CHAPTER – IV

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONDITION AS REFLECTED IN SAUNDARĀNANDA

Society refers to the patterns of thought and behaviour of people. It includes values, beliefs, rules of conduct, and patterns of social, political and economic organisation. These are passed on from one generation to the next by formal as well as informal processes. Society consists of the ways in which we think and act as members of a society. Thus, all the achievements of group life are collectively called culture. In popular parlance, the material aspects of culture, such as scientific and technological achievements are seen as distinct from culture which is left with the non-material, higher achievements of group life (art, music, literature, philosophy, religion and science). Culture is the product of such an organization and expresses itself through language and art, philosophy and religion. It also expresses itself through social habits, customs, economic organisations and political institutions.

Culture has two types: (i) material, and (ii) non-material.

The first includes technologies, instruments, material goods, consumer goods, household design and architecture, modes of production, trade, commerce, welfare and other social activities. The latter includes

norms, values, beliefs, myths, legends, literature, ritual, art forms and other intellectual-literary activities. The material and non-material aspects of any culture are usually interdependent on each other. Sometimes, however, material culture may change quickly but the non-material may take longer time to change. According to Indologists, Indian culture stands not only for a traditional social code but also for a spiritual foundation of life.31

Indian culture is an invaluable possession of our society. Indian culture is the oldest of all the cultures of the world. Inspite of facing many ups and downs Indian culture is shinning with all it‘s glory and splendor. Culture is the soul of nation. On the basis of culture, we can experience the prosperity of its past and present. Culture is collection of values of human life, which establishes it specifically and ideally separate from other groups.

Concept of Culture

The English word Culture is derived from the Latin term ‘cult or cultus’ meaning tilling, or cultivating or refining and worship. In sum it means cultivating and refining a thing to such an extent that its end product evokes our admiration and respect. This is practically the same as Sanskriti of the Sanskrit language.32

Culture is a way of life. The food you eat, the clothes you wear, the language you speak in and the God you worship all are aspects of culture.

In very simple terms, we can say that culture is the embodiment of the way in which we think and do things. It is also the things that we have inherited as members of society. All the achievements of human beings as members of social groups can be called culture. Art, music, literature, architecture, sculpture, philosophy, religion and science can be seen as aspects of culture. However, culture also includes the customs, traditions, festivals, ways of living and one‘s outlook on various issues of life. Culture thus refers to a human-made environment which includes all the material and nonmaterial products of group life that are transmitted from one generation to the next.

There is a general agreement among social scientists that culture consists of explicit and implicit patterns of behaviour acquired by human beings. These may be transmitted through symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment as artefacts. The essential core of culture thus lies in those finer ideas which are transmitted within a group-both historically derived as well as selected with their attached value. More recently, culture denotes historically transmitted patterns of meanings embodied in symbols, by means of which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and express their attitudes toward life. Culture is the expression of our nature in our modes of living and thinking. It may be seen in our literature, in religious practices, in recreation and enjoyment. Culture has

two distinctive components, namely, material and non-material. Material culture consists of objects that are related to the material aspect of our life such as our dress, food, and household goods.

Non-material culture refers to ideas, ideals, thoughts and belief. Culture varies from place to place and country to country. Its development is based on the historical process operating in a local, regional or national context. For example, we differ in our ways of greeting others, our clothing, food habits, social and religious customs and practices from the West. In other words, the people of any country are characterised by their distinctive cultural traditions.33

Culture and Heritage

Cultural development is a historical process. Our ancestors learnt many things from their predecessors. With the passage of time they also added to it from their own experience and gave up those which they did not consider useful. We in turn have learnt many things from our ancestors. As time goes we continue to add new thoughts, new ideas to those already existent and sometimes we give up some which we don‘t consider useful any more. This is how culture is transmitted and carried forward from generation to next generation. The culture we inherit from our predecessors is called our cultural heritage.

