CHAPTER XI - A SUMMING UP

To be meaningful cultural interaction between nations or individuals demands empathy and genuine understanding of each other's contribution to social welfare. It proves abortive if either assumes a superior stance. International relations have always been based on altruistic self-interest. But after the Second World War foreign aid, one of its facets, is being used as an instrument of foreign policy to manipulate the developmental strategy of the recipient country.

Three decades of independence in India, the largest democracy in the world, have highlighted the faulty planning, deliberate or otherwise, and the neglect of the social imperatives necessary for rapid integrated development. The reasons for miscalculation in the planning strategy are traceable to historical events or current international political pressures.

Educational planning has suffered all along for want of an Indian definition of education and what it should achieve. With 80 per cent of its population living in rural India, the system followed has been derivative; the planners have been strongly influenced by an alien system of elitist education. Indian agriculture, which was essentially feudal, has not changed despite the remarkable output as a result of technological innovations. The much needed land reform has not been tackled for lack of political will or for the fear of upsetting the vote-bank of rural India. The country also adopted an alien political system with the full knowledge that 70 per cent of the population are illiterate. The imported model of democracy which survives on mere numbers has proved a disaster.
In the democracy, as it now operates, it is difficult to identify clearly the foci of power — whether they are the elected representatives, trade unions, industry, bureaucracy or just the power of money. But for want of a viable alternative, the Westminster model may still have some lessons to offer. Technology has offered solutions to some of the problems in agriculture, medicine and education. The technological input in agriculture has made even a marginal farmer realize that education, science and technology give him power to manipulate nature and obtain the desired results. But the transference of 'know-how' between developed and developing countries has meant a drain on the developing countries' resources. Appropriate technology has to be developed indigenously and dependence upon imported 'know-how' cannot be an all time solution.

Although there is a temptation to blame the Indian scientists and intellectuals for the country's continued dependence on foreign aid it is as well to remember that the innovative capability of the Indian mind has had a setback which is only slowly being remedied. There is now a growing awareness of the role of the intellectual, which is to highlight the fact that in a totally interdependent world any policy for human survival on this planet cannot be based on exploitation of one another. In the Westerners' keenness to live in Auroville or take to the 'Hare Krishna' movement or to Yoga, and the Easterners' pursuit of the affluence of the West, runs a thread of common desire to seek an enduring economic order, social justice and internationalism.

The changes which were unobtrusively taking place in society as a result of the interaction of many organic factors began to attract the attention of sociologists after the Second World War and politicians realised that
social changes could be manipulated to fulfil their political objectives. In India when an alien system of government - parliamentary democracy - was grafted on to a feudal society, new political elites were forced into places of power without the requisite education or experience even in ordinary administrative practices, let alone statesmanship. The electorate could never ensure that the elected representatives had the required national perspectives or that the system under which the country worked provided them. The intellectuals in India who, with their knowledge and wisdom, ought to lead society, have kept aloof from politics because of the hierarchical value system that tends to give one a false position of superiority in relation to the elected representatives. The system, therefore, as it prevailed at the time of independence, still exists with only marginal adjustments. Any social change designed to transform the Indian scene from its tradition bound values and rigid caste and class systems requires a radical approach in three important areas - education, agriculture and technology.

Since change has to begin with an individual or a unit, the changes must be attempted at the unit level and the planners must follow a strategy of indirect approach, where possible. Though considerable social legislation has been passed, both by the Union and the State governments, directed change by legislation in areas like the abolition of untouchability, the dowry system, the creation of an egalitarian society and equal status for women - none of these has in fact taken place in reality.

India's problems can be traced to a crisis in leadership. Erik Erikson's definition that a successful and creative leader tries to solve for all what he
cannot solve for himself is of significance. Any study in leadership or lack of it becomes an analysis of the relations between an individual whose motivations are never apparent and a group whose reasons for responding to him are invariably complex, rooted as they are in historical circumstances. Whether it is political or intellectual, charismatic or institutional leadership, those who follow and conform present a mystifying picture today, especially in the patterns of communications between leaders and followers. We do not have a Gandhi or a Nehru who could hypnotise the 400 million people of India in the 40's, when the country did not have sophisticated communication technology—transistors, T.V. and satellites which are common place today. The threat of a fast by Gandhi had an electrifying effect on the people who voluntarily gave up any agitation and listened to him. Nehru, a charismatic and dynamic leader, felt he could channelise the nation's potential by educating the people, which he did through his speeches. Today India presents a picture similar to the old city states of Greece without their intellectuals.

