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THE INDUSTRIAL MAN OF INDIA

by
N R Sheth

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THE INDUSTRIAL MAN OF INDIA

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The title 'Industrial Man'¹ is open to a variety of interpretations. Any attempt to define it has therefore got to be arbitrary. In a historical perspective of human society, the concept of industrial man should refer to the industrious innovative man who devised new ways and means to exploit his natural environment, either to satisfy his elementary physical needs or in response to the needs and aspirations generated in contemporary civilization. Thus, the men who invented stone and metal implements, those who introduced fire and farming and those who undertook voyages of unknown territories were all industrial men of their respective times. These people must have valued work in the spirit of entrepreneurship, implying commitment to a goal and willingness to take risk (although in some cases inventions could have been accidental). In this sense, a relatively small section of population in any society would qualify for the title 'industrial man'.

Social scientists however, have conventionally used the term industrial man in a broader perspective. It covers those who participate in industrial activity governed by modern machine technology. But here again there are different ways in which you can identify the participants in industrial activity. You may restrict your definition of industrial man to those who are directly associated with production of goods and services, such as entrepreneurs, managers, technicians, administrators and workers. On the other hand, you may

cover all those who are directly or indirectly concerned with the process and products of modern industry. In this sense, investors who supply money to industry, scientists and technologists who supply knowledge, administrators and politicians who provide a framework of rules and sanctions, trade unionists who influence workers' behaviour, traders who provide a link between producers and users of industrial goods, consumers who use the products of industry and deviant professionals such as smugglers and whores who use modern technology in their business (do we not hear people referring to the 'smuggling industry' and the 'sex business'?) are all industrial men. In this paper, I shall primarily deal with those industrial men who are more directly involved in industrial activity. However, it will be necessary at places to widen the concept of industrial man in the context of the implications of modern industry for the Indian society.

I shall first briefly present the concept of industrial society which is used by social scientists to serve as a basis for any discussion on the industrial man.² I shall then focus my attention on the following questions : How did the modern industrial man emerge in Indian society? What are his main social and cultural attributes? How do these attributes compare with the socio-cultural attributes of the industrial man in the more developed industrial societies on the one hand and with the rest of the Indian culture on the other hand? What lessons can we draw for the Indian society from the behaviour patterns, values, attitudes, aspirations and fears of the industrial

man? In what way does he influence the widely accepted goals of modern industrial civilization, such as productivity, economic development, human happiness, dignity and freedom?

In dealing with these questions, I shall, of course, depend on the available research output on the subject produced by social scientists. But I shall also present a personal point of view based largely on experience and observations in relation to the current spectrum of Indian society. I would like to emphasize the personal bias underlying my analysis and observations in this paper. In my judgement, every piece of social science research reflects the prejudices of its author who needs not only to be aware of his prejudices but also to express them frankly³ if social science should have real social meaning.

INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

The concept of industrial man originated in the context of industrial development in the western society. It will be useful at this point to briefly explain the social and cultural aspects of that society which supported its industrial development and moulded the behaviour patterns characterizing the industrial man within it. The main socio-economic developments that contributed to the transformation of the pre-industrial western society into the industrial society of today can be summarized as follows:⁴

- 1 Scientific inventions and discoveries led to the introduction of modern machine technology for mass production of goods. The characteristic mode of production was then represented by large-scale industry with special emphasis on new concepts of time, formal supervision, discipline and skill for performance of jobs.
- 2 The new production system entailed a formalized market economy for systematic distribution and exchange of commodities. Producers not only served existing users of their goods but also felt compelled to sustain the market and create new demand for their organizational survival and growth. This eventually led to a complex web of economic inter-dependence among persons, groups, economic sectors, regions and nations.
- 3 Industrial activity was organized in the form of enterprise under the leadership of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship implied ability to exploit scientific know-how for commercial purpose, accumulation and investment of capital in productive enterprise (recognized by Weber as the spirit of capitalism) and stress on technical efficiency, economic calculation, hard work, risk-taking, innovation and creativity.
- 4 Industrial organization acquired a form and complexity not known in the pre-industrial society. In terms of Weber's

theory, the organization became progressively formal and bureaucratic. It was governed by a set of rules designed to achieve the specific objectives (e.g. productivity, efficiency, growth) for which it was established. Authority and responsibility were allocated to each position in the organization according to the need of the system and sustained by bureaucratic rules rather than by individual whim. As technology became more complex and sophisticated, the technocrat, the bureaucrat, the scientist became more important as enterprise leaders.