This heritage exists at various levels.

The life of the Buddha is well worth a brief sketch, not only to reach the original nucleus buried beneath a mass of later legend but also because of the social picture of his times. The founder was born with the name Gotama, later improved by the devout to Siddhartha, in the small, undifferentiated Kshatriya tribe of the Sakyans (Sakka). The Sakyans spoke an Aryan language and claimed to be Aryans. The name in the precise Pali form Sakka is reported for a conquered tribe in the Elamite version of the inscriptions of the Achaemenid emperor Darius I, late in the sixth century.

There may be no direct connection between the two, but the Aryan origin of the Sakyans becomes plausible. There were no Brahmins or caste-classes within the tribe, nor have high Vedic observances ever been reported of the Sakyans. In spite of being Kshatriya as who wielded arms at need, the Sakyans also worked at agriculture.

All Sakyans including the Buddha's father put their hands to the plough. In addition, they had a few trade colonies (nigama) outside their own territory. The Sakyan chief was elected by rotation, which led to the later fable of the Buddha being born a prince and living in magnificent palaces amid the most refined pleasures. Actually, the tide rajanya denoted any Kshatriya eligible for election to chieftainship.

The Sakyans generally managed all their own affairs, but had not power of life and death. Such power was reserved by their overlord, the

Kosalan monarch (at that time Pasenadi: Sanskrit Prasenajit), whose suzerainty was acknowledged by the Sakyans. In this they differed from the more powerful and completely independent Aryan tribes such as the Mallas and Licchavis, fighting oligarchies similar to the Greek republics of the time, over whom no external king had any authority and who also elected their office-holders in rotation.

The date of the Buddha's birth would have been a priceless datum and reference point for our chronology. He died at the age of 80.

One Indian tradition puts the decrease in 543 B.C., but there is an unexplained jump of sixty years in the record, corresponding to one complete sixty-year cycle by which Indians and some other Asiatic people count their years. The year 483 seems to be reasonably consistent with the chronology of later events and is supported by a record of one dot per year after the Buddha's death, placed on an Indian palm-leaf manuscript which was taken to Canton in a known Chinese year.

The tiny Sakyan region, primitive and poorly developed, lay on both sides of what is now the Indo-Nepalese frontier along Basti and Gorakhpur districts. The Koliyan neighbours of the Sakyans had also listened to the Buddha and claimed a share of his ashes after his cremation. Nevertheless, many of them were at the time in a more primitive stage of tribal existence, with the Kol (Zizyphus jujuba) tree as a tribal totem; some followed personal rites of the bull totem.

The Koliyans as a whole were therefore often counted among the aboriginals with the generic label Nagas. The Sakyans, fighting with them over the waters of the Rohini River, had naturally no compunction in poisoning that water, against all rules of warfare among Aryans.

The Buddha himself was born in a grove of sala (Shorea robusta) trees sacred to the mother goddess Lumibini, just after his mother had Bathed in the adjoining sacred investiture pushkara (artificial lotus pond) of the Sakyans. The sala was the Sakyan totem tree, so that the mother Maya (who died within a week of Gotama's birth) kept all the observances then in force, in the manner of most Indian women of whatever class and historical period. The goddess is still worshipped at the same spot under much the same name (Rummindei) by people who have forgotten the Buddha altogether. 35

Young Gotama received the normal Sakyan Kshatriya training in the use of weapons, management of the horse and chariot, and tribal custom. He was married to a Sakyan lady Kaccana and begot a son Rahula. But the influence of the new philosophies made felt itself in the urge to solve the problems of life, the cause and removal of sorrow from humanity.

At the age of 29, just after Rahula's birth, Gotama left his house and tribe, cut off his hair, assumed the garb of an ascetic, and began his quest of salvation for mankind. Six years or so went in seeking guidance, in the

beginning from various teachers and then by direct experiment, without satisfaction. The life of a reasonable almsman was soon abandoned for extreme physical penance, at times in complete isolation from all humanity in the deepest jungle.

