

BETWEEN DOGMA AND DEBATE

The problem of communication between Groups
and individuals engaged in
Social Development and Change

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PROLOGUE : THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITIES

We are heirs to a racial history. We do not start with a clear slate, ever. Every word we use, every idea we express, every image we conceive, has its roots in the past. And since the past is cluttered with the droppings of a hundred wayward tendencies, therefore our expression is open to different interpretations unless we are careful to identify (to the best of our ability) the meaning of what we express. We are dealing here with the “problem of communication between groups and individuals engaged in social development and change”. How do we define, for instance, the word “communication”. Do we refer to an English language dictionary? Do we interpret it as in advertising agent would? Do we take as our basis the pontifications of the Minister of Information and Broadcasting (colour TV and all that)? Do we accept what an artist would say? Communication of what? To whom? By whom? For what purpose? Questions that could be raised for all the other words in the area of our enquiry. In the search for an identity to these words let us at least lay down what shall be our approach.

Being heirs to history we shall try to approach our enquiry through the avenues and by lanes of history. The biggest major upheaval in Indian society on a national scale in the recent past has been the movement for liberation from British rule. Thus it is that movement that has had the most immediate impact on the forces that impinge on the present society. We shall, therefore, examine the Independence movement briefly in order to arrive at an understanding of what have been the tendencies in Indian society. Selecting the main features of those tendencies we shall set up a hypothesis to explain what causes changes in society. We shall then further examine the hypothesis in the light of activities in the post-Independence era to validate and modify it. From the hypothesis we shall attempt to define, for our purposes the words “groups”, “individuals”, “social development”, “social change”, and “communication”. Thus we will be in a position to arrive at what have been the major streams in the past, and what has interrupted or diverted the flow, and so come to the crux of our analysis of the problems therein. From a reconstruction of history within the frame of India in the last fifty years we shall attempt to arrive at a construction of the future.

This paper is about the “problems of communication”. If it is able to analyse those problems faithfully it should also be able to pose some of the solutions. This is the first test of the validity of the analysis. However, if in the analytical exercise, the paper is unable to encompass within itself the solutions it poses then it will fail to communicate about communication. This is the second test of the analysis. It is also the paradox we find ourselves in and which we must resolve! Even for this resolution we shall look to the lessons we can extract from the past. If we fail in this ambition well, never mind, we are but grains of sand on the beaches of time. There will be other grains mightier than us withstanding the vagaries of wind and water! To them, our salute!

MONOLOGUE : TOWARDS A THEORY OF CHANGE

The central figure in the Indian struggle for Independence was M.K. Gandhi. He expressed the major thrust of the struggle in simple words and put forward concepts which appealed to people all over the country. It is, therefore, important to understand something of those concepts.

Gandhi held that the 'freedom of the individual' stands above everything else; "man is the measure"¹. But the individual must willingly adjust his individualism to the social requirements of progress. This is only possible in a non-exploitative, non-coercive social order based on love, altruism, spirit of service, dignity of labour, non-violence, and equality. Gandhi, therefore, offered two arguments. Firstly, the roots of violence lie in exploitation. Industrialism causes concentration of economic power in a few hands and in the city centers, leading to decay of villages, generating an infinite parabola of wants and corruption. Hence, voluntary action is needed to curb the hedonist norm, i.e. "limitation of wants". Secondly, he held, private property and capital are the main sources of inequality and exploitation; therefore, abolishment of external conflict between capital and labour, leveling down of the few rich and leveling up of semi starved millions; hence "trusteeship".

Gandhi warned the rich "Violent and bloody revolution is a certainly one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of richers and the power that riches gives and sharing them for common good.. The present owners would have to make the choice between class war and voluntarily converting themselves into trustees of their wealth." And he explained for the benefit of the poor, "The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the cooperation of the poor in society. If this knowledge were to permeate and spread among the poor, they would become strong and would be able to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation." No wonder that Gandhi was able to appeal to rich and poor alike in the struggle against British imperialism.

Gandhi thus based his thesis of social transformation on the "inherent goodness of Man." He proposed that the class antagonisms be resolved through non-violent non-cooperation (by the poor) and trusteeship (by the rich); while the city-village antagonism (which he held to be the more important one) would be resolved through rural development based on radical decentralization and village self-sufficiency. He held that the "reason of our poverty is the extinction of our industries and our consequent unemployment." Eradication of mass rural poverty and mass unemployment being the main objectives, he concretized all his ideas into the 18 point "constructive programme": communal unity, removal of untouchability, prohibition, khadi, village industries, sanitation, basic education, adult education, women's conditions, health and hygiene, regional languages, economic equality, peasant organization, industrial labour organization, tribal welfare, care to lepers, mental moral and physical training of students. The British were the biggest exploiters of all so he directed the programmes of Non Cooperation and Civil Disobedience against them.

Gandhi's idea, however, were not the only ones to dominate the country. At the same time there were those like Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh and M.N. Roy who advanced increasingly violent forms of protest and there were others like Vallabhbhai Patel, Tej Bahadur Sapru, and Motilal Nehru who advocated various compromises with the British. All these ideas reached out to individuals all over the country and pulled them in one way or another depending upon their disillusionment with Gandhi. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, at present member of the Politburo and Central Committee of the Communist Part of India (Marxist), has given a fascinating account of how this turmoil of ideas influenced him in particular and his contemporaries in general and how he travelled the long road from a traditional Namboothiri Brahmin to a Communist.²

Namboodiripad was born in 1909 into a conservative Namboothiri family of Kerala. He was trained to be a Sanskrit hymnologist, one who can recite the Rig Veda in ascending and descending order without, as he notes, "the least idea as to the meaning of it". In his boyhood, however, there were disturbances in the traditional structure of the Namboothiris. Tenancy Acts were being passed by the Government under pressure from tenant sympathisers and the Namboothiris (who were also feudal landlords) began to realise that they would also have to be able to lobby in Government circles. For this knowledge of English was essential and the Namboothiri Welfare Association was set up to undertake the reform of the ancient caste so that it could better survive in the modern society. This was in the face of stiff opposition from the conservative Namboothiris and young Namboodiripad, like many of his fellow students, was drawn to the side of the more progressive elements. From the learning of English, the Welfare Association moved into other areas of Namboothiri life: the prohibition of polygamy; permission for the younger brothers in the family to marry into the caste (since the elder brother had several wives there was a shortage of marriageable caste girls for the younger ones); widow remarriage; division of property from the joint family to the nuclear one, and temple entry for non-brahmins. E.M.S. Namboodiripad vividly recounts how two dramas he participated in 1929, "From the Kitchen to the Stage" and "The Hell behind the Purdah", revealed to the Namboothiri women, for the first time, their right to monogamous marriages to men of their choice. Members of the Welfare Association also undertook the cutting off of hair tufts (a sign of Brahmin supremacy), the breaking of sacred threads of the men, and wearing of blouses and ear studs, and discarding the purdah by women. Thus, within 20 years the bastion of Namboothiri supremacy had crumbled.

In the meantime, by 1921 the Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Gandhi, had launched the Non-Cooperation movement against the British. This evoked wide response in Kerala and the Muslims also joined it to express their protest against the British for ousting the Khalif of Turkey. However, the Muslims were all tenants and, in time, their "Khilafat" movement also began to challenge the caste supremacy of the Brahmin landlords, eventually culminating in the Moplah rebellion. This communal upsurge effectively disorganised the Non-Cooperation movement in Kerala. All these events attracted the attention of the Kerala youth and they began to develop an interest in national affairs. Much of this interest was fuelled through the series of public meetings sponsored by the Congress and the increasing number of local language publications that

reached out to the educated citizens (Kerala had and still has the highest literacy rate in the country). Drawn to the Congress ethic young Namboodiripad began learning Hindi, and wearing Khadi.

Kerala youth were not the only ones to find a place in the Congress. During the Non-Cooperation movement most of the leaders of the Congress were imprisoned in the Nagpur central jail. They realised how all the patriotic impulses of young women and men in the jail were going waste in the absence of organised training in discipline and loyalty to a cause. Hence the idea emerged of an All India Body of Volunteers. The Hindustani Seva Dal was thus born in 1923. This was later transformed into the Congress Seva Dal and played its distinct part in the struggle for national liberation.

