

Dr. N. A. Baloch

TRADITION, EDUCATION AND PROGRESS

'Readiness to accept new traditions against the ones which are already inhibited generates a setting for new developments. However, traditions defend the society and its institutions against illconsidered innovations. It is also generally recognized and acknowledged that 'human beings have predilection both to seek change and to reject it.'

The developing economies have their own traditions. Some of them may be progressive, reinforcing the process of growth and development; a few others may be retarding the pace of social and economic development. It is essential to identify the factors retarding progress and those that create conditions conducive for the promotion and propagation of progressive measures for development.

Role of Tradition

It is to be recognized that TRADITION plays an important role in the political, social, educational and economic development of a nation; therefore, it becomes necessary to explore how it can serve to accelerate the pace of economic, educational and social progress. When a nation comprises of a group or groups of people having like institutions, customs, traditions and a sense of social homogeneity and mutual interest, the pace of progress both in the fields of educational and economic development and social organization is likely to be accelerated. However, in the countries which are multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-racial lack of homogeneity of language and culture may tend to retard the pace of development, especially if group conflicts pull and push in different directions.

DEVELOPMENT refers to the powers of simultaneous development of the physical and material resources as well as the human resources of a country. In countries which are multi-cultural in character, conscious and positive efforts have to be made to evolve strategy of development that not only looks to the effective use of resources and development of potential capacities but also helps in resolving tensions and promoting harmonious adjustments. It may also aim at the discovery of strategic

factors that are likely to generate impulses leading to cooperation and minimising tension between groups with divergent or conflicting interests.

'It is possible that a total homogeneity may be lacking and a few sensitive spots continue to persist, but if they do not assume a disturbingly large magnitude to upset the equilibrium, one may not be too much worried about them.' However, if there are repeated protests from the conflicting groups and the disharmony persists over a long period, it is worthwhile studying the whole problem and resolving the issues.

Normally, educational and socio-economic development should emerge out of the existing traditions of a society. Tradition can provide the substance on which the new trends are based, and educational and socio-cultural changes emanating out of a viable traditional base will ensure continuity and progress. Also Tradition needs to be interpreted as one of the means to the progress of social and educational development rather than as an end in itself. If a tradition helps to generate the process of development in the new realities of life, it may be accepted as such; if it does not, it may be adapted to the new realities of life by giving it a more pragmatic and future oriented interpretation.

Let us take Religion, the most significant constituent of Tradition, which is often taken for granted to be a factor hindering or retarding the pace of development. No doubt, in those religions wherein the 'other-worldly' attitude is emphasised to the neglect of the world around us, or wherein accent is on contentment with one's lot or on renunciation of the miserable life on this planet, there will be but little response to the challenge of the realities of life. Yet even such extreme attitudes have yielded to the prospect of economic well-being, and that the religious communities have not necessarily lagged behind in economic development.

Islam offers a code of moral and social conduct that, on the one hand, provides incentives for hard work and on the other hand ensures fairplay and social justice to all those participating in the process of production and social interaction. Renunciation of the world is prohibited in Islam. Acquisition of earnings through occupational activities has been duly commended by the Holy Prophet in his well-known saying: "One who earns by working is a friend of God". The Holy Quran puts all premium on human effort: "Man can have nothing more than his effort". By his own example, the Prophet demonstrated success in business through honesty and hard work. Beside incentive for work, Islam has also laid down the norms of social justice, a matter of great concern for the present-day development economists who had neglected

this aspect of the problem in their earlier discussions and have realized its significance only recently.

Example may be cited of yet another component of Tradition having a significant bearing on the rate of growth and development, viz. the attitude of the people to innovation. Countries that had a tradition of adaptation to innovation have made remarkable headway in the field of educational, social and economic development. On the contrary, resistance to change particularly to adaptation to innovations, has tended to retard the rate of growth and development of the material and human resources in any economy.

Fortunately, Pakistan has demonstrated to be a progressive country as far as adaptation to improve innovational practices are concerned. The spread of the use of fertilizers is a case in point. Similarly, popularity of plant protection devices and a number of improved practices in the agricultural sector have been responsible for an enormous increase in the volume of agricultural production.

Educational Development

The historical perspective of Pakistan shows that in relation to educational and economic development, the colonial administrator had blamed Tradition as a scapegoat for his own failure, while the Pakistani administrator has remained indifferent to 'Tradition' in planning for educational development.

In most of the developing countries, including Pakistan, the existing systems of Education were founded on the pattern of foreign systems which aimed at presenting a different set of values than their own to the subject people. The colonial system of education in British India was purposely planned as an antithesis of the indigenous educational tradition, culture and religion.