The final discovery was made near Gaya, on the banks of the Neranjara River, seated under a pipal (Ficus religiosa) tree that probably had been a humble cult spot and became a great centre of pilgrimage afterwards, with cuttings planted in distant places like Ceylon and perhaps China. The first sermon was preached at Sarnath (Isipatana) near Banaras to former disciples who had left him in disillusionment when he gave up rigid austerities. The remaining forty-five years of his life were spent wandering on foot, except during the obligatory monsoon retreat, to preach his new discovery. Occasionally, he would retire to absolute solitude to think out the answer to some important social problem.

Later in his life, a young disciple Ananda accompanied him to look after his welfare as far as the simple daily routine allowed. Tradition ascribes to this Ananda the repetition from memory of many of the discourses that the Buddha preached, none of which were written down during the Teacher's lifetime. More of the sermons were delivered at the Kosalan capital city Savatthi than in any other place. The Buddha's travels could not have taken him much beyond Kosambi and probably not as far as Mathura on the Yamuna River, though he did visit Kuru-land more

than once. In the opposite direction, he passed regularly through Rajgir and Gaya and visited the newly cleared region of Dakkhinagiri near Mirzapur, just south of the Ganges. Nothing is reliably known of his appearance.36

There were no contemporary portraits, and, in fact, the Buddha is represented for centuries after his passing away only by a tree, his footprints, or the Wheel of the Law in sculptures such as at Bharhut. The peripatetic life with its simple and spare diet kept him healthy through a long life, with little recorded illness. Though he spoke jestingly of his aged body, 'held together somehow like an old worn-out cart', he seems to have swum across the Ganges at Patna in his seventy-ninth year, while less hardy disciples looked for boats and rafts to ferry them over. Death came to him at Kusinara of the Mallas, on the way from Rajgir to Savatthi. The life was not without its adventures and risks. At Dakkhinagiri ('the southern mountain') and near Mathura, there were cruel yaksha cults where strangers were caught, asked riddles, and sacrificed if the answer was not satisfactory.

The Buddha managed to convert some of these yakshas (presumably their human representatives) to bloodless sacrifices. King Bimbisara offered the young and then unknown Buddha command of the Magadhan army, after making certain that the young almsman of

distinguished appearance and impressive physique was a trained Kshatriya.

The King and the Buddha remained good friends after the refusal. A Brahmin Magandiya offered his beautiful daughter in marriage to the Buddha, regardless of caste and vow of celibacy. The refusal made a lifelong enemy of the rejected beauty, who later married a prince and tried for revenge. There were false accusations by rival teachers and manifestations of contempt from those who felt that a healthy man should take to farming or some other productive occupation. The ferocious brigand Amgulimala, outlawed for killing every wayfarer he caught, was converted after trying in vain to intimidate the Buddha, and joined the Order to end his days in peace as a monk.

The richest and most generous merchant of the time, Sudatta (styled Anathapindika, “he who feeds the helpless") acquired the grove of Prince Jeta outside Savatthi by covering its soil with silver pieces, just to give the Buddha and his followers a place of rest during the monsoon. There were many other men and women of the trader and well-to-do householder (gahapati) class who listened with special attention to the duties the Buddha worked out for the ordinary citizen who was content to remain within the power of karma and rebirth.

