

# Questions of Freedom and People's Emancipation

By Kobad Ghandy

*[The political prisoner, Kobad Ghandy, wrote this work while imprisoned in Tihar Jail. Its six parts originally appeared separately in the magazine [Mainstream](#) in 2012 & 2013.]*

## PART I — THE CONTEXT

Communism is the return of man himself as a social, i.e. really human being, a complete and conscious return which assimilates all the wealth of previous development. Communism, as a fully developed naturalism, is humanism, and, as a fully developed humanism, is naturalism. It is the DEFINITIVE resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man. It is the true solution of the conflict between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be this solution. —Karl Marx

Utopian? Maybe. Yet, it sounds like the ultimate in freedom, something toward which one could move towards, step by step. The rose of freedom in the above-mentioned garden, called by any other name, would, no doubt, smell as sweet. It may seem ironical to dream of freedom locked up in a jail within jail (the high-risk ward), with lathi-wielding cops breathing down one's neck 24 hours a day, denied access to even the normal jail facilities. But dream one must to maintain one's sanity under such conditions.

Yet FREEDOM... that much abused word. Freedom—around which hundreds of myths have been woven into beautiful-looking intricate webs waiting to entrap us. US, as the ultimate in freedom: free speech; free trade; free association; free thought; et al. And, if perchance we are unable to find freedom here, there is always the escape to religious illusion—moksha, to be acquired in splendid isolation. In all this are we not losing the essence of freedom?

Coming back to this jailed existence, we find some bright spots within the darkness—like the compound attached to our ward covered by a canopy of trees. I sit in silence watching the squirrels prancing around in gay abandon, and listen to the chirping of birds in the tree. Looking at them, they seem so free. But, are they really? I begin to think what really is the meaning of freedom?

My thoughts drift to the time I developed an interest in communism. It was a time in the late 1960s and early seventies when lakhs, nay millions, of youth came to a similar conclusion in their search for freedom and justice. After all, at that time one-

third of the world was socialist, and, in addition, Left national liberation movements raged throughout the backward countries. One can safely say that about half the world was under the sway of communism. But today, just forty years later, when the world is going through one of its worst crisis, when the gap between the rich and the poor has never been so wide, the communist existence is insignificant. Though all the conditions exist for it, yet it is unable to captivate the minds of the youth, workers and students. The socialist countries have collapsed, the national liberation movements have been replaced, in many places, by Islamic resistance, and of the millions who have come onto the streets in the West, one can see only a sprinkling of Communists. There continue to be a few communist resistance movements, but even of these, many have collapsed, while a few continue with enormous difficulties, fighting with their backs to the wall. Sitting here in the quietude of the compound, I begin to contemplate the serious implications of what has happened. Why such a devastating reversal? What happened to our hopes and dreams of a better future? Was it to witness a mafia-type rule in the first ever socialist country, or the billionaire princelings of China, not to mention the tin-pot dictators of earlier East Europe!! Forget the autocratic rulers, why did the masses so easily choose a free market over freedom from want? If there are no clear-cut answers and also solutions, the Communists of today may continue to live ostrich-like in their make-believe worlds; but the people will go their own way. The reasons given by many an academic for the failures—lack of democracy and development of productive forces—are in no way convincing; so these have little impact on the people. If the sensitive amongst the people are unable to find answers in real life, they will once again seek solace in religion and spiritualism. As Marx put it, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of an unspiritual world. It is the opium of the people." Yes, people are seeking spiritual solace from a crass-materialist consumerist opium, far more potent than earlier religions. Do we not see such a turn not only amongst the deeply alienated middle classes, but even amongst the organised working class? Communism seems no longer an attraction for the youth, as it was for us in the 1960s and 1970s.

Tracing my way back to the cell, through two locked iron gates, I feel that I am returning from the garden of paradise to the real cruel world. My musty cell brings me back to reality—recollections of my past experiences.

Images float before my eyes, some clear, some hazy. Quite naturally the first image to come is of the person with whom I had the longest and deepest relationship—my late wife Anuradha. So lively and chirpy, like the little squirrels, she was straightforward, simple, with few complexes, and her reactions were so spontaneous and child-like (not calculated and cunning). My impression was that probably her inner feelings were very much in tune with her outward reactions; as a result she was closest to what we may call a free person.

The image passes. Then others appear—of associations experienced over forty years of social activities. I could club them into three categories:

First is the Anuradha-type. Many of these (not all) would be from tribal, women and Dalit background, but would include others as well.

The second category would be those from the other extreme. Notwithstanding their dedication, they have been unable to get out of the prevalent value system, deeply embedded in their sub-conscious, and have to resort to pretences, intrigues, subterfuges, etc. to gain acceptability. Often they may even be unconscious of this dichotomy wherein their inner feelings are in deep contradiction with their outward behaviour. They therefore get entangled in a web of comp-lexes, like caged animals in a zoo. Particularly, in India, the entrenched caste hierarchy adds to the existing feelings of class superiority, creating fertile grounds for these complexities. This may not reflect in crude casteism, but gets manifested in the form of intellectual superiority, arrogance/ego, domi-nation/authoritarianism, etc.—one could call it, in its extreme form, the Chanakya syndrome.

And between these two extremes of white and black would lie the third category—the varied shades of grey: some veering towards the white, others towards the black. I would consider the majority would lie here.

My mind then switches back to myself and the present caged existence. I look out at the guards walking up-and-down through two sets of gates. It reminds me how animals in a zoo look at us humans from their cages—only they have one set of gates, and sufficient space to pace up and down. In this caged existence it is difficult to evaluate myself in relation to freedom, in the sense outlined above. But before arrest, where would I have stood? An honest self-assessment is often the most difficult, while one easily jumps to conclusions about others. Yet, a truthful self-assessment is most important, as that and that alone would be the starting point for any positive change—given that we would all be infected, to varying degrees, with the dominant values prevalent in the system. Well, I think I would place myself in the third category. One may say that this is a convenient broad categorisation. Very true! But, the important aspect here is to remember that no one is static (this applies to all categories), we are in continuous flux; the key factor here is the direction of our movement—whether it is towards white or heading towards the morass of black. This I leave to others to assess.

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NOW, before coming to the CONTEXT in which FREEDOM should be viewed, a point of clarification needs to be made. The above presentation may appear as a crude pragmatic interpretation of freedom, lacking a scientific content. But, all I have sought to present is the reality. Science seeks to understand the laws behind the reality, which I will try and do in my future articles.

What I have presented is no moral categorisation that seeks to praise or condemn people. It is just to bring out that in this society, not only social activists, but all are impacted by the prevalent value system in varying degrees. A lot depends on

childhood influences and the environment in which we are brought up. The point here, however, is to what extent have we been able to use our conscious effort to counter the negative within ourselves and the environment. For, if we are unable to do this, no sustained social change is possible, as we see with what has happened to the leaderships in the erstwhile socialist countries.

Yet, another point of clarification, before coming to the CONTEXT, is on Marx's definition that "freedom is the consciousness of necessity". In other words, knowledge of the laws that govern us and society, give us the freedom (ability) to act effectively, compared to those who do not understand the laws. To that extent this is true; yet there are two limitations if we just confine ourselves to this framework of freedom (which Marx himself did not do; but Marxists do). Firstly, laws of nature and society are continuously being developed, and what seemed correct yesterday, turns out to be incorrect today. Take, for example, the recent discovery of God's Particle; it is said it may overturn much of how we understood physics. Even as regards society, Marx and Lenin would be turning in their graves seeing the resilience of the capitalist system, notwithstanding its present deep crisis. So, as new laws continue to be discovered, this "consciousness of necessity" has some limitation in interpreting the concept of freedom. Besides, every individual would have a limited ability to grasp such extensive laws for nature and society.

The second point is precisely this—Marx never did try and apply this formulation to individuals. In fact, while dealing with the freedom of the individual his main focus has been on the concept of alienation, on which he has written extensively. [See Capital, Vol. I; German Ideology, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts etc.] On this I will deal later; here the more pertinent point is that though we may have an excellent grip on the laws that govern society, we may also be immersed neck-deep in all sorts of fears, jealousies, insecurities, pettiness, etc. With all this baggage can we still be said to be free? Far from it. We would be in a state of extreme unfreedom, entangled in a web of complexes and distorted behavioural traits. The point is that at the time of Marx (or for that matter even Lenin) psychology had not yet emerged as a sphere of science. But, after the discoveries of Freud and future psychologists, we can understand that our inner feelings, emotions, fears, complexes, etc. would also have some bearing on freedom.

While dealing with the concept of freedom today, it would be necessary to take not only what Marx said, his and others' concepts of alienation, but also the findings in the sphere of psychology and the working of the mind. Only then would we be able to deal with the question of man's freedom more thoroughly.

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WITH this brief introduction, I will now present the CONTEXT within which I intend to look at the issue.

First Context: There is nothing like absolute freedom, it will always be relative.

Maximi-sation of freedom should be a goal to which we continuously strive. There has to be regular and unending efforts to deepen its content. This approach is important as we often look at it in black and white terms, like some mathematical formula.

Second Context: Real freedom must necessarily be linked to the innate goodness in man (I use this word to denote 'mankind', that is, both men and women). The factor of goodness is essential as one's individual freedom should not act to deprive/curtail others/another of their freedom. If it is associated with evil, it will restrict others' freedom. For example, a greedy person may himself be happy, but his greed would be snatching the livelihood of so many others, causing much pain all around. On the other hand, if linked to good, one's awakening to freedom would be contagious—impacting one's entire circle. Similar, say, to a torch that gives a beam of light in the darkness; and more the torches the greater the brightness. But, if my torch acts to extinguish the light of others, only darkness will prevail. Third Context: After the basic necessities of life are met, freedom from deprivation should necessarily result in greater happiness for the majority. If it does not, and people only act as a sense of duty, it will not last. Freedom and happiness must be intrinsically linked. A sense of guilt, often fostered by organised religions and even by Communists, deprives man of his freedom and also happiness, and keeps him/her in a continuous state of insecurity. If one does not meet up to the standards of goodness (more on this later), one needs to be open about it with society providing acceptability/toleration in order to help rectify the shortcomings—it should not create a sense of guilt. The goal of a better social system must, in the final analysis, result in greater happiness for the majority. And this happiness must sprout from the bedrock of the goodness within us. No doubt such new values of good may take time to evolve, given the rot all around; yet it cannot be imposed or forced down one's throat. If this is done, it will not sustain. Could this be part of the reason for the reversal in China?

Fourth Context: There can be no social/political/economic freedom if the individual is bound in chains. There must be a dialectical inter-relationship between the two. Greater freedom to the individual must reflect in increasing freedom in the social/political/economic sphere. And greater freedom in the latter must create a conducive atmosphere for the flowering of the individuality of the majority. How the existing system crushes a person's individuality has been brought out beautifully by Goethe, Marx, Chekhov and the many existentialist writers. Fifth Context: The development of a person's individuality (not individualism) is closely linked with freedom from the alienated lives we lead. Marx has elaborated this at length, as to how the production process in capitalism alienates man not only from his product, not only from the production process, but also from other men, and finally even from himself. In Marx's alternative, he dreamt of a new society where man ceases to be "a crippled monstrosity and becomes a full developed human being". (Capital, Vol. I, p. 396) Alienation from oneself gets reflected in the contradiction between our sub-conscious thoughts, feelings, emotions, desires etc. and our conscious behaviour. But, more on this later; suffice it to say that in today's ultra-consumerist

world this contradiction has reached peak levels.

Sixth Context: Freedom is the very opposite of determinism. Many a religion propound determinist views wherein a superior being decides one's fate—everything is pre-ordained and there is no question of free will. We see such sentiments widespread amongst inmates in Tihar, where coming in and going out is, they feel, already decided by 'Uppar Walle' (The One above). With the development of science, a new type of determinism came into being where all phenomena were given some mathematical formula-type inevitability. Also, there were some scientific theories which were deterministic like the one that says genes determine all our characteristics. And then, we also find Marxists falling into the trap of economic determinism. This was reflected in the theory of productive forces, which says economic development and socialisation of production automatically will result in a change in social relations. It was crudely seen in India, where Communists (of all hues) negated caste differentiation as only class division and saw the automatic withering away of caste oppression with industrialisation and/or revolution. In all this the free will of man to impact phenomena/change is negated.

All these six points have to be woven into a beautiful embroidery of freedom and happiness. This I will attempt in future articles.

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IF we look at our country today, let alone freedom, more and more are so traumatised that suicides have reached epidemic levels—16 per hour in 2011, that is, one lakh thirtysix thousand in the year. And these are not the poverty-stricken, but mostly from the lower middle classes, who, neck-deep in insecurities of varied kinds, reach acute levels of alienation, depression and suicidal tendencies. And, probably, for every one suicide there would be hundred on the brink. No one cares for them and they see a bleak future before them. Unlike a hope that the youth of our generation (1960/1970s) had, they see no answers in their conflicting lives—conflict between their internal wants and desires (created mostly by the mainline media/films etc.) and what is socially and economically possible. Finally, sick of the crass materialism, many turn inwards towards spirituality. But, cleansing oneself is no easy task, unless the muck in which we live is, at least to some context, cleaned up.

And amidst all this trauma, there is one factor central to impinging on freedom; and that is MONEY. Without it, in today's world, there is no self-respect, there is no recognition, there is no possibility to meet any of our wants and desires; why even spirituality is available at a price. You are what your money makes you. Yet, it is money that has the power that destroys all freedom, all of natural life, all good, fosters all greed, destroys all morals, and wields power over all mankind—the God of MONEY. The Church/Religions wield it to control others, political parties use it to control their cadres, organisations of all types use it to control their flock—it is the one power that subverts the maximum of freedoms. Marx said that MONEY is "the

power to confuse and invert all human and natural qualities, to bring about fraternisation of incom-patibles, the divine power of money resides in its character as the alienated and self-alienating species-life of man. It is the alienated POWER OF HUMANITY.” [Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts]

Why, even five centuries back, Shakespeare presented the same point poetically in ‘Timon of Athens’:

“Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold?  
No, Gods, I am no idle votarist: roots, you clear heavens!  
Thus much of this will make black white, foul fair,  
Wrong right, base noble, old young, coward valiant...  
.....This yellow slave,  
Will knit and break religions, bless the accursed;  
Make the hoar leprosy adored, place thieves  
And give them title, knee and approbation  
With senators on the bench.  
.....Come, damned earth,  
Thou common whore of mankind, that put’st odds  
Among the rout of nations, I will make thee  
Do thy right nature.”

I am not in any way advocating doing away with money, but just bringing out its role in the subversion of freedom. To restrict this a first step could be that those wielding power do not have control over the purse-strings. This could apply to governments, political parties (including Communist Parties) and for that matter ANY organisation. Decision-makers could focus more on good policy rather than bother about mundane things like controlling and distributing funds—which could be more de-centralised.

Sounds utopian? On the contrary, very pragmatic, as otherwise money tends to call the shots. Power itself tends to corrupt; but, combined with money it becomes an explosive cocktail. Though all may not be able to implement this, at least those who desire change need to give this a serious thought. This may not be easy, as it will necessitate honest, upright persons who control the funds without its misuse. But then, it is only the existence of such people that can bring about lasting change. Having now placed the CONTEXT in which I intend to elaborate on the question of freedom, I shall take up various aspects and angles in future articles. But before doing that, in the next article I will briefly trace the history of man’s search for freedom.

## **Part-II—Search for Freedom through History**

Throughout history man has searched continuously for freedom, happiness and humanity/justice (that is, good over evil, ...I club humanity with justice as one cannot go without the other; the struggle of good over evil necessarily entails

justice). Through the ages, prophets (religious), philosophers and enlightened individuals have sought answers to these basic concepts of life. In fact, through early history, right through the Middle Ages, philosophy and religion were basically the same, where freedom and happiness were sought through rapport with God. It was only with the Renaissance (1300-1600), and more particularly the Enlightenment (1600-1800), with the evolving of man's individuality (from the earliest clan structures), that philosophers focused on a more concrete search for freedom in real life, reflected particularly in the debate on the question of the primacy of mind or matter. But, even through this later period the philosophers' link with religion continued. The enormous impact of religion on philosophy for about twenty centuries is because the prophets of the various religions were the main people to propound the values of goodness in a desert of evil and stood against the establishment.

It was only in the 19th century, when capitalism was more or less established in Europe and science had advanced, that philosophers sought answers to these vexed questions of life in society itself without any prop of religion. Primarily it was Marx and Engels who crystallised most of these ideas into an analysis showing that the lack of freedom, justice, happiness and humanity was a direct product of the prevailing systems. Marx also went on to show how these values could be achieved in a new just order.

The problem is that while, on the one hand, prophets and philosophers have presented genuine values of humanity and sought to reform society, on the other hand, tyrant rulers and oppressive systems sought to debase these very values and keep mankind in perpetual chains. In this conflict, it was the latter that won, as it is they who wielded power, and this power was able even to co-opt and debase the very religions themselves. We saw this happen during the past period of Zoroastrianism (before Islam came) and more particularly with the Church. Not only the religions, we saw this happen even with the ideas of Marx, which too have been corrupted, and the socialist systems, which sought to be a stepping stone towards the ideal, have today turned into its very opposite.

In this article I will briefly try and present the history of man's search for freedom. Let it be remembered that this search was intrinsic to opposing the prevailing establishment and supporting the oppressed. Most prophets had their main supporters from among the poor, and many were martyred by the tyrannical rulers of their times. For example, Moses and his rag-tag supporters were hounded for decades by the Pharoahs of Egypt; Zoroaster is said to have been killed by a General of the King; Christ was crucified; Mohammad was hounded from Mecca and spent the major part of his life fighting wars for survival; Socrates famously drank the cup of poison (399 BC) sitting amongst his disciples, as he refused to retract his views as demanded by the city-state. Not to see the rise of these religions in a historical perspective and their emancipatory efforts, and to only see their present-day forms and roles, covers up an important historical reality. In this article I will not touch on the aspect of their (prophets') struggles against the establishment, which is anyhow

well documented, but only briefly present their views on the subject under discussion.

### A. Pre-Christian Thought

This period witnessed two major phases of intense awakening. The first was the 1500-1200 BC period where the great civilisations of West Asia brought forth the ideas of Moses or Zoroaster. Simultaneously in India, there was the birth of the Rig Veda.

The second phase was around 600-300 BC which brought forth the great philosophers of Greece; Buddha, Upanishads and the Charvakas in India; and Tao and Confucius in China.

#### First Period

The Ten Commandments of Moses (part of the Old Testament) not only laid down a set of values to follow, but laws and norms for the systematic functioning of society. Also, by opposing idol worship, he put forward, in effect, the first concept of alienation in Western thought. The essence of what Moses (and other prophets), who opposed idolatry, conveyed was that man bows down to worship things; worship that which he has created himself. In doing so he transfers to the things of his creation the attributes of his own life, and instead of experiencing himself as the creating person, he is in touch with himself only by worship of the idol. He becomes estranged from his own life forces, and from the one and only Ultimate Creator (as then conceived), and is in touch with himself only in the indirect way of submission of life frozen in idols. From Abraham to Christ and Mohammad—all the prophets opposed idol worship and insisted on the one Almighty/Creator who, they said, alone had all the attributes of good. Moses and most of the other prophets (including Christ) came from the Egypt-Syria-Palestine belt.

In the neighbouring region (what later became the vast Persian Empire from 300 BC to 650 AD) was the prophet Zoroaster. His main theme was simple—good thoughts, good words and good deeds. Zoroaster's life was closely associated with nature, and Fire was the symbol of ultimate purity. Life was portrayed as a struggle between good and evil—between the God, Ahura Mazda, representing light, truth, goodness and knowledge, and Angra Mainyu representing darkness, falsehood, wickedness and ignorance. Like the Old Testament, the Avesta also laid down norms for the systematic functioning of society. Surprising for its time, it gave equal respect to women as men.

