

## INDIAN THOUGHT AND THE ETHOS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Professor Northrop, in his introduction to Professor Heisenberg's volume in the World Perspectives series entitled *Physics and Philosophy*, makes the following significant observation:

It is frequently assumed by native leaders of non-Western societies and also often by their Western advisors, that the problem of introducing modern scientific instruments and ways into Asia, the Middle East and Africa is merely that of giving native people their political independence and then providing them with the funds and the practical instruments. This facile assumption overlooks several things. First, the instruments of modern science derive from its theory and require a comprehension of that theory for their correct manufacture or effective use. Second, this theory in turn rests on philosophical as well as physical assumptions... one cannot bring in the instruments of modern physics without sooner or later introducing its philosophical mentality, and this mentality, as it captures the scientifically trained youth, upsets the old familial and tribal moral loyalties. If unnecessary emotional conflict and social demoralization are not to result, it is important that the youth... must see their experience

as the coming together of two different philosophical mentalities, that of their traditional culture and that of the new physics.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this paper is to examine in some detail the specific implications of the coming together of the two different philosophical mentalities. The discussion shall be limited to India, and in particular to the philosophic foundations which have to be reckoned with in any system of economic development, planned or otherwise. In other words, we shall attempt to assess the specific philosophical values of India with reference to the use of material means in the human pursuit of life; examine the conflicts, if any, between objectives of economic development and Indian thought; and inquire into the possible development of new answers in the ancient philosophical system when confronted with the contemporary challenges of changes in the form of the economic development.

#### I. ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF INDIAN THOUGHT IN THE HOUSEHOLD

A gathering of informed readers need not be reminded that the reference to Indian thought does not imply the comprehensive characterization of the codes and conduct of the 389 million people who inhabit the subcontinent. We refer to Indian thought and mean thereby the codified system of thinking which has been traced through the Vedic Period, Epic Period, the Sutra Period and the Scholastic Period. We note that the outstanding characteristic of Indian thought is its concentration upon the spiritual. Our inquiry here is to find out if man and his material needs are accorded any place at all in this concentration upon the spiritual.

In the *Mahābhārata* we find the elaboration of the orthodox social code with the four aims of life (*purusarthas*) namely, righteousness (*dharmā*), wealth (*artha*), worldly enjoyment (*kāma*) and spiritual freedom (*mokṣa*). It is known that these four great aims of human life were referred to by Manu.

The *Laws of Manu* are considered to be contemporary to

<sup>1</sup> Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy*, New York, Harper, 1958: Introduction by F.S.C. Northrop, pages 2-3.

Aristotle and Alexander the Great by some scholars.<sup>2</sup> Whether or not the entry of Alexander in the year 325 into northwestern India precipitated an inquiry into the basic structure of the contemporary social order is not known, but seems to be worthy of investigation. We know that the author is familiar with Vedic literature and offers solutions based on the *Sāṃkhya* and the *Vedānta*. The fact of greatest interest to us at this point is that in the *Code of Manu*,

The functional basis, as distinct from that based on birth, has been stressed. Each one has to perform the function for which his nature best suits him. Manu believes in the four stages of development and the four supreme ends of life.<sup>3</sup>

The change of basis from birth to function is most crucial to our discussion. We shall see in our examination of the requirements of economic development that the well-known division of labor concept associated with Adam Smith in 1776 requires that each one perform the function for which he is best suited. We find that in this functional basis of society, the most important unit is the householder. To quote Manu:

77. As all living creatures subsist by receiving support from air, even to (the members of) all orders subsist by receiving support from the householder.

78. Because men of the three (other) orders are daily supported by the householder with (gifts of) sacred knowledge and food, therefore (the order of) householders is the most excellent order.

*The Laws of Manu*, iii. 77-78.

89. And in accordance with the precepts of the Veda and of traditional texts, the housekeeper (householder) is declared to be superior to all of them (the other three orders); for he supports the other three.

90. As all rivers, both great and small, find a resting-place in the ocean, even so men of all orders find protection with householders.

*The Laws of Manu*, vi. 89-90 (Repeated<sup>4</sup>)

<sup>2</sup> Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, New York, Pantheon, 1951, Appendix B. Historical Summary, page 2.

<sup>3</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957, page 172.

<sup>4</sup> *The Laws of Manu*, translated by G. Buhler: Sacred Books of the East, xxv, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1886.