A most charming story tells of his preaching to a couple happily married for many years, who asked for nothing more than to be reborn as

husband and wife again, in whatever condition. They were told how to achieve this by performing the simpler duties of a righteous family life. The Brahmins Sariputta and Moggallana, the leading disciples during the Buddha's own lifetime, were actually better known than the Teacher when they left the following of Samjaya to join the Order; the Buddhist samgha owes its growth, early philosophy, and organisation to them. But there were other disciples from all walks of life. The first in the traditional line of samgha patriarchs was Upali, a lowly barber (but almost certainly a Sakyan, too) before initiation. The Buddha's Sakyan Cousin Devadatta wanted a more austere discipline for the monks, with less social contact; he is accused of having tried to murder his pre-eminent leader, who refused so unsocial a rule. A scavenger, a dog-eater, members of the lowest castes, was highly respected monks, too, initiated by the Buddha himself. There was also a separate Order of Buddhist nun, with their own organisation. The two greatest kings of the day, no longer tribal chiefs but absolute monarchs, offered respectful patronage. The blacksmith Cunda served the aged Buddha a special dish of mushrooms which later brought on a relapse of an earlier attack of dysentery and led to the Teacher's final illness; but he, too, received as much attention in a special discourse on morality as the richest merchant or most noble princeling.

One story from the archaic Buddhist canonical work, the Suttanipata, is worth detailed report for the information it conveys, both

about the spread of Buddhism and about contemporary India. The Kosalan Brahmin Bavari had left the capital (Savatthi) to go down the southern trade route (dakshinapatha, the modern Deccan). He settled with a few young disciples at the junction of the Mula and Godavari rivers, in the territory of the Assakas ('Horse People', the tribe that later developed into the Satavahanas). There he lived by food-gathering, taking wild grain and nuts from plants and tubers or roots from the earth. Eventually a good-sized village {grama) came into being in the neighbourhood. With whatever he could gather from the surplus of this village, Bavari arranged to perform one of the major yajna sacrifices in Vedic style.

The ceremony was upset by a Brahmin who turned up after the gifts had been distributed and cursed Bavari for not having anything more to give. Then Bavari sent sixteen of his Brahmin acolytes north to question the Buddha, whose fame had reached far down the trade route and who seemed to be the only person who might enable the curse to be foiled. These pupils went first to Paithan, the terminus of the Dakshinapatha trade route (which lay to the south-east of the hermitage); then presumably with some trade caravan past Aurangabad, to Mahesvar on the Narmada; Ujjain, Gonaddha (unidentified but in Gond country), Bhilsa, Kosambi, Saketa (Fyzabad), Savatthi. There they joined the eastern section of the northern trade route (uttardpatha) to go to Setavya, Kapilavastu (Sakyan headquarters), Kusinara and Pava (both of the

Mallas), Bhoganagar, Vesali (modern Basarh; then chief town of the Licchavis), Rajgir, There they found the Buddha at the Stone Chaitya outside the city. Some of the questions asked were: What covers this world, what keeps it from the light? What can take man out of the cross-currents of life? Who is the fully contented man in the world? What constrains sages, kshatriyas, Brahmins and other people to offer sacrifices to the gods? What is the source of the many sorrows of the world? Is the real sage he who has philosophic knowledge, or the master of (Vedic) ritual? What is the nature of that salvation which is gained by whoever frees himself from desires and doubt? Such queries are typical of the early Upanishads. These questions speak for the spirit of the times.

The southern trade route from Paithan to Savatthi is outlined in detail by our source. Kosala was more important at the time than Magadha and direct transport from Kosambi to Banaras and further east not too popular, whether by land or river. It is clear that there was no agriculture on the Godavari till the middle of the sixth century, after which village settlement spread rapidly, presumably because iron and knowledge of iron-working as well as the heavy northern plough had then just reached the region. The emergence of the Deccan from prehistory is thus rather accurately dated with reference to the life of the Buddha. This, incidentally, tallies with excavations at Mahesvar on the Narmada and Nevasa near the junction of the Godavari to the Pravara-Mula complex; it

also explains the 'intrusion' stratum in southern excavations. The territory from Nevasa to Pravarasangam remained holy for southern Brahmins throughout recorded history.

