

# PSYCHE AND SOCIETY

December- 2013

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### Editorial

#### Shame India!

Yes we are developing in high speed. That is the proof that we are sending CSLV satellite to Mars. The expenditure of this expedition is in a modest estimation 450 crores rupees. Now we would be the fourth power in the world, if we are successful in this expedition. Then what next! Yes, in spite of this development some of our poor people are saying something different problems.

It is fact that in India each day one thousand people die of pulmonary tuberculosis mostly of multidrug-resistant type and almost all of them are poor people. To make a potest about this fact we have hard much hue and cry to highlight this issue in a recent International Conference.

There were many social activists in the 'Union World Conference on Lung Health' held in Paris in the first week of November 2013. This activists were much agitated about this fact and they repeatedly obstructed to deliver his speech in this conference of our additional secretary of the Central Health Department. They were eleven in numbers, they rapidly went to the podium and gave slogans as 'Go back to India and treat your TB patients first'. It is nothing wrong that they were very much agitated for this regular huge innocent deaths.

But in this chaos and turbulence we were seized by a perplexing fact from the representative of Kenya, Africa. He said that 80% of the bulk crude drugs for World tuberculosis patients are manufactured by India. Even the success of controlling tuberculosis in Africa was due to the drugs supplied by India in free of cost! So they were astonished that Indian had failed to check the death rate in their own country! What a matter of shame!

Yes this is the hard, unpalatable fact that our system is ill, our institutions are ill, our democracy (World's largest) is ill so there are this 'mass murder'. Now what is the way out? Who knows it? Who can lead us? Who can make this science and technology for proper utilisation specially for our poor, ill people? Do anybody know the answer? Should we take gun in our hands to supply drugs to our tuberculosis patients? **PAS**

## Ivan Pavlov

Ashim Maulik

You have probably heard of Pavlov and his famous dogs, but who was he and what was his contribution to psychology? Born in 1849 in central Russia, he was expected to follow in his father's footsteps and become a priest in the Eastern Orthodox church, but, inspired by reading Darwin, he escaped the local seminary and went to study chemistry and physics in St. Petersburg.

At university Pavlov became passionate about physiology, and worked in the labs of several eminent professors. In time he became well known for his work as a specialist in digestion and the nervous system. As a physiologist Pavlov did not think much of the new science of psychology, yet it was this work that would lead him to insights on "conditioning," or the way in which animals (including humans) develop new reflexes in order to respond to their environment.

*Conditioned Reflexes : An Investigation of the Physiological Activity of the Cerebral Cortex*, translated from the Russian, is a collection of lectures first given by Pavlov at the Military Medical Academy in St. Petersburg in 1924. In mind-numbing detail, it summarizes the 25 years of research carried out by his team that ultimately led to a Nobel Prize, we look at what Pavlov actually discovered and its implications for human psychology.

### Animals as machines

Pavlov began *Conditioned Reflexes* by noting the lack of knowledge about the brain that existed at the time. He regretted that the brain had become the domain of psychology, when it should have been the preserve of physiologists who could determine the facts about its physics and chemistry.

He paid tribute to philosopher Rene Descartes, who three centuries earlier had described animals as machines who reacted predictably according to stimuli in their environment in order to achieve a certain equilibrium with it. These reactions were part of the nervous system and occurred along set nerve pathways. One of these reflex reactions is the creation of saliva, and it was the action of the digestive glands in dogs that Pavlov initially investigated. He wanted to chemically analyze the differences in saliva produced in response to food under different conditions.

But in his early experiments Pavlov noticed something strange. There was a psychological element to the dogs' saliva reflex; that is, they would begin to salivate simply when they thought they were *about* to get food. Descartes' idea of the automatic reaction was clearly not so simple; Pavlov wanted to investigate further.

### Creating reflexes

He decided to try out a range of stimuli on the dogs to see what exactly would provoke their saliva secretion, if it was not just a simple automatic reflex. In order that his experiments would be in real time, he had to perform a minor operation so that some of the dog's saliva

passed through a hole to the outside of the cheek and into a pouch where the amounts produced could be measured.

Pavlov gave the dogs various stimuli such as the beat of a metronome, buzzers bells bubbling and crackling sounds, plus showing a black square, heart, touching the dog in various places, and intermittent flashes of a lamp. Each of these occurred just prior to giving food, so when the dog heard, saw, or felt a certain stimulus another time, he started to salivate even if the food had not appeared. Merely the sound of a beating metronome produced saliva even if no food was to be seen; physiologically there was no difference between the dog's reaction when he heard the metronome and what happened when he actually saw food. For the dog, the metronome—rather than a bowl of meat—came to "mean" food.

Pavlov realized that there were two types of reflexes or responses of an animal to its environment :

the natural or *unconditioned* reflex (e.g., a dog's salivation when it begins to eat, to aid its digestion); and

the acquired or conditioned reflex, which arises through unconscious learning (e.g., when a dog begins to salivate at the sound of a bell, because the sound "equates" to food).

The fact that reflexes could be instilled so that they became part of the animal's natural functioning made Pavlov aware that if an animal was really a machine responding to its environment, then it was a very complex machine. He showed that the cerebral cortex, the most advanced part of the brain, was very malleable, as were the nervous pathways linking to it. So-called instincts could be learnt—and unlearnt, since he was also able to demonstrate that reflexes could also be inhibited or extinguished by associating food with something the dog didn't like.

Yet Pavlov also noted limits to the creation of conditioned reflexes. They either wore off over time, or the dogs sometimes did not bother to respond and just fell asleep. He concluded that the cerebral cortex cannot be over-worked or changed too much. It seemed that a dog's survival and proper functioning required it to retain a certain amount of stability in its brain wiring.

### Advanced environment-responding machines

Pavlov observed two levels in the way in which the animal responded to its environment. There was first a "neuro-analysis," in which it used its senses to work out what things were, then a "neuro-synthesis" to establish how something fitted into its existing reactions and knowledge. In order to survive, for instance, a dog must be able to quickly determine if something is a threat to it or not.

Some of Pavlov's experiments involved removing a dog's whole cerebral cortex. This turned the dog into little more than a reflex machine. It retained its unconditioned reflexes that were hardwired into its brain and nervous system, but was not able to respond to its environment properly—it could still walk, but if it came to even a small obstacle like the leg of a table it did not know what to do. In contrast, with a normal dog even if there is a minute change in environmental stimulus or something new, an "investigation reflex" will cause the animal to prick up its ears or sniff the stimulus. A dog may spend a lot of time simply "investigating" in order that its reflexes to as environment are fully up to date.

Pavlov knew that the results of his experiments did not just apply to dogs. The more advanced the organism, he said, the greater its ability "to multiply the complexity of its contacts with the external world and to achieve a more and more varied and exact adaptation to external condition." "Culture" and "society" could be understood as a complex system of the management of reflexes, with humans only different to dogs to the extent that conditioned reflexes had surpassed the natural ones. While dogs could develop advanced social and territorial knowledge as their optimal response to their environment, human beings had responded by creating "civilization."

#### **Man and dog: The similarities**

The final chapter of *Conditioned Reflexes* concerns the applications of Pavlov's work to humans. Given that a human has a much more complex cerebral cortex than a dog, Pavlov was wary of reading too much into his own work. However, he noted the following parallels:

The way human beings are trained, disciplined, and enculturated is not that different to how dogs are taught to do things. We know that the best way to learn something is to do it in stages, in the same way that the dogs' conditioned reflexes were effected in steps. And as he found with dogs, humans have to unlearn things as well as learning them.

Pavlov had a special soundproofed building created for his experiments because he found that external stimuli affected the ability to condition reflexes. In the same way, most of us cannot study a book if a movie is showing at the same time; and we find it hard to "get back into things" after a holiday or some break from routine. As with the dogs, neuroses and psychoses occur as the result of extreme stimulation that cannot be properly incorporated into existing thinking and reactions.

The reactions of the dogs could not be predicted. Pavlov recalled that when one of Petrograd's famous floods swept through the experimental quarters, some dogs grew excited, others frightened, some withdrew. In the same way, he noted, we can never predict how a person will react emotionally to, for instance, a strong insult or the loss of a loved one. These reactions recognized in both dogs and humans—neurasthenia (fatigue, withdrawing, immobilization) and hysteria (neurotic excitation).

With the last point, Pavlov's implication was that evolution has ensured that we cannot react to a major event—we must take account of it some way. To eventually return to a state of stability, we have to incorporate what we have experienced. The phenomenon of "fight or flight" in the face of a challenge is the nervous system's manner of self-protection in the short term. In the longer term, the fact that we have had a reaction ensures that we can eventually return to a state of equilibrium with our environment.

#### **Final comments**

Pavlov saw the cerebral cortex as a complicated switchboard in which groups of cells were responsible for different reflexes. There was always room for more reflexes to be created, but also capacity for existing ones to be altered. His dogs did have "automatic" characteristics, but at the same time their reflexes and reactions were changeable. The implication for humans? Although we live for the most part through habit or enculturation, we are in a

position to change our behavior patterns. We are as susceptible to conditioning as any animal, yet at the same time we also have the ability to break our own patterns if they ultimately prove not to be in our interests. Via feedback from our environment we learn what are effective responses to life and what are not.

Pavlov's research had a major impact on the behavioral school of psychology, which holds that humans are little different to dogs in that we have predictable reactions to stimuli and can be conditioned into certain ways of behavior. For the hard-core behaviourist, the idea of free will is a myth—whatever inputs are made into a person will yield certain outputs in terms of attitudes or behaviors. Yet Pavlov's own observations seem to contradict this. For instance, he noted that many of the dogs' reactions were not predictable. Even when conditioning had occurred, there was still room for canine personalities to be expressed. Given our much larger cerebral cortexes, how much more room for varied expression—or "responses to environment"—must we enjoy.

*Conditioned Reflexes* has a very plodding, scientific style. Reflecting his love of empirical fact, order, and discipline, Pavlov did not allow much of his personality to come through. Yet he was a fascinating figure. Although critical of communism, he flourished after the bolshevik revolution, with Lenin handing down a decree that Pavlov's work was "of enormous significance to the working classes of the whole world."

Given his distrust of the claims of the subject, it is ironic that the name Pavlov has come to be associated with psychology. His focus on measurable physiological reaction alone was almost the opposite approach of the Freudian immersion in "inner drives and wishes," yet that focus enabled psychology to come to rest on harder scientific ground.

#### **Ivan Pavlov**

*Ivan Petrovich Pavlov was born in 1849 in Ryazan in central Russia, the oldest of 11 children, and his father was the village priest. His time at the University of St. Petersburg produced acclaimed work on the pancreatic nerves, and on receiving his degree in 1875 he continued his studies at the Imperial Medical Academy. There he gained a fellowship and later a position as professor of physiology. His doctorate concerned the centrifugal nerves of the heart.*

*In 1890 Pavlov set up the physiology department of the Institute of Experimental Sciences in St. Petersburg, where he did most of his work on digestion and conditioned reflexes. He was in charge of a large team of mostly young scientists.*

*His many honors included membership of the Russian Academy of sciences, winning the 1904 Nobel Prize for medicine, and in 1915 being awarded France's Order of the Legion of Honor. His marriage to Seraphima (Sara) Vasilievna Karchevskaya, a teacher, in 1881 produced four children who lived past infancy, one of whom went on to become a physicist.*

*Pavlov was still working in his laboratories when he died in 1936, at the age of 87.*

## Critiquing Timpanaro's Concept of 'materialist pessimism'

Ramkrishna Bhattacharya

One of the novel and surprising concepts proposed by Sebastiano Timpanaro (1923–2000), the well-known Marxist philologist-cum-philosopher, is that of 'materialist pessimism' (p.66). His plea is to recognize this concept as a part of the Marxist worldview. Time and again he comes back to it in his book, *Sul Materialismo* (1970, translated as *On Materialism* with an Introduction to the English edition). In what follows we intend to critique his view in some detail.

Optimism is generally accepted to be inherent in Marxism, although its founding fathers, Marx and Engels, never declared it in so many words. Engels in his *Anti-Dühring* somewhat ecstatically declared: 'It (sc. socialism) is humanity's leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom' (p.344).<sup>1</sup> Such a statement might suggest to the unwary reader the negation of necessity, of specific patterns of causation as a whole. Marx in *Capital* was more cautious in his formulation although he used the same terms:

'The realm of freedom really begins only where labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends; it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper....The true realm of freedom, the development of human power as an end in itself begins beyond it, though it can only flourish with this realm of necessity as its basis.' (3: pp.958-59)

The coming into being of a just and equitable social system free from exploitation and subjugation cannot but be deemed as an optimistic vision. The end of the long era of class society will release enormous energy in humankind and open up new vistas of peace and plenty. Then why does Timpanaro raise the issue of pessimism, whether materialist or not?

Timpanaro has no quarrel with Marx's optimistic vision. However, keeping in mind the entity of man in two planes, social and natural, he observes:

'[T]he juxtaposition of a historical and social optimism (communism as a now certain goal of human history, even if the price paid with Stalinism seemed even at that time excessive to many of us, despite our inability to see any alternative to Stalinism other than a social-democratic one) and a pessimism with respect to nature's oppression of man, which would continue to be a cause of unhappiness even in communist society.' (pp.10-11)

By 'nature's oppression of man' Timpanaro means the three archetypal enemies of humans, nay of all living beings, imposed by nature: disease, old age, and death. More than 2500 years ago one young Indian prince also realized the weight of these three and renounced his home to find a remedy. He is said to have found a way to overcome these three by dint of following the life of a recluse and developing through meditation an outlook of his

own. His self-realization led to the gaining of *bodhi*, enlightenment. He was subsequently known as Gautama Buddha, Gautama the Enlightened One.

Timpanaro does not think in terms of any illusory emancipation from the clutch of the three adversaries. Hence he prefers to call his view 'materialist pessimism', for there is no real escape from them. Humans have to submit to the scourge resulting from disease, old age, and finally the inevitability of the cessation of life. Whether in the pre-class society or the class society or the classless society, these three enemies will always dog the footsteps of humans, irrespective of all other differences that mark off one individual from the other. It is the forced admission of the inevitability of the human condition that makes Timpanaro believe that, instead of attempting to find any escape route, humans must accept 'man's biological frailty' (p.18). He further observes: "Physical ill"... cannot be ascribed solely to bad social arrangements; it has its zone of autonomous and invincible reality' (p.20). He cautions:

'To maintain that, since the 'biological' is always presented to us as mediated by the 'social', the 'biological' is nothing and the 'social' is everything, would once again be idealist sophistry. If we make it ours, how are we to defend ourselves from those who will in turn maintain that, since all reality (including economic and social reality) is knowable only through language (or through the thinking mind), language (or the thinking mind) is the sole reality, and all the rest is abstraction?' (p.45)

Using the terms coined by Antonio Labriola (1843–1904), one of the pioneers of Marxist studies in Italy, Timpanaro speaks of the 'conditioning' that the 'natural terrain' exercises over humans even after the formation and development of the 'artificial terrain' (p.46). But the issue of death, as envisaged by Timpanaro, is not confined to living beings. Since change is the only immutable factor in nature, 'all that comes into being deserves to perish'. This aphoristic sentence, although spoken by an 'unreliable witness', Mephistopheles, in Goethe's *Faust* (Part I, scene 3), was a favourite with Engels. It led him to anticipate not just the extinction of the human species but the end of the world itself. With the loss of their natural habitat, all denizens of this planet (including humans) will also perish and whatever had been achieved not only in the class society but also in the classless society will also disappear with them. Timpanaro notes that Engels was quite eloquent in this respect (p.98). In his *Anti-Dühring* Engels paid handsome tribute to Charles Fourier (1772–1837), a remarkable French utopian socialist, for having handled 'dialectics in the same masterly way as his contemporary Hegel' (p.315). What makes Engels pay such a tribute to Fourier? Engels explains:

'Using these same dialectics, he (sc. Fourier) argues against the talk about illimitable human perfectibility, that every historical phase has its period of ascent and also its period of descent, and he applies this observation to the future of the whole human race. As Kant introduced into natural science the idea of the ultimate destruction of the earth, Fourier introduced into historical science that of the ultimate destruction of the human race.' (p.315).<sup>2</sup>

Timpanaro further refers to a passage in Engels's *Dialectics of Nature* which, he thinks, gives 'a picture of the future end of our world in which a tragic sense (though it is a serenely tragic sense) about the destiny of mankind predominates' (p.98). The passage in *Dialectics of Nature* runs as follows:

'Nevertheless, "all that comes into being deserves to perish". Millions of years may elapse, hundreds of thousands of generations be born and die, but inexorably the time will come when the declining warmth of the sun will no longer suffice to melt the ice thrusting itself forward from the poles; when the human race, crowding more and more about the equator, will finally no longer find even there enough heat for life; when gradually even the last trace of organic life will vanish; and the earth, an extinct frozen globe like the moon, will circle in deepest darkness and in an ever narrower orbit about the equally extinct sun, and at last fall into it. Other planets will have preceded it, others will follow it; instead of the bright, warm solar system with its harmonious arrangement of members, only a cold, dead sphere will still pursue its lonely path through universal space. And what will happen to our solar system will happen sooner or later to all the other systems of our island universe; it will happen to all the other innumerable island universes, even to those the light of which will never reach the earth while there is a living human eye to receive it.' (pp.35-36)

One can see how 'this Lucretian theme of the end of the world' (p.99) enables Timpanaro to compare Engels's sentences with the close of an ode, *Sumonte Mario* by Giosuè Carducci (1836–1907):

...till man's exhausted progeny  
 Confined beneath the equator  
 By the call of fleeting warmth  
 Has a single female, one man.

Timpanaro admits that no two authors could be more unlike each other than Carducci and Engels and there is no possibility of one deriving from the other. Despite these hard facts, Timpanaro says, 'It represents further evidence of the wide diffusion of this theme among even the most diverse areas of European culture in the late nineteenth century.' (p.99)

Not only Carducci but also Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837), another Italian poet, is brought in to reinforce the theme of pessimism. Leopardi's pessimism, Timpanaro asserts, is 'radically different' from that of all earlier romantics and existentialists from Schopenhauer to Kierkegaard. But Timpanaro makes a distinction between Leopardi's idea of 'materialist pessimism' and the pessimism of all the central European thinkers. All of them had 'an anti-materialist, anti-Enlightenment, anti-jacobin orientation, and, as expected, all end up in, or at least tend towards, more or less exclusively religious positions' (p.19), whereas Leopardi's pessimism flowed in a different terrain.

Timpanaro also warns his readers that he does not propose 'yet another marriage of Marxism and "Frankfurt" pessimism, of existentialist or Freudian ancestry' (p.18). His conception of materialist pessimism, he claims, is derived from the classics of Marxism and, notwithstanding such pessimism, the struggle for the betterment of humanity will continue.

#

I hope I have not distorted Timpanaro's view in any way. In order to avoid all wilful or unintentional distortion, I have tried to make him propound his view as much as possible in his own words. Now let us examine his view in some detail.

First, what exactly is meant by optimism and pessimism? Without bothering about exact definitions, let us take it for granted that they represent two diametrically opposite points of

view: the first encourages hope for future betterment, the other, despair at the present state of affairs and disbelief in any change for the better in future. The fact is that optimism, in order to be realistic, must set limits to its visions. Only a naïve optimist would believe in limitless progress and unhindered development. The course of history, a true optimist knows, has both ascending and descending curves, as Fourier noted (see above).