If the country had been left to fend for itself by trial and error, a viable system may probably have evolved. But Indian independence coincided with the period when the Second World War ended and foreign aid as a form of neo-colonialism came on the international scene as a bait to the developing countries. There are, therefore, reasons to believe that the country had a sound base on which to plan for rapid all-round development. But, shorn of Burma and Sri Lanka, and with the creation of Pakistan, India lost some of her natural wealth. Even then her planners could have taken a proper inventory and drawn up plans with rural economy as an integral part of national development. Instead,
the temptation of foreign aid was difficult to resist. The donors naturally expected to guide the recipients' developmental efforts to their advantage and it was possible to engineer this with the help of influential Indian bureaucrats, intellectuals and neo-political elites. That foreign aid - whether it is in the form of advice or loans - has become an instrument of foreign policy is not realised by the average Indian. It is understood that no country can be totally independent, and the repercussions of change elsewhere will be felt even in the remotest corners of the world.

**Education**

The influence of British colonial and other Western value systems - elitism, urban orientation, consumer society and several class distinctions - had their imprint on the Indian intellectuals and their decisions inevitably tended to percolate to the lower strata of society, most significantly in planning a new education policy. It is felt that a budget of Rs.2,400 crores on education is whittled away because there is evidence that 70 per cent of the population are kept illiterate owing to vested interests, 25 per cent are educated on irrelevant textbooks and that five per cent educate themselves on ephemeral popular literature.

Indian independence or de-colonisation by the British was achieved not by the destruction of the old colonial state or seizure of power by Indians, but by transfer of power from the British to the Indian elite representing big landlords and big business interests which had many things in common with imperialism and shared a common fear of revolutionary developments in the country. Consequently, post-colonial India, the product of a legal transaction between the dominant elite groups of Britain and India, found it easy to continue even as a sovereign republic.
much of what was undemocratic – and a good deal was – in the political institutions and political culture of the Raj.

Since there is no facet of life in a democracy which is not touched by politics, education has been no exception. The three educational reports which show the deep impact of the alien value system have continued to suggest only elitist education. But for the fact that the management changed, the contents and the pattern were the same as in pre-independent India. The changes necessary to meet the national needs, especially in educational reform, need a longer period of gestation than in other fields of activity. But even after 30 years of continuous experimentation the educational system has not created a national awareness, a world perspective or fellow feeling among students.

The important forces of economic policy for a just social order ought to be to generate employment that is able to absorb at least the new additions to the adult population, especially when there is a backlog of unemployment and underemployment as well. The major source of injustice is not the general scarcity so much as the diminishing marginal utility of man. In fact, millions of people find themselves idle and useless, often in the very prime of youth. The formal education system has apparently failed and alternatives are being sought in education in order to achieve the desired social change for rapid development.

India certainly wants to profit from the educational experiments, scientific discoveries and the advances in technology of other countries. It should, however, do this by choosing what it needs to adopt where it cannot
innovate. There is no need to imitate the Western standards, but only to improve on them.

Whatever may be the verdict of history on the Indo-British encounter, none can deny the role that English language has played in unifying this country as a single nation. Contemporary politics is largely conditioned by the language controversy, and linguistic fanaticism with its roots in the caste and class systems are driving the country to a point of total disintegration. Since each regional language has been encouraged to grow, while simultaneously through English, India has access to 70 per cent of world's ever-growing knowledge, it would be an act of statesmanship to de-fuse the language controversy by accepting English, which would offer equal advantage to every region, as the official language.

Higher education needs to be restricted to those who need and have an aptitude for theoretical knowledge and institutes of higher education should be sited where such education can be supplied. The country needs specialists in every field, but the problem is their location and eventual place of work. Most trained personnel do not want to go where the jobs are, and the institutes that train them are unwilling to train them for jobs in local conditions; our leadership is also unwilling to tell them about their duties and responsibilities. Higher education, instead of becoming an instrument of class privileges, must be made an integrative force to mobilise human resources and meet human needs.