So, we find that in both these earliest religions maximum emphasis was given to acquiring the qualities of goodness. Universal Permanent Value systems of goodness are put as the attributes of God by his messengers (prophets) and so, according to them, closeness to him would help acquire his attributes and pave the way to Heaven. One can see the same thread continue in Christianity and Islam. If we turn

to India, we find that around the same time the Rig Veda came into being. While this too was said to contain the result of revelations (from Above), it different from the above two, in that it was polytheist. The Rig Veda (Royal Knowledge) primarily comprised mantras propitiating the gods of the numerous natural forces—rain, wind, thunder, sun, dawn etc. In the Yajur and Sama Vedas, that followed the Rig Veda, mantras were replaced by sacrificial chants and elaborate rituals (yagnas). The latter were not only to propitiate the forces of nature but to also acquire things in life. Here the concept of freedom was mostly from the wrath of nature, and the yagnas were also to gain freedom from the evil forces and spirits.

## Second Period

The earliest Greek philosophers put forward theories of hedonism which believed the attainment of pleasure and avoidance of pain to be the aim in life. The earlier crude form of hedonism was refined by Epicurus (4th century BC) who tried to show that his concept of pleasure as the aim of life is consistent with the virtues of temperance, courage, justice and friendship. Here ‘pleasure’ would reflect man’s earliest search for freedom and happiness in life itself.

Plato believed all actions are subject to fate, and considered humans as part of nature’s general laws. He also viewed the human being primarily as a soul/spirit and the body as nothing but a prison-house. For him death was liberation, as the soul was freed from the prison-house of the body. Aristotle propounded differently views on ethics built on the science of man. He said happiness, which is man’s aim, is the result of ‘activity’; it is not a quiescent possession or state of mind. The free, rational and active (contemplative) man is good, and accordingly a happy person. With Aristotle, we have probably the first man-centred humanistic proposition encompassing the concept of freedom and happiness linked to a person’s values. These Greek philosophers had a major impact on the philosophers of the future. Around the same time (6th century BC), Buddhism evolved in India with its deeply humanist philosophy. It also replaced the ritualism of the earlier period with meditation as a path to liberation. The Buddha put forward his concepts in his Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path and Ten Precepts. But, going to the other extreme as compared to the hedonists, he maintained that nirvana (liberation) could only be achieved by suppressing all desires and wants and cutting off from society. At that time itself the Charvakas and Upanishads presented opposite poles within Hinduism. The Charvakas promoted somewhat hedonistic views, took up cudgels against caste and much of the ritualism of the past. (Mostly ignored by mainline historians, the Lokayats were elaborated at length by Debiprosad Chattopadhyaya, but this is not available to me in jail.) The Upanishads too opposed the rituals, focusing on meditation, and, like the Buddhists, denied all worldly pleasures as the path to achieve liberation. The Upanishads say the Self (Atman, Brahman) is linked to the mind, which, in turn, is linked to the senses. If the senses are controlled, the mind is still/quiet, then alone we will be able to realise the Self and achieve Moksha (liberation). It says freedom from desires/wants results in freedom from grief and therefore happiness. It thus says a complete suppression of worldly desires alone

can result in knowing thyself through meditation—thereby one can achieve liberation and immortality, escaping the trauma of the cycle of life, death and rebirth. Though the Upanishads do not appear to say much on values, around the same time came the epic, Mahabharata, which symbolised the war of good against evil—the Pandavas versus Kauravas.

Finally, if we turn to the Far East around the same time (500 BC), we see the birth of the famous Chinese philosophies—Taoism and Confucianism. Confucius' views elaborated on statecraft and values in order to build an ideal society. This was presented in his famous writings: 'Five Classics' and 'Four Books'. In his principles of 'Li', morality is actualised through education, self-reflection and discipline. He teaches that a simple, secular and unassuming attitude towards life is the root of morality. In his principles of 'Ren', to build a true gentleman, he puts focus on five virtues—self-respect, generosity, sincerity, persistence and benevolence. He also speaks about Tao, the Great Ultimate, giving it a divine status; but here too he sees Tao comprising opposite energy forces—the Yin and the Yang.

So we see that in this earliest period of recorded history, the focus of most religions/philosophers was to bring about some norms in society—at both the personal and societal levels—to facilitate the transition from the nomadic/pastoral stage to a structured state. At the personal level they advocated values of goodness and at the societal level structures and laws for a society to be ruled. Some used the concept of God, where man through rapport with him may acquire his (positive) attributes, while others (like Buddha, the Charvakas, Confucius) did not. So, in places so far apart as West Asia and the Far East, we find a similar search for the victory of good over evil. But, for all the teachings of the prophets/philosophers, evil continued to envelop society. So West Asia gave to this world two more Messiahs: Jesus Christ and Prophet Mohammad.

#### B. Christianity, Islam, Bhakti and the Middle Ages

Hegel had said it was the Germanic people, through Christianity, who came to the awareness that every human is free by virtue of being human, and the freedom of spirit comprises our most human nature. While Christianity, like Islam, does say that men freely choose their own actions, this freedom is, to a large extent, negated as God is the ultimate cause of every-thing. Also Christianity (and most religions) inculcate numerous guilt complexes, like the 'Original Sin', which keeps man in a perpetual state of insecurity. An insecure person, generated by any means, can never be free; as such weak people become the most vulnerable tool to ANY form of power. Guilt, insecurity and inferiority complex give man a slave-like mentality, destroy his creativity and quash his initiative.

Christianity presents the most excellent values of love, compassion, honesty, simplicity etc., but we find in its practice (in later years) exactly the opposite. It goes so far as to say that "the Meek shall inherit the Earth", but in the name of the Bible the entire African continent was raped and the indigenous people of the Americas

were massacred on a scale never seen before. Today the ‘civilised’ world perpetrates the worst atrocities.

Then, a few centuries later, came the last major religion of the world—Islam. This contained all the positive aspects of Christianity and even went further. It called for equality of the people and laid down certain economic norms; it spoke of fighting evil not only within us, but in society as well. As the famous poet-philosopher, Iqbal, said: socialism+God=Islam. Islam also produced the great mystic poet-philosophers during the 10th to the 13th centuries like Gazzali, Razi, Rumi etc. Rumi’s entire six volumes (in Persian) is devoted to inculcating the best values within man, told in simple poetry and story form. Throughout history there have, in fact, been numerous Sufi saints that presented the liberating aspect of Islam. But, here too the religion has been corrupted, taking on a fundamentalist form with numerous sects. The Arab Sheikhs, for example, make sure that Islam serves their rule and their billions of petro-dollars.

Both Jesus Christ and Prophet Mohammad lived simple lives, with their supporters amongst the poorest. For this reason their philosophies spread far and wide, in spite of enormous persecution. As with other religions, these too were co-opted by the rulers of their times, distorted, twisted, factionalised, and began to be used as ideological weapons amongst the very masses whom the two prophets sought to arouse.

In India in this period the Hindu religion witnessed probably the greatest retrogression. Buddhism was thrown out and the Charvka influence reduced and with the consolidation of the Magadh state in BC itself, the Manusmriti was written on social relations and the Kautilya/Chanakyan statecraft. The former consolidated and rigidified all the worst aspects in social relations, while the latter did the same for the form of rule. In reaction to this rigidity, particularly in the sphere of caste (besides inhuman untouchability, only the upper castes had access to God and the temples), the Bhakti Movement said every individual could have direct access to God through bhakti (devotion). Though the first sparks of the Bhakti Movement emerged around the 8th/9th century in the South, it took a powerful form and spread widely between 1300 AD and 1550 AD. Interestingly, the bulk of the bhakti saint-poets were from the lower castes.

Though we find that the ideas presented were powerful, positive and had a great liberating impact (whether Christ, Mohammad and, to a much lesser extent, Bhakti), they were unable to sustain as they were not accompanied by radical social change. This entire period saw little socio-economic change where slave relations continued along with the consolidation of feudalism. Not surprisingly, it is referred to as the Dark Ages.

The period that was to follow in the West witnessed probably the greatest ever leaps in the realm of thought as it was accompanied by enormous socio-economic churning.

### C. Renaissance and Enlightenment

The salient feature of the medieval period was an uncritical and blind acceptance of authority and power, overemphasised by theology, neglecting human freedom and life on earth. Emancipation from the authority of the Church led to the growth of the individuality in man. While the Greek philosophers were more institutional, in the Middle Ages the philosophers were usually monks.

The main landmark of modern philosophy, which distinguishes it from medieval thinking, is its growing faith in the power of reason. The ability to reason, independent of the stifling confines imposed by the Church and State, was in itself a great leap in the realm of freedom unleashing a surge of creativity,. Of course, this was possible and sustainable as the period also witnessed big social changes. While the centre of the Renaissance was Italy, that of the Enlightenment was England, France and Germany.

#### Renaissance

The Renaissance was a sort of bridge between the Dark Ages and the Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason. Three major discoveries added to its impact: gunpowder, the compass and printing. The first two facilitated colonial conquest in far-off places; the last allowed, for the first time, the widespread spread of knowledge.

Just the 50 years from 1490 to 1540 in particular witnessed giant leaps in the sphere of knowledge, as also important social changes in society. The latter was reflected in the Reformation, with Protestantism being introduced by Martin Luther (Germany) and John Calvin (France). These, in turn, were inspired by the writings of the foremost humanist of the period, Desiderius Erasmus (Holland).

It was also in this period that Thomas More wrote his 'Utopia' as a protest against the abuses of the day. Though he served as the Chancellor to King Henry VIII, he was beheaded when he refused to accept the King pronouncing himself as the head of the Church. It was in the first decade of the 1500s that Italy witnessed the great paintings of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. Not only were they among the greatest artists ever, but they were also scientists and philosophers combined into one.

It is also in this period that we see the first steps towards colonial conquest. In the 1490s Vasco da Gama discovered India and Christopher Columbus, America. In 1519 the Spanish Empire spread to Central and South America. Finally, we see that the Enlightenment was ushered in by the great scientific discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo; the works of the great dramatist ever, William Shakespeare (1566-1616); and the writings of the fathers of modern philosophy, Francis Bacon (UK, 1561-1626) and Descartes (France, 1596-1650).

#### Enlightenment—Age of Reason

The period of the Enlightenment, 17th and 18th centuries, witnessed enormous churning in all spheres of life—the socio-economic, political, scientific and philosophical fields. It was a period of transition from feudalism to capitalism. In the sphere of socio-political turmoil there were the following: the 30-year war between the Catholics and Protestants from 1618 to 1648; the seven-year civil war in Britain—1642 to 1649—resulting in the beheading of King Charles I and the establishment of Parliament; the American War of Independence from 1775 to 1783. And all these culminated finally in the historic French Revolution of 1789. In the sphere of the sciences there were Kepler's discoveries in Astronomy published in 1609; this was immediately followed by Galileo's famous discoveries; in 1628 William Harvey published a description of the circulation of the blood; in 1687 came Newton's Principia Mathematica; in 1705 the steam pump was discovered; and in 1709 came James Watt's steam engine facilitating the industrial revolution.

Probably in no other period of recorded history has there been such a spate of well-known philosophers as during these two centuries. It produced three major schools of philosophy—the rationalists, the empiricists and the idealists. While much of the debate revolved around the existential question of the primacy of mind or matter, in their bid to understand man's relation to the outer world, they also focused on questions of freedom, humanity/justice and happiness. In the rationalist school the big names were Descartes, Spinoza and Leibnitz; among the empiricists there were Locke, Berkeley and Hume, also Spencer; and the idealistic school of thought was initiated by Emmanuel Kant, and followed by Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. These are just a few of the names, there were many more. And together with these the two great French philosophers, Voltaire and Rousseau, propounded the concepts of freedom, equality and justice, and their views had a major impact on the French Revolution.

It was, in fact, Origen who was one of the first authors of this period to write a treatise on freedom. His famous work, *De Principiis*, is a remarkably profound and systematic work on free will. According to Origen, men are free; truly man is everywhere in chains, but it is, in Origen's opinion, his own responsibility that is the cause of his enslavement. Origen asserts that Divine Providence allows man's free will full scope in his cooperation with God. He says that if a believer takes away the element of free will from virtue, he destroys its essence.

Here, not only does the author make a break with the fate-centred concepts of most religions, but also links the question of humanity (virtue) to the question of freedom.

Acquinas distinguishes between the free choice of humans and the natural instincts of animals. Descartes regards freedom of the human will, or liberty of choice, as so important that he compares it with the concept of Divine Infinity. He presents it simply as having the power of choosing to do a thing or choosing not to do it. He holds that the power of free will is the greatest perfection in humans, through the exercise of which we become masters of our actions, and thereby merit praise or

blame.

In the sphere of values/virtue, it was Spinoza's masterpiece 'Ethics' that had a major impact on future philosophers like Goethe, Hegel and even Marx. 'Ethics' is a work of ethical philosophy, whose ultimate aim is to aid in the attainment of happiness. For Spinoza, all affects were to be divided into passive affects (passions), through which man suffers and does not have an adequate idea of the reality, and active affects (generosity and fortitude), in which man is free and productive. He adds that while reason shows man what he ought to do in order to be truly himself and teaches him what is good, the way to achieve virtue is through the active use man makes of his powers. Famously Spinoza said: "Happiness is not the reward of virtue, but is virtue itself", and he put forward a 'Model of Human Nature' as a scientific concept. He adds that virtue is identical with the realisation of man's nature.

For Spinoza, Goethe, Hegel as well as for Marx, man is alive only inasmuch as he is productive: inasmuch as he grasps the world outside himself in the act of expressing his own specific human powers, and of grasping the world with these powers. In this productive process man realises his own essence, he returns to his own essence, which in theological language (according to Spinoza) is nothing other than his return to God.

Scientific ethics was further elaborated by John Dewey. Like Spinoza, he postulates that objectively valid value propositions can be arrived at by the power of reason; for him, too, the aim of human life is the growth and development of man, in terms of his nature and constitution. But, his opposition to fixed ends leads him to reject Spinoza's 'Model of Human Nature'.

Here, I have in no way done justice to the elaborate views presented by the philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries on questions of freedom, humanity (also called ethics, virtue etc.) and happiness. Here, I have tried to present a small sample of the type of thinking taking place in these spheres during this period. There was a deep search for the meaning of life within life itself. In the earlier period, the search was mostly within the realm of rapport with God. Now, though Divinity often still played some part with most, the emphasis was to find answers within society itself.

#### D. Age of Science

And as we come into the 19th century, we could say one has shifted from the 'Age of Reason' to the 'Age of Science'; and this has continued until today. The advances in sciences in the 19th and 20th centuries would be greater than all hitherto history put together. Capitalist production demanded continuous scientific research to increase productivity, and big powers required continuous upgradation of weaponry. So, scientific advance has literally reached the moon, nay the Mars. The positive aspects of this was it developed a scientific temper. With it God was given a back-seat, only to be utilised as an opium of the masses. The scientific temper

demanded no longer mere ‘reason’ but concrete evidence for any postulation. Though this approach was also put forward by the empiricist philosophers of the earlier period, it was not so clear-cut. Scientific discoveries one after another widened man’s horizons beyond anything earlier imaginable. (It is another matter that science has wrought unimaginable destruction as well—in wars, of the environment, and even of man. However, that was not the fault of science per se, but of those who wielded it.) But, somehow with all this scientific fever and ever new gadgetary ethics was lost, values were considered old-fashioned, freedom was merely reduced to the free market and right to vote, and happiness was, de facto, equated with pleasure. Market fundamentalism and crass consumerism reduced philosophical materialism (primacy of matter over mind) to vulgar materialism which added to the destruction of man’s spiritual values—his emotions, feelings, and his very humanity. No doubt there has of late been a reaction to this materialism; but this is as bad as the former. It is in the form of religion; religion minus its value-system, with a fundamentalist, intolerant and hate-oriented form. This is to be seen in Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, even Buddhism (as in Sri Lanka). So, humanity has been lost by both the ‘materialists’ and today’s religionists.

Now, coming back to the philosophers of the early 19th century, we find that most of the answers to the existential questions raised by the earlier philosophers was found by Marx. But, even before Marx we find utopian socialist idealistic views presented by philosophers like Fourier, St. Simon etc.; the dialectics of Hegel; we see the materialism and humanism of Feuerbach; as also the political economy of Adam Smith and Ricardo. Marx took much from these past philosophers and economists, but he did not confine his views within the framework of their debates; he took a major leap in the realm of thought by interlinking the concepts of freedom, justice, humanity, happiness etc. with a scientific analysis of the prevalent capitalist system. For, Marx sought not merely to interpret the world but to change it. Change it did with socialism sweeping one-third of the world during the 20th century. But, by the end of that century all those huge changes were reversed. So, were his views utopian? Well, during the recent financial crisis it was reported that there was an upsurge in reading Marx to understand the crisis. But, that is regarding the present system; what about the future?

In the 1990s, it was postulated that with capitalism we have reached the ‘End of History’. But even these authors have revised their views since the unending crisis beginning 2008. Like all human endeavours and scientific discoveries, however great, they will have the limitations of time, existing knowledge and prevalent conditions. If Marx’s writings are turned into some infallible gospel, Marxism de facto becomes a new religion. But here I seek to bring out Marx’s understanding of the concepts under discussion—freedom, humanity, happiness—to better understand not only the causes for the reversals, but also the impact of the lack of these values in today’s prevailing existence. I will not dwell on his concepts of justice as those are well known except, of course, in their interconnection with the above concepts.

Very often Communists give a crude understanding to the term class struggle, totally negating the individuals who comprise the “class”. This sort of thinking results in economic determinism on the one hand, and, on the other, it sees only the forest and not the trees. It tends to reduce people into mere instruments/tools of change, forgetting that change is for those very people themselves. It tends to put everyone into straitjackets where any sign of emotion, feelings etc. are ‘bourgeois sins’ and ‘class’ rigidity is the only virtue, even if it entails the “Mani syndrome” (who in Kerala said we kill all those who dissent/oppose). So, humanity is said to be non-class; so also freedom and happiness. Once this was said about caste as well.

In further articles we will see how these are not only misconceived and blinkered views, but precisely those that resulted in reversals to socialism. For the present, I will restrict myself to briefly mention what Marx had to say on these issues. I will have to be forgiven for quoting at length. As these views of Marx are little known, if I do not quote the original I may be accused of misrepresentation. Under normal circumstances it would be best not to quote too much as that is the method of dogmatists with a tendency to lose creativity.

Here I will just present the basic concepts on these issues in brief. Later I will try and develop these, while applying them to alienation today and also the socialist reversals.

#### E. Marx and Freedom

As I mentioned in my earlier article, besides defining freedom as the consciousness of necessity, Marx outlined at length how alienation in the capitalist production process deprives man of his freedom, de facto turning him into a commodity. It was Hegel who, in fact, first used the term alienation. For Marx, as for Hegel, the concept of alienation is based on the distinction between existence and essence; on the fact that man's existence is alienated from his essence; that in reality he is not what he could be.

Marx outlined how alienation operates in the capitalist system of production. While comparing it with earlier forms of production, he said (*Capital*, Vol. I): “In handicrafts and manufacture (the earlier mode), the workman makes use of the tool; in the factory, machines make use of him. There the movements of the instrument of labour proceed from him; here it is the movement of the machine that he must follow. In manufacture, the workmen are part of a living mechanism; in the factory we have a lifeless mechanism independent of the workman, who becomes its mere living appendage.” This, in fact, was beautifully portrayed by Charlie Chaplin in his film *Modern Times*.

As a result of this type of relationship in the production process, Marx added (*Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts—EPM*): “A direct consequence of the alienation of man from the product of his labour, from his life activity and from his species-life is that man is alienated from other men. When man confronts himself, he

also confronts other men. What is true of man's relationship to his work, to the product of his work, and to himself, is also true of his relationship to other men, to their labour and to the objects of their labour. In general, the statement that man is alienated from his species-life means that each man is alienated from others, and that each of the others is likewise alienated from human life."

Then Marx goes on to show how the production system totally dehumanises man. He adds (EPM): "Production does not simply produce man as a commodity, the commodity man, man in the role of a commodity, it produces him in keeping with this role as a spiritually and physically dehumanised being—the immorality, deformity and hibernation of the workers and capitalists. Its product is the self-conscious and self-acting commodity—the human commodity."