French Enlightenment thinkers, like their predecessors during the Renaissance in Europe, used to believe in the potential of every individual to do everything and anything.<sup>3</sup> Marx, on the other hand, understood that every person has his or her own limitations and, therefore, even in the communist society he did not expect everyone to contribute in equal measures to social welfare. That is why he spoke of 'from each *according to his ability* to each according to his needs'. In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx also emphasized that the needs of every person cannot be the same: some will need more, some less:

'Further, one worker is married, another not; one has more children than another, and so on and so forth. Thus, with an equal performance of labour, and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund, one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so on. To avoid all these defects, right instead of being equal would have to be unequal.' (p.22)

Therefore, the distribution of products even in a socialist society would be *equitable*, not *equal*. Only simple-minded egalitarians, well-intentioned but quite innocent of reality, demand equality in the area of distribution. Equality can only imply equality of rights and opportunities (as opposed to hereditary rights and privileges enjoyed by the gentry in the pre-capitalist eras), nothing else.

In an article entitled 'Junius Pamphlet' (written on July 16, 1916 and published in October 1916) Lenin too once cautioned naïve optimists: 'It is undialectical, unscientific, and theoretically wrong to regard the course of world history as smooth and always in a forward direction *without occasional gigantic leaps back*' (1974 p.310. Emphasis added). The words seem to echo what Engels in *Anti-Dühring* said about Fourier's outlook and his Hegel-like mastery of dialectics (quoted above).

Notwithstanding this very practical view Lenin did assert: 'Progress, if we leave out for the moment the possibility of temporary steps backward, can be made only in the direction of *socialist* society, only in the direction of the *socialist revolution*.' (1974 p.316. Emphases in the original)

And the true socialist society will not appear immediately after the socialist revolution; it will take time. One should be prepared for facing 'occasional gigantic leaps back' at every step. In any case, there will be a first stage when the society can ensure only this much: 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his work.' After traversing a long way humankind will reach the second stage. Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* said:

'In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the indi-

vidual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly – only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!' (p.22)

The transition from the first stage to this second, higher stage too cannot be accomplished rapidly, however much one may wish for it. Necessary time has to be allowed for the realization of such a society. Humankind will have miles to go before it can reach there. If an over-optimist turns pessimist because of the delay in reaching the higher stage, the person is only to be pitied.

When Engels spoke of 'the ultimate extinction of humanity', he was not at all being pessimistic. He accepted the fact quite calmly as something inevitable, and as unavoidable as the death of every single individual member of the human species (and of every other species which has animal as its genus). When Marx spoke of 'a higher phase of communist society', he was not being optimistic to the extent that humans will then be able to overcome the perils of old age, disease, and death. The natural or biological terrain was not at issue. Keeping into mind the possibility, nay the certainty of the ultimate setback, Marxists take upon themselves the task of studying human society, a human construct, and seek to transform the world.

Limitless progress (in which even a utopian socialist like Fourier did not believe) is a grand idea, but it has to be understood in terms of the limited nature of humankind. Humans do not have wings but that does not mean that they can never move in air. Aeroplanes were invented to overcome the 'natural' limitation. What mythographers imagined could not go beyond the limits of their experience. The Greeks conceived of Daedalus and his son, Icarus, flying with artificial wings. The wings closely resembled those of birds with the difference that they had to be attached to the body with wax.

Quite naturally, when Icarus, defying his father's advice, soared higher and higher, the wax got melted by the heat of the sun. Consequently, he fell down and died. Apparently, the mythographers too knew or rather felt that flying like birds in their own fashion was not destined for humans. Indian mythographers, on the other hand, conceived the idea of a chariot with wings. Such a chariot, however, was meant for Indra, the king of the gods or for Kubera, a demi-god in charge of wealth lying underground. Royalties like Rama (as said in the Uttarakanda of the *Ramayana*) or Dushyanta (as stated in Kalidasa's play, *Abhijnana-Sakuntalam*, *The Signet Ring of Sakuntala*) were sometimes offered the service of such aerial chariots, but that was all. Common humans were excluded from such a privilege. There was always a belief underlying such fancies that flying was after all something to be wished for but never to be attained. However, by inventing the aeroplane, all limits set by nature in this sphere were successfully bypassed. What was not supposed to happen eventually did happen, not however by defying necessity but by *appreciating* or *recognizing* it (in the sense of getting insight into it) and circumventing it by other means.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, all limitations set by nature cannot be overcome or subverted or bypassed by inventing novel gadgets. The three archetypal enemies, namely, old age, disease, and death, are of such kind. Thanks to the giant strides made in the world of medicine and surgery, human longevity has been immensely extended. Yet immortality is a dream till now. The fanciful idea of 'the philosopher's stone' or that strange 'elixir of life' that would ensure

immortality drove hundreds, if not thousands, of medieval alchemists to search for such magic objects. Yet it was no better than a wild goose chase. Neither old age nor death nor disease can as yet be exterminated, although old age can be made more bearable than before; even such diseases that had been regarded as incurable in the past can now be cured to a large extent, and death too in some cases at least can be less painful than it had been even a few years back. Further inventions in medicine and surgery may bring further consolations and comforts which we cannot conceive at the present juncture, but such faith in further improvements is not at all unjustified.

What I wish to emphasize is that recognizing the inevitability of the presence of the three inescapable adversaries of humankind need not lead to pessimism. On the contrary, a stoic-like acceptance of decay and death is to be strongly recommended for every rationalist. Death after all is not something for which humans alone are predestined. Without death, the population of the whole living world would go on increasing, so much so that there would inevitably be a population explosion that would cause famines and disasters. It would lead to inconceivable chaos. Death is necessary in order to make room for the next generations: the old must yield to the new. Thus decay and death are a necessary part of nature's schema. There is nothing to be pessimistic about it.

It is rather surprising that Timpanaro who, against the concerted campaign of some self-styled Marxologists, defended Engels's rightful claim to be regarded as a co-founder of Marxism, did not care to remember what Engels had said about life and death in his *Dialectics of Nature*. Let me quote the whole passage:

*'Life and death.* Already no physiology is held to be scientific if it does not consider death as an essential element of life (note, Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, I, pp. 152-53), the negation of life as being essentially contained in life itself, so that life is always thought of in relation to its necessary result, death, which is always contained in it in germ. The dialectical conception of life is nothing more than this. But for anyone who has once understood this, all talk of the immortality of the soul is done away with. Death is either the dissolution of the organic body, leaving nothing behind but the chemical constituents that formed its substance, or it leaves behind a vital principle, more or less the soul, that then survives all living organisms, and not only human beings. Here, therefore, by means of dialectics, simply becoming clear about the nature of life and death suffices to abolish an ancient superstition. Living means dying.'  
(p.295)

It is rewarding to remember in this connection that words like optimism and pessimism did not appear in English (and presumably in other modern languages too) before the eighteenth century. In addition to the philosophical significance endowed to the word 'optimism' by G.W. Leibniz (1646-1716), it has come to mean a belief in the 'ultimate predominance of good over evil in the universe,' as said by Emerson in 1841.

Optimism further suggests a 'disposition to hope for the best or to look on the bright side of things; general tendency to take a favourable view of circumstances or prospects.' Pessimism similarly emerged as a tendency to look exclusively at the dark side of things. This word too received a philosophical coating in the hands of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and others in the early nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

It would be absurd to think that no human ever thought in terms of hope or despair before these two words were coined. There was Heraclitus, a Presocratic philosopher in the sixth century BCE, who was branded as 'the weeping philosopher' (as opposed to Democritus, 'the laughing philosopher').<sup>6</sup> But such an appellation (the weeping philosopher) does not entail any grievance against death as if it was a conspiracy of nature to deny humankind of immortality which is our species' birthright! Neither unbounded optimism nor all-out pessimism can be a part of the *lebensphilosophie* (philosophy of life) of a rationalist. His or her optimism too is not naïve, it is always critical. Critical optimism urges all to cut their coat according to their cloth, at least for the present. Utopias no doubt played and will play a historical role by helping humans to stretch out their hands for what is badly needed but not available.<sup>7</sup> Many new inventions that have now become part of our daily life were first projected in the utopias, not just in Thomas More's classic, *Utopia* (first published in 1523), but in much earlier times, in the works of Greek and Latin authors.<sup>8</sup>

We may in this connection think of the (e)utopia (both 'good place' and 'noplacé') of ancient India, the mythical land called Uttarakuru. Right from the Vedic times down to the epics and the Puranas, we read of this land of plenty and prosperity.<sup>9</sup> Uttarakuru differs from the then world (and today's world too) in two major respects: (a) there is no private property (*amama*, literally, not-mine. Cf. Latin *meum* and *teum*, mine and yours), and (b) there is no marriage (*aparigraha*) there. These two features reflect the justified yearning for the abolition of private property and of patriarchy which imposes marriage as the only approved form of male-female sexual relationship. The second is not unrelated to the first, for marriage entails the domination of husband over wife, and inheritance of property from fathers to their legitimate children. Thus the legend of Uttarakuru points to a valid form of society, free from the bondage of private property and the laws of inheritance. The demand for the abolition of these two evils is nothing impossible to achieve. The socialist programme proposed by such late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century social thinkers as Fourier, Owen, St. Simon and others, culminating in the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels (1848) leads to the same direction.

Timpanaro's concept of pessimism, drawn from Carducci and Leopardi, seems to be a yearning for something which is against the laws of nature. The concept of pessimism is thereby overextended: it transgresses the limits set by nature, 'the natural terrain' to which humans belong and must belong. Instead of thinking in terms of either optimism or pessimism, a rationalist should rather pay more attention to what is necessary and achievable, whether in the short or in the long run, rather than crave for what is neither required nor probable to happen.

#### Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> In the extract from *Anti-Dühring* published as a separate book, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, the sentence reads: 'It is the ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom' (p.82).

<sup>2</sup> This translation by Clemens Palme Dutt, as found in the Moscow edition (1977), differs a little from what has been reproduced in the English rendering of Timpanaro's book (p.98) from the New York edition of *Anti-Dühring* (1940 p.285).

<sup>3</sup> Speaking of the 'giants' who appeared during the Renaissance, Engels said: 'The heroes

of that time were not yet in thrall to the division of labour, the restricting influence of which, with its production of one-sidedness we so often notice in their successors' (1982 p.22). In *Holy Family* Marx and Engels observed: 'There is no need for any great penetration to see from the teaching of materialism on the original goodness of man, the omnipotence of experience, habit and education, and influence of environment on man, ...how necessarily materialism is connected with communism and socialism' (1975 p.154).

<sup>4</sup> Engels in *Anti-Dühring* quoted from Hegel a sentence, '...ist die Freiheit, die Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit'. Emile Burns translated it as 'Freedom is the appreciation of necessity' (Moscow ed. p.140). But there is 'recognition' in place of 'appreciation' in the Peking translation (p.144). In the Moscow translation of Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, in rendering the same sentence from Engels/Hegel, there is 'recognition' in the New York edition of Lenin's *Collected Works* (vol. 13 p.154) whereas in the Moscow edition of the same (vol.14 p.187) and in the text published in separate book form (n.d., p.190) there is 'appreciation'. All this has caused and still causes a lot of confusion. John Somerville in a seminal essay suggested: 'The word "insight," much closer to "Einsicht" than is "appreciation" or "recognition," pointedly suggests, as part of its meaning, a basis for better action and control (which was central to Engels' thought)...' (p.20).

<sup>5</sup> All references are to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (compact edition).

<sup>6</sup> See Bogomolov, pp.52, 152. The source may be Seneca, p.50 n17 (as stated in Wikipedia).

<sup>7</sup> For the importance of utopias in history see Morton, and Bloch.

<sup>8</sup> Literally *utopia* in Latin signifies 'no place', *u topia*. The generic name of all such imaginary lands has been adapted from the title of More's work. Some specimens of earlier and later utopias are available in J.W. Johnson (ed.), and More's *Utopia* (ed. R.M. Adams).

<sup>9</sup> See R. Bhattacharya 2000 and 2004 for details.

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## Counselling of HIV+ve High Risk Inmates in Correctional Homes

Basudev Mukherjee

### Contents

Back ground □ Organisational structure □ Objective □ Function □ Flow chart of ICTC (Integrated Counselling and Testing Centre) □ Counselling □ Testing □ Behavior change communications □ People living with HIV & AIDS (PLWHA) group □ Cumulative Data of ICTC unit, ACCH □ Case study

### Background

There is an AIDS epidemic in the world today. Here we will limit ourselves to a discussion of AIDS in Correctional Homes of developing world. Because here reside potentially a huge high risk population of HIV communication in the general population. The most unfortunate thing is that this huge population is almost untouched till today.

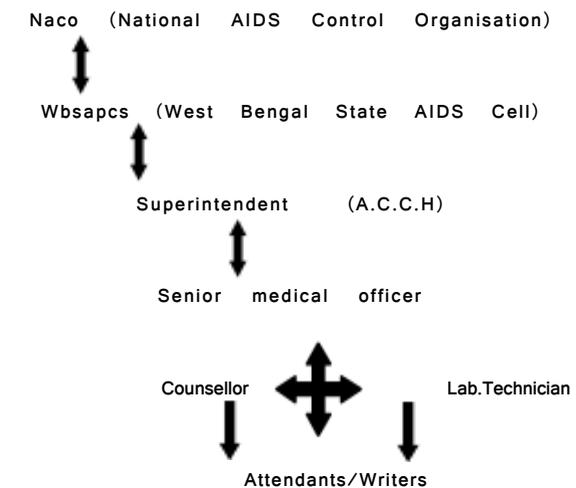
In the developed countries, the availability of highly active antiretroviral therapy (ART) for AIDS has transferred this disease from an inescapably fatal destruction of cell-mediated immunity into a manageable chronic illness. In developing countries, treatment has been offered more broadly only since 2003, and only in 2006 the number of patients receiving treatment exceed 25% of the total patients.

Narrow cost-effectiveness arguments that created false dichotomies - prevention or treatment, rather than both - too often went unchallenged. The greatest obstacle at the time was the ambivalence, if not outright silence, of political leaders and experts in public health. The cumulative effect of these factors was to condemn to death of millions of poor people in developing countries who had become ill as a result of HIV infection.

It is clear by now that the claims made for the efficacy of ART are well founded. Such therapy has prolonged life by an estimated 13 years per patient on average - a success rate that would compare favourably with that of almost any treatment for cancer or for complications of coronary artery disease. During the past decade through experiences and knowledge about implementation can dramatically transform the prospects of people living with HIV infection in developing nations.

ICTC, Alipore Central Correctional Home (ACCH) was established in the year of 2007. And since then it has been running successfully. Initially it was run by a NGO for few years funded by WBSAPCS but after that it was withdrawn from the concerned NGO and after that it has been running by the Govt. Of West Bengal (WBSAPCS) successfully.

### Organisational Structure (ICTC unit, ACCH)



### Objective

□ To generate awareness through sensitization programs on HIV/AIDS. □ To impart knowledge about the transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infection, TB). □ To detect HIV infection within inmates and to bring them under the service of Care, Support and Treatment (CST). □ To detect co-infection of HIV-TB.

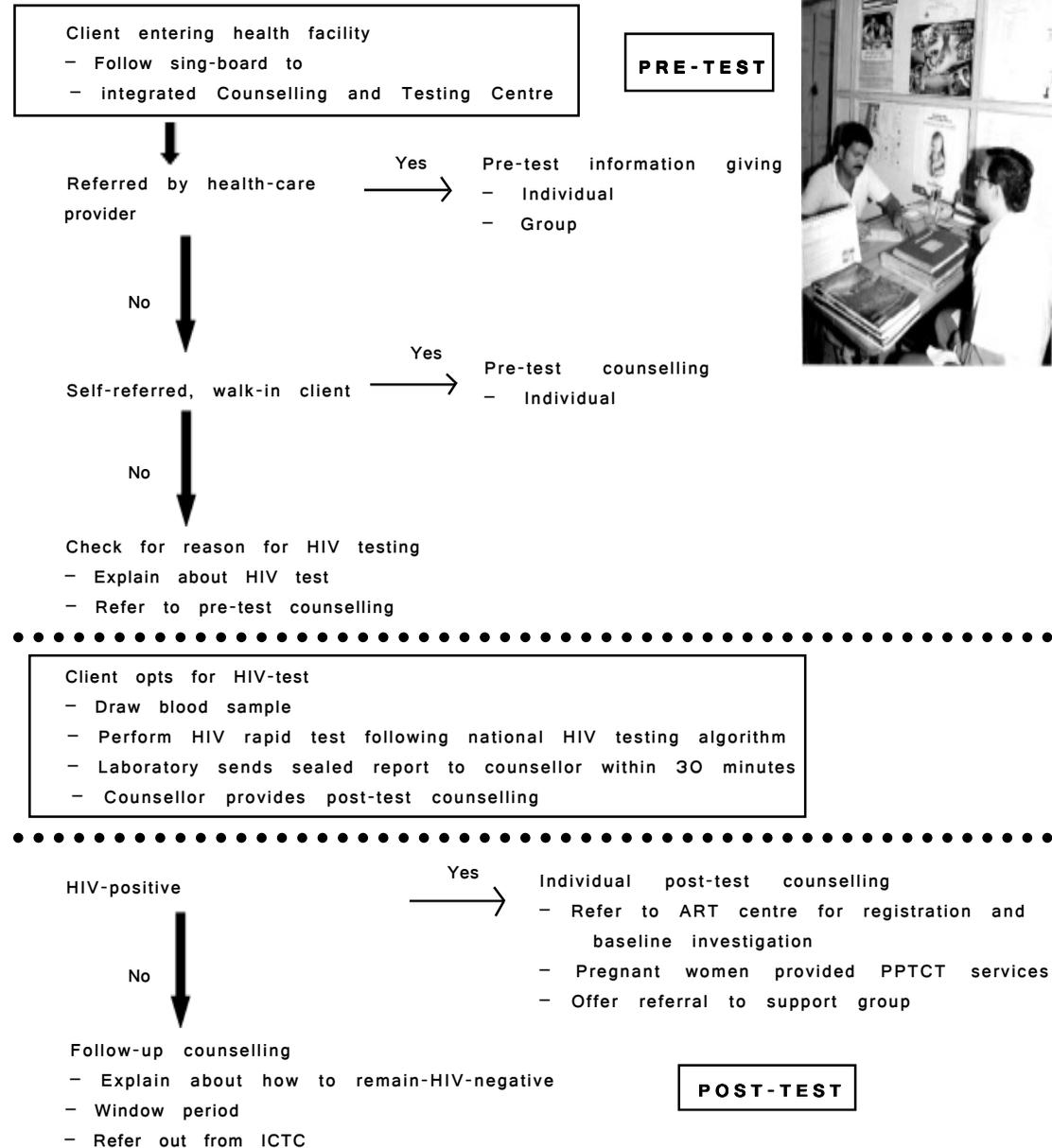
### Function

□ Pre-Test Counselling □ Testing □ Post-Test Counselling □ Referral and Networking □ Follow-Up counselling (Care, Support & Treatment) □ Maintaining a PLWHA group.