The Non-Cooperation movement triggered off a debate nationwide within the Congress over whether to demand Dominion Status (Home Rule) or complete independence (Poorna Swaraj) of the British. The “moderates” wanted the first while the “extremists” were agitating for the second. Impressed by the argument for independence, Namboodiripad was drawn to the latter. Gandhi sided with the moderates until the general dissatisfaction within the Congress forced him to agree that if by 1929 the British did not grant Home Rule then he would launch a Civil Disobedience movement for independence. The British did not oblige and so in 1930 a public pledge was taken for independence in which lakhs of people participated. In 1931 the Salt Satyagraha was launched followed by the Gandhi Irwin pact under which picketing of foreign goods and promoting Swadeshi was allowed. However, the Gandhi-Irwin pact did not last long and in 1932 the second Civil Disobedience movement was launched. By this time Namboodiripad had fully identified himself with the Congress was jailed for the first time. But Gandhi suddenly put an end to the Civil Disobedience movement as a form of collective activity and substituted it by individual satyagraha. Most of the Congressmen were subsequently released by the Government but there was widespread discontent among the Congress workers at this abrupt end to collective struggle. In 1933 Gandhi declared that he would devote his entire time to Harijan uplift and rural reconstruction. This further added to the uneasiness felt by many within the Congress. It was at this time that Socialist opinions started to take hold and the seeds of the Congress Socialist Party were sown. The Socialists argued that unless the Congress were to develop a mass base amongst the peasants and workers it would be unable to achieve the goal of independence. (The Communists were not a party to much of this debate as they had become almost defunct after the 1929 Meerut conspiracy case in which all the top leaders had been arrested). But Gandhi retorted that “Harijan uplift is not mere social reform but a revolutionary movement.” The movement itself was gaining ground. Even within the Namboothiri Welfare Association the issue of temple entry for untouchables had been raised and found favourable response. So Namboodiripad and his colleagues joined in Gandhi’s programme of Harijan uplift. At the same time they became involved in the agitation by the Malabar peasantry against enhancement of land tax. The agitation led further to issues of agricultural debts, landlord tenant relationships etc. which drew many of the Congress Socialists in Kerala further and further away from the concepts being propagated by Gandhi into the dynamics of their own area. Congress satyagrahis all over India began to slowly enter the field of trade unions and mass organisations.

In 1934, the Socialists in the Congress grew sufficiently convinced and vocal to form the Congress Socialist Party. At the first convention at Bombay, Jai Prakash Narayan was elected the General Secretary, while M.R. Masani, N.G. Gore, Mohanlal Gautam, and E.M.S. Namboodiripad became Joint Secretaries. The entire thrust of the CSP was to transform the Congress into a socialist organisation. This was naturally resisted by the moderates led by Gandhi. There were conflicts in the Congress over who would control the Congress and for short periods in some pockets the Socialists were able to have their say.

By 1935, the Communists had begun to recover from their earlier debacle and then firmly resisted the temptation to join the Congress. Rather, they questioned the members of the CSP at individual meetings about their policy of working within the Congress. "How can an organisation of the bourgeoisie, "they asked, "be transformed into a socialist one?" but this evidently was not adequate, for in 1936 Namboodiripad joined the Communist and by 1940 the entire CSP in Kerala had merged with the CPI.

Namboodiripad's account brings out many interesting features of the pulls and counter pulls that existed in those heady days of the struggle for national liberation. The frustration with Gandhi's ideas led many to search for alternatives. The Socialists, "official" Communists (recognised by the CPSU), and the Royists were active in propagating "Left" idea while equally the Congress leadership was pulling in a "Right" direction. As Namboodiripad wryly observes, of the five office bearers of the CSP executive, J.P. Narayan eventually became a Sarvodayite, M.R. Masani joined the Swatantra Party (the party of the big industrial house), N.G. Gore joined the Praja Socialist Party, Mohanlal Gautam returned to the Congress, and only E.M.S. Namboodiripad joined the Communists. Evidently, different and opposing schools of thought were contending for mastery.

It is this struggle between opposing schools of thought that is the focal point of our hypothesis. It would be simplistic to classify it simply as a struggle for control over an organisation, or as a struggle between "Left" and "Right". The roots lie deeper in opposed world views and ideologies. To understand this in its specificity we shall need to go further than 1947, the year of national liberation.

The thrust given by the Congress under Gandhi's leadership to values, attitudes, and programmes had far reaching consequences in Independent India. The Hindustani Seva Dal, organised in 1923 as a body to transform the patriotic impulses of a generation into loyalty to the cause of national liberty, ran into rough waters in 1947. The issue was no longer loyalty to liberty; it became one of how to "save the youth from the virus of communalism", and how to prevent them from showing disrespect to the National Flag, the National Anthem and the portraits of national leaders³. (So soon after the struggle for independence, one is tempted to ask!) The Dal was reorganised by Dr. Hardikar into a "non-political broad-based-all comprehensive youth organisation" called the Bharat Seva Dal. This paved the way for state patronage and support. Hundreds of camps were organised to train youths, teachers, and the public. And what were they trained in? In

exercises with the Lathi, Khati, Indian clubs, lezzimes, first aid, spinning, ceremonial flag hoisting, and rifle training. Topics related to the Freedom Struggle, Flag, Indian Constitution, Five Year Plans, Panchayat Raj, Sarvodaya and Gandhian Philosophy were also taught. In practical training they were instructed in compost making. Reportedly, the Dal reached out to 50,000 youth and 5,000 teachers. There was little even of the Gandhian “constructive work” programme in all this, leave alone a discussion on the frustrations with the programme.

In 1948 also, a conference of constructive workers was held out of which the Sarva Seva Sangh emerged as the coordinating body of the Sarvodaya movement. The Sarvodaya Plan was accepted by J.P. Narayan as the socialist programme in the Indian context. Later on other bodies emerged such as the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, the Gandhi Peace Foundation, the Khadi Village Industries Commission etc. The first Five-year Plan of the Congress and Vinoba Bhave’s Bhoodan Programme emerged together in 1952; Bhoodan being the “Gandhian” answer to the violent Telengana peasant agitation led by the communists. Bhoodan tapered off after 1955 and was developed into Gramdan in 1957. At the same time the Government’s Community Development programme failed and was replaced by Panchayati Raj in 1957. (The Planning Commission reported on the CD programme “Richer cultivators benefited disproportionately if not indeed at the expense of the poorer ones.”) Gramdan too ran into difficulties. The land was donated mainly in Bihar (over 50%), U.P., Rajasthan, and M.P. where feudalism held greater sway, and it was observed that the major response was from the landless and poor peasants while 99% of the land donated was of poor quality. By 1963, Sampurna (i.e. total) Gramdan gave way to Sulabh (i.e. easy) Gramdan and by 1970 Gramdan itself tapered off. The Sarvodaya movement, by and large, kept pace with the government programmes and when Panchayati Raj gave way to Block Development and Integrated Area Development Programmes the Sarvodaya agencies matched it with Gram Vikas programmes of their own. But as a movement it ceased to retain its dynamism. It was reportedly at its peak in 1964 with 8620 Lok Sewaks, 8114 Shanti Sainiks, 2000 organisational workers, and about 2,00,000 workers in the Khadi institutions. A study revealed that the leadership was dominated by the upper caste (90%), middle class (90%), male (97%), older (55% over 50) generation. After 1964 there was a steady decline in organisational strength. The leadership attempted to recoup ground through the establishment of the Tarun Shanti Sena to attract the youth (many of them children of the leaders!) but there was only a marginal response in Bihar, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. A brief glimmer appeared in 1977 with the Bihar and Gujarat movements which accepted the leadership of the Sarvodaya leader Jai Prakash Narayan but the student and youth organisations preferred to be known by their own names and not join the Sarvodaya.

In spite of the decline of the Sarvodaya in 1964, there was yet a major thrust to constructive work” in the minds of much of the educated youth. Some joined the Communists and the Socialists, other joined the ranks of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, but the major avenue open to the rest was to do “social work”. Little leagues and organisations and groups sprang up in different colleges and functioned in a random fashion. But they were taken note of and in 1974, the Government attempted to absorb all of them in the National Social Service Scheme. This was speedily followed by the Nehru

Yuvak Kendras and the Rural Youth Clubs – all designed to promote the ethic of “constructive work”.

In the mid sixties there were other signs symptomatic of the search for alternatives. Non-Congress ministries had been voted into power in some of the States in 1965 but by 1967 many of them had failed. The Communists split into the CPI and the CPI(M) and, subsequently, into the CPI(ML). The Nehru era was coming to a close and the Green Revolution was still offering considerable hope. But as the sixties rolled into the seventies, into the Green Revolution, and then the White one, both began to be flawed. Three wars with Pakistan briefly ignited the patriotic spirit but these too soon died down. And in the search for alternatives the pushes and pulls of conflicting ideas continued.

We may now specify in greater detail the nature of those conflicting ideas and their ideological roots as well as the relationship between them. Ideology is not merely the perception of exploitation in society. It does not stop at the recognition of class antagonisms. It further delineates a set of values, attitudes, and beliefs about how these class antagonisms appear as real social problems and how to deal with them. Thus ideology guides the activities of individuals and organisations and the growth patterns of organisations reflect trends in the material life of the people these organisations are reaching out to. So ideology and organisations are the abstract and concrete forms of the answers to problems as people see them. When life became more than difficult the Telengana peasants rose in rebellion and turned to the CPI for guidance; when the economy of Bengal was unable to absorb them educated young men and women joined the ranks of the CPI(ML); when unemployment increased amongst engineers they began to join the professional constructive work programmes. Equally, when these organisations were unable to provide solutions to the problems of society people began to drift away to seek other organisations which seemed to offer better opportunities and better answers. E.M.S. Namboodiripad’s long road from Namboothiri Welfare to working class politics and Jai Prakash Narayan’s equally long travel from Marxism to the Socialists to the rag-rag Janata Party are only facets of this struggle between ideologies and the growth within each.