I remember a saying in my mother tongue, Malayalam, which is one of the fourteen major languages recognized by the Indian Republic, to the effect that the learned old man and the pious old man keep watch at the door of the rich old man.

The old in learning, the old in piety and the old in age  
all three keep watch at the door of the old in wealth.

Thus we find that riches themselves are not abhorred by Indian thought. It is the attachment to wealth that is counted as undesirable. Even the *Atharva Veda* contains a prayer for the increase of the money which the merchant takes to market in order to make more money.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Indra is considered the god of the merchants and the *Rigveda* permits wealth to gain Heaven.<sup>6</sup>

Having established the acceptability of riches as such, we shall now inquire into the different aspects of riches and their acquisition which pertain to considerations of economic development. We need to know, among other things:

1. The preparation of the householder to perform the duty of providing sustenance to the members of all orders, the student (*brahmacary*), the forest dweller (*vānaprastha*), the wandering ascetic (*sannyasa*), and the householder (*garhasthya*).

2. Accepted means by which riches could be acquired and multiplied.

In *Taittiriya Upanisad*, which is famous for its doctrine of the "Five Sheaths" of the Self—food, breath, mind, intellect, and bliss—there are some practical precepts for a student.

Practice virtue (*dharmā*)...

One should not be negligent of welfare.

One should not be negligent of prosperity...

• One should give with plenty.<sup>7</sup>

While the injunction is clearly given that "one should give with plenty," there is not the corresponding specificity with

<sup>5</sup> *Atharva Veda*, III, 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Rigveda*, VIII, 13, 5.

<sup>7</sup> R.E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, London, Oxford University Press, 2nd ed. rev., 1931.

reference to the means of obtaining enough so that the student can perform his sacred duty of providing sustenance to the members of all orders.

I recall a verse describing the marks of a true student which lists little food, worn out clothes. Poverty is enjoined upon the student. After a strenuous period of apprenticeship which is oriented to poverty, he is admonished to "give with plenty." In the words of Zimmer:

Then, abruptly, when the stage of pupilship is finished, and without any transitional period, the youth, now a man, is transferred—one might say, hurled—into married life, the stage of householdership (*grhastha*). Taking over the paternal craft, business, or profession, he receives a wife, (chosen for him by his parents), begets sons, supports the family, and does his best to identify himself with all the tasks and ideal roles of the traditional *pater familias*, member of the guild, etc. The young father identifies himself with the delights and worries of married life (*kama*), as well as with the classic interests and problems of property and wealth (*artha*), so that he may have the means at his disposal, not only to support his growing family according to the standards proper to his birth or human species (*jāti*), but also to meet the more or less costly demands of the orthodox sacramental cycle of rituals. For the house-priest, the Brahman-guru, whom he now must employ and heed—even as Indra must employ and heed the divine Brhaspati—blesses and assists the family on every possible occasion, as a combination spiritual advisor and confessor, family doctor, consulting practical psychologist, exorcist, conjuror, and wizard. And these professional men charge their fees: that is part of the cause of the real effectiveness of their cryptic, holy, psycho-therapeutic dealings. The gurus, linking themselves with full surrender (like everyone else in the community) to the privileges and duties of their own immemorial role, serve as conduits of supernatural wisdom and holy power (*brahman*), like nerves of consciousness throughout the social body.<sup>8</sup>

It looks as though riches and all their associated problems are introduced into the life cycle in a left-handed manner. The student whose primary preoccupation was the will and desire to "hear" (*sru*) and to learn by heart, to hear to obey and to conform (*susrusa*) is now suddenly faced with requirements of an entirely different order.

<sup>8</sup> Henrich Zimmer, *op. cit.*, page 156.

How may the student make a living? The answer is the caste system.

The caste system seems to me to make good sense from an economic point of view. In order that the ordinary business of life may go on in an agriculture economy, it is essential that the land be cultivated. When the land is cultivated and the yield is about to be harvested, the thought naturally turns to protection from thieves and robbers. Once the harvest is secure, it must be traded to facilitate distribution of the output. When the land is cultivated, the borders are defended and the produce is traded, then time and effort could be directed toward improvement of mind. To me it seems that this is approximately the economic logic behind the caste system, which comprises tillers of soil, defenders, traders, and intelligentsia. Since the desire to move from one occupation to another would disrupt the economic organization of such a system, the tillers had to be tied to the soil, the traders to their vocation, and the defenders to their posts. This was achieved by imparting a religious halo to the vocations. It is only natural that a society which recognizes no death would seek the basis for social stratification in the only certain event, namely birth. Thus the act of being born became also the act of being brought into a vocational group; and not all thy tears, nor all thy piety could remove a jot from the caste lines.