This was written over 150 years ago. There is no comparison between the factories of those days and the highly automated production of today, where everyone is a mere cog in the giant global industrial machine. The more sophisticated the technology, the less the need for skill, and more mundane and repetitive the task. Even the middle-class jobs of clerks, accountants etc. are much the same; those of salesmen are even worse where they are forced to act roles, maintaining artificial smiles to please customers; worse still is the role of call-centre employees, where they must not only have a fake identity, but also a false accent/voice; and if one turns to models, actors, TV people, even their bodies are fake—made up artificially. Today the entire life has reached extremes of artificiality and the levels of alienation are so extreme that mind-related (tension-associated) diseases and deaths have reached epidemic levels, not to mention the unheard-of levels of suicides. When Marx spoke of alienation, it would not have been even one per cent of what it is today. Such acute levels of alienation bring with them a total lack of freedom (becoming slaves to the images we seek to maintain), unhappiness, and lack of self-confidence. And people with such deep insecurities are the most prone to fascist and fundamentalist values as they are desperate for recognition and an identity outside themselves.

In fact for Marx, independence and freedom are based on the act of self-creation and self-assertion, exactly opposite to that of the above type of insecure individuals. He says (EPM): "A being does not regard himself as independent unless he is his own master, and he is only his own master when he owes his existence to himself." Further, Marx adds that man is independent only "... if he affirms his individuality as a total man in each of his relations to the world—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, willing, loving—in short if he affirms and expresses all organs of his individuality."

Indeed the maximum the flowering of one's individuality, the greater is a person's creativity and effectivity. Unfortunately, often even in people's organisations we tend to see the relation between the leader and the cadres similar to that between the boss and his clerk in an office. The cadres often have little individuality, little ability to make decisions independently and therefore little impact on the people. In

such cases the leader tends to monopolise to himself all ‘creativity’, authority etc., while the cadre is forced into a claustrophobic existence. And if the leader-cadre relation is further cemented by money dependency, the boss-babu relation is complete. In India’s feudal/casteist culture such structures/relations evolve spontaneously if one is not alert against it.

So, this brings us back to the question of MONEY—it is not only the source of satisfying all needs, today it is the source of power. Money is a necessity, it is also the source of what is rotten in this system. This contradiction cannot be wished away, but has to be taken cognisance of, and dealt with by those seeking change. Marx said (EPM): “The need for money is the real need created by the modern economy, and the need which it creates. The quantity of money becomes increasingly its only important quality —excess and immoderation become its true standard. This is shown subjectively partly in the fact that the expansion of production and of needs becomes an ingenious and always calculating subservience to inhuman, depraved, unnatural and imaginary appetites.”

Then, elaborating on the alienating effect of money, Marx added: “Everything which the economist takes from you in the way of life and humanity, he returns to you in the form of money and wealth. And everything which you are unable to do, your money can do for you, it can eat, drink, go to the theatre. It can acquire art, learning, historical treasures, political power; and it can travel. It can appropriate all these things for you ... But, although it can do all this, it only Desires to create itself, and to buy itself; for everything else is subservient to it.” Marx also famously added that “the production of too many useful things results in too many useless people”. And that a man who has thus become subject to his alienated needs is “a mentally and physically dehumanised being ... the self-conscious and self-acting commodity”.

So, through all these writings (and more) Marx outlines at length how this unjust system destroys every aspect of man—his humanity, his freedom, his happiness. And, of course, all this to perpetuate an exploitative system. Quite obviously, his call for a just order entails bringing out all that is best in man, resulting in freedom and happiness. His concept of justice does not merely mean satisfying man’s economic needs, but also fulfilling his spiritual needs and thereby creating happiness for the majority of people.

### C. Summing Up

So we see that throughout history, the struggle for people’s emancipation has been intrinsically linked to man’s search for freedom, humanity and happiness. This we particularly see throughout the 2000-year history of the prophets of West Asia. Even in China we find that Confucius, while seeking an ideal society, was hounded in his later years. Surprisingly in India, it seems the mainstream religion/philosophy has remained more or less independent of the struggles for people’s emancipation. (Historians need to study this.) But, here too the Charvakas, Lokayats and some other schools of thought at that time, as also some of the bhakti saints, linked their

ideas with people's issues and did face repression at the hands of the establishment.

Another factor to note is that economic justice is only one aspect of people's emancipation. The economic determinists tend to equate the two. The tragedy is that the bulk of humanity is even worse off than animals, who at least have their food, water and habitat. By such logic the determinists seek to merely bring man to the level of animals! But, there are also many other aspects to people's emancipation like social (caste, gender etc.), religious, spiritual/ethical, environ-mental (man's relation with nature), educational and recreational (language, sports, music, theatre, art, literature etc.); sexual and man-woman relations, questions of alienation, questions of dignity of labour (important in this feudal/Brahminical culture), and of course genuine political empowerment, with the right of all to live with self-respect and dignity. Though economic justice may be the starting point, unless all other aspects are developed step by step (that is, consciously) societal change will not sustain, as we have seen in the erstwhile socialist countries.

Of course, this is easier said than done, as the international powers with their enormous ability at subversion and moral corruption, as also the force of past habits, tend to destabilise the process of change. In order to prevent these forces from impacting the process of change, the Communist Parties, and particularly their leaderships, maintained tight controls over most aspects of peoples' lives. But, did it stop the reversals? Not only did they revert, in every case it was that very leadership, who controlled 'tight' reins of power, that was the first to revert. This was the case everywhere—the USSR, China, East Europe—and it was these very leaders who became the new elite. And ironically it was precisely these 'tight controls' that prevented any resistance to the reversals. That there was not much opposition is another aspect... But, more on this later, when we deal with the subject, freedom and socialism.

Here, to conclude, we see that in the history of society, man's search for meaning in life goes far beyond meeting the basic economic necessities. He has sought fulfilment in all other spheres of life, which can be realised through a set of ethical values, which alone will allow humanity to flower in the fresh breeze of freedom. Invariably the class that ruled resisted such positive values developing in the people; so the struggle for ideas/values has continued through-out history. And, as we will see in the next article, it continues till this day.

### **PART III—Socialism and Existentialism**

The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed two major schools of thought—socialism and existentialism. The former reflected the agony of the vast impoverished masses, the latter mirrored the acute alienation within society, strongly reflected in the middle classes. While socialism focused on the society, the existentialists concerned themselves more with the individual. Both these philosophical trends had a powerful impact till the 1980s.

I shall first briefly look at these two trends and then come to the present, post-1980s situation.

### Socialist Trend

The agony of the impoverished people was beautifully portrayed in a large number of classics in the 19th and early 20th centuries. There was Engels' Condition of the Working Class in Britain, a large number of novels by authors like Emile Zola, classics like the book Grapes of Wrath etc. which depicted how cruel capitalism was.

In the post-war period there were a number of African and Latin American writings which pictured the agony of colonial conquest like the book Open Veins of Latin America by Eduardo Gallaeno.

Then the Russian and Chinese Revolutions threw up brilliant writers like Gorky and Lu Hsun as also a number of philosophical writings. There were also a number of important socialist writings from Europe. But, on the concept of alienation/freedom and humanism few developed further on Marx's initial concepts, though Rosa Luxemburg and Gramsci did touch related issues. The Chinese Revolution did make serious attempts in the sphere of values and humanism, but these too did not sustain. Finally, it all crumbled, like a pack of cards, in the 1980s.

### Existentialist Trend

The existential vacuum in people's lives was reflected as early as the beginning of the 19th century as in Coleridge's poem 'Dejection' (1802). A theoretical form was given by Kierkegaard around the 1950s.

The vacuum in people's lives arose from the fact that while capitalism had stripped the individual of his earlier props—traditions, customs, beliefs etc.—the alternative it promised to provide in liberty, equality, fraternity, remained elusive. So man had nothing to anchor him. Evicted from his rural roots, cut off from nature, alienated from his fellow beings and even from himself, life became meaningless. Without any purpose to existence, existentialists portrayed the sensitive individual as fragmented and broken by the exigencies of modern life. Estranged from 'normal' society, the individual was unable to distinguish between his authentic and unauthentic self.

Existentialism was a philosophy of disorientation and the literature that had developed concomitant with its influence was a literature of despair. Yet, it also reflected the individual's stubborn search for human identity in an un-known world. All this was conveyed in some form or the other in the writings of Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Moravia, Sartre, Beckett and others.

Dostoyevsky's famous existentialist motto was: "Thou shall love life more than the meaning of life." Tolstoy, in Memoirs of a Lunatic, Death of Ivan Ilyich etc., examines

the situation wherein man is estranged from himself because he is trapped by a society that cannot fulfil his deepest needs. The 'lunatic' finds his salvation in charity and generosity and in a general withdrawal from the kind of behaviour society expects. For Sartre, existentialism becomes a philosophy of liberation; it is an attempt to set free man's authentic self from his cage-like existence. Existentialism, Sartre felt, was a new basis for humanism which, though pessimistic, provokes to awaken man from apathy and make him face his true self, no matter how unpleasant that confrontation may be.

The existentialists sought to bring out the conflicts within a person's personality resulting from the acute alienation caused by the capitalist system. While Marx saw liberation from this only in a new social order, the existentialists excellently pictured the trauma of individuals in society, but did not have any solution. For a period in the late 1960s, it did lead to a non-conformist hippy culture. But, this could not sustain as commune life with persisting deeply individualistic/selfish traits are contradictory.

Today, with the neoliberal economy having pushed man's alienation to extreme levels resulting in the veritable cracking up of large sections of the middle class, a vast number of new-age gurus have come on the scene like J. Krishnamurthy, Rajneesh etc. providing a mix of existentialism, religion and psychology as a panacea. But these, at best, provide a palliative, not a solution—a balm to the troubled soul, not a path to freedom/liberation. The mad rat-race of present-day existence does not allow moksha so early.

#### Retrogression, Post-1980s

We find in today's era both socialism and existentialism in a state of limbo. This, in spite of the fact that mass impoverishment and alienation have increased manifold in these past two decades.

With the reversal/collapse of the erstwhile socialist states and the decline of communist movements worldwide, socialism has lost its appeal. Communist resistance remains in isolated pockets and the millions who have come out on the streets have few Communists amongst them.

Similar is the state of existentialism. Though alienation has increased ten-fold since the neo-liberal economy was introduced, crass consumerism, with its focus on sex, has swamped the bulk of the middle classes. Their alienated lives, suppressed existence with little sense of purpose seek release in sexual fantasies (inflamed by TV, media, films), ever new consumer gadgetry, cricket/football craze and, above all, money-mania, together with regular visits to the flourishing pilgrimage centres. Existentialism reflected the pain of the sensitive being which has been numbed by such values/culture.

Individualism/selfishness has reached such extreme levels that, let alone empathy

for the poor, there is little concern even for one's associates, neighbours or for that matter even relatives. All this has been aggravated by the de facto segregation of the middle class from the urban poor—the former housed in colonies with reasonable amenities, the latter increasingly ghettoised. So, impoverishment forms little part of their consciousness—which is confined to ME, I, MYSELF and of course everything I own. The ego is inflated to elephant size, and instant pleasure takes the place of real happiness. No wonder today's best-selling novelists, except for rare exceptions like Arundhati Roy and a few others, are neither social nor existential—magic (voodoo) and soft porn seem to be the trend today.

The entire global economy is geared to create a growing super-rich of billionaires, an expanding middle class and a huge mass of destitutes. The first two provide their market, the rest are dispensable. Besides the super-rich who wallow in their voluptuous, degenerate lives, both the impoverished masses and alienated middle classes' search for freedom, humanity/justice and happiness continue. But, their context is different.

### Freedom in Today's Context

For the masses submerged in hunger, disease, illiteracy, not knowing where their next meal comes from, liberation/freedom can only mean freedom from deprivation and ignorance. At this level of existence, man's life is primitive and all his human faculties are geared merely to survival.

For such a person, freedom would mean freedom from deprivation. A serf's sense of freedom would be liberation from his ties to the land/landlord. A small plot of land for him would be the ultimate in freedom. And for those living above the subsistence level, freedom would have another meaning altogether. Yet, even for the starving man, once the problem of hunger is solved, his faculties will evolve and his senses will develop, and for him too freedom will have a fuller meaning. While speaking about our sense perceptions Marx put it succinctly when he said (Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts): "Man's musical sense is only awakened by music. The most beautiful music has no meaning for the non-musical ear, it is not an object for it, because my object can only be the confirmation of one of my own faculties. It can only be so for me insofar as my faculty exists for itself as a subjective capacity, because the meaning of an object for me extends only so far as the sense extends (only makes sense for an appropriate sense). For this reason, the senses of social man are Different from those of non-social man. It is only through the objectively deployed wealth of the human being that the wealth of subjective human sensibility (a musical ear, an eye which is sensitive to the beauty form, in short, senses which are capable of human satisfaction and which confirm themselves as human faculties) is cultivated or created. For it is not only the five senses, but also the so-called spiritual senses, the practical senses (desiring, loving etc.), in brief, human sensibility and the human character of the senses, which can only come into being through the existence of its objects, through humanised nature. The cultivation of the five senses is the work of all previous history. SENSE, which is subservient to

crude needs, has only a restricted meaning. For a starving man the human form of food does not exist, but only its abstract character as food. It could just as well exist in the most crude form, and it is impossible to say in what way this feeding activity would differ from that of animals. The needy man, burdened with cares, has no appreciation of the most beautiful spectacle. The dealer in minerals sees only their commercial value, not their beauty or their particular characteristics; he has no mineralogical sense. Thus the objectification of the human essence, both theoretically and practically, is necessary in order to HUMANISE man's SENSES, and also to create the HUMAN SENSES corresponding to all the wealth of human and natural being."

So, we find that it is only when man's basic necessities are satisfied that he is able to evolve as a full human being, with more developed senses, thereby acquiring the ability to flower in the full bloom of freedom. If in the process of socio-economic change these factors are not realised by the protagonists, and one continues to see him as a primitive man, as a mere tool for production, there is bound to be a reaction.

In the next article, when I deal with values and freedom, I will be referring to the evolved human beings—whether those that already exist, or those who have been raised to that level from their sub-human existence.

This problem of alienation does not seem to be given importance to by many a Marxist practitioner—often it is dismissed as petty-bourgeois rubbish. For many of them only the economic struggle is of importance; but class oppression considers not just one but all forms of oppression—economic, political, social, cultural, ideological, religious etc.

Besides, today the urban society is far different compared to the times of Marx, or for that matter even during the Russian and Chinese Revolutions. Then, the urban society was more or less polarised between the capitalist and proletarian classes and it was said that the middle class was being continuously pushed down into the ranks of the proletariat.

On the contrary, today, the middle classes are huge and, in fact, growing. (For example, in most countries the service sector is far bigger than manufacturing; in India it has increased from 30 per cent to 60 per cent since 1950, while manufacturing has increased from nine per cent to 15 per cent in the same period. In Africa, the ADB says the middle classes comprise 34 per cent of the population.) This is because in the neo-liberal schema the focus of their market is the middle class, which is pampered even at the cost of extreme pauperisation of the rest (through taxation and other policies). Of course, in this period of acute economic crisis, all are being affected, including the middle classes, yet their numbers are substantial. Practitioners of change ignore the middle classes only at their peril. To sum up, this then is the prevailing atmosphere today and division of classes in the world. Except for the super-rich, all are suffering the inhumanity of the system and

are searching for answers. Those who are sensitive seek to free themselves from the crass consumerism. They are searching to give more meaning to their lives.

## PART IV — No Freedom without Values

When a man feels superiority over others, this sort of inward elation is called pride. A proud man will not tolerate any other to be on equal terms with himself. In private and public he expects that all should assume a respectful attitude towards him and acknowledge his superiority, treat him as a higher being... So long as man feels proud he will not like for others, what he likes for himself. His self-esteem will deprive him of humility, which is the essence of righteousness. He will neither be able to discard enmity and envy, resentment and wrath, slander and scorn, nor will he be able to cultivate truth and sincerity, and calmly listen to advice. In short, there is no evil which a proud man will not inevitably do in order to preserve his elation and self-esteem. Vices are like a chain of rings linked together which entangle the heart. —Al Ghazzali

So said the famous Sufi philosopher over one thousand years back.

One may have the best of ideologies, but without the inculcation of good values the ideology will remain hollow and hypocritical. One may seek an equitable economic transformation, but if one does not acquire a commensurate value system, the changes will remain illusory. One may create beautiful theories of freedom, but if one does not have decent values, it may be anarchy or extreme individualism, but certainly not freedom. One may evolve the most democratic of organisational structures, but if the individuals within it (particularly the leadership) do not have a set of proper values, any organisation, whatever the form, is bound to get distorted and become autocratic. One cannot expect nice sweet fruit from a mango tree by nurturing it on poisonous water. With filthy water we cannot expect to clean the vessel, however much we keep scrubbing it with glossy detergents.

If the question of a proper value system is so fundamental to a future just order, how would one define the terms good/virtuous and bad/evil? Would these concepts change with changes in the system, culture, etc.; or would they remain constant through the ages? We have already seen in the earlier two articles that for over three millennia, prophets, philosophers, enlightened intellectuals and revolutionaries have continuously sought good over evil. Whether it was the West or the East, whether it was BC or AD, the values that they propounded were much the same. Why, even the Communists speak of those very same values which they present as 'proletarian values' (good) and 'bourgeois values' (bad).

So call it by any name, the values of good and evil have been similar through the ages. Then what would these universal permanent values be? Here, I will present a broad general categorisation.

The values of goodness would, say, comprise: honesty/truthfulness,

straightforwardness, simplicity, modesty, selflessness, being principled/responsible/accountable, being fair/just etc.

The values of bad/evil would be: dishonesty/perfidy/treachery, devious/cunning/manipulative/mean, arrogance/pride/ego, selfishness, greed, being opportunist/irresponsible/unprincipled, jealousy/prejudice, tyranny, being unfair/unjust etc.

While these would generally comprise values of good and bad, the religious may include others like piousness and love/compassion/kindness in the virtuous category and, say, lust/sex in the evil category.

To be pious or not is a personal choice. Though genuinely pious people would normally be good, as, in their frame of thinking, they seek to acquire god's positive attributes; in reality we find it is mostly the opposite. So, there is no direct relationship between piousness and the values of goodness. Besides, there are many excellent beings who may not be religious at all.

And, as far as love/compassion/kindness go, while these are, no doubt, extremely positive qualities, and to be generally inculcated; they may not be universally applicable, as it is difficult to love a monster/rakshas!!

As far as sex is concerned, this, together with hunger are our basic instinctive needs, common to all living creatures, and so come under a different category. No doubt, excess of anything is bad, whether it is lust or gluttony. But, many a religion virtually equate sex with sin, inculcate guilt complexes, and advocate unnatural abstinence—like Catholics, Buddhists and Hindus (Brahmacharya). As both these instinctive needs form an important part of the human psyche, being one of the major sources of pleasure, they are important to be dealt with, but not as part of the general human value system.

From now on, whenever I mention good/virtuous and bad/evil it will basically entail the values mentioned above. But, to make up the entire essence of man (what Marx calls his species-life), I will not only deal with his values, instinctive needs, but also emotions and the role of the senses. I will look at these in their interconnections, for it is only thus that we will be able to construct man in his entirety, in order to truly realise freedom and happiness for the majority.

But, to be able to effectively do this, first we shall have to briefly understand the working of the mind, where all these values, emotions, desires and instinctive urges lie embedded. It is after understanding the mind that I will turn to separately deal with our values, instincts and emotions within our consciousness. Finally, I shall then try to posit these in their relationship to freedom, alienation and humanism—not in a static form, but in their dynamic and dialectical relationship which can open the gate towards change for the better.

## 1. Functioning of the Mind

Man's main distinction from animals is the development of the mind. It is the most highly complex form of matter and energy. Though a lot of knowledge about its functioning has been gained in the past three to four decades, we still probably know very little about it. Yet we do know the mind is the centre of oneself—our entire autonomous body functions are controlled by it; our senses are activated through it; our emotional responses are lodged in it; and our thinking and reasoning ability are due to the functioning of our mind.

The mind basically has two aspects. The first is its structural form linked to the nervous system. The second is its division into the conscious and the sub-conscious.

Let us then briefly look at both aspects.

### (a) Structural Aspect

Specific parts of the brain conduct specific activities. So, for example, the hind brain is responsible for the automatic activities like respiration, heart beat, BP, digestion etc. as also many motor activities. The mid-brain regulates activities like sleep, arousal and attention. The forebrain is the most important part that regulates all the higher and complex activities of human beings—thinking, reasoning, memory etc.