**Flow Chart (Counselling)**

Client flow in an ICTC

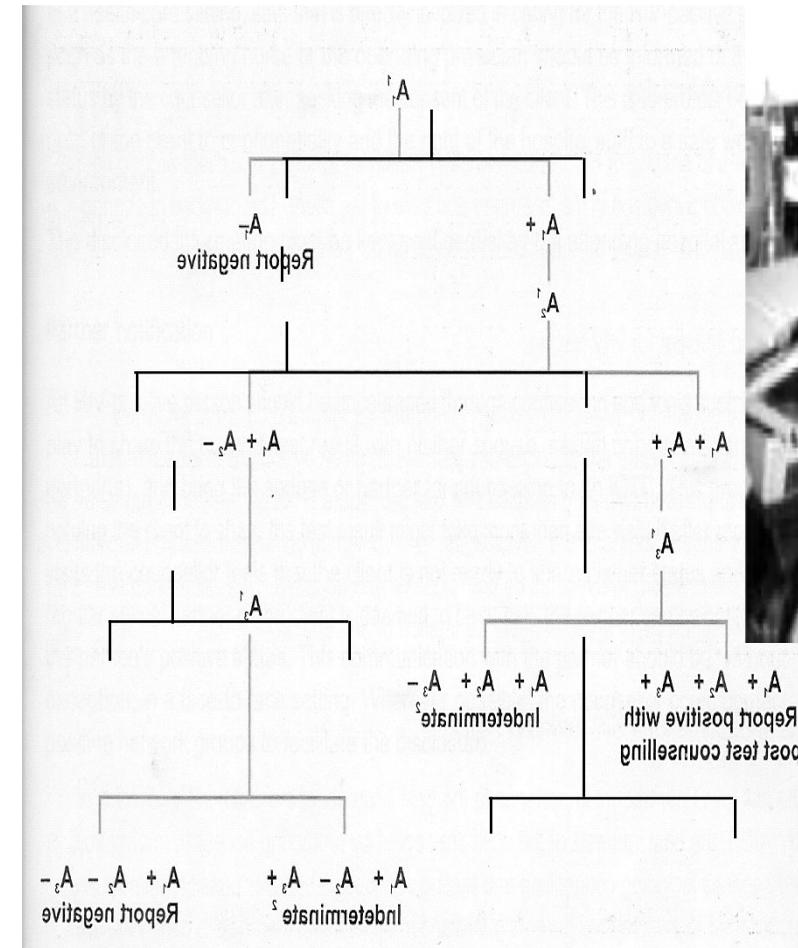
The suggested client flow in an ICTC is shown below :



**Flow Chart of Testing**

Annexure II: Testing algorithm

For the purpose of diagnosis three rapid HIV test kits based on different antigens/principles are to be used. Blood samples are processed for HIV. The test result may be positive, negative or indeterminate to HIV as described below :



1. Assays A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>3</sub> represent 3 different assays.
2. Testing should be repeated on a second sample taken after 14-28 days. In case the serological results continue to be indeterminate, then the sample is to be subjected to a Western blot/PCR if facilities are available or refer to the National Reference Laboratory for further testing.

**Counselling**

Counselling is an on going process where in the client and counsellor work together to assist the client and resolve their problems.

In this process the counsellor enable clients to get a better perspective of their problems and to generate possible alternative to resolve them.

Within the given support of the counselling relationship, the client feels comfortable enough to initiate relevant alternatives to change attitude and behavior.

**HIV Counselling**

HIV/AIDS counselling/education is a confidential dialogue between a client and a HIV/AIDS client and bringing about behavior change in the client.

It is also aimed at enabling the client to take a decision regarding HIV testing and to understand the implications of the test results.



**Know about AIDS**

**What is AIDS?**

AIDS is a condition caused by virus known as HIV. HIV is transmitted through exchange of body fluids such as blood, semen and vaginal fluid. HIV gradually destroys the body's ability to fight infections. This eventually leads to death. There is no cure or vaccine available yet for HIV infection.

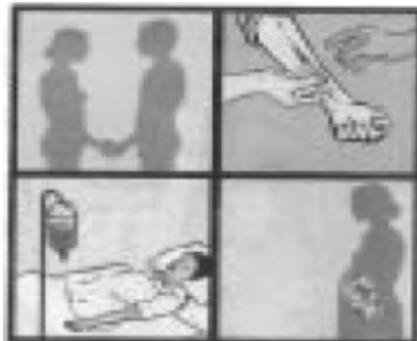
**How can I protect myself?**

By having a single faithful life partner

By using condoms (like Nirodh) correctly and consistently. By receiving blood products or body parts tested free of HIV. By always using disinfected syringes, needle and surgical instruments.

**How is HIV transmitted?**

Sexual intercourse with an infected person



Reuse or infected syringes and needles

An infected mother could infect her child, during pregnancy or delivery

Receiving infected blood, blood products or body parts

**Who is at risk?**

Anyone who has many sexual partners. Anyone who does not use condoms correctly or consistently. Anyone who shares or uses used needles. Anyone who has received un-tested blood, blood products or body parts.

**How is HIV not transmitted?**

HIV is not transmitted through normal social contact with infected persons. These situations are safe: Taking care of an infected person, hugging and shaking hands. Sharing of food, utensils, toilets, telephones, swimming pools. HIV does not spread through coughs or sneezes. HIV does not spread through mosquitoes, animals or pets.

**How will I know if I am infected?**

HIV can only be detected through certain blood tests

These blood tests are conducted at ICTC centres in all Medical Colleges in the state.



Use a condom every time to avoid HIV/AIDs and Sexually transmitted Infections

**Route of Transmission (Percent wise)**

What is the efficacy of HIV transmission by the various routes?

The efficacy of transmission varies by the different routes as shown in the table below:

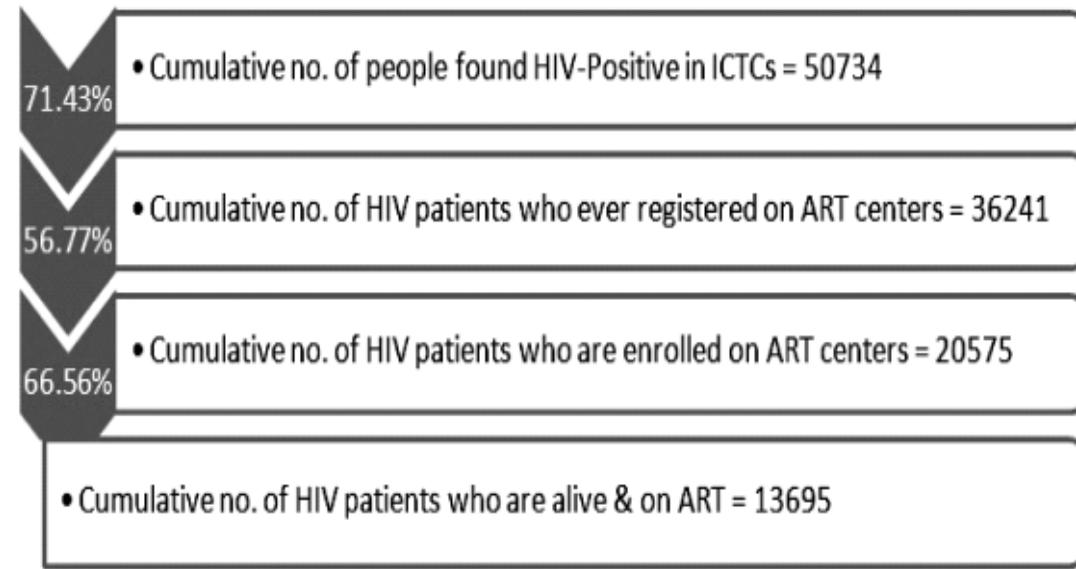
Sl. No.	Modes of Transmission	Efficacy	% of Infection	
			Global	India
1	Sexual intercourse	0.1-1.0%	75 (60)	79.0
2.	Blood transfusion	90-95%	5	7-0
3.	Perinatal	20-40%	10	0-15
4.	Injecting drug use	0.5-1.0%	10	6.0
5.	Needle type exposure (health care settings, needle stick injury, tattooing etc)	0.5%	0.1	Note available
6.	Others (Not Specified)			8.0

**HIV date (updated on : 30.08.2012, Source: CMIS)**

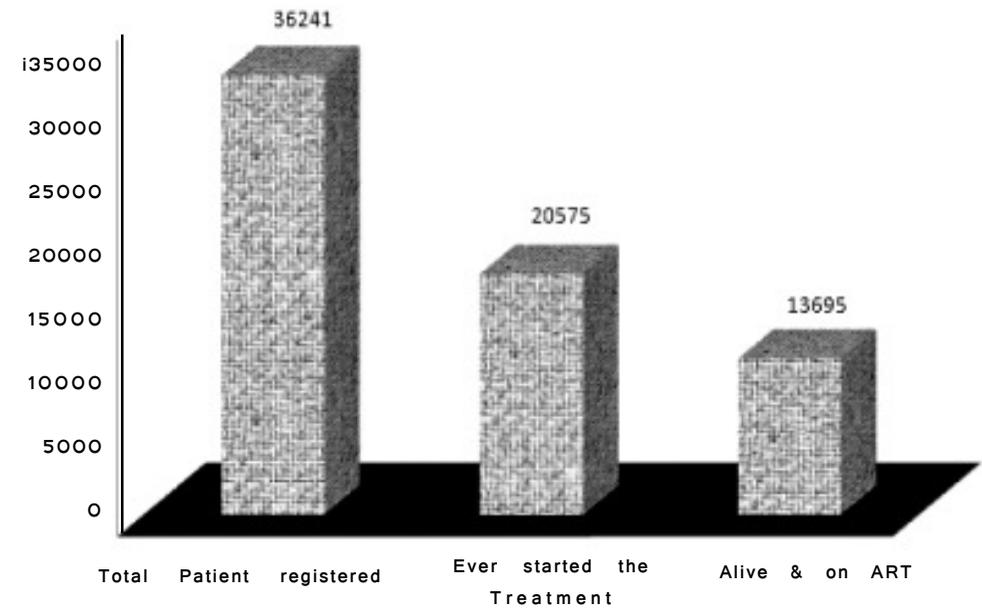
Cumulative number of people tested for HIV & found sero-positive in ICTC center of West Bengal (Till 31st October 2012)

Category	District	Total Clients tested for HIV (till 31st October 2012)	Out of total tested found Sero-Positive (31st October 2012)
A	Burdwan	251371	2352
A	Kolkata	1042550	26516
A	Purulia	67898	153
A	Uttar Dinajpur	62370	1756
B	Darjiling	1880991	5241

Category	District	Total Clients tested for HIV (till 31st October 2012)	Out of total tested found Sero-Positive (31st October 2012)
B	Jalpaiguri	96341	1130
B	Medinipur (East)	79744	699
B	Murshidabad	130722	823
C	Bankura	170038	477
C	Birbhum	47438	327
C	Dakshin Dinajpur	35233	332
C	Howrah	125902	1549
C	Hooghly	145659	1010
C	Cooch Bihar	59499	1238
C	Maldah	54931	975
C	Medinipur (West)	108992	1647
C	Nadia	118726	843
C	North Twenty Four Parganas	213133	1714
C	South Twenty Four Parganas	182581	1424
<b>Total</b>		<b>3207631</b>	<b>50734</b>



HIV Patients registered, enrolled & on Treatment (Upto October '12)



**HIV/AIDS**

The most common symptoms are : Unexplained Weight loss Frequent loose stools Persistent, dry cough Fever at night Night sweats Swelling of the lymph nodes Fungal infections.

AIDS refers to the final stages of the illness, when the person's immunity is very low and the person is seriously ill.

The person is unable to fight infection dies. The common infections that occur among persons with HIV include Tuberculosis (TB), pneumonia, fungal infections and infections of the brain and spinal cord.

**STD (sexually transmitted Diseases)**

STDs are those diseases that are transmitted mostly through sexual contact. There are many STDs of those Syphilis and Gonorrhoea are the common ones. The common symptoms of an STD include :

1. Discharge from the penis or vagina
2. Pain or burning while passing urine
3. Ulcers or blisters on the genitals
4. Swelling in the groin-due to the lymph nodes in the region swelling-up
5. Abdominal pain in women

Many STDs are without symptoms, so a person may not be aware that he or she is infected.

There is no vaccine for STDs, however this are curable. STD are treated by;

1. Consulting a doctor and taking the medicines prescribed by correctly.

2. Completing the course of treatment prescribed correctly.
3. Abstaining from sex or using a condom correctly during sexual activity in the course of treatment.
4. Motivating the partner to get treated.
5. Adopting safer sex practices to avoid further risk of getting STD.

**HIV-TB (Co-infection)**

ART is a life long commitment. Adherence to treatment is the most important factor to suppress HIV replication and to avoid the emergence of drug resistance.

The management of other infection and ART can not seen in isolation. HIV infected patients including those with active TB, should benefit from additional care needs, including clinical and nursing care in particular.

The counsellor plays an important role in assessing readiness for ART and can effectively contribute to treatment, knowledge, and compliance.

All ART medicine have side effects. The counsellor should refer the client to a physician with experience in ART who can decide whether a treatment should continue or be interrupted.

**Sing And Symptoms**



MANY HIV+PEOPLE DO NOT HAVE SYMPTOMS. OFTEN PEOPLE ONLY BEGIN TO FEEL SICK WHEN THEY PROGRESS TOWARD AIDS



AS EARLY AS 2-4 WEEKS AFTER EXPOSURE TO HIV PEOPLE CAN EXPERIENCE ARS OFTEN DESCRIBED AS "THE WORST FLU EVER"



AFTER THE INITIAL INFECTION THE VIRUS BECOMES LESS ACTIVE IN THE BODY. THIS PERIOD CAN LAST UP TO 10+YEARS

**Testing for HIV**

How to detect HIV antibodies/HIV infection? Whom to test? How to test? Process of HIV testing : Commensurate with the objective of testing. National Policy of testing

**Detection of HIV infection**

Clinical symptoms of HIV infection are not characteristic to enable to diagnose clinically  
 Acute infection may be asymptomatic  
 Infection may be silent until last stages (AIDS)  
 HIV infection can be detected only in the laboratory by detecting specific antibodies or components of HIV.

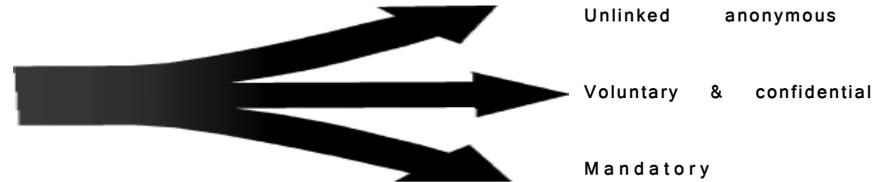
Only way to diagnose HIV infection is by laboratory testing for specific antibodies and/or the structural components of HIV.

**Aims of laboratory support**

- Preventing transmission through blood, tissues, organs (Transplantation)
- Preventing Parent to Child Transmission (PPTCT).
- Promoting voluntary counseling and confidential testing

- Diagnosis, staging and monitoring of HIV infection to enable early detection and ART treatment
- Estimating disease burden (surveillance)
- Conducting surveys to define groups/ areas needing special interventions
- Post exposure management

**Testing procedures**



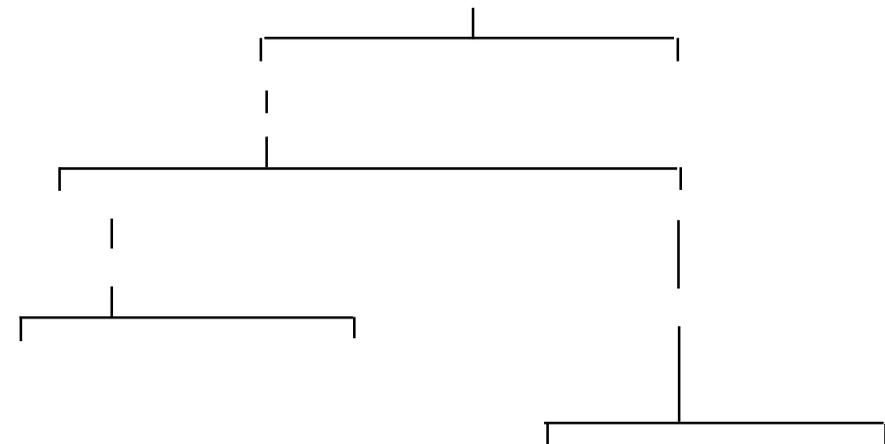
**Characteristics of HIV Rapid Tests**

Based on four immunologic principles :

- particle agglutination,
  - ELISA,
  - immunofiltration (spot and dot)
  - immunochromatography
- Positive test kit result indicated by clumping, a spot, a dot or line (visual to naked eye)  
 Most rapid tests detect antibodies to both HIV-1 and HIV-2 (all the types and subtypes)  
 Results within 30 minutes

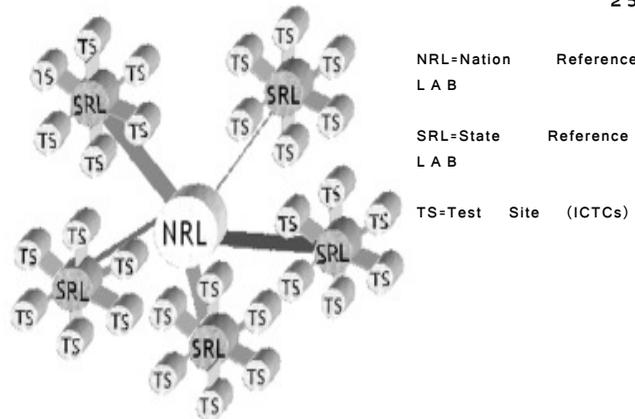
**HIV Testing strategy III**

Strategy III  
 [To detect HIV infection in asymptomatic individuals (ICTC, PPTCT)  
 3 Different Test kits required



1. Assays  $A_1, A_2, A_3$  represent 3 different assays
2. Such a result as in strategy 1 is not adequate for diagnostic purposes: use strategies HB or III. Whatever the final diagnosis, donations which were initially reactive should not be used for transfusions or transplants. Refer to ICTC/VCTC after informed consent consent for confirmations of HIV status.
3. Testing should be repeated on a second sample taken after 14-28 days. In case the serological results continue to be indeterminate, then the sample is to be subjected to be subjected to a Western blot/PCR if facilities are available or refer to the National Reference Laboratory for further testing.

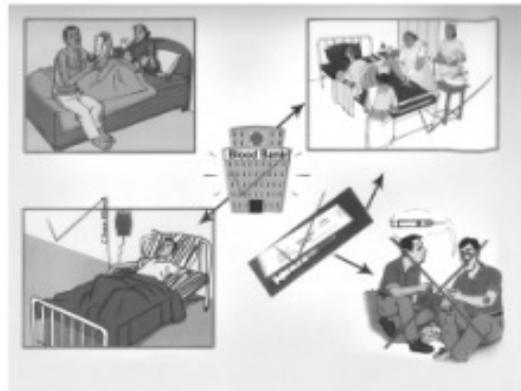
**External Quality Assessment (EQA)**



**Quality Assessment Methods**

- Proficiency Testing
- On-site Evaluation
- Re-checking/Re-testing

**Behavior change communications, HIV transmissions**



**Cumulative Data, ICTC, ACCH**

No. of Pre-Test Counselling Done	4155
No. of Testing Done	4132
No. of Post-Test Counselling Done	4132
No. of Found HIV +	45
No. of Client (Inmates) are on ART	16
No. of Clients are on ART & ATT	04
No. of Plwaha members	

Upto June, 2013

**Following-up counselling (Session)**

Follow-up counselling sessions at regular intervals help to

1. Provide appropriate information;
2. Clarify misinformation and;
3. Re-emphasize the need to adhere to treatment;
4. Review the topics discussed during the previous counselling session HIV/AIDS;
5. ART and the Importance of adherence;
6. It is important that patients understand names of each medication.;
7. Dose and time of medication;
8. Dietary needs and;
9. Tests as prescribed by the doctor

The counsellor should maintain notes of each session by maintaining a diary, or by developing formats for the same.