Thus the mainstay of the business of life centered around land. In a latter-day verse discussing the occupations, I recall the first place of excellence being given to education, the second place to agriculture, trade, in that order. Service in the courts was a low occupation, and woe to porters carrying loads!

Note the bracketing of agriculture and trade. Admittedly, this is a latter-day innovation. In ancient times, people gave precedence to animal husbandry in the vocational rank order, followed by tillage. Trade and especially money lending was everywhere suspect and scorned.<sup>9</sup> Later, however, trade was considered far superior.

<sup>9</sup> *The Mahābhārata*, XIII, 60, 23; *Laws of Manu*, IX, 327. Both despise trade and moneylending.

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Trade came to be rated higher, if for no other reason than that animal husbandry necessitated operations such as castration.

This is a radical reversal of the rank order of Vedic times. In the Vedas the merchant (*pani*) appears only as a wanderer, as a rule from strange tribes, haggling by day, stealing by night, collecting his riches in secret hordes, hated by God because he acts the miser against gods (in sacrifice) and men, especially holy singers and priests. Therefore, the "godless treasures" of the merchant stand in contrast to the wealth of the nobles who fill the hands of singers and priests. *Ari*, the rich, the mighty, has, therefore, an evil and a good meaning as Pischel and Geldner have observed. He is the most sought after, hated, and envied of men; one cannot be alone with him peacefully; he is fat and haughty, especially when he fails to pay singers and priests other than his own. He should give, and give again; when he does, he is the "darling of gods" and men. But the merchant simply does not do this.<sup>10</sup>

We should note here that the merchant coming into his own in society in the post-Vedic period has an interesting parallel in English economic history. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* fitted in with the middle class temper of late 18th century Europe. By this time the success of the operations of English merchants abroad and at home induced a reconsideration of status accorded to them. To quote Laski:

To have their (the businessmen's) longings elevated to the dignity of natural law was to provide them with a driving force that had never been so powerful... with Adam Smith, the practical maxims of business enterprise achieved the status of a theology.<sup>11</sup>

But in India, there was no Adam Smith, and no elevation of business maxims to the status of a theology. Tillage, land and trade were the means recognized for earning a livelihood. Since this duty of earning a livelihood was that of the householder on whom depended the other orders, the economic function of the householder was a vital interest. Nevertheless, we find that he was hardly trained for this duty when he was hurled from the hibernation of the academic tower to the duties of the household.

<sup>10</sup> Max Weber, *The Religion of India*, Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press, 1958, pages 84-5.

<sup>11</sup> Harold J. Laski, *Rise of Liberalism*.

## II. ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF INDIAN THOUGHT IN THE STATE

Economic action in India of the 1950's or 1960's encompasses a unit much wider than the individual household. For the first time, the subcontinent as a whole has become an administrative unity whose destiny is in the hands of indigenous people. New wants are created, and new methods to satisfy them have to be sought. In this context of continued challenge to change exerted by the very fact of modernity, we have to inquire whether or not the traditional philosophic systems of India are compatible with the present day demands for economic action.

We note that the importance of wealth was well recognized by Indian thought. In the hymns from *Rigveda*, for instance, Agni (the god of fire) is magnified as, "The greatest bestower of treasures." Prayer is made to Usas (dawn):

Bring us to wealth abundant, sent in every shape, to  
plentiful refreshing food  
To all subduing splendor, Usas, Mighty One, to strength,  
thou rich in spoil and wealth.<sup>12</sup>

Again, the Viśvedevas (all gods—the Pantheon as a whole) are invoked "that Pūsan may promote the increase of our wealth."<sup>13</sup>

Riches are a source of evil, not in themselves, but in the undue attachment to them. The *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Mahābhārata* lay emphasis on the traps of wealth. In *Santiparva*, 177, it is said, "Wealth cannot be got by even the surrender of one's person. What can be more painful than this? When acquired, one is never gratified with its measure, but one continues to seek it. Like the sweet water of the Ganges, wealth only increases one's hankering."