- 5 Industrial labour emerged as a distinct socio-economic category. The concept of wage labour as against bonded labour gave rise to the institution of labour market which assumed great significance as a factor influencing the economic performance of a firm as well the society.
- 6 The behaviour patterns of members of the industrial society became more rational in terms of Weber's distinction between traditional and rational forms of social action. Following Hoselitz (1963), this rationality of behaviour can be described in the form of pattern variables postulated by Parsons. First, a person attained a certain position in the industrial society by virtue of his knowledge and capacity to perform the tasks relating to that position (achieved

status) rather than by virtue of his birth or social status (ascribed status). Second, the norms of the society applied equally to all its members (universalism) rather than differentially according to one's social status (particularism). Third, as work-organization in industrial society was separated from other basic forms of social organization such as the family and the small community, the roles of a person in various spheres of social life (such as family, work, recreation) were increasingly differentiated from one another. Each role acquired its distinctive characteristics (role-specificity) in contrast to vague and diffuse role expectation (role-diffuseness) in pre-industrial society.

7 Apart from differentiation of individual roles, the growing scale of industrial activity created different and ever-increasing organizational forms. The factory, the office, the laboratory, the mine all implied quite different forms of interpersonal and intergroup behaviour. Even among factories, each technology entailed a distinct organizational form. Concurrently, new non-industrial organizations (trade unions, recreational groups, professional associations) emerged and grew. The integration of the various roles and organizations was achieved at the higher levels of society (mainly by government agencies responsible for making and

implementing laws). The locus of social control thus moved away from primary groups such as the family and became more formal and impersonal.

- 8 The growing complexity of the society, the multiplicity of organizational forms within it and the changes in behavioural norms as mentioned above resulted in considerable openness and mobility of people among the various groups, classes and categories. While the social status of individuals in the pre-industrial society remained relatively static by virtue of their membership of primary groups (e.g. family, caste), individuals in the industrial society could change their social status by acquiring wealth, education and power. Industrial society also placed emphasis on change and growth as indicated by special preoccupation with ideas of development, progress, dynamism etc.
- 9 Concurrently, the political system was increasingly characterized by the values of individual liberty, social equality, justice, welfare and happiness which were incorporated within the democratic framework of society.

I must at once add that the above characteristics together represent an ideal type of industrial society and do not describe the actual conditions obtaining in any specific society at any point of time. The basic elements of technology, work organization and formal market system may not vary considerably among industrial societies. But the concrete organizational forms, behavioural patterns, values and ideologies in a society depend on the social, cultural, economic and political forces underlying the process of industrialization within it. It is now widely recognised that the social consequences of industrialism in any society need to be understood in terms of questions such as (i) which sections of the society piloted the journey to industrialism? (ii) how were the necessary economic and technical resources generated? (iii) what pace was set for the development of industrial growth? (iv) what were the sources of authority and power used by the leaders? (v) how did the other sections of the society respond to the leaders' plans on economic development? (vi) how did the various power groups (those wielding overall political power, those wielding power over masses of workers, those wielding power arising from knowledge and information etc.) interact with another?⁵ Some earlier scholars seem to have assumed that all industrial societies would eventually move in the direction of the western social system which was regarded as the most developed and rational. For instance, the distinction drawn between traditional and modern societies by scholars

such as Weber, Tonnies and Redfield implied the progressiveness and superiority of the American-West European forms of industrial organization. Accumulation of material wealth for productive goals, rational economic calculus and conformity to bureaucratic norms were supposed to lead to the achievement of the basic goals towards which industrial man would strive; namely, individual happiness, freedom and equality. Industrialism was looked upon by thinkers such as Tocqueville as a great leveller of human society which would remove hereditary inequalities and establish equality before the law. A recent statement made by Aron (1961) is quite interesting in the present context :

