

If a nation/society ill favoured by Nature can turn the sterility of its little endowments into fecundity, effectively defend itself from the cosmic rule of the stars and Neptune's encroachments, and through this produce wealth, thereby capture and hold territories far and near, why cannot we? This seems to be the spirit that spurs the above statement. A nation blessed with natural resources should alter the relation that the people of the nation maintained with nature; such people should have realised the use and exchange values that can be 'milked' from the land and 'sacred cows'. The lesson learned from the bearers of colonising forces like Netherlands and Britain etc., who were thought to be victors and replicable models, was to suck whatever possible from the earth and siphon it into the exchange circuit.

It has never entered into the thoughts of the peasant or those who are much wealthier and better informed than he, to endeavour to make two blades of grass grow where only one does now, or to make that one blade twice as valuable as it now is." (Rama Varma: 1874: 4)

Agronomy and production were becoming an end in itself, and getting naturalised as the most desirable human action. Increased productivity and 'gain' were to be the ideas that directed the meaning of human existence; the notion of productivity in judging one's worth in this world was getting centrality.

Such ideas of political economy got wide circulation and material application. It was perpetually reinstated that our hands should also become industrious as 'their' hands are already so; we should also tame the land, the stars and everything effected by the non-human world. Both repentance and expectation charged the spirit of the prevalent mood. The vanquished longed to internalise the victor; of course, both the victor and vanquished are constructs, but the effective range of such constructions are far-reaching when the vanquished desire to internalise the essence of the Other/victor. Particularly when they desire to become the victors by using 'hands'.

Both the 'native' rulers as well as the 'British Paramountcy' desired that industrious hands may multiply like the *lantana* shrub and intensify exercise of their power on Nature. The economic interest on colonies continued amidst contestations and resistances from different agents. In such a situation the projected idea of 'what the ideal citizen should engage in' was consistent with the colonial interests. An exemplary statement:

It may be long before we could see Travancore converted into an industrial bee-hive of manufacturers like Bengal and Bombay; but we need no despair. ... We must, therefore, in India and particularly in Travancore, primarily look to the land and to the production of raw materials." (Rama Varma, 1874:5)

The colonial interest, as is well known, fell primarily on the raw materials of the colonies and their suppliers. 'Progress', in the above quote, is equated with 'production of raw materials'; this primarily helped the colonial interest than any others. The anticipated future is the one in which the human being is convinced of the infinite potentials of his hand and puts Nature under his control; in which his initiative alters Nature the way 'he thinks', with all his whims and fancies, particularly, to amass wealth. Man and land were separated just like men and cattle, the slogan being "let us try to *milk our land*". (Rama Varma, p.5); the anticipated and projected legitimised and hegemonised such attitudes. Man was to suppress Nature by mastering it and repressing the 'natural' in him and reveal strong preference to desire the abundance of artefacts-- which are separated from the worlds of nature and natural.

One of the beginnings of developmental modernity was such that 'Progress' meant intensive and extensive gathering/cultivation of raw-materials, such production necessitated mastery over Nature and labour. Why master nature? It is for the glory and happiness of the colonial Paramountcy and for the continuation of the status of the Princely State. 'Progress' becomes merely ever-increasing production of raw-materials. Within such

scheme of thinking, no more does the luxuries of nature lure Man's nature; it is production of commodities and raw materials that inspires him to be industrious by mastering Nature.

When the quantity of raw material production is the measure of progress, happiness, contentment etc, and the non-human world or nature become the objects of human assessment and classification because ordering and pruning of the nature and the natural by human hands becomes inevitable. As a result nature gets divided into 'useful' and 'waste', and 'good' and 'bad'. To master nature, Man had to make this division, and hostility towards the latter was 'naturalised'. This engendered the perception of Man and Nature as conflicting forces. We will elaborate such a situation later. To become a Man was to master Nature, but to attain that he had to first change himself.