<sup>12</sup> R.T.H. Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, Benares, India, E.J. Lazarus and Co., 1926.

<sup>13</sup> R.T.H. Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, loc. cit.



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We may say that Indian thought is not averse to riches, but only to their improper acquisition and use. Mahatma Gandhi made this distinction in his interpretation of the philosophical basis of economic action.

Generally speaking, it is the experience of the world that possession of gold is inconsistent with the possession of virtue; but though such is the constant experience of the world, it is by no means an inexorable law. We have the celebrated instance of Janaka, who although he was rolling in riches and had a limitless power, being a great prince, was still one of the purest men of his age. And even in our own age I can cite from my own personal experience and tell you that I have the good fortune of knowing several moneyed men who do not find it impossible to lead a straight and pure life.

I would allow a man of intellect to earn more; I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father goes to the common family fund. They would have their earnings only as trustees.<sup>14</sup>

In the interpretation that Mahatma Gandhi has given, we note that the State is introduced explicitly. His interpretation would be considered not to conflict in any major degree with the citations mentioned above from the ancient philosophic treatises. We note here the philosophic sanction for economic action in a manner conducive to the betterment of the society in which the multiplication of wealth is made. The reconciliation between differential remuneration and the spiritual emphasis of Indian thought is accomplished by means of the emphasis upon what will be considered the pursuit of *Dharma*.

The question arises as to how pursuit of *Dharma* on a large scale can be obtained in such a way that the increase of wealth is weaned of its imminent temptations. Gandhiji's (the suffix "ji" is one of the commonest additions to a name in India, conveying an idea of respect, applied indiscriminately to all kinds of people and to men, women, boys and children. Gandhi himself preferred the addition of "ji" to "Mahatma") approach to economic action

<sup>14</sup> *The Gandhi Sutras*, arranged by D.S. Sarma, New York, Devin-Adair, 1949, pages 80-1.

on a national scale was circumscribed by acute consciousness of the ancient family concept, in which context the increased wealth was directly the birthright of all the members of the society, irrespective of their earning capacity.

A semi-starved nation can have neither religion or art nor organization... Whatever can be useful to starving millions is beautiful to my mind. Let us give today first the vital things of life, and all the graces and ornaments of life will follow... I want art and literature that can speak to millions.<sup>15</sup>

This statement puts the emphasis on removal of starvation as a basic need to be reckoned with *before* religion or art or organization can flourish. In other words, economic factors have been recognized as constituting the basic substratum of meaningful life. Gandhiji was not stating that food was more important than religion. His point is that the splendour of religion is likely to be beyond the axis of those without food. In contemporary Indian thought, there is hardly any explicit mention of the need for fulfillment of bodily needs as a condition for purposeful meditation. Radhakrishnan, in his contemporary interpretation of Indian philosophy, observed that "The attainment of steady spiritual life is the aim of religious endeavor and the means to it are an ethical life and the art of meditation."<sup>16</sup> However, he does not tell what the prerequisites are for the ethical life in terms of the day to day necessities that flesh is heir to. The emphasis is strictly on the spiritual needs of the person, with hardly any reference to the means of keeping the body alive in order to pursue this ethical life.

While not discussing the essential prerequisites to an ethical life, Radhakrishnan does defend the reality of the empirical world. The world of every day events and things is not ultimate reality, to be sure, but neither is it unreality.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Nehru on Gandhi*, New York, The John Day Co., 1948, page 24.

<sup>16</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1929, Chapter III.

<sup>17</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1931, vol. II, Chapter 8.

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It seems to me that Gandhiji's statement quoted above is a clear recognition of the reality of the empirical world that finds its basis in the Absolute. In this sense, Gandhiji's statement is strictly consistent with the ideas of Indian thought.

Going back to the explicit reference to the State introduced in the quotation on page 74, we are able to see in the State of Gandhiji's vision the benevolent machinery which would transform the ancient responsibility of the extended family in the context of the present day. In order to examine closely the precepts and problems that Indian thought provides to the State for the pursuit of the function as a superfamily, we should logically inquire into the predecessors of the modern state that existed in the early periods when Indian philosophy was in the making.

