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## Communications and Population Control

FOR the majority of the people of India, as of many other so-called 'undeveloped' countries, the concepts of communications and population control cannot mean much; and their meaning is probably misinterpreted by many devoted fieldworkers who are trying to introduce population control in rural areas by means of an excessively one-way use of an uncoordinated segment of one of the many possible channels of communications.

COMMUNICATION has come to be regarded as denoting the lavish use of mass media (radio and boob-tube, films and printed matter) to inculcate adoption of supposedly necessary innovations in the entire population of a country. One enormous multi-directional network of channels in mass communication is almost never mentioned. Yet this chosen medium of the majority population dominates all others in the field of action among illiterate people and their literate neighbours because it is the only means by which these two enormous groups can understand each other. The medium is the simple one of mutual, inter-personal, oral conversation, which is probably practised on a vaster scale in India than in other countries.

It may be summarized, for effect, by terming it an attempt, through regular, non-committal conversations, held regularly by public-spirited people, dependent for a livelihood on a network centering on one general occupation (e.g., farming, fishing or textile production), to obtain a view of suggested innovations, which will reach a consensus upon the safeguards and modifications required to ensure that no section of the rural community is harmed by their adoption; in order to maintain the traditional social cohesion without burdening the organization of the community with further, possibly inoperable, adjustments in the socio-cultural structure.

POPULATION CONTROL likewise has no immediate meaning for simple people whose small world is confined to the region of their society and its culture, and whose prime concern is to get along with their neighbours in daily contact, and less frequent, but possibly more selective meetings at market-places and development agency offices, during travel,

and at *melas, uruses, jatras*, and other pilgrimages and festivals. It was a wise move to convert this concept of the intellectuals to the more understandable term of 'Family Planning'. The conversion, however, has in fact created a host of difficulties. To a traditional family in nearly all rural India, the idea of planning a family may be quite impious. It cuts through all the slender but clinging roots which bind the traditional society of any religion and other cultural characteristics of value, to the fundamental animism which is reflected in some Hindu rituals and symbols of divinity as also in the sacred character of certain local sites and institutions, some being enshrined legend, no less affecting indigenous Muslims and Christians as well as Hindus. A whole cosmology may be bound up in these local indicators of historical and religious beliefs, whose sanctity must be freely recognised; and the human function which is most governed by such considerations of eternal values is quite obviously the sexual and procreative, consonant with the reverence for Earth, Water and Sun<sup>1</sup> through which elements all terrestrial life is manifested and human life endeavours to refine itself.

### **The Persistent Vitality of Civilization**

I am consequently dealing in this paper with two of the original elements in peasant, and even tribal, societies which have traditionally reconstituted themselves and endured in the Indian sub-continent for nearly three millennia; while the ambitious urban units of political rule (indigenous or infiltrated) swayed to and fro in mutual conflict, and the rural groups of production and its technologies kept out of the way as far as they could; then swept back after the periodic devastation and impoverishment of the countryside to reassert the more viable genius of the people belonging to the land. The vitality and such unity as holds the forty-odd peasant groups by distinct languages together by partial fusion of culture in the contiguous regions, is a primary source of *Promethean Élan* and durability of the peasantry and the tribes-folk in India. The more sophisticated elements of the population have always been utterly dependent on the countryfolk in their repeated attempts to assert and maintain political power. There seems every historical reason why this flux of human power returning to its root-sources in the countryside should be repeated over and over again.

India has specialised in producing sages rather than heaven-born politicians and administrators; a sage, a Maharshi or even a Mahatma would seem to be a more suitable adviser than a secularised boss or teacher, particularly in the ticklish ultra-personal question of promoting family planning. The Kindly Light of Common Sense does not seem to glimmer alongside the often patchily exposed, muddy filmstrips of slow motion, early 20th century, cinematic ideologies that flicker across the political and planning screens of delayed action which are now employed as channels of information and

1. Mircea Eliade : *Patterns in Comparative Religion*; Sheed and Ward, London, 1958 (Trs. Rosemary Sheed from *Traite d'histoire des Religions*, Edn. Payot, Paris), 484 p., index, biblio.

persuasion to assist the medically qualified and other field workers in promoting the reduction of India's alarming population growth.

