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The Integrated Life*

THE most significant feature of the Twentieth Century is the incredible fact that the temper, tenor and tempo of man's life have been altered to a greater extent than in the few thousand years since the dawn of human civilisation. While human thought, literature and religion can be traced to immemorial times and historically to a few thousand years before the birth of Christ, scientific knowledge is a few hundred years old and more precisely traced to the age of Newton. The applications of science came much later and technology is essentially a product of the Twentieth Century, altering the pace and perhaps the face of human civilisation as never before.

Let us first review the nature of the changes that have affected human life in this century. They are essentially new methods of transportation and communication and a deeper knowledge and consequent control over natural forces and biological systems. We wish to understand the impact of these on the mind of man and the course of human civilisation. Is it possible to assimilate these to exalt his powers and to make life on earth more meaningful and purposeful? Would the comforts from science improve the quality of life which Shakespeare enjoyed and Milton experienced in their times?

Though the Industrial Revolution started in the eighteenth century resulting in many mechanical contrivances, including the Railways, it was the invention of the automobile at the beginning of this century that for the first time changed the pace of human life. Mass production due to the great American business houses of Ford and General Motors brought the auto-

mobile within the reach of the average man. It was the beginning of a new sense of freedom, a new desire for possession, a 'democratisation of affluence' which altered time honoured concepts of social structure. Though the democratic way of life had established itself in England for over three centuries it became an economic reality only with mass production of goods and widespread availability of the good things of life.

Even greater changes to human life came through rapid means of communication of messages. The telephone and the radio broke down the barriers of inaccessibility and democratised communication of ideas bringing the entire world, the people of various nations and climes within hearing distance of one another. With the growth of the Radio and Television, mass communication of news was possible and one part of the world became aware of the happenings in the other, almost instantaneously, with the 'speed of light.' This brought a keener sense of awareness and a desire for the advanced countries to communicate with the less fortunate which could now hope for a better future. Man's attitude to life changed as anyone could aspire for success by the exercise of his talents. This led to the growth of mass education for the million, through the rise of new universities. While Oxford and Cambridge, Harvard and Yale still retained their prestige, all over the U.S., England and Europe, University education became available to everyone. While a Prince of Wales could reside at Madingley Hall and study in Cambridge, the son of a worker or a fisherman also could get his education in the Redbrick Universities, which soon rivalled in quality and prestige the Ivy League centres of learning. So the new aristocracy was born, based on merit and talent, initiative and enterprise; the greatest gift of the new

world to the old.

This desire for universal advancement also bred a new socialistic philosophy, resulting in the Soviet revolution in the 1920's. With the rise of the USSR the world was driven into two groups—one believing in the individual initiative for raising the social level of the many and the other in the cooperative enterprise of the many to improve the status of the individual. But the objectives were the same—equality of opportunity—where the worker in Detroit and the peasant in Russia aspired for the same privileges as those that hitherto belonged to the more fortunate in birth and blood. This perhaps is the greatest revolution in human aspirations since the beginning of human society.

More spectacular changes came with the invention of the airplane and the development of aviation. Though the first airplane was constructed in the early part of the twentieth century, it was only by 1930 that travel by air became a normal means of transport. The second world war brought the airplane to technical perfection when it was felt that it is safer to cross the oceans by air than travel by taxi in Tokyo or Paris. Transportation of millions of people brought a new factor into human life since geographical barriers disappeared. Nations which were at war with one another were now having peaceful commerce, as Tennyson's precient vision of aerial argosies became a reality. The Lufthansa boasted of service to New York and the Pan American advertised the cultural attractions of Germany. Japan which had aspired to be the master of the Orient, was now running

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an airline round the world. Thus a peaceful, cultural and social confrontation among different races and peoples of different nations became the order of the day. It is impossible to distinguish in atmosphere Heathrow from JFK or Schipol from Haneda. In turn this brought in its wake the growth of international hotels and there seems to be no more Indian atmosphere at Bombay Sheraton than French milieu at the Paris Hilton. Added to this came the growth of multinational companies employing personnel of different nationalities. How does the Indian employed in the IBM in Australia, the French executive of the General Motors Office in Germany and the British salesman of Toyota in Argentina, feel about nationalism? Is it not incredible that the United Nations organisation is located in metropolitan New York and one can vote against America, right in the heart of Manhattan? All this has been possible only with the growth of airways, rapid means of communication and dissemination of news.

On top of all these came the release of atomic energy, a source of apparently unlimited power and uncontrolled possibilities. This invested man with the power to make a heaven of earth or a hell on earth. As dazzling an achievement was the conquest of space when man landed on the moon in 1969. We must consider ourselves fortunate to have been able to witness on television, in the cushioned comfort of our living rooms, this man-made phenomenon denied even to Archimedes and Copernicus, Galileo and Newton who set in motion the great scientific revolution.

