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THE FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN
ECONOMICS

INDIA'S MESSAGE TO THE WEST

INDIA stands for living Humanity as against inert matter; for more equitable distribution of wealth; for less luxury and more brotherhood; for less industrial conflict and more co-operation; for wealth as a means as against wealth as an end; and for finding happiness not in restless self-serving but in the consecration of life to the welfare of Society and Humanity.

Pp. 459-61, 465-7.



THE BAMBOO TRAP ON THE MARGIN OF THE RIVER (p. 86).

THE FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN ECONOMICS

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नमस्तस्यै ॥

भूयश्शतवार्षिक्यामना वृक्षामनम्भसि ॥
मुनिभिः संस्तुताभूमौ सम्प्रविष्ट्याम्ययोनिना ॥ १ ॥
ततः शतेन नेत्राणां निरीक्षिष्यामि यन्दुनीन् ॥
कीर्त्तयिष्यामि मनुजाः शताक्षीमिति मानतः ॥ १ ॥
ततो बृहत्सिर्लं लोकं मात्मदेहसमुद्भवैः ॥
भरिष्यामि सुराः ! शाकैरावृष्टेः प्रायः शारकैः ॥ १ ॥
शाकम्भरीति विख्यातिं तदा यास्याम्यहं भुवि ॥

(MARKANDEYA CHANDI, Chap. XI., 46-49.)

“ And I shall again be on earth when there has been drought, and scarcity of water for a hundred years, born not out of mother's womb when my praise will be recited by the Saints. Then I shall cast a look on mankind with hundred eyes, and they shall call me the hundred-eyed from that time. Then, ye Gods, I shall support the entire universe until there is rain with life-sustaining herb created out of my own body. From that time I shall be known on earth by the name Sakamvari ”-(lit. she who sustains with the herb).

TO
THE HONOURABLE
MAHARAJA SIR MANINDRA CHANDRA
NANDY, K.C.I.E.,
OF COSSIMBAZAR
WHOSE NAME IS A HOUSEHOLD WORD IN BENGAL
FOR HIS MATCHLESS MUNIFICENCE IN THE
CAUSE OF EDUCATIONAL AND INDUSTRIAL
DEVELOPMENT OF HIS COUNTRY

INTRODUCTION

PROFESSOR MUKERJEE honours me by his wish that I should write the introduction to his volume ; and I willingly attempt this. As an eager reader, and even an old reviewer of books on India, I can honestly invite others to follow him through the villages and fields, and into the homes and workshops to which he leads us, and of which he has so much to tell. Since the appearance of " The Web of Indian Life," by his and my old friend Sister Nivedita, I know of no such further and fuller volume, again sympathetic and suggestive and now detailed and practical, even reconstructive.

The situation of the village is one of the profoundest interest, and this to Indian and European alike, since the whole modern transition is involved within it. There—the ancient village community with its family and caste systems, and with the agriculture, the crafts and arts, the education and religion also, which are congruent with these. Here—attacking and disintegrating it, more and more year by year—the Industrial Revolution. Upon this process of breaking-down of the antique social order, which in Western countries we have earlier and thus more completely expressed, there are two familiar and contrasted types of comment, the regretful and the triumphant respectively. Of

the first, Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" is the classic dirge, as Carlyle's, Ruskin's, and Morris's impassioned diatribes are the later expression; but for most ears all these alike have been drowned by the tumult of the manufacturing or the financial city, by the mingled thunder of steam-engine, rail, and loom, and, above all, by the economists' and politicians' inspiring battle-cry of "Progress." What, then, can we expect from the Indian student, insistently educated as he is in both these schools—in experience by the first, and at college by the second—but that he should accept the process, as Westerns usually do, as "at any rate inevitable," and so adjust his life to win such position or profit as may be practicable under the circumstances? Not so, however, our author; here is the main point and purport of his book.

The rural conditions of India, its village life and institutions, have been described by many authors and with a recognition of their antique worth which no one now-a-days will seriously deny. Similarly for the associated industries, though here in this book with a real beginning of full and monographic surveys. The struggle for existence in which the village now finds itself is likewise admitted on all hands, though it is much to have it here reviewed afresh by an essentially first-hand observer. But the main thesis of this book, to which all else leads up—its distinctive contribution, by which it has to fall or stand—is that the struggle is not, at any rate need not be, that of despairing age, vainly striving with broken sword and feeble shield, against overpowering numbers, modern weapons, limitless resources, ruthless strategy, and

thus inexorable fate. With cheering faith in the survival-capacity of his old village, as well as in the value of its villagers,—a faith based on knowledge—our author presages for it and them a very different future; and he supports this forecast not merely by general economic arguments of vigour, but by definite and practical proposals as well. For him age is not necessarily senescence, still less senility; its long-sought secret of rejuvenescence is again coming within grasp; why, then, may not renewing and readaptive youth—even now, far though the struggle has gone—seize his antagonist's best weapons and successfully turn them to the defence of village and home?