### **Culture-wide Awareness of Need for Family Planning**

Margaret Mead<sup>2</sup> and other anthropologists in their studies of Melanesia have given instances of autobiotic precaution where the pressure of excess population on the limited and apparently (to the local technological view) fully exploited natural resource\* of the land had begun to try restricting the unlimited production of children by encouraging more frequent practice of an already established method of birth control. Within these confined cultures, there operated in effect an autobiotic survival mechanism to bring into balance the numbers, within the socio-culture, with the narrow confines of its ecology and capacity to exploit natural resources without much in the way of technological innovations.

It would seem that in the majority of peasant societies in India, stresses created by excessive demand on the economic production of rural folk have engendered the notorious submission to poverty in which families at the lowest end of the socio-economic scale have found it expedient to produce many children so that those who survived could contribute to the family's gainful labour and the eldest could be sure of support in their feeble old age. Possibly the autobiotic reaction of family limitation was ironed out by such a constant, *karmic* response to the accepted lot of grinding poverty.

There are prominent exceptions to this melancholy possibility in tribal regions not subjected to the processes of official modernization. In addition to these, we have the example of Kerala where forms of democratic government have been steadily evolving through the present century and longer. Malayalis have been increasingly literate for so long that they have devised methods of social organisation which are more modern in their intellectual engineering than those of any other large part of India. Excess children in Kerala have, for some three or four generations, been encouraged to take education in English, which enabled them to be in the first ranks of competition for white-collar work, and prominent among the highly professional nursing staff of hospitals in other regions. The politics of Malayalis have also been noticeably far more globally informed and advanced than the blundering efforts of persons taking to this inspirational profession in other parts of India would suggest.

Kerala remains a land where the density of population continues to be higher than even the fortunate natural resources can readily support; both technologies of production and socio-cultural adjustments have accordingly been made and consolidated. The

2. Margaret Mead : *Continuities in Cultural Evolution*, Terry Lectures, Yale University Press, 1964, 471 p., illustr., appendices, Sh. 63/-. The bibliographies cover most of the important work done in this field of study, and the relevant region.

extent to which this process of adjustment and consolidation was conscious and deliberate on the part of individual members of the society cannot be estimated. It would, in any case, seem probable that changes based on consultation through millions of interpersonal conversations between men and women separately through visits to many places in the same cultural range would take a long time and might be approached with much more trepidation on account of the relative reticence on the topic of sex, even amongst kinsfolk, that is one of the saddest British legacies to Indian culture.

For socio-cultural complexities, the regions politically classified as north-eastern Vidarbha (an accretion of Maharashtra) and northern Andhra Pradesh (now politically in dispute) are hard to beat. The languages and systems of kinship organization in this chaotic region are: Marathi (Vidarbha dialects, now being adjusted to standard Marathi, by education), Gondi, Kurku and Telegu (the official Andhra language). If Orissa be included in the complex considered, at least four more local languages must be added, including, of course, Oriya. In fact the complex can be extended into West Bengal, and Bihar, when a total of 13 languages appears, each with its distinct culture-pattern.<sup>3</sup>

It is an awkward though unmistakable fact that Christian missionary education in India perverted the thinking of many public figures. Too many among the politicians, who have exercised political power since Independence, were brought up to consider sex a shameful function of the bodily appetites. They accepted the Pauline-Augustinian doctrine that a contravention of the rule that sexual union was intended for procreation, and that the sensual pleasure it afforded by mutual adjustment of its performance designed to suppress conception were both sinful.

