

PEOPLE'S SELF-DEVELOPMENT*

- Md. Anisur Rahman

Abstract

Against the culture of deficit and dependent planning at the top, there have been and are popular initiatives which demonstrate a spirit of self-reliance and imaginative self-development efforts by the people. This lecture discusses the perceptions and premises of the underlying urges and vision of development, and contrasts these with the "liberal" and the "socialist" trends in development thinking.

As distinct from conventional perceptions of professionals, popular perceptions of development emphasise the value of organic life with nature, standing up and moving forward in communal solidarity, in search for life and self-determination, and the primacy of human dignity.

Popular initiatives of self-development achieve economic betterment by taking imaginative economic initiatives to the extent that they have access to economic resources, and when domestic and external structures permit this. But reality is not always favorable for significant economic improvement early enough, and a creative engagement for collectively tackling life's challenges is the more universal aspect of popular initiatives. Fulfilling one's creative potentials is also suggested to be the basic human need of people, and a creativist view of development is hence enunciated in terms of the development of human beings as creative beings, fulfilling their creative potentials in ever-newer ways. The creativist view of development is contrasted with the "consumerist" view of the liberal trend in development thinking which seeks to eradicate poverty in material terms. The consumerist and "have-not" orientation of such development discourse is suggested to have a negative motivational impact on the society.

The creativist view of development is traced to Karl Marx as far as scientific development discourse is concerned. But the Marxist view of the working class creating its own history got distorted in East European "socialism" which followed the Leninist theory of a vanguard Party of intellectuals to lead the socialist revolution. Mao Ze dong encouraged people's creative initiatives, to "break paths unexplored and scale heights yet unclimbed", rather than talking of poverty as the problem to be solved, and this positive and challenging invocation resulted in a spectacularly sustained process of self-reliant development of China with hard work and shared austerity, in the course of which material poverty of the people was also reduced significantly. But the question of a Party unaccountable to the people remained, and remains, unresolved.

People's self-development as a practical expression of the creativist view of development rejects dogmatism about collectivism as the ultimate emancipation of labour, and leaves the question to the organic evolution of people's collective search for life. It also rejects the notion of macro structural change as a prerequisite of people's self-development, which can start immediately as a process of collective enquiry and action for solving problems with self-determined priorities. It is also suggested that a political leadership which is not involved in promoting people's self-development before a macro-structural change will not have the competence for doing so after such a change.

People's self-development implies changing the relations of knowledge, to restore popular knowledge to a status of equality with professional knowledge and advancing "organic knowledge" as a part of the very evolution of life and not distanced from it. This offers a new role for intellectuals, in initiating "animation" work with the people to promote their collective self-enquiry and action.

1. Introduction

During the time I worked with Bangladesh Planning Commission (1972-74) I learnt two great lessons. One was the utter inadequacy of our professional

training as economists to suggest a viable path for the country's development. The other was that the best promise for development lay with the initiatives of the ordinary people.

Our failure as planners may perhaps be summed up as follows. The reasoning and calculations which we had learnt inevitably ended up with a huge resource deficit which could only be met, if at all, by massive foreign assistance. This implied some surrender, at least, of our autonomy as a sovereign nation; the country's economic structure also gets locked into a large import-dependence; this along with the debt burden would perpetuate the overall continued dependence on foreign assistance; the country's indigenous knowledge, skills and culture would be humiliated in the hands of the alien knowledge and culture embodied in foreign expertise and resources coming in on such a scale; and a beggar mentality rather than a spirit of dignified hard work would dominate the psychology of the society. As economists we were trained mainly in this kind of deficit and dependent "development" planning. We had not learnt how to plan the mobilisation of the human energy of the people, to develop with what we have, not with what we do not have.

While going through the agonising process of applying the above logic and calculations in our task as "development" planners, I was also fortunate to have had the opportunity to interact with a number of popular movements in the country in which the people's energy was being mobilised for development activities. I discussed some of these in my Farewell Address to the Planning Commission and elsewhere (Rahman 1974a, b). Let me mention here two popular initiatives which had a profound educative effect on me.

One was the Rangpur Self-reliance Movement (Rahman 1974b, 1977). When in 1973 I first visited the *Kunjipukur* village where this movement started, the villagers proudly showed me the development initiatives they had launched in various fields - e.g. agriculture, health, literacy, cottage industry. And they said:

“We want persons like you to visit us, to give us your advice, your blessings, and the dust of your feet. But we do not want money from anybody”.

I was intrigued, and asked how they had reached this extraordinary consciousness. They replied:

“We have discussed this question. We have realised that ours is a country of villages, and if villages want money from the government, either the government has to take from us and give us back, or beg for us from other countries. We do not want our beloved leader Bangobondhu to beg for us. So we decided not to ask anything from anybody”.

The other experience was a literacy movement in a few villages in Dinajpur (Rahman 1997). Here, the village youth mobilised the villagers for wiping out illiteracy from their villages, and did so in two to three months of innovative campaign. As a Member of the Planning Commission I had Education as one of my charges, and I had been supervising the calculations of my able colleagues as to how many new school buildings, teachers, literacy manuals, etc. were needed to promote literacy by a respectable percentage per annum. The input-output table was not very encouraging. The village youth, not yet trained in our kind of planning, found out how to solve this problem, and solved it without bothering us.

Unfortunately these two movements did not last long for reasons which I shall not discuss here. But initiatives like these are being taken in many countries in recent years, either "spontaneously" or by being "animated" and assisted by friendly quarters. People's self-development is emerging as a new urge and vision of elements of concerned intelligentsia, social activists and people's own ranks. In this lecture I propose to discuss the perceptions and premises of this urge and vision, and contrast these with two major trends in development thinking - one to be called the "liberal" trend, and the other the "socialist" trend - which have dominated the scene until now.

The discussion uses experiences not only in Asia but also in the other regions. Needless to say, Asian development has always been influenced by development thinking and practice elsewhere, and the people's self-development movement is also linking and developing solidarity across continents.

2. Popular Perceptions and Initiatives

Deepest popular urges

Some years back the programme which I am coordinating in the ILO¹ facilitated the coming together of a number of forest-based people's movements in India, to visit each other and reflect together in a series of workshops over a period of one year, to articulate a common position on the question of "forest, ecology and the oppressed". The result was a revealing statement (Das Gupta 1983) in which, among other things, there was a poignant commentary on the notion and actions of "elites" on development. In essence, the commentary was the following :

We lived with the forest as one organic whole - there was no separation between us and the trees, physically, culturally, emotionally, in a daily living and growing together². Then you came, with your notion of "development", and separated us. To you the forest was a "resource", and you could not even develop this resource as the forest is disappearing. We on the other hand did not count to you, and started becoming slum dwellers. We reject your notion of development and we want our life with the forest back. But we do not know how to achieve this. Your notion of development and your attempt to develop whatever it was, have destroyed even our hopes.

Where such elite efforts to promote "development" have not yet matured so that hope still exists, and the people have mobilised themselves for self-development, one finds glimpses of the people's perceptions and urges which embody what could be interpreted as their own vision of development.

¹ "Participatory Organisations of the Rural Poor" (PORP).

² cf. "my pain is entwined with the grass of the pathway which she treaded, and trembles with its breath" ("Ami Srabono akashey oi", a song of Rabindranath Tagore). By ignoring the organic relation with nature that we had, our "development" efforts have not only brought about the ecological crisis which we are lamenting today, but we are also destroying a vital part of ourselves.