There would appear to be two major ideological mainstreams in society. The first attempts to maintain the existing pattern, trying to strengthen the existing economy and the existing social relations, assuring that class antagonisms can be accommodated in the same framework through the free competitiveness of man. The second calls for a change in the entire structure of society, holding that the exploited classes must overthrow their exploiters for this change to come about. We shall call the first the “Dominant Ideology” because it penetrates into every area of private and social activity and governs the general movement of society. We shall call the second the “Counter Ideology” because it counters the dominant values and beliefs when they fail to provide adequate answers to social and private problems, by giving new interpretations to language, experiences, and visions. Individuals and organisations remain in the mainstream of the dominant Ideology as long as it is sufficient for their physical and mental needs; veer towards the Counter Ideology when this is no longer so; return to the dominant Ideology if the Counter Ideology also fails, and so on. Both the ideologies co-exist in society, they are not

independent of each other, one thrives on the failures of the other. They provide different and opposed world views. Thus for instance, the Dominant Ideology gives birth to the conception of universal justice and equates it with equality of opportunity in a 'free' competitive society. The Counter Ideology takes the same concepts of justice, freedom, and equality and reinterprets them to show that they are not possible to competitive society. There is, therefore, a constant tussle between the two.

The propagation of the Dominant Ideology is in the self interest of the section of society which is dominant, which is in power; the ruling class. Since it controls society through the State apparatus it also uses the State to propagate its ideology. This it does through the careful patronage and control of education, religion, culture, and information, seeking to legitimise itself in the eyes of the people. But at every step it has to meet the challenges of the Counter Ideology when it fails to organisationally fulfill its own objectives. It first advances the proposition that Swarajya will fulfill the aspirations of the enslaved nation but Swarajya comes in a communal holocaust. It assumes that Tenancy Acts will ameliorate the lot of the farmer but famine still stalks the land. Community Development gives way to Panchayati Raj, Panchayati Raj to Area Development, Area Development to people's Participation, each failing to meet the objectives set by the authors according to their own assessment. Witness this report from the Planning Commission: "The existence of militant organisations of tenants and landless labourers would have facilitated the better implementation of land reforms. Such organisations cannot, however, be built up simply by issuing executive instructions. In the absence of strong peasant organisations the next best arrangement is to associate committees of beneficiaries with the implementation of land reforms."⁴

Constantly, through its failures, the Dominant Ideology fuels the challenge offered by the Counter Ideology and yet, it manages to survive. How does it do this? Partly by capitalising on the failures of the Counter Ideology to offer a possible alternative but mainly by its ability to create hope in the hearts of the millions, by grasping the fundamentals of continuing propaganda, by beginning the process of education in its values at an early age, by offering marginal concessions here and there, and, if all else fails, by terror. Its strength lies in the fact that it can link any aspect of society with any other because it controls the State. This linkage between aspects is strengthened by its continuous propaganda machine from primary school to university, from birth to death. Some have managed to break away from this "schooling" into the Counter Ideology but many thousands have not.

The philosophical basis of the Counter Ideology challenges the foundations of the free competition of the Dominant Ideology. It calls for a society in which private property will have been abolished.⁵ In such a society the political control of resources will be exercised in such a manner that the conflicts between men in society and the conflicts between Man and Nature will be resolved.⁶ The goals of such a Socialist society could be identified as:

1. Easing the material human reproduction and satisfaction of needs (raising labour productivity for socially necessary but unsatisfying work)

2. A domination-free association of solidary individuals.
3. A mode of production that does not destroy the basis of life (no “exploitation” of nature by “man”)⁷

Thus the Counter Ideology postulates a classless, non-hierarchical, non-exploitative, non-destructive, non-sexist, decentralised, participatory production system in which “the free development of each individual is the condition for the free development of all.”

The period before the sixties saw the transformation from charitable notions of welfare and relief to concepts of self-sufficiency and constructive work. But constructive work is not and cannot be the last word. This is being recognised beyond the boundaries of India. At an Asian Regional Workshop attended by 31 participants from 12 Asian and Pacific countries it was recognised that⁸: “No longer is development viewed simply as a process of economic and growth and adjustments. It is an inter-related process of change involving economic, social, cultural, and ethical factors. No longer should development be the sole prerogative and responsibility of the politician, the economist, technician, planner or aid administrator. It is a process which demands the active and conscious participation of all the people. Participation has been highlighted in the past few years by increasing emphasis upon concepts of social justice, self-reliance, and liberation, and by a realisation that development endeavour has in most instances benefited the ‘already strong’ at the expense of the ‘traditionally poor’, the powerless. Almost as a reaction to the deeply felt, but often unacknowledged, failures of development planning, and of the attempt to extend conventional technical and economic wisdom down to the masses, has come to contradictory pressure for greater emphasis in developmental action to be placed upon people’s participation, and upon the role of mass action as the engine of change from below. “Here there are no conceptions of trusteeship!”

From the notion of mass action for development it is but a short logical step to mass action against those who have so far been monopolising the fruits of development. Thus notions of organisation and mobilisation emerge to supplement the earlier views of village self-reliance through khadi and village industries. Even these notions cannot last. In class society, and under the promptings of the Counter Ideology, individuals will begin to see the class antagonisms when mere mobilisation fails to develop the forces of production, and from that to an understanding of politics is a short logical step. But politics as an individual effort will prove fruitless. It is only when politics permeates mass mobilisation itself that it will become a vital force for social transformation. This is the essential condition for the Counter Ideology to become a part of the mass organisation necessary for social action. Thus, through the agency of the Counter ideology, conceptions develop from charity to development, from development to organisation, from organisation to politics, and from politics to political education. These are what we would call the conceptual and organisational domains within the Counter Ideology. It is, at this state, necessary to define these domains more clearly.

Charity is the highest stage of idealism. Its simplest gesture is the act of giving alms to the beggar; its most complicated form is the act of individual sacrifice for the “common”

good. The central theme is of giving what one has in the hope that it will help the one to whom it is given. Of all charitable acts the questions asked are, “How long can one continue giving?” and, “Does it really help beyond the immediate present?”

Development embodies the concept of self-help, that whatever is received has to be paid for, that in work lies the solution on the problem of poverty, and that work is not available or is not efficient enough because of technical and administrative factors. When however, development is seen to be unable to remove poverty, indeed in many cases, to increase it, the questions asked are, “Why do the poor become poor?” and, “How can the poor have access to resources”?

Organisation arises out of an understanding that society is divided into rich and poor and that these two are opposed to each other, that the rich exploit the poor, and that the only way for the poor to better their lot is to form organisations that will demand their rights. The questions asked in this domain are, “Won’t the poor also begin to exploit when they obtain resources?” and, “Who all do we categorise as poor?”

Politics emerges as a “class” conception when the rich/poor division becomes inadequate to explain social reality; class arises as a category related to production and labour and profits, and class antagonisms as the basis of who holds political power in society, and, therefore, people have to be mobilised on a class basis, either as landless labourers or poor peasants or workers or artisans etc. The questions that emerge are, “What is to prevent exploitative relations within the class?” and, “How can the labouring class overthrow the ruling class and construct a new society?”

Political Education is the domain in which the ideas of class struggle and possibilities of socialist societies are attempted to be widely spread through dialogical methods, taking the live issues of workers and peasants at the starting point and building upon them into a visualisation of socialism as a cooperative, exploitation-free community, for which it is necessary to achieve political power. The questions, asked are, “How will growing understanding actually reflect in commitment to building a new society?” and, “Are human beings purely rational?”

Thus, as can be seen, the logic of the Counter Ideology leads from one domain to the next. This does not mean that individuals move from one to the other in a linear fashion. Given the nature of the struggle between ideologies, often individuals move backwards or are again attracted by the values and aspirations of the dominant Ideology because of their own problems of survival and hope. The movement between and within ideological mainstreams is affected by the material conditions within which production takes place. Unemployment, for example, creates generalised dissatisfaction; so does inflation and rising prices. The actions of such dissatisfied individuals, groups, and organisations, on the other hand, also affects to some degree these material conditions. Thus, a group moving from Development to Organisation will attempt to organise poor people who, in turn, will exert influences on the way land is distributed at a micro-level, credit is utilised, and production patterns changed.

To sum up, what is our hypothesis? There is in society, a constant struggle between two opposed ideologies of two opposed world views which are class-based. The purpose of the ideologies is to offer reasonable and adequate explanations and solutions to the problems of social and private existence. Failure of one creates conditions favourable for the growth of the other. Individuals and organisations are constantly affected by the innate ideological struggle and this creates the conditions for changing views, attitudes, and beliefs. There is an explicit organisation of the Dominant Ideology through the medium of the State. There is an implicit logic in the course of the Counter Ideology. The nexus of the battle between ideologies lies in the democratic control of political power.