How, then, could such 'leaders', twisted into feelings of guilt and sin, be expected to impart the practical concepts of contraception, or abandonment of the male sexual appetite to the satisfactions provided by prostitutes? For one must note that the simplest and most traditional of rural Indians was quite aware of the addiction to prostitutes by the politicians who required them to limit their families by adopting contraceptive devices, and to persuade or force their subordinated wives, arranged for them by the family, and not chosen through mutual acquaintance, attraction and consequent understanding.

It would thus appear that in the attempt to promote family planning among the majority, traditional cultures of India, a scornful conflict has been created by the pseudo-puritanism of the ruling class and the healthy, vigorous continuation of sexual interests, without any mental pollution of sin and guilt, on the part of masses in general. The

3. Irawati Karve : *Kinship Organization in India*, Deccan College Monograph Series 11, Poona 1953. 304 p., maps, diagrams, tables, no index. See especially map on pp. 26-27 and relevant commentary in text.

most bitter comment I ever heard on this topic came from a group of mixed cultures encamped for the *Kumbh Mela* at Prayag. Men only were in the group and I asked without any prevarications how the women liked the idea of only two and never more than three children. A lusty farmer of the middle class from Maharashtra, who spoke excellent Hindustani, was the immediate spokesman. Naming a highly placed politician, he said, "of course he can let his tongue loose about choosing women who only want to have the children their husbands tell them they must have. Why? Everyone knows that he ... has plenty of money to buy any woman he wants to amuse him with all her tricks; no wife is necessary for him, and look at the cash he saves because he doesn't drink tea or coffee. But I'm more limited in what I can afford, and what I like, just as my father did and all my forefathers. That old liar can shut his dirty mouth, and not come lecturing us." This is a conversational response from a man who knows how the lives of his own family and their neighbours, near and far, among the lower orders of Indian society, are balanced from day to day. It is anyone's guess how many such negative responses there may have been in discussions by the majority population, literate or illiterate; possibly in the range of 60 to 95 per cent.

This response makes clear the uselessness, in the long term, of the present approaches to family planning propagation, even when pushed by influential and rich organizations like the American Population Council, of General Building Park Avenue and 42nd St., New York, who are unconscious of the interactions within and between traditional societies in India.

It was, indeed, realized in India that the provision of facilities for contraception and appeals by mass-media, supported by development field-staff would not alone serve the purpose of creating a nation-wide socio-cultural change amounting to a reversal of human relationships, institutions and ethical or aesthetic values held since before civilization was built on the backs of the main producers of human needs. The campaigns to promote family planning were factual enough, but their proposed motivation was lost in some nebulous cloud of 'patriotism' and socio-economic 'realism' that simply did not fit the Indian situation. The effort then was concentrated on research into methods of contraception suitable for the cramped quarters and their lack of privacy, besides unhygienic conditions (where bidets are unimaginable), in which the majority (and fastest-breeding) segment of the traditional population lives in rural as well as in urban India.

In the era of contraceptive gimmicks, the more permanent, surgical measures (such as reversible vasectomy, and irreversible salpingectomy) were pushed along with the more temporary interruptions of the union of sperm with ovum. Family Planning clinics were medically staffed; but not sufficiently to study their suitability for contraceptive devices such as I.U.C.D., their capacity to endure surgical procedures and sustain even the minor operations without deleterious after-effects, or their ability to adjust their behaviour to the rhythm of the menstrual cycle.

The dreadful system of whooping up volunteers for protection against conception by paying intermediaries, organizing mass-operations, might all have been designed as a breaker of ethical fibre by incitement to be 'in the swim', and to earn the cash or prestigious transistor given to some acceptors of surgery. Perhaps the most insulting feature of the services proffered to the lower social orders by the Family Planning clinics was the brutal overriding of the ignorance of, or misinformation about, the basic physiology of sex and procreation. This lapse was probably explained by the shortages of time, facilities and staff"; but such callous approach to fellow human beings (male or female) could not be expected to engender genuine, lasting impulse towards the 'patriotism' of reduced baby-production.