We find this predecessor of the modern State in the institution of royalty. It should be recalled in this connection that kings in their individual capacity were not much more than glorified actors fulfilling their roles. Once the king was deposed or overthrown, the newcomer who was more powerful was recognized as the one in whom the responsibility of royalty was placed.

Now, how were these kings to provide for the material and physical needs of all the people that were dependent upon them?

The principle of kingship in itself, as an institution, was never questioned... The institution itself was in accordance with *dharma*, its function being to serve as the instrument of *dharma*. The king was to supervise mankind and see that all fulfilled their ordered duties and life tasks according to the orthodox prescriptions for caste, age and sex.<sup>18</sup>

The administration of the kingly function should be considered in the context of the Indian political scene; "the ever recurrent tragedy, the constant perils of the individual, the total lack of security, and the absence of all those rights which we cherish today as pertaining to our basic human freedom." Zimmer goes on to observe: "The world depicted was that of the lonely monarch-dictator supported by a vast and costly military machine and a monstrous system of secret espionage and police—which included informants, prostitutes, sycophants, thugs, sham ascetics,

<sup>18</sup> Zimmer, *op. cit.* page 106.

and professional poisoners; a terrible organization of despotism similar to that described by the Greek historians in their accounts of the Basileus of ancient Persia, 'the King of Kings'.<sup>19</sup>

This picture of unrelieved misery and insecurity is probably determining the scant regard given to Kautilya's *Artha-Sastra*, although it is dated 321-296 B.C. In other words, the realism sought after by Kautilya in response to the unpleasant facts of life that faced him was ignored by later students of philosophy who, apparently, permitted themselves to be overwhelmed by the Epic Period of Indian philosophy, dated approximately from 500 to 600 B.C. to A.D. 200. However, the definite role that Kautilya's thinking has had in Indian thought cannot be overlooked without doing damage to the genius of Indian thought as a whole. Thus, I do agree with Professor Moore when he says, "Materialism undoubtedly had its day in India, and according to sporadic records and constant and determined efforts on the part of other systems to denounce it, the doctrine apparently enjoyed widespread acceptance at one time." But, I must beg to differ with him when he proceeds to conclude: "nevertheless, materialism could not hold its own, its adherents have been few in number, and its positive influence has been negligible. Indian thought has not been oblivious to materialism; rather, it has known it, has overcome it, and has accepted idealism as the only tenable view, whatever specific form that idealism might take."<sup>20</sup>

My difference is based on two main grounds. One is that the basic means of communication of Indian thought, namely *sruti* and *smriti*, distinctly speak of the hundreds of principles which were evolved by the attempt of Kautilya and philosophers like him to relate themselves to the hard facts of day to day existence. Even among the stories of *Mahābhārata*, there were several which place distinctive emphasis on what may be called the philosophy of success. I am not for one moment suggesting that these stories do constitute all of Indian thought; but I do maintain that their rightful place in the corpus of Indian thought is undeniable. If Indian philosophy dealt with only material that

<sup>19</sup> H. Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, New York, Pantheon, 1951, page 94.

<sup>20</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957, page xxiii.

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was fit for "lotus-eaters," the great volume of astute principles of day to day living would have been securely kept away from the reach of common people. If this were true, as a non-Hindu I would have had extremely little access to many of the treasures contained in these stories which try to address themselves to the practical problems of day to day life; and I would not have been the only one denied access to this particular aspect of Indian thought.

The second ground on which I find it necessary to differ from Professor Moore is the observation of one of the greatest men of modern India on the subject:

Among the books that have been lost is the entire literature on materialism which followed the period of the early Upanishads. The only references to this, now found, are in criticisms of it and in elaborate attempts to disprove the materialist theories. There can be no doubt, however, that the materialist philosophy was professed in India for centuries and had, at the time, a powerful influence on the people. In the famous *Arthashastra*, Kautilya's book on political and economic organization written in the fourth century B.C., it is mentioned as one of the major philosophies of India.

We have then to rely on the critics and persons interested in disparaging this philosophy, and they try to pour ridicule on it and show how absurd it all is. That is an unfortunate way for us to find out what it was. Yet their very eagerness to discredit it showed how important it was in their eyes. Possibly much of the literature on materialism in India was destroyed by the priests and other believers in the orthodox religion during subsequent periods.<sup>21</sup>

It is clear from Nehru's observation that the philosophy of materialism as we know it today could not be construed as something which the Indian mind tried and discarded. It would be still harder to establish that Indian thought "has known materialism, has overcome it, and has accepted idealism as the only tenable view."