We shall now examine some events of the last fifteen years in the light of this hypothesis.

DIALOGUE: THE PRACTICE OF CHANGE

By the mid 60s, the Gandhian policy of constructive work was reaching its peak through the Sarvodaya agencies. Accordingly it played a major role in providing the organisational and intellectual space for the ideological conflicts of later years. A classic case of this may be seen in the case of Maharashtra.

The spread of the Sarvodaya Mandals in Maharashtra was wide in its scope and coverage. One of the nerve centres was at Wardha where Vinobha Bhave, the spiritual successor of Gandhi, had established himself amidst a number of constructive work agencies. The other centre was in Bombay where much of the financial support for the Gandhian movement had been generated. From these two centres, the movement of Sarvodaya workers spread, partly in response to the threat of violent agitations and partly for the requirements of its own organisational growth. Both constructive work programmes were taken up as also attempts to attract the youth towards the Sarvodaya. For instance, the Tarun Shanti Sena was established as a youth wing and many units emerged in different towns and cities. The youth in the TSS were encouraged to do “social service,” to promote prohibition of alcohol, to contribute to national reconstruction.” Another example was of Baba Amte who established a Kushtashram (lepers colony) in Chandrapur and inspired hundreds of student volunteers from Poona, Bombay, Ahmednagar and Nagpur to volunteer for short periods to clear the forests and plough the land of the centre. A third example was in the Church-related institutions which, though not Gandhian in their conceptions, nevertheless encouraged their youth to undertake social service like the Social Service League of the St. Xavier’s College in Bombay. But by the end of the 60s the Sarvodaya constructive work movement had lost its appeal. The hopes it had kindled in the students and youth was being challenged critically by those who saw the failures of developmental activity. This challenge took two forms – the first seeking to set up constructive work and organisational activities outside the Sarvodaya/Church institutions, and the second attempting to explore new educational directions. We shall consider each of these in some detail.

Much of the search for alternatives began at the beginning of the 70s. For instance, in 1970 Ambar Singh, born in a share cropper family and brought up in the Bhajan tradition,

had founded the Adivasi Bhil Seva Mandal in Dhulia District⁹. In the same year there was a famine in the area and the adivasis took grain, which they thought was rightfully theirs, from the landlords. There was some shooting by the landlords and police cases were registered against both adivasis as well as Gujar landlords. The Sarvodaya intervened and decided to make the adivasis aware of their land rights. They formed the Gram Swarajya Samiti. But by 1972 the continued harassment by the landlords forced the Sarvodaya agency to call an all-Party conference to seek a way out. It was at this stage that volunteers who had been to and learnt from Baba Amte's Kushtashrm decided to join and strengthen the movement. They rejected the Sarvodaya's call for class cooperation, but continued their association with the Gram Swarajya Samiti as they deemed it necessary to "have the protection of an established organisation till they could get the feel of the area and get to know local workers. "Later the Samiti was replaced by the Shramik Sanghatana and the Sanghatana initiated land grab by the adivasis, active boycott of the Assembly elections, and an agitation for higher farm wages. The Sanghatana moved increasingly towards participation and democratic decision making. It held that it is "of the first and foremost importance that the exploited, down-trodden, common people smash State power and consciously assume a leading role in all the spheres of decision making in their life." Making explicit implicit movement within the counter Ideology from Organisation to Political Education, the Sanghatana states that "a mass organisation with a mass base not having allegiance to any political party will start with social and economic struggles and later go on to political struggles to bring about radical transformations." The earlier domains of Charity and Development are not included within the Sanghatana's perspective but they are embodied in the actual existence of organisations like the Adivasis Bhil Seva Mandal and the Gram Swarajya Samiti.

Equally interesting is the case of the growth of the Bhoomi Sena¹⁰ in Thana District. In this area the Congress had linked the social reform movement in the early 30s through the Adivasi Seva Mandal. Gandhian Ashrams, schools, hospitals, and cooperatives were set up through the 30s and 40s. After 1945, the Adivasis revolted under the banner of the Communists on the issues of bonded labour, wages for grass cutting, and excess rent. But the spontaneous movement was absorbed through the formal abolishment of bonded labour, rents were regulated, wages were legalised, cooperatives were formed to eliminate contractors, and the Adivasi Seva Mandal become the channel through which welfare measures were routed. The feudal structure collapsed in 1947 and capitalist agriculture had been introduced by 1952. But the welfare schemes could not arrest the discontentment for ever. In 1967 there was a land grab movement led by the Left parties. In 1970 it spread to Palghar Taluka and here the Socialists provided the leadership. All the leaders, including the Adivasi ones, were arrested and the movement collapsed. Disillusioned with the Socialists the Adivasis, on their release, formed the Bhoomi Sena. They resorted to forcible cutting of crops from the lands of the traders and landlords. The crop was threshed collectively and stored in grain banks but those in charge of the banks ate up the paddy. The Sena turned, in its crisis, back to the Socialists and social workers who launched development programmes with bank loans, trading in grass, relief works, digging of wells etc. Each of these programmes failed miserably and the Bhoomi Sena re-emerged in 1975 and the social workers were forced to leave the area in 1976. Issues of land, crops, and atrocities were taken up. A gradual realisation dawned that the

confrontation was not with an individual landlord but with an entire class. And the Sena moved towards participatory learning and decision-making through Shibirs and the establishment of Tarun Mandals which were the basic “schools for learning.”

It was not only such mass-based tribal organisations that grew towards the Counter Ideology through the larger ideological battle. The same course seems to have been partly charted by other constructive-work experiences. For instance, in 1972 Philip Byrne, a manual labourer for 20 years in England, came to India convinced that he “could help poor people by building up small scale industry and providing them with employment”.¹¹ In his lucid account he reports that in his 20 years in England he had rebelled instinctively against employees and bureaucracy, battled over wages and working conditions but, as he ruefully admits, “knew nothing about such things as exploitation, structures, systems, communism, capitalism, or the significance of ‘rich’ and ‘poor’”. He was directed to the village of Waigaon by the Sarvodaya where he decided to set up a workshop. It took him six months to realise that the power elite were not interested in changing the poor people’s plight and six months more to admit that they were only interested in the corruption value of the project. He finally built up relations with the landless and then it took him a year of being harassed by the elite before he could set up the workshop. He slowly began to perceive the class character of Wardha/Waigaon society and to relate it to his own situation in England. In an attempt to transfer this awareness to the landless he introduced worker-management in the workshop. This was opposed by the leaders of the landless who looked down on this kind of initiative-building. He became convinced of the need for social education and attempted to do this by provoking his workers by taking the stance of a strict employer. Finally, in 1978, he left India feeling that “the only conscious cadre created here was me, and the sad thing is that we discover that I cannot carry on the linking effect, and that through me, no further link can be added to this chain of communication simply because I am not based in the masses.” It is interesting to note that while all this was going on in Waigaon, a short distance away in Wardha, the Centre for Science to Villages 12 was established in 1977 on the basis of the earlier Magan Sangrahalaya set up in 1937 by the Gandhians and with the stated belief of “converting rural habitat into an ideal setting which could afford man the fullest expression to his being in close communion with fellow human beings on one hand and Mother Nature on the other”: and of a “forceful movement by establishing cooperation between the voluntary agencies, the scientific institutions and the industries, for the benefit of the less fortunate section of the society. “What better illustration of the conflict between ideologies could there be!

Similar growth of understanding of the Counter Ideology led others more fortunate than Byrne into trade union work in Poona, Nagpur and Bombay. Others joined groups like the Spearhead Teams of the National Institute of Bank Management, the Kashtakari Sangathana, the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini, the Kranti Sena, the Dalit Panthers and so on. We do not claim that all these are at the same ideological level. Not at all. There are, for instance, startling differences in ideological depth and activity between the Kashtakari Sanghatana and the Spearhead Teams. Nor do we claim to have reviewed the entire field of social and political activity. But the trends examined even in this limited cross-section clearly indicate the inner dynamic of the counter Ideology and its domains.