### **Facing the Realities of Family Planning as a Willing Change**

As everyone has always realized, the mating and breeding of women in traditional India is regulated least of all by the potential wife and mother. She can neither resist husband's desire nor guarantee that she produces a male child. Since pre-natal choice of sex is not yet a specific offering of medical science and technology, no guarantee can be given that she will not produce the permitted three babies all female, and so burden the family all the more with the need of finding dowry and marriage expenses, and elaborate, status-establishing ceremonials.

Looked at squarely, the field to be covered by all-round therapeutic and Public Health Service in Rural India is as technologically complex and unexplored by family planning clinics as was the similar field of change, through innovations in technology, projected by the crackpot, western inspired programme of Community Development and National Extension Service which was established in nearly 5,300 Development Blocks, comprising 565,000 villages.<sup>4</sup>

### **Rural Medical Service**

With the true aim of human development, there is no evading the necessity for this expansion of official services to cover, in the full context of health and family-planning, the entire field of socio-medical therapy, including psychiatry. The addition of a demographer to each team, with some knowledge of traditional sociology, would make the primary, and continuous, research a much simpler matter, and could even contribute to the technologies of social organization, with innovated relationships and institutional structure of traditional culture, thus furnishing a more humane and practical means of obtaining knowledge of people as individuals and of their organizations. Whatever the facilities offered by the medical, surgical and social science staffs in rural areas and in the lower strata of urban populations, there is today no manic hurried greed to

4. *Kurukshetra*, 2 October 1967.

reshape the rural folks' productive societies and cultures; unless, indeed, such frantic efforts are to be revived in order to support the *Garibi Hatao* principle.

### **Using the People's 'Communications' Network to Gain Knowledge**

I believe the earlier pages of this paper will have exposed the impracticability of the attempts, on the part of the state and its degraded bureaucracy, to play the source of all modern knowledge for traditional India. Acting with proper humility towards the oldest human stratum which persists from the earliest Indian civilization, in need still of more secure bonds of countrywide unity, the least that the bosses in power, with either democratic or a state capitalist overall chain of societies in view, can do is to set themselves to *learn from the people*, whose inherited knowledge of the conditions of life and the ecology of their productive efforts is factual because it is confined to the tested ground of generations of action within the geographical, hydrological and climatic frameworks. Neither the international (U.N.O.) nor the top G.N.P. (U.S.A.) sanctions are required to set up this university of civilization for the would-be *elite* of India- Development staffs for medical and social services can, primarily as learners, do far more to indicate where and how useful and practicable innovations in any field of technology can be suggested and supported, not 'inculcated'.

### **Levels of Interpersonal, Oral Communications in Traditional India**

In detailing the regular opportunities available to rural folk for conversational exchanges in India, we must first refer to one of the most enduring of the socio-cultural values which are embedded in all Indian traditional societies: '*All men are born equal*'. This Rousseau-Kant idea, which is largely accepted at least as an aim to be realized in many Western countries, seems to be arrant nonsense when it is observed as an unfactor in the hard realities of rural life, or of the lower working classes in urban India. As a spiritual maxim, the principle of human equality was current in India two millenia before Jean Jacques Rousseau and his troupes of 'equalizers or chain-breakers' were heard of; but materially, the more skillful and consequently more successful man or family in an Indian village is recognized as pursuing the *dharma* equally with the labourer, who has not realized the farmer's, fisherman's, artisan's or even tribal's opportunities of human development, within the given local ecology of a specific culture.

Traditionally, a family successful and prosperous in its productive operations forms the natural centre of a neighbourhood comprising around twenty families. In periods when the work in the fields or at the crafts does not occupy the entire daylight hours, the male members representing each family congregate on the *chaupal*, a platform or other open space kept clear opposite the prosperous family's dwelling. Here, the meeting begins before sunset to discuss the current conditions-weather, availability of water, condition of the soil, and progress of the work in hand. Other social and cultural

matters, or technical innovations, are also discussed. Women only participate in these meetings as hidden listeners, with occasional bursts of whispering.