Coextensive with these developments have been the advances in electronics and their incredible consequence, the versatile computer, which stimulates and complements the functions of the human brain in storing information and making complex calculations. It is still subservient to the human brain which is invested with indefinable but understandable attributes—freewill, imagination consciousness, conception, sensitivity and perception.

With all these developments, the great question which concerns us is the relationship of the individual to society. Is there a conflict between the concepts of the development of individual on the one hand and the well being of society on the other? It is these two cultures, the culture of the individual

and that of society which have to be brought in harmony, not so much scientific culture on the one hand and religious and social on the other. This has brought about a 'cold war' between the 'two worlds', with the third groping for its own place under the sun. We have the right to hope that these peoples will come together for they have fought for a common cause and won the bloodiest war in history, to lift the curse of Hitler from the brows of men. More recently we have heard that the Russian and American cosmonauts had a rendezvous in outer space and the day may not be far off when they will strive to live in harmony on this solid earth.

Science has come to stay and there is no alternative to accepting the material consequences of human thought. What man can do is just to direct the flow of this new momentum and energy, this new power and vitality, for the advancement of the human race. The impact has been so sudden that there is bound to be confusion which we are witnessing at the present time even after two world wars. But the ingenuity of man is equal to meet this challenge. Every age produces its prophets and very soon, before the twentieth century runs its course, the world will find a balance between rationalism on the one hand, sentiment and emotion on the other.

What distinguishes the living from the material is consciousness. What distinguishes the human being from the animal is the additional power to decide between right and wrong, that is, the ethical and moral perception. This is the logic behind the creation of the human brain or else the Universe would be just a galaxy of stars governed by physical laws—unheard, unseen and unfelt. There must be a plan behind the creation of life and particularly human life. Man has been invested with the power of thought, with consciousness and awareness, and with a freewill for action, to control and harness the material forces of the Universe. It is this exercise of the free-will that determines the course of civilisation and in such exercise, man must have a code of ethics and morality. If Einstein had refused to think, the course of the world war would have been different for there would have been no atomic energy either for destructive or for constructive purposes. If Edison or Marconi had taken to farming, different parts of the world would still be isolated from one another. If Valmiki had not written the Ramayana and Christ had refused to preach, the

world would be like a pilotless plane with action and motion but no sense of purpose or direction.

With the impact of science, it looks as if there is a need for a change in the concept of ethics and morality but examining carefully it is not particularly essential since man is animated by the same emotions and feelings from time immemorial and his biological evolution from infancy to old age has remained unaltered. The infant still has to be bred in the nurse's arms and the school-boy has to learn and acquire knowledge so that he becomes aware of the world he lives in. The youth must desire a partner for companionship in his journey through life. In middle age, one should acquire maturity which ripens into wisdom in later years. Finally at old age—the second childhood—one must again be taken care of by those who surround him. That is why the integrated family was a hall-mark of a great civilisation. The appurtenances of modern life must be adapted, absorbed and assimilated to make man's life more intense and purposeful without distorting this rhythm of human existence. Imagine what a confused world we would have if human life can be unnaturally extended to hundreds of years. It would imply a greater length of middle and old ages, creating more conflicts and pressures, making selfishness more secure, greed more insatiable and tyranny more prolonged. It is a Hitler or a Bormann who would aspire for the 'Elixir of life'—Oh, what a thought—and not a Schweitzer or a Gandhi. In the Hindu epics it is the *Rakshasa* (the Devil) who aspired for infinite life while the benevolent monarchs of Raghuvamsa knew when to love, when to strive, when to rule and when to leave. A Shakespeare and a Thyagaraja write their immortal verse and song and shuffle off their mortal coils as *Krihakaryas* on completion of their appointed tasks.

We shall take four examples of integrated lives, though not completely so as in an ideal case, those of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sir Winston Churchill, Albert Einstein and Robert Oppenheimer.

The driving forces in Nehru's life were exalted emotion, respect for his great father, devotion to his country, passion for its progress, unswerving loyalty to his Guru, Mahatma Gandhi, an extraordinary faith in science, adherence to ethical principles not only in personal life but in national and international affairs. One cannot think of Nehru signing secret treaties or going back on time-honoured agreements just for the

sake of national exigencies. His idealism was woven into his life and his conduct was animated by it. Though an unswerving patriot who believed in non-violent struggle against the proud British empire, he was a universalist at heart and in deed.

Sir Winston Churchill can be reckoned as one of the greatest men of this century, a 'well-integrated' personality in the finest sense of the term. He was proud of his country, his language, his environment, everything that England stood for as described by Shakespeare through the words of John of Gaunt. He knew that science and technology would determine the course of the war. An aristocrat by temperament, he was a democrat in faith and in practice. Can there be a greater demonstration of the faith than the manner in which he stepped down just at the hour of victory at the Potsdam Conference? Tough and unyielding to the point of destroying Hitler and Nazi tyranny to their last vestiges he was essentially driven by higher emotions of patriotism and ideas of universal brotherhood, may be according to his concept of imperial magnanimity.