Counselling for adherence is an ongoing process and patients would require counselling throughout their life.

Patients should be assessed on adherence to the medications, side effects should be identified and if required appropriate referrals should be made.

Obstacles or barriers to adherence and strategies to overcome them, emphasis on HIV prevention to reduce the risk of transmission or re-infections with the virus needs to be discussed.

**HIV/AIDS psycho Social Aspects.**

HIV/AIDS is not just a medical illness-it is a condition with complex psychological and social implications for persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and their families.

The word AIDS is associated with words like sex, multi partner sex, drug use, commercial sex workers (CSW), men who have sex men (MSM), fatal illness and death.

People with HIV/AIDS and their families face discrimination, prejudice, hostility and isolation.

These negative attitudes and feelings make it difficult for people to come out openly about their HIV status and seek the help and support that they need.

This results in denial of the problem and believing that HIV/AIDS "will not happen to us" It is important to be sensitive to be difficulties PLWHA face.

For this it is necessary to examine our own feelings, thoughts, prejudices and blind spots. Plwaha Group

People Living with HIV/AIDS Group is a group that offers opportunities for members to share experiences and discuss problems openly, counteracts feelings of isolation, fear and despair. The groups often have role models for "living positively" with hope and purpose despite the unknown future. These groups also assist individuals to cope with HIV infections and empower them to engage in safer behaviours.

In this group, providing information and advise on healthy eating, quit smoking prog., the impact of illegal drugs and other medications, primary health care, support groups, detoxification prog. Exercise prog. education opportunities and other options that support prisoners "well being".

**Mental Health Issues Associated with HIV/AIDS Impact of HIV/AIDS on mental health**

- Social rejection/shame/low self esteem
- Low levels of energy and impairment in social functioning.
- Impaired quality of life.
- Disease prognosis affected
- Mal adaptive coping strategies
- Personality factors.

**Management Strategies :**

□ Assessment and diagnosis □ Appropriate medical and psychological investigations  
 □ Pharmacological intervention □ Psycho social interventions □ Ensure pre & post test counselling □ Hospitalisation □ Family education social support.

**Suicide Risk in HIV+Patient**

There are so many factor which may contribute to suicide risk are-

□ A pre-existing mood disorder (depression, anxiety or mania) □ A current psychiatric disorder such as schizophrenia/bipolar disorder. □ Presence of other psychosocial stressors e.g-relationship break down. □ Substance use or withdrawal. □ Inadequate support network. □ Discomfort with sexuality and or gender.

**Role of a counsellor : In suicidal cases**

Role of a Counsellor :

A good assessment is part of the therapy it is often enough to change suicidal thoughts. In most cases, the client comes in during a crisis and requires urgent attention.

This is because many para-suicidal clients feel powerless and are often unwilling to be frank and open about the problems in front of others who may be part of the problem. When a counsellor is dealing with a case of para suicide it is important to first have the client medically examined.

**Role of a counsellor : In suicidal cases**

Suicidal ideation or attempted suicide is closely related to feelings of hopelessness.

It is important to determine the individual's thoughts about the future and his or her beliefs about improvement in the current circumstances.

If the individual believes that a positive change is unlikely, the counsellor can try to restore hope by reassuring the individual that everything will be done to help and by teaching them the structured problem solving method.

**Role of a counsellor : In suicidal cases**

The counsellor will also need to be on the look out for other symptoms that may suggest the presence of clinical depressions, specialist referral is necessary.

**Case study**

Study : 1

Mr. Ojha (name changed) came under our service three years back with HIV-TB co-infection. He was on ART and ATT, his weight reduced to 48 kgs and CD4 count was 179. He was reluctant to take ART and ATT drugs.

He was counselled and guided for adherence to take ART and ATT from time to time. He is also a member of PLWHA group.

He attends all activities of PLWHA group (Yoga, Monthly meeting, Story telling therapy, Music therapy, Art therapy etc.) at our Correctional Home. He was motivated and supported to fight against HIV infection and gained body weight which is around 58 from 179 which is in normal range. Now he is leading a healthy life like normal people. **P A S**

**Marxist Concept of the Individual**

Adam Schaff

*Adam Schaff (1913–2006) was a leading thinker of Poland, internationally acclaimed Marxist philosopher and author of a number of books and essays dealing with Marxism and the human individual.*

[Paper read last May to an international symposium on "Morale e societa" at the Gramsci Institute in Rome.]

Let me begin with a hackneyed truth: for any brand of socialism—both utopian and scientific—man and his affairs are the central problem. And it is not an abstract man, but the concrete human individual.

But in certain circumstances this banal truth acquires, paradoxical as it may seem, the nature of an important discovery. For without it, it is impossible to grasp the meaning of socialism and to understand its theoretical premises and practical import.

Socialist currents of thought have always arisen from a protest against inhuman realities, from a revolt against oppression, exploitation of man by man, hatred in human relations. "Freedom, Equality, Fraternity"—these watchwords of the French Revolution—reflect eternal human aspirations which, in the course of centuries, have been endowed with various meanings and have been expressed in various ways. The roots of these tendencies and attitudes could perhaps be traced back to the times of the primitive community and its struggle against the first disruptive elements or a class system. In any case, irrespective of their form—whether religious or secular, utopian or scientific—they have always been an expression of protest, although not necessarily of struggle; and it was always man, with his suffering and his hope, that has been the point of departure for this protest. And this is precisely why all socialism is a theory of happiness, although it is not always a theory of struggle—authentic struggle—for this happiness. But when man is not treated as the central issue of the socialist ideal, its essence is lost and it is impossible to grasp its meaning.

Far from being an exception in this respect, Marxism is part of the historical development of socialist ideology. In a new and riper situation—when the character of human relations was becoming ever more clearly understood and when the advance of technology was making feasible what had previously been utopia—socialist thought could take on a new and riper shape. It came with Marx's scientific socialism which, while basically making over the socialism that had existed before, retained its point of departure: the individual and his problems.

Enmeshed in society, the individual has a social origin and nature—but in a sense, remains autonomous. And whatever the topic under discussion—be it the class struggle or the laws that govern history—it is the real, concrete individual, the true maker of history, that remains at the source of all analysis; for he is the true object of suffering and the true subject of action. This was never contested by Marx, either in his youth or later in his maturity.

From the outset of his theoretical inquiries, living human individuals were Marx's point of departure. It is precisely in this sphere that Marx—in the footsteps of Feuerbach—declared war on idealism, particularly of the Hegelian brand; his first concern is the living, real man.

That Marx—both in his youth and later—regarded man as the starting point of his philosophy is an incontestable fact, best evidenced by his writings. But it is a different matter whether the place allotted to man in Marx's system—both as a point of departure and a point of arrival, an aim—is theoretically correct. In other words: does Marxism, in treating man as its cornerstone, possess its own conception of the individual, or can it at all—in the light of its system—have such a conception. The question may seem strange, but it cannot be ruled out.

Feuerbach's thesis that philosophy's point of departure is living man—a flesh-and-blood individual who is part of nature—today sounds like a commonplace. Historically, however, it was a bold proposition which, as Marx used to say, turned the whole Hegelianist philosophy of the age the right way up. Many statements, once bold, sound banal after years, having simply become recognized and easily accepted truths.

By its radical transition from a God-centred to a man-centred anthropology—and thus to a philosophical vision of the world—Feuerbach's anthropologism, though criticized by Marx for its narrow naturalism which lost sight of history, played an essential role in the development of materialism. It is true that in its conception of the individual this anthropologism accorded no—or an inadequate—place to the social and historical factor; this was its failure. But it is also true that it meant a radical breach with the God-centred—and thus heteronomous—interpretation of the human world; and without this breach it would have been impossible to overcome Hegelianism and consolidate materialism. No wonder that it played such an important role in the philosophical evolution of the creators of Marxism—a role that was later to be highly commended by Engels in his book on Feuerbach. And no wonder that—notwithstanding his critique of Feuerbach's anthropologism—Marx fully subscribed to *this aspect* of his views.

The starting point is thus the human individual conceived as a flesh-and-blood specimen of a biological species—as part of nature. This is the most important element of Marx's *materialist* conception of the individual.

Naturalism is materialism, but it is a limited kind of materialism, incapable of reproducing the whole variety of human problems. Thus it is obvious that if Marx comes close to Feuerbach in his anthropology, it is also in anthropology that they part. But in revealing the failures of Feuerbach's anthropologism he also laid bare the weak points in Feuerbach's materialism in general. It is in the course of this criticism of Feuerbach that Marx arrived at the other side of his conception of man—his own and original view.

The *German Ideology*—was written only two years after the *Manuscripts*, but it already contained a fully developed critique of the naturalist conception of man and an outline of its social aspect.

Man is part and parcel of nature: he belongs to the species *homo sapiens*—and human individuals are its specimens. But if the *ontological status* of the individual is restricted to this problem only (although this is the most important issue in the struggle against the idealism of the God-centred or—more generally—heteronomous conception), then it is reduced to the existence in every individual of a number of specific features which are here promoted to the rank of man's "essence"—if the phrase is taken to express those characteristics which distinguish man from the animal world, that is, are attributes of man but not of other parts of

animated nature. "Being human" is thus reduced to a set of abstract features which are supposed to be "inherent" in every individual—to be peculiar to him as an element of a class.

Marx protests—and rightly so—against this conception of the individual; for its naturalism is limited and one-sided—it only takes note of the biological aspect as the constituent element of man and ignores the social aspect. And yet what singles out the species *homo sapiens* are not merely its biological features but also—and, in a sense, primarily—its socio-historical characteristics.

For in effect, when the factor of the social bond is introduced, the conception of the individual acquires a different quality; it becomes *concrete* as compared with the abstract character of the narrowly biological view which ignores the social involvement of man. And yet man is not only a product of the biological evolution of the species but, as a result of this evolution, he is a socio-political product, varying in certain respects depending on the development level of each society or of the various classes and strata within a single society. When construed only on the basis of the general biological features peculiar to all human beings, as distinct, for example, from other mammals, man is only an "abstract man", a "man in general"; this is opposed to the concrete interpretation of man on the basis of his social involvement, as a member of a society which has reached a certain stage of development, and as member of a class who thus has a place in the social division of labour, in culture, etc.

Feuerbach's discovery that the human individual is primarily part of nature, a specimen of a biological species was, in its simplicity, a real stroke of genius, banal as it may sound today. No less inspired—though its ring is still fresh—was Marx's simple historical materialism, that the individual is part of society, enmeshed in concrete human relations—particularly in the field of production—and created by these conditions.

But the conclusions to be drawn from this as far as the concept of the individual is concerned are not only restricted to the general statement that man is part of both nature and society; they also require concretization of the notion of the socio-psychological structure of the individual. "But man's essence," says Marx in the *Sixth Thesis on Feuerbach*, "is not an abstraction inherent in the given individual. *It is in its reality the whole of social relations.*" This thesis—often quoted but seldom fully appreciated and, I fear, seldom understood—I regard as one of the most momentous achievements of Marx's youth, as one that has paved the way for the further evolution of historical materialism.

The logical point of departure for Marx's analysis is the conviction that man—both as a species and as an individual which is a specimen of this species—is a product of historical development, that is, a social product. In stating this Marx does not simply echo Aristotle's truism (for that at bottom is what it is) that man is a *zoon politikon*—that is, that he always lives and produces in conjunction with others and is, from his infancy, dependent on society; he says much more—that man is a *product* of society, that what he is is the work of society. This Marx saw and understood at a very early date; in any case he already spoke of it in *A Contribution to the Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Law*, and—in a more profound and developed form—in the *Manuscripts*. But if one is convinced that man is not just a product of nature, that he is not immutable "human nature" which was given him at birth, that under the impact of historical conditions, etc.—in a word, that if he is a product of society then the point at issue is to explain what this means.

In *A Contribution* Marx points out that the critique of religion has lent a sharper edge to

the problem of man and writes: "But man is not an abstract being, living somewhere beyond the world. Man is the world of man, the state, society."

What this means is not only that man is linked with the world and society but that—and this is to go much further—that he is also constituted, *created* by this world.

*Theses on Feuerbach* advance another step forward in the decipherment of this proposition: the human being=the entirety of social conditions.

From the point of view of historical materialism the thesis is relatively simple and clear. If the being of man is not determined by his consciousness, but his consciousness by his being; if human attitudes, opinions, evaluations, etc., are a historical product and a result of a mutual relationship between base and superstructure—the movement of the whole, however, over longer periods, being ultimately regulated by the movement of the base—then what man is like in given conditions depends on the pattern of social relation, particularly in the sphere of production. These are at the root of his consciousness—create it—although this creative process is extremely complex. What philosophers call "human nature" or the "essence of man" is thus reduced to the role of a product—or a function—of social relations.

What is, however, so clear and simple when the existence of a developed theory of historical materialism is taken for granted seems much more complicated at a time when there is no such theory. It is a historical fact that the concept of the individual was not deduced in the Marxist theory from historical materialism, but on the contrary, Marx's sociology was developed from the problem of the individual. But this only concerns the ways of reaching the final formulations and not the merits of the case.

Man is born into a society and into certain social conditions and human relations; he does not choose them—they exist as a result of the activity of earlier generations. And it is on the foundation of these social conditions—which, in the final analysis, are based on relations of production—that the whole involved structure of views, systems of values and their resultant institutions is erected. Views of what is good or bad, worthy or unworthy, that is a defined system of values, are *given* socially—and so is knowledge of the world which is determined by the historical development of society. Through the prevailing social consciousness social relations give a shape to the individual who is born and educated in a specific society. In this sense social relations create the individual. It would be advocacy of nativism to deny this—something which nobody apart from racialists would risk today; it would mean scientific death in the eyes of public opinion. This is a result of the advance of psychology—but also of the Marxist-influenced sociological science.

Man is not born with any innate ideas—certainly not with inborn moral ideas—as is proved, if only by the tremendous variability of such views not only in various historical periods but even in the same period but in various societies whose evolution takes place in various conditions. On the other hand, men are born with certain possibilities of development and these depend on their historically formed psycho-physical structure. This is a result of phylogenesis—which in its turn is also historically determined. But on a certain level of biological development, which changes very slowly, man—in the sense of his attitudes, opinions evaluations, etc.—is a product of ontogenesis, a wholly social product. For what he becomes in ontogenesis is fully determined socially, and this in a way which is quite beyond his control—through language which implies a certain type of thinking, and education which inculcates certain manners, customs and morality, etc., and does it so thoroughly that even

when we later realize their origin and relativity we are usually unable for the rest of our lives to get rid of their effect. Indeed, even the way of hearing and seeing—our responses to music and art—as well as our literary tastes, etc., are formed in the same way, in most cases independently of our more mature and conscious reflexion on these issues.

Thus man's mental outlook, his consciousness, is formed as a result and expression of certain social conditions. His ontogenesis, which is a function of the whole of social conditions in a given period, can be indirectly taken to mean this whole. This is naturally a figurative way of speaking—a metaphor—but the meaning of what we want to convey by means of this metaphor is obvious.

This description of the individual *does not differ* from the statement that the individual is a specimen of a biological species since neither claims the role of a definition. When dealing with such a complicated entity as man only an analysis of some of its many aspects or elements is attempted. Now if the statement that the individual is part of nature as a specimen of a biological species settles one aspect of the problem since it cuts it off from theocentrism or heteronomy, then the statement that man's consciousness is, in its many forms, the function of social relations as a whole takes care of another sphere of problems and queries. There is no competition or mutual exclusion—on the contrary, both spheres of investigation are complementary, although even when taken together they do not exhaust the whole of the problem. There remain some essential questions—and we shall try to take up at least a few of them in our further remarks. These too will be directed towards supplementing the concept of the individual as here set out, rather than representing any "rival" formulations.

It may be pertinent at this point to consider the heuristic value of the description of the individual—in the sense of his attitudes and consciousness—as the function of the prevailing social conditions.

This makes for a concretization of the notion of the individual at least in two senses.

Firstly, in the sense of the Marxian methodological postulate that what is concrete should be arrived at through what is abstract, and thus simpler. There is no doubt that the concrete individual, from whom any sociological analysis must start, is among the most complicated structural entities. If the components—material and spiritual—of this involved structure are left aside then the description "man" or the "human individual" is extremely abstract and general and so of little use. But if we begin with the component elements—and their analysis can be, among others, carried out by means of their reduction to certain social conditions, we can arrive at a much richer reconstruction of the concrete individual, not to mention the clarity this brings to such cryptic spheres of human life as systems of values and the patterns of evaluations and behaviours based on these systems.

Secondly, when problems of the individual are interpreted as a function of social conditions, the conception of the individual can be concretized through a clarification of his relationships with groups and society. This is incontestably one of the key issues of any philosophical anthropology—and in Marxism it finds an unambiguous solution in the light of the interaction between the individual and society or a social group.

The individual is in a peculiar sense a function of social relations; in this sense he is a product of society in the concrete form in which this society exists. If social relations are class relations—which is determined by the mode of production—the individual is a product of these relations and is determined by his class background. But the problem cannot be reduced to

the broad social classes; it also involves social strata, occupational groups, etc., depending on the structure of a society and the role this structure plays in a given time and conditions. The concept of the individual thus acquires a much more concrete shape and becomes more firmly rooted in society—in its various parts which are the actual result of the existing conditions.

Let us now consider the third essential element of the Marxian conception of the individual.

Both the interpretation of the individual as part of nature and as a function of social relations fits into the framework of the man centred or autonomous conception which takes the human world as its point of departure, remains within it and dissociates itself from all theories which hold that man's destiny is governed by the influence of any ultra-human factors. To complete the picture one more question must be answered; how did social man come into being and how did he develop? For to say that man has a link with nature and society does not in itself supply a full answer to the question: what is man?

Where is the answer to this question to be sought? Marx thought that it was in human *labour*, in human *practice*—conceived as a process in which man transforms the objective reality—conceived as a process in which man transforms the objective reality—and thus himself. *Selfcreation*—this is Marx's answer to this question, and without this answer it is hardly possible to grasp the basic lines of his concept of the individual.

Marx did not invent this answer—he is here indebted to Hegel and through him to English economists (particularly Adam Smith). Naturally Marx did not take over Hegel's idea of selfcreation as it stood: in this case, too, he righted the Hegelian theory. And he also differs from the English economists. What is important is that Marx's point of departure is an individual who not only thinks and reasons but also acts consciously and reasonably.

Labour is the fundamental form of this transforming activity—for man, unlike mythological forces, creates everything from something, not from nothing. Human labour transforms the objective reality and thus turns it into a human reality, that is, a result of human labour. And in transforming the objective reality—nature and society—man transforms the conditions of his existence and consequently also himself as a species. In this way the human process of creation is from man's point of view a process of selfcreation. It was in this way—through labour—that *homo sapiens* was born, and it is through labour that it continues to change and transform itself.

It is precisely in the context of selfcreation that the category of practice acquires a clear meaning. This category has a multiplicity of meanings and applications in Marxist philosophy in general, and in anthropology and epistemology in particular. But its historical origins are bound up with the sphere of politics. Marx arrived at his interpretation of human activity as practice through the recognition of the role of *revolutionary practice* in human life. I do not agree with Cornu that Marx's *praxis* is a "replacement" for the notion of alienation. It is in fact connected with alienation but by other bonds: investigating alienation from the point of view of his search for ways of overcoming it, Marx came to the conclusion that this can be achieved not by speculation but by man's revolutionary practice. "The weapon of criticism," he wrote, in *A Contribution to a Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Law*, "cannot of course replace the criticism of weapon material force must be countered with material force." It was philosophical inquiry into alienation and the means of overcoming it together with the political

activity that was pushing him step by step towards communist radicalism that led Marx to his appreciation of the role of practice. And his mental evolution—particularly in the field of philosophy—cannot be understood when it is approached out of context of his political activity and experiences.