A study of a popular movement of self-development in the Matabeleland region in Zimbabwe - the Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP) - presents the following insightful observation (Chavunduka 1985, p 1):

Significantly, the translation of the concept of development into *Sindebelle* (local language of Matabeleland) is "taking control over what you need to work with". The names of most of the ORAP groups also reflect these concerns. A few chosen at random are: *Siwasivuka* (we fall and stand up), *Siyaphambili* (we go forward), *Dingimpilo* (search for life), *Sivamerzela* (we're doing it ourselves), *Vusanani* (support each other and get up), ...

In apparently simple-minded words these popular articulations of people's collective self-identity reflect deep conceptualisations of popular aspirations. We have seldom been even interested in a genuine dialogue with the people to understand what their deepest aspirations are, and in seeking their contribution to a social articulation of the notion of development in which the people themselves must be considered as the most important actors.

What do the people do, when they get mobilised for self-initiated action? This depends, of course, on the situation in which the people find themselves.

The primacy of human dignity

The Bhoomi Sena movement of *adivasis* in Maharashtra, India which we studied in 1976-77 (Rahman *et al*, 1979) gave primacy to liberation from bonded labour - a question of human dignity, achieving which was the first step in their self-development. The *adivasis* then fought for land rights and implementation of the minimum wage law. With an intense self-reliant spirit the movement since then has focussed on cultural and political assertion of the *adivasis*, and assertion in particular of their autonomy of action in all spheres - i.e. their self-determination. The movement is avoiding getting into any kind of dependence on outsiders for their "development", even if this means a slower pace of economic development. To these *adivasis* development is, indeed, the very moving forward authentically, in the search for their own life.

In a different setting, human dignity has featured as a primary urge in some grass-roots mobilisation in Bangladesh also. Organisations of landless men and women created by the intervention of Nijera Kori, a rural development agency which does not offer any financial assistance to the people and promote their self-organisation, have not progressed much economically. But these landless groups consider their organisation to be a solid step forward in their lives. Among other results, as some of these landless groups told me when I visited them in 1984: *“The jotdar ("kulak"), the officials and the police can no longer humiliate us - they have to treat us with respect, because we are now organised.”* (Rahman, Personal diary)

For some organised women's groups in the landless categories with utterly meagre economic resources, the perception is even more telling :

We know that there is no easy and quick solution to our problem of food and clothing. But we as women did not even have the right to speak. In our organisation we can now meet and speak, and share and discuss our problems. We feel that we are now human beings. We look forward to our weekly meetings where we stand up and speak - we can thereby release ourselves as we have never been able to do before, and we now have the courage to speak the truth. (Rahman, Personal diary).

Economic self-development

Experiencing humanhood thus is a great leap forward, the first necessary step in anybody's development. But other mobilised people's groups have had better access to economic resources, some with small productive assets of their own, some acquiring rights to economic assets such as land or fishing water by collective struggle after getting mobilised, and some amongst them being also able to mobilise external resources like bank credit or donor finance. With these, they have taken initiatives to promote their socio-economic livelihood as well. I give two examples as illustrations only, one from Sri Lanka and one from Zimbabwe

Sri Lanka

"Animation" work³ was initiated in a project in 1978 by a team of development workers in a number of villages in Sri Lanka, to stimulate the "poorer" sections of villagers to get together, undertake social enquiries about their stagnant economic condition, and to take collective action to improve their situation. In this animation work no financial resources were offered to the people. A group of coir yarn producers, after a period of collective enquiry about their economic situation, looked for some way to build a saving fund to break their dependence on the village traders who appropriated the bulk of their surplus product. There was no possibility of generating much surplus by saving out of their meagre incomes. But they hit a novel idea of saving in kind. The source of saving was found in the raw material for yarn supplied by the traders to whom the producers were obliged to sell the processed product. The trader applied a certain ratio to calculate the quantity of yarn that a producer must surrender to him against the raw material supplied, i. e. Y quantity of yarn for X quantity of raw material. Often, however, the producer was able to produce a slight excess (say Z) over and above the required amount, i.e. a production of Y+Z with X raw material. But they were not obliged to do this. The group decided now to produce and save this excess and, moreover, to make this saving in the best quality yarn.

After about a month the group collected the savings thus made by the members. The total savings far exceeded the expectations - almost all members had saved much more than they had originally expected. There was a sense of achievement; a confidence in the potential of collective action. The group sold this excess product in the open market bypassing the village trader, got 30 per cent higher price than the village trader was giving them, and the essential breakthrough for their forward economic journey was made. The message soon spread to other

³ "Animation" is a term being used by grass-roots activists to denote the promotion of self-esteem, self-awareness and self-researched knowledge in the people, and to stimulate them in taking collective initiatives of their own for their self-development (Tilakaratna 1987). This includes "conscientisation" as Paulo Freire conceived it, viz. a process "in which men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the sociological reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality" (Freire 1972, p 51n). A crucial challenge of animation work is to promote genuine self-reliance of the people and avoid promoting their dependence on animator. This challenge has been discussed in depth in a recent workshop of trainers of animators (Rahman, 1989b). The term "animation" as it is being used in contemporary grass-roots work has no relation with the concept of "animation rurale" once in vogue in Francophone Africa. See also concluding section.

producers who got stimulated to form their own groups for collective efforts of similar and other natures.

All groups viewed the creation of a collective fund as the first step. As the funds grew in size, the groups started initiating some self-reliant actions. They often started with small actions which they felt confident about, e.g. purchase of some capital equipment for the use of group members thereby saving the hiring charges they paid earlier; giving out small loans from the collective fund to the members to meet urgent needs such as illnesses thereby reducing or eliminating the need to borrow from money-lenders at exorbitant interest rates; bulk purchases of some consumer goods (e.g, rice, kerosene, coconuts, soap etc.) and agro-inputs (such as fertiliser and chemicals) and distribution among the members at prices lower than those charged by the village traders which also freed them from trading malpractices such as under-weighting and adulteration of quality; and mutual exchange of labour in cultivation work which also fostered their group spirit.

Gradually they moved on to launch a further series of self-reliant actions of a wide variety. These included actions on the consumption front, expanding their activities to procure and distribute a whole range of basic consumer goods; actions on the production front, cutting down their cultivation costs through a series of collective efforts, using spare labour time to cultivate common plots of land as a means of increasing their collective fund, diversifying crop patterns to reduce narrow specialisation and to introduce a greater measure of stability into their incomes, reversing technologies to reduce dependence such as replacing the tractor by animal power and chemicals by organic fertiliser; action on the marketing front, devising collective marketing schemes, exploring and discovering new market outlets, forming wider marketing organisations of their own by joint actions of several village groups to obtain control of public markets hitherto dominated by a few traders, storing a part of the crop to take advantage of better prices; increasing the value of the produce by processing; initiating thrift and credit schemes of their own, and also establishing links with public banks and obtaining bank credit by demonstrating their sense of purpose and credit worthiness. The stimulation also spread to wage labourers who formed groups of their own, to initiate cooperative consumer, thrift and credit activities; collective struggle and action for access to land and other productive assets; joining

producer groups by switching over from the sale of labour power to farming on a part-time or full-time basis; collective farming when they succeeded in gaining access to some land, and so on.

The initiative has by now spread to fourteen locations (village clusters, 10-40 villages in a cluster) in different parts of the country. People's organisations which have federated into higher level units are taking up broader developmental functions such as in areas like housing, health and sanitation. Experiment is being initiated now to prepare total development plans involving resource surveys and mobilisation of the people's own resources for comprehensive development effort, and negotiation with the authorities and private development agencies, asserting that local development should fit into the people's development plans rather than the other way around. (Tilakaratna 1984, 1985).