It is also to be noted that when development in Education, or any other sector, is initiated *de novo*, it creates a tradition of its own which may not be necessarily superior to the previous one. The colonial system of education rejected the earlier tradition and founded a new one in its place which, among others, ingrained the following values and attitudes.

- (a) The people lost initiative in managing/advancing their own education. In the course of time, the belief was consolidated that nothing could be done unless it was done by the government.

- (b) The newly 'educated class' came to believe that all that was English/foreign, was superior to the native/local/traditional. Therefore, any further advance was impossible without the import of educational models and methods, experts and advisers, books and materials from England/abroad.
- (c) Education was meant for the higher classes of society and not for the masses, and that Higher Education was much more important for the country than Primary Education.
- (d) The earlier tradition of working *together* for the achievement of community objectives was replaced by working *individually* under the direction of the central authority for the achievement of the goals which were already fixed.

These elements, among others, became an integral part of the colonial educational tradition which has remained strongly entrenched in the post-independence era, and has not yet been successfully countered to achieve a breakthrough in educational development. By the turn of the fifties, an attempt was made by the Commission on National Education to devise a new system of national education for Pakistan. Along with its socio-cultural objectives, the Commission emphasized, for the first time, the role of new education as an investment in human resources. Later on, models of 'Pilot Schools' and 'Comprehensive Schools' were imported from abroad, but they did not survive in the new environment. The net gain came in the extension of opportunities for higher science/technical education and the setting up of the Engineering, Medical and Agricultural Colleges/Universities.

In retrospect, it would appear that while the colonial education aimed at producing men required for administration, the newly devised system of education resulting from the recommendations of the Commission on National Education went one step further, viz. producing the required personnel both for the administration and for the expanding economy. The structure and substance of the colonial education, however, remained unchanged.

So, the crises of values has persisted in Pakistani education. It is being felt, with sufficient justification, that primary schools and other common public educational institutions impart only 'instruction' which is also of a poor quality. There exist, albeit, the 'privileged institutions' where standard of 'instruction' is higher than that in the other institutions, but where "care is taken to build up a *cordon sanitaire* against all possibilities of infection from Pakistani tradition".

Modernization

The most important problem facing the Third World and therefore the majority of humanity is the problem of 'modernization', that is, the process of transforming traditional (agricultural/pastoral, peasant/tribal) societies into urban/industrial societies. "Industrialisation and urbanization may not be by themselves desirable objectives, but with a fast growing population and ever decreasing resources of food and employment, pressure on land and increasing poverty, it becomes essential to find alternate means of subsistence." The solution devised by the modern man which so far has not been superseded by any other is that a country may be industrialized in order to draw off surplus people from agriculture and pastoral/nomadic pursuits. Also, industrialization would enable the country to export goods and earn foreign exchange, and thus buy other necessities for the sustenance of the increased population.

The process of modernization in terms of industrialisation and urbanization was initiated in Pakistan in the early fifties when bulk of the migrating population was settled in the town/city areas which became centres for both the small scale and the heavy industries. Neglect of agriculture during the first three decades after independence and the limiting of facilities for better education to the town/city areas, brought a significant population shift from the rural to the urban areas in search for employment and better educational opportunities. Thus, the process of modernization in terms of urbanization also gained momentum under 'compulsive' factors rather than through proper planning.

With the spread of mass media—mainly radio, cinema, and television, modernization in terms of a 'psychological warfare' against traditional pattern of response to the more familiar socio-cultural life situations, has been augmented in the Third World with the increasing tempo of exciting news and exciting movies. It has come as a shock to the communities conditioned to the indigenous culture to see in the most modern media that people would dress in a way that left them half-naked and that they 'kissed' and 'killed' without restraint. Yet these communities are compelled to adjust themselves to this new 'cultural' experience in the process of 'modernization'. In effect, they are being subjected to a process of cultural conversion. As in other vast areas of the developing world so also in Pakistan, larger and larger sections of population are being familiarized, day by day, with these new gadgets of 'modernization'. In the context of 'tradition-cum-progress', implications of such

sudden 'exposure' call for studies both at national and international levels.

Education is fondly conceived as a panacea for all the ills of a developing society. It is considered as the one most effective agent in socio-economic change and progress. The experience of colonial education in Pakistan has not confirmed this hopeful dream of education *automatically leading* to social development or economic progress. It rather brought in social disintegration and economic frustration. The youth 'modernized' by 'modern' education in the native country is more often alienated from his native culture; in the process of 'advanced' education abroad, such an alienation is all the more accelerated. Losing his own cultural moorings, and qualities of adjustment in native environment, this new type of *highly educated* scholar/scientist has not been able to find any securities and satisfactions in his own country. Does this indicate the need for initiating a process of *de-education* in the developing countries?