“Fair hopes of a young writer,” the elderly reviewers, if in good temper, may patronisingly say. Many of us have felt the like, and this forty years ago and more. But we saw Ruskin forced to retire to his hillside in sadness, and Morris to retreat to his library, his printing-press; and so more or less with the other romantics, “beautiful ineffectual angels” all. The foremost living poet of the West, Emile Verhaeren, has faced the modern inferno of hideously spreading tentacular cities, into which their impoverished and hallucinated country-sides more or less hopelessly fall. And now that war is bringing poverty, and its stern financial masters, so plainly within view, what rural life can hope to escape from the clamant summons of the manufacturing towns? From the standardized semi-slums of Western progress, the corresponding coolie-lines or human warehouse-chawls of Indian progress, who will deliver these simple country people who daily crowd the ingoing

trains? What hope from the most benevolent of governments, save of inspection and inspectors? or from progressive social theorists, like Mr. Wells? or from his antagonists, the Fabian Society for choice, save more machinery and more inspectors still?

Despite all this, and even here in Calcutta—where the industrial process, with its coarsest material of jute and its attendant evils accordingly, with its planless muddle of docks and railways and canals, is rising to a devastating and destructive force fully recalling the unrestrained and unmoralized heyday of the generations of corresponding initiative of Britain—Professor Mukerjee is resolved to fight his battle, and not only to defend but renew his hard-beset village home. It is well he should, for, in eager thought no less than in strenuous deed, youth must to-day, as of old, “ride forth to war with all his banners flowing.” But with what hope for him, or for those he seeks to inspire or lead?

Despite ample witness of failures and disappointments in social and educational endeavours, and long, indeed well-nigh incessant, experience of such discouragement as well, I yet venture to maintain that his main thesis is sound. The village can be made to survive. Though a Ruskin may fail, a Plunkett may and does succeed. In Denmark, above all, Bishop Gruntwig has succeeded.

Education has not said its last word, but only repeated earlier and mistaken ones, in preparing the present overplus of would-be clerks and officials, of barristers and politicians, with disappointments, embitterments, and social dangers accordingly. Similarly for social organization;

even with its soldiers and munition-makers by the million to-day, massed as for the creation of railways and factories a generation and more ago. France, which has so largely led the world, and for evil as well as good, into militarism, officialism, and examinalism alike, is now peculiarly disillusioned with all three; and she is setting towards rural and technical efficiency; other countries are following suit; and the turn of India will not be much longer delayed. That when the war is over young Europe will wish for and seek more constructive work, more manly, healthy life than our present cities offer, is being generally realized. The generation succeeding that of our young soldiers is already characterized by its boy scouts, with their joyous return to nature and labour. Moreover, to the boy scout is already being added the boy citizen. Then why not also the boy villager, who more naturally includes them both? And this similarly (or first?) for girls.

Beyond all such observations or forecasts of social changes in detail, there is a larger view with which we may conclude, that of a better understanding of the Industrial Age. Of this every economist speaks, but none has yet adequately analyzed it. Every one has heard of the Stone Age; but no ordinarily informed person any longer speaks of this as one period but always clearly distinguishes it into two ages, rude and fine, "Paleolithic" and "Neolithic," the Old Stone Age and the New. In the earlier of these periods we see man still fresh from his emergence above the brute, grasping a rudely chipped flint and mastering the secret of fire. In the second we have man rising beyond the rude

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hunting stage, and founding, in all its essentials, our present civilization. For he is creating not only finished and polished tools, with corresponding finer workmanship, but has established agriculture and cattle-keeping, with all that these imply—of the progress of intelligence, the status of woman, of the beginnings of institutions. He had religion too, as his burials and monuments testify, and education necessarily also.

Here, then, is the material for a present comparison; here the clue to a corresponding analysis of the Industrial or Technic Age, into its ruder and its finer phase, as Paleotechnic and Neotechnic. The first is the age of coal and smoke, of steam factories and railway centralization, of mean housing and cheap textiles. Above all, it is the age of cheap people, slaves to all the evils of overcrowding, dirt and disease, and with rebound from these into worse evils, as of intemperance and vice: furthermore it is maintained by that substantial indifference among the directive classes, that shrinking acceptance among the educated classes, which we all know so well. This Paleotechnic phase of industry has been abstractly formulated; into mechanical science and machine-politics, into conventional "education" of examination boards, above all, into monetary economics, its appropriate mythology; and the whole has been received with superstitious and fatalistic acceptance, all the world over. Hence it is no wonder that Indians, as the smoke-cloud and ash-heap and muck-rake come from overseas to them, think of these as "Western Civilization."