Zimbabwe

Animation work was initiated in Matabeleland province in Zimbabwe in 1981 by a team of social activists, which resulted in the formation of people's groups in the villages. These groups spent a lot of time discussing their situations, problems, needs and what they wanted to do. Village groups federated into "associations". The "Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress" (ORAP) mentioned earlier, became the apex body of the network with the majority of its members including the chairperson coming from the ranks of the ordinary villagers, and a team of professionals in its staff to assist them. Today ORAP is one of the most vibrant cases of people's mobilisation for their self-development in South-East Africa. As of September 1989 it has groups in more than 600 villages, with the membership of a group varying from about 50 to 100; between 40-50 "umbrellas", and fourteen "associations".

A wide variety of group activities have been launched - e.g. carpentry, net wire making, sewing, building, basketry, wood carving, livestock grazing, school uniform making, vegetable gardening, poultry keeping, sisal and cement sheet making, knitting, mat-making, ox-yoke making, baking, grinding mills, food storage, water and sanitation, etc. Most of the activities have been initiated at the group level, with some at the inter-group level. The people continuously review

their experiences critically. Two review sessions in 1989 came to the conclusion that the village groups were too big for effective participation by the member families in the group deliberations, choice of group activities and in their implementation, and were being dominated in many cases by a few individuals with a more "project-management" orientation. It was accordingly decided to create a smaller unit called the "family unit", meaning a collective of a smaller number of families (men, women and children all together) - 5 to 12 families or so. The family units first take up collective activities from which the benefits to the member families are direct and immediate: members of a family unit are mobilising their labour to construct for each member household some of the basic amenities prioritised by them - e.g. well for drinking water, sanitary latrine and improved bath, improved kitchen, etc.

An imaginative development is taking place at the Association level - the creation of "development centres". A development centre is a centre where ORAP communities come together to deliberate, plan and consolidate their development efforts. A development centre is located in a physical space where the people construct an assembly hall for mass deliberations; a market place to sell their products, also serving as a place for interaction, exchange and discussion among the people on their on-going development; and "workshops" in various technical areas - e.g. bakery, building, blacksmithing, tinsmithing, mother and child care, etc., to experiment with and develop "appropriate technology", combining the indigenous skills of the people with "modern" knowledge to serve the community's real needs, in the process upgrading the people's indigenous skills.

ORAP itself ran a drought relief programme during the last drought, transporting grains from surplus to deficit areas buying from the former and selling at cost price to the latter. With the experience of the drought, ORAP is now giving high priority to developing a comprehensive food and water programme with a 4-point strategy : recourse to traditional seeds and fertilisers which have a lower risk factor than the modern ones; emphasis on quantity and variety of the foods produced; improved food storage and food banks in the villages; and improved water storage and local irrigation schemes. (Rahman 1989a)

3. Development Philosophy

The above, and numerous other cases that are known, indicate that the mobilisation of the people's collective energy generates imaginative solutions to the economic problem alone - production, distribution, marketing, skills training, promoting social welfare and social security and, along with all these, the problem of employment - which are not conceived in or available to professionally designed and managed economic development projects and programmes. However, my point is not to highlight in particular the economic dimensions of people's self-development. Some of the popular efforts which have found ways of significant economic betterment within relatively short periods may be the more fortunate ones, and many countries may not have such possibilities to reduce economic poverty significantly in the short-to-medium run, as discussed below.

The problem of mass poverty

As a Member of the Bangladesh Planning Commission I had made some calculations on the kind of improvement we could most optimistically expect to have in the incomes of the masses of the country's population over a medium--to-long term. I quote below from a submission I had made in March 1972 to the then Prime Minister:

Bangladesh remains one of the world's poorest countries, and will take a long time to meet the aspirations of its people for a decent economic life. Under normal conditions, the income per head in Bangladesh would have been in the order of Rs. 400 a year in 1972, or about Rs. 33 a month. The devastation of the economy by the war has brought it down, perhaps somewhere between Rs. 20 and 25 a month. If income per head grows at the rate of 5 per cent per year from now on, it will take close 20 years for it to reach Rs. 50 per month; for this, total income will have to grow at the rate of 8 per cent or so in view of a high rate of population growth, and such high growth rate in income would be an achievement by any standard ... But even Rs. 50 a month would hardly be a tolerable level of income in absolute terms; in relative terms this would be even less so as international consumption standards would be rising all the time, and hence aspirations all over the world,... As long as some people's income remain above the

average, rightly or wrongly, it will take longer for the average income of the masses to reach the figure of Rs. 50 a month or whatever else may be postulated, than for the national average to reach the same In short, the possibility of meeting the aspirations of the people in the short run does not exist, and this is not the problem the government is facing today in any meaningful sense. The problem instead is how to carry the suffering people of Bangladesh through a long and extremely hard journey to the realization of their aspirations within the framework of a stable social order (Rahman, 1972).

With such perspective, I had joined many other elements in the society, in particular from the ranks of freedom fighters including the students, in advocating "shared austerity" to prevent the society from falling apart from a scramble for personal appropriations of undue shares of the tiny national "cake", and to stimulate the society in a mobilisation for social reconstruction with positive values (Rahman 1973). We failed in this regard, and this is where, in my assessment, we failed fundamentally.

The basic problem that we faced was not special to Bangladesh. For many countries in a state of mass economic "poverty" and "unemployment" there may not be an early enough "cure", in terms of technological and/or social management possibilities with available resources, except for a specially small country which can be "lifted" quickly by external assistance coupled with its own resources. And for any given country it should be difficult to predict or promise a significant reduction of mass poverty in the near future in view of many factors which are not within the control of the society no matter how mobilised its people are, including internal and external resistances that should be expected to the very effort to promote people's mobilisation and self-determined development. In this respect, the women's groups in Bangladesh referred to earlier may have shown a better perception of the problem than those development professionals who theorise about reduction of mass poverty, and political forces who promise so generously. We have seen three "decades of

development" and for most of such countries the problem of mass "poverty and unemployment" has aggravated, or in any case appears to be intractable⁴.

In this sense, viewing the "development" problem as many quarters do in terms of eradication of (economic) "poverty", providing to the population ("entitlements" to) the "basic needs", etc., is liable to raise aspirations more than can be fulfilled for any given generation. And this raises an operational question of social motivation to work constructively for the realisation of such a goal. As suggested above, the first step toward a possible solution of the problem requires a constructive cooperation of those - the present generation" - who may hardly be a significant material beneficiary of the solution. But the operational development problem concerns this very generation, which has to be motivated to participate in a social endeavour toward what may be at best a gradual eradication of poverty from which this generation itself may benefit very little. The theoretical economist's answer to this question - and I have myself been a party in this intellectual game playing - is to conceive an "inter-temporal social utility function" of "infinite time horizon", and ask the present generation(s) to feel happy because its sacrifices would maximise this utility function. But we have not considered how precisely the mother will explain this utility function to her hungry and shivering child who is, furthermore, attracted by the toys of the elite's son. Failing this, the mother may have to steal, or try other devious ways of acquiring some privileges for her child at the expense of others. There go the social values, and the society gets into a race for private aggrandisement by depriving others, in which only a minority can win at the expense of the majority⁵. And as we see today in so many countries, the very concept of the nation state in the "liberal" political philosophy as a guardian of society and trustee for its development (and for the future generations) gives way to attempts

⁴ Much was expected of Vietnam, after this small "poor" nation humbled the world's mightiest war machine in an epic military struggle. One-and-a-half decade from then the Chairman of the State Planning Commission reported to the National Assembly of December 23-29, 1987, that the socio-economic situation was "continuously worsening"; unemployment was a growing problem and a cause of "greater social instability"; the living conditions of the working people and the armed forces were "very difficult" and even "serious" in some areas; and "social negativism" had developed. (Keesing's Record of World Events, May 1988).