It was here that the Maharashtrian saint Jnansevara took refuge at the end of the thirteenth century A.D. from the persecution of his fellow Brahmins at Alandi, to write his metrical translation of and comment on the Bhagavad-Gita, This work gave the Marathi language its form and provided inspiration for a long line of successors of all castes. But the impetus for the new language and for the agricultural settlement, without which the Gita and its translation would have been unnecessary for the region, both came from the north, effectively in the sixth century B.C. Buddhist scriptures work out the duties of a householder and peasant regardless of caste, wealth, profession- and with no attention whatever to ritual.37

They argue against Brahmin pretensions and specialised ritual with consummate skill but in the simplest words. Caste might exist as a social distinction; it had no permanence, no inner justification. Nor did ritual, which was irrelevant and unnecessary for the good life. The canonical writings, almost all supposedly from the Buddha's discourses and dialogues, were in everyday language and plain style without mysticism or lengthy speculation. This was a new type of religious literature addressed to the whole of contemporary society, not reserved for a few

learned initiates and adepts. Most important of all, the Buddha or some anonymous early disciple ventured to propound new duties for the absolute monarch: the king who merely collected taxes from a land troubled by brigands and anti-social elements was not doing his duty. Banditry and strife could never be suppressed by force and draconic punishment. The root of social evil was poverty and unemployment. This was not to be bribed away by charity and donations, which would only reward and further stimulate evil action.

The correct way was to supply seed and food to those who lived by agriculture and cattle-breeding. Those who lived by trade should be furnished with the necessary capital. Servants of the state should be paid properly and regularly so that they would not then find ways to squeeze the janapadas. New wealth would thus be generated, the janapadas liberated fromrobbers and cheats. A citizen could bring up his children in comfort and happiness, free from want and fear, in such a productive and contented environment.

The best way of spending surplus accumulation, whether in the treasury or from voluntary private donations would be in public works such as digging wells and water ponds and planting groves along the trade routes. This is a startlingly modern view of political economy. To have propounded it at a time of Vedic yajna to a society that had just begun to

conquer the primeval jungle was an intellectual achievement of the highest order.

The new philosophy gave man control over him. What it could not give was limitless scientific and technical control over nature with the benefits to be shared by all mankind according to individual and social need. When the Buddha passed away by an obscure village, attended only by one disciple, his own Sakyan tribe had been massacred, both his great royal patrons dead in miserable circumstances; his brilliant pupils Sariputta and Moggallana had already attained Nirvana. The doctrine continued to grow nevertheless because it was eminently fitted to the needs of a rapidly evolving society.

Buddhism stood between the two extremes: unrestrained individualistic self-indulgence and equally individualistic but preposterous ascetic punishment of the body. Hence it’s steady rise, and its name "The Middle Way". The core of Buddhism is the Noble (arya) Eightfold Path. The first of the eight steps is proper vision: this world is filled with sorrow generated by uncontrolled desire, greed, cupidity and self-seeking on the part of mankind. The quenching of this desire is the path to peace for all; the eightfold path is the way that leads to this end of much desire for the first step of get the proper vision. The second step is proper aims: not to increase ones wealth and power at the expense of others, not to be lost in the enjoyment of the senses and in luxury; to love

others in full measure and to increase the happiness of others- this is proper design. Third step, proper speech: lies, calumny, vituperation, useless chatter, and such misuse of the tongue spoil the organisation of society. Quarrels arise that may lead to violence and killing.

Therefore, correct speech must be truthful, conducive to mutual friendship, endearing, and measured. Fourth step, proper action: taking life, theft, adultery and such other actions of the body would lead to great disasters in society. Therefore it is necessary to abstain from killing, stealing, and fornication; and to do such positive deeds as will lead to the benefit of other people. Fifth step, proper livelihood: no man should make his living by means that harm society, e.g. by the sale of liquor, dealing in animals for butchery, etc. Pure and honest methods alone should be followed. Sixth step, correct mental exercise: not to let evil thoughts enter the mind, to remove evil thoughts already in the mind, to generate good thoughts actively in the mind, and to carry to fulfilment the good thoughts that are already within the mind.