Thus, as prime example, arose Paleotechnic Glasgow; for here there emerged James Watt and

Adam Smith, as veritable conqueror and law-giver of the whole Paleotechnic world for generations to come. Their little old university and cathedral townlet thus swiftly grew into a world-city, yet one fundamentally of slum, overcrowded from the depopulated villages of Highlands and Islands, of Lanarkshire and Ireland alike. The same process spread everywhere, in Birmingham and the Midlands, Lancashire, Yorkshire; each developed its Black country; and next throughout the world.

But in this very city of the Prometheus of Steam, and in the very midst of its crude industrial order, there has been going on, for two generations past, more and more of higher Promethean endeavour and accomplishment. Here worked for half a century the foremost magician of electricity, Lord Kelvin; and here young Lister began the cleansing advance which he later perfected into the antiseptic surgery of Edinburgh, and finally popularized in London, and to the world. The master-art of ship-building, surpassing even architecture in its co-ordination of crafts and sciences, has in Glasgow reached its highest perfection; and, at the same time as in Holland of old, the art of painting has had its most conspicuous development in modern Britain. From the Paleotechnic City, of coal, steam, and iron, of overcrowding, dirt, and squalor, there is thus emerging the Neotechnic City, of electricity and hygiene, of architecture and art. And with all this a new uplift of citizenship which has made its Town Council undertakings known to every municipality. So for Birmingham, for Manchester, for American cities too: everywhere throughout the Paleotechnic confusion there is beginning to appear the Neotechnic

order. So even the railway kings—at first harsh invaders like the conquering caravaneers of old, and still charging “what the traffic will bear,” still careless even of their own workers, as of the towns and villages through which they pass and which they disorganize—are now showing signs of developing into socialized, even moralized, rulers; it is a change as from Mongols to Moghuls.

In this Neotechnic society, as it becomes conscious, agriculture is beginning to recover and to redeem the land from its Paleotechnic neglect and waste; and with this is arising horticulture. There also reappears the art of Town-planning; and with this Housing and Town-planning there is new hope for the related crafts and arts. In a word Western Civilization proper begins to emerge from its eclipse and to enter a fresh phase of evolution. In this renewal the heritage of the past is being recovered; its ideals are being re-stated; it may be that even its essential institutions may be renewed upon the modern spiral.

All this is of present interest in Professor Mukerjee's volume. He has much to tell of how India has conserved the essentials of her civilization, and of how, making at once the best of her old powers and resources and of her new ones, she may again hold her own in the great world and even more. Beyond this economic vision he has sociological insight. He sees that India may arouse to the value of her communitary spirit and free this from its present deteriorations, even develop it into a renewed efficiency, surpassing all mere economic co-operation; and if so that she will renew her rural and her urban world, until each again blossoms

and fruits as did the village into the city life of old. Tree and Shrine, Parishad and Panchayet, have grown before now into Temple and Council, and may again. Etho-polity, culture, and art are not the finished products, the urban monopolies, the townsman now-a-days thinks them : on the contrary, their greatest renewals have come to him from the fields ; and will again.

This line of argument is I take it essentially that of Mukerjee's book ; and I submit to him as to his readers that it may be further elaborated in detail and in theory, and increasingly applied towards practice.

PATRICK GEDDES.

THE CIVIC EXHIBITION,
TOWNHALL, CALCUTTA,
December, 1915.

PREFACE

I HAVE attempted in the following pages to describe the main features of Indian industrial life, and to formulate a programme of Indian economic expansion. I have felt the relativity of economic life and institutions, the significance of which is unfortunately not fully understood in our country. In India we have heard and seen enough of theories as well as practices attempting to force economic systems and methods which have not been wholly successful in the West, but which are unsuited to the socio-economic traditions of the country, and to its geographical and historical conditions : and the time has come for a clear analysis of the regulative social and ethical ideals of India, to which all economic institutions must be adapted. It is true that some of these ideals themselves will be and are being changed by contact with Western industrialism, but we need to analyze the nature and extent of this change, and to judge whether this change will be permanent, or only temporary in its operation. Above all, we have to decide whether such changes will aid the expression of the Indian genius, of the particular phase of universal humanity which the Indian people are unfolding, or will tend to suppress and obliterate these. The investigations into the

various factors in Indian economics have followed the historico-comparative method, the only right method in all sociological inquiry, and will, it is hoped, as a study in comparative and applied economics, be a contribution to the science of pure economics, widening its basis, and extending the domain of its data.