There is also the need to give special attention to education for women. The urban woman has facilities and encouragement to enter higher education, but women in rural India have no facilities whatsoever. These are serious disparities in the educational system between men
and women, and even among women - an important source of persisting duality of cultures, economic levels and consumption standards. These differences have their impact on the way children of the rich and the poor are brought up, thus perpetuating sharp disparities for generations to come. This is one of the reasons why Gandhi propounded his economic reconstruction of India, based on the ethic of consumption.

Cultural interaction since independence has been on the increase in terms of numbers of exchanges of scholars between India and other countries. In this post-war exercise, India has continued to play host to a number of countries and students from a number of countries - Madagascar, Mauritius, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines - attend Indian university courses which only perpetuate the old colonial value scale, fostering class distinction.

Cultural interactions are usually the result of foreign policies of contracting countries, foreign policies in each case in themselves being influenced by the internal and external needs - political, economic or otherwise.

Since Britain entered EEC, a new political constellation, her relationship with India cannot be treated as anything like 'special'. Her interest is purely economics, for India does still offer a big market for some manufactured goods, notably, books. Of course, Britain is interested in importing tea, jute. With her labour policies tilting economic fortunes, if scope for multinational corporations open up, on Indian terms, she may use India as a manufacturing centre for her products. The world has already seen the end of cheap energy; it would be foolish to suppose that Britain or for that
matter any country, can go on obtaining cheap raw materials through unequal trading relationships. With such a vast population and cultural diversity, India has all along been a training ground for her civil service cadres. With independent India making progress in several scientific fields, there is scope for collaborative or independent research into problems to which Britain and other developed countries have no other means of access.

Foreign aid has played an important part in social change and development, though all the changes are taking place within the traditional hierarchical Hindu social structure. Whether it is in education, agriculture, scientific development or in technology, foreign aid should not be the outlet for the unwanted produce of industrialised countries. Substantial domestic progress can be achieved only through improvements in international policies concerning trade, aid and related fields, realised with the full participation of the developing countries in international decision making on all issues of vital interest to the country. Social change is politically difficult, but has to be weighed against the risk of social rebellion. Too little, too late is history’s most universal epitaph for political regimes which have lost their mandates to the demands of landless, jobless and desperate men.

Just as the English language, which was introduced for recruiting staff to operate the revenue oriented administration, in the long run helped India to master the literature and have access to Western thought and liberalism, access to the English language ushered India into the modern world. Modern science and technology helped Indian ability to compete with the rest of the world. In a competitive world, we cannot go back
altogether to the Gandhian approach to science and technology without the fear of being left behind if we neglect the organisation of science and the need for a national policy. But the Gandhian growth model is adaptable. 'Rural development' or uplift will turn out to be yet another politician's phrase like national integration and 'garibi hatao'. Science and technology in modern India should have their own status so that even visiting scientists from other countries can have a dialogue with Indian scientists of eminent stature. The emphasis on Indian rural science should not slacken the pace of internationally accepted R & D work. As in everything, we must develop self-reliance in nuclear technology.

**Agriculture**

Radical reforms in agriculture are possible only by upsetting the rural or urban elite who are vote banks. Technology and other modernising influences have widened the gap between the rural rich and the rural poor. Indian farmers, like farmers elsewhere, are willing to accept innovations as long as they can see quick results. Rural planners must take into account specific social imperatives before injecting technology inputs.

In large parts of the world it is safe to predict that all the reforms involved in the new agricultural technology and redistributive legislation will not be enough to sustain a growing population on land. Studies in manpower absorption by different sectors of economy show conclusively that except in a few places there comes a stage when agriculture begins to absorb a diminishing proportion of the rising population. In India it is believed that this critical stage will be reached between 1980 and 1985. This does not mean that
those engaged in agriculture should take on jobs in cities. In any case city employment depends more on machines than men.