'My visit to Asia helped to convince me that the major concept of our time is that of industrial society. Europe, as seen from Asia, does not consist of two fundamentally different worlds, the Soviet world and the Western world. It is one single reality : industrial civilisation. Soviet and capitalist societies are only two species of the same genus, or two versions of the same social type, progressive industrial society'. (p. 42)

However, ever since the beginning of industrialization in the Western societies, scholars have drawn our attention to the negative social effects of the various aspects of industrial organization.⁶ Marx pointed out the alienation of workers in the

industrial society and their exploitation by people controlling the means of production. Weber himself, while developing the ideal type of rational behaviour and organization in modern society, brought out the substantive aspect of formal bureaucracy which created uneven distribution of advantage in society. This crucial aspect of industrial society - growing inequality of wealth, status and power - has raised a variety of questions regarding the social effects of industrialism. More recently, several observers of the industrial scene have painstakingly identified the various types of negative effects of industrialization. Some have expressed concern about the organization man who is often over-committed to his career and hence suffers from physical and psychological pain while ostensibly he enjoys higher status and the greater material happiness. Others are perturbed about the growing technicization of human life, making man a slave of technology and rules and procedures at the cost of other cherished values. Industrial man in the affluent society depends heavily on wealth and technology even for enjoying leisure. Some are concerned with the horrifying potential use of some sophisticated technology (such as nuclear energy) which exposes the interest of the common industrial man to the fancies of those who create and possess new knowledge. Scientists, bureaucrats, politicians and other experts seem to be the proprietors of the 'knowledge industry' controlling the most powerful resources in the society. It is also known

that much of economic activity in advanced industrial societies can be sustained only through economic dominance over less advanced societies and maintenance of political balance among big powers. Within a society industrial men running large corporations need to exploit their customers and clients into buying what they sell to keep up their own affluence.

Some of these trends in industrial society have generated resistance among those who do not possess any significant wealth, status and power and hence find themselves at the receiving end of industrial civilization. Others who still remember the basic human values (freedom, dignity) towards which industrial man is expected to strive also question the wisdom of the continuous march towards industrialism in the industrial society. Some of these challengers leave the mainstream of industrial civilization and seek the fulfilment of human values in withdrawal and meditation. Others propose political, social, economic or psychological solutions to the problems of industrial civilization in terms of their understanding of the causes of these problems. But whatever the problems and whatever the viability of various solutions, the effect of industrial man on his civilization and conversely the effect of industrial civilization on its members are becoming more and more complex.

INDUSTRIALISM IN INDIA

It is well known that India occupies a very low position on the international scale of industrialization. More than 72 per cent of its working population is employed in agriculture and related jobs. However, some areas and regions within the country are more industrialized than others. For instance, data compiled from the 1971 census reports indicate that while less than 20 per cent of the working population is employed in non-agricultural jobs in states such as Assam, Bihar and Rajasthan, the corresponding proportion of non-agricultural workers in states like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal is over 35 per cent. Large industrial centres such as Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Kanpur, Ahmedabad and the various steel towns may compare quite favourably with similar industrial towns in advanced industrial societies in terms of their physical outlook, facilities and the work-rhythm of the people. On the other hand, smaller industrial centres in semi-urban and rural areas tend to merge into their physical surroundings in terms of people's behaviour and outlook. Perhaps the social and cultural characteristics of the industrial man vary from region to region on the basis of the degree of industrialization at each place. However, there is little information on this variation. I shall largely neglect the local variations in the behaviour of Indian industrial man and present a general picture on the subject.