The notion of man's selfcreation through labour is the most radical denial of theocentricism and its consequent heteronomy. In Gramsci's fine phrase, it is only in the light of this conception that "we are the smiths of our beings, of our lives, of our destinies", and it is only in its light that we can call "man a process, or strictly speaking, a process of his actions". How broad and hopeful are the horizons inherent in such a philosophy of man.

The human individual as part of nature, as an object; the individual as part of society—whose attitudes, opinions and evaluations are explained as a function of social relations; finally, the individual as a product of selfcreation, of the practical activity of men as makers of history—these are the foundations of the Marxian concept of the individual.

This picture does not contain *all* the elements of this concept; this is neither possible nor necessary. Nor is it an attempt at definition—despite Aristotle, this is not of primary importance nor always essential—even though all the ingredients for such a definition are given. But what probably matters most is that as a result of this concept the problem of the individual's ontological status can be solved in a way which makes it radically different from the rival anthropologies of personalism and existentialism.

Does the Marxian concept of the individual include also the *problem* of personality? Certainly. But does it contain a developed *theory* of personality? To this question no simple yes-or-no answer can be given: for the Marxian conception of the individual contains some elements of such a theory but it does not body it forth in full.

Marx was familiar with the notions of personality and individuality and employed the pertinent terms. From his early youth he also had a clear idea of the ontological status of personality, thus creating the foundations of his own theory of personality: it was the defining factor of a real individual, peculiar to him. Individual and person cannot thus be separated for they merely are two different names for the same real object. This statement—and it is of essential importance for a theory of personality based on materialism—is a result of Marx's critique of Hegelian idealism but its significance has a much wider scope; it also covers other varieties of the idealist theory of personality—particularly Christian personalism.

"But subjectivity", says Hegel, "in its truth possesses being only *as subject*, personality possesses being only *as person*." This is also mystification. Subjectivity is a definition of the subject, personality a definition of the person. Consequently, instead of treating them as predicates of their subjects Hegel makes predicates independent and then makes them turn, mystically, into their objects. It is the subject that is the existence of the predicates, and thus the subject is the existence of subjectivity, etc.. Hegel endows predicates, objects, with independent existence, but in so doing detaches them from actual independence, from their object ... With Hegel it is the mystical substance that becomes the real subject, and the real object appears as something else, as a moment of mystical substance."

This may be written in the ponderous, abstruse language of "philosophical jargon" but the meaning is quite clear: there is *an actual human individual* that should be the starting point of analysis. It is a complex physico-spiritual entity and thus can be examined in the light of its various properties and characteristics. A certain set of these is called *the personality of*

*the given individual*, namely the spiritual, mental properties, that is, the individual's views, attitudes and dispositions which we often describe as *character*. This description is as vague as "personality" and it also calls for more scientific precision, but the associations it engenders are similar if not identical. Though this is still to leave the problem of the individual somewhat obscure and imprecise and in need of scientific elaboration (particularly by psychologists and anthropologists), we have at least reached knowledge of the essential issue: there is no person as a spiritual entity who can be distinguished from the individual as a real being. Personality is merely a special description of the individual and is an attribute in the same way as his physical appearance. Thus to hypostatize personality into "person" and separate it from the individual is as misleading as trying to dissociate the individual from his physical appearance or his shadow and to endow them with some independent existence.

Personality can be discussed tortuously and at length—all the more easily since no school of thought has so far succeeded in saying something precise on the subject. But in all of them the central issue of the theory of personality is regarded as dependent on the problem of the individual's ontological status, and the choice is relatively simple: personality is either conceived as a set of certain properties of an object—which implies an idealist approach not only to personality but also to the individual in general.

Thus the Marxist approach to the problem of personality is closely connected with Marxism's materialist answer to the question of the individual's ontological status. Recognition of the individual's social character and his treatment as the entirety of social relations imply another conclusion: the personality of the individual is formed *socially*, it has a *social character*.

"The functions and spheres of state activity are linked to the individual (the state only acts through individuals); not, however, with the individual as a *physical* individual but as a member of the *state*. They are connected with the character of an individual as member of a state. It is simply ridiculous for Hegel to say that they are linked to the individual personality *as such in an external and accidental way* ... The state's functions and spheres of activity are conceived by Hegel abstractly, in themselves, and the individual personality as their contradiction; but he forgets that the individual personality is human personality and that the state's functions and spheres of activity are human functions; he forgets that what constitutes the essence of an 'individual personality' is not beards, blood, abstract physical nature, but social character..."

This is another blow at the idealist (personalist) concept of the *person*: personality is not some independent or autonomous spiritual being (autonomous, that is, with regard to the material world, and so also the world of concrete individuals)—but it is a *social product*, a function of social relations between concrete individuals. Human personality thus varies in the course of history, just as the conditions which shape it.

And finally, the third inference from the Marxist concept of the individual: precisely because of its social character human personality is not given but *is made*, is a process; it is not a product of some ultra-human forces, but *social man's* own product, a product of *selfcreation*. This is another point of causal relationship at which Marx's theory of personality is linked to his general concept of the individual—and another blow at idealist mystification, dealt by a consistently anthropocentric theory.

One more remark on the problem of personality in Marxist theory: the category of per-

sonality is closely related to that of individuality—conceived as uniqueness, irrepeatability. Marxists, it is true, represent the view that personality is a social product and has social character, but this is only an interpretation of its origins. Human personality is socially conditioned, a kind of focus-point of social determinants but, if only because of its complexity, it is—as an entity—irrepeatable and in this sense individual (see *German Ideology*).

It is in fact an integral structure and so a psycho-physical structure that irrepeatability is an attribute of the individual. Consequently, it primarily concerns the human character of man's attitudes, dispositions, views, volition, preferences and choices, etc. It is in this sense that Marxism, while repudiating personalism's metaphysical approach to the human person, presents a full theory of the human person as individuality—or at least its anthropological system has room for such a theory. The controversy concerns the interpretation of the phenomenon but not the phenomenon itself.

This entails a conclusion which although not *expressly* stated by Marxist theorists, is fully authorized by implication: as an irrepeatable, structural entity the individual constitutes a certain *value* which is unique and only disappears with the individual's death. In a sense, therefore, the individual, although not a monad—on the contrary, it is tied to society by a thousand manifold bonds and a product of this society—represents, as an irrepeatable whole, *a world in itself* which disappears with the death of the individual. Here again, while rejecting the metaphysics of existentialism, Marxism does not deny an obvious fact in existentialist doctrine; once more the controversy is over interpretation, not over the existence of the phenomenon. This entails fundamental consequences, both for the theory of morals and for human action which affect other people's destinies.

These then are the general outlines of the theory of personality linked with the Marxist concept of the individual—and to this extent it is possible to maintain that such a theory exists in Marxism or at any rate is deducible from Marxist assumptions. But this does not mean that it has been actually developed in Marxism; this is certainly not the case, and the problem still remains open—all the more so since what is involved is not philosophical speculation but the general inferences from research into such specialized fields of the sciences of man as psychology, social anthropology, sociology, etc..

This particular field has been patently neglected in Marxism—as has been everything that concerns individual and social psychology. The sociology of knowledge helps explain this omission: when Marxism lost sight of the problems of the individual and emphasis was shifted to the study of mass movements the neglect of everything connected with the individual was the natural result. No wonder that a Marxist today broaching the problem of personality is faced with a host of notions which were usually formulated from idealist premises—and has little to set against them, apart from his methodology. That is why Marxism here must be destructive, refuting the erroneous views and propositions on personality, without naturally foregoing its own construction. Negation also leads to affirmation.

The constructive side of this work still remains to be done. If for no other reasons, this is necessary if a full picture in the field of research into the nature of the individual is to be obtained. As a working proposition I might mention Fromm's suggestion that human *character* should be studied as a system of filters through which the stimuli of the base are selected and guided in the superstructure. This suggestion offers a valuable pointer to the direction of research into the problem of personality—at least in the sense that the full recognition of

the social character of personality as far as the genetic aspect is concerned does not exclude the necessity of studying its concrete psychological substance, including the subconscious. When personality is investigated allowance must be made not only for the rational but also the irrational factor if the latter makes itself felt in human behaviour—and one should even try to provide a rational interpretation of these irrational factors. This is certainly not an easy task and it will force Marxists to revise many a preconception and repudiate many a taboo. But the effort must be made—if we want consistently to develop our own conception of the individual and overcome the rival theories.\*

The conception of the individual is, in my view, the central point of any philosophical anthropology—if only because it must solve the problem of the individual's ontological status and thus provide a link between anthropology and the whole of a given view of the world. For philosophical anthropology—despite all the appearances to the contrary and the often very fierce assurances of its sponsors—is tied by a thousand threads to the view of the world; What is more these bonds are mutual: in a coherent system the view of the world entails certain inescapable choices in the field of anthropology and *vice versa*.

How an anthropological system should be expounded is debatable. In my opinion the best and most convenient way is to *begin* with the concept of the individual since in this procedure the whole argument can be arranged into a system of deduction. But in the actual process of inquiry and reflexion the conception of the individual is not a point of departure but a point of *arrival*. It is only on the solutions of the various problems of individual life that a complete theory of the individual can be erected. And that is precisely why the system can be presented in reverse—beginning with the result of the investigation—the concept of the individual.

At any rate, it is precisely around the concept of the individual, particularly his ontological status, that the chief differences between the various anthropological schools revolve; and that is why this conception can serve as basis for a typology of these schools.

The individual's ontological status is clearly is part of nature and society and this determines his ontological status. He is a part of nature which thinks and consciously transforms the world and as such is part of society. As a natural-social entity he can be understood without any additional factors apart from the objective reality. such an approach to the individual's ontological status—based as it is on the whole Marxist view of the world—makes it possible to construct a consistently *man-centred* philosophical anthropology—which is thus *autonomous* in a special sense of the word.

Whatever its surface appearances the anthropological conception depends on what it takes as its basis: either the concrete individual with his social involvement or the ultrahuman world.

In the former case it is possible to construct a consistently man-centred anthropology which needs no ultra-human additions and approaches the human world as man's product. This and only this anthropology can be coherently united with the materialist view of the world; on the one hand, it can be considered as its logical outcome (Engels once spoke of materialism as an approach to reality without any additional factors taken from outside reality) and, on the other, as a position which leads to such a view of the world.

Such an anthropology—man-centered and thus materialist—is also *autonomous*—that is, the human world is conceived as *independent* of any forces beyond it (nature and society),

as a product of man. Autonomy must always be relative to something—in this case, to some supernatural, ultrahuman forces which might affect human destiny and govern man's conduct. This sense of the term "autonomous anthropology" must not be forgotten, and it must not be confused with "autonomy" as interpreted by personalism whose anthropology is based on the notion of the human person as spiritual entity. In this case the soul is regarded as autonomous with regard to the actual world—a relationship diametrically opposed to what we mean when speaking of "autonomous anthropology". Any confusion of these meanings may lead to basic misconceptions—even to a denial of the autonomous character of Marxist anthropology.

In the latter case, that is, when anthropology starts from an ultrahuman world—God, supernatural forces, the Absolute Idea, a world of objective values, etc.—man is not its point of departure but a point of arrival. It then has a *theocentric* character when (as is usually the case in traditional anthropologies) it is based on religious faith, or is—more broadly—heteronomous when what is implied is the influence of an ultrahuman factor which is not necessarily supernatural in the traditional sense of the word. "Heteronomy" is thus a broader notion than "theocentricism". Theocentric anthropology (for example, Christian personalism) is heteronomous since it is based on the idea of God's superior and governing role with regard to the human world; but Hegelian anthropology, although heteronomous, is not theocentric, for it is the Absolute Idea which is credited with a role similar to that of supernatural force in religious systems.

Anthropology's point of departure is, naturally, not fortuitous; it is closely linked to the whole of the view of the world within whose framework anthropology has been developed. It is misguided to think that anthropological theory can be expounded out of context of the view of the world, "without philosophical premises". Unless he is prepared to shatter the framework of his own system of thinking a Marxist cannot accept the concept of the person in the sense in which it is interpreted by Christian personalism; and vice versa, an existentialist or personalist cannot—at the risk of similar consequences—accept the theses of historical materialism.

When an anthropology has chosen its point of departure, this choice determines not only its general character but its treatment of many specific questions. Thus, for example, the problem of moral responsibility is viewed in one way by an anthropology which accepts the existence of supernatural forces and a creation, and in another way by an autonomous anthropology which combines materialism with the doctrine of man's selfcreation. And this is one reason why philosophical anthropology has a clearly ideological nature.

Among the many colloquial meanings of the word "ideology" we are here primarily interested in the sense in which it appears in such phrases as "socialist ideology", "bourgeois ideology", etc.. What is implied in these phrases are the views and attitudes which affect people's social behaviour in relation to an accepted objective of social development and of a system of values which makes them choose this objective. "Ideology" so defined will also include philosophical anthropology which represents a set of views of this type. This does not mean that anthropology entails direct practical, particularly political conclusions—but an indirect connection of this type certainly does exist. For this reason philosophical anthropology is an area of ideological struggle, a battleground for various schools and trends. The concept of the individual, for example, is, from a certain point of view, a highly abstract

problem and yet it provokes fierce controversies whose nature and repercussions can only be grasped when their ideological significance is taken into account, that is, their influence, even though indirect, on the formation of man's social ideal, and thus on his conduct and actions. Indirectly, no practical conclusions can be drawn from adherence to one or another theory of the individual; indirectly, however, such conclusions are very significant. And here, in the final analysis, lies the social importance of the concept of the individual and of philosophical anthropology in general.

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## Can We Make Life?

J.B.S Haldane

How did life start? Two great inventions have given us some hints towards an answer, but left us still guessing. The first invention is the microscope, which showed that there were many plants and animals far simpler than any that can be seen with the naked eye.

The second invention is called zoning. William Smith, an engineer, who was in charge of the construction of several English canals round about the year 1800, saw that he got to progressively older rocks as he went westwards, each with its characteristic fossils.

As you go back the fossil animals become simpler. On the way from Caernarvon to London we should find the first skeletons of fish in Shropshire, of land animals in Staffordshire, while the bones of warmblooded animals of the modern type would not be found before Hertfordshire.

The fossils were first used for dating the rocks, just as we can tell the age of a ruined house by the coins and pottery found in it. Later on Darwin and others made the same fossils tell the story of evolution of animals and plants.

But these two great inventions take us only half-way towards our answer. For there are living things too small to see with the microscope, and the fossil record is incomplete. Before the Cambrian rocks of Harlech were formed there were living things which have left a few fossils, but not enough to tell any clear story. This is partly because most of the old rocks are buried and most of those which are now exposed have been baked and crushed. But it also seems as if the first animals were soft-bodied, without much in the way of shells or bones.

The fossil record is like the third volume of a Victorian novel. We know a lot about the recent adventures of our hero, Life, but we do not know where or when he was born. Many people are content to give up the quest, and to say that the origin of life is a mystery beyond the range of science. This may prove to be true. Some scientists think so. But others are not so modest. They say that if life once originated from dead matter it ought to be possible to repeat the conditions, and make life in the laboratory. If they fail, that will be a triumph for believers in tradition. It will show that some things are beyond human power. But they must be allowed another hundred years or so of attempts before they are adjudged as failures. Men had tried to fly for several centuries before the Wright brothers succeeded. And making life will be a harder task than flying, because the machinery of a living thing is on a scale

too small to be seen even with a microscope.

Let us see how the problem is being attempted. Even the simplest living thing that we can see with the naked eye is fantastically complicated. To aim at building a worm or a moss-plant out of laboratory chemicals would be like trying to build to *Queen Mary* before one had made a rowing-boat. Even the bacteria which we can only see with a powerful microscope are far too large and complicated for anyone to try to make one with the faintest chance of success. It is true that model cells have been made which show some of the phenomena of life, but they will not grow and reproduce themselves indefinitely.

The bacteria which cause water-borne diseases, such as typhoid fever and cholera, will not go through a porcelain filter. But other smaller agents of disease will do so; for example, those which cause smallpox and influenza. We cannot see most of these filter-passers even with the best microscopes, because they are smaller than the wave-lengths of light. We can, however, find out their size, at least roughly, by means of specially devised filters with very small holes. They include agents of disease, harmless living things, and parasites which kill disease bacteria, as these latter kill us.

The most reliable test of whether a thing is alive is whether it can reproduce its like indefinitely if given the proper food. Of course, some living things cannot do so; for example, double-flowered stocks or castrated animals. But until recently no one doubted that a thing that can reproduce itself is alive. A child is vaccinated, and the fluid from its arm can be used to vaccinate a score of others, and so on indefinitely. So, though we cannot see the agent, it is generally thought to be alive.

But in 1935 Dr. W.M. Stanley, of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research in New York, made a discovery which marks an epoch in science comparable with Pasteur's discovery of disease bacteria, of Schleiden and Schwann's that animals and plants are made up of cells. Stanley is working with the mosaic disease of tobacco plants, which causes yellow patches on their leaves. He claims to have got the agent of this disease in a pure state, and to have crystallized it.\* It is a protein—that is to say, a member of a definite and common class of chemical substances. But yet if a crystal of it is dissolved in water and injected into a plant it spreads through it, and hundreds of other plants may be infected. From them millions of times the original amount of crystals may be obtained.

Here, then, is a chemical substance which may be kept in a bottle and shows no signs of life. But given the right food it can reproduce itself. Clearly, the gap between chemistry and life has been very much narrowed. Critics can still make two objections. They can point out that these crystals have not been made artificially, and they can say that they are not really alive, but somehow persuade the tobacco-plant to copy them. However, a protein molecule is built up of only about 100,000 atoms, arranged in a definite pattern, so it should be possible to build up this one artificially within the next thirty years. And other filter-passers can reproduce when feeding on dead matter.

This discovery has immense possibilities for good and for evil. On the one hand, it may lead to a thorough understanding of filter-passers, so that influenza and common colds will be as easily controlled as typhoid fever. And it may be possible to make new diseases so deadly and so specific that they will wipe out a whole species of animals or plants without

\*This has been fully confirmed.

affecting others. The world would be a definitely better place without fleas, lice, and bed-bugs and this is one of the possible ways in which they may be abolished. It is equally possible that man will turn the same weapons on himself. A new disease as deadly as smallpox and as infectious as influenza would be a weapon compared to which explosives and poison-gas would be as antiquated as bows and arrows. If a belligerent nation could immunize itself against it before turning it on the enemy it might hope to win a war against enormous odds. It is worth noticing that the old gentlemen who framed the international convention which forbade the use of gas in war did not forbid such weapons. They forbade "bacteriological warfare," but they had probably not heard that many of the worst diseases are caused by agents much smaller than bacteria. The present international law is as silly as would be a law forbidding the sale of rifles but allowing that of automatic pistols. However, as the present convention is violated with impunity, this does not very much matter. Somewhere about 1990 these new weapons should be available, and unless by that time the human race has done something serious to abolish war it will have to take the consequences.