Man bent upon mastering his own Nature

Present life worlds of the people were accused of making a horrible medley. They lacked industriousness, but what did they have? Rama Varma, probably along with several others, represented the situation as follows: In short, the whole presents a most pleasing picture of light but diversified labour, health, content, and comfort, unruffled by anxieties, unembittered by rivalries." (Rama Varma, 1874: 5) The texture of society seemed temptingly picturesque. This statement was quoted from the Administrative Report of Travancore, but he made a strong comment on it and gave a new interpretation of the situation.

Now divested of the poetical varnish with which perhaps this is slightly surcharged, it still depicts very faithfully the rural Arcadia of Travancore. But the very *contentment and conservatism* have proved the greatest obstacle to industrial progress. (Rama Varma, 1874:.5, *emphasis added*)

Connotative terms like 'contentment' and 'conservatism' are clubbed together and through such textual strategy (intentional or unintentional), the gifts like contentment, absence of rivalries, anxieties etc., that were always cherished, are inverted or the negative consequences of it on wealth production and labour given visibility in the interpretation. Now human happiness and national glory become a sure sequel to the material values that one generates by altering oneself. What was cherished becomes hindering. It was an age in which contentment and luxuriance appeared as qualities that need to be dispensed with; rather, people were expected to encounter them with the annihilative spirit. For national glory one had to refashion one's very soul and spirit, let alone behaviour patterns and inter-personal relations. Some life styles and life worlds became untouchable, being obstacles to progress.

Contentment seemed to pervade the present, so only very few had the desire to depart from the warmth of such a continued tradition, which valued them, as it was at the heart of custom/tradition.¹⁰ But yet, as we have observed, there were several people to whom this appeared as a constraint. These features of the period appeared as an imposing limit that bred a sense of various lacks and inferiority. What is punching here is the desire for a radical change; changes that say farewell to the surviving habits and gifts bequeathed by the past to the present. Change was a key term of developmental discourse. A future redeemed of tradition was a recurrent image. When? When Nature is separated from human beings in order to mastered and when the natural in human beings is exorcised or repressed by themselves.

What was at the core of the Man-Nature separation is the concept of 'change'; Nature was distanced from culture in the light of the former separation. Instead of Nature deciding our destiny by working on us, let us decide both Nature's destiny and ours. Either Nature works on 'us' or 'we' work on ourselves to change each and every one of us, others and Nature. This predicament was felt severely, for it was thought that we, with our

¹⁰ Contentment was placed in opposition to greed in Malayalam language.

hands, will change Nature for our gratification. But for that to happen, we would have to change ourselves, our very nature (*prakretham*). Indeed, this seemed necessary to gain culture; there was full conviction about this thought. Primacy was given to 'milking' Nature by taming and dominating it, but the prerequisite was the mastery over self-hood to change its Nature. Socio-cultural change became inevitable as present was recognised as the bunker of negative traditions and negative customs. A discontinuity between past and future is conceived here.

...with a sharpened intelligence and ability to read, they can learn much that is practical and theoretical in the various industrial operations; and the knowledge so gained can be employed hand in hand with a capital which our yet **undeveloped** country must draw to itself. (Rama Varma, 1974:11, *emphasis added*)

The reason for such aggressive calls for change is clear in the above quote; it is the **undeveloped** state of the country. The characteristic feature of the country was recognised as its 'undeveloped' state because:

... no attempt the worth the name is made to increase the area of this cultivation by reclaiming waste lands, of which we have abundance, or to enhance to the yield of the existing lands by deep ploughing, proper manuring, judiciously selecting best and most prolific varieties of indigenous or exotic seeds, by irrigating where it is needful and practicable, and by carefully harvesting the crops. Instead of all this, we fold our hands and utter idle curses on the stars that innocently course the heavens, or inveigh against the Dewan for the time being! The fault is indeed to be laid at the door of the rich land lords and capitalists and men who have received the benefits of education, rather than at that of the poor and ignorant peasantry. In industrial progress, as in everything else, it devolves on the well-to-do classes to take the lead. (Rama Varma, 1974:11)