The implications of traditional Indian social structure and culture for the country's economic growth had drawn the attention of eminent classical social scientists such as Marx and Weber. In Weber's view the rigidity of status inherent in the caste system, the concept of purity and pollution underlying the system and the fatalistic belief in Karma (duty ascribed by birth) and rebirth made it impossible for Indians to adopt rational economic behaviour necessary for the development of modern capitalism and entrepreneurship. Subsequently, the administrators and economists who dealt with Indian society were struck by the rigid traditionalism of its institutions and reached pessimistic conclusions about India's economic development.⁷ The joint family, the caste system, Hindu beliefs and rituals and the rural-agricultural nexus of the society were supposed to be the main stumbling blocks in people's acceptance of the institutions and values associated with the industrial society. As Singer records,

'As late as 1914, the British director of a new Department of Industries in Madras, which had been belatedly created to encourage commercial enterprise, expressed the following opinion of the obstacles to industrialization in that Presidency: "None of these entrepreneurs had the haziest notion as to what industry really meant.....The root of the trouble lies in the Indian social system - the caste system".'

(Singer : 1972 : p.277)

This view of the Indian society led to the belief that whenever modern technology was introduced into Indian society, it would clash with the traditional culture. As this culture was believed to be strong and rigid in its character, it was easy to conclude that industrialization in India would remain weak and ineffective. As the traditional social system would not permit the normal members to move into the 'alien' culture of modern industry, the latter would attract downtrodden and deviant people. All this led to the prediction of a bleak prospect for industrial development in India. Such an observation was supported during the early period of industrialization by the fact that industrial workers came largely from lower castes who were pushed out of villages due to increasing pressure of population on land and other economic resources. These workers were supposed to be uninterested in factory jobs and anxious to go back to their rural homes at the first opportunity. The workers therefore were believed to lack commitment to industrial work. Data on workers' behaviour during the initial period of industrialization indicated high absenteeism, high turnover and low productivity. Such data set the seal on the contention that industrial workers were uncommitted to industrial jobs.⁸

This theme of cultural handicaps to industrialization in India later received a major impetus when western social scientists began to make comparative studies of industrialization in

developed western societies and the 'underdeveloped' societies in Asia and Africa. These scholars constructed a logic of industrialism⁹ similar to the summary of characteristics of the industrial society in the earlier part of this paper. It was believed that this logic of industrialism reflecting the culture of the western industrial societies was incompatible with the traditional cultures of non-western societies. Cross-cultural studies of industrialization indicated that the participants in industrial work in underdeveloped societies were reluctant participants due to their old cultural bonds and hence the process of industrialization was sluggish. More recently scholars such as Myrdal (1973, especially chapter 3) have likewise attributed problems of economic development in India and similar countries to their traditional culture and values.

These generalizations about the traditional Indian culture and its impact on the effectiveness of industrialization in the country are based on inadequate information and understanding of Indian social reality. Sociological and historical studies of the principal institutions such as caste, joint family, village community and Hindu religion have shown that while these institutions had a degree of rigidity about them, they also had a propensity to make adjustments with changing environment. For instance, the classical Hindu joint family has changed its structure progressively to allow recognition to the interest of individual

members (son, wife etc.).¹⁰ Similarly, inspite of the close correspondence between caste and occupation, changes in occupation were not uncommon. Also, caste groups and subgroups within castes often made deliberate attempts to raise their status within the hierarchy.¹¹ Hinduism underwent changes from time to time by allowing rebels within the system to express and propagate their views. According to one interpretation, the sage Vyasa, the author of the Bhagavad Geeta was himself a rebel against the post-Vedic ritualism of the Brahmins and hence advocated a balanced rational outlook on life and work.¹² It is also interesting to note that the medieval Muslim ruler Akbar produced a fairly rational synthesis between religions in the days of religious fanaticism.