Even in the area of educational activity this inner dynamic stands out in bold relief. For instance, the Front for Rapid Economic Advancement began in 1967 as a technical support organisation, encountered an earthquake and a drought, and rapidly turned towards a volunteer programme designed to take technical students from notions of Development to notions of Politics. In 1974, a breakway group founded the Institute of Social Research and Education,¹³ to explore the domain of Political Education through “assisting the process of scientific enquiry into the processes and dynamics of under development and social change”. In 1972 a section of Bombay University students organised a summer school to allow students a forum to discuss social and political issues. In 1973 another section of students designed the National Graduate Scheme¹⁴ to enable young graduates to live in the villages for 15 months on a fellowship from the University and “learn by doing in real life situations”. This was later transformed into the Graduate Volunteer Scheme and from this emerged both the Rural Communes,¹⁵ reacting against the “rat-race”, and the Academy of Development Science, trying to research developmental issues with an “open mind”. They have none of them yet reached a position of accepting class antagonisms but the shift from the Development to the Organisation domain is quite clear in their statements. A large portion of this general shift in conceptions emerged in the wake of the 1972 drought all over Maharashtra and the immediately visible evidence that developmental efforts had failed to deal with the problem of poverty. In 1976 Alternate School¹⁶ was initiated in Bombay to try and bring to a focus all the previous experiences and relate them to the educational system which had “distanced itself from life” and was imparting “incomplete, differentiated, mystified knowledge.”

This massive turmoil in the academic and social service institutions all over Maharashtra was attempted to be absorbed into programmes initially offered by agencies such as Gyan Prabodhini, the Buldana Youth Centre, Junior Jaycees, Leslie Sawhney Training Programmes etc. all trying to “build character” and “train leaders” – but that this was inadequate was demonstrated when in 1969 the Government initiated the National Service Scheme in a few Universities. The N.S.S. spread to all colleges in India by 1974 with the avowed objectives of “arousing the student’s social conscience” and providing him with the opportunity” to work with and among people, to engage in creative and constructive social action, to enhance his knowledge of himself and the community through a confrontation with reality, to put his scholarship to practical use in mitigating at least some of the social problems, to gain skills in the exercise of democratic leadership, to gain skills in programme development to enable him to get self-employed”¹⁷. The actual activities of the NSS volunteers consisted of annual 10 day summer camps doing a minimum amount of constructive work. But because of the tempting availability of funds and a vision of being able to use the NSS for their own purposes many of the nascent groups in the colleges joined the NSS only to be engulfed by it.

Despite the all-encompassing activities of the NSS it still could not absorb the full turmoil in Maharashtra. Indeed, because of the very nature of its activities it gave rise to further disillusionment. And soon educational activities within the Counter Ideological stream emerged from the academic field to impinge on class society. In 1976 the Science

Educational Group was formed “to propagate a scientific attitude among the people”.¹⁸ The members were mainly working scientists and students of science and they began with tuition classes in Mathematics and Physics in the slums of Bombay. Gradually they turned from scientific subjects to the real life problems of the slum dwellers and this initiated discussions about the material conditions of existence. In 1979 such small initiatives gave way to the Jana Vigyan Kendra¹⁹ and the Peoples Science Movement wherein there was the stated realisation that the “educational system has lost touch with masses and as a result of this, science and technology has become the handmaid of few privileged people” and “the ultimate aim of PSM is class struggle.” Thus once again the long road from development based education to political education of the working mass of people has been covered within the conflict of ideologies.

Maharashtra is not an isolated example. Similar trends may be observed everywhere perhaps not with the same degree and depth of clarity, but nevertheless, they are there. For example, in Bengal dissatisfaction with the policies of the Communist Party of India had resulted in 1967 in a breakaway group forming the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) popularly known as the Naxalites. Reportedly thousands of idealistic young men and women joined the CPI(ML) to pursue the policy of annihilation of the class enemy. A number of landlords, rich farmers, businessmen, and policemen were “annihilated” but the State responded with massive repression. Lacking a genuine mass base the Naxalites were hunted out and gunned down mercilessly. By 1972 many of those remaining realised that this policy of noble sacrifice of the individual could not change social structures. Thus, some of them after their release from jail in 1972 set up the Institute for Motivating Self Employment²⁰. In this they wished to connect self-employment with social service activities as also to gainfully link up their own struggle for existence with the general struggle for existence of the people. The movement they wished to develop was for self-help and self-reliance for the masses through comprehensive programmes in agriculture, small trade, cottage industries, poultry, fisheries, grain-golas, adult education, health care, training of artisans, and provision of credit. Some of their statement are worth quoting: “The new grows in the womb of the old... The contradictions sow in every crack, and fissures in every nook and corner of the old society, the germs of the new. The failure to see the widening cracks in the old society, often teaches us to try to destroy it all at once by applying external and artificial force. This is a wrong strategy because on the process we get destroyed ourselves and thus enable the old society to prolong its life. A better strategy is to work from inside to help the new society to grows till the time comes for it to force its way out. Till then one must help the old society to continue to dig its own grave”. They further explore the relationship between organisation, development, and politics: “Methods of mass demonstration, strikes, meetings, mass petitions, hunger strikes, gheraos etc. have become closely associated through long use as the only acceptable means of struggle. But the method of setting up an alternative to the capitalist system of production and to carefully nurture it to grow within the capitalistic system, before its capture, has come to be regarded as “reformistic,” and is sneered at as not worthy of consideration by a trueblooded revolutionary. Yet, run properly, the revolutionary potentiality of the latter, in the long run, may far outweigh the former... What makes a cooperative society, a school, a village health centre etc. into a revolutionary struggle and not a “reformistic”

facade? The crucial differentiating factor is the element of “class consciousness” involved in its operation. A cooperative society run by a band of class conscious workers is a powerful revolutionary instrument, helping the spread of class-consciousness among the people and defending the economic position of the exploited and helping the growth of the new society.” The streak of idealism that motivated the Naxalites in the first place runs deep in this philosophy and yet there is no gainsaying that the logic of the Counter Ideology also emerges in sharp focus.

This was of course, not the only initiative in Bengal. There were many who did not agree with the M-L brand of political thought and launched their own constructive work programmes. But even within them the pulls of Dominant and Counter Ideologies can be observed. An example of this is the Steel Builders workshop.²¹ It was begun in 1970 as a private owned fabrication workshop with a capital of Rs. 1200/-. It survived and expanded into a Rs. 1 lakh operation with 18 workers, mainly on the basis of job contracts it received from the nearby Haldia petro-chemical complex. In 1973 the owner came in touch with a group of social workers called Chhandabrati and discussions began about how he could contribute to the social work effort. In 1978 he attempted to transform the workshop from an owner managed unit into a worker managed one. The attempt failed because the workers had no experience of management. Subsequently the workers were trained by a commerce student in accounting, cash handling, and management. Once again the workers began to manage the workshop. In the process regular discussions and meetings were called for democratic decision making. Soon these discussions began exploring the wider social condition and contact was established with other member groups of Chhadabrati. Knowledge about the conditions of other workers in the region seeped in. A drama was written on the problems of industrial workers tossed between the capitalist owners and the misdirected trade union movement and outlined workers struggle for a brighter future. Poster exhibitions, performances of the drama, and discussions were organised in different industrial places and later, evening classes and an educational programme using slide-shows were being planned. Other youth took directions similar to what was happening elsewhere in the country. Just as the Science Education Group and the Peoples Science Movement were begun in Maharashtra (corresponding to the much earlier All India Association of Scientific Workers, the Shastra Sahitya Parishad in Kerala, the later Science Forum in Delhi, and the contemporary Peoples Education Centre in Gujarat etc.), in 1974 the Scientific Workers Forum²² was begun in Calcutta to “work for the most effective use of science and technology and the scientific method for the interest and well-being of the Peoples of the Country” and to “expose and fight against the abuse of science”. In addition, medical students began bringing out a journal “Bikhan” to explore the relationship between medicine and society, others joined Unnayan, an organisation examining the relationship between town planning and poverty. Still others spread out to work within the Sarvodaya and Church agencies but with definite ideas of their own; some set up their own little bodies like the Vivekananda Sports Club and the Amar Bir Shahid Khudiram Smriti Raksha Samiti, and so on. The list is wide and long.

When the Haldia petro-chemical complex was established in Bengal large numbers of people were displaced from land that was taken over by the complex. Many of them

travelled westwards in search of jobs. A few settled on the banks of the Yamuna in Delhi. One of the social work organisations that began work in these colonies was Action India,²³ founded in 1974. The members of Action India were professionally qualified teachers, journalists, economists, engineers, housewives and students. Some of them had earlier been working with Mobile Creche, a charitable organisation running small mobile creches for the children of the construction workers of Delhi. The programme focussed on the welfare of the children and did not impinge on the lives of the workers of Delhi. The programme focussed on the welfare of the children and did not impinge on the lives of the workers themselves. Hence, when some of the members of Mobile Creche left to join Action India they took with them an anti-charity stand. Their perspective was of developing self-reliance among the poor through organised and collective effort. In Jamuna colony they were working with essentially rickshaw pullers, coolies, and skilled artisans. These were people who expected charity and the members let themselves be manipulated. “It took us some time to realise that they had a totally different sense of values that had been fostered by long economic insecurity. Dishonesty and manipulation was a necessity in their struggle for survival. This growing awareness gradually diminished our sense of moral righteousness. But we never condoned it. We constantly sought to fight it through discussions in groups meetings. “AI went ahead with the activation of the existing Samitis in the hope that these would organise the community but the Samiti leadership proved to be corrupt and self-seeking time and again. So AI was forced to seek a measure of participation from the community and encourage the democratisation of decision making. Thus attempts at democratisation within AI proceeded hand-in-hand with democratisation within the community. Programmes around issues of water supply, ration cards, schooling, and medical aid were taken up through a dialogue with the people. There were marches and appeals with community effort and contributions led by a new Samiti. But the Emergency intervened and the brightest of the new leaders were absorbed by the local politicians in their programmes. Action India stood by helpless. Finally they realised the need to educate the people, and the effort began to draw in more and more of the community into all the programmes, to keep a check on the new leadership through public pressure, to make the community aware of its rights and responsibilities.

