There can be no doubt that our republic will be both democratic and socialist.74

Post modern India: Incorrupt Indians

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) said: “We live in a market, where is only so much wheat, or wool, or land; and if I have so much more, every other must have so much

74 Constituent Assembly of India Debates, 17th Dec. 1946.
Therefore, land as commodity, in the ultimate analysis, is theft. Therefore, the political economy of the civil society is a thief's economy. In such an economy, therefore, it is impossible to identify and judge the corrupt, simply because in a political economy of theft there is no corruption! In any case as Mahatma Gandhi maintained:

We punish thieves because we think they harass us. They may leave us alone; but they will only transfer their attentions to another victim. This other victim, however, is also a human being, ourselves in a different form, and so we are caught in a vicious circle. The trouble from thieves continues to increase, as they think it is their business to steal. In the end we see that it is better to tolerate the thieves than to punish them. The forbearance may even bring them to their senses. By tolerating them we realize that thieves are not different from ourselves, they are our brethren, our friends, and may not be punished. But whilst we bear with the thieves, we may not endure the infliction. That would only induce cowardice. So we realize a further duty. Since we regard the thieves as our kith and kin, they must be made to realize the kinship. And so we must take pains to devise ways and means of winning them over. This is the path of ahimsa. It may entail continuous suffering and the cultivating of endless patience. Given these two conditions, the thief is bound in the end to turn away from his evil ways and we shall get a clearer vision of truth. Thus step by step we learn how to make friends with all the world; we realize the greatness of God, of Truth. Our peace of mind increases in spite of suffering; we become braver and more enterprising; we understand more clearly the difference between what is everlasting and what is not; we learn how to distinguish between what is our duty and what is not. Our pride melts away and we become humble. Our worldly attachments diminish and likewise the evil within us diminishes from day to day. 

History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul. Nevertheless, the familiar story, that, on seeing evildoers taken to the place of execution, Bradford was wont to exclaim: "But for the grace of God there goes John Bradford," is a universal tradition, which has overcome the lapse of time, because the tradition of the political economy of India based on land as capital, and therefore, as commodity has itself overcome the lapse of time from the days of rajatantra to those of prajatantra: the political economy remains the same in the Republic of India. But as Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens, 1835-1910) said:

No tribe, howsoever insignificant, and no nation, howsoever mighty occupies a foot of land that is not stolen.

History is witness to many a Homeric contest over land. Therefore, so long as land

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77 M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1938, 68.
remains a commodity in India as long both the natural and the social environments of India will be affected as of yore: inequalities of power over land and people in rajatantra definitely affected the control of biotic resources after its own fashion in pre-colonial and colonial India, the equalities of rights over land and people in prajatantra will certainly affect, after its own fashion, the control of biotic resources in post-colonial Republic of India. But when one speaks of the land, one cannot do so without speaking of its environs, its flora and fauna, its mineral resources, since these are the basic material wherewithal of the people to live by. Yet 'while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.'

Perhaps, the priorities and compulsions of the processes of our successful prajatantra since 15 August 1947 will eventually overturn the habits and traditions of priorities and compulsions of centuries of rajatantra in India, so that prajaneeti, not rajaneeti, prajadharma, not rajadharma prevailed in the Republic of India. Amen to that.

Nevertheless as Jawaharlal Nehru said:

The past brings us many gifts; indeed, all that we have today of culture, civilization, science, or knowledge of some aspects of the truth, is a gift of the distant or recent past to us. It is right that we acknowledge our obligation to the past. But the past does not exhaust our duty or obligation. We owe a duty to the future also, and perhaps that obligation is even greater than the one we owe to the past. For the past is past and done with, we cannot change it; the future is yet to come, and perhaps we may be able to shape it a little. If the past has given us some part of the truth, the future also hides many aspects of the truth, and invites us to search for them. But often the past is jealous of the future and holds us in a terrible grip, and we have to struggle with it to get free to face and advance towards the future.

After thousands of years of her past as rajatantra, including the British Raj-tantra, the future arrived for India on 15 August 1947 as prajatantra. As never before in India's history, common destiny beckoned all Indians to seek a new beginning.

Nevertheless, in the ten years from 1947 up to 1957 of our study, India's agriculture, and related activities continued to affect the natural environment, and, in turn, were affected upon by it; but, on the whole, Indian agriculture sustained the fledgling Republic of India largely creditably. Mahatma Gandhi had a dream and the Constituent Assembly turned

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that into reality in the Constitution of India by granting Fundamental Rights, including in land to the people of India for the first time in their history, but the irony was that the same very people of India, including the Mahatma’s followers as well as those of Karl Marx, turned that reality back into dream.

However:

What we need for lasting happiness is impossible for human beings: only God can have complete bliss, for His is ‘the kingdom and the power and the glory’. Earthly kingdoms are limited by other kingdoms; earthly power is cut short by death; earthly glory, though we build pyramids or be ‘married to immortal verse’, fades with the passing of centuries. To those who have but little of power and glory, it may seem that a little more would satisfy them, but in this they are mistaken: these desires are insatiable and infinite, and only in the infinitude of God could they find repose.81

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81 There is an apocryphal anecdote about a poet, who translated John Milton’s Paradise Lost into his native tongue. A nephew of his retranslated that back into English!