⁵ Such individualistic motivation has in some countries generated a dynamic entrepreneurial class which has taken a society "forward"; but this has not necessarily been a solution to the poverty problem.

by elements of the society to grab state power to transform the state also into a “private enterprise” for maximising personal aggrandisements as fast as possible, by depriving the masses of the present generation as well as by mortgaging the future of the society.

I suggest that a focus on economic needs and economic "poverty", a culture of development discourse that becomes preoccupied with what the people do not have, gets trapped in the negative thinking and dependence orientation that this generates, rather than motivating the society to become constructively engaged in moving forward. With a constructive engagement, the people show imaginative ways of progressively fulfilling their needs and urges. This includes, naturally, their need and urge for economic betterment. However, in view of what has been said above, it is the constructive engagement rather than economic achievements *per se*, which is the more universal aspect of popular initiatives - the fact that the people are mobilised, engaged in tasks set by themselves and going about them together, pooling resources and energy whereby they can do better than walking alone, drawing strength and sustaining power from a shared life and effort. Sometimes they succeed (in their own terms) and sometimes they fail; but through all this they move forward in the evolution of (search for) their lives. It is such a positive evolution that is possible, and this is important in its own right, both for the involved people themselves as well as for the future generations to whom they can pass on the heritage of constructive social engagement to move through life with all its odds, showing their creativity and a spirit of tackling challenges, developing thereby as a human personality.

Two views of development: the consumerist view

Philosophically speaking, there are two opposing views of development. One is a consumerist view, which regards the human being primarily as a consumer of goods and services. Basically, "development" is seen in this view as an expansion of the flow of consumption. As a means to bring this about, an expansion of the productive capacity of the country is needed, but the primary logic of development remains a progressive increase in consumption. For a time, development was identified with aggregate economic growth to bring about a progressively higher flow of aggregate consumption irrespective of its

distribution (the "reactionary" view). Gradually, the interpersonal distribution question was raised, in terms of who benefits from such development as consumers (the "liberal" view). The development debate then focussed on questions such as growth first or distribution first, or can we have growth with distribution simultaneously, and how can "entitlements" (command over goods and services) be truly ensured for all, etc. This debate continues to this date; but the basic consumerist view prevails⁶, concerned with who gets what as a consumer, and what is the intertemporal and interpersonal trade-off in this question - the question that this view does not ask is who in the society are able to take the needed initiative to produce the goods and services, and what happens to the different sections of the population as creative beings i.e. the distribution of the power and opportunity to fulfill oneself by creative acts⁷.

The notion of "poverty" follows the same viewpoint. The concern here is whether a person has the necessary income or access or "entitlement" to, the bundle of goods and services postulated to be the needs of human beings as consumers.

⁶ Sen, who introduced the notion of "entitlement", goes beyond entitlement at what he calls "capabilities", converging with the creativist view of development: "When we are concerned with such notions as the well-being of a person, or standard of living, or *freedom in the positive sense*, we need the concept of capabilities. We have to be concerned with *what a person can do*, and this is not the same thing as how much pleasure or desire fulfillment he gets from these activities ('utility') nor what commodity bundles he can command (entitlements'). Ultimately, therefore, we have to go not merely beyond the calculus of national product and aggregate real income, but also that of entitlements over commodity bundles viewed on their own." (Sen 1983, *italics added*). The notion of "desire fulfillment", of course, need not be limited to consumerist desire but could be extended to creativist desire which I have suggested as the basic *human* desire.

⁷ The theoretical height of the consumerist view is the notion of maximising the "intertemporal utility function" which is primarily concerned with the time-stream of consumption, considering saving as a necessary sacrifice to maximise this function, rather than being a positive strategy to develop one's creative powers. Likewise, labour is considered to have a disutility to be minimised, rather than as the expression of human creativity.

Tevoedjre (1968, p 83) combines basic needs satisfaction with creativity in a framework of frugal living and solidarity: "A regime of convivial frugality based on a self-sufficient collective development, which mobilises the energies of peoples involved in the creation of their own future and is aimed at satisfying the basic needs of a society united by a common feeling of solidarity - this I believe to be the foundation of a new kind of economy". The reference to basic needs is redundant and may be misleading - a self-reliant creative people would naturally satisfy whatever needs, material as well as nonmaterial (emotional, cultural) they prioritise themselves irrespective of what others may consider to be the "basic needs" which they ought to satisfy.

"Poverty" in terms of lack of an "entitlement" to develop as a creative being is, again, not expressed as a concern. The problem of "poverty" in this sense is a consumer's rather than a creator's problem, focused on the "poor" not being able to consume the things desired (or biologically needed) rather than not having the opportunity of producing (or commanding) them through one's creative acts.

It is worth reflecting on how the "development" problem might have presented itself naturally to our fore parents - let us say the earliest human communities. They had to create what they wanted, and, moreover, had no external standards to consider in deciding what they wanted. Given this situation, I should think, they could not have had any static set of "wants" -their wants, to be meaningful, had to be defined and redefined continuously in the dynamic context of evolving possibilities of what they themselves could create. In this sense, a difference between wants and creative urges did not exist for them. They were not "poor" - it was the beginning of their life to move forward, by applying their creative powers.

The two, however, - wants and creative urges - got separated as a result of, first, class separation between people by which the control over productive resources got polarised, giving the dominant class the power also over the lives of others. Secondly, the dominant class and its allies (together, the "elites") developed certain consumption standards and were able to influence by their social power the culture and aspirations of society so that to attain these standards came to be regarded widely as the purpose of life itself. This has resulted in aspirations and urges dissociated from the immediate creative possibilities of the people. In turn this is causing pointless frustration among the masses besides strengthening mass dependence on the elites, and submission to a view of development as the fulfillment of such aspirations, and hence to submission of the initiative for development to the more "successful" in the hope that such "development" could possibly be "delivered" by those who have attained this themselves. Even many "class struggles", of local as well as of wider scales, retain this consumer consciousness, with material aspirations which are way beyond the creative possibilities of the working class; implicitly, such struggles retain a dependency

orientation, cherishing the hope that some other power (class) will deliver the kind of material development needed to satisfy such aspirations.

Basic *human* need: the creativist view

In recent times, the concept of satisfaction of "basic needs" of the population has emerged as a primary objective of development in liberal development thinking. Interestingly, the five "basic needs" which have been identified - food, clothing, housing, medical care, education - are in some form or other the needs of animals as well, who typically do not create (materially, socially, culturally) except at a very elementary and static level (e. g. creating the bird's nest). But the distinctive human-ness in us is not in needing these elementary means of survival, but what the combination of our distinctive brain and the limbs can do and, therefore, the urge we must have as human beings to fulfill this power. This urge is often for the sake of creation itself, but in the process of satisfying this urge this also creates the means of satisfying whatever other needs, "basic" or "non-basic", that we wish to and can satisfy, according to our own priorities. Through such creation we evolve – develop - as creative beings. This is the basic *human* need - to fulfill our creative potentials in ever newer ways - although this may not be expressed or asserted by all because of the conditioning resulting from structural social and cultural domination mentioned above.