It may be that artificial life of a simple character will be made in the laboratory long before we understand the process going on inside the cells of more complicated animals and plants. For here, too, as soon as we get out of range of the microscope we are working, quite literally, in the dark. We know as great many of the substances found in living cells, but we do not know much about how they are arranged. It is as if we had piles of most of the parts of which a watch is made, but no clear idea of how they are put together.

One of the real scandals of science is that we do not know how a muscle works. When I lift my hand various muscles contract. I know what fuel they are using and can analyse the gas produced by its burning. Which is carried by the blood of my lungs and breathed out. But I do not know just how the energy makes the fibres contract, as I know how the gas in my car pushes the piston. There is no mystery here. The will does not come into the story. I have had the blood supply to my arm blocked till it was paralysed and then watched another man stimulate my nerves with electric currents so that he could work my muscles when I could not. The problem is a problem of chemistry, not of psychology. And it is a practically important problem. When we burn fuel in an engine we use its heat to expand gas or vapour. But in muscles it is burned at a low temperature. We can imitate this process in the laboratory, but we cannot yet turn the energy into useful work. If we could, it might revolutionize industry. For a muscle has an efficiency of about 50 per cent, while few heat engines reach 25 per cent.

The way in which the machinery of a muscle is arranged is gradually being discovered by X-rays. These are vibrations like light, but of a much smaller wave-length, so that they can give us pictures of atoms. Unfortunately, we cannot bend X-rays as we can bend light with a lens to give us a picture. So we have to rely on indirect methods. However, the work goes on, and we ought to have fairly good artificial muscles within a generation. They will certainly be more efficient than our present engines, but a good deal bulkier. A one horse-power engine will not be as large as a horse, but it will at first be as large as a small sheep. And when properly designed, it will last a very long time, because none of its parts will get hot. As fuel becomes more expensive owing to the exhaustion of oil and coal, such engines will begin to pay, and it is probable that they will replace our stationary engines. But they will be too bulky to be useful for aeroplanes or vehicles.

Animals, and particularly plants, are very expert at making a variety of chemical substances, and arranging them in patterns, such as wood, wool, and cotton. We are just beginning to copy them; for example, by making artificial dyes and artificial silk. But our chemical processes are carried out at a high temperature, involving a great waste of energy. We know how animals and plants break down complicated substances; for example, how a man digests meat or a potato plant turns the starch of the tuber into sugar to be used in building new roots and shoots in the spring. This was discovered during the last thirty years. But we are only just beginning to find out how it builds up more complicated substances, and certainly cannot imitate this process. However, we know enough to say that the process is not mysterious but merely complicated. It looks as if the factories of the future would contain no heat engines, and that most processes would be carried out at normal temperatures. But these factories will not be mere imitations of living creatures. Invention is well ahead of life at many points. Life never produced the wheel. Nerves are most inefficient compared with telegraph wires. Nervous impulses only travel at speeds up to 10 miles an hour, while telegraph and telephone messages travel many thousands of miles per second.

The industry of the future will only copy life where it cannot improve on it. Unfortunately, progress along these lines is very slow because people in general are not interested in them. It is far easier to get Pound 100,000 for a telescope than Pound 1,000 for a number of rather dull-looking glass vessels needed for chemical analysis of living tissues. This is because one can write about the stars in simple language, but I defy anyone to do so about the ultra-microscopic world which lies between the cell and the atom. It is there that our ignorance is most profound. It is there that the outstanding problems of medicine will be solved. And it is there that discoveries will be made in the next century which will not only revolutionize medicine but industry, and (if we are stupid enough to let them) war also.

[From *Keeping Cool* (1944)] **P A S**

## **Snake-Bite : Observations and Reflections**

Nirmalendu Nath

The rural people still now believe that the presence of venom in the human body due to snake-bite could be eliminated by the exorcist (Ojhas) or by the application of a sucker-stone generally known as 'venom stone', on the wounded part of the body. A section of the rural people even believe, the human body (dead) caused by a poisonous snake may be re-animated if the body after being floated in the river is able to draw attention of a master exorcist. Canning Juktibadi and Sanskritik Sanstha (CJSS) estimated that only in 4 blocks of South 24 Parganas, the number of deaths between 1993-2002 due to snake-bite were around 349 and most of the deaths occurred due to high dependence on quacks and exorcist.

In order to abolish these prevailing superstitions from the mental frame of rural people CJSS for the last 20 years has been organizing various programme in various blocks of South 24 Parganas. So far, three different but related programmes have been adopted by CJSS. First, estimation of the number of deaths caused by snake-bite in these snake-bite prone district. Second, adoption of sustained awareness campaign about snake and treat-

ment of snake-bite patients in the district. Third, inauguration of 'Help-Line' on 'Snake-bite' with a wider coverage of South Bengal. The estimation of the number of deaths caused by snake-bite was done by CJSS through an epidemiological household survey covering the eight snake-bite prone blocks of South 24 Parganas. This estimation was done for the period 2006-2009. Initially the awareness campaign about snakes and snake-bite patients was done at almost all important markets, ferryghats, fairs, schools etc., of South 24 Parganas. With the financial assistance from National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in January, 2008, this campaign was organized at the village level more particularly, at the 'Gram Sansad' level. Apart from these 'household level' and 'gram sansad' level activity from March 2010, CJSS extended free medical advice for snake-bite patients through 'Help-Line' centered at Canning. In the following pages, after a brief description of the socioeconomic condition of the eight selected blocks, we try to evaluate the results of these different but related programmes.

#### The District and Selected Blocks

The district of South 24 Parganas came into existence on March 1, 1986. Presently there are five subdivisions Alipore (Sadar), Baruipur, Canning, Diamond Harbour and Kakdwip, 29 blocks consisting of 312 Gram Panchayats and 7 Municipalities. South 24 parganas is, indeed, a complex district, stretching from the metropolitan Kolkata to the remote riverine villages in the south up to the north of Bay of Bengal.

The eight selected blocks of the district under survey are Gosaba, Basanti, Joynagar-II, Kultali, Mathurapur-II, Pathar Pratima, Sagar and Namkhana. All these blocks belong to the southern part of the Dampier-Hendeges line. The southern part of the Dampier-Hendeges line consists of 13 blocks of South 24 Parganas and is commonly known as Sundarban. The northern part of the Sundarban have been settled long ago, the settlements in the southern part are of recent origin. The settlement in the south are more dispersed than those in the north.

The eight blocks under survey can be categorized into two regions. Some of them are now parts of the mainland which is connected by roads and having other infrastructural facilities typical of their rural counterparts in India. Under the South 24 Parganas, the areas under the administrative blocks of Joynagar-II, Mathurapur-II, Namkhana, fall almost entirely in this category. The people living in these areas are not in close proximity with the forest. But the blocks of Basanti, Gosaba, Kultali, Patharpratima and Sagar, together accounting for about 40 per cent of the total area of the district call for a special understanding of the people, their threat perceptions. They are almost entirely detached from the mainland and live under much different conditions unmatched in the rest of India. These are people living in islands on the fringes of Reserve Forest. The islands often face the forest on the other side of the separating river. The settlers initially lived mostly on agriculture with some viable amount of reclaimed cultivable land for each household.

The five island blocks around forest boundary is featured by the co-existence of human settlement and reserved forest. Given a moderate density of population approximately 700 per 5q. km. and low-lying nature of the area infested with various species of snakes, the incidence of snake bites is traditionally high in these blocks. Snake bite is a common problem in these areas and results in death in many cases.

According to Census 2001, the total population of South 24 Parganas is 6906689. In 2001, 25.06 per cent of the total population of the district and 61.95 per cent of total population of the Sunderban region are living in these 8 selected blocks. The socio-economic condition of the people living in these 8 blocks is described with the help of four parameters; a) female literacy rate, (b) percentage of the small and marginal farmer household and agricultural labourer household, (c) the percentage of household living below the poverty line and (d) human development index. The value of the four parameters with respect to eight blocks are presented in Table-1.

Socio Economic Profile of Selected blocks							
Block	Density of Population	Female Literacy Rate	B.P.L House hold in %	Human Development Index	Bed per 10000 Population	Doctors per one lakh population	Infras- tructural gap
<b>Island Block</b>							
Gosaba	751	56.60	38.02	0.54 (27)	1.39	2.24	1
Basanti	689	44.30	64.59	0.50 (29)	1.18	0.72	2
Kultali	614	44.60	46.36	0.59 (18)	2.82	5.32	1
Patharpratima	595	60.60	49.15	0.56 (23)	2.12	2.43	2
Sagar	658	67.10	44.46	0.55 (24)	4.42	4.85	1
<b>Non-Island Block</b>							
Joynagar-II	1123	45.40	43.62	0.55 (25)	2.49	4.30	1
Mathurapur-II	872	54.90	39.59	0.59 (17)	4.48	5.46	1
Namkhana	433	67.60	48.17	0.58 (19)	2.68	6.23	1

Source : Census of India 2001, Rural Household Survey 2005, HDR South 24 Parganas 2009, Health on the March 2008.

A glance at the Table-1 reveals that highest female literacy rate is observed at Namkhana the percentage being 67.60. The lowest female literacy rate i.e., 44.30 per cent is observed at Basanti. Basanti is also featured by the presence of highest percentage of families living below the poverty line. At Basanti the percentage of rural households living below the poverty line is 64.59 per cent. Basanti is thus, characterized by the presence of highest level of illiteracy among women along with highest number of rural households living below the poverty line. The human development index (HDI) of the block Basanti is 0.50, indicating the lowest level of human development among the 29 blocks of South 24 Parganas. The value of HDI for all these blocks varies between 0.50 and 0.59 indicating a low human development. In other words the standard of living of these eight blocks is at a low order (Table-1)

The health parameters of the block is measured by the number of beds per ten thousand populations and the number of doctors per lakh population. It will be observed that compared with national norms for provisioning of health infrastructure, there exists an infrastructural gap. The presence of such gaps forced the patient to move from one hospital to another resulting an increase in the 'burden of health expenditure' (The burden of health expenditure is the ratio of average health related expenditure during the period of reference per indisposed person and the average overall consumption expenditure per house hold during the corresponding period). Among the 8 selected blocks, the number of bed per ten thousand populations is highest in Namkhana followed by Mathurapur-II, Kultali. In case of number of

doctors per lakh population the situation is moderate in Mathurapur-II, Namkhana and Kultali. The situation in Gosaba, Basanti is quite different. Both in cases of hospital bed and the number of doctors in state health care services per one lakh population they are at the bottom. However from the point of view of providing health care services to the people this is of little consequence. In Gosaba a large number of families do not depend on the state sponsored health care system. Infact, the relatively favourable female literacy rate along with mortality rate is related with the activity of Christian Missionary activity in this area for several decades.

Inspite of the presence of Christian Missionary activity in Gosaba, infrastructural gap persists. The average level of deficit with respect to community health centre (CHC) is one (as per national norms there should be one CHC for every 1-1.20 lakh population, serving as a referral institution for 4 PHC) the presence of such gap distract the rural population from the lower level public health sector and enhances the burden of health expenditure. NSSO's 60th round observed that at the all India level the poorer sections carry a higher burden compared with the better off. It is also observed that the burden of expenditure for hospitalization is substantial for 90 per cent of the population. It is observed that during the survey in South 24 Parganas a poor family has to bear an expenditure amounting to Rs. 1000/- for curing a Common Krait snake-bite patient, while in case of in Russell's Viper bite the expenditure rose to Rs. 15,000/- for proper treatment of the patient.

A low level of HDI i.e. a higher level of illiteracy generates superstition. Illiteracy along with substantial burden of expenditure poverty reinforces the foundation of superstition. As a result of this superstition rural people of these areas depend to a great extent on the exorcist for treatment of snake-bite victims. In some cases, the people hesitate to report about the snake-bite victims. In some cases, the people hesitate to report about the snake-bite incidents. Consequently, a large number of snake-bite cases remain unrecorded. As mentioned in HDR-South 24 Parganas, 2009 there have been 8 reported deaths from snake-bite between Jan-June 2007. In order to trace the extent of these unrecorded event i.e. snake-bite patient and snake-bite victims a survey was organized by CJSS in these eight selected blocks of South 24 Parganas.

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### The Survey

The survey was conducted in three phases. In phase-I of the survey only two blocks, Gosaba and Basanti were taken into consideration. After the completion of the survey in Gosaba and Basanti, remaining six blocks such as Kultali, Joynagar-II, Mathurapur-II, Patharpratima, Sagar and Namkhana were taken into consideration. In phase-III of the survey 5 blocks such as Mathurapur I, Joynagar I, Kakdwip, Mograhat I and Mograhat II are considered, However the entire data of phase III is not yet processed. As such we restrict our analysis with respect to phase I and phase II of the survey. Started in January 2008, a total of 22 months was required to complete the phase I and phase II survey. Due to financial constraint and administrative reasons the period of survey was prolonged. It was decided that the survey will be one of household survey. The enumerators were asked to visit each household of the 'gram sansad' and collect information relating to snake-bite, if any, occurred in the family during the past two years through a structured questionnaires.

The information of snake-bite collected for the period 2006 to 2009 will now be analyzed on the following major points; (a) the extent of the occurrence rate, i.e., the number of snake-bite cases per ten thousand population per year in these 8 blocks, (b) determination of the mortality rate due to poisonous snake-bite i.e., number of deaths occurred per thousand snake-bite cases per year, (c) age-wise variation of this death, (d) seasonal variation in the death of snake-bite cases, (e) type of species (snake) that effected such death and lastly (f) current practice of treatment of snake-bite patients.

Table-2 described the number of deaths from snake-bite from the period 2006 and 2009 as captured in the survey. The total number of deaths from snake-bite in these eight blocks was 148. The highest number of deaths was observed in 2007, the deaths being 61. Thereafter number of deaths decreases. In 2009, the number of deaths from snake-bite was 42. The highest number of death in any year in a block was observed at Gosaba. In 2007, 17 cases were found to be snake-bite victims at Gosaba. As against this in Sagar, the number of death was as low as 10 between 2006 and 2009.

**Table 2 : Number of Deaths Due to Snake-Bite between 2006-09**

Block	Year 2006	Year 2007	Year 2008	Year 2009	Total
<b>Island Block</b>					
Gosaba	7	17	na*	na	24
Basanti	12	11	na	na	23
Kultali	na	8	15	15	38
Patharpratima	na	5	12	11	28
Sagar	na	2	4	4	10
<b>Non-Island Block</b>					
Joynagar-II	2	6	11	3	22
Mathurapur-II	na	9	15	4	28
Namkhana	na	3	3	5	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>184</b>

Source : Field Survey 2009 (\* not available)

The number of snake-bite cases per ten thousand population per year i.e. occurrence rate and the number of deaths occurred per thousand snake-bite cases per year i.e., mortality rate in these eight blocks of South 24 Parganas are presented in Table-3. The data indicate that there had been 184 deaths out of 4871 reported cases of snake-bite between 2006 and 2009. The survey data on snake-bite shows average occurrence per ten thousand populations was 13.95. However, the average case fatality ratio i.e. mortality ratio was observed by other researchers. In 1992 Dr. Amiyo Hati and others observed the same mortality ratio of snake-bite with respect to Burdwan. In some blocks the mortality rate was significantly high. The incidence of death from snake-bite per thousand at Mathurapur-II was as high as 61.18, while the lowest incidence of death was recorded at Basanti. The rate was only 23.58. The important point to be noted here is the prevalence of high mortality ratio (case fatality ratio) with a low occurrence rate. In Mathurapur-II death from snake-bite was considerably higher in comparison to other blocks. Lack of awareness, improper quality of life might be the causes of increased morbidity.

Geographically, the area under the survey is confronted with specific health problems such as arsenic contamination, vector borne diseases (like Kala-azar, Malaria, Filariasis) and diseases spread through food and water (like diarrhoea). The high incidence of snake-bite as revealed by the survey also requires proper attention. The information given in HDR South 24 Parganas 2009 indicate that in 2006 the total number of deaths from all vector borne diseases and diseases spread through food and water was 62, while in 2007 the total number of fatality, due to snake-bite as observed during the survey in these eight blocks only was as high as 61. Clearly, the importance of snake-bite death in these region is quite evident from the above data.

Table 3 : Occurrence rate and mortality rate of Snake-Bite

Block	Number of Person Bitten	No. of Death	Average Number of Person Bitten per year	Average Number Deaths per year	Estimated Population 2009	Occurrence Rate in per cent	Mortality Rate in per cent
<b>Island Block</b>							
Gosaba	885	24	442.5	12.5	232874	18.60	28.24
Basanti	975	23	487.5	11.5	318453	15.30	23.58
Kultali	714	38	370.5	19.0	211507	17.52	51.20
Patharpratima	590	28	295.0	14.0	319635	9.23	47.40
Sagar	280	10	140.0	5.0	209516	6.68	35.71
<b>Non-Island Block</b>							
Joynagar-II	515	22	257.5	11.0	232660	11.06	42.72
Mathurapur-II	474	28	237.0	14.0	216310	10.96	61.18
Namkhana	411	11	205.5	5.5	193884	10.59	26.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>4871</b>	<b>184</b>			<b>1744845</b>	<b>13.95</b>	<b>37.77</b>

Source : Field Survey 2009, Census 2001

The age specific distribution of snake-bite victims will now be discussed. As we gather from Table-4, there were 29 persons whose age group is between 15 years and 19 years. Out of 184 victims, 25 victims belong to age group 10 years to 14 years. In fact, there were 88 persons whose age is below 20 years. In other words, out of 184 snake-bite victims in these eight blocks, 47.83 per cent were below 20 years of age. It should be noted here that the highest incidence of mortality rate within the age group 20 was 82.14 per cent. The survey revealed that at Patharpratima out of 28 snake-bite victims the age of 23 persons is 20 years. Most of these deaths occur due to improper treatment.

Table 4 : Age Distribution of Snake-Bite Victims  
Age in years

Block	01-04	05-09	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60+	Total
<b>Island</b>														
Gosaba	1	-	1	2	1	4	1	4	2	2	5	-	1	24
Basanti	2	3	3	6	2	1	-	1	1	-	1	3	-	23
Kultali	3	3	5	7	2	4	2	1	4	3	1	1	2	38
Patharpratima	1	8	11	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	28
Sagar	-	1	-	3	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	10

<b>Non-Island Block</b>														
Joynagar-II	-	2	2	3	3	1	4	1	1	2	3	-	-	22
Mathurapur-II	6	2	1	3	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	28
Namkhana	-	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	3	-	-	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>184</b>

Source : Ibid

Table 5 : Seasonal Variation of Snake-Bite Victims

Block	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Gosaba	-	2	2	2	1	4	3	2	6	-	2	-	24
Basanti	-	-	1	2	1	6	4	4	5	-	-	-	23
Kultali	1	1	-	3	5	6	6	7	6	2	1	-	38
Patharpratima	-	-	-	2	1	-	1	9	9	4	2	-	28
Sagar	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	5	1	1	-	10
<b>Non-Island Block</b>													
Joynagar-II	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	15	3	1	1	-	22
Mathurapur-II	-	-	1	-	2	5	2	5	10	2	-	1	28
Namkhana	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	3	3	1	2	-	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>184</b>

Source : Ibid

One important feature of the snake-bite cases/victim in these eight blocks is that large majority of victims occurred between June and September. The data presented in the Table-5 indicates that out of 184 victims, 73.37 persons lost their life due to poisonous snake-bite between June and September. The data collected during the survey on snake-bite victims reflects a high degree of seasonal variation on the snake-bite cases. It gradually increases between January and August, thereafter decreases. This unique pattern of death due to poisonous snake-bite is quite consistent with the life-cycle of snake.