The brain is linked to various parts of the body through the nervous system, through which impulses are carried. The neuron is the smallest unit in the nervous system. It is the neuron which converts stimulation from the different sense organs into electrical impulses. The brain functions through nerve impulses. A nerve impulse is an electrical event. Whenever some stimulation takes place it disturbs the electrical balance, and this disturbance runs throughout the membrane. The impulse is transmitted to another neuron via the axon. In this way a chain reaction occurs till it reaches the concerned part of the brain where the meaning of this impulse is deciphered and the brain sends directives for activity to the concerned part of the body through the nervous system.

Psychologists give more attention to the forebrain, which controls and regulates almost all our activities. The limbic system plays an important role in memory and our emotions. Till recently it was believed that thinking, recognition etc. came from the highly developed frontal cortex of the brain (that is, thalamus, hypothalamus etc.); while emotions emanated from the limbic system, which in humans is not much different from other animals. But latest studies (like those of Davidson and Begley) show that emotions, at least partly, are located in the brain's seat of reason—the forebrain.

It was found that there are a large number of neurons running between this region of the pre-frontal cortex and the amygdala in the limbic region. The amygdala is involved in, among other things, negative emotions and distress, snapping to

attention and activity when we feel anxious, afraid, or threatened. The left pre-frontal cortex inhibits the amygdala and, through this mechanism, helps to facilitate rapid recovery from adversity. People with greater activation of the left side of the pre-frontal cortex recovered much more quickly even from the strongest feelings of disgust, anger and fear. In other words, the left pre-frontal sends inhibitory signals to the amygdala instructing it to quiet down. Activity in the left pre-frontal cortex actually shortens the period of amygdala activation, allowing the brain to bounce back from an upsetting experience.

In addition, earlier it was thought that the brain had a fixed form, but now it is known to have a property called neuroplasticity—the ability to change its structure and function significantly. For example, a pianist will find that part of the brain developing that controls the finger movements. Also, in a similar way, our brain can change in response to messages generated internally—in other words, merely by our thoughts and intentions. So, one need not be a pianist to develop that part of the brain, repeated thought of the movement of the fingers can bring about similar change. In a similar way, through mental activities of various types a more positive outlook can develop which allows the pre-frontal cortex to be more resilient and restore negative feelings (like fear, anger etc.) that develop. It will be important to remember this fact when we later deal with our emotions—particularly the fear psychosis.

In addition to this, recent studies by scientists like Bruce Lipton, utilising the latest in quantum theory and epigenetics (science of heritable changes in gene expression caused by mechanisms other than changes in the underlying DNA sequence), have shown that environmental factors are primary in a man's make-up over genes. Lipton says scientific studies show that genes can be turned on and off by environmental signals, including thoughts, feelings and emotions from outside the cell.

For example, he explains how this works:

"Each of our cells is a living entity and the main thing that influences them is our blood. If I open my eyes in the morning and my beautiful partner is in front of me, my perception causes a release of oxytocin, dopamine growth hormones—all of which encourage the growth and health of my cells. But, if I see a sabre-tooth tiger, I am going to release stress hormones—cortisol, histamine and norepinephrine. These chemicals change the cells to a protection mode. I don't even have to see these things. If I am worried or afraid, my blood will fill with the same harmful chemicals. People need to realise that their thoughts are more primary than their genes, because the environment, which is influenced by our thoughts, controls our genes."

This further indicates how one can bring about changes in our values, emotions etc. which are existing in our brain. This could be in a positive direction or negative depending on the type of environmental and thought impact.

### (b) The Sub-conscious

The second aspect of the mind is its division into the sub-conscious and the conscious. It was Freud who long back showed that many of our desires, urges, feelings, that are suppressed because of the social environment, bury themselves in the sub-conscious. These often find expression in dreams. This suppression leads to schizophrenia, neurosis and other forms of distorted behaviour. In his understanding, it was primarily the suppression of sexual feelings that was the cause of this. But, that was during the Victorian era; later Jung and others widened the scope beyond sex.

Though this was an important discovery, most of the 20th century psychology in the West sought to play down the aspect of the sub-conscious. In fact, modern psychology began to be defined as the “science of behaviour”. Watson, the father of the school of “behaviourism”, rejected the mind as the subject of psychology, and insisted that psychology be restricted to the study of behaviour—that is, merely the observable activities of people and animals.

It was only recently that scientists like Bruce Lipton and others brought back onto the agenda the sub-conscious in their scientific research involving the latest in epigenetics and quantum theories. They have shown that the main functioning of the brain is through energy waves and not physical (mass). This factor becomes hugely important as it scientifically shows how we can change our mental make-up through various forms of concentration, meditation and other mind activities—both at the conscious as well as the sub-conscious level.

Regarding the sub-conscious, Lipton, using computer vocabulary, says: “The sub-conscious is a million times more powerful than the conscious. But the sub-conscious is only ‘habitual’, it will only play the programmes with which it has to be loaded. Ninety-five per cent of our daily activities are controlled by the sub-conscious mind. The less powerful conscious mind is unique, for it is creative, it can observe the body’s operations and manually control the mechanism, over-riding the read-only sub-conscious programmes... There are two fundamental classes of programmes. In the sub-conscious data-base—those derived from evolution (instincts), and those learned through life experiences. The sub-conscious mind is not a seat of reasoning or creative conscience, it is strictly a stimulus response device. When an environmental signal is perceived, the sub-conscious reflectively activates a previously stored behavioural response—no thinking required. The sub-conscious is a programmable auto-pilot that can navigate the vehicle without the observation or awareness of the pilot—the conscious mind.”

We will now study the questions of our values, instinctive drives and emotions in their interactions not only with our conscious mind, but also with the sub-conscious. For, at a conscious (rational) level I may intellectually understand that selfishness, greed, ego etc. are bad; I may even try and counter these qualities at the conscious level; but if they continue to remain embedded deep down in my sub-conscious, in

different circumstances they will keep popping up. Finally, I may give up the struggle and allow these negative values to completely envelop my conscious mind and practical activities. This can be compared to a cancerous growth. If we merely treat the manifestations the cancer will keep spreading till it destroys the body. It is only by exterminating the roots of this growth (whether through chemotherapy or surgery or both) that the cancer can be destroyed.

Now let us look at our values, instinctive drives and emotions in relation to both our conscious and sub-conscious mind.

## 2. Values and Consciousness

We have already seen that throughout history values of badness have dominated, while those of goodness have been mostly suppressed, remaining as an oasis in a desert of evil. The values of evil are conducive to an oppressive/exploitative system/organisation, on which it thrives. The values of goodness are conducive to non-oppressive/non-exploitative system/organisation. Each feeds on the other. Widespread values of badness facilitate greater oppression/exploitation, whether in society or an organisation or an individual. But, if badness is restricted, the oppressors will not find a fertile soil to take root and spread their weeds. The opposite will also be true—a just social order requires widespread goodness in society to take proper root and bloom.

Now let us turn to our values and consciousness in present-day society. From our very childhood we are being subtly indoctrinated. When a child is born, he/she is innocent. It is said that till about the age of six most children are unable to discern, and tend to absorb things uncritically from the environment. Whatever the child senses, feels or learns has a deep impact on the sub-conscious. The child's surroundings are comprised of the immediate family, relatives, teachers and friends, who, themselves inculcated with the prevalent values of society, naturally impact the child with these values. But today, this is not the only means of indoctrination—TV, internet, films etc. greatly impact children from a very young age. Specifically cartoons, internet games and many advertisements are being consciously filled with negative values to directly affect the sub-conscious of the child. In addition, the TV/internet culture deprives children of social interaction and deepens further values of individualism, selfishness and lack of concern for others. All this acts to build the consciousness of a person with those values conducive to the present oppressive system from a very young age.

One central factor sought to be created is greed, where acquiring money, wealth, gadgets etc. by any means becomes the main aim in life. What basically should be a means of existence, becomes an obsessive craze. Similar to a drug addict, the more money/goods/property I have, the more I crave for. And the more I have, the better is my status within society. This consumerist mania is promoted day-and-night by every means possible—even sports. The paranoia afflicts not only the rich and middle classes, but also the slum dweller.

In fact today it is the wealth one possesses which has become the main criteria for one's acceptability (in India also caste). I may be the biggest fool, but if I have wealth, hundreds will fawn over me. I may be the worst criminal, but if I have wealth I am acceptable and can even occupy a prestigious position in the top echelons of the elite and power structures. We see this throughout the world today.

In India there is the added factor of caste. The upper castes have a de facto genetic reservation into the club of the elites, while the lower castes, particularly Dalits, find gaining respectability an uphill task. This division is clear even within Tihar. The big-time dons are mostly Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Jats, while the petty criminals are mostly lower castes and Muslims. Nehru and Gandhi are portrayed worldwide as big-time intellectuals, but Ambedkar, with his wide spectrum of writings in 22 volumes, is never presented as an intellectual but merely as a Dalit messiah and writer of the Indian Constitution. When I am born into a particular caste the casteist environment has a deep impact from childhood itself.

So, the me-first/greed culture breeds all the worst values, which deeply impact the consciousness of society at large, with a particularly strong impact on the middle classes. In this neo-liberal age, the intensity of the advocacy of such culture has been magnified a hundred-fold, even compared to the pre-TV period. Its impact, not only on the conscious mind, but also the sub-conscious can well be imagined.

But, our conscious mind is not a mere mirror-image of society. It has the ability to reason and assess the good from the bad. We also read about those who stood up for the good and justice, even at the cost of their lives. In addition, the enormous unhappiness, hardships and alienation most suffer in the present way of life, makes one search for alternatives. So, with conscious effort it is possible to re-write the negative programmes in our sub-conscious.

People are finding the cut-throat rat-race-more and more intolerable. Except for the super-rich (the 0.1 per cent) and wielders of power, the rest are getting more and more frustrated and disgusted. The innate goodness in man seeks to assert itself, transforming our consciousness from being a stagnant, muck-filled pond, into a flowing river of clean, pure water.

### 3. Instincts and Consciousness

Together with inculcating the worst values, the present system and their media seek to distort our very instinctive needs of hunger and sex. These too are disoriented from a very young age.

If we first look at the question of hunger, we find that the media is busy promoting on a huge scale the most unhealthy of foods/snacks and cold drinks/liquor. Even young children get addicted to these. Such food/drinks, together with a lethargic life-style, has resulted in a growing section of the middle class suffering from a strange disease of obesity (over-weight). In a country like India, it is ironical that

amongst the middle classes we have large numbers of obese people, while the bulk of the people suffer from malnutrition. This has resulted in a big leap in what is called 'life-style' diseases in the urban areas, like diabetes, hypertension, heart problems, spinal problems etc. destroying lives at an early age. To enjoy tasty food and drinks is one thing; but to create/develop an obsession for unhealthy snacks/drinks is quite another. This craze for food/drinks not only destroys the health, it disorients the mind.

What is mentioned above for food/drinks is taking place on a far greater scale in the sphere of sex. A sex mania is being whipped up on a scale never seen before. TV, magazines and newspapers are full of it; in films, it is now de facto the central theme; the most viewed sites on the internet are said to be pornography, and now even novels have an extensive dose of it, and, unbelievably, the latest best-selling novel is a soft-porn trilogy.

What is a natural urge, together with being a major source of pleasure, has been turned into such a level of obsession that today it occupies large parts of the consciousness of not only the youth but the bulk of the middle classes. This serves two purposes: First, it distracts the youth from meaningful thought and activities into flights of fantasy, instant pleasures, perpetually chasing phantoms. Sex has become an increasingly important release from the frustrations in our lives, living in a purposeless vacuum. Second, it spawns vast business empires giving the super-rich billions of dollars in profits—like in advertising, TV, films, sports and music, fashion and modelling, tourism, spas and hotels etc.

In the West even the once progressive women's liberation movement of the 1960s/1970s against patriarchal oppression (of which women's sexuality was only one aspect) has been turned into a movement for the commodification of women, where beauty and sex have become a marketable commodity. And in this marketplace there is no room for such mundane things as love, affection, concern etc. Relations, here too, are turned more impersonal where money, fame and instant pleasure are the sole purpose. And to gain a good market-value girls go to any extent from having artificial body parts to starving themselves (anorexia) to remain slim.

In India the promotion of this 'Western' (read sex) culture is having a disastrous impact on our youth, where it has been super-imposed on the existing deeply feudal ethos. The media virtually equates sex with "being modern"; while, in real life, except for a section of the urban elite, intermingling of the genders is considered taboo. This results in all sorts of degenerate, criminal and perverted behaviour (like eve teasing, rape, sexual abuse of minors etc.) and unmanageable sexual liaisons (resulting in suicides, depressions, honour killings, murders etc.) Much of the youth are caught between the devil and the deep sea—a pretense to be sati-savitris and a desire for the 'modern' world of pleasure. They cannot understand the possibility of a real healthy, mutually enhancing and mature relationship between the sexes. With the media onslaught, on the one hand, and the inability to realise those relations in real life, on the other, the Indian youth's mind is even more clogged than his/her

Western counterpart, with sexual fantasies and the imagination running wild.

Sex and love should be a normal part of our human relations to fulfil both instinctive and emotional needs. The less the restrictions on it, the less it will clog our minds, the more we can focus on meaningful thoughts and actions. From an obsession it should become a normal natural relationship between mutually consenting couples.

No doubt, both food and sex are an important part of our psyche as they are a major source of pleasure. One need neither to take a missionary approach—sex only for procreation and food only to satiate hunger—nor go to the other extreme to make it the central aspect of our consciousness. Both have to be dealt with a certain degree of maturity, not frivolously; becoming a victim of our passions.

#### 4. Emotions and Fear Psychosis

Marx said (Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts—EPM): “Man as an objective sentient being is a suffering being, and since he feels his sufferings, a passionate being.”

No doubt man interacts with the outside world through his five senses (as a sentient being). True also that the objective world is reflected in his consciousness through these senses. But, these senses in themselves do not result in emotions. Emotions are a product of the conscious (and sub-conscious) mind, which receives sensations through the senses. Sadness/happiness, fear, anger, love/hatred etc. evolve in the process of our interaction with our environment, and are activated (as we have seen) in a particular part of our brain. One could say that our senses are merely a highway between the object and our consciousness.

Take some examples: say, a child was bitten by a dog. Till today, fear may be triggered in his mind on seeing a dog, as probably this incident had a deep impact on his sub-conscious which his conscious mind was unable to over-come. Say, again, someone suddenly loses a most beloved person. Here too sadness can be overwhelming and impact the entire psychic make-up of the brain.

So we see that the overall emotional make-up comes from thousands of such experiences right from our childhood days. These construct the entire emotional pattern of a person at a given time.

At the emotional plane, what we basically seek is happiness, but many of our other emotions—like fear, sadness, anger, hatred—prevent us from achieving this. Here I will primarily deal with the emotion of ‘fear’ as it is more general in character, while sadness, hatred, anger etc. are conditioned individual responses.

So, for example, one person may feel sad if he does not make pots of money; another may feel sad on seeing a starving child. One person may feel hatred if another person contradicts him; another may feel hatred for a bully who he sees beating a

weak person. One person may feel anger if someone does not flatter him; another may feel anger on seeing someone behave dishonestly/unfairly. So, most of these emotional responses are strongly connected with our value-system—if the latter changes so will the response.

No doubt this also applies to the fear psychosis, but that is more prevalent and deep-rooted and manifests in hundreds of forms. The more the fear complexes, the more our insecurities, the more is our vulnerability, the less is our sense of freedom.

There is fear of the powers that be, fear of god, fear of starvation, fear of death, fear of ostracism, and even fear of oneself. These, and hundreds of other forms of petty (or major) fears haunt man, eat into the vitals of his freedom, and also abilities.

Particularly, the fear of ostracism compels people to either actively or passively support all the evils around us. It is this fear of isolation and ostracism that makes people repress the awareness of that which is taboo, since such awareness would mean being different, separate, and hence to be ostracised. For this reason the individual must blind himself from seeing that which his circle claims does not exist, or accept as truth that which the majority says is true, even if this own eyes could convince him that it is false. Do we not witness this regularly in our offices, circles, parties, organisations, communities etc.? Are we too not silent spectators?

As Erich Fromm says, “The herd is so vitally important for the individual that their views, beliefs, feelings constitute reality for him, more so than what his senses and his reason tells him... What man considers true, real, sane are the clichés accepted by his society, and much that does not fit in with these clichés is excluded from awareness... For the majority of people their identity is precisely rooted in their conformity with the social clichés... Hence the fear of ostracism implies the fear of the loss of identity, and the very combination of both fears has a most powerful effect.” In fact how many are willing to ‘swim against the tide’ even when they know the tide carries with it filth and muck!!

But, very often the pangs of conscience prick us. Take a spiritual being; the fear of god (or hell) often pushes man to oppose the bad within and around ourselves. In many a religion, though the religious themselves promote the values of goodness, what is said is that only the fear of god can keep people on the virtuous track. But, if I seek to adopt some values not because of a deep understanding of their intrinsic worth, but merely because of a fear of going to hell, can such values be deep-rooted? It cannot be, as fear may only help suppress the bad within me; while only a sincere understanding of its negative features will help me eradicate it. Fear and suppression bring with them feelings of guilt, numerous complexes, the need for pretenses etc. that distort a person’s character, creating a million insecurities. Regular confessions before a priest may help temporarily relieve some of the resulting tensions/guilt, but do not help cure the disease.

Exactly the same would apply if god is replaced by any other authority—be it a

Communist Party or leaders. The best example was the Cultural Revolution in China which sought to inculcate the values of selflessness etc. But the method adopted was through fear, imposition, punishments etc. So, whatever apparent change that took place was superficial and not internalised, and, when the opportunity presented itself, it was all reversed.

Superficial change, at best, remains at the conscious level; deep (real) change takes place at its sub-conscious roots. One can never change the sub-conscious through fear, imposition etc.

If one has to truly imbibe the values of goodness, one has to, first and foremost, throw aside all feelings of fear—particularly the fear of ostracism and authority. One must then realise the intrinsic goodness in these values in themselves and seek to make them a part of our sub-conscious mind. Though this primarily requires looking inwards within oneself, it cannot be done in isolation. Any changes within must, of necessity, reflect in a change in our outward behaviour discarding fear of ostracism/authority. It requires both: inward-looking and the outward courage to be principled and to stand up for what one believes to be just and right.

So, as long as fear reigns at the emotional level, it brings with it numerous insecurities, which sap our strength to fight the negative within us and also the ability to stand up for what is right. Various systems seek to keep people in a state of emotional instability, so that they are easily malleable to their nefarious designs.

## 5. Alienation and Consciousness

Alienation results in man being distanced from his self. In other words, my sub-conscious self is in conflict with my conscious thinking and being. 'I am not 'me'; 'I' am what others make of 'me'; what 'I' want others to see as 'me'. I thereby live in an artificial world, as an actor perpetually playing a role in the theatre of life. The artificiality itself becomes natural (habitual), so much so, that to actually be natural would feel artificial. It would feel like standing naked in a crowd of clothed people. My sense of security comes in my being clothed in the garments of artificiality, paranoid that others may take a peek at my naked (that is, natural) self. In this way our real self becomes a prisoner to pretenses, hypocrisies, ego etc. And when two such artificial beings interact, one can imagine the level of superficiality in the relationship.

A (relatively) natural being like Anuradha is a rarity even in communist and progressive circles. On the contrary, very often the artificiality is even larger in the activists' world than in the normal world. Communists/progressives are supposed to have more of the values characterised as 'good', but at the sub-conscious level they have not been able to give up the value systems acquired through society. So, the conflict in the sphere of values is even sharper. Also, at the instinctive level, because of the need for a show of Puritanism, one suppresses (or hides) one's urge for good food and sexual feelings. For all these reasons, at the emotional level such

persons are the most insecure (unless, of course, they are leaders) as they are filled with guilt feelings, complexes, and always in a state of dissatisfaction. They are not able to come to terms with themselves. Anuradha's naturalness was reflected in her child-like spontaneous emotional responses—whether anger, happiness, sadness (she would cry easily) etc. The lack of complexities and pretenses enabled her to develop an exceedingly sharp and focussed mind, as it was not clogged with large amounts of baggage. If our conscious mind is full of maintaining pretenses, sustaining an ego, scheming and manipulating, indulging in one-upmanship, dominating others etc. etc., what space is left in the mind for creative effort? This is partly the reason that one finds nowadays less creativity amongst organisational people; and less practicality amongst intellectuals and academics.