During this period there was another unit of Action India working with agricultural labourers in another part of the Delhi suburbs. Their experiences were somewhat similar, whether in their individual efforts at Mehrauli²⁴ or in Chandigarh²⁵: the gradual change in understanding from initial programmes of employment and settlement to the need for organisation, the emergence of class factors, and the drive for mass political education. One of the exercises in education was the Mazdoor Kisan Mela,²⁶ organised in 1980 with the purpose of bringing “together the various sections amongst whom we were working in order to highlight their problems, the need for unity against them, and ways by which these problems could be tackled”. The people amongst whom the AI unit was working were essentially farm labourers and quarry workers and the Mela consisted of film exhibitions, plays, live performances, photographs, models, posters, drawings, and painting, highlighting legal issues, the need for literacy, health and nutrition, science and social science etc. Some of the comments of the people after the Mela was over were: “no violence... dharmic even for the people”; “now we understand what the Dehat Mazdoor

Union is about. We are no longer afraid...”; “the films show us the way forward.”; “now all sections will join the union.” Essentially, worker-peasant issues were being exposed for discussion at a mass level for the first time.

All over North India, all through the Seventies, the wealth of experience was accumulating taking the movement of the Counter Ideology forward from notions of Charity and Development to Organisation and Politics. Large-scale events provided additional thrust to this movement, from floods and famine to war and elections. Some individuals took much longer than others, experimenting incessantly within the developmental domain, while a few leaped in an exceedingly short space of time, to the frontiers of political understanding. This was happening all over: to name a few – in Kishore Bharati, in the Social Work and Research Centre, in Sewa Mandir, in the Service Civil International, in the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini, in the Volunteer Reconstruction Organisation, in the Progressive Youth Movement, in the Society of Social Work – everywhere. In a few cases the institutions themselves moved, but in most cases it was the individual in these institutions who found the space of one domain closing in on her or him and moved out to the next one. Towards the end of the seventies of particular note was the resurgence of interest in science, in women’s issues, and in civil rights as the forces of repression grew to contain the growth of the Counter Ideology.

In the South, there were more marked stirrings because of the influence of radical theology on Church. Much of this “theology of liberation” emerged from the struggles in Latin America where priests took the side of the poor and spread their message worldwide through the Church structures. The growth of the Counter Ideology in South India owes much to the struggles within the Church. The Catholic Church has a student wing called the All India Catholic University Federation. In addition there are units of the Students Christian Movement and the Young Christian Movement. They undertook social service and constructive work projects in village and slums as part of character building and leadership training. In 1971 the mounting dissatisfaction among the students finally erupted and a section of them formed the Free University, splitting off from AICUF to explore the nature and causes of poverty for themselves. They organised a period of intensive study and emerged with an understanding of the need for organisational work. Some of them moved even further into political reading. Elements of Free University may still be found in the teaching profession, in rural development projects and research institutions, and in trade unions and peasant organisations swept along by the flow of the Counter Ideology.

Other developments paralleled the emergence of Free University. For instance, the Socio-Economic Agriculture Development Society²⁷ began work in the Gumgol area in 1970 with the Basel Mission Agricultural Training Centre, primarily for training school dropouts in agro-mechanics and other technical fields. They found that this kind of programme only helped individual families and would never bring “real change”. A comprehensive rural development programme was begun by the church, beginning as relief work during the drought (this was the same draught that provided a major thrust for the education of the Free University). The initial belief was that the village was a

homogenous unit so the projects were channelled through the existing leadership. But soon the domination of the rich became evident and so SEADS began to look for alternatives. They found separate caste organisations of the landless and the shepherds and began giving loans to them. Medical care was provided by distributing medicines. Soon SEADS became acutely conscious of the fact that the problem was not one that could be tackled by curative medicine. Slowly they began moving towards an understanding of “exploitation”.

Similar is the story of SEARCH²⁸. During the drought Oxfam, the British funding agency, funded a number of relief projects. One of the field officers of Oxfam discovered that not only was relief not adequate, it was not even reaching the poor. Believing that development should lead to greater justice he set up, along with others as dissatisfied with what had been done in the name of development, the SEARCH organisation. Many new questions had arisen about social justice, education, people’s participation, and the role of the development worker. So they were, “Searching ourselves, and want to encourage others to search too”. They had an “open ended, exploratory and experiential approach” and were “concerned with enquiry and not with preconceived ideology”. Through workshops, study groups, debates, involvement programmes, practical training, exhibitions, and meetings of development workers they were trying “to promote knowledge and concern about development”.

Others went much further than a concern for development. For instance, dissatisfaction with a Community Development project in the slums of Madras led to the emergence, in 1976, of the Rural Community Development Association²⁹. Believing that fundamental change could never begin in the slums, a group of six Harijan graduates began work in the rural areas under RCDA and succeeded in organising the Harijans against caste oppression and raising issues of credit, wages, and community leadership. The organisation of the Harijans took another name as the Rural Harijan Agricultural Development Association while RCDA continued activities of training and initiating programmes. The theological roots of RCDA ran deep, convinced, as they were, they their “struggle among the poor is to express the meaning of the Gospel in its fullest sense and to identify with those for whom Christ dies daily”. At the same time they promoted a deeper study of Marxism, Saul Alinsky, Paolo Freire, and the theology of liberation and the struggles in Latin America. From this they came to the conclusion that “State power has to lie in the hands of the people. It is an educational process that builds up the peoples’ critical awareness of their own situation that will initiate a class struggle”.

The peculiar mixture of Marxism and liberation theology in the South is perhaps two shades of pink away from the equally peculiar mixture of Gandhian thought and Marxism in the North but, nevertheless, it fuels the motive force of the Counter Ideology. All over the South it has influenced the growth of political awareness as individuals began questioning the substance of their own work: in the founding and growth of the Marianad Community Development project; the Young India project, the Centre for Development Studies; CHDSC, CDRA, CIEDS and CISRS; the Indian Social Institute, and many more. As in the North, all did not proceed at the same pace nor arrive at the same understanding; institutions and individuals differed markedly in the development of

ideology; old initiatives lost ground, new ones arose in their place; the State and the Church both launched major offensives through the NSS and the AICUF (supplemented by the activities of the RSS and the Muslim League) to wean away the youth but nevertheless, there can be no question but that the Counter Ideology continues its tidal assault against the Dominant Ideology.

We have so far, to the best of our ability and knowledge, attempted to show the struggle between opposing ideologies and the growth of understanding along the lines of the inner logic of the Counter Ideology. This admittedly, is only a generalised picture. It cannot faithfully reflect each and every detail of particular experiences. But it serves to explain how and why individuals move from one set of beliefs to another; how some of them reach out for “ideology”; how others prefer to remain “non-political”; how some remain for years doling out medicines and alms to the poor; how others take to the path of political assassination and then, even retreat as ascetics (like Aurobindo did). We have tried to show that it is in the tussle and the muscle of ideological conflict that we seek to explain the movement of social and individual consciousness. And we have also tried to validate our hypothesis that the Counter Ideology progresses through a series of domains as it poses its challenge to the Dominant Ideology. We may now proceed to give form and content to the problem of communication.

For the purposes of this analysis we shall be concerned with those groups and individuals who are taking up programmes with the people in the four domains of Development, Organisation, Politics, and Political Education, of the Counter Ideology and who are also undergoing a process of self-examination. It is this self-examination which provides education and the germination of ideas within each domain until growing conviction and understanding take these groups into the next domain. For us, therefore, communication is that activity through which new ideas and values are absorbed by these individuals and through which the forward thrust to the logic of the counter Ideology is provided.

CATALOGUE: COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE

Before we begin to examine how the communication of ideas has taken place between the domains of the Counter Ideology, it may be worthwhile to look at this question, “Are these groups and individuals of any consequence?”