Table 6 : Species of Snake and Deaths

Block	Monocled	Common Cobra	Krait	Others	Total
<b>Island Block</b>					
Gosaba		8	16	-	24
Basanti		10	13	-	23
Kultali		14	24	-	38
Patharpratima		7	21	-	28
Sagar		2	8	-	10
<b>Non-Island Block</b>					
Joynagar-II		10	17	-	22
Mathurapur-II		10	17	1	28
Namkhana		5	6	-	11
<b>Total</b>		<b>62</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>184</b>

Source : Ibid

In addition to age specific variation of snake-bite victims, and seasonal variation in the death cases, the survey also tries to detect the particular species of venomous snake which endangered the human life. The four major poisonous snakes in Bengal are Spectacled Cobra, Monocled Cobra, Common Krait and Russell's Viper. Among these four species two types are generally found in the Sundarban region. Naturally, most of the people are losing their life by bites from any of these two species i.e., Monocled Cobra and Common Krait. The study however, indicates an intriguing aspect. The baseline study indicates that there had been 121 deaths due to Common Krait bite out of 184 total death. (See Table-6). Thus, the case fatality ratio due to Common Krait is possibly due to night faring nature of this species, unpredictability of bite at the early stage, bad housing of village people and gradual extinction of Banded Krait a natural predator of Common Krait.

**Table 7 : Place of Death of Snake-Bite Patients**

Block	Govt. Hospital	Nursing Home	Ojha to Hospital	On the way to Hospital	At Home	At Ojha Home	Poisonous Stone	On the way	Village Doctor	Total
<b>Island Block</b>										
Gosaba	2	-	3	-	3	16	-	-	-	24
Basanti	2	1	1	-	3	9	7	-	-	23
Kultali	4	-	17	-	10	7	-	-	-	38
Patharpratima	-	2	12	1	1	1	-	-	5	28
Sagar	2	-	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	10
<b>Non-Island Block</b>										
Joynagar-II	-	-	7	-	1	14	-	-	-	22
Mathurapur-II	7	1	12	-	4	3	-	1	-	28
Namkhana	3	-	3	1	3	3	-	-	-	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>184</b>

Source : Field Survey 2009

The major public health problems of the eight blocks are water-borne diseases, especially diarrhoea, frequent out-breaks of gastroenteritis. However, the loss of life due to snake-bite by venomous snake is also a matter of grave concern. In spite of this treatment for snake-bites is generally done by Ojhas. In most of the cases, the affected persons do not rely on medical hospitals. Somebody even depends on quacks. Various types of treatment adopted by the victims relatives/party is demonstrated in Table 7.

As we got from Table-7, about 81.52 per cent of 184 total deaths were almost without any treatment. Age old superstition unpredictability of bite at the early stage bad housing, illiteracy are possibly the prime cause.

### III

#### The Awareness Campaign

Our discussion, so far, has concentrated on the extent of snake-bite death cases in eight blocks of South 24 Parganas. We shall now turn on the steps taken by the CJSS to redress this problem. It is already stated that for the past 20 years CJSS has launched various programme such as puppet show, cycle rally, songs, poster, map, exhibition about snake-bite, lack of proper treatment of snake-bite patients in 19 blocks of Sundarban. The organi-

zation has also launched a series of programme to impart training to quacks and Ojhas how to deal with snake-bite cases. Sensitization programme with the BMOH of South 24 Parganas and East Midnapore had also been organized. In 2008, with financial assistance from National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) a 'sansad' level awareness campaign had been taken.

**Table 8 : Attendance Rate at the Sansad Level Meeting**

Block	No. of Family (2005)	No. of Sansad (2009)	No. of Family per Sansad	Average of Meeting at Gram	Presence Rate at Sansad
<b>Island Block</b>					
Gosaba	52006	170	305	57.37	
Basanti	62464	201	310	56.45	
Kultali	35424	121	292	59.93	
Patharpratima	61272	187	327	53.51	
Sagar	37674	116	324	54.01	
<b>Non-Island</b>					
Joynagar-II	38414	122	614	55.73	
Mathurapur-II	30615	115	266	65.78	
Namkhana	37768	98	385	45.45	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1130</b>			

Source : Field Survey 2009, Rural Household Survey 2005

It was envisaged that a crucial role in this 'sansad' level survey is to be played by a Pradhan of Gram Panchayat. As per 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, the involvement from the local people in the developmental initiatives is drawn through their participation in public hearings, and meetings. Considering this it was decided that in the evening a public meeting would be held at each gram sansad with the presence of local stake holders. As there were 1130 gram 'sansad' in these 8 blocks, an equal number of 'evening meeting' were held. It was expected that at least one member from each household would attend these meetings. Dividing the actual presence by expected presence we have estimated the average attendance of each meeting. The entire exercise is shown in Table-8.

As per Table-8 the highest attendance was observed at Mathurapur-II, and lowest attendance was at Namkhana. Admittedly, the attempt to educate the poor and illiterate people about snakes and treatment of snake-bite patient through awareness campaign is not totally achieved. It was realized that the campaign should be sustained.

In spite of this indifferent attitude of a section of rural people towards awareness campaign, the number of snake-bite patients coming to the government hospital for proper treatment is rising. The data for the period 2006 to 2009 with respect to Canning (Sadar), Gosaba (Block), and Basanti (Block) hospital clearly depicts this trend. (See Table-9). As we go through the information contained in Table. 9, we observe that case-fatality ratio reduces to zero in 2009, at least for the admitted patient in different hospitals.

In epidemiological study the disease causation in a broader concept depends on the complex interaction between 'agent', 'host' and 'environment'. This interaction is commonly known as 'epidemiological triad', which is the basis for understanding disease problem. In a similar way the high incidence of snake-bite and subsequent death in South 24 Parganas should be understood on the interaction between poisonous snake (agent), superstitious man

(host) and habitation on the fringe of forest (environment). As habitation on the fringe of the forest can not be changed, reduction in the death rate of snake-bite patients requires a transformation in the mindset of poor people living in the area. There is no single stroke solution. It requires an intensive and sustained awareness campaign about the various species of snakes, variation in the snake-bite over the year, possible places of snake-bite and proper treatment of snake-bite patients.

Table 9 : Trend in Hospitalisation

Year	Sadar			Block			Block		
	Canning		Hospital	Gosaba		Hospital	Basanti		Hospital
	Snake-bite patient	Poisonous Snake bite	Death	Snake-bite patient	Poisonous Snake bite	Death	Snake-bite patient	Poisonous Snake-bite	Death
2006	292	22	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
2007	470	47	1	21	9	3	29	11	3
2008	471	52	6	110	11	0	98	61	1
2009	402	44	0	103	6	0	150	68	0

Source : Field Survey 2009

#### The Help-line

In epidemiological survey, research information is gathered through field investigation or field survey. The discussion of this section are however based on the data culled from the register book of 'Help-line' on snake-bite. It is already stated that from March 2010, CJSS extended free medical advice for snake-bite patients through Help-line centered at Canning. It was decided that vital information contained in the conversation over phone with respect to snake-bite would be recorded. This recorded information is processed to make it useful for drawing conclusions. Technically processing includes editing, coding, classification and tabulation of data with a view to facilitate its analyses.

Between March 2010 and November 2010 there were 543 phone calls. (Table 10) These phones can be classified into four categories: first, courtesy call, secondly, request for rescue of snakes from the room/orchard of the callers, thirdly, about availability of government compensation in case of snake-bite death and lastly, seeking advice for treatment with respect to snake-bite and other bite. It is observed that the highest number of phone calls relate to seeking advice for treatment with respect to snake-bite, the number of phone calls being

Table 10 Nature of phone call between March 2010-November 2010

1. Courtesy call	63
2. Requests for rescue of snake from courtyard / orchard etc.	38
3. About Govt. Compensation	25
4. Seeking advice for treatment with respect to bite	417
<b>Total</b>	<b>543</b>

Source : Register Book Help-Line CJSS, 2010

417 and the lowest number of calls refers to procedure relating to the availability of government compensation. The number of calls in this respect were only 25. It is observed that most of the people have no idea about this compensation. Doctors/hospital authority, on their part,

also hesitate about issuing a proper death certificate to the relatives of snake bite victims. Out or 29 reported snake bite death cases across the various districts of West Bengal only in one case the proper death certificate was issued to the victims relatives. As regards the rescue of snake either poisonous or non-poisonous, there were 38 calls (Table 10). CJSS after receiving the calls sent its members to the callers' house and trained members

Table 12 : Lapse of time between bite and telephonic call for help

Assistance seeking by	Within 1 hour but	After 1 hours before 3 hours	After 3 hours but before 6 hours	After 6 hours but before 9 Hours	After 9 hours before 24 hours	After 24 hours	Total
Relatives of patient		5	1		1	1	8
Well wisher of patient	2	1	4 (4)				7 (4)
Trained Ojha		6					6
Members of CJSS			2 (1)				2 (1)
From hospital by patient							
From hospital by doctors	1	1			2	2 (1)	4 (1)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7 (5)</b>		<b>5 (2)</b>	<b>4 (1)</b>	<b>32 (2)</b>

Note : Figures in the bracket indicates number of deaths.

Source : Register Book - Help line, CJSS 2010

collect the snake from the house. The snake rescued in this way were again released to the forest area. CJSS is thinking about developing a snake collection centre, where snakes would be collected in the aforesaid way.

Table 11 : Distribution of phone-calls between Period-I and Period-II

Seeking advice with respect to	Poisonous Bite		Non Poisonous Bite		Others		Total		Grand Total
	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	
Districts	1	11	1	11	1	11	1	11	
Burdwan	2	1	4	6			6	7	13
Birbhum		1						1	1
Bankura		3						3	3
East	3	6	12	13	3		18	19	37
Midnapore									
West	8	12	10	4	2		20	16	36
Midnapore									
Howrah	2		1				4	3	7
North	1	5	5	5	3	2	9	12	21
24 Parganas									
South	13	47	50	142	10	10	73	199	272
24 Parganas									
Nadia		1	2	1	1		3	2	5
Murshidabad	2	2	4	4	3		9	6	15
West Dinajpur		1						1	1
Jalpaiguri		1						1	1
Purulia		1						1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>417</b>

Note : Period I : March 2010-June 2010

Period II : July 2010-November 2010

Source : Register Book Help Line, CJSS 2010

Table 11 described the distribution of phone calls between March 2010-November 2010. It is observed although most of the phone calls are from South 24 Parganas, parents and relatives of snake-bite patient of distant district such as Jalpaiguri, Purulia, West Dinajpur, Burdwan also contacted with CJSS for seeking advice with respect to snake-bite. It is observed that during March 2010-November 2010, there were 114 cases of poisonous and non-poisonous snake-bite occurs to 268 cases. It is also observed that the phenomena of snake-bite was significantly higher in July-November (period II) than in March-June (period I). In period I the total number of poisonous snake-bite was 32, while in period II, the number shots up to 82. The highest number of poisonous snake-bite case was reported in South 24 Parganas, in period II the number of poisonous snake-bite case was 47 as against only 13 in period I. In West Midnapore, the reported poisonous snake-bite case in period-II was 12 while in period-I it was 8. The relatively large number of phone calls about snake-bite in South 24 Parganas seems to be caused by two factors : (i) awareness campaign and (ii) snake-bite prone area. However, it is evident from the reported calls that West Midnapore, a district with a relatively high forest coverage is also a snake-bite prone district. An awareness campaign similar to South 24 Parganas may enhance the number of phone calls from this district.

**Table 12 : Blockwise distribution of phone calls  
March 10-November 10 (South 24 Parganas)**

Block	Poisonous bite	Non-Poisonous If other bite	Total
<b>A. Sundarban Area</b>			
<i>i) Island Block</i>			
Gosaba	2	10	12
Basanti	13	22	35
Kultali	2	8	10
Patharpatima	3	8	11
Sagar		5	5
<b>Non-Island Block</b>			
Jaynagar -I	6	11	17
Jaynagar-II		6	6
Mathurapur-I	3	12	15
Mathurapur-II	2	6	8
Kakdwip	1	8	9
Namkhana	1	3	4
Canning-I	9	37	46
Canning-II	5	32	37
<b>B. Non-Sundarban Area</b>			
Magrahat-I	8	8	
Magrahat-II	2	6	8
Phalta	1	2	3
Bishnupur-II			
Baruipur	4	12	16
Budbug-II	1	3	4
Bhangar-II		6	6
Kulpi		2	2
Mandir Bazar	1	1	
Diamond Harbour-II	3	3	6
Sonarapur	1	2	3
<b>C. Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>272</b>

Source : Register Book Helpline, CJSS 2010

It is already stated that the highest number of phone calls is received from South 24 Parganas. It is observed that there exist a variation in phone calls between blocks under Sundarban area and Non-Sundarban area. The comparatively large number of phone calls from the blocks of Sundarban area is due to launching of awareness campaign in this area. (Table 12)

Within the Sundarban area the variation of phone calls also persists between 5 Island Blocks and 8 Non-Island Blocks. A highest number of phone calls were from Canning-I block, the probable factor being high level of literacy among the people of this block. As against this a relatively higher phone calls from Gosaba block denotes a high rate of occurrence of snake-bite.

The four major poisonous snakes in West Bengal are Common Krait, Spectacled Cobra, Monocled Cobra, and Russell's Viper. Among these four species the total reported bite by Spectacled Cobra is only 2. (Table 13)

**Table 13 District-wise variation of poisonous snake-bite cases in Bengal March 2010 Nov. 2010**

District	Common Krait	Spectacled Cobra	Monocled Cobra	Russell's Viper	Total
Burdwan	-	1	1	1	3
Birbhum				1	1
Bankura	1	-	-	2	3 (1)
East Madanapur	-	-	5	7	12 (2)
West Madanapur	2	-	2	14	18 (4)
Howrah	-	-	-	1	1
Hooghli	-	-	-	2	2
North 24 Pgs	1	-	3	-	5
South 24 Pgs	34	-	22	5	61 (18)
Nadia	-	-	-	1	1
Murshdabad	1	1	1	2	5 (3)
West Dinajpur	-	-	-	1	1
Jalpaiguri	-	-	-	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>114 (29)</b>

**Note :** Figures in the bracket refers to death cases

Source : Register Book Helpline, CJSS 2010

As against the bite by Common Krait, Monocled Cobra and Russell's Viper are 39, 34 and 39 respectively. Out of the 39 total reported Common Krait bite, 34 bite cases occur at South 24 Parganas, while out of 39 total reported Russell's Viper bite cases 14 bite cases happened in West Midnapore. In other words, among the poisonous snake, South 24 Parganas is featured by the presence of Common Krait while Russell's Viper is common poisonous snake of West Midnapore. It should be pointed here that base line survey observed 121 deaths due to Common Krait bite out of 184 total deaths. In other words 66 per cent total deaths due to snake-bite is caused by Common Krait. As against this the help line register recorded only 50 per cent death due to Common Krait bite. The reduction in percentage of death caused by Common Krait is effected initiative taken by member of CJSS through help line.

Data on places of snake-bite is also culled from the call register. We have classified the place of bite in 8 categories. In 14 cases the classification of the place of bite could not be done due to improper information. It is observed that majority of the poisonous bite occurred in and/or around home while information contained in Table-14 revealed that 69 out of 114 poisonous bite cases occurred in and/or around the home. Moreover, total snake-bite at bed was observed in 61 cases and out of 61 cases in 37 cases it is poisonous bite. As regards non-poisonous snake-bite 46 cases were found to have happened by the side of pond.

**Table 14 : Place of Snake-Bite – Poisonous & Non-poisonous**

Places of Bite	Poisonous	Non-poisonous	Total
A. Home/attached to home			
1. At the courtyard	22	70	92
2. At the Straw Stack	4	14	18
3. At the Bed	37	24	61
4. At the Kitchen	6	20	26
B. Outside the home			
1. At the Pond	2	44	46
2. At the attached orchard	2	8	10
3. At the Road	8	53	61
4. At the Paddy field	19	12	31
C. Not mentioned	14	23	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>382</b>

Mortality Statistics in respect of snake-bite is given in Appendix 1. As per Help-Line call register, between March '10-November '10 a total number of 29 persons is reported to be died of poisonous snake-bite. The age wise distribution of this 29 victims is given in Table 15. It is observed that there were 10 persons whose age is below 20 years. In other words out of 29 victims, 33 cent were below 20 years of age. It should be mentioned that in the survey of eight blocks, out of 184 snake-bite victims, 47.83 per cent were below 20 years of age. The relatively low percentage figure is due to effective monitoring of the patients through help line.

**Table 15 : As distribution of reported snake-bite victims : March 2010 to November 2010**

Age in years 01-09 10-19	Number of Victims
01-09	4
10-19	6
20-29	7
30-39	2
40-49	4
50-59	1
60+	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>

Source : Register Book-Helpline November 2010

The association between place of bite and snake type with respect to 29 victims is presented in Table 16. It is observed that majority of the bite by Common Krait was occurred at the bed. Out of 16 cases of bite at the bed in 13 cases the agent is Common Krait. In case of Monocled Cobra and Russell's Viper particular association with any place is not observed. During the awareness campaign in the remaining blocks of South 24 Parganas this phenomenon of snake-bite should be communicated to the people. Apart from this stress should be given on the use of mosquito net to get rid off Common Krait bite. In this respect local self government may think of providing mosquito net to the poor people at a subsidies rate.

**Table 16 Snake type and place of bite of 29 victims March 2010 to November 2010**

Place of bite	Common Krait	Monocled Cobra	Russell's Viper	Not mentioned	Total
Courtyard	–	1	2	–	3
Wood/Straw stack	–	1	1	–	2
Bed	13	2	–	1	16
Kitchen/Room	–	1	–	–	1
Road	–	–	1	–	1
Paddy Field	–	3	1	–	4
Playground	–	–	–	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>29</b>

We shall discuss the extent of laps of time (in hours) between bite and called for help. It is observed that from Table 17 between March 10 to November 10 there were 114 phone calls with respect to poisonous bite. Out of these 114 phone calls 50 were from hospital. In other words 44% of the total phone calls with respect to poisonous bite were from hospital. This indicate an important development. As per report of the NSS 60th round the trend of hospitalization for treatment among the rural people of India is about 22 per cent. Compared to these all India figure a relatively high rate of hospitalisation is perhaps due to awareness campaign launched by CJSS in this district. Another point also is to be mentioned. There are 17 phone calls from doctors attending snake-bite patients at various hospitals. This development indicates the presence of cordial relations between doctors at various hospitals and CJSS.

One last point to be mentioned is that there have been 29 reported deaths out of 14 poisonous bite from March-November 2010. In 14 reported death cases, the well wishers of the victim informed the incident of serious snake-bite to CJSS after 3 hours of the bite. CJSS through telephone tried its best but it was of no avail. Be that as it may, in 85 poisonous snake-bite cases, i.e., in 75 per cent case CJSS had correctly handled the patient.

**Table 17 : Lapse of time (in hours) between bite by poisonous snake and telephonic call for help**

Assistance seeking by	< 1	1-3	3-6	6-9	9-15	15-24	>24	Total
Relatives of patient								
Well wisher of patient	9	9 (1)	–	2	–	2	23 (1)	
Trained Ojha	3	4 (2)	7 (6)	2 (1)	2 (1)	–	25 (16)	
Member of CJSS	2	6	1 (1)	1	–	–	–	7 (1)
From block hospital	2	2	2 (1)	1	–	–	–	7 (1)

by patient party	2 (1)	1	5	2 (2)	4	1	13 (4)	
From block hospital	2	2	2	1 (1)	4 (2)	1	1	13 (3)
by patient party								
From PG/NRS	-	-	4	2	3 (1)	-	7 (2)	16 (3)
From PG/NRS	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	4
by doctors								
<b>Total</b>	<b>20 (1)</b>	<b>25 (3)</b>	<b>23 (8)</b>	<b>14 (9)</b>	<b>16 (4)</b>	<b>4 (1)</b>	<b>12 (3)</b>	<b>114 (29)</b>

Note : Figures in the bracket indicate number of deaths.