As opposed to the consumerist view of the liberal school, there exists a creativist view of development which regards the human race primarily as a creative being. In recent times this view is explicit in the articulations of activist-intellectuals working directly with the people to promote their self-development (Tilakaratna 1987; Fernandez 1986). But the underlying philosophy is not new. This is, of course, the central message in trends of some major religions⁸. At the level of scientific discourse this view was, perhaps, first suggested in the philosophy of Karl Marx.

⁸ e.g. "I am the Creative Being" in Sufism, Islam; "I am the Life" in Christianity; and "I am the Ultimate Soul" in Hinduism

The philosophy of Marx

Marx viewed the human being primarily as a creator who because of one's class situation either fulfils or becomes alienated from one's creative power. Looking at the development of capitalism Marx was excited by its spectacular creativity - the central focus of his analysis of capitalism was the revolutionary development of productive forces in this phase of human history. Likewise, the central argument in his theory of revolution was the need, and what he considered the inevitability, of the overthrow of capitalism as its creative phase comes to an end, and as a further development of the productive forces would be possible only in the hands of the "working class". In tracing the development of capitalism Marx observed the phenomenon of "exploitation" as the primary means by which the capitalist class appropriates the resources needed for the productive forces in its hands; Marx's primary concern here was to explain the process of capitalist accumulation rather than to condemn it. In fact, he praised the capitalist class for the practice of thrift which he observed in them, as a necessary virtue to obtain a high rate of investment and hence development of the productive forces. (See n 12, 13)

While he was thus excited by the creativity of capitalism in its "glorious" days, Marx saw the working class alienated from its own creative potentials and power, the free exercise of which alone could give it fulfillment as labour. The working class as a producer and not as a consumer must, therefore, revolt and take over the means of production, to fulfill itself as producers. The history of "Man" (as unalienated workers) would then truly begin. This implied that, through the revolutionary development of the productive forces in its hands, labour would eventually produce (and control) enough for everyone to have according to one's "need": but such (material) needs satisfaction would follow human creativity and does not appear in Marx as the primary motive force for human effort.

Experiments in socialism

Marx's writings, of course, shift from the philosophical to the political-economic to the polemical, and are separated by time and contexts, so that they may not

necessarily give the same message always. However, the greatest followers of Marx have also been inspired by a creativist vision of the working people. Lenin had conceived of socialism as a social construction in which "the majority of the working people engage in independent creative work as makers of history" (Lenin 1918a, p 646). But, unfortunately, Lenin's political theory of the party of professional revolutionaries led by intellectuals as the "vanguard of the proletariat" with an "advanced consciousness" contained the seeds of major distortions (Rahman 1988). As it turned out, the Bolshevik Party increasingly centralised its own power vis-a-vis the workers' and peasants' soviets, and this could only have strengthened the negative forces within the Party seeking to impose elite and bureaucratic rule on the masses. In his last years Lenin became keenly aware of the degenerating tendencies in the party and struggled to his last day, unsuccessfully, to reverse this trend. But he did not see his own theory of the Party claiming the ultimate wisdom to rest in "revolutionary" intellectuals⁹, and the absolute power assumed by the Party, to be the root of the problem.

What emerged in the Soviet bloc under the rule of such parties was far from the above Marxist vision of the working class as the principal architect of socialism. On the contrary, the notion of "advanced consciousness" of the "vanguards" was invoked to justify stifling dictatorship by the Party over the working people¹⁰. This great distortion of socialism was accompanied by official interpretations and articulations of the ideology which had little relation with Marxism. Initiatives by the workers and peasants were hardly ever encouraged, and in glorifying the achievements of "socialism" such initiatives and achievements, if at all they were

⁹ "...one very first and most pressing duty is to help to train working class revolutionaries who will be on the same level in regard to Party activity as the revolutionaries from amongst the intellectuals (We emphasise the words "in regard to Party activity", for although necessary, it is neither so easy nor so pressingly necessary to bring the workers up to the level of intellectuals in other respects). Attention, therefore, must be devoted principally to raising the workers to the level of revolutionaries; it is not at all our task to descend to the level of the working masses" (Lenin 1902, p 205) - the key statement of Lenin implying that the intellectuals are ahead of (above) the workers, which got crystallised into a theory of "advanced consciousness" of the vanguard intellectuals held by Leninist vanguards everywhere.

¹⁰ "The free people's state has been transformed into the free state. Taken in its grammatical sense, a free state is one where the state is free in relation to its citizens, hence a state with a despotic government."

Ironically this statement in Engel's critique of the Gotha Programme which Lenin quotes in his State and Revolution (Lenin, 1918b, p 315) can be applied to what the Party made of the state in the Soviet bloc.

taken, were hardly ever highlighted (after Lenin). Resistance to such distortion of socialism and dictatorial policies surfaced from time to time, coming from Marxist intelligentsia as well as from the working class, only to be ruthlessly suppressed. Finally, the sheer incompetence in economic management coupled with the corruption of elements in the Party leadership was challenged first in Poland by the working class (Solidarity) and subsequently in the citadel of the Soviet bloc by the very leader of the "vanguards" (Gorbachev). Today, "socialism" of this variety is being dismantled fast in Soviet Russia, Poland and Hungary, and the moral appeal of such models of socialism has all but eroded¹¹.

The other great revolutionary leader of this century, Mao, encouraged people's initiatives more passionately, challenging the people to "be fired with great, lofty proletarian aspirations and dare to break paths unexplored and scale heights yet unclimbed." (Han Suyin 1976, p 213). By this way Mao was able to keep the vast "poor" Chinese masses engaged in a sustained process of development with considerable (shared) austerity¹², building the economic base of a possible "modern" China, in the process advancing significantly in meeting the material "basic needs" of the population as well by a self-reliant mobilisation of the people which inspired progressive forces all over the world. I suggest that this, one of the two greatest developmental feats of this century¹³, could not have been achieved if instead of appealing to the creative spirit of the Chinese people Mao had highlighted their "poverty" as the main problem to be solved. This is a basic question of what motivates the human spirit to move forward: one cannot move forward thinking of what one does not have - one can only move forward thinking of what one can accomplish with what one has¹⁴. However, Mao also was unable to solve the question of the party, a structure which was "above" the people and susceptible to be taken over by elitist forces to rule over the people. The Cultural Revolution appears to have been Mao's own answer to such

¹¹In a recent visit (July, 1989) to a Hungarian village to initiate participatory research the author was struck by the observation of a retired cooperative worker who said: "What hurts most is the indignity of being forced to vote for the chairman who I know is corrupt".

¹²With an accumulation rate in the order of 30 per cent over 1951-78, the highest sustained rate any "poor" country has shown in recent history (Ghose 1984, p 258, Table 83).

¹³The other feat is Japan's, which has also shown exemplary hard work and thrift toward becoming a leading economic power of the world.

¹⁴One of the first well-known statements of Mao after the victory of the Chinese Revolution was: "China has stood up". Note the similarity with urges of the ORAP groups in Zimbabwe

tendencies, but its strength rested heavily on Mao's personal weight in its favour, and this was no lasting solution, if at all, to the problem¹⁵.