Where conditions seem to indicate that pressing social matters, such as those relating to village institutions and marriages, or other changing relationships, are up for possible readjustment, members of other *chaupal* groups are often invited. Generally, however, it is the continuity of forthright daily conversation that builds up mutual understanding.

It is easy enough for an humble, and suitably unassertive, member of a development-promotion group from outside the village, to be accepted as a participant to such exchanges of experience. The invitee may tentatively suggest technological or other innovations; but he must not at first expand on them. He must appear to concur with the local judgement in local matters as being superior to, and better-informed than, his own.

Women in rural India have their own meetings, despite the fact that, except in very prosperous families which can afford servants, they are on their feet with household jobs from early morning to bed-time. Like the men, the women of a village family go for their morning defecation and ablutions to outlying fields on their side of the village, usually in very small knots of neighbours, and use this opportunity for conversation. At least once a day, and usually twice, the business of drawing water and carrying it to the house must be performed. On the way to the well or some other source, there is some chatter; but the more intensive conversation is, naturally, in the queue of women waiting their turn to draw water.

Other opportunities for such by-the-way conversation arise when minor purchases have to be made, particularly if the village supports a shop; e. g. fresh *pan-supari* is seldom prepared in a small dwelling with no insatiable addict, and the specialist sells it at less cost. This practice of meeting for a few words and exchanges of current experiences is likewise followed in the cities, for there is not much idle 'dropping in for a chat' among busy Indian women of the working classes.

These briefer female conversations have their intimate qualities, perhaps the only uninhibited freedom of speech available in a young woman's domestic life, either as an adult daughter or a wife. As in Western countries' nineteenth century cultures, the range of a young woman's intimacies with others of her age is strictly limited; thus highly selected, and much prized.

Being highly selected for mutual confidences such casual conversations may be loosely arranged to happen daily as welcome breaks in household routines. Many of the more specially active men follow similar patterns of 'a few words' exchanged even during their working spells. The effect of such events as impending technical innovations, and

consequent changes in social behaviour (including the husband-wife relationship) claim naturally the first importance in discussions held without the inhibitions of most talk before kinsfolk, and other conversations between household members, with whom a difficult matter must be handled more cautiously.

Conversational exchanges are, of course, not confined to villages. The traditional market-places are visited, weekly or more often, by women as well as men; and enlightenment is often sought there from friends living in other villages, served by the same market-place, or at the corners and teashops of the market-town itself; especially where it offers some goods or services not obtainable in the villages.

Domestic festivals, such as the *rites de passage* of the children, marriage ceremonials and local holy days held at shrines and other places of worship offer more widespread opportunities for conversation, particularly to women; and the more important among these occasions offer similar opportunities also to men. Where people are drawn from several villages to such celebrations, there is a brisk demand for informative discussion, the experience of one contiguous group being considered valuable to another, irrespective of the differences between the two in caste, sub-caste or occupation.

The supposedly 'local self-government' officialdom, or formal paper-bossery introduced in some states under the resounding tag of *Panchayati Raj*, actually produces far more intimate and critical conversations about social institutions and relationships than ever appear in its written records or in the debates officially organized at or for the 'higher levels' of government. In fact, the traditional practice about community decision-making seems to be inevitably two-faced. Official discussions are productive of rhetoric founded on 'accepted' principles, sometimes on modish ideologies, to 'please the higher powers'. Each sonorous orator, however, reveals his dyarchic qualities of negotiation; in private conversation he is ready to adjust his principles to existing or anticipated socio-cultural tergiversations ensuing from extensive, innovative technological and institutional changes.

It must here be pointed out that the title *Panchayati Raj* seeks to give the authority of existence to archaic myth about socio-cultural organization in India. No reliable evidence records the fanciful concept of a self-sufficient peasant village in civilized India of any period as 'a little village republic'. The caste-panchayat was no more and no less than a representative group of men belonging to one caste, more usually a sub-caste, or a cluster forming an occupational group, and was empowered to judge, usually subject to a pandit's sanctions, upon the standards of behaviour and relationship between members of the same social division. In practice, the norms of human relationship were the principal subjects of such adjudication. Obviously, a local 'Court of Torts' does not remotely constitute a 'little republic', even in a single-caste village.