Source : Register Book—Help-line CJSS 2010

The idea of Help-line services to the snake-bite patients is a new one in West Bengal. Through this help-line the advice relating to the management of snake-bite patients can be rendered without any cost. We observed that for successful implementation of the help line programme with respect to snake-bite patients three things should be taken in consideration : first, a group of expert about snake-bite, secondly, a moderate infrastructure in rural PHCs and hospitals, lastly, financial assistance to the snake-bite patients for meeting the cost of hospitalization of the poor snake-bite patients. For a substantial reduction in snake-bite mortality in West Bengal particularly in South 24 Parganas and West Midnapore these factors should be addressed properly.

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## Democracy and Alienation

Dhirendranath Gangopadhyay

We know, in bourgeoisie production system gradual application of technology and division of labour have created man alienated from his labour, from other man and from his essence. He has no right for his self-created product. As if he is an outsider, came from an other planet in this changed world. Though it has been created by his labour. This is not only the picture of the developed countries. Our third world countries are also being industrialised in rapid rate.

In tribal infested areas industrial township is developing associated with modern technology. There are much demand of electricity in rural areas. Age old agricultural system is wholly or partially get the touch of modern technology. With the use of artificial manure and modern irrigation system, it has created the price-rise of agricultural products. In the fifth five

year plan capital has been accumulated only in the hands of few comprador bourgeoisie, but there is no change of economic condition of the common man. But certainly some kind of mental condition of them have transformed.

The feudal interhuman relationship is gradually dispelled. Though in spite of unfinished industrial revolution in the urban area the bourgeoisie alienation process is intruding there also as unstoppable. In the rural areas there are influence of modern technology and agricultural property rights have changed the scenario to some extent. In the rural areas literacy rate has not improved appreciably but the number of literate persons have increased. The election propaganda of the political parties have increased the social-consciousness of the common people.

Due to democratic adult franchise individual is now much more self-conscious. As capital has now invested on agricultural products so the poor peasantry gradually has less access of this products. Expectation has increased but without any result. So there is feeling of alienation in the rural areas. People are gradually alienated from the landowners and owners of industries. In the news of recent food movement of Bengal we can find its special character and finding all sorts of chaos, disorder and lawlessness, so we can presume that a deep and widespread alienation is developing between the rural and the common man.

If want to make psychological analysis of the relationship between modern democratic government and common man then we have to march a few step backward of history. Man is doing struggle for food, clothes, shelter since the formation of the primitive society, certainly in different strategy and methods. To start with they appeal to the blind nature collectively. Then they handover this responsibility to the 'Shaman' or priest class. In one side they developed the skill of performing magic and religious sacrifice or oblation in various religious festival so they get special privilege from the common man to enforce this power. On the other side to neutralise the wrath of people, to satisfy the demand of the people and as self defence they developed a special mental skill.

But still then this people's representatives were not dissociated themselves from the common man. Gradually in the age of monarchy and feudalism this people's representatives had transformed into the God's representatives. So the people were getting alienated from the rulers. This form of alienation has been completed in the era of capitalism.

In capitalism there developed individual freedom and individualism and inform of this way gradually democratic state system has been established. Now the rulers are not the representative of God, they are the elected representative of common man due to adult franchise. Self-conscious people get the responsibility to self-rule. Natural science has taken the role of magic. In stead of performing religious sacrifice, chanting and prayer people has now learned to solve his basic necessities. He feels that now he can control his fate. But in spite of that people are alienated as he has no right to enjoy the modern consumer products due to peculiar characteristics of this bourgeoisie production system. He is confined within the laws of production and distribution system. The interhuman relationship became mechanical and jeopardised. This is one form of alienation.

On the otherhand, though adult franchise is his basic right, yet he is gradually becoming alienated from the elected representatives. State has an unlimited power, people and its elected representatives are without any connection, so much aloud 'personal freedom' is also jeopardised. Many days ago Roussaeu had given hint regarding this political alienation.

Internal contradictions of democracy became obvious in his thoughts. "Sovereignty ... cannot be represented, it lies essentially in the general will, and does not admit of representation." But there is no other way. State has increased in volume, it has population explosion so there is no other way to run the administration without people's representation. A huge power and responsibility have been concentrated at the hands of state and it has become much more complex. This is the main objective of the bourgeoisie revolution that in democracy it will maintain democratic election system and the state will be run by the elected representatives. We have to accept this system though the main objective of democracy is thwarted in each and every time.

As today's deprived people look helplessly, innocently to the high skyscraper though it is being created by him. So he feels with similar helplessness and apprehension about his elected representative who becomes tremendous powerful in this state machinery. He just thinks, is this airconditioned motor car riding minister is his representative? This armed police and military are his own countrymen? Are they protecting the people's interest? Are they fed by his direct and indirect taxes? He does not get any answer. It is not possible to develop a heartiest relationship with ministers, secretaries, councilors, judges, directors, officers and the bunch of electors. Like all other relationships this should also be based on commodity.

There are no question of putting some comments, as common men have no free access to enter that cosy airconditioned room where our powerful leaders, our elected representatives deciding the fate of their people and making some very important decisions. Very simple one or two bills or drought laws have been placed to the people for propaganda but the majority very important decisions are taken by the majority Assembly and Parliament members of the party. And the illiterate, half-literate people are kept totally ignorant regarding this important decisions.

"The great decisions are removed from the elected representatives of the people and placed in the hands of a small group of rulers. The state is alienated from the average citizen, who generally thinks of it 'as the powers that be' or 'them up there', never as 'us'." Though it is the comment of an European critics regarding democracy of Europe, it is equally true for our country also. Our people are much more ignorant regarding the state machinery outside the Assembly and Parliament House. At the subdivision and district level people are much more alienated from the actual rulers. For that reason relationship of common men with the rulers and general administration are either fearful detachment or of indifference. Common men always feel some kind of opposition and dislike towards politics and political persons. But they could not find any solution. So, they think it is better not to divulge their feelings, it is better to keep mum. It is useless to make any criticism. So they 'lie low and keep quiet'. This is the motto of the people.

It is not alone the problem of Western World, the political alienation is gradually mounting high in our countries also. Regarding communication there is huge gap between the rulers and the common man. There is no doubt that they are actually receding from themselves. As a result people cannot think about any government institution or enterprise of their own or as live. Like the character Barnabus of the novel 'The Castle' of Camus each and every persons are considering the bureaucracy that has no individuality, no personality or any colour. We can not develop any viable link with the high ranking officers of this administra-

tion. And if this is the condition what is ultimate result of this communication? This heartless, abstract bureaucracy is always ready to crush mercilessly and vanquish the human essence, positive emotion of man. Who is the leader to take decisions? Who is responsible to implement the decisions? Where we can get the justice? There is no answer of this questions.

In this state of mental alienation is it possible for the common man to consider that the government properties are our own properties and this government is actually our elected representative? They were tortured due to the fetter of colonial rules for many years and so they are still profoundly alienated from them for a long period and our countrymen are conditioned to consider the rulers some alien. So it is not easily possible for them to think that the government properties are our properties. Though during the past period people had a negative attitude towards the ruler. Then he had some dream of freedom, future of great hope and he thought someday there would be end of all atrocities. But this present situation is no better to him than the past, sometimes it seems much more worst. People has lost the ability to dream a dream.

He is taken aback due to the ferocious evicting power of technology though it is actually created by him. "The individual is faced by enormous, impersonal incomprehensible machines whose strength and size fill him a sense of his own importance." The flow of life is thwarted, obstructed.

To control and channelise this new emerging power we need a new society. Formation of higher developed order of any society can only create some new type of interhuman relationship by which we can fight with this sense of alienation. If we can properly channelise our life energy in some new pathway then only we can find that there would be no muddly stagnation of life or we can prevent devastating inundation of both banks.

Written in April 1966 **P A S**

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**Dr. Dhirendranath Gangopadhyay**  
**Memorial Lecture 2013**

Venue : Bangla Akademi Sabhaghar

Time : 20th December, Friday 2013  
at 5 p.m.

Speaker : Manik Mukhopadhyay

Subject : Role of Revolutionary Intellectuals in Communist Party

All are Cordially Welcome

From the desk of the Mind-Painter

## Asceticism Or Society

Goutam Bandyopadhyay

With an unshaved face, wearing a bit shabby dress, staring a glance on the books of my table, suddenly he slipped to the infinite distance outside, as if piercing the wall of the room with a vacant look. Entered young Unmesh of twenty five years and he began a discourse after coombing his hairs piercing fingers once or twice, ' Doctor, I want to start afresh; but cannot concentrate in my studies by any means. I have come to you for that reason.'

'Why you want to start afresh, why you have stopped studies, now what are you doing?' He was answering my questions just unmindfully and in pieces. Not only in studies, what I felt in our brief conversation, even he could not concentrate in normal discourse. If I patched up this unmindful, fragments of his answers then it would take the following shape. Unmesh had tried to get admission at the Ramkrishna Mission but failed as they had no provision to admit anybody without graduation certificate. So he had started study afresh to get the certificate but could not concentrate in it.

I suggested, 'So you want to study just for a certificate?' Unmesh made a strong eye contact and boldly answered to my question for the first time, 'Yes it is just that.' Then I want to know, 'What is the main reason that you have decided to escape from the society?' In this simple question, I think, his unmindfulness, relaxed attitude vanished instantly. Sitting on the chair he became straight and alert.

Gradually his concentration crystallised while in discourse surrounding his own philosophical thinking. Unmesh tried to convince me, 'No I am not trying to escape from the situation. Actually the spiritual side of life pull me much. The asceticism of a monk, his strength, beauty attract me profoundly. Yet often I fall in deep crisis. I have no psychological demand for sex, it means only physical to me. I do not feel any love towards any girl. But my physical demand is high. Sometimes it becomes so horrible that I feel apprehensive whether I can create some dangerous situation. Whenever I see any women in bus or train I develop an impulse to catch them. Sometimes I feel, I would enjoy all of them physically and satisfying all my appetite, I shall join Ramkrishna Mission.'

'I feel excellent when I see the Brahmachari and Maharaj of Mission. It seems to me that all beauty and vigour are concentrated within their asceticism. The household men are mere consumerist and spineless. Vivekananda is my god whom I worshipped. Yet often I get the urge to visit sex-workers. But after masturbation I have a feeling that this side of life is meaningless, just a barren desert. Sometimes I feel it like a hell. Then I cannot imagine about women except only some amount of flesh. On the otherside meditation, prayer, rajyog all this I consider like spiritual bliss. I give up studies due to this crisis. When I feel that this society is void of any essence than what are the use of studying! But now I want to start afresh only to enter the Mission.'

'But how you could stay at the Mission with this intense physical need. There are many people like you who join the Mission not in the objective to provide service to the people but

to get rid of their mental crisis. It is not the philosophy of Ramkrishna Mission that is attracting you, it is the outward show and glamour, its lustre that attracting you. Over and above you want to enter the Mission just to escape from your inner crisis. After a few days this attraction would be vanished then you may fall in deep frustration. It is the usual picture. After you have passed that life for few years you have no alternative to return. For this reason here people passed rest of their life in heart-breaking loneliness.'

'Not only for escape I have an ambition too. I want to be a celebrity of Ramkrishna Mission. But it is also true that when I feel sex intensely then only I think of women and I overwhelmingly observe them. Then I think enough is enough, there is no necessity of mine to be a monk. Hell thy Mission. But after masturbation when my excitation subsided then only the picture of Ramkrishna Mission, Brahmachari, Monks appear brightly in front of my eyes. Then only I think that the body of a female is nothing but a dark world, an object of enjoyment or only sensual pleasures.'

'But if you think half of the population of this world as creatures of hell and the household family-men as insignificant creatures, only craving for sensual pleasure then with this profound disrespect towards people how could you be able to serve them? Though we all know that to provide service to the common people is the motto of the Ramkrishna Mission. If we think common man as so insignificant then would it be possible for us to serve them as our kith and kin? Do not we want to glorify ourselves by rescuing them from their utter helplessness? So you want to be a big celebrity of Ramkrishna Mission that you can get regular exposure at TV and newspapers and hundreds of people make a queue to get your blessing as Maharaj. So all these things are pulling you much more?' Now Unmesh kept mum. He accepted his severe strife-laden mental condition by not giving any answer.

'Listen, what I think, joining in Ramkrishna Mission you will dissociate yourself from the natural pleasure and sufferings of the common people who are navigating in the mainstream. The Mission people create a stonewall of solemn dignity and greatness isolating and dissociating themselves from the feelings of the common people. They always want to establish among themselves that they are different from the common man. They consider the common man as object of pleasure. They always try to dissociate themselves from the common man's feeling and want to confine themselves to Ramkrishna or Vivekananda or Sarada as the imaginary god or their true representatives. It is actually an obsession.'

'They cannot find themselves in midst of this normal natural beauty and variations of this world. They cannot navigate or identify the feelings of the common man in the mainstream. So they are restless and to emancipate from this restlessness they join in the alternative lifestyle of the Mission. They embrace the ego to become a special from the general. And to cover up the restlessness due to inner loneliness they chant silently the name of Ramkrishna or Vivekananda all the time. Repeatedly they read their writings as sermons and they captive themselves with these rituals. This behaviour is nothing but obsessive-compulsion. As your behaviour of masturbation is nothing but a behaviour to extinguish your restlessness. And they get shelter in the inflating ego of providing service to the common men as if they are rescuing them from their helplessness.'

'You have said that you love to read philosophy. You have studied philosophy in your graduation course. What kind of philosophy can you learn from Ramkrishna Mission! They

just surround their Ashram regularly chanting some of the writings of Ramkrishna, Vivekananda and Sarada as gospel. So you are shifting yourself from an unrecognised social obsession to a recognised and glorified social obsession. They are regularly chanting from the books of Ramkrishna without any argument. So there are no scope to develop any independent thinking because all are pre-determined.'

'You will not find any significant reference of Ramkrishna or Vivekananda anywhere in the world history of philosophy. Better you learn philosophy. Then you will learn what are the crisis, problems philosophy has to face through ages. Read Kant, Hegel, Marx, Feuerbach. Read Veda and Upanishada, specially books written by Radhakrishnan. Read Sartre, Camus, Kaffka. Read Postmodernist Foucault, Derrida to find what they have to say. Read classical literature where joys and sufferings of man through ages will discourse with you. Just make conversation with all the philosophies of the world, be argumentative so that you can make your independent stand.'

'You just mingle your philosophical ideas in the mainstream social welfare activities of the common man. Otherwise if you join into Mission then it will be a stereotype routine to utter some gospels. And always you have to praise their sayings.'

Unmesh tried to listen my word stooping his head. I continued, 'No, certainly it is not fact that everything you want for power and celebration. Somewhere in our life we want to recognise ourself as brightly and meaningfully. You are not searching yourself in the mainstream of this society. Certainly you have some deep trauma in your mind since childhood.'

Unmesh became straight, 'Do you know, the relationship of my parents was worst. There is no question of agitation or unrest because my mother had no courage to make any protest. My father was very much ill-tempered, authoritative yet erudite and scholar. My mother was usually panickised in front of my father, just like a docile maid-servant. Whenever father wanted anything then and there she would try to fulfill his demand. But she had no agitation for this sufferings. She was a bit indifferent, detached just like an inert matter. Sometimes she embraced me forcefully like a child.'

'I feel pity for my mother. Father always oppressed me with his authoritative personality. He never allowed me to make any protest. In childhood at midnight sometimes I have heard the act of sexual intercourse of my parents. It seemed to me as horrible. It seemed as if father was torturing mother like a beast and mother was bearing this torture in tearful eyes. Then only I wished to break the door and kick my father and throw him outside. Otherwise I would kill my father. Yet on the next day I could not find any allegation of mother against father. Actually she never made any allegation against him.'

After that I had given few sittings to Unmesh. After graduation he had admitted to MA in philosophy. Then only he was not interested about Ramkrishna Mission. In the later part of our discourse what we had discussed regarding his crisis, was briefly like this.

Usually we developed our self-identity and recognition of opposite gender specially at the first part of our childhood due to nurture of our parents. Gradually we developed our psyche in this process. Unmesh had developed his lust of power, strength and authoritative attitude from his father. Yet he could not accept his father's stiffness and cruelty, the cruelty that had tortured his pitiful mother. Though he had received gracefully, intimately the care of his mother. Yet he had developed a deep sense of pity towards her.

Actually he accepted the glory of father's valour of manliness and tried to channelised this in the form of sublimation in the way to become a monk. On the other side pale, insignificant, dull inanimate characteristic of his mother obstructed him to develop any respect or dignity towards the womanhood. So he could not find any colour or brightness or elegance in the married or conjugal life. But he could not avoid compulsive masturbation just to satisfy his physical need. He could not resolve this conflict so he revolved with this problem again and again. Due to a philosophic mind Unmesh felt a deep sense of loneliness specially after masturbation. He could not restrict himself like his father's physicality, as he had a thoughtful mind.

Yet he could not conceive any bright picture of conjugal life. So he could not amalgamate the sexual pleasure and thoughtful creative higher qualities of mind. Seeing his mother as a meek, docile creature always surrendering to her husband, he could imagine women nothing but an object of sensuous pleasure.

But as he had innate compassion towards man so he had developed a deep sense of pity, sympathy towards his mother. For this reason he could not dream to develop the attitude of his father's authoritativeness. He fulfilled his stereotyped physical need in an alternative way and that was a sense of pride to him. The general womanhood express and exhibit their deep sense of respect towards the Maharajas of Mission. He had found a picture of valour in this act or behaviour of them.

Lastly his father's power and vigour transformed into restrained of the monks. He abandoned the path of violence and choosed to provide service to the common people and developed a feeling of compassion and sympathy towards common man. On the other side he had an inner urge to become a distinguished, keeping aside the service to the common man. Again he did not require any higher order of relationship with women though he wished to get the respect and regard from the womanhood as a Maharaja of Mission. Now he could continue the lifestyle of a Brahmachari and monk. So that he could amalgamate the feeling of sexual pleasure and thoughtfulness. All this complex situations could be solved if he joined to the Ramkrishna Mission.

Perhaps meanwhile Unmesh could find any picture of his bright future among the philosophers of world history of philosophy. And I had suggested him that you had not seen glory, dignity, personality, beauty of womanhood but you must see it. So you must read classical literature, modern literature. Then you could find the brightness of women. They all are not like your mother. So you will not consider women as a material object like your mother. Whether you marry or not that is a separate matter. But being a man you must think or find women as bright as you.

Yes it is very difficult to find somebody of your choice in this patriarchal society. But though not like as wife you can find many persons in facets of our relationship. It solely depends whether you are proceeding in a healthy way towards them or not.

Initially when Unmesh visited me, I said my assistant Tarun to serve him also with a cup of tea. Then and there he objected to the proposal loudly as he was going to join Ramkrishna Mission so it was not possible for him to take tea or cigarette. However afterwards during his visit he accepted the tea with a smile. I felt good that he could not miss in his life a beautiful thing like tea. **PAS**