This sort of active mental self-discipline is the sixth of the eight steps. Seventh step, correct awareness: to be ever conscious that the body is made of unclean substances, to examine constantly the sensations of pleasure and pain in the body, to examine one's own mind, to meditate upon the evils that come from bonds of the flesh and attachments of the mind; and to meditate upon ways for the removal of these evils. Eighth

step, proper meditation: this is a carefully worked out mental training in concentration. Briefly, it is to Buddhism what 'gymnastics' was to the Greek body. Clearly, this was the most social of religions; the applications of its various steps are carefully developed and expounded in a long series of discourses ascribed to the Buddha.38

There were regulations specially meant for the monk, such as celibacy, which were not binding upon the lay follower. The Buddhist monastic Order was organised and conducted its meetings precisely on the lines of the tribal sabha assembly. The total number of monks in the Buddhist samgha (Order) could not have exceeded 500 during the Teacher's lifetime, nor is there any credible record of their having all gathered together at any one time till after his death. The rules of the Order which form a special vinaya (discipline) section of the Buddhist Canon are all ascribed to die Buddha himself in order to lend them his authority; but they are obviously of later origin for the most part, though formulated not long after his death. During his lifetime, and even long afterwards, any group of six or more almsmen could, if so minded, frame their own special rules and follow their own separate discipline without interference by the rest of the Order, provided, of course, they respected the main doctrine.

The monk was permitted no property beyond a begging-bowl, a water-pot, at most three pieces of plain, unembroidered, patternless cloth

(preferably pieced together from rags) for wear; oil-jug, razor, needle and thread, and a staff. The more delicate were allowed plain sandals. Though he might be his food in a village or town, the one daily meal of left-over scraps (mixed together to minimise any pleasure of taste) had to be eaten before noon. Nor could the almsman stay in a householder's dwelling even for a single night (later altered to permit three nights or less). His residence had to be outside the settlement, in a grove, cave (originally, natural cave), under a tree, or by a corpse-enclosure into which dead bodies were thrown to be eaten by birds and animals, or sometimes cremated.39

These were just the places where the most gruesome primitive rites were practised, including cannibalism for the attainment of magic powers. The monk was enjoined not to let the terrifying sights move him, but to overcome all such perils by his own firm determination. For the three or four months of the rains the residence had to be in some one place. Otherwise, he must travel on foot (never by chariot, elephant, horse, cart, or packanimal) to preach to the people. The early monks, like the Buddha himself, were expert food-gatherers, as is evident from their recorded arguments about begging soiled food from other human beings; long trips through the wilderness did not trouble them. Generally they would accompany caravans, but even then pass the night outside the camp.

The Buddhist monk was forbidden labour for profit and for agriculture, having to live on alms or by gathering food in the forest without the taking of life; only thus would he be free to concentrate upon his social dudes, the obligation to lead all to the proper Way. His own salvation was freedom from the cycle of rebirth, nirvana, a mysterious ideal never fully explained. The Buddha would refuse to answer questions as to the existence or non-existence of a soul. However, the doctrine of rebirth and transmigration (no matter what part of personality was reborn) seemed natural to contemporary society.

The Vedas and Upanishads did not have this. Though it was only one step from the primitive conception of return of the departed individual to an animal totem, the step was of the utmost importance. Primitive reversion to one specific totem was obligator, independent of the individual's will. Buddhist transmigration depended upon karma, the man's action throughout his life. Karma as merit would correspond not only to a store of acquired money or harvested grain, but would also come to fruition at the proper time as a seed bore fruit or a loan matured. Every living creature could perform some karma which would raise it after death to rebirth in a suitable body; a better body if the karma were good, a mean and vile one, say of an insect or animal, if the karma were evil.