The fault diagnosed in the statement is that men do not engage in intensive, extensive agronomic practices, and instead curse the celestial rule and inveigh against the worldly rulers. No initiative seemed forthcoming to change the perpetuating practices and attitudes. Thus the natural milieu was expected to give way for a new cultural milieu as the existing agricultural practices were found out to be obsolete and standing in the way of progress and the accumulation of wealth. Both capitalists and workers are to join hands in producing more wealth from the soil; this was the prescribed solution to the 'problem'.¹¹ No one was expected to curse god or accuse the state; one's own indolence was to be accused or cursed; this idea is implicit in the above statement. Both capitalists and labour were found equally at fault although the latter are pardoned for their 'ignorance' about the developmental strategy. The 'naturalised orders' were called into question and a new order of life was prescribed in which the wealth-generating individual was idealised as the vanguard of patriotism, the messenger of the new order and redeemer. One example: "...the climax of ambition for our large capitalist would be to rackrent their tenants, and to fill China jars with molten gold." (Rama Varma, 1874:6). Any social construct that is incompatible with the cultivation of such ambition was classified as traditional, in which such ambition was not cherished, and one was pressurised or enticed to do away with it.

Who was expected to bring about such internal inversion? State, rich landlords, capitalists and the educated—especially 'English educated'. 'Landlord' and 'capitalists' are class-based categories, that is; it is more an economic classification unlike the category of the 'educated'. This was not strictly a class category even though class has a share in sub-setting it. Once one is included in this category, it was expected that, then, he/she went beyond class/caste identities. From the beginning it was a hybrid category. In fact the agents of action were located in the system of English education. Development and change were expected to create the ever-more interactive

¹¹ It seems there were at least few people by that time, although every one think so today, who thought that any social problems can be solved with rationally thought out policies.

space of landlords, capitalist and the educated. In fact the third category included individuals from the other two as well. This hybridity capacitated them to become the active agents; they included spiritual leaders, scholars, modernisers and enlightened or English educated. Blue prints for agency systems were drawn and ideal modernisers were projected for agents to follow, an example:

Be assured that the wielding of a spade, or the driving of a plough, or the treading a watering lever, in one's own interest, is not a whit less honourable than scratching foolscap with goose-quills, taken in itself. Remember that Cincinnatus, the Dictator, after saving Rome and glory to its name, returned to plough his fields. Remember that Garibaldi, after liberating the same historical land from modern thralldom, went back to his island home to rear cabbages. I do not mean that those who are being educated should learn to shoulder a spade or drive a plough; but with a sharpened intelligence and ability to read, they can learn much that is practical and theoretical in the various industrial operations; and the knowledge so gained can be employed hand in hand with a capital which our yet undeveloped country must draw to itself." (Rama Varma, 1874:11)

A tremendous faith in the agents' capacity to change themselves through calculated moves, and the confidence in gains from the application of the newly received knowledge appeared glaringly in several statements-- besides the above one. The human being declared himself as the supreme subject of history, for it was assumed that people can become what they are not in the present or had never been before, instantaneously. The attempt at that time was to take out people from the cradle of 'pleasant' and 'pleasing' life to the world of labour and pain under the auspices of industrious hands. And the educated, in the company of capital, was to turn the 'undeveloped' country upside down by taking spade and plough, not pen and paper the most cherished tools of the educated.

Between Nature and the labouring subject symbolic exchange was no more possible. Instead, creation of behaviours/attitudes calculated to produce 'useful values' with minimum effort becomes the logic of change and development. It was a type of rationality/mission in which the separation of Labour from Land and domination of hybrids over Nature and people were just; the Natural law and God's will justified it. It was unlike the previous rationality in which Nature was distinguished from Man; but there was no fixed boundary between Man and Nature, or between Nature and Culture. Labour was carved out of other human activities and valorised as the new Culture that will determine the course of history. Valorised labour was window-dressed with a garb borrowed from Cicinnatus and Garibaldi. The attempt was to give dignity to labour and particularly manual labour, but it resulted in denigrating labour as inferior to the work, which the English educated usually undertook.