Albert Einstein represented the transcendence of human and creative contemplation and along with this a natural lovable humility, another name for deep unruffled confidence. Before he became great and the world knew of him, he was contemplating with the true assurance that something worthwhile will emerge from deepest thought. He was just the same in mood and temperament after he became a living legend of the human race. His loose shapeless sweater was a symbol of that simplicity which goes with true greatness.

Robert Oppenheimer represented the pragmatism of the new world and the wide humanity of a universalist. He understood the whole of physics and perhaps that is the reason why his creative work did not have the seminal quality of Bohr's or Heisenberg's. He was invested with the responsibility of a task, unprecedented in its nature, unlimited in its objective and unpredictable in consequences, the release of atomic energy. He achieved it within a period of five years—both a triumph and tragedy for the human race which must learn how to master it. He found his haven at the Institute for Advanced Study where he inspired the loyalty of scientists gifted with powers of thought greater than his own.

The examples I have cited are integrated lives but with some sense of

incompleteness, inherent in mortal humans. The ideal of course is described in the Ramayana which opens in transcendent beauty with the definition of an integrated man and the twenty four thousand verses which follow later described the story of such integrated life. However, in the real world it is not possible to attain all these in a single person—Wordsworth's sweet calm and love of nature, Goethe's luminous view of life, Milton's impregnable faith in the Maker, Shakespeare's knowledge of human nature and his gift of diction, Lincoln's sense of rectitude, Jefferson's concept of freedom, Churchill's pride in his country and love of his language, Nehru's defiance of tyranny and passion for progress, Gandhi's adherence to truth and non-violence, Schweitzer's concern for human suffering, Thyagaraja's sublime devotion, Paramahansa's awareness and detachment, Vivekananda's enlightenment, Einstein's genius for creative contemplation, Bohr's perception and unrivalled intuition, Oppenheimer's understanding of science and sense of achievement, Feynman's brilliance and exuberant vitality, Neil Armstrong's courage based on confidence in science and technology. Even if they co-exist in peace among the many it will be a happy harmonious world endowed with the triple gift of God to sustain human life—*Gnana*, intellect and knowledge, *Bhakti*, love and devotion, and *Karma*, action and evolution.

In answer to questions, Dr. Ramakrishnan said:

The facts of the development of astrology and the way in which astronomical calendars were computed in ancient India are accepted as achievements. However what I meant by science was the precise laws which science has discovered since the Newton era. Only in quantitative aspects you can harness the energy in the atom or other source. The laws of force between the atoms must be known in order to utilize the energy. Science has given the method of measuring these forces. In ancient India we had an intellectual awareness of these problems.

Another question he answered by saying that there are two attributes of life, one of consciousness and the other of finiteness. There has not been a case of infinite life. There is no meaning for life unless it is finite. There is another characteristic of life in man and that is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

Answering the question that biologists have come to the conclusion that evol-

ution is not merely blind but there is a design behind it, he said it is not particularly a discovery of biologists. Human being is invested with a brain such that not only the wisest will live but those who are not wise will also become wise. The idea behind propagating knowledge is the true enjoyment in bringing man in harmony with the environment. I believe this will be the purpose of all education in the future. Especially we are all heirs to a rich religious tradition and the intellectual tradition which science brought to us.

Answering another question he said, 'I meant the distinction between moral right and wrong and it is just religion. This cannot be taught by science. Science can discover only the relation between mass and energy. The scientist can even put a bomb in our hands. But it is the power to distinguish between right and wrong which is not taught through physical laws. These laws will not tell you how to use your freewill.'

On the question of whether the demarcation between science and religion is going to vanish, he said: By emphasizing on the need for integrated life charged with humanity he envisaged such developments.

There is nothing impossible for human thought to achieve. It is his favourite idea that it is not necessary to perform an experiment in every case of scientific discovery in order to come to that conclusion. Even if there were no experiments performed with regard to proof of theories such as those of Einstein, he could have come to the same conclusion regarding the velocity of light in much the same way as he had done them.

Man gifted with the power of thought can solve many problems with the right exercise of his freewill. Persons like the Buddha were able to conceive of things which we are not able to discover by ourselves. So problems of right and wrong can be solved by human thought.

If there are material methods of changing the process of the mind, say by radiation or other means, then those methods can be equally well employed for making us devilish. Even then the problem of the exercise of freewill in the right direction will exist. Man can use the brain to think what he should do with the brain. □

The Editor sincerely regrets the delay in publishing this issue of the Bulletin due to unavoidable circumstances.