Even the gods were subject to karma. Indra himself might fall from his particular heaven after the course of his previous karma was fully run;

an ordinary man could be reborn in the world of the gods, even as an Indra, to enjoy a life of heavenly pleasure for aeons - but not for ever. The Buddha and the truly enlightened monks were released from the otherwise endless chain of births, death, and rebirth.

The eightfold path and the Middle Way, a pure life of no possessions and no worldly attachment, dispassionate and compassionate, devoted to helping mankind discover the right trail through the maze of conflicting personal desires, would achieve ultimate liberation for the best of the bhikshu almsmen. It is doubtless more important to change history than to write it, just as it would be better to do something about the weather rather than merely talk about it. In a free parliamentary democracy every citizen is supposed to feel that he personally is making history when he elects representatives to do the talking and to tax him for the privilege. Some have now begun to suspect that this may not suffice; that all history may terminate abruptly with the atomic age unless a bit more is done soon. The endless variety is striking, often incongruous. Costume, speech, the physical appearance of the people, customs, standards of living, food, and climate, geographical features all offer the greatest possible differences. Richer Indians may be dressed in full European style, or in costumes that show Muslim influence, or in flowing and costly robes of many different colourful Indian types.

At the lower end of the social scale are other Indians in rags, almost naked but for a small loincloth. There is no national language or alphabet; a dozen languages and scripts appear on the ten-rupee currency note. There is no Indian race. People with white skins and blue eyes are as unmistakably Indian as others with black skins and dark eyes.In between we find every other intermediate type, though the hair is generally black. There is no typical Indian diet, but more rice, vegetables, and spices are eaten than in Europe. The north Indian finds southern food unpalatable, and conversely. Some people will not touch meat, fish, or eggs; many would and do starve to death rather than eat beef, while others observe no such restrictions.

These dietary conventions are not matters of taste but of religion. In climate also the country offers the full range. Perpetual snows in the Himalayas, north European weather in Kasmir, hot deserts in Rajasthan, basalt ridges and granite mountains onthe peninsula, tropical heat at the southern tip, dense forests in laterite soil along the western scarp. A 2,000-mile-long coastline, the great Gangetic river system in a wide and fertile alluvial basin, other great rivers of lesser complexity, a few considerable lakes, the swamps of Cutch and Orissa, complete the sub-continental picture.

Cultural differences between Indians even in the same province, district, or city are as wide as the physical differences between the

variousparts of the country. Modern India produced an outstanding figure of world literature in Tagore. Within easy reach of Tagore's final residence may be found Santals and other illiterate primitive peoples still unaware of Tagore's existence. Some of them are hardly out of the food-gathering stage. An imposing modern city building such as a bank, government office, factory, or scientific institute may have been designed by some European architect or by his Indian pupil. The wretched workmen who actually built it generally use the crudest tools. Their payment might be made in a lump sum to a foreman who happens to be the chief of their small guild and the head of their clan at the same time.

Certainly these workmen can rarely grasp the nature of the work done by the people for whom the structures were erected. Finance, bureaucratic administration, complicated machine production in a factory, and die very idea of science are beyond the mental reach of human beings who have lived in misery on the margin of over cultivated lands or in the forest.

Most of them have been driven by famine conditions in the jungle to become the cheapest form of drudge labour in the city. Yet in spite of this apparent diversity, there is a double unity. At die top there are certain common features due to the ruling class. The class is the Indian bourgeoisie, divided by language, regional history, and so on, but nevertheless grouped by similarity of interests into two sections. Finance

and mechanised factory production are in the hands of the real capitalist bourgeoisie. Distribution of the product is dominated primarily by the petty-bourgeois class of shopkeepers, formidable by reason of their large number. Food production is overwhelmingly on small plots.