Thus, the corpus of materialistic aspects of philosophy, both in its existence and in the efforts to subdue it, affirm that: (a) concern with the day to day reality is an integral part of

<sup>21</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, New York, The John Day Company, 1946, page 87.

Indian thought; (b) this body of thought has neither been tried nor given its due place of importance.

### III. COMPATIBILITY OF RECENT AND CONTEMPORARY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITH INDIAN THOUGHT

We have established in Section I that tillage, land and trade, were the means recognized for earning a livelihood. This duty of earning a livelihood was assigned to the householder, who was hardly trained for it when he was hurled from the hibernation of the academic tower to the duties of the household. In Section II we have found that Indian thought has concerned itself seriously with the micro-aspect of economic action (that which encompasses larger units like society, group). The micro-aspect that deals with the smaller units of economic action like the household has been found to be poorly covered with respect to the prescription of training for the attainment of more remote and inclusive goals. However, we find that the detailed discussions for action on a micro-level, particularly found in Kautilya and others, are much more alive to the relationship between economic ends and means. We shall now proceed to investigate how this aspect of Indian thought may be studied for its insights with reference to economic development.

We must recognize that there is hardly any reference to manufacturing as a means of livelihood in the Indian philosophical discussions. As we pointed out earlier, tillage, land and trade were the recognized means. We shall discuss some aspects of one of the three means, trade.

It is almost self-evident that India does require foreign exchange to carry through any program of economic development worthy of the name. By making this statement, we are excluding the possibility of a Gandhian order based on the self-sufficiency of the individual households which grow their own grain, milk the cow, and weave the cloth necessary for their members. In order to multiply the effect of application of animate power, inanimate means have to be used. The common name given to the aggregate of such inanimate means is machinery. Now, we do not have any significant precepts regarding the use of machinery in Indian thought. But, we do have some precepts about

trade. Since India does have to earn enough foreign exchange to carry through any program of economic development, she can beg, borrow or steal; or she can do it honorably by the use of the means prescribed by the slogan "trade, not aid." Our investigation of compatibility between Indian thought and the needs of economic development must be virtually restricted to the analysis of precepts on trade.

Consider the fable of the cat and the mouse. In this tale told in the *Mabābhārata*, 12. 138, there lived a wild cat and a mouse; and they inhabited the same tree in the jungle, the mouse dwelling in a hole at its root, and the wild tomcat up in the branches, where it lived on birds' eggs and inexperienced fledglings. One day the cat fell into a trap set by a hunter. When the mouse came out of its hole to rejoice at the plight of the cat, it found an owl ready to pounce upon it overhead and a mongoose approaching it on the ground. Suddenly the mouse decided upon a surprising stratagem. It asked the cat if it could take shelter in the cat's bosom, in return for which the mouse would save the cat from the net. As soon as the cat agreed, the mouse jumped in without cutting the net enough to permit the cat to escape. Towards morning when the approaching hunter's feet were close, the mouse kept its promise and cut the net, disappearing into the hole.

One important moral of this story for trade as a means of financing Indian economic development is the association between the cat and the mouse in the short run. The Indian philosophical thinking discussed in this fable bears the mark of the times in which it was developed—lonely monarch-dictator supported by a vast and costly military machine and a monstrous system of secret espionage and police. The issues of day to day living and the matter of survival clearly made the philosophers recognize the need to be realistic. This fable shows the need to make friends on the basis of expediency, whether for survival or for improvement of earnings. If this description is distasteful to those who are used to thinking of Indian thought as lofty abstractions, it would be advisable to reread the *Gita* where there are instances in which idealism does lose its halo. However otherworldly the superstructure of Indian thought may appear, its influence in the day to day life of people did not take the form

of an otherworldly orientation. The eminent sociologist, Max Weber, remarks, "...the acquisitiveness of Indians of all strata leaves little to be desired and nowhere is to be found so little antichrematism and such high evaluation of wealth."<sup>22</sup>

Thus we should count the means of increasing trade by entering into arrangements even with enemies as a clear and consistent interpretation of Indian thought.