More importantly, inspite of the continuing rural-agricultural nexus of traditional Indian society, urban communities have been a part of the tradition since the period of the Indus Valley Civilization. The main phase of urban growth in the country began with the Muslim invasion. The Muslims brought with them a distinct tradition of empire-building, art and craft. Besides, India's trade and commerce with other countries began to grow during this period in the background of an emerging class of traders and entrepreneurs. As a result, large towns like Agra, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Surat and Cochin came into existence and grew. Some of these towns were mainly political-administrative centres while others were clearing houses for trade and commerce. Unlike the overwhelmingly peasant popu-

lation included civil and military hierarchies, courtesans, merchant communities, professional classes, artisans, craftsmen and domestic servants. Most of these people who were employed by government and non-government agencies were salary and wage earners. A crude factory system prevailed in urban industry and exchange of goods and services was considerably governed by monetary standards and primary banking institutions. The level of education in urban areas was fairly higher than in villages and towns were regarded as the abode of the elite. Medieval Indian society, thus, in a limited sense, contained the industrial man who clearly showed qualities of entrepreneurship and rational economic calculus. In fact, some of the business entrepreneurs in places like Ahmedabad amassed so much wealth that they could help local rulers with huge loans of money in times of economic crisis. They also organized civic and welfare amenities for fellow citizens. Thus, some of the behaviour patterns and organizational forms characterizing the industrial society existed in a rudimentary form long before the beginning to seek cooperation and assistance of the local people for tasks at the middle and lower levels of the organizational hierarchy. Consequently, Indian citizens had the opportunity to receive western-type education and work in urban-industrial jobs. This brought them close to the rational and liberal outlook of the British. The liberalistic tradition of the British also helped them to imbibe the western ideology through conscious attempts on the part of

the British to 'civilize' them. On the other hand, the British administrators realized the need of acquainting themselves with some of the traditions of the Indians as they wanted to honour local customs in dealing with problems of law and justice. This type of cultural interaction between the British rulers and Indian citizens gave rise to a type of Indian intellectuals who rationally attempted a synthesis of the positive attributes of India and the west. Such rationalists emerged mainly among the high caste affluent sections in the regions around the main centres of British administration (Bombay, Calcutta and Madras). Ram Mohan Roy, Karve, Tagore, Phule, Tilak and other leaders challenged irrational practices and beliefs (illiteracy, child-marriage, dominance of upper castes, religious superstitions etc.) within the traditional system and advocated a social order based on human dignity and social justice. In this sense, such people became the torch bearers of modernization of Indian society reflecting the outlook and values associated with the modern industrial man.

The industrial entrepreneurs as well as professionals who were drawn to the western technology belonged mainly to the upper caste groups. Due to their traditional status and affluence these people benefited from western education and cultural influence more directly than the poorer lower castes. Industrial entrepreneurship was initially captured by the more affluent sections among

the traditional trading communities (Gujarati and Marwari Banias, Parsis, Chettiars etc.). However, there is good evidence to show that leadership in modern Indian industry was not too much conditioned by caste as it was believed earlier. Singer's (1972 : chapter 8) depth study of industrial entrepreneurs in Madras indicates that joint family, caste and Hindu philosophy did not act as insurmountable barriers to the spirit of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs came from various caste groups since the early years of industrialization. People moved with relative ease from agriculture to industrial enterprise if they could secure adequate wealth and education. Hindu ritualism hardly interfered with industrial rationality as entrepreneurs could easily compartmentalize their social behaviour at home and in office. Performance of traditional rituals at home had no significant effect on the behaviour in office or factory. The joint family was found to be quite compatible with involvement in industrial organization as it helped members to pool their economic and managerial resources. Tripathi (1971) also argues with the help of historical data that caste and religion have hardly been a barrier to entrepreneurship in India. He suggests that moneylenders, traders and industrialists were sufficiently imbued with the spirit of capitalism inspite of their cultural affiliation. Saberwal (1976) has also shown that low-caste people such as the Ramgariahs in Punjab took to entrepreneurship when they found opportunity and resources to do so.