Now let us turn to the question of alienation in the three spheres of our consciousness—values, instincts and emotions.

First, let us look at the sphere of values. As long as my conscious mind accepts/rationalises the rot within society and in myself, I have no major conflict between my sub-conscious and conscious mind. The problem (which often is major) only arises when I am unable to fulfil my greed, selfishness, ego etc. And, at times, if pangs of guilt flash across the conscious mind, I subdue these through thousands of self-justifications, rationalisations, even though most may be in the realm of the absurd.

But with most people who have varied levels of sensitivity, the conflict between one's sub-conscious self and one's conscious being eats into one's vitals, creating guilt, neurosis, depression etc. The sub-conscious will have elements of the innate good in man, but will be more filled with the impact of the environment. The important aspect here is to use our conscious mind to build on the elements of good, while reducing the negative impact of the environment.

Let us now turn to the second aspect, instincts, particularly sex. Sex was important enough to be the major aspect of Freud's psychological theory of the sub-conscious. Though now recognised as one-sided, and more relevant to the Victorian era of suppressed sexual urges, with India's feudal ethos, sex will still have significant impact on our thinking.

As already mentioned, the relations between the sexes should be based only on affection, liking and mutual respect and concern. But our values and emotional insecurities make this impossible.

Our selfishness, ego, prejudices etc. and, of course, patriarchal tendencies, play a major role in vitiating relations between the sexes. Over and above this our emotional insecurities prevent maturity in such relations, resulting in all sorts of jealousies, doubts, pretenses etc. Together with these the alienation in society is reflected here too, with invisible walls sprouting up in the closest of relationships. Until a lot of this baggage is shed, not only between the two individuals involved, but

also in our circles, such ideal relations are not possible.

Finally, if we turn to our positive emotional feelings of loving, liking, happiness etc., most remain unfulfilled, at least, not to the extent one would desire. Man is a social being and such feelings are absolutely essential to his very existence. Lack of these will push a person to insanity. But today, the society has created a desert of such feelings, and man has to seek nourishment from the thorny cacti or else scramble in search for an oasis. Very often he ends up facing mirages, to which he rushes, only to find burning, scorched sand.

The walls of alienation are reaching such extreme levels, driven by a maddening rat-race for the middle classes and a fearsome dog-eat-dog scramble for survival for the rest, that there is little time for evolving human relations. The time spent, must give a return; so, even human relations are increasingly thrown to the anarchy of the market—virtually with a price-tag. Man is, de facto, being turned into an automaton, like some robotic machine, with a heart of steel. What Marx called a “crippled monstrosity” is even more true today, than when he wrote *Das Capital*, Vol. I.

So, we see that the walls of alienation, that deprive us of our freedom, seriously affect man at the level of his values, instincts as also emotions.

## 6. Free, To Be Human

This apt title of a book by Felix Green brings out the importance of humanity in the question of freedom.

This entails freedom from our alienated being reflected in the spheres of our values, instincts and emotions. Whether it is my values, or my sexual feelings, or my emotions, if these remain suppressed within us in the sub-conscious, and in continuous conflict with our conscious being, I will be forced into a sort of schizophrenic existence, alienated from my very self.

No doubt, as already mentioned, such feelings and sensitivity come into play only once I am free from the pangs of hunger, starvation and disease. A perpetually hungry/diseased person develops just the survival instinct and all other faculties will lie dormant. Yet, once the existing system is transformed and most acquire the basic necessities of life, such people too will find these faculties develop with the inherent contradictions they create. Unless the practitioners of change factor in this aspect from the very start, real change will remain illusory.

This fact was recognised over two millennia back when Christ said: “Man does not live by bread alone.” Acquiring the basic necessities of life is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for socialism. The manner of socio-economic transformation should be in such a way that it frees man from his alienated self and facilitates the transformation of his values, emotions and instincts.

So, to gain genuine freedom and happiness, besides acquiring the basic necessities of life, one has to gradually turn our sub-conscious from being a breeding ground of evil into a haven of good, restore our emotional balance and harmonise our instinctive urges. It is only then that we begin to bring out the humanity within us and start to move from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom. And if we thus bring about greater balance between our conscious and sub-conscious minds we can gradually overcome our alienation and thereby realise our true natural self. And it is in this process that we will be able to understand, as Marx said (EPM), "how far man's natural behaviour has become human, and how far his human essence becomes a natural essence for him; how far his human nature has become nature for him".

Though society at large has to be changed, the starting point has to be with the individual. Society, class etc., seen divorced from the individual, become abstractions. Besides, how can I ask others to change if I myself am not set on that path of change? Every person who seeks change must be responsible and accountable, first and foremost to himself/herself, then only will he/she impact society in a positive direction.

This process of change can and should begin here and now within the circles, committees, organisations etc. we interact with. But, in order to be sustaining, two basic changes need to be brought about in society: First, an end to alienation created by the very production process itself. Second, society be re-organised in such a way where man lives in greater harmony with nature, not at its expense.

But more on this in the next and last articles in this series.

## **PART V — VALUES, AS CENTRAL TO A NEW JUST ORDER**

The year was 399 BC. Socrates had been advocating a more honourable society. The rulers of the Greek city state ordered him to change his views or take the cup of poison. He chose the latter.

Nearly two millennia later, the year is 1535. Thomas More, the humanist author of Utopia; was beheaded by King Henry VIII of England. Though Lord Chancellor to the King, when the latter declared himself head of the Church, Thomas More refused to sign the Act. His Utopia was a novel on an idyllic imaginary republic, written as a protest against the abuses of the day.

We have already seen that on all occasions prophets, philosophers and revolutionaries, right from the earliest of times, have sought to bring out the goodness in man, and with it, greater justice in society. When the society was under despotic rule such people invariably faced the wrath of the rulers. When the society was in ferment such ideas facilitated a change in the system.

But, when we delve into these transformations, we find one major difference

between all earlier changes (say, to feudalism, capitalism) and that to socialism. The earlier changes were not conscious, planned acts, while that to socialism was. Yet, in all cases the ideas of the new society evolved in the womb of the old. Such ideas became a powerful force for change once they gripped the masses.

The earlier changes were more-or-less evolutionary in content. But then, in all these changes, though radical in nature, one section of the elite replaced another section; while with the socialist transformation, it was for the first time in the history of mankind that power sought to go into the hands of the poor and oppressed.

In this penultimate article I shall first briefly trace the link between consciousness/values and revolutionary change through history. Next, I will try and bring out the role of consciousness/values in the latest transformations—that is, in socialism. Finally, in this background, I will seek to present the main goal of mankind and some questions of orientation to facilitate change in that direction.

### 1. Consciousness and Revolutionary Change

MARX said that it was “social being that determines consciousness”. Though generally true, it does not explain how, through history, many thinkers have been far ahead of their times. To fully appreciate this understanding of consciousness, and avoid a mechanical interpretation, three points need to be considered.

First, if being and consciousness are seen as a one-to-one mirror image, no change would be possible, as our mind would merely reflect the existing reality and nothing else. In actual fact our mind merely gets the raw materials from our sensory perceptions, which it processes through reasoning to give the final product—consciousness. So, the mind acts (or should act) as a machine, not a mirror, and knowledge passes from the perceptual level to the conceptual level.

The second point is regarding the reasoning power. How is it created and from where did it evolve? At any given time an individual has a definite mental make-up, which gives him the ability to reason. This is internal to him, having evolved from childhood through thousands of impressions stamped on the mind due to varied experiences—physical, emotional, scientific etc. etc. Consciousness is also generational—instinctive, like hunger and sex. All these are recorded in the mind—at both subconscious and conscious levels—which give us our ability to reason. It is with this existing mental make-up that an individual, at any point of time, processes the raw material. Of course, this mental make-up is not fixed in nature, it changes with new experiences. So, while the objective reality is a fixed determinant, the mental make-up changes depending on the changing outlook.

The third point is that consciousness itself has evolved over centuries. According to the famous psychologist, C.G. Jung,

“The development of consciousness has been a slow and laborious process that took

untold ages to reach the civilised state (which we date somewhat arbitrarily from the invention of writing, about 4000 BC). Although the development since that date seems to be considerable, it is still far from complete. Infinitely large areas of the mind still remain in darkness."

In fact, most of our instinctive feelings are not because of immediate sensory perceptions, but have evolved through the ages.

So, in a general sense, no doubt, social being determines consciousness. Yet, from the latter two points we find that our mind has been impacted from our activities (being) since childhood and over centuries. And, at any give time the impressions thus created are internal to us, and its impact is specifically reflected in our subconscious.

Now, keeping the above-mentioned factors in mind, let us look at the relationship between consciousness and revolutionary change.

The relationship has been best presented by Marx in his Preface to a Critique of Political Economy, where he says: "At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into contradiction with the existing production relations... From forms of development of the productive forces these relationships are transformed into their fetters. Then an epoch of social revolution opens. With the change in the economic foundation the vast superstructure is more-or-less rapidly transformed."

This oft-repeated quote of Marx, though presenting the relationship between ideas (part of the superstructure) and revolutionary change, may give the impression that economic changes are a pre-requisite for other changes—that superstructural changes only follow economic changes. In reality, though economics may be the basis, the relationship is dialectical, each impacting the other. Not only do the productive forces change prior to a revolutionary transformation, but also the new ideas evolve in sync with these changes. In the final analysis, it is man and his ideas that act as instruments of revolutionary change, not inanimate forces.

Let us take two of the most recent changes as examples—from feudalism to capitalism and then to socialism.

In the classical (capitalist) French Revolution of 1789, the ideas of humanity and justice were evolving from about 1500. First came the Protestant Reformation in Christianity through thinkers like Martin Luther and John Calvin. This was followed by a large number of philosophers debating the relation between being and thinking as also the concepts of humanity and justice. Finally, these culminated in the concepts of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity put forward by Voltaire and Rousseau, whose ideas had an enormous impact on the French Revolution. But, this transformation was itself the culmination of a number of other gradual changes that had been taking place—for example, establishment of the Parliament in England in

1649 after a seven-year civil war; establishment of a constitutional government in England in 1688-89 brought about by the Declaration of Rights; the American War of Independence 1775-83 etc.

Here, we find that both the productive forces and consciousness developed in the embryo of the old feudal order through an evolutionary process of changes culminating in the French Revolution.

As already stated, such an evolutionary process was not evinced in the socialist projects. Both the Russian and Chinese Revolutions were conscious, planned and organised actions. Their post-revolutionary developments (not reversals) were also extremely minutely planned actions. Yet, here too, the socialist/communist ideas were evolving from the time of Marx and Engels in the 1840s.

But, for two reasons the questions of humanity and man's individuality, his freedom and happiness were relegated to the background.

The first was probably due to equating freedom, humanity etc. with liberating people from the horrors that capitalism wrought. Hundreds of classic novels during the 19th and early 20th centuries depicted the unbelievable agony resulting from early capitalism. With the extermination of entire populations by colonial conquest, the destruction of moral life; and workers toiling 12 to 15 hours living in inhuman hovels etc. etc., quite naturally the question of humanity was intrinsically linked to freedom from such a system. As a result the individual was somewhere lost amongst the 'mass', 'class', party etc. It was the mass/class that had to be liberated and, it was assumed, the individual would automatically achieve salvation. But, as we have seen, that was not to be. Socialism raised people economically out of the muck, but did not seek to solve the existential problems of the individual. A herd mentality may be OK for a starving, illiterate, diseased individual; but once delivered from this filth, he/she achieves an identity of his/her own: a self-respect and dignity that calls for a different form of attention in order to achieve liberation/freedom.

The second reason is related to the fact (probably accidentally) that Marxism evolved as a science of society. By adopting a scientific approach to social phenomena, humanity seemed to have got lost somewhere. There is no doubt that with Marxism evolving a scientific approach to understand society, a great leap took place in the realm of thought. Cause and effect, as evinced in the natural sciences, was now also seen in the social sciences. But, while this enormously extended the horizons to understand society and its transformation, a sort of clinical approach developed, which tended to neglect man and his humanity (except, of course, in the sphere of economic equality).

In hindsight one can now view these limitations. Yet, in just one century Marxism, as an ideology, became probably the most powerful force ever in the history of mankind—by the 1960s roughly half the world was under the sway of communism. Yet, surprisingly, barely two decades later there was a near-total reversal. I do

believe an important reason for this was the neglect of dealing with these questions of humanity and freedom of the individual.

Though Marx's very starting point to understand social phenomena emanated from his original search for humanity (reflected in his earlier writings), this was somehow lost later. We find little of this in the writings of the Second and Third International nor in those of the towering Marxist intellectuals of that time. Nor do we see much of this in the Russian Revolution, except in the novels of Gorky. Most writings, statements, analyses were confined to political events, economic analyses and a lot of tactics, strategies etc. In the Chinese Revolution (and after), though the question of values was continuously stressed, it was more in the moralistic tradition of Confucius and Buddha, not linking it to questions of alienation, freedom and happiness and the taking of society and the individual on this path.

So, though ideas have evolved in these 150 years of socialism/communism, these were more in the sphere of political/economic justice, politics, economics and tactics/strategy; not in the sphere of values and the individual's sense of freedom and happiness. And once the projects failed (as seen after the 1990s) the people's confidence has been shaken in the feasibility of such a transformation. The lesson to be learnt here is that the development of human consciousness cannot be reduced to merely greater and greater scientific knowledge—whether in the natural or social spheres. As already outlined, this is just one aspect of our consciousness, which also comprises our values, instinctive desires and emotional responses. Overall civilisational advance entails progress in all these spheres.

That it is not just a question of advanced science can best be seen from the example of the present neo-liberal period.

There is no doubt that this period has witnessed gigantic leaps in the sphere of knowledge. The discovery of the computer/internet and its advance, the micro-chip, satellite technology, quantum mechanics, genetics etc. have been truly revolutionary. No doubt this has generated a big pool of brilliant scientists and unheard-of advances in the sphere of the sciences.

Let alone the other spheres, even in this sphere of knowledge has there been any real advance as far as the bulk of the people are concerned? Ironically, it appears, the more advanced the technology, the more moronic the condition of the people. So, for example, calculators do the adding, subtracting etc., the mind is unable to do even simple addition/subtraction, writing is done on computers (now even through voice), so I am unable to write physically; computers do much of the thought processing, so my mind does not think, it merely reproduces. At our workplace, the more sophisticated the technology, the more mechanical and repetitive the job. In my education, cramming and memorising replaces creative thinking. In my leisure, actual sports, music, literature, drama etc. are replaced by sub-standard TV programmes and, instead of performing I merely VIEW the above on a screen. As a result even in the sphere of knowledge/science, for the bulk of the people, there is

little advance, in fact, more probably, there has been stagnation or even degeneration. As a matter of fact, a recent research at Stanford University indicates that humans are losing intellectual and emotional capabilities because “they no longer need intelligence to survive”.

And if we turn to the other sphere of consciousness—values, emotions, instinctive desires—there has been serious decay. The overall result of all this is a mental stagnation and civilisational retrogression.

That is why we find today a narrowing of man’s thinking, though there is much talk of the global village. We witness a growth of religious fundamentalism worldwide—not just Islamic, but Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, even Zoroastrian—which restricts our worldview taking us back to a class-type mentality. This breeds exclusiveness, not humanity; hatred, not love. Not only is this de-humanisation at the level of identity, it is admixed with the worst forms of crass consumerism, resulting in the total debasement of man.

In India the situation is even worse as all those have been super-imposed on a basically feudal and casteist mindset. Caste exclusiveness, upper-caste superiority, and hatred of the lower castes (Dalits) have, in fact, increased in this neo-liberal period.

Of course, there is a reaction to this all-round degeneration which is infusing a new search amongst large sections of the youth. This can be seen in the huge movements in the West, the changes in Latin America and increasing number of people seeking spiritual solace (as opposed to religious fundamentalism).

But, at present what exists is more in the realm of negation. To take a leap in the realm of consciousness and produce something positive, there has to be negation of this negation to result in a new set of values, and a new life-style and production process. For these vast movements, socialism is no longer posing as that alternative as we see a similar retrogression in the erstwhile socialist states.

Today, to once again turn ideas into a force for change would be impossible without taking lessons from what was the most recent of the revolutionary transformations—that is, socialism—and its failures.

## 2. Socialism—One Step Forward Two Steps Back

CAPITALISM is at a dead-end, heading for a 1930-type Great Depression. There is no sign of any ability to revive given the deepening of the euro-debt crisis and stagnation in the US and Japanese economies.

Socialism too is at a crossroads; all socialist revolutions have reversed, most socialist/communist movements are in stagnation, nay decay; and there are no signs of any renewal/revival. This is in spite of the crisis of capitalism.

So, what of the future? What is the alternative? Does one have to suffer the existing inhumanities of capitalism till “the end of history”? Or, can it be reformed? And is socialism a lost cause, or could it be reformed to make it more sustainable? Or, should one look for some third alternative? What hope is there for mankind from the miseries of today?

Here, we shall try and deal with the socialist experiences, to seek the reasons for their failure. But, first let us take stock of the socialist project as it stands today.

If one traces the history of the socialist/communist movements we see that from the turn of the nineteenth century these grew from strength to strength for nearly 150 years. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were powerful movements in Europe and Russia under the Second International. World War I ended with a socialist state in the USSR and a failed revolution in Germany. The impact of the socialist revolution of the USSR resulted in powerful communist movements not only in Europe, but throughout the world, particularly in China—under the leadership of the Third International. After World War II, with the Chinese Revolution and the vast national liberation movements of Asia, Africa and Latin America, virtually half the world was brought under the sway of communism notwithstanding the massacres of lakhs of Leftists in Greece, Indonesia, Turkey, Chile, India, Latin American countries etc.

But then, with the collapse of the USSR, the reversal in China, and the retreat of the national liberation movements, by the 1990s most communist/Left movements/organisations collapsed, and the few that remained existed, fighting with their backs to the wall. This is the harsh reality even today—a situation worse than ever before!! Never in this past one-and-a-half centuries of communist thought, has the situation been so pathetic.

The situation is serious and would require a thorough review. Here I will merely try and touch on the philosophical point that was the cause of the reversals in the socialist states. But first, I shall touch on the two main arguments given for the reversal. I will then hypothesise in which direction the search for the real cause needs to be taken.

#### (a) Two Arguments

The two major arguments put forward (in varied forms) for the reversal are: (i) the productive forces were not sufficiently developed to facilitate the transformation to socialism, and (ii) lack of democracy in the party and the state.

Let us then look at both points briefly:

##### (i) Question of Productive Forces:

It has been said that only when capitalist relations are fully developed that it is

possible to transform society towards socialism. Based on this reasoning they argue that both Russia and China were underdeveloped, and so what existed there was state capitalism, not socialism.

There is no doubt that if a developed capitalist country transformed to socialism the transition would be easier, as both the level of productive forces and social consciousness in these societies would be more advanced.

Though this is generally true, the factors for transformation grew stronger in the backward countries once capitalism developed into imperialism. With the world getting knit into a relatively more homogenous unit, the possibility of transition to socialism arose in any part of the world.

This is one aspect that has to be considered. Another aspect is that the argument ignores the fact that the transformation to socialism is a conscious, planned act. They treat it like some evolutionary process where the productive forces will develop and develop transforming the production relations. In a planned process, the practitioners of change can factor in a step-wise process of transformation, depending on the preparedness of the masses to accept the change. Probably it was this that was attempted with the NEP (New Economic Policy) in Russia and the New Democratic Economy in China.

So, the issue of the level of 'development of the productive forces' was not really the major problem. It lay elsewhere.

#### (ii) Question of Democracy:

It is often said that it was lack of democracy within the state/government and party that was the undoing of the new order. Even if this were true, how does one guarantee democracy in a body? Normally when this issue is taken up, it is only discussed at the structural level—democratic centralism, multi-party democracy etc. But, democracy operates at many levels, not only the structural. It is there at the individual level (in one's behaviour), at the family level (patriarchal behaviour), at the institutional level (boss-employee relations), at the social level (like caste) etc. etc.