An attempt has been made to examine the socio-economic data derived from caste and the joint family as well as the economico-religious ideas and institutions, and the peculiarities and special features of Indian consumption, which are still living forces in Indian economic life. I have made an inductive study of the principal cottage and village industries, which are still holding their own with a remarkable vitality and exhibit in their nature a striking though not perfect adaptation to their environment, and are ultimately sustained by the moral ideas and ideals it involves. I have also studied the machinery of exchange and distribution which this Indian industrial system has evolved, the characteristic methods of trade, transport and credit which are adapted to and subserve the productive organization. Finally, there have been indicated in a general way the lines of Indian economic advance, showing the scope of the factory, the workshop, and the cottage industry in the industrial progress of the future. Though I have touched more slightly upon Indian agriculture, which I hope to discuss in a future work, I have examined and pointed out remedies for the decline of the village, and of rural life generally, which in India is now so grave and urgent a problem for the economist and the statesman. In the concluding chapters I have sought to discover the economic

message of India breathed forth by her immemorial institutions, and its meaning and significance for the economic unrest of the modern age.

My study of Indian economic phenomena and problems has led me to certain conclusions about the economic future of India which differ in some respects from the two rival theories now current. One of these formulated by what may be called "the arts and crafts school" can find no place for large production in the scheme of Indian economic development; while the other is equally extreme in preaching the impossibility of small production. My conclusion is between the two extremes; and I am convinced that in sound economic development both large and small industries have their proper scope and importance, and one need not exclude the other.

As a student of Indian Economics, I cannot but express my obligation to Ranade's *Essays*, which is the pioneer work on the subject. The different papers submitted to the Indian Industrial Conferences are published every year and contain a mine of information on technical and industrial subjects which I have occasionally drawn upon. Sir Theodore Morison's *Industrial Organization of an Indian Province* has been specially useful to me as regards the methods of economic investigation it has followed. For the regulative conceptions of Indian economic life the brochure entitled *An Introduction to Indian Economics* of my brother, Dr. Radhakumud Mookerji, M.A., Ph. D., author of *A History of Indian Shipping*, is an admirable production; while his paper on *Lines of Indian Industrial Advance* is specially valuable for the light it throws on the proper place and importance of the

small industry in Indian economic life. The monographs published by Government in different provinces on village industries and handicrafts, though mainly descriptive in their character, have been very useful: they are, however, unfortunately too few in number.

But the main source of my information is my own first-hand study and actual investigation on the spot of the cottage and village industries and the systems of trade, credit and transport. I have had to go from village to village in a laborious search for facts and details regarding rural life and labour which have hardly been recorded by any previous observation. The difficulties one has to experience in collecting such data from our artisan and trading classes are characteristic. One has to fight not only their ignorance and superstitions, but also their fears and suspicions. The real sources of information are accessible only to sympathy and fellowship with simple labour and life, in its distress and sufferings, its aims and aspirations.

For some of these data I am indebted to artisans and labourers who are taught in my night schools, rural and urban, and also to agriculturists and traders who are members of Co-operative Credit Societies in villages established by me as Honorary Organizer of Co-operative Societies in the district of Murshidabad. I have been able to collect, after Engels' method, the statistics of consumption partly through them as well as through friends and pupils of Krishnath College, Berhampore, who took the trouble of filling up the tables I prepared for this purpose: and to them my best thanks are due.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Dr. Brajendra

Nath Seal, M.A., Ph.D., King George V. Professor of Philosophy in the Calcutta University, for his invaluable suggestions given from time to time, and his deep interest in my work. My acknowledgments are also due to Dr. Radhakumud Mookerji, M.A., Ph.D., and Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar, M.A., author of the *Science of Education*, for revision of the book, and assistance rendered by them in various ways; as also to the writer of the introduction.

Chapters I. and II., Book III., and Chapter IX., Book IV., were approved by the Calcutta University for the Premchand Roychand Research Studentship. Some of the other chapters were originally submitted as papers to the Indian Industrial Conference, and the Provincial Co-operative Conference, Bengal. My thanks are due to those by whose kind permission I am reproducing them here. I should also express my grateful acknowledgments to the Editors of the *Modern Review*, the *Indian Review*, the *Hindusthan Review*, the *Modern World*, the *Wealth of India*, the *Dacca Review*, the *Vedic Magazine and Gurukula Samachar*, the *Collegian*, and the *Calcutta University Magazine* for the courtesy of their permission to reproduce different portions of the work which originally appeared in these journals. My special thanks are due to Mr. Ramananda Chatterji, M.A., of the *Modern Review*, for the greater portion of this work appeared in his journal.

RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE.

BERHAMPORE, MURSHIDABAD,
March, 1914.

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Numbers

Lakh = 100,000 Crore = 100 lakhs

Money

1 anna = 1 penny
 16 annas = 1 rupee = 1s. 4d.
 15 rupees = £1 sterling

Weight (Bengal)

1 seer = 2 lbs. avoirdupois
 40 seers = 1 maund = 80 lbs.
 28 maunds = 1 ton

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