Similarly, the earlier observations and generalizations on the lack of commitment of industrial workers seem to be based on incomplete understanding of workers' behaviour and attitudes. While workers had to face problems of adjustment to the industrial situation during the early years of industrialization, scholars such as Thorner (1957) and Morris (1960) have shown that high rates of absenteeism and turnover among workers were not good indicators of their commitment to industry. High turnover often reflected employers' unwillingness to stick to their jobs. Studies of industrial workers in various parts of the country indicate that a large proportion of workers had some experience of urban industrial work before they entered regular factory jobs. For such workers, the problem of transition from agricultural work to industrial work did not arise. As industrialization progressed, factory jobs ceased to be restricted to lower caste groups as people from various sections of higher castes entered these jobs. Such workers are genuinely committed to industrial work. Moreover, with the growing dispersal of industry into semi-urban and rural areas, workers have increasing opportunity to remain in the midst of their joint families and caste groups while working in modern industry. Like the entrepreneur, the worker also has learnt to compartmentalize his behaviour at work and at home without encountering any major conflict between the two types of behaviour. Now, the social security and welfare provided to workers through labour legislation and management action along with ever-growing unemployment in the country not only ensure workers'

commitment to industry but generate pressures on industry to absorb people whose skill and will to work are evident. In view of these facts, social scientists realize that the problem of incompatibility between traditional Indian culture and modern industry as posed by earlier observers has little significance for understanding the behaviour of industrial man in India. I have discussed this issue at some length here because the role of Indian culture in determining the pace of industrialization and modernization is invoked again and again by economists, sociologists, journalists and other observers.

For instance, it is still in vogue for scholars to stress the influence of joint family, caste, Hinduism etc. to explain the behaviour and attitudes of Indian managers and administrators. Thus Chattopadhyay (1975) observes that the attribute of dependency pervading Indian culture makes managers submissive towards superiors, authoritarian towards others and security-conscious in their personal outlook. Similarly, Moddie (1968) attributes the corruption, inaction, laziness and authoritarianism among Indian elite to the 'Brahmanical culture and personality'. Ray (1970) and Tandon (quoted by Chowdhry : 1970 : pp. 57-58) also hold the traditional social institutions responsible for the irrational behaviour of Indian managers.

I do not mean to suggest that the behaviour and attitudes of Indian managers bear no relation to the traditional institutions

like joint family and religion. However, some of the academic and popular (Indian elite themselves seem to be developing greater awareness of the role of traditional institutions on their behaviour) beliefs on this matter need careful examination. If Indian entrepreneurs and workers can conduct their work-behaviour and non-work behaviour (in social relationships) in separate compartments (as suggested above), managers and other elite may be able to make a similar compartmentalization. Indian technocrats, bureaucrats, traders, lawyers, teachers, physicians and other industrial men may be potentially as rational and competent in their work-behaviour as their counterparts in other industrial societies. In fact, the incidence of 'brain-drain' suggests that they are.

MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDES

Another aspect of the behaviour of industrial man in his work place relates to his motivation for work and the satisfaction he obtains in his work. Indian social scientists usually depend on work-motivation theories developed in the West. One of the most popular theories on this subject is the theory of need-hierarchy postulated by the American psychologist Maslow. He suggested that man initially wants to fulfil his basic physical needs (food, shelter etc.) and then progressively looks for higher-order needs such as safety, social recognition and self-actualization. In this background, some studies of Indian workers suggest that their satisfaction in work

varies with their status within the organizational hierarchy and the challenge posed by their work technology and promotion opportunities. (e.g. Lambert : 1963; Sharma : 1973; Vaid : 1968). As industrial work becomes progressively routinized and monotonous in the wake of increasing automation and mechanization, various categories of workers are supposed to lose interest in their jobs and hence feel alienated. This problem of alienation among workers has lately drawn the attention of social scientists and practitioners in India as well as in more advanced countries. Many interesting attempts are being made to reduce the workers' alienation by redesigning the work technology in specific situations and also by involving workers in the managerial process. However, our present knowledge regarding the motivation and satisfaction of Indian workers (as well as other industrial men) is extremely limited. Solutions to the problem of workers' motivation can be effectively designed only if we clearly know what they want. For instance, if workers need more money and are willing to put up with boredom of work for the sake of monetary gains, solutions such as job redesign and participative management may not yield desired results.