With the seizure of power by anti-Maoists as soon as Mao died, the Chinese revolution also started to unwind. Among the reversals in so many fronts it is pertinent to note that, while the people's creativity rather than their "wants" were highlighted in Mao's time (something never highlighted in post-Lenin Russia or for that matter in the Soviet bloc), the new leadership in China started talking more of the "poverty" and "unemployment" of the masses rather than their initiatives and innovativeness to take on challenging tasks. Both undoubtedly existed and exist both in Mao's China and in today's China; but from what one chooses to highlight is revealed one's basic philosophy (ideology) of social life and purpose. However, the shift in the ideology of China has been limited to the economic sphere and remains to be complemented by a parallel shift in the political sphere, thus creating a tension of the first order whose final resolution is still to be seen.

Many contemporary left parties seeking ways of coming to power in pre-revolutionary societies also show tendencies that contain the seeds of degeneration. The notion of "advanced consciousness" of revolutionary intellectuals persists, and the revolutionary leaders go to the people "as theoreticians, as propagandists, as agitators, and as organisers" in the Leninist tradition (Lenin 1967a, p 165), i.e. to indoctrinate and mobilise the people politically, but not to learn from them nor to animate or work with them to promote their

¹⁵ The question here is the crucial one of creating people's power as *countervailing power*, and of keeping this power alive and effective. As I have stated elsewhere, "Countervailing power is a living, collective consciousness and a vigilance of the people against the abuse of formal power, and a capability to resist such abuse and to assert people's will if formal power deviates." (Rahman 1981, p 45). This presupposes people's own critical awareness at all times, and hence a permanent process of people's collective review and analysis of what is happening. Mao had great respect for the wisdom of the people and asked the intellectuals to learn from them; but it appears that he considered the task of synthesis (even of people's own ideas) to belong to intellectuals. Mao Ze Dong's Thought itself was claimed to be synthesised people's thought which was, however, not called "People's Thought" but was named instead after the "Great Teacher". This may have been one of Mao's great mistakes - the people waited upon the Teacher to tell them what their thoughts were, and turned to new teachers after the old Master died. The recent "participatory (action) research" movement believes, and is demonstrating, that the people can synthesise their own thoughts, and a necessary and central task in developing people's countervailing power is to give the people the confidence in their ability to do so. (see section 5)

'self-awareness" and self-development. I have argued elsewhere (Rahman, 1987, 1988) that the claim to "advanced consciousness" is false - the consciousness of persons living very different lives (social existence) are not comparable within the same epistemological paradigm; and that the fact that revolutionary intellectuals rather than the working people usually assume leadership of macro-revolutionary movements is explained not by the former's intellectual superiority but by the constraints of the daily life's struggle and work obligations of the working people. This false claim of "advanced consciousness" of intellectuals justifies and perpetuates the polarisation of the relations of knowledge, a major force in determining the power relations in a society irrespective of the relations of material production (Rahman 1982). If ever the "revolution" takes place under such leadership, it can only be expected to reconstruct the hierarchical relations between professionals - revolutionary intellectuals as well as the general technocracy - and the people, a relation completely anti-thetical to the Marxist vision of the working people creating its own history. I shall return to this question in section 5 of this lecture.

4. Two preoccupations of the left

Those who are working to promote people's self-development include activists who have had associations with formal left trends, but who got disillusioned by the dogmatism or totalitarian tendencies and other failures of such trends. Other such activists have identified themselves with the objective of liberation of people's creativity without the mediation of a formal radical ideology (e.g. Marxism). They are a new breed of "humanists", driven by the urge to see the human spirit truly liberated. Some of them - possibly many - would have ideological or intellectual differences with some or other of the "Marxist" premises and assertions (whether these were enunciated by Marx himself or not). Among the issues that may be debated, the question of individualism vis-a-vis collectivism is a very important one.

Collectivism

Marxism has been identified with collectivism as one of its principal visions, and indeed this has been a major bone of contention in the great confrontation between two rival ideologies of the present era. Marx himself saw in collectivism the final emancipation of labour from a state of alienation from one's supposedly true self - the collective man or woman.

It may be recalled that Marx was seeing collectivist production relations coming after capitalism in its advanced stage when all labour has become associated labour. The transition from associated labour to collectivism is a matter simply of such labour seizing the means of production, and owning them together rather than dividing them up. This may be viewed as a natural step "forward", and in predicting this Marx was expounding an organic logic. From this point of view Marx's vision of collectivism as the final emancipation of labour may be seen as a philosophical rationalisation of what he envisaged as the natural, organic evolution of the relations in production.

Actual socialist revolutions, however, have occurred and have been contemplated to occur, in societies at an early or pre-capitalist stage, in which associated labour has not become the dominant form of labour. In such societies the above organic logic to move to collectivism does not, in general, apply. There arises, then, the question of organic evolution of production relations in such societies where the people get mobilised for collective effort for their self-development, be it on a macro scale where state power has changed into the hands of forces committed to the release of the people's creativity, or on a local scale.

Lenin, facing this question particularly for Soviet agriculture after the Bolshevik Revolution, desired the transition to collectivism to be indeed, organic, and was against an attempt to collectivise agriculture by coercion. Stalin's forced collectivisation violated this organic logic, and the result was disastrous in terms of agricultural production itself (development of the productive forces in agriculture). The peasantry could hardly have been expected to feel "liberated" by such a drastic coercive measure. What with the peasantry's response and Stalin's own view of "socialism", what was conceived as "collectivism" degenerated into (disguised) capitalist form of production relations which

Gorbachev recently has summed up poignantly: "On state and collective farms, people have become divorced from the land and the means of production. We have turned them from masters of their land into daily labourers" (Gorbachev 1988). In China, Mao tried to promote collectivism (in agriculture) more organically, moving step by step from "lower order" to "higher-order" cooperation, encouraging, highlighting, inspiring collectivist efforts, and finally completing the process by central policy when he assessed that bulk of the peasantry might be ready for this. The result is part of the great accomplishment of Mao, as already discussed. However, it is noteworthy that the spirit of "individualism" has not disappeared in China, notwithstanding Mao's vision and efforts, and seems to have been reasserting in response to the policies favoring private initiatives which the present regime has been progressively taking.

Socialist experiments of this century do not demonstrate that human beings can transcend their individualism and become fully collectivist men or women. In this sense Marx's vision of collectivism as the final emancipation of labour remains questionable independently of the organic logic of his specific model of transition from already associated labour to full collectivism.

Those who are working with the people to promote their self-development do not, by and large, have a dogmatic position on the question of collectivism. The people when they are mobilised and deliberate themselves to set priorities and tasks, do a lot of pooling of resources and talents, and cooperation, and engage in a lot of collectivist initiatives (as the two illustrations from Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe show). They do so as they see the objective advantage of doing so, and as they feel inspired from working together to identify and solve problems and develop greater trust in each other. The poorer and the more oppressed the people are, the more, other things equal, are they likely to see the advantage of such cooperation and solidarity among themselves for martial improvement as well as for resisting oppression and emotional security. The development of such cooperation among the people may be enhanced by sensitive "animation" work, but cannot be forced, without alienating them, by some ideological principle external to the organic evolution of their life, a principle to be applied mechanically (e.g. collective ownership of land or such other "means of production"). And it may not be guaranteed that full collectivism may be attained

some day, or even that there will be no shift back toward some more individualism, in a possible permanent movement of dialectical tension between these two identities of the human species¹⁶. There cannot be people's self-development with any ideological dogmatism external to the people's evolving life and consciousness.