The starting point of democracy is not, in fact, structural, but human. If the individuals (particularly leaders) who comprise the state/party/organisation are not democratic, then how can the organisation be democratic, whatever the structure? This would apply not only to an organisation but also to the family, institution etc. A change of form cannot change the content. If those manning an organisation are arrogant, conceited, opinionated, manipulative etc. and have many of the values earlier outlined as evil/bad, would a change in the organisational structure make a difference?

In fact democracy (or the lack of it) is merely one aspect of the question of freedom

discussed earlier and is intrinsically linked to the value system we have adopted. Lack of democracy is just a symptom of the disease. The disease is our negative value system. Unless there is a fundamental change in the latter, whatever tinkering we may do with structures, there will be no democracy. Besides, no structure can guarantee proper democracy; at best, it can facilitate it.

What CAN guarantee democracy are the attitudes within the organisation/institution/state, particularly of its leadership. Definitely, if the leaders are equipped with the values of good (outlined in the earlier article), this is bound to get reflected in their relationship with others. The existence of a democratic approach is very much dependent on the values of modesty, straightforwardness, simplicity etc. and does not exist in an ethical vacuum. And this applies not only to the organisational/state structures but also to the social and institutional structures.

And while on the topic of organisation/state structures, one cannot ignore the question of power. It is rightly said that power tends to corrupt; but for much time to come, it is a necessary evil as structures to run society will entail some leadership. To minimise the possibility of negative factors developing, two steps could be taken: First, divorce power from control over money/wealth. Second, a major criteria for electing a person to power, besides abilities, must be that the individual has the maximum quantification of the qualities of 'goodness'. This could be structured into some 10-15 rules of behaviour, which could be a model for all, but a criteria for those in power.

Given that both the above were not the main criteria for the reversals in the socialist state, where, then, does one look for the answers?

#### (b) Direction of the Search

If we are to seek the real cause for the failures of the socialist states, the search must be man-centric. Structures, economy, party etc. exist, after all, to serve man, not vice-versa.

The problem began from the very defining of one's goals. If that itself was faulty, quite naturally the path taken was bumpy. The goal was defined as being equality and justice. And the primary task was to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor.

Were these then correct? Or should our final goal have been towards freedom and happiness? By putting the goal as equality and justice, we miss the real target towards which man needs to aspire. No doubt, this could be an immediate first task; perhaps a minimalist first step. But, by restricting it to this, we are likely to fall into the trap of economic determinism, where the entire focus may be reduced to mere economic welfare and not the overall flourishing of man, nature and society.

On the contrary, if we see our goal as freedom and happiness, this would be more

all-encompassing, wherein equality and justice would be just one aspect. Keeping this broader goal in mind, the nature of the economy would not be restricted to mere physical/economic welfare, but would seek to also create the material conditions to root out alienation, our negative values, our emotional distress, social injustice and environmental destruction from our lives. It would primarily seek a path for the full flowering of man and his/her individuality.

If we look at the two main socialist experiences, they were, to an extent, able to achieve the goal of economic justice. But, having once achieved the basic necessities of life for all, both societies reversed. Is it because once poverty was extinguished, man's basic selfish nature came to the fore, bringing out his greed to acquire more and more for his personal gain? Is it then that this 'human nature' of selfishness and greed, ingrained over centuries, is unchangeable? This would seem the conclusion, looking at society generally today, and particularly the reversals in the socialist states!!

Whether that is so or not, we shall see later. The main point here is that when the main goal set is merely equality and justice, society was not reconstructed to rid it of alienation, the lack of freedom and other aspects that would carry the individual towards fulfilment and happiness. Nor was it effective in changing the basic value system, nor was the economy, polity etc. constructed in that direction. So, quite naturally, when man acquired the basic necessities and his senses evolved, if the society did not move in the direction of greater freedom and happiness (basing on a new set of values), it would spontaneously move towards seeking happiness in the form of pleasures as was the habit from the past, as also what was visible in the world around them.

And so it was with China. As they were unable to successfully imbibe the values of goodness, the masses began treading the old path to happiness. Probably, after the revolution they sought to bring about change too rapidly for which the people were not yet mentally ready. This was both in the realm of the economy as also in the sphere of people's thinking. Obviously, people's consciousness, having just emerged from a backward feudal background, was not yet ripe to accept the commune-type organisation (without private property), nor the selfless values sought to be imposed during the Cultural Revolution.

Just having acquired the basic necessities of life together with education for the first time in generations, and having so evolved their senses and desires, the natural trend was for greater and greater enjoyment of the newly acquired pleasures, not the rigid sense of duty that the Communist Party sought to impose. So, seeking to forcibly impose selfless values during the Cultural Revolution through the impetuous Red Guards, the cult of Mao, and labour camps (May 7th schools) only created an appearance of conforming to dictates, not real change within the bulk of the people.

Man cannot change his subconscious/conscious mind through imposition and force.

It is only possible through a sense of awareness, voluntarily acquired through a deep understanding that positive values alone can take us on the path to genuine happiness, not the instant pleasures of the day acquired through the new-found wealth of the populace over a generation of socialist construction.

It is now obvious (in hindsight), that during the Cultural Revolution in China, the bulk of the people merely suppressed their desires and wants in order to conform to the hysteria whipped up. And, once the opportunity arose, with Deng's get-rich theory, the people's suppressed desires/urges found a release in the form of acceptance. So there was little resistance to the new policies introduced by Deng. Not even the examples of Tachai and Taching (commune models in agriculture and industry), nor the limited resistance in Shanghai could stem the surge of support to Deng's reversals. The rest, of course, is history as we witness in China today with the billionaire 'princelings' dominating the Communist Party leadership and its 80 million odd rank-and-file comprising a major share of a relatively privileged middle class.

Yet, it is not that human nature is basically bad and unchangeable. No doubt man's negative values, emotions etc. are very deeply embedded through conditioning over centuries, together with the strong impulses generated from our early childhood days. Yet, we have also seen that man's thinking is not a fixed entity and the neuroplasticity of the mind allows change. In addition, we have also seen that the innate goodness in man has time-and-again sought to assert itself through history.

The lesson to be learnt from the Chinese experience is that in man the seed of goodness has been covered by layer upon layer of poisonous weeds and is therefore unable to bear fruit so easily. As long as these weeds remain, what grows is a decrepit, shrivelled, ugly, half-dead plant. Mere economic gain, coupled with imposed duties and straitjacket boring lives, would create such individuals seeking the sunshine. And if the sun rising above the horizon is unable to bring the bright rays of a new dawn, it will necessarily bring the routine light of instant pleasures, money and the old world order. No doubt, these rays have raised China from a dwarfed plant into a giant, but, in its wake, it has created more shadows than light.

If one is to seek a new dawn and acquire the sweet fruits from that latent seed of goodness, it is necessary to patiently and tirelessly clean off the layers of poisonous weeds. For this the effort has to be both internal and external. Internally it requires an awareness of what is positive and the voluntary desire to strive in that direction. Externally it would necessitate the creation of the most conducive environment—economic, political, social—to facilitate the change. No doubt both processes may take time due to the deep conditioning within us; but, given past experience, no short-cuts are likely to succeed.

So, to sum up, given this past experience, the direction of the search must be towards freedom and happiness and not confined to mere equality and justice.

In the following part of the article, I will not touch on the latter as there are already examples of their relative success. I will only take up the former, wherein freedom and happiness results in the birth of the natural man, liberated from his alienated self, living in harmony with himself, others and nature.

### 3. Question of Freedom

The path towards greater and greater freedom is achieved by the twin tasks of: (i) a more exhaustive knowledge of the laws that govern society and ourselves (inclusive of our inner being), and (ii) by bringing harmony to the conflict within our alienated selves, that is, between our inner feelings and desires embedded in our subconscious and our outward self, reflected in our conscious reactions and activities.

The first is achieved by acquiring genuine knowledge of the natural sciences as also the social sciences. The latter is achieved by transforming our alienated lives and by imbibing the values of goodness.

The first is merely a question of evolving a more scientific educational system which inculcates one's creative and thinking abilities. There have been numerous experiments in this, which can be developed further. The second aspect is far more difficult. Here I will focus only on this aspect.

#### (a) The Framework

Marx said (in Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts): "Man alienated from himself is also the thinker alienated from his BEING, i.e. from his natural and human life. His thoughts are consequently spirits, existing outside nature and man."

Marx further elaborates that the unalienated man is the man who does not "dominate" nature, who becomes one with it, who is alive and responsive towards objects, so that objects come to life for him. The alienated man is not only alienated from other men; he is alienated from the essence of humanity, from his "species-being", both in his natural and spiritual qualities.

So then how does one reduce this alienation in our lives? First, its generation in the material conditions of production and life need to be eliminated. Next, changes have also to be brought in the realm of our thoughts.

Regarding a change in the material conditions, it entails a change in man's relations to production and also to nature. In the change of our thoughts it would primarily entail a change in our value system.

First, let us look at the question of the material conditions of life.

As we have already seen (Article II), in capitalism the roots of alienation lay in the

productive process itself. To change this, we cannot, of course, go backwards to the handi-crafts form of production. Also, the mammoth state enterprises in the socialist states, with bureaucrats replacing capitalist managers, did not give a solution to the problem of alienation. Obviously some alternative to both these is needed.

A second aspect linked to production, is that capitalism has wrenched man from nature. Particularly in this neo-liberal era, with the consumerist mania reaching peak levels, there has been a systematic and brutal rape of nature—destroying everything; the flora, fauna, forests, soil, water sources, even the air. Here too, we cannot obviously go back to the old feudal system of dependence on agriculture. Yet again, the huge state farms were not only economic failures, but also did not help connect with nature. Today, in fact, what is needed is not merely living in harmony with nature, but also the repairing of fractured nature.

It is these twin tasks—that is, unalienated production and living in harmony with nature—that can help realise the material conditions to reduce alienation and take society towards the realm of freedom. Once the material conditions evolve in these two spheres, a conducive atmosphere is created to facilitate changes in our thoughts and values. Of course, this is not a one-way process, it is a dialectical relationship with each affecting the other. A change in values allows people to move easily (voluntarily) accept the reorganisations brought in society; the re-organisation of society that reduces alienation, encourages the best in us to come out.

Marx further added (EPM), on the question of man's relation to nature, that: "Activity and mind are social in their content as well as in their origin; they are social activity and social mind. The HUMAN significance of nature only exists for social man, because only in this case is nature a bond with other men, the basis for his existence for others and their existence for him. Only then is nature the BASIS for his own HUMAN experience and a vital element of human reality. The NATURAL existence of man has here become his human existence and nature itself has become human for him. Thus SOCIETY is the accomplished union of man with nature, the veritable resurrection of nature, the realised naturalism of man and the realised humanism of nature."

Regarding change in the realm of thought, the process would be more slow and painful as our prevalent ideas and emotions come with generations of conditioning. No amount of imposition can change man's thoughts towards acquiring the qualities of goodness—it HAS to be through a process of self-awareness.

So, with this framework let us now briefly touch on the possible orientation for: the re-organisation of society, the reorganisation of thought, and thereby the evolution of the natural man.

### (b) Reorganisation of Society

In order to reduce alienation in the production process the community needs to

produce as much as possible for its own consumption, together with blending agriculture with industry. Through this alienation in the production process can be minimised and the break with nature restored.

But, how would the economy then have to be structured? An ideal form could be communities organised into commune-like structures. When I say commune-like structure, I do not mean communes as such, where land is commonly owned and run. If one recollects, this got quickly reversed in China, barely five to 10 years after being set up. In hindsight one can say that in China (in most communes) man's consciousness had not evolved to fully accept common living/agriculture, without private property of their own. Man's mental growth over the centuries has deeply inculcated a sense of private property (linked to selfishness), and this consciousness cannot be done away with quickly. To accept commune living may take generations, and that too when many of our negative values have changed. With values of selfishness, greed, possessiveness, jealousies etc. still existing, people will not voluntarily accept a commune-style of living.

In the commune type I am speaking about, for a long time to come, living will be primarily family-based in one's own house and plot, while gradually more and more activities can become common depending on the level of acceptability. So, for example, activities like solar energy, re-cycling waste etc. can, at first, be both private and also common. Slowly, as people realise they can gain more leisure time, many of such private activities can go to the common pool.

And as far as production for consumption purposes go, it can operate at two levels. Each family plot could mostly grow their own vegetables, fruits and, where possible, meet poultry and dairy needs. For a large number of consumer items, given today's high technological levels, most of the toiletry, furniture, toys, shoes/chappals, educational equipment, cycles etc. could all be produced locally with know-how provided centrally.

In this article. I do not intend to go into details. I just seek to give an orientation—a direction of the path to tread. The aim should be to raise the standard of living of the bottom rungs without depriving the better-off (except the super rich) and also improving the quality of life all around. Together with a better living standard the aim should be to progressively reduce the material basis for alienation in our lives and gradually acquiring, what Marx said, the "naturalism of man and the realised humanism of nature".

In this entire process of change an important factor must be that it should be all voluntary, where those willing should initiate the process, with those in power leading by force of example (not through fiats). Coercion should be reduced to a minimum and confined only to the bad/criminal elements and those who consciously try to sabotage the process. A strict distinction should be drawn between such elements, and those who are not yet prepared for the change.

The two systems should be allowed to co-exist. If the new leads to greater freedom and happiness, others will soon follow it. One must remember that centuries of conditioning cannot be wished away in a day.

### (c) Reorganisation of Thought

For reasons earlier explained, the goal here should be to impact not only our conscious mind but also our subconscious with the values of goodness, to bring emotional stability and harmony in our instinctive desire—that will lead us on the path to genuine freedom and happiness.

To talk of changing people's thoughts may sound like crude brain-washing. In fact, this is one of the main accusations against Communists and socialist states—no freedom of the press and thought control. Though partially true, it is, in fact, the present system that has the most insidious forms of thought control, wherein the entire media is controlled by big money power and vigorously promotes the values and culture suited to it. Only, in the present system, it is subtle (giving an appearance of free speech) while in the socialist societies it is crude. So, whether we like it or not, all societies promote the values of the rulers through the controls they maintain.

What then would be the problem for a new power to promote good (as already defined) and counter evil? Of course this should not be done through crude propaganda, but creatively through logic and, more particularly, by force of example. The stories of the Panchatantra, the writings of Sufi philosophers like Rumi, Ghazzali, and others and numerous novels by classical writers and socialists (for example, Premchand) are some good examples. Propagation of good should not be done by suppressing other views, but by allowing all thoughts to contend in open debates. If one stands for truth, a scientific understanding of reality, and for justice/freedom/happiness, why is there any need to fear a counter-view? It is in fact the liars and fraudsters who fear the truth being expressed and tremble at the idea of open debates and resort to means such as 'paid news'.

And what is valid for all views/ideas/thoughts should even be more particularly applied to the issue of God and Religion. Being one of the oldest and most deep-rooted ideas, their impact will be enormous.

It is ironic, but socialists/communists seem to fear God more than the Devil (that is, evils within us). And to banish this sceptre hovering over the people they convincingly repeat ad nauseum a quote of Marx—torn out of context—that "religion is the opium of the masses". But, what Marx said in his *Towards the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* was: "Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the Sigh of the Oppressed Creature, the Heart of the Heartless World, Just as it is the Spirit of the Unspiritual Situation. It is the Opium of the People."

Further Marx added (Letter to R, 1843): "Our motto must be: reform of consciousness, not through dogmas, but by analysing the mystical self-confused consciousness, whether it has a political or religious context."

The reality is that man does not live in a spiritual vacuum. Religion/God gives man an anchor, without which he will be let adrift on a turbulent ocean. Religion has three aspects: a value system linked to heaven and hell; God and worship; and, rituals, customs etc. much of which are us much products of the era of their birth (slave, feudal societies) as of the religion.

The first are mostly common values of goodness. To throw out this aspect of religion is like discarding the baby with the bath water. Regarding the second point, to seek to destroy one's faith in God, without the people imbibing, as deeply, the positive values, only results in a spiritual vacuum. Without the alternative, it at best results in the emotional instability of the person, at worst turns him into a crass-materialist monster.

The third aspect of religion—rituals, customs etc.—is what needs to be dropped. Most of these promote superstitions, feudal customs (for example, caste system, patriarchy etc.) and retrogressive thought. These are most suited to be utilised to subvert a new just order.

Religion should be confined at the level of a person's personal faith, delinked totally from the state, and not be allowed to divide people.

The main point here is that the correction of people's value system is far more important than tinkering with their religious beliefs. As one gains more and more humanity and the values of goodness, each individual will decide himself his beliefs—to be religious (and the religion), or agnostic or atheist. And when one's focus is on the value system, quite obviously no malpractice in the name of religion will be tolerated by the people.

In India the question of religion is a little more complex as Hinduism is deeply connected with the heinous caste system and 'untouchability'.

So, in the realm of the reorganisation of thought, any new power needs to particularly focus on changing one's values, acquiring humanity and evolving the unalienated natural man. With such values alone no person would tolerate poverty and the suffering of others, or, for that matter, any form of injustice.

#### (d) The Natural Man

As man moves into the realm of freedom, where the subconscious and conscious mind are in greater harmony, we are able to slowly re-assert our natural self, rather than our alienated self. We are then able to react and behave naturally—childlike, Anuradha-like—shedding our layers and layers of pretences and hypocrisies. With

the new values prevalent, we are confident that we will be accepted for what we are, not what we are being forced to appear to be. With less of jealousies, hatred, one-upmanship, manipulativeness etc. around, we can be confident that our weaknesses will not be used by others against us. This facilities our natural behaviour, no longer afraid that our weaknesses/shortcomings may get exposed.

In such an atmosphere of goodwill every person can gain in self-confidence no matter what her/his abilities. People gain emotional stability, particularly getting over their thousands of fears. With such values and emotional sensitivity, they will be able to harmonise their instinctive desires of sex and hunger that will give pleasure without hurt to another. They thereby evolve from being a victim of circumstances, a slave to their environment, a “crippled monstrosity”, into a free being, basking in the sunshine of a new humanity.

To evolve this natural man, an added necessity would be man's sensitivity to nature. Not only does nature also have life, man is dependent on it. Dependent, not only for All his needs, but also for an invigorating life with fresh air, water and non-polluted food. Man's sensitivity to nature is a part of his/her overall sensitivity to life.

Though man has to necessarily live-off nature, and would thereby appear in perpetual conflict with it, today he has the scientific wherewithal to return even more to it. But, much of this conflict is linked to today's consumerist craze wherein man seeks to destroy any and everything in order to satiate his voracious and ever-growing appetite for more and more. The commune-like structure, earlier outlined, will help make man sensitive to both nature and his fellow beings.

We have, in fact, seen how the Green Revolution in Punjab has destroyed not only nature (soil, ground water, type of crops etc.), but also the people living there with their epidemics of cancer, suicides and drug addiction. On the other hand, when man lives in sync with nature, growing part of his own food, he not only gets healthy food, but also evolves a life-style (even with modern amenities) which helps develop not only his physical health but also his mental/spiritual life.

To sum up, this path to freedom and the evolving of the natural man entails a long process, wherein the changes in the material conditions of life will change in sync with the changes in our values and thought process—each impacting the other. Thereby society will be driven to higher and higher levels of freedom, evolving, in its wake, the natural man and greater and greater happiness.

And there, in this Garden of Eden, breathing in the fresh air of freedom, amongst thousands of Anuradha-like beautiful angels in all their purity, one can really realise Rabindranath Tagore's dream:

“Where the mind is without fear  
and the head is held high;  
Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up  
into fragments by narrow domestic walls;  
Where words come out from the depth of truth;  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms  
towards perfection  
Where the clear stream of reason  
has not lost its way  
into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;  
Where the mind is led forward by thee  
into ever widening thought and action  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,  
Let my country awake."