The necessity of paying cash for taxes and factory goods forces the peasant into a reluctant and rather backward wing of the petty-bourgeoisie. The normal agrarian surplus is also in the hands of middlemen and moneylenders who do not generally rise into the big bourgeoisie. The division between the richest peasants and moneylenders is not sharp. There are cash crops like tea, coffee, cotton, tobacco, jute, cashew, peanuts, sugarcane, coconuts and others tied to the international market or to factory production. These are sometimes cultivated by modern capitalist owners by mechanised techniques on large plots of land. High finance, often foreign, determines their prices and skims off the main profit.

On the other hand, a considerable volume of consumer goods, especially utensils and textiles, is still produced by handicraft methods and has survived competition with factory production. The political scene is dominated entirely by these two sections of the bourgeoisie, with a class of professional (lawyers, etc.) and clerical workers as the connecting link with the legislatures and the machinery of administration.

We must note that, for historical reasons, the government is also the greatest single entrepreneur in India. Its assets as a large capitalist equal those of all private Indian capitalists together, though concentrated in particular types of investments. Railways, air services, posts and telegraphs, radio and telephone, some banks, life insurance, and defence industries are entirely in the hands of the state, as to some extent are the production of electricity and coal. Oil wells are state owned.

The major oil refineries are still in the hands of foreign companies, though state refineries will soon be in full production. Steel was mostly in private ownership, but the state has begun its own large-scale iron and steel production. On the other hand, the state does not produce food. When scarcities (often artificially created by shopkeepers or middlemen) threaten to drive cheaplabour out of the cities the state distributes imported grain by rationing in the major industrial centres. This satisfies both the large and the petty bourgeoisie without interfering with the profits of either.

The obvious cure and stabiliser for the uncertain food situation would be to collect agricultural taxes in kind, with storage and distribution of food effectively in the hands of the government. Though suggested often enough—and indeed the practice in ancient India nothing has been clone in this direction.

The imported grain is neither unloaded by efficient suction pumps nor stored in modern grain elevators, nor even mechanically cleaned. The production of consumer goods is in private hands. State interference is necessary even here for two reasons. First, without it the economy would be shattered by unrestricted greed and uncontrolled production, particularly as many raw materials and almost all machinery have to be imported against very scarce foreign exchange.

Secondly, the bourgeoisie came to power with full knowledge of the economics of scarcity, of restrained production and the black market, learned during the shortages caused by the two great world wars; in fact, these wars and shortages were the cause of capital accumulation and ultimately of the transfer of power from British to Indian hands. The state, for example, is now being forced to become a large-scale monopolist producer of antibiotics and drugs, a field where private enterprise showed its greed and contempt for human welfare in the deadliest fashion.

The government, by exercising its regulating functions and by planning future development, seems to stand above all classes. The administration and top bureaucracy inherited from British rule always behaved and regarded itself as above anything Indian. Of course, the government in the final analysis is manned exclusively by members of one class.

Thus what and how the government controls depends also upon who controls the government. Recent border incidents with China enabled the central state authority to assume extraordinary dictatorial powers which could bring socialism or any other goal rapidly within sight. If, then, the country finds itself as far away as ever from socialism, there may be some ground for the sarcasm that the road is not being travelled in the right direction.

Notes and Refferences:-

31) “Vajrasuci of Asvaghosa” by Ramesh Bharadwaj, Page no. 50—52.

32) “Kalidasa: A Critical Study” Page no. 289—298.

33) Vajrasuci of Asvaghosa” by Ramesh Bharadwaj, Page no. 44—49.

34) “Saundarananda Mahakavya” by Acharya Mishra, Chap-1; verses from 18—40, and 45—62.

35) “The Saundarananda of Asvaghosa” by Johnston, Page no.145.

36) “Shisupalvadham Mahakavya” 2nd Edition, Page no. 39—66.

37) ‘History of classical Skt.literature’ Page no. 22—26, & 63—71.

38) ‘Literary Criticism in Ancient India’ Page no. 42—60.

39) “Kalidasa: A Critical Study” Page no. 308—313.