In any case, with the turning around of the great socialist experiments of the century toward greater individualism, the ideological debate over individualism and collectivism is weakening. At the same time it is being witnessed that rule in the name of the people and "democracy" in the (so-called) "free world", and in the name of "dictatorship of the proletariat" and "socialist democracy" in the (so-called) "socialist world", actually represents rule of some or other category of elites over the people. This is clarifying the real ideological issue to be the question of real social power - whether the working people could have the power to determine their own destiny within a framework of horizontal social interaction with other classes, as equals and not as inferiors. This, ultimately, is the questions of real democracy, not the democracy merely of periodic elections and the freedom to express the verbal word on what should be done, but the freedom and opportunity of the people to take the initiative to do it themselves.

Structural Change

¹⁶ Unless one wishes to believe in the mystics, human beings are separated from each other by space and time, and to relate each other entails, therefore, a cost. Rational individuals are expected to weigh this cost against the gain of any form of cooperation. At a certain state of existence - e.g. extreme scarcity of material resources to work with (material poverty), or conditions of natural calamity - the advantage of cooperation may be seen to outweigh its cost, and individuals then may join hands and pool resources to work together for individual advancement itself. This is the objective basis of human cooperation. The subjective (emotional) basis - e.g. a sense of collective identity - is more difficult to track down, and it appears that such identity may also cut across "class relations" and express itself in family, kinship, ethnic, religious bonds which may either support or act counter to the objective basis for cooperation in a "class" framework. We must not forget that even under conditions of associated labour in production, labour spends only a part of its time in the production process, and has an individual social life of its own (social existence) outside this process, if one's "social existence" were to determine one's "consciousness". Thus the tension between individualism and collectivism may very well be permanent notwithstanding the nature of relations of production.

As I have suggested, people's self-development can start even under conditions of extreme resource shortage - mobilising themselves for assertion of human dignity and self-determination, and to cooperate to accomplish collectively determined tasks, in the process developing in capabilities and in human personality. In fact, some conditions of the acutest resource shortage - e.g. under natural calamities - are known to have produced the most impressive popular mobilisation with such self-developmental elements. The possibilities and pace of self-development, however, are naturally constrained by the availability of physical resources to work with, and as observed before, people's self-mobilisations themselves have often been directed toward achieving greater access to such resources by collective negotiation and struggle. In countries where the bulk of physical resources are controlled by elites, a redistribution of the control over such resources in addition to redistribution of the social power to take development initiatives is, therefore, necessary. *This* distribution question - rather than the question of distribution of "incomes" per se or "benefits from development", etc. - is the basic question of *equity* in the creativist view of development.

While thus calling for radical structural change in societies with polarised control over physical resources, this viewpoint questions the identification of people's ownership with state ownership which, as we have noted, may actually separate the people from the means of production (and thus inhibit rather than promote their self-development). The distribution question is, therefore, one of giving the people (individually and/or collectively) real control over resources to work with to develop their own potentials, not to be dictated by a state-appointed managerial technocracy. The concept of "socialism" defined as "social ownership" of the means of production which has often been identified with state ownership needs in this light a thorough re-examination.

There is need for rethinking also on the tasks before such structural change is accomplished, and on the prerequisite for such change to truly liberate and promote people's creativity rather than stifle it with new forms of domination. Most left quarters have been preoccupied with the macro-question of capturing state power to initiate "socialist" development before action is initiated to

animate the people in self-developmental mobilisation. But micro-level initiatives to promote people's self-development are showing that this need not await a redistribution of resources even for physical resource-poor communities who can start developing today at least in human personality, social values and social organisation, and who themselves consider such advancement to be positive gain; on the other hand the question of macro-structural change for most societies where this is desired remains uncertain and often intractable; it is not very convincing to suggest that generations should keep on waiting for the elusive "revolution" before mobilising themselves to move forward with what they have and what they can acquire through local struggles. There is, furthermore, another profound need for working to promote micro -level people's self-development right now, to enhance the very possibility that a macro-level social change, if it does occur some day, may truly release and promote the people's creativity. I suggest that a political leadership which is not involved in people's self-development *now*, will not be able to promote this *after* coming into power, because it will not know what this means, nor how this can be animated. This - what a leadership can do after coming into power - is also a question of organic logic resting on what it has done, and hence learnt, previously. As a corollary, the hope of a macro-level structural change to promote people's self-development rather than even to suppress the popular initiatives we are witnessing today at local scales, lies in the emergence of an "organic vanguard" which is rooted in such popular movements ", and does not claim itself to be above (and unaccountable) to the people¹⁷.

S. 'Conclusion: Breaking the Monopoly of Knowledge'

Three years back I had a four-hour dialogue with about one hundred leaders of landless workers' organisations in Bangladesh coming from about thirty contiguous villages¹⁸. This was one of the most stimulating "seminars" I have had, surpassing in the intellectual quality of the discussions, in my judgment,

¹⁷In a different way, Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes are also looking at the contemporary "social movements" as the hope for a "socialist" future: "it is becoming increasingly clear that the road to a better 'socialist' future does not lead via 'really existing socialism'. The real transition to a 'socialist' alternative to the present world economy, society and polity may be much more in the hands of the social movements ... which can transform the world in new directions. (Frank and Fuentes 1988).

many academic seminars I have attended. We discussed questions concerning their immediate environments as well as questions of national policy, politics and social change. On most of these questions the landless leaders - not a few but many of them - had well thought-out positions: "we have discussed this question for the last five years, and our thinking is this" - was a typical beginning of the answer to many of my questions.

The point is not whether their position was correct or not. The world's greatest social thinkers and scientists have made mistakes - sometime the greater you are, the more profound is the mistake you make. The point is that the ordinary working people are capable of social enquiry and analysis, and that this capability can be enhanced by practice.

Anyone's self-development starts, as it must, with one's self-understanding to guide one's own action, and is a process in which self-understanding develops as action is taken and reviewed. Formal efforts at social "development" have, however, been in the hands of elites who have in general considered themselves wiser than the people, and instead of seeking to promote the people's self- inquiry and understanding have sought to impose their own ideas of "development". In doing this they have promoted *their own* "self-development" in some ways, while bringing the world in the dismal state in which we find it today. In any case this had to be at the cost of people's self-development, for one cannot develop with somebody else's ideas. This has been, I suggest, also the single most important intellectual error in many otherwise committed efforts toward social change for people's liberation, which seek to indoctrinate the people in a vertical relation with them, and give priority to structural change over liberation of the mind. Only with a liberated mind (of the people) which is free to inquire and then conceive and plan what is to be created, can structural change release the creative potentials of the people. In this sense liberation of the mind is the primary task, both before and after structural change.

Organic knowledge and participatory research

¹⁸In the programme of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) which has a literacy-cum-awareness-raising (conscientisation) content of the Freirian type.

This implies breaking the monopoly of knowledge in the hands of the elites - i.e. giving the people their right to assert their existing knowledge to start with; giving them the opportunity and assistance, if needed, to advance their self-knowledge through self-enquiry as the basis of their action, and to review themselves their experiences from action to further advance their self-knowledge (Rahman 1982). In this reflection-action-reflection process of the people (people's praxis), professional knowledge can be useful only in a dialogue with people's knowledge on an equal footing through which both can be enriched, and not in the arrogance of assumed superior wisdom. Altering thus the relations of knowledge, to produce and advance "organic knowledge"¹⁹ as a part of the very evolution of life rather than abstract (synthetic) knowledge produced in academic laboratories to be imposed upon life, is a central commitment of what is being termed as "participatory research" (Hall 1981). This is also the first and continuous task of "animation" work to promote people's self-development.