There is no exact assessment of the number of groups but a recent compilation has listed 1,175 of them. According to the classification³⁰ adopted in this directory they are engaged in the following work:

Activity	Percentage
Non-formal education	32.2
Integrated Rural Development	26.8
Community Health	9.9
Micro-level Research Planning	0.4
Technology	7.7
Agriculture	7.1
Irrigation	1.9
Political work	1.6
Cooperation	1.4
Science education	0.9
Ecology	0.7
Documentation	0.5
Cultural activity	0.4
	100.0

There are a large number of errors in listing and classification, as also the directory does not cover the entire field but it is as good a listing as any other, perhaps better, at this time. What is interesting to note is that a little over half (52.9%) are engaged in what one might call Development (integrated rural projects, community health, technology, agriculture, and irrigation). The rest have moved into other domains related more to Organisation and Politics. In the light of conditions in the early sixties when the field was dominated by the Community Development kind of project, this is quite encouraging. This also indicates, that large numbers of young people have been moving towards the Counter Ideology without the support of any political party. If one adds to this list the numbers thrown up by agitation, strikes, and mobilisation against oppression then the list should be quite large. As the directory indicates, groups are active in 207 districts (out of a total of 560). The list focusses essentially on the rural sector. It makes no mention of all the groups active in the organised trade union sector. If at any time even half of all these groups were to come together on a single platform to support a specific activity in the Counter Ideological stream then they would perhaps be a fairly formidable force to reckon with. However, whether they will ever come together is a question that history will eventually deal with.

Gail Omvedt³¹ has argued that such groups are victims of new strategies of the bourgeoisie. According to Omvedt, “the bourgeoisie supports such activity not so much for the negative purpose of deceiving the masses but for the positive purpose of serving its own needs for fighting “feudalism” as a part of economic development”. This new strategy “suggests the rationale behind all the bourgeois reformist rural organising and it highlights dangers into which even organising which begins with revolutionary intentions may fall”. She further states that, “collective forms can indeed serve capitalism as long as they don’t aim at breaking the bourgeois State Itself”, and that the assessment of the bourgeoisie is that “pre-capitalist, non-productive forms can be dealt a blow without shaking its own power unbearably. But in order to do this it needs ‘left’ or ‘popular’

organisations who can mobilise the masses for this limited purpose of fighting local feudal or pre-capitalist exploiting groups and developing more productive forms of economic organisation without really bringing them forward to confront the State itself'. Much of what Omvedt argues is inherent in the activity of the Dominant Ideology. It must, for its own preservation, attempt to chalk out strategies to absorb dissent and serve its own ends. But, despite that, as the movement of the groups show, the question of State power is inevitable and those in the domains of Politics and Political Education have recognised and are grappling with it. We must, therefore, recognise the activity of the dominant Ideology but at the same time, we cannot ignore the working of the Counter Ideology.

To trace all the intricacies of communication between all these groups over the last 15 years is a complex task. We shall not attempt to reconstruct the pattern in all its detail for the reference material is nowhere systematically organised but we may be able to offer a general hypothesis for examination based on our personal involvement. It would appear that there have been five phases in the evolution of the communication of ideas since the mid -60s.

The first phase was one of visiting the existing constructive work agencies. Through this the individuals were exposed to a social reality about which they had many mistaken preconceptions. Most of the constructive work projects had been initiated by either the Sarvodaya or the Church and they provided the initial learning ground for many who were new to the field but had sufficient idealism to try and do their bit. Thus places like Babe Amte's Anandvan, Dwarko Surdarani's Bodhgaya, Hari Vallabh Parikh's Anand Niketan, S. Jagnathan's Gandhigram and many others out of the 6,000 odd voluntary agencies registered with the Central Social Welfare Board became the centres to which young people came in their hundreds and thousands all through the sixties and early seventies to help and, coincidentally, to learn and criticise. Specific agencies were set up to deal with this volunteer force, like the Society for Developing Gramams established the Voluntary Action Cell, the Church developed its Rural Life Programme, social service units sprang up in many college campuses, and, of course, there was the government sponsored NSS.

Born out of the first phase, by the end of the sixties, the new generation of constructive work groups was born which was neither Sarvodaya nor Church oriented but was critical of both and wished to break out in new directions. Among them were Kishore Bharati, Social Work and Research Centre, Navbharat Jagriti Kendra, Skills for progress, Youth Action, Jagaran, Ahmedabad Study and Action Group, Frea, Action India, and a host of others. The major criticism of the earlier constructive work projects was that they were not manned by competently trained persons, hence many of these new groups either comprised of people from professional disciplines or else centres emerged to provide the training. Among these centres were the Indian Social Institute, the Basel Mission Agricultural Training Centre, Agrindus, the Indian Youth Population Coalition, Khadigram, Sevapuri, and so on. As these groups worked for a few years and gained a certain amount of their own experience they began searching for fora to share their experience in. Hence, through some of the training centres, a series of meetings and study

circles were organised to encourage further the self criticism and evaluation of these groups. This was the second phase of the communication of ideas and it reached its peak by the mid-70s.

In the third phase it appears that the meetings of the second phase were not adequate enough to systematically communicate the wealth of information that was piling in. There was no continuity in the meetings and when a meeting did take place there was repetition in the description of experiences and analyses as the participants would change with every meeting. Hence, an attempt was made to communicate through the written word. A number of bulletins, magazines, and newsletters emerged, some of which died a rapid death while a few have been vigorous enough to last till the present time. They dealt with a whole variety of issues from Gandhian philosophy to radical feminism. Among them were Zameer. How, Voluntary Action, Anavim, Bikhan, Medico Friends Circle Bulletin, Tatparya, Manushi, Singhbhumi Ekta, Point of View, Magova Hiraval, Samayik Varta, Kaise, Mazdoor Kisan Neeti, Tarun Man, and Philhaal. Most of them emerged between 1976 and 1979. They attempted to give a direction to all the experiences by not merely offering case-studies and informative articles but also by commenting on and analysing the national perspective. It was in these journals that the ideological conflict came into focus. Perhaps a sign of the times is that during this phase there was also a marked shift towards investigative journalism and writing sympathetic to the cause of the weaker sections in the Press, in the Indian Express, Sunday, Saarika, Dinmaan etc. What is more interesting is that the groups sought a new medium in new journals rather than approach the traditional journals of the Left-New Age, People's Democracy, Economic and Political Weekly, Patriot, and so on.

But by 1978 itself the fourth phase began. The third phase had provided an enormous amount of written information, new directions in thinking were emerging. Clearly this was not enough. Individuals wanted to see for themselves, to communicate on a person-to-person basis, to debate and argue within sight of the grassroots, so that ideas were given flesh and substance. Hence, another round of visits began. From one group to another, individuals toured the country trying to get a vision of the Counter Ideology in practice, seeking answers to the manifold questions that were plaguing them. This was the time when groups were shifting from the domain of Development to the domain of Organisation and from Organisation to Politics. The two principal questions that were, therefore, emerging were: "What is the relationship of development work to organisational work?" and, "How does micro-level work relate to a national perspective?"³² Individuals and groups sought the answers in practice. People's participation, cadre formation, declassing, political theory, cultural transformation, community action: all these were examined in minute detail through the living experiences of groups and mass organisations. High on everybody's list in the map were Shramik Sanghatana and Bhoomi Sena where, as reported in the journals of the third phase, many of these issues had been successfully resolved. A representative example of this phase was the attempt at forming "Aarambh". In 1977, a meeting of the groups in the South was called at Hyderabad. At this meeting many of the issues disturbing similar groups elsewhere came up for discussion. By the end of the meeting it had become clear that there were a number of questions for which the participants did not have adequate

experience to provide answers. Hence, it was decided to visit other groups to clarify matters. A follow up group was formed to undertake the visits and through 1978 about 12 different projects were visited, studied in great detail, and case studies prepared. Before the material could be consolidated, however, the follow-up group broke up. At the same time the individuals who undertook the visits were drawn further into the ideological turmoil.

The fifth phase is of recent origin, perhaps covering the last years from 1979 onwards. Possibly because of the limitations of individual travelling, the time required, the costs, the bifocal presentations, and possibly because of the random character of the fourth phase, institutions began to emerge in the fifth phase to coordinate, organise and systematise the learning experience through documentation, training and debate. Thus, the Institute for Social Research and Education³³ sponsored libraries and discussions; Pratishabb '80 brought together over 150 participants from all over Maharashtra to discuss the cultural aspects of the Counter Ideology³³, a Forum of Social Workers³⁴ was organised in Bilaspur; the Lok Samiti³⁵ set up a training unit in the four areas of theory, programmes, practice, and organisations; the Centre for Development Studies³⁶ changed its focus in training from management skills to “development with justice”; the Indian Social Institute³⁷ went even further, from a stress on skills to a focus on political ideologies; the Peoples' Institute for Development and Training³⁸ offered short courses in participatory training; the Centre for Tribal Conscientisation³⁹ was set up to strengthen tribal movements; the FAO sponsored the publication of “The Role and Training of Development Activists”;⁴⁰ the Lokayan⁴¹ project was set up by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies to articulate inter-connections between rural development, decentralization, and democracy; and all manner of study circles emerged in a number of cities and towns. However, all these were not placed within any coherent framework. The ideological conflicts glimpsed in the third phase (and, sometimes, in the second) had matured within the brief span of five years into a number of contending schools of thought. While the Counter Ideological stream had broadened to adequately tackle a complex reality, the Dominant Ideology had also responded to every challenge with a twist of its own. Words were manipulated so grossly as to lose their meanings: “peoples participation” came to mean anything from parliamentary politics to communal violence; “participatory training” has ranged from non-directive chaos to demagogic manipulation; “scientific method” has been interpreted to mean the asking of mindless questions and to prattle about the glories of ancient India. Thus, at the present time, the ideological struggle is being waged more vigorously than ever before and the Counter Ideology appears to be seeking a coherent focus to carry the war into the enemy's camp.