When do we reassert or valorise something, say, valorisation of labour, by advising people to become disciplined labourers? When it is looked down. That is why Garibaldi and Cincinnatus were imported to the country as modern heroes who went beyond convention by taking plough and spade. Although they are identified as replicable individualities, in the statement there is great reluctance to directly call upon the educated to follow these heroes, and this call is carefully couched in the prioritisation of work over labour. The existed coupling between the hierarchical distribution of caste identities and corresponding distribution of labour/work influenced such a couching. There was the longing for a new culture of labour which had to be imbibed after de-learning what had already been learned/imbibed; within this culture, separation between theoretical and practical forms of knowledge, and between the employed and the 'capitalist' were the coding-distinctions that influenced inter-subjectivity and hierarchy.

In short, the present culture was thought to be formidable and forbidding; both capital accumulation and voluntary labour were found to be

sluggish or simply missing. The existed regime of representation allowed for the conception of society as 'non-enterprising'—landlords were there, capitalists were there and also the educated, but the state did not find anyone smoothly taking excursion into the womb of the anticipated work/labour culture. Had this been the case, it was expected that they would have churned out the essence of Nature. Isolation of unique traditions, habits, customs, etc. become feasible and within them 'good' and 'bad' also became distinguishable.

When some elements that persist for long in the social fabric and when they are not cherished in the present by the 'reformers', they are branded as 'tradition' or better 'negative tradition'. That is, several aspects of cultures persisting from the past to the present began to be clubbed together as 'negative tradition' as they were found to be working as obstacles in the path of achieving modern future for the society and wealth for the nation. The appeal was to change this tradition with the confidence that if calculated moves are taken, humans can transcend their present position/identity and become what one desire to be. The possibility for achieving 'radical discontinuity' is inherent in this kind of perspective. The educated and capitalists are those who have already undergone substantial transformation, now they are told to transform themselves again to become what they were not at present. Self-gaze, self-control, self-sufficiency, auto-command etc. became social practices within the emerging fields of human labour, 'work' and 'action'. Such 'technologies of Self' cultivated individuated Selves. Such self-control praxis was there in the past, but now it stands as a generalised practice. It was born under the condition of 'restrictions', but they work through restraints.

Traditions and modernities were distinguished and this marks the moments of hybridity. Many other such distinctions came along with the creation of tradition/modernity device; it was not alone. One major distinction that has influenced the contemporary time is the distinction between

developed and undeveloped/underdeveloped. Progressive industry is treated as Man's increasing modification of Nature with 'challenge'. The new era of development was to be experienced as a transition by means of which people are finally liberated from pre-developed (undeveloped) Nature and the present, which came to be recognised as 'tradition'. The dream of succession of fast changes created an obscure 'yesteryear' that was soon to be relegated to amnesia by the state and intelligentsia.

In one of the excerpts quoted in this paper, we could observe that the country is represented as 'undeveloped'. How does the author of the quote visualise his country as undeveloped? He is thinking about his country as a developmentalist and a moderniser and to him his country is not developed like England or Netherlands. The comprehending terms such as undeveloped, underdeveloped or developing are the residuals of the universalising concept of 'development'--a development that was not strictly distinguished from Progress. The notion of development enters into the depth of consciousness. He thinks with the aid of the jargons and idioms circulated in the discourse of development, by that he can be seen as an object and bearer of developmental discourse.

By classifying his country as 'undeveloped' he becomes a bearer of the discourse that the British Paramountcy in India wished to receive wide attention and following. At first he was an object of such a discourse, and later he happened to become an agent of it by being a bearer/subject of it. Development discourse trickled from top to bottom, that is why there were realms of non-surety about the separation between Man and Nature and also in claiming the might of the hand and the rightness of the rights of labouring hands. But today, it is the bottom layer and the voice from the margins which articulates the need for development and it is the so called intelligentsia which pronounces the short comings of the project of development in order to 'correct' its shortcomings. And there are few who underscore the harbingers of the negative externalities of development.