Such animation work to promote organic knowledge offers a new role for intellectuals, distinct from their traditional role as "uninvolved" social researchers, or involved social "revolutionaries" in political structures separate from and "above" the people. Professionally, and also circumstantially as suggested before, intellectuals as a class remain in the more privileged position vis-à-vis the ordinary working people to take a leading role in social transformative work. The roles that they have been taking traditionally have contributed to keeping the people subordinate and dominated. A more humane and liberating role can be taken by the intelligentsia, and thereby the intellectuals can even satisfy their urge to provide leadership toward social change - a new kind of leadership that invites, stimulates and assists the people to collectively inquire and act for themselves.

References

¹⁹The term was first suggested, to the best of my knowledge, in an Workshop on People's Initiative to Overcome Poverty at the East-West Center, the University of Hawaii, Honolulu (March-April 1989), which I had the privilege to attend.

Chavunduka, Dexter M. *et al* (1985). *Khuluma Usenza, The Story of ORAP in Zimbabwe's Rural Development*, The Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress, Bulawayo.

Dasgupta, Subhachari (1983). *Forest, Ecology and the Oppressed, A Study from the point of view of the Forest Dwellers*. People's Institute for Development and Training. New Delhi.

Draper, Hal (1977). *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, Vol I: State and Bureaucracy*, Monthly Review Press.

Fernandes, Maria E (1986). *Participatory Action-Research and the Forming Systems Approach with Highland Peasants*, Department of Rural Sociology, University of Missouri, Columbia, USA.

Frank, Andre Gunder and Marta Fuentcs (1988). "Nine Theses on Social Movements", *IFDA Dossier 63*, Jan/Feb 1988.

Freire, Paulo (1972). *Cultural Action for Freedom*, Penguin.

Ghose, A.K. (1984). "The Industrial Development Strategy and Rural Reforms in Post-Mao China", K.Griffin (ed.) *Institutional Reform and Economic Development in the Chinese Countryside*. Macmillan,. London.

Gorbachev, M. (1988). *Guidelines for the Central Party Meeting of October 28*.

Gramsci, Antonio (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Lawrence and Wishart. London.

Hall, Budd *et al* (1981). "Participatory Research: Development and Issues". *Convergence*, Vol XIV, No. 3.

Han Suyin (1976). *Wind in the Tower, Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Revolution 194-1975*. Jonathan Cape. London.

ILO(PORP) (1988). *Promoting People's Participation and Self-reliance, Proceedings of the Regional Workshop of Trainers in Participatory Rural Development, Tagaytay, the Philippines, August 15-28*.

Kofi, Tetteh A. (1981). "Problems and Prospects of the Transition from Agrarianism to Socialism: The Case of Angola, Guinea Bissau and Mazambique", *World Development*, Vol. 9, No. 9/10, Sept/Oct 1981.

Lenin, V.I. (1902). "What is to be Done ?". *Selected Works*, Vol 1, Progress Publishers 1967.

-----(1918a). "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government". *Selected Works*. Vol 2, Progress Publishers, 1967.

-----(1918b). "The State and Revolution", *Selected Works*, Vol 2, Progress Publishers, 1967.

Marx, Karl (1844). "Critical Notes on the King of Prussia and Social Reform", Marx and Engels. *Werke*, Vol. 1.

Nyoni, Sithembiso (1989). "People's Power in Zimbabwe" (Rahman and Fals Borda (1989).

The Participatory Research Group (1983). *Participatory Research, An Annotated Bibliography*. Working Paper No. 4 (Revised). Toronto.

Rahman, Md. Anisur (1972). "The First Step". Anisur Rahman (1993). *The Lost Moment, Dreams with a Nation Born through Fire, Papers on Political Economy of Bangladesh*. University Press Ltd., Dhaka.

-----(1973) "Priorities and Methods for Socialist Development of Bangladesh", Paper, presented at the International Economic Association Conference on the Development of Bangladesh within the Framework of a Socialist Economy", Rahman (1993).

-----(1974a). "Planners and the Society", *The Wave Weekly*, Nov 3. Reprinted in Rahman (1993).

---(1974b). "The Famine". Rahman (1993).

-----(1977). "Goodbye to Gruel Kitchens". *New Internationalist*, No. 49, March.

---(1979). With G.V.S. de Silva et al, "Bhoomi Sena. A Struggle for People's Power". *Development Dialogue*, No. 2.

---(1981). "Participation of the Rural Poor in Development", *Development: Seeds of Change - From Village to Global Order*, Society for International Development, Rome. Republished by Pathak Samabesh: *Participation Studies Vol 1: Participation of the Rural Poor in Development*. Dhaka. 2000.

----(1982). "The Theory and Practice of Participatory Action Research". IFDA Dossier 31, Sept/Oct; Fals Borda, Orlando (ed.) (1985). *The Challenge of Social Change*, Sage Studies in International Sociology 32; Shadish, William R. Jr. and Charles S. Reichart (ed.) (1987). *Evaluation Studies Review Annual*, Vol 12, Sage Publications.

----(1984) (ed.). *Grass-roots Participation and Self-reliance, Experiences in South and South-east Asia*. Oxford and IBH, New Delhi.

----(1987). "The Role and Significance of Participatory Organisations of the Rural Poor in Alternative Strategies of Rural Development: Theory and Experience -An Overview", *Third World Legal Studies, The Application of Law and Development theory: Some Case Studies*. International Third World Legal Studies Association and The Valparaiso University School of Law.

----(1988). "Ganogabosbana o Shwamaj Paribartan", *Lokayat*, March. pp 41-52. Reprinted in Rahman, Md. Anisur (1992). *Unnayan Gignasha*. Brac Publication.

---- (1989a). Glimpses of the "Other Africa". *World Employment Programme Research Working Paper*, WEP IQ/WEP 48, ILO, Geneva. Reprinted in Rahman (1993).

----(1989b). The Challenge of Promoting People's Self-reliance. Highlights of a Regional Workshop of Trainers in Participatory Rural Development. *Lokniti*, Vol 6, No. 1.

---- (1993). People's Self-Development. A Journey Through Experience. Perspectives on Participatory Action Research. Zed Books, London and University Press Limited, Dhaka.

----(1997). "Shikkhito Ke?". Rahman, Md. Anisur. *Je Agun Jolechhilo. Muktijuddher Chetonar Shwatosfurto Prokash*. Gonoprokashoni, Dhaka.

Sen, Amartya K. (1983). "Development: Which Way Now?" *The Economic Journal*, Vol 93, No. 372. December, pp 745-762.

Tevoedjre, Albert (1978). *Poverty, Wealth of Mankind*, Pergamon, Systems Science and World Order Library.

Tilakaratna, S.: "Grass-roots Self-reliance in Sri Lanka: Organisations of Betel and Coir Yarn Producers", Rahman (1984).

----- (1985). *The Animator in Participatory Rural Development: Some Experiences from Sri Lanka*, World Employment Programme Research Working Paper, WEP 10/WP. 37, ILO, Geneva.

- - - - (1987). *The Animator in Participatory Rural Development (Concept and Practice)*, ILO, Geneva.

*National Professor Atwar Hussain Memorial Lecture, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 16 October 1989. First published in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*, XXXIV (2). December 1989 (129-156). Helpful comments on an earlier draft by Jafar Shaheed, Ajit Ghose, Monwarul Islam, Hammeed Tabatabai and Andras Biro are gratefully acknowledged. They are not, of course, responsible for the views expressed herein.

An abridged version of this paper has been published in Paul Ekins and Manfred Max-Neef (Eds.): *Real Life Economics, Understanding Wealth Creation*. Routledge, London and New York, 1992.