The problem is compounded by a tendency at haphazard growth and a directionless 'national' system of education which produces a wrong kind of graduates for a developing country to absorb. Education is in fact the crucial factor for modernization of a developing country, and yet it is in this sphere that most blunders are made.

A Pakistani educator (the late Dr. I. H. Qureshi) had raised some pertinent questions in this context. "How can educationally backward countries with cultures other than those of the advanced countries ever succeed in catching up with the scientific, technological and intellectual progress of the world, if they cannot adopt the system of education that prevails in the countries that have achieved a high degree of progress? How can the developing countries of the Third World ever hope to shake off their backwardness if they are to limit their educational effort within the context of their own culture? If the system and—what is much more serious a matter—the experience of one country are not relevant in another country that possesses a different culture, can the less advanced countries ever gain from the progress in the sum-total of human knowledge?"

According to him the answer lies in 'adaptation' rather than 'wholesale adoption' and he cites the examples of Japan, Soviet Union and China as successful examples of adaptation and modernization. However, the solution cannot be over-simplified, because the basic 'motivation' and the sense of 'direction' will determine the nature and quality of adaptation.

Social Development

It appears as if Pakistan has responded to the challenge of technology, but we have not been able to cope with the problem of social organisation conducive to national integration. The pre-fabricated models of educational, social and economic development imported from outside have not paid full dividends.

When Tradition is used as vehicle/medium to teach basic concepts, develop desirable attitudes and impart requisite skills, the educative process would be viewed as relevant to the social and cultural values and the needs of the society and, therefore, the people would participate in educational activities without fear of alienation. Also, social and material development must keep pace and be coextensive, if an equilibrium is to be maintained to prevent social imbalance and eventual disorder. With more income in hand and less of socio-cultural consciousness, a backward people are likely to become bad consumers putting in their earnings into perishable rather than productive pursuits. In turn, they lose the viability inherent in their cultural traditions, and seek alternatives which have little survival value. To be productive and enduring, the process of material development must assimilate and integrate social change at every stage.

In Pakistan, where prejudices of race, caste and colour are absent, social development should present, comparatively, less formidable problems. Difficulties arise mainly from ethnic and linguistic areas. The development and extensive use of common lingua franca in the form of a *Pakistani Urdu* as distinct from '*Classical Urdu*' is likely to break the linguistic barriers in not too distant a future. This will depend, in a large measure, upon a simultaneous development of Pakistani languages, viz. the vernaculars of the people used extensively in large and contiguous geographical areas. All the ethnic barriers cannot be broken immediately. The quickly developing systems of communication and more extensive employment opportunities in the different parts of the country, are promoting ethnic mobility; but, in the long run, it is the common base of a truly national education which can operate as an effective levelling factor towards greater social homogeneity.

Female education among the Muslim communities had lagged behind during the colonial period, but a substantial progress has been made during the post-independence era. There was no prejudice against female education in the Islamic tradition, but the indigenous social tradition, particularly of the middle class, continued to operate as a barrier which has to be finally broken. This can become possible by

providing separate higher educational institutions for women and not necessarily insisting to identify 'female education' with 'co-education'.

Education is a positive force for social change, but it can become effective only when the masses consciously participate in educational development activities at their own level. In a developing country like Pakistan where a vast majority of the people is illiterate, development in educational and social domains often poses a serious problem. The people feel that formal schooling is neither related to their immediate economic needs, nor does it fulfil their socio-cultural requirements: it rather alienates their sons and daughters from their own cultural tradition.

It is to be recognized that in Pakistan the masses of the people have not resisted the introduction of technology, and the modes of production have been considerably altered resulting in enormously enlarged production and substantially enhanced productivity. However, in the field of social organization the process of readjustment has been comparatively slow, mainly because of the cleavage between profession and practice in the policies and programmes of social action. A society committed to shape the ways of life on the basis of an ideology, must adopt appropriate strategies to reform the pattern of social interaction on ideological principles. It would also seem that in Pakistan it is partly the economic disparity which has retarded the process of social integration. Dualistic patterns of development have brought in protests from the aggrieved sectors and regions. The models of development have often neglected the code of social justice which constitutes a major premises under the Islamic approach to resolve conflicts in the process of social interaction.

The world is in quest of a New Socio-economic Order. The OLD order devoid of social justice will have to change yielding place to the NEW based on social justice. It is here that the West and the East, the developed and the developing countries could contribute their best to evolve new models of development based on social justice, which will promote harmony and minimize conflicts in human society.