#### 4. Question of Happiness

Finally, whatever changes we seek in the nature of man, in the socio-economic system, in the political structures etc.—these should all have one goal: The Greater Happiness of Mankind. Even gaining greater freedom and acquiring values of goodness is to bring more happiness all around. Why, often even a social worker or Communist painstakingly tries to act good (knowing this to be night); but if this effort is without a deep-rooted change in values, every act of good will be like a heavy burden, a sort of imposed DUTY that must be alone. Such a person will be far from happy and at the slightest opportunity will seek release from such impositions and will, like others, turn to pleasures as his source of happiness.

From this three questions arise:

First, where does the sense of duty fit into the framework of happiness? Would such duty impact our happiness quotient?

The second question is: where does pleasure fit into the framework of happiness? Today, instant pleasure is equated with happiness. For the crass materialists the two are synonymous. At the other extreme many a religion and even Communists speak only of sacrifice (tapasya) and treat pleasure as some sort of sin. So what then is the relationship between the two?

The third point is: where does the question of values fit into our sense of duty, our sense of pleasure and, in the final analysis, our overall happiness?

Let us look at all three points. The third point will be intern oven into the other two.

##### (a) Duty and Happiness

In the present system as also the socialist system, the term 'duty' has an element of compulsion in it; something forced on us, either by circumstances or by an institution/leader. The two most common 'duties' are: (i) the need to earn in order to survive, and (ii) tasks/rituals done in order to gain social acceptability.

For most people employment is a duty to be suffered, while pleasure is gained in our leisure time. Marx had said (in EPM) that man's labour in the present system is alienated because the work has ceased to be part of the workers' nature and "consequently, he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless."

He will begin to enjoy his job only once this alienation at the workplace is reduced or ended.

If we turn to tasks one has to do in order to gain social acceptability, however painful they may be, there would be numerous such daily tasks. Often religious customs/rituals fall into this category. Even in socialism most tasks are duty-centric which are done on instructions, rather than a sincere belief in them.

Whether some duty is done out of sufferance or whether we desire pleasure from it, is very much linked to our value system as well. If we have positive values we will automatically have a sense of responsibility (to the job at hand and towards others), and will do good/useful tasks not as a sense of imposed duty, but with pleasure. So, for example, in a socialist system if I am a selfish type, 'serving the poor' will be done as a sense of imposed duty, to gain credibility/acceptability. On the other hand, if I have genuine empathy for the poor, it will be a source of pleasure. That is why in a socialist system a change of values is so very important, as otherwise all tasks will feel like a heavy burden, an imposition; and people will seek an escape/release whenever an opportunity comes by.

Even today, in our daily lives people with positive values will have a greater sense of responsibility to tasks. They will fulfil them with enthusiasm and on time. But, with negative values, they take responsibility as a pain (unless, of course, they personally gain from it), do a haphazard job and seek all types of pretexts to delay/shirk it. So, here again the question of duties and responsibility is intrinsically linked with our value system.

Duties that are done out of compulsion necessarily act to restrict our freedom and happiness. In a new order, where alienation is minimised in the production process, even earning can become a fulfilling and pleasurable task.

#### (b) Pleasure and Happiness

There is a dialectical relationship between pleasure and happiness. Pleasure is one of the sources of happiness, but is not synonymous with it. Pleasure, enjoyment etc. are derived from activities external to us. Happiness, on the other hand, is internal to us; it is a state of mind wherein man is at peace with himself, with a sense of contentment with his overall life. To achieve this, no doubt, pleasure plays an

important role.

Pleasure is no sin as long as it is not at another's expense. There are basically three forms (sources) of pleasure—the first is universal, the second is linked to our individual tastes, and the third is value-based.

Pleasure derived from our instinctive needs—primarily food and sex—is universal to all people. Though this is common to all, every person has his/her personal likes and dislikes regarding both food and partners. This category is a major source of pleasure.

The second form of pleasure is derived purely from one's individual tastes and is not universal. Activities like sports, music, literature/drama, arts/painting etc., or even spiritual activities like meditation are all sources of pleasure—some enjoy a particular activity/activities, others another. Involvement in such activities helps develop an all-round personality and needs to be facilitated in any new order. If freely accessible, people can choose the field they enjoy.

The third form of pleasure is value-based. So, for example, some may derive pleasure from causing pain to others dominating others, deriding others etc. Another may derive pleasure from helping, assisting and caring for others.

Often the pleasure factor in happiness is negated by religions as being sinful, and even by Communists as being 'petty-bourgeois'. No doubt, any source of pleasure that acts to harm others, or achieved at another's expense, is bad. But, those that add to happiness for ourselves and those around us should be welcomed.

So, pleasure is one factor for happiness. Others involve our values, our emotional stability and the extent to which we have been able to minimise the conflict between our inner selves and our conscious actions. Here, of course, we are assuming people have already acquired the basic necessities of life.

To sum up, in any new order the maximisation of happiness should be the goal. Then again sadness and happiness are no black and white formulae to be switched on and off like a lamp. As society progresses, one has to increase the quantum of happiness all around. This, of course, will be directly proportional to the amount of freedom we have been able to acquire. This, in turn, is based on the quantum of goodness we have been able to imbibe.

All these three are, in fact, deeply inter-linked and inter-connected. The real civilisational progress of society can be measured not by its scientific advance alone, but by the quantum of progress in these three spheres as well. And it is with progress in these spheres that people's individuality will begin to emerge. Freedom and happiness, based on a new set of values, results in this flowering of the individuality in man.

## 5. Flowering of the Individuality

In the feudal era individuality was mostly reflected in the romances of kings and queens, while the masses had a clan identity. Capitalism tore the individual from the clan, but the individuality that had the potential to evolve, was crushed by the person's alienation in production and otherwise. In socialism the alienation in the productive process continued to a large extent.

A distinction needs to be made between individualism and individuality which are often confused. Individualism is based on selfishness, the me-first mentality, ego, arrogance etc.; on the other hand, individuality is based on one's self-respect, self-confidence etc. The former crushes the individuality of others; the latter realises the creativity, initiative and effectivity of the individual. Individualism is idolised in the cult of the heroes where all others are dwarfed in comparison. The Ayn Rand novels, *Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, reflected the epitome of this ideolised portrayal of the individual—the super-man, super-hero, super-don, superstar etc. Portrayal of our film stars, cricket stars, political leaders etc. one of the same nature.

In any organisation/institution facilitating assertion of the individuality of all creates a greater pool of creative and talented people—not just one super-hero, but the potentiality of a hundred such. In any organisation the more the individuality of each individual (not just the leader) is promoted, the more effective the organisation. Often we find the opposite happen —the cult of the hero (leader) is promoted, while the weapon of 'discipline' is used to crush the individuality/initiative of the ranks.

In India the individuality is doubly crushed—first by the production process and then by the caste system. The bulk of the population, particularly Dalits, are treated as 'born inferior'. Even their human status is questioned, let alone their individuality. As for the assertion of the upper-caste, it is more caste assertion, rather than assertion due to one's abilities. So the caste system destroys individuality.

Among socialists what is often said is that only the petty-bourgeois speak of individuality, the proletariat stands for class. In practice though, it is often the 'leader' who is able to assert himself as he likes, while the ranks are confined to the herd. In reality the relation of the individual to the class/party/organisation is like that of the tree to the forest. There is no forest without sturdy trees. If the trees are decrepit, dry and stunted, there would be no luscious forest. Similarly the flowering of every member of any organisation only lends it strength, as the more creative the people comprising anybody, the more effective the organisation.

Yet, all the above questions of effectivity etc. are mere pragmatic equations, not the main issue. The real issue is whether we truly seek freedom, happiness and the growth of people's individuality as a goal in itself. This is the essential question, not how valuable a person may be to an organisation or to society. The latter factor may

merely be a positive by-product, not its essence.

There is one last point—the assertion of one's individuality is dependent not only on our value system, but also on our emotional stability. Emotional instability, lack of confidence, nervousness etc. crush a person's individuality. Particularly the psychosis of fear (dealt with earlier)—fear of not conforming, fear of the boss/leader, fear of the patriarch etc. etc.—reduces a person to a cringing worm rather than an upright and self-respecting individual in oneself.

To sum up, we find the flowering of person's individuality only when alienation reduces and freedom grows. These in turn are possible as and when we begin to adopt the values of goodness, acquire emotional stability and bring harmony in our instinctive desires and urges. Finally, all these result in greater happiness all around, for which man has been seeking since time immemorial.

Though all the above are intrinsically interlinked, where lies the key? What is central to this entire process to create the new man, the natural man. From where does one start? We have already seen that whether it is a question of freedom, or emotional stability or even the question of justice and people's emancipation, the central aspect to facilitate change is the transformation of our values; eradication, to the extent one can, of bad/evil and acquiring the values of goodness. We have also seen that even sustaining a more just economic order is impossible without proper values; the system tends to revert back. So, in whichever direction one looks, without traversing a path to change one's values one cannot sustain any new order built on justice, freedom and, above all, happiness.

So, central to all the above changes is a change in our value system. In the final article we shall delve more into this.

## PART VI—NEW VALUES, NEW MAN

Do not seek the truth by means of man; find first the truth and then you will recognise those who follow it. —Al Ghazzali

Confucius's teachings reveal that a simple, secular and unassuming attitude towards life is at the root of morality. —Principle of Li

Social justice goes right through the history of Zorastrianism. Fighting evil underlies its essence. The Gathas are about looking after the poor, separating what's good and what is not. —Prof Skjaevvo

His Favourite Virtue: Simplicity  
His Idea of Misery: Submission  
Vice he Detested Most: Servility  
—Marx, as told by his daughter, Laura

She had been diagnosed with systemic sclerosis over five years earlier. While this was eating into her vital organs and crippling her fingers, severe arthritis made climbing even the overbridges at Mumbai's local stations painful. Yet, in March 2008, when requested to take a class on the women's question and patriarchy, she willingly trudged deep into the forests of Jharkhand. She spent over ten days with leading tribal girls, teaching them, discussing their problems, eating, chatting and sleeping with them.

As reported later, the women were so enamoured by Anuradha that they pleaded with her to stay on a few more days. When she finally had to leave, they all insisted walking with her as far as they could. Due to her painful knees, she would often stumble on the stony path. While the tribal girls would look at her, pained, she was quickly up, laughing it away. Not willing to leave her, many had tears in their eyes, when she finally crossed the hills, watching her disappear into the wilderness. Little did they know that she would be no more in just fifteen days, hit by the deadly falciperum malaria during that class itself.

This was the type of love and affection Anu attracted wherever she went and whomever she met. Normally leaders with her reputation and stature invite (nay welcome) awe, flattery and fear; but not the diminutive Anuradha, who never put on airs, even after becoming a popular leader.

While in Nagpur, she attracted a similar sort of affection from the Dalits among whom she lived and worked in the sprawling Indora basti; as also from her professor colleagues and students at Nagpur University where she taught post-graduate students MA Sociology. Such also was the love she attracted amongst intellectuals, lawyers, human rights/women activists, among whom she worked.

Anuradha was unique inasmuch as she could win the affection equally of the most down-trodden as of top intellectuals like the renowned dramatists Vijay Tendulkar, Satydev Dube etc. (whose views strongly differed from hers).

What then was this Anuradha magic? It was none other than her values of simplicity, straight-forwardness, honesty etc. which emitted fragrance wherever she went. It was her inner beauty that was reflected in her eyes, in her expressions, in her behaviour, in her responses, that drew people towards her like a magnet. And when such values were combined with a sharp intellectual calibre and wide knowledge, she would, under different circumstances, have been the ideal role model.

She came close to what Marx called the "natural being", what religious people would call purity of the soul. Jalaluddin Rumi said of such people: "Those who are pure in heart achieve God-consciousness; they are truly and actually aware of God at the centre of their being."

Call it by any name, goodness within a person is still much appreciated by ordinary and simple people, notwithstanding the high levels of corruption, greed, selfishness,

arrogance etc. all around. But, in such a world, where did an Anuradha-type person get such values? She never seemed to have had to struggle to achieve it—it seemed a natural part of her. If "social being determines consciousness", how could a filthy social environment result in such pure consciousness? How does one explain the thousands of unnoticed Anuradhas in our midst? Particularly in this neo-liberal era, where the rot has got so deep? In such an environment the best of people tend to get corrupted; more so those in leadership and power. What Marx said in 'German Ideology' is generally true, but, of course, it does not explain those like Anuradha, going against the main trend.

He said:

"The ideas of the ruling class are, in every epoch, the ruling ideas: i.e. the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it..... The individuals composing the ruling class possess, among other things, consciousness, and therefore think. In so far, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in their whole range, hence among other things rule as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch."

Today, we see this crudely reflected all around us. It is even more glaring in a place like Tihar Jail. Here, truth is a rare commodity; falsehood the norm. But even here you will find a few gems, like our earlier sevadar, Bablu, and a few others, even from the staff. We have seen that the innate goodness in man is there, but he gets corrupted by the social environment. And even the few who have a predominance of good, often get sucked into the vortex of evil, as they are continuously bombarded by the prevalent value system.

Generally, in society, most people will have a predominance of negative values (that is, the ruling ideas), but, they too will have varying amounts of good; only some will have a predominance of good, which they have to struggle to maintain. To effectively build a new just order, besides changes in the socio-economic structure, one has to build on the elements of goodness within people, while eradicating the negative. Only with these new values and a new man will a new socio-economic structure sustain.

Through history we have found that the socio-economic orders have changed, but in the sphere of values man has failed, notwithstanding great effort by heroic people/movements through the ages. Even with the final change to socialism, due to the continued prevalence of the negative values, the new order was reversed. So, the key question is: how can one effectively change man so that the good in him/her effectively comes to the fore, in order to achieve genuine happiness and a

sustainable new just order?

In the socio-economic sphere we have seen (in the last article) what changes may help facilitate this. These external factors may act as the conducive conditions for change; but the deciding factor for any real qualitative change are the internal factors. A seed only takes root to give a plant and beautiful flowers if it is fertile; if it is sterile there will be no plant however much fertiliser and water we may use. Here, the internal factor is within us, that is, our consciousness. Change in our consciousness requires a separate and independent effort. It will not happen of its own merely by taking up social issues (that is, external factor). And it is on this point alone that I shall try and focus in this final article of this series—that is, how to imbibe the values of goodness, and reduce the negative values.

But, before coming to this I will briefly discuss two concepts presented in India which apparently seek the same goal—that is, the Gandhians and the Communists. The former base their philosophy on TRUTH, the latter on CLASS STRUGGLE. So, first let us see the relation values have with these two concepts. After doing that I shall turn to the question of methodology for changing our values.

#### A. The Two Concepts

TRUTH is the central philosophical aspect of Gandhians together with non-violence and Brahmacharya. Many quasi-Hindu religious scholars have also made TRUTH their central focus. Communists of all hues and also some Socialists take CLASS STRUGGLE as their central theme. Let us look at both questions:

(i) Values and Truth Like all other values, and freedom and happiness, here too there is nothing like absolute truth. This too is always relative, and the aim would be to always maximise the element of truth. For simple things, truth and falsehood are clear. So, if I point to a pencil and say it is a pen, that is a clear falsehood. Yet, if I point to the pencil and say that it is lead, wood etc., it is not a lie; but still it obfuscates the truth that it is a pencil. So, even for such simple issues the truth is relative, not absolute. But for value-based assessments it is even more complex. Take the question of FDI in retail; what is the truth? Is it good for India or bad? Some say it is good, the others bad. The truth would be neither—it is good for some (TNCs and big business), it is bad for others (small retailers and farmers). But, even this is disputed. Here, truth depends on whose interest one is serving. Again, here it is relative. Even in the sphere of the sciences, where it would come closest to being absolute (as it is not based on value-judgements), it is also relative, as science keeps advancing. With each new discovery what was thought to be absolutely correct yesterday, turns out incorrect today. So, even in the sphere of science it is relative. Yet, some base their entire philosophy around the question of Truth, giving it some abstract and absolute virtue. Some religions, of course, equate the absolute truth with God. Others have presented a theory to "seek truth from facts" as central to their philosophy. As far as virtue goes, if we make truth a central factor, we tend to de facto negate all the other aspects of goodness that I have outlined earlier. So, for

example, can I uphold truth if I stand for injustice, greed, arrogance, selfishness etc.? I cannot! Truth for such people will always get twisted to serve their self-interest. So, in value-based assessments, truth is meaningless unless accompanied by the other values of goodness. On the contrary, if we imbibe those values of goodness, then our assessments will automatically be closer to the truth. And, as far as 'facts' go, they are an objective reality, while the conclusions (truth) we draw from reality will always be subjective, dependent on our outlook and knowledge. At any given time a person has a given mental make-up by which he processes facts. He thereby arrives at what he believes to be the truth. But, the mental make-up of individuals differ from person to person; that is why we find that with the same set of facts numerous conclusions may be drawn. Which, then, of these is the truth? Truth, in such value-judgements, is therefore subjective, depending on the reasoning and interests of the person. So, we find that truth is both subjective and relative. Subjective, inasmuch as it is dependent on our values, interests and levels of existing knowledge. It is relative as our understanding at any given time is limited, and with greater study/research new truths will continuously be discovered. For these reasons, to make 'truth' central to one's philosophy, could lead one astray. No doubt, 'truth' (or honesty) is one of the important values to be cherished.

(ii) Values and Class Struggle The Socialists/Communists call the goodness in man as 'proletarian values' and the bad values as bourgeois values. The 'proletarian values', though never clearly defined, would be, I assume, roughly those I have outlined earlier as the values of goodness. Now when they refer to 'class struggle', it is normally mechanically interpreted as the mere physical (mostly economic) struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. But, when we say that the "ideas of the ruling class are..... the ruling ideas", then it quite obviously follows that in a bourgeois system, the ideas prevalent within most of us are necessarily bourgeois ideas (that is, values of badness). Obviously then, these ideas are part of any bourgeois (ruling) system. To think that one can effectively struggle against the bourgeoisie without countering their ideas within us, is wishful thinking. It will amount to nothing but a chimera for real change, as we fight one aspect of the ruling system and not the other. Have we not seen this happen in history? We demolish the bourgeoisie, but the 'bourgeois' (negative values) within us soon asserts itself, and we ourselves turn into a new bourgeoisie. Today's 'princelings' (sons of top leaders) in China have probably more wealth than Chiang Kai-shek of the past, and today's Russian mafia-magnates probably ten times that of the Tsar. It is the "Animal Farm" syndrome, with the Snowballs and Napoleons of the party becoming the new bosses/oppressors. Bourgeois values are an important factor sustaining the bourgeoisie, and, so, struggle against the bourgeois system should necessarily entail struggling against their values. The struggle against the bourgeoisie is relatively simple as they are easily identifiable. But, struggle against their values (that is, the negative values) is not so easy, as they are buried deep within us (within even those taking up this struggle), within layer upon layer of consciousness. Not only is such an 'enemy' difficult to identify; once identified, even more difficult to struggle against. So, we have seen that in countries like Russia and China they successfully fought the bourgeoisie/feudals, but were unsuccessful in countering these values. As

a result, both societies reverted. Unfortunately, the Socialists/Communists give little attention to this internal struggle, except for some formal/nominal so-called criticism/self-criticism. This normally has little impact and is much like the Christian's confession before the Padre. There is no real plan, method, policy, nor any serious effort to conduct this internal struggle within man. At best it is given lip-service; at worst it is taken for granted that those fighting for just causes must necessarily be just. But, this is not a reality. To create a new just order, it is imperative that people change not just the economic and political system, but also the prevalent values of their time. This entails internal change in the outlook of people, eradicating the negative values and strengthening the positive. And in a class society the class struggle (in Marxist terminology) is also against alien class views and ideas. Omar Khayyam once said: "We are busy breaking this idol and that, but the biggest idol to be broken is within us." (Meaning our ego, self.) Values are an integral part of every system which will also need changing together with a change in the system. While spiritual people tend to focus mainly on internal change, the Socialists/Communists concentrate primarily on external change. But, both are essential to have a sustaining impact on society.

NOW, having seen the limitations of a mechanical (and/or absolutist) interpretation of truth and class struggle, we shall finally turn to the most important question of defining the values to be changed and the process and method necessary to achieve it. I once again repeat, I do not seek to delve into the aspect of external change as I have already touched on the commune-like structures in the previous article. Here I shall only focus on a methodology entailed for internal change.