In the subsequent stages of public discussion, this *Janus* will continue to display his

highest conservative or other ideological principles; and yet the privately negotiated socialism, fascism or what not will finally be implicitly acknowledged, however, distantly. But rhetorical 'face' must be preserved. This process is as much a matter of quiet verbal attrition leading to altered behaviour as is connoted by the women's intimate and furious talking about their repressed social and sexual situation. No comedy is so excruciatingly funny as a convocation of Muslim women, throwing around the conventional rhetoric and their ideal socio-cultural status within Islam. The comedy is best appreciated by a few phrases caught from small groups of the same ladies conversing on their way out of the affirmation meeting.

Further opportunities for conversational meetings between wider groups of socio-cultural similarity occur nowadays during the long hours of waiting to get advice, some permit, or some license from the Development Agencies. A common example of the bureaucratic run-around is for chemical fertilizer, always in short supply, and hence enthusiastically declared on innovatory essential by an Agricultural Extension Officer. 1st day: to District H.Q. office to pay cash and get receipt for fertilizer. The next couple of days: hunting for stocks in the godowns of approved sellers (co-operative societies), the District H.Q. having no firm idea of where stocks are available and giving only a list of possible stockists. After perhaps a week: the refusal of the godown-keeper to weigh the torn and leaking bags or to exclude them from the delivery. If this kind of irresponsible waste of peasant's time, in the season of intensive cultivation, is matched by the Health and Family Planning hospitals and clinics, then the practicability of inspiring him with a sense of responsibility for maintaining the health and limiting the size of his family may well be abandoned.

Implementation of proposals for establishing a rural Medical Service throughout India has been delayed for years because of the obstinate know-all, superior attitude of government departments, who will not work on the detailed plans of action prepared for them by Medical Associations based on the cities' teaching hospitals. Unless officialdom is patriotically convinced that it cannot organize better than the scientific and technological specialists, then of course no pattern of working services on any lines which involve knowledge of many skills and people can be organized, and the family-planning campaigns, which must stretch over at least three generations, will have to be abandoned.

The impassioned conversations and interpersonal communications, for which these idle days of pursuing bureaucrat-termites may serve will not help to create a climate of confidence or even credibility in the capacity of government to support development of any kind; but they may have the effect of consolidating rural opinion on the present impotency of official organization, and of resulting in the peasants' insistence on proper service by such slack agencies of official development organizations. Peasants may at least be grateful for the opportunities to frame better methods of organizing the services supposed to be rendered by patronizing officials. But the question of power to remedy such abuses of administration will no longer be so readily dismissed by a reference to

the 'power of the vote'-which won't change the bureaucrat-termite in any case.

Conversations which exchange the experiences of those traditional persons who are convinced of the need of development are finally most useful in regions where several socio-cultural systems meet; and, for instance, where there has been a patois formed between the two adjacent languages. It is no accident, but the result of a historical process that many shrines, and confluences, to which pilgrimages are made in enormous numbers, are set on these natural lines of physical communication. Natural boundaries, such as rivers, mountain passes, sea coasts, have established places for multi-lingual gatherings like Prayag, Varanasi, Mathura, Dwarka and even Delhi, Tirupati and Puri. The journeys to these places of pilgrimage used to offer great opportunities for pilgrims drawn from different regions and different cultures to meet and converse, never entirely about spiritual matters; now that travel is briefer and cheaper, more opportunities are created at the site of the temple or confluence itself.