We mentioned before that Indian philosophy evolved during a period when the king, though supreme in the realm, was nevertheless the most in danger from neighboring kings, his own ambitious ministers and generals, even the members of his own family. In such an atmosphere, we see in *Arthasāstra* 1. 49 and *Mahābhārata* 12. 67. 16-17 and 12. 89. 21 that *matsya-nyāya* prevails, "the law of the fish." Our own century permits us little respite from the ancient atmosphere of threat, dread and sudden moves. With reference to economic development, it means that there are no securities, but only opportunities. Combined with the preceding precept of alignment with enemies in the short run to achieve certain ends, this law of the fish would instruct that means of economic development should be found when and where it is possible. One may look upon this as the expression of the highest faith in humanity—the brotherhood of man—or as the astute application of expediency. Indian thought will amply substantiate either interpretation.

There is, at the present time, a far greater test of Indian thought that is taking place in India. The test is to find out whether or not Indian thought is compatible with the requirements of change, and, if so, what aspect of it is most apropos. We mentioned earlier that Gandhiji interpreted Indian philosophy in such a way that the responsibility of discharging the functions as a super-family was vested in the machinery of the state. Since Gandhiji's death, the best known Gandhian leader in India is sixty-six year old Vinoba Bhave, one of the Mahatma's closest associates. His name has received world-wide attention since 1951 when he launched *Bhoodan Yagna* (the land-gift movement) in an effort to solve India's land problem. We notice the basic similarity in the approach of Bhave to that

<sup>22</sup> Max Weber, *The Religion of India*, page 4.



of Gandhiji. Bhave would go to a village and tell the rich landlords that he was the fifth son. If a father had four sons and a fifth one were born, would he not divide the land among the five equally? This method of approach, essentially an appeal to conscience, is decidedly consistent with Indian thought. If successful, it will help the improvement of production from the land and in that sense help Indian economic development, making economic development and Indian thought compatible.

In this context, the recent status of Bhave's work, particularly its relationship to the challenge of Communism, is crucial.

Admist reports that Gandhian "constructive workers" had become disillusioned with the Congress Party and had worked against Congress candidates in the elections, there were interesting indications by the middle of 1957 of a possible rapprochement between the Communists and *Bhoodan*... In May the nation's leading Gandhians including Jayaprakash Narayan, convened their annual *Sarvodaya Sammelan* (gathering of constructive workers) in Kerala. At a public meeting Bhave remarked that Nambudiripras (chief minister of Kerala, Communist) formerly had misunderstood the *Bhoodan* program. This, he said, was before the two had met, and he now excused the chief minister. Bhave then appealed to his *Bhoodan* workers to make the people understand that communism and socialism, like the Jumna and Ganges rivers, could join together in the ocean of *Sarvodaya* (literally, "welfare of all").<sup>23</sup>

The last sentence is the most important from our point of view. Here, the well known philosopher is found to discover an area of agreement with an alien philosophy. One could be skeptical and apply the ruthless logic of the fable of cat and mouse and see in this statement an effort to make an interim arrangement. However, it seems more plausible to see the philosophic rather than political expediency in the statement,

If this work of non-violence and *Sarvodaya* has no effect, then you will have to take to Communism. Such is the nearness between the two ideologies... Communism believes in violence, but there can be no doubt that it is generated by compassion. This is a strange paradox.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Gene D. Overstreet & Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, Berkeley, California, University of California Press, 1959, page 526.

<sup>24</sup> *A.I.C.C. Economic Review*, XI May 25, 1957, page 31.

It would seem that the question of compatibility between Indian thought and economic development is one of emphasis rather than of concept. I hope that enough evidence has been presented heretofore to establish the fact that while Indian philosophy has a lofty superstructure of otherworldly orientation, it certainly does have a core of rugged realism, almost to the point of opposition to the superstructure. Addressing ourselves to the needs of the 1950's and 1960's, we find it true to the spirit of Indian thought to be realistic in making decisions concerning people and policies without necessary reference to a superstructure of philosophy. I would consider that the greatness of Indian thought is in having recognized the higher aspirations in man, alongside of the low nature of this environment in which he has to pursue his ultimate goal, even like a pure lotus flower sprouting out of dirty waters. It is perhaps inevitable that the lotus plant does have to draw sustenance from the dirt; but even in doing so, it has constantly to struggle to give birth to spotless purity in its numerous petals.