If we consider various other trends in resource use, congestion, breakdown of city life, and the growth of crime and violence, it is necessary to restrain large scale migration to the cities. There is, therefore, need to provide farm and non-farm employment in the rural and semi-rural areas. This can be done through massive public works programmes for constructing durable community assets (buildings, roads, canals, wells and various other infrastructural facilities) for rural development. These can become long term investments and reduction of costs in such spheres as water use, land consolidation and marketing of farm output in turn will generate more productivity, employment and incomes. Improvements in agriculture can also be used as a stimulus to a whole line of processing and refining industries in the rural areas.

Such a combination of increased farm output and increased employment on land and public works should provide the basis through its stimulation of demand for consumer necessities for the growth of small towns close to the rural areas where medium and small scale industries can be located. This should lend itself to a conscious policy of decentralised industrial development and location so that urban growth becomes complimentary to rural development. The preferred scenario should not be one made of clusters of self-contained villages, but rather one of thousands of small nucleating towns towards which the rural landscape gravitates, thus ending the present duality of metropolitan and rural cultures.
Technology

In the field of technology India outlined a National Policy of Science and Technology in 1973. Whereas indirect social changes are quantifiable, as a result of technological inputs, Indians have placed an exaggerated emphasis on the value of technology to solve all human ills in society. The Approach Paper* is more an academic exercise; except occasionally mentioning its social relevance to Indian poverty it had dependence on foreign aid built into it right through the 21st century. Some critics feel that the West owes a moral duty to less developed countries whether as restitution for past wrongs or as a form of humanitarianism. Such beliefs are invoked to justify far-reaching policies which serve important political and financial interests.

There is also a general belief that rapid development cannot take place in a participatory framework. The issue is not one of choice between liberal democracy dominated by machine politics and state capitalism in which bureaucracy tends to perpetuate itself. The real issue in industry relates to the classic predicament of political life, namely between those in power and those out of it; between the government and the people.

One could try out reforms in this participatory approach in a number of sectors - economic organisation and its governance, the nature of education, location of work and enterprise, choice of technology, size of units and the nature of work. Participation is a process of evolving institutional structures from which diverse individuals experience a sense of dignity and self-respect - as beings that are able to determine their own

destinies. Poverty and inequality are themselves reflections not just of prevailing conditions of production, but rather of structures and values that deny dignity to the human being. The point to emphasise here is the value of participation, irrespective of the size of the operation.

Only by achieving material prosperity and intellectual superiority can an Indian hold his own in the international community. Political rhetoric, unrelated to the practical realities of the country, and borrowed technology, will take us nowhere. The disappointment of unwarranted expectations aroused by many forms of international aid results in political tensions and diverts attention from the real tasks of the improvement of the conditions of life of the poor. Even well meaning critics who would like to see India progress, often measure India in Western terms. They seem to fear that procrastination might lead to total disruption in India which in turn would upset the world economic order. But India will have to fight hard to maintain her national morale and face unflinchingly the prophesies of doom.

Post-independent India needs to modernise and develop. Britain first put her on the path to such modernisation but without the impact of colonial rule, Indian response to the West may well have been quite different. Her choice of Western learning was limited by British imperial needs, but the initiative to select her requirements was her own and it is only since 1947 that she realised, very slowly, at that, that Western learning had little relevance to national needs.

Gandhi, was perhaps the first Indian to voice the need for a totally indigenous 'basic' education. He called upon his countrymen to select those elements from foreign cultures which could harmonize with our own and
lead to progress. The spirit of the century had to be reconciled with that of the country. Indians have always resisted regimentation of thought and do not hesitate to express themselves uninhibitedly. While this gives India a distinctive character, it often hinders organisation, team-work and collective discipline, the virtues essential for material transformation. This is also why several underground revolutionary movements failed. On the other hand open mass movements such as Gandhi's Satyagraha succeeded because they were essentially individual efforts. This amply proves that all efforts at modernisation and development must be planned around the individual.

The country can also re-orient its strategies of growth, re-fashion her plans and regain her faith in herself by enlisting and accepting, in increasing measure, her own intellectuals as competent advisers, while choosing more and more selectively such 'know-how' and resources as are offered by other nations. She would do well to open wide her windows on the world outside but not allow exogenous influences to shake her national identity and rich culture which India is re-discovering through Gandhi and the Indo-British encounter.