ANALOGUE : THE PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATION

A brief review of the 50 odd years that come within the scope of this paper, in order to identify what could be the main stumbling blocks in the flow of the Counter Ideology, lead us to the following conclusions.

The first problem we are able to identify is that of empiricism. The history of the groups emerging after 1960 shows only too clearly their commitment to the need for “personal” experience. Meetings, training, visits have all been based on personal experience. Hence, communication too has been based on it. The theoretical tasks of learning from history have been, by and large, rejected. Even when the experience of other has been looked at, the same experience has been repeated on the premise, “I can do it better”. The movement within the Counter Ideology from one domain to the next has been spurred by a sense of failure in the personal task, rather than by an anticipation based on evidence from the social movements in the past.

The second problem has been of the verbal tradition. Much of past experience, analysis, and theorisation is recorded in the written work but that appears to offer little attraction for those engaged in social development and change. Of the five phases in the communication of ideas only one has used the written form, the rest have depended heavily on face-to-face confrontation for the exchange of experiences. Regular correspondence between groups has been rare. Most do not have the time and energy, others do not have the inclination, and a few object on principle – on the grounds that the written word cannot convey the visual impact of gestures and attitudes. Even in the case of the journals that are brought out, the basic criteria for success has been the demand for more copies. Little or no effort has been made to discover how much has been read and debated. Within the columns of the bulletins, at least, very little debates takes place.

The third problem is of one we shall call the feedback. Since communication is based on experience and, hence, learning also has the same basis, therefore, the earlier the experience is systematised and analysed the faster will be the growth of the Counter Ideology. For this the assistance of those who have already passed through the earlier domains can be of great value to those still in them. This is akin to the teaching of mathematics at a junior school level by a University graduate who is willing to begin with the decimal point and not with differential calculus. In a historical sense, the major repositories of experiential knowledge are the Political parties of the Left, but they have cut themselves off from all the domains except that of Politics. Hence, they have not attempted to strengthen the roots from which they sprang. They have suffered from a peculiar form of myopia and hypermetropia: either the Politburo is always right; or else what was written prior to 1945 was right; what falls in between in terms of the actual movement of society is to be ignored. The task has therefore, been left to those few training institutions which have taken upon themselves the burden of widening the road from Development to Politics. Even in the sphere of formal education, while much lip service is paid to primary education, the apple of the eye is the university graduate. It is here that the institutions of the Dominant Ideology (take, for instance, the RSS who begin their educational work when the child is 2 years old) score significantly over those of the Counter Ideology.

The fourth problem is of sectarianism. In the absence of a strong central focus, the Counter Ideology tends to dissipate itself before the attacks of the Dominant Ideology (which has as its central organ the State) into numerous internal dissensions. These dissensions were becoming apparent at the third phase itself and the more ferocious they

become the more the internal debate grinds to a halt. Add to this the holier-than-thou attitude that revolutionary sentiment engenders, the need for self identify in those who sacrificed their careers and families in the cause of social change (one must not forget that the Counter Ideology begins with the charitable domain), and we get a complex scenario indeed. This is not restricted to the groups, it penetrates deep into the Left Parties. And the Dominant Ideology flourishes in this state of affairs by subtly introducing the bogeys of the CIA and foreign funds and anti-national activity into the tensions of non-dialogue and non-communication.

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The fifth problem is one of personal priorities. A very large percentage of the individuals and groups we are concerned with come from backgrounds well-ensconced within the Dominant Ideology. Their friends, their families, their favourite places – all contribute to a set of beliefs that they find themselves increasingly alienated from. The contradictory emotions within themselves, therefore, create strains of major proportions that reflect in a perceptible dichotomy between what they say they wish to do and what they actually do. Thus, while ideas are communicated and accepted and externally verbalised, the accompanying values are not internalised into daily living. Commitment does not keep pace with comprehension. Thus communication itself becomes subject to suspicion and an unwitting handmaid to the Dominant Ideology.

The entire process of communication is further endangered by the absorption, manipulation, and repression undertaken by the organs of the Dominant Ideology. Absorption takes place when a particular domain of the Counter ideology is offered institutional support in a major way and thus the activity is directed towards strengthening the roots of the Dominant Ideology. Manipulation results when the Dominant Ideology penetrates the feedback loops of the Counter Ideology becomes too strong the State resorts to repression to break up the entire activity and induce a feeling of helplessness.

What could resist the attacks and accelerate the growth of political understanding is a strong coherent Counter Ideology and its premier organisational form which, for this study, we shall call the Alternate. But ideology is the creation of a class and so far the working classes have yet to come into their own the present their world view. On the

other hand, the Alternate cannot come into being as a centralised apparatus like the State. The logic of the Counter Ideology demands a decentralised, non-exploitative, non-hierarchical apparatus. Hence, it is in the feedback loops that we must seek the Alternate and those loops are, at best, random, scattered, and individualised at present.

Of all these we hold empiricism to be the most important obstruction to the growth of the Counter Ideology. It is empiricism which prevents an appreciation of history, which keeps individuals confirmed to the verbal tradition, which leads to an improper appreciation of one's own role and importance in the course of events, and which permits the Dominant Ideology to make such deep inroads into the Counter Ideology. It is this empiricism that needs to be corrected and turned to the service of the Counter Ideology. Empiricism cannot be destroyed by frontal attacks which will merely frighten off those who obey its dictates (as in the case of the Revolutionary Bolshevik Circle that took the public position of "smashing the centralist groups" and thereby alienated itself from them) nor can it be ignored and rejected (which the Left Parties are at present doing). It needs understanding and patience. Those who believe in personalised experience have to be given the maximum possible opportunity to obtain that experience as soon as possible and then helped to see the limitations of it so as to proceed speedily along the domains of the Counter Ideology. It is, therefore, the notion of feedback that will be able to tackle the agonising slowness of the empirical exercise. It will have to be feedback that is non-sectarian, that does not espouse any political line rigidly; it will have to bring into the debate the whole area of personal frailties; it will have to concentrate on the verbal tradition; it will have to organise to intervene widely in all domains; and it will, above all, have to have a sense of history, made and in the making.

It has been suggested⁴² that the task before the groups in order to get themselves out of their own crisis, is to align with a political party. We would like to argue here that the onus is on the Political Parties to the Left. Unless they treat the development of the Counter Ideology with sympathy and patience they will not be able to fully muster the revolutionary potential in its dynamic form. It would appear unlikely that any non-political agency, no matter how large, will be able to do this. We would urge the members of the Parties to reread their own history. (They will probably have to write it first. And they should hurry, because the first generation of Communists will soon be gone, carrying with them, within the verbal tradition, the memory of those inspiring days).

But even here, an element of doubt remains. Will the Left Parties be able to accomplish this historic task? Stuck as they are in their domain of Politics, pressurised by existential happenings, designed as an instrument of the militant organisation of the working classes, and therefore, caught up in their own inner dynamic, the answer is probably in the negative. Joining a party may resolve the domainal crisis of a group or mass organisation but it cannot solve the structural crisis of feedback. Eventually, the groups and mass organisations in the domains of Politics and Political Education (including elements from the Parties) may have to create their own broad based apparatus to pull the plug out from the cesspool that is the Dominant Ideology.

EPILOGUE

I lay no claim to being a social scientist. This paper therefore, is not the result of any academic study. It has emerged from an involvement and ad association with those committed to the process of social transformation. As such I owe a deep debt of gratitude to those who figure in these pages and whose experience in struggle adds flesh and muscle to the bones of a structure of intervention. I am further indebted to those who have encouraged me to write this paper and those who discouraged me too – both will recognise themselves in these pages. And lastly, a fable. I dropped the manuscript of this paper while travelling to Nizamuddin Railway Station, gave it up for lost, reconciled myself to further weary hours of toil, and listened patiently to well-wishers who each had a sorry tale of woe to relate regarding friends and friends' friends who had similarly lost their papers. One of the tales recounted the story of how a friend had lost his computer printout while walking to office, had passed by the same road three days later, paused to buy peanuts from a roadside vendor, and found parts of his printout wrapped elegantly around his purchase of peanuts! Two days later the lessons of the story reached me and I rushed back to Nizamuddin. My heartfelt thanks are due both toe the startled rickshaw-puller who guided me to a monkey nut vendor and to this vendor who sits placidly outside Nizamuddin plying his trade and who magically drew out the battered manuscript from under his little mat with only one page missing! Somewhere, there must be a moral to this fable.

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