## B. Towards the New Man

A new set of values is then the key to the lock opening the door to the garden of freedom and happiness. From time immemorial man sought entry into this garden with beautiful flowers, fruit-laden trees and sparkling streams. Earlier it was the prophets from West and East who sought to open these locks to the garden of paradise; more recently it was the revolutions—the French and then the socialist revolutions. All these sought to wield the magical key; but to this day, the garden has eluded man, and he continues to live in muck and filth. Unless the key is moulded correctly, it will not fit the lock, and the door will not open. To mould this key correctly one can learn from the efforts of the past, and formulate new ideas for it. The problem is that most practitioners of change have plans/policies/activities around economic, social, environmental, political etc. issues, but nothing for changing one's values. It is normally taken for granted as some sort of by-product which will automatically change while struggling for just causes. But, as past experience has shown, this does not happen; and often these same activists, on gaining even an element of power, can become the worst tyrants. But how can we have a plan/policy to change ourselves? Unfortunately this field has mainly been the exclusive preserve of spiritual people (who too fail as they ignore the socio-economic surroundings that generate such values)? Well, let us now tread upon this thorny path to change our values to what we have already defined as good. Even at

the cost of some repetition, I will once again repeat what I believe these values to basically be:

GOOD/ honesty/straight forward- VIRTUOUS VALUES: ness, truthfulness, simpli- ( $\alpha$ ) city, modesty, selflessness, being principled/responsible/accountable, being fair/just etc. NEGATIVE/ dishonesty/ perfidy/trea- BAD/EVIL VALUES: chery, deviousness/cunning,

( $\beta$ ) mean/manipulative, arrogance/ego/pride, greed, selfishness, being opportunist/unprincipled/irresponsible, hypocrisy, jealousy/prejudice, tyranny, being unfair/unjust etc.

For the sake of convenience I will call the good values as  $\alpha$  (alpha) and the bad values as  $\beta$  (beta).

I will divide this section into three parts:

First, I will try and analyse the process of change which could be considered. Second, I will discuss the methodology to be used. And finally, I shall elaborate on the specific values that could be focused on.

### (i) The Process

In the process for change I will deal with three aspects. First is the presumption that most people will have a predominance of  $\beta$  over  $\alpha$ . The second aspect is that change is primarily internal, but its manifestation is external. And the third aspect is that the changes, to be sustaining, must not be superficial, but deep-rooted, that is, these must not reflect merely in our conscious mind, but impact the subconscious as well.

Now let us look at all three aspects:

(a)  $\alpha$ - $\beta$  Relationship: The task would be to make  $\alpha$  predominant over  $\beta$ , and then slowly keep increasing the quantum of  $\alpha$  and reducing the content of  $\beta$ . To start with, the focus would quite obviously be on those who have a significant content of  $\alpha$  and not equally on everyone. Those with a large content of  $\beta$  will be exceedingly resistant to any change; on the contrary, many will try and stall/subvert the process going on in others.

The first choice to target would, of course, be those limited numbers of the Anuradha-type, who have a natural predominance of  $\alpha$ . Then would follow the vast numbers wherein  $\beta$  may be predominant, but also have, not merely a significant quantum of  $\alpha$ , at the same time a propensity, willingness and inclination of moving in the direction of  $\alpha$ .

Those of the incorrigible  $\beta$  types will, in all probability, have to be countered and used as symbols of negative example, from whom to learn what not to be. These

three categories of people will be found in all communities, organisations, parties etc.; and the above categorisation would facilitate effectively in our efforts. (b) Change is Internal: Both  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  do not exist in a social vacuum; they come into existence only through our interaction with others. While the change is internal, one can only realise that change during our relationship with other human beings and nature.

So, for example, I seek to acquire the quality of modesty. No doubt, this requires inward change to reduce my arrogance, ego, pride, superiority complex, domineering nature, know-all attitude etc. This change can ONLY take place through serious reflection and an awareness of how harmful (to others and oneself) these negative qualities are. Varied methods of contemplation may be adopted to achieve this (more on this later). But, if I merely sit meditating, without the social interaction to test whether the arrogance is actually reduced, can I, one day, get up and declare: "Eureka, I have achieved modesty"? This is not possible. It is only through regular social interaction that I will come to know whether my arrogance is indeed reduced, and to what extent. So, for example, after a certain amount of reflection I may find arrogance no longer reflecting in my family relations (that is, a reduction in patriarchal attitudes); but, while, say, dealing with lower-caste people or organisation people, I may find it still strongly reflected. So, to reduce and try and eliminate all forms of arrogance (or any other negative value) it would require a continuous and alternating process of contemplation and sincere assessments of my daily interactions with a varied cross-section of people. Only then will I realise to what extent my contemplation has been effective and whether I am really moving in the direction of greater and greater modesty (or any other positive value).

In other words, change in our values would have to be internal, but its manifestation, assessment etc. will be through interaction with the external world. (c) Change to be Deep-rooted: Change has to be deep-rooted to be sustaining. In other words, it must impact the subconscious and not merely the conscious mind. Let us take an example to understand the process. My conscious mind tells me that I should not be greedy; so when six ladoos are put before me, I take my share of two and equitably distribute the other four between my two friends. On another occasion, extremely tasty six rasgollas are given to be shared. Unable to control myself, I consume four and send only one each to the other two friends. This shows that there has been only a limited change in my approach and greed still exists at the subconscious level, which manifests when the urge is stronger. But, this greed cannot be removed by the fear of getting caught. At the most, because of the fear of being caught I may suppress my greed and take only two. But, the fact that I shared the tasty sweets equitably out of fear, does not mean that the greed has gone; it will manifest again when the fear factor is not present. This is a crude example of what manifests on a gigantic social plane when it comes to the question of power. As long, for example, as I am a low-key social activist, my ego/arrogance may not manifest; but, if not eradicated from the subconscious, it can manifest in the worst forms of tyranny with power. Do we not witness this regularly in our lives? If not tyranny, at least, various levels of autocratic behaviour!!!

The central point here is that real change in values comes from awareness and realisation, and not through external factors like fear, dictat, gaining social acceptability etc. I must sincerely feel that changing my values to  $\alpha$  will give me (and others) a greater sense of freedom and happiness. Not only that, it should actually result in a greater happiness, which, in turn, will encourage further effort in that direction. But, if I adopt  $\alpha$  out of sufferance (or imposition), as say, a mere sense of duty, I will turn to seeking pleasure through other means when an opportunity arises. So, for example, to go back to the earlier example, by taking only two rasgollas, I may deprive myself of some immediate pleasure, but, with a greater  $\alpha$  content, I will gain more in happiness in seeing the pleasure of my two friends consuming it. Of course, with larger amount of  $\beta$  only my pleasure would be important, and I would only feel deprived of it by having to share the rasgollas equitably.

The main point to be emphasised here is that the change must be deep-rooted, impacting the subconscious. And this is ONLY POSSIBLE through self-awareness and NOT imposition.

SO, these three aspects need to be kept in mind while considering the method to be adopted.

## (ii) The Method

The good values of  $\alpha$  will not come of their own merely by social activists fighting for just causes. A conscious and specific effort will have to be made to bring changes in this sphere as well. It will have to be a planned and conscious agenda by social organisations, political parties (that stand for change), the governments (in a new system that stands for these values) and even by enlightened individuals in their spheres of social interactions (relatives, jobs, residential communities etc.) One need not wait for society to change to begin the process; one could begin the process here and now, which, in fact, will facilitate the change. Just as the new-age gurus are attracting thousands from the middle classes (due to increasing alienation/insecurities in people's lives), even individuals could similarly promote these values as the path to freedom and happiness. It can and should take on the form of a wide movement promoting and seeking to adopt a Model Code of Behaviour (MCB).

This would have to be done at two levels: (i) widescale propagation through literature, media, films, plays, songs and even through the new-age guru-style by enlightened individuals, and (ii) more importantly, by organisation (within and outside their bodies) and community leaders.

It must be realised that this is a long and continuous process, which will need to go on for generations, even after the system changes. As the qualities of  $\alpha$  are never absolute, there is always scope for improvement. The process would have to run parallel, and in conjunction with struggles for just causes.

The method to be utilised could always evolve and be improved, with greater experience. For the present, I will focus on just two factors—the question of leadership for this change, and second, the methodology to be adopted. After that I shall take up what the Model Code of Behaviour (MCB) should comprise.

(a) Leadership Factor:

To undertake any venture successfully, the leading factor is essential. Generally, the criteria for leadership is the person's abilities, talent etc. For professionals this is understandable, but for social activists or political leaders it should additionally entail a sufficient quantum of  $\alpha$ . In fact the latter should be the more important criteria for leadership (of any social political body) with one's abilities being the secondary factor.

The leader should be a model for others. He should be a leader by example. And, to decrease the possibilities of him getting sucked into the vortex of  $\beta$ , the leadership should be divorced from the purse-strings of the organisation/body/party. Only then will the leadership be true leadership, combining moral character with abilities—not depending on extraneous factors like, say, caste factor, control over funds etc.

The following could be some criteria for electing good leadership (besides abilities):  
The person

- (1) should be an example of MCB, where  $\alpha$  predominates over  $\beta$ ; a method could be evolved for quantifying this depending on the nature and role of the organisation: if they are individual propagators, they should be exemplary in their behaviour;
- (2) should inspire confidence in others, through a reputation of being principled, sticking to promises, keeping punctuality and being energetic and hardworking;
- (3) should be broad-minded, avoiding bigotry, rigidity, back-biting, gossiping and have the ability to draw a distinction between minor and major issues;
- (4) should be caring about others, particularly the weak and poor, and sensitive to other's needs; (5) should stand on the side of justice and fair-play;
- (6) should stand up for truth, however bitter it may be, and not tolerate deceit, fraud, corruption, lying etc.

These, then, could be some of the qualities required for people in leadership positions. The bigger the leader, the more of such qualities would be expected.

(b) Methodology:

This could be done at three levels: first, widespread propagation of the MCB; second,

training sessions; and finally, a more intense form could be through small group discussions.

Propagation should be creative and as widespread as possible utilising all means available, including, to the extent possible, the mass media. This could also include wide awareness campaigns. For children, cartoons, comics etc. could be evolved and even internet games be used to inculcate these values.

In the training programmes, the methods could be taught to imbibe the  $\alpha$  values and practical sessions conducted. The main aspect to be remembered here is that there should be no element of coercion and should primarily facilitate auto-succession, utilising the more recent studies in neurobiology and cognitive science. For example, recent research has shown numerous methods of brain training which improves concentration, memory etc., that meditation strengthens the connection between reason and emotion and increases the brain's white matter boosting creativity; creation of new neurons (neurogenesis) and synapses (that is, connections between neurons) enhances learning potential etc. Through all these discoveries one can evolve new methods to imbibe values and stabilise our emotions.

The small discussion groups could comprise circles of people who are comfortable with each other, and where they can have the confidence of speaking of their fears, insecurities etc. in the light of  $\alpha$ , without the concern that others may use it against them. In fact, this could be a place where we drop our masks, pretenses etc.—a sort of oasis of frankness in a desert of mistrust. The methods used in the training programmes could be used here as well.

It cannot but be emphasised that an important aspect to facilitate this whole process is that an atmosphere needs to be promoted of tolerance, where our negative values ( $\beta$ ) are allowed to show up without fear of humiliation, isolation, prejudice, one-upmanship etc. The more such a free atmosphere is created in the community/organisation/circle/party, the quicker will be the process of individual transformation.

Finally, the transformation has to entail a dialectical relationship between the individual and his/her social circle—with each impacting on the other. In the new society the commune-type structure would be probably the most suitable to facilitate this transformation. But, even in present-day society one could build community-level bodies in our residential areas which enhances the quality of life of all its residents. This could entail cooperative community efforts in the spheres of, say, sports/exercises/yoga/karate, waste disposal, agriculture, watershed management, solar power, child-care, sick-care etc. etc. The level of cooperative effort will, of course, be directly proportional to the quantum of  $\alpha$  imbibed by the community, and particularly its leading elements.

This is just a rough idea of the methodology entailed; it can and must be developed

with experience and advances in neuro-science.

Having discussed both the process and method, let us now turn to what could be a Model Code of Behaviour.

(iii) Model Code of Behaviour (MCB):

A Model Code of Behaviour must necessarily be based on  $\alpha$  and values/approaches associated with it. While seeking to bring about a change, one needs to view people as belonging to three categories, in order to be more effective in the focus while working for the transformation.

First and foremost there must be a different standard expected from people at the leadership level or those wielding some form of power, whether it be in an organisation, a party or at a community level—anywhere. In this category the MCB (besides abilities) must be a compulsory aspect. In such people  $\alpha$  must definitely predominate over  $\beta$ , and the MCB content should be around 70-80 per cent. With anyone in leadership there must be the right to recall; this is important as corruption/degeneration more easily comes to people with power. If, for example, there is a strong element of retrogression and the person is showing no sign of reform (in spite of effort), such a person should be replaced. Of course, measuring the MCB and  $\alpha$  is not something mathematical or like some thermometer which records levels; it will be based merely on rough estimates by the people, electoral colleges and committees. The percentages are mentioned just as an indicator and should not be taken literally.

The second category would be for activists (that is, those not yet in leadership, but who have the potential to grow), where the quantum of the MCB (besides abilities) should be over 50 per cent. Here, even if  $\beta$  predominates, the trend within the person must necessarily be towards an increasing quantum of  $\alpha$  and a continuous reduction in  $\beta$ . Regarding recall etc., the same should apply as for the leadership people, but with a greater amount of leniency.

The third and final category will comprise the vast mass of civil society, as also the ordinary members of organisations, parties etc. A large bulk of ordinary, hard-working citizens are simple people, who would have a large quantum of the MCB/ $\alpha$  within them. But, a lot of this would lie latent, while the desperate struggle for survival, the rat-race, the atmosphere of one-upmanship etc. will all tend to push  $\beta$  to the forefront. To bring out their latent positivity and expand on it, the values of the MCB/ $\alpha$  need to be propagated widely amongst them; and these need to be presented as a model to aspire for. The leadership/activists amongst them should create an environment to facilitate change, and should themselves be role-models for others to emulate.

So, roughly these would be the three categories of people existing in society. [The incorrigible elements, who are the scum of society, are not included—they will have

to be countered.] It is not something that has to be created, they merely have to be identified, utilising the MCB/ $\alpha$  as the yardstick. No doubt, this would primarily apply to social activists and public servants; for professionals, ability will be the main criteria. But even for the latter, their professional talents will get dissipated with large quantums of  $\beta$ . Take, for example, the greedy lawyers, judges, doctors etc. we see around us, their 'talent' is merely used for money-making even at the cost of their clients/patients. So, even with professionals,  $\alpha$  will play a significant role.

Today, the MCB/ $\alpha$  are nowhere taken into consideration; it is at best ability that is considered coupled with extraneous factors like social status (including caste), influence, money power, blood relations, yes-men, sycophants etc. etc. ANYTHING BUT MCB/ $\alpha$  !!!

HAVING seen where and how to focus one's attention, let us now turn our attention to what should comprise the main contents of the MCB. While  $\alpha$  would comprise the entire gamut of positive values (many of which have been already outlined), the MCB would comprise a minimum of these-needed to act as a model in today's prevailing social environment. It would be an achievable target for most citizens to aspire for.

So, what then should this MCB comprise of? Here I outline a preliminary framework, which could (should) be elaborated with further experience. The following would be the main points:

(1) Simplicity: This would entail modesty, with the least amount of arrogance, ego or pride. It would mean being straightforward with the minimum of complexities and pretenses; not being manipulative, cunning or devious. A simple person does not mean naive or unintelligent. On the contrary, it is they who have the potential for greatest creativity as their mind is least clogged with complexities, pettiness, rubbish etc.

(2) Honesty: Being truthful and not resorting to lies and distortions. Being principled (to whatever one stands for) and not being opportunist; not being a hypocrite or corrupt.

(3) Maturity: Being responsible, punctual and sticking to one's promises and time-schedules. Being broad-minded, not indulging in back-biting, pettiness, gossiping; with an ability to distinguish between minor and major issues.

(4) Selfless: This would be relative, but should, at least, avoid greed, and the person should have an attitude of caring, sensitivity and kindness for others, particularly the weak and poor.

(5) Just/Fair: Should be just and fair in one's dealings with others, not indulging in favouritism, injustices, oppressive behaviour etc. It should also entail not tolerating injustice being done by others.

These five cardinal principles should be followed by those who seek to be socially active and leading elements in society. Also, it should be a model for all to emulate, being widely propagated through varied forms. The ideal to work towards would be a child-like straight-forwardness, a sharp intellect, with a humane approach.

### C. Conclusion

YES freedom, freedom, freedom, proclaimed by one-and-all, yet so elusive—freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom from tyranny, freedom from social ostracism, freedom from oppression (caste, patriarchal, economic); and finally, and most importantly, freedom from our alienated selves.

And here, behind bars, the question of freedom is even physical—the inability to move beyond a few metres, at most walking up-and-down on the same dusty patch. Sitting under the canopy of trees I cannot but recollect that famous poem by Oscar Wilde over two centuries back:

If each should know the same—  
That every prison that men build  
Is built with bricks of shame,  
And bound with bars lest Christ should see  
How men their brothers maim.

With bars they blur the gracious moon,  
And blind the goodly sun:  
And do well to hide their Hell  
For in it things are done  
That son of God nor son of man  
Ever should look upon.

But though lean Hunger and green Thirst  
Like asp with adder fight,  
We have little care of prison fare,  
For what chills and kills outright  
Is that every stone one lifts by day  
Becomes one heart by night.

With midnight always in one's heart,  
And twilight in one's cell,  
We turn the crank, or tear the rope,  
Each in his separate Hell,  
And the silence is more awful far  
Than the sound of a brazen bell.

And never a human voice comes near  
To speak a gentle word:

And the eye that watches through the door  
Is pitiless and hard:  
And by all forgot, we rot and rot,  
With soul and body marred.

So well pictured by Oscar Wilde, the freedom lost in jail is not just physical but also psychological. So,

How else may man make straight his plan  
And cleanse his soul from Sin?  
How else but through a broken heart  
May Lord Christ enter in.

Two centuries later, what Oscar Wilde wrote then is still true today—structured to break a person both physically and psychologically, unless, of course, one is a VIP prisoner. And the legal-police system strikes the last nail in the psychological coffin making mummies out of human beings.

But, jail is only the worst reflection of what exists outside, wherein man is also imprisoned within his alienated self, reduced to a walking-talking zombie, spouting what is media-created or dictated by parties/organisations/institutions. Forced into a life of continuous pretence, make-believe, falsehood et al., man is moulded into a distorted image of himself, imprisoned also within walls of emotional insecurities, unfulfilled desires and fears of social ostracism. Imprisoned also within the temple of MONEY, prostrated before the God of the MARKET.

The socialist systems achieved freedom from want, but failed in the other freedoms of which man has been robbed by the capitalist system. So, such systems did not sustain, for man is not merely an animal to be satiated by satisfying just his instinctive needs of hunger and sex. Man seeks freedom in all spheres to become truly the “natural man” living in harmony with himself, others and nature. To achieve such freedom and real people’s emancipation, the key lies in man acquiring the values of goodness ( $\alpha$ ), and utilising this inner strength to change the outside world. One cannot sweep away the filth with a broken broom; one cannot cleanse the pots and pans using gutter water; one cannot build a beautiful house with a foundation made hollow by white ants and vermin. The enemy within is often more dangerous than those without—as it is a silent killer.

Let us shed our masks, let us change our robotic existence, let us destroy (or at least reduce) the negative within us, let us escape from the web of insecurities and fears that entangle our hurt emotions, let us seek harmony in our instinctive urges and desires..... and in this process let us begin to take a whiff of the fresh, cool breeze of freedom and true emancipation of our fractured being.

And for all this let us mould the key with the values of  $\alpha$  that will finally unlock the door to the garden of paradise.

As Marx said in his ‘Introduction to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law’, “To

be radical is to grasp something at its roots. But for man the root is man himself."

Let all social activists and progressive citizens pledge this April 12, 2013 to seriously begin to rid ourselves of all negative values as a tribute to Anuradha on her fifth death anniversary. Let us commemorate the occasion by recalling the model values she lived by till her last dying breath.

[End]