All such meetings represent the polyglot capacity of peasants and others for exchange of experiences by conversation as outlined in previous pages. When similar enthusiasm for certain developments, and reservations about others, are found to be experienced in common, the effect on the participants is to strengthen the feeling of solidarity (*not* integration) between Indian cultures which are not necessarily geographically adjacent. All such meeting places should be, and in fact already are, covered by the health service. If that service were associated with wider therapy, public health and family planning, then full use could be made of the oldest communication channels by the organisation as a whole. The weakness of this proposition lies in the ease with which its professional, advisory and research content may be vitiated by the termite tendency of all large organizations in India; but it could have a better chance of success than any of the previous inculcation drives undertaken from 1952.

### **Large-Scale vs. Small-Scale Operations**

There has been much talk about 'economies of scale', in the promotion of nationalized institutions, the apparatus of state capitalism. This gigantomachic and megalomaniac recommendation towards 'bigger and better' is only one of the fallacies inherent in the aim of economic growth. Yet, development can have only one real aim, to which every country is necessarily committed, whether knowingly or not. Human development remains unaccomplished *in any country*, and it is only patchily recognized as an objective in the very countries which have most forcefully sidetracked its demand in favour of a high and belligerent G.N.P.

No matter how ancient and tested the civilization, nor how ingeniously contrived its policy of creating a *pseudo-elite* and allied autocratic structures of government, the technocracies and bureaucracies are all tarred with the same brush of inferior humanity, the development of the whole people being smothered beneath mountains of *paper'asserts*

and official smuggling, in which hindrance of the "people's will" is most effectively established by the fortunes spent in campaigning for votes to sustain the bureaucrats' political masters; and of accepting its various autocracies, e.g. 'communism' (Where? Albania !). The former of these political man-traps are not peculiarly an Indian problem; but it does expose the peculiar sensitivity of Indian socio-cultural patterns of poverty to the promotion of economic development on a large scale for petty benefits and for incomprehensible objectives.

Decisions about any innovations, whether to increase the useful application of technology, or to follow the implications of such changes with a modification of socio-cultural institutions from their traditional and partly developed state, are best taken to coalesce as a result of the frequent verbal attrition which is only possible when oral, interpersonal communications towards a consensus are accepted as the valid means of basing development of any kind on foundations of continuously adapted mutual understanding.

### **The Slow Caravan of Human Development**

Perhaps this common, humble track of slow mutual travel towards a shared understanding will be a more distressing experience for the teams of highly educated and laboriously trained fieldworkers in the development cadres, drawn from the universities, which supply the modern knowledge, to the rural people who form the rational ground of humanly-controlled real information. Possibly even the exalted promoters and pen-pushers of the new information about the real people in the process of thorough change, including V.I.P. Ministers and superior civil servants, will learn to endure the slow process of new learning, through suffering a proper humility. There is no evasion of this slow travel down an uncertain track, in order to attain human development throughout all the classes of the people.

Such patient foot-slogging may constitute the hardest lesson to be learnt by India's self-styled *elites* of politicians who can buy their way to power, the lackeydom of their 'committed' bureaucracy and judiciary, and, most difficult of all, the solemnly criticizing and utterly ineffective squadrons of intellectuals who seek to cause the temporary 'ruling classes' to reform themselves according to the gospels of Gandhi, Marx, annotated by V.I. Lenin, or the as yet obscure experimentations of Mao-Tse-Tung and Chou-En-Lai.

It may turn out to be a blessing that the elaborate plans for 'improving' (teaching) the traditional folk, which have got more and more into tangles of misunderstanding and violent conflict since 1952, are now to be utterly discredited, and a phase of learning begun from the more enduring masters of civilized India—the peasants—in order to use their methods of socio-cultural adjustment through constant, multi-directional communication of actual experiences. There could be no better topic to serve as a framework for this radical change than those presented by the autobiotic process of conscious

family planning, properly backed by therapeutic, sometimes psychiatric, and public health institutions, provided these latter official constructs are confined to interconsultative units designed separately for each of the socio-cultural systems in the entire country. To some extent, such a radical departure from present practice would fulfil Gandhiji's rather vague dream of a non-violent India, the polity of which could be reorganized from experiences at the working-class and peasant 'grass roots' of the country's traditions.