Such problems are not a special asset of any society. We have our share of competent and incompetent industrial men. We have the more motivated and the less motivated. We have the authoritarians and the democrats. We have the rational and the irrational. The combination of these various qualities in a given organization and

in a given situation will depend on a series of historical, cultural, economic, political and psychological factors. These factors and the combination of Indian industrial men they create in any situation would provide the clue to the comprehension of the concrete reality of the dynamics of Indian society and the kind of industrial society it is. At present our understanding of Indian society and its industrial man is extremely limited. Most scholars and observers seem to have been overconditioned by the urge to fix the Indian industrial man in the cultural box of Indian society. Some have tried to pull him out of that box. We still need to examine this species in all his dimensions - psychological, cultural, technological and so on.

In this connection, it is interesting to note a recent attempt made by Holmström (1976) to develop an empirical typology of industrial workers on the basis of his observations and interview data regarding workers in Bangalore. He illustrates nearly a dozen different types of workers reflecting their behaviour in and outside their workplace. Some of these types are : (i) paternalist worker - who have strong paternalistic attitude towards management; (ii) careerists - whose main interest is in a career in trade unionism or politics; (iii) those who find the factory a cosy place to work in and hence are reluctant to leave it, (iv) those who are clearly committed to the factory and aspire to achieve their career goals within the factory. Such attempts to understand the behaviour of workers and other industrial men are likely to be useful for developing any plans to deal with situations and problems concerning them.

HIERARCHY OF INDUSTRIAL MAN

One of Holmström's conclusions in the study I have just mentioned is that the Indian industrial worker tends to move away from the traditional concepts of hierarchy towards the concept of equality and freedom of choice in his work behaviour. Perhaps the behaviour of industrial man in general should indicate such a trend if we still persist in seeking the social goals of liberty, equality and justice. We should not, however, forget that industrial man has acquired by virtue of his job and ~~sta~~ status some power in relation to the rest of the society and that this power is differentially distributed among various sections of industrial man. This is a matter on which generations of economists, political scientists and others have broken their heads and will continue to do so. I have neither the time in this **brief** essay nor the competence to go into any detailed discussion of this power dimension of the industrial man's behaviour. I shall briefly touch upon a few aspects which I consider important in the present context.

We have travelled a long distance from the early days of industrialization when industrial workers were at the mercy of their employers who owned the means of production. As we know, human society by and large has excellently responded to the revolutionary analysis and prediction offered by the Marxists on the consequences of the exploitative relationship between employers and employees in

industrial society. One of the most significant of these responses is the concept of welfare state which implies acceptance by the state of overall responsibility for the welfare and happiness of all its citizens. An important aspect of this concept of welfare state is the recognition of the right of various interest groups (e.g. employers, managers, workers, lawyers, teachers etc.) to form voluntary associations for promotion and protection of their respective interests. Hence we have a large number of trade unions, employers' organizations and associations of a variety of other industrial men. These associations give their members a distinct strength and power to achieve their goals in respect of economic rewards, better working conditions, greater comfort and higher status as members of industrial organization and citizens of industrial society. At present less than half of the workers in the organized sector (where it is possible to organize members due to steadiness and regularity of employment) are unionized. But unionization has given workers considerable power to bargain, pressurize and coerce employers to achieve their goals. Indian trade unions have since their inception get mixed up with political parties as a result of which the working classes have been fragmented into competing groups at the level of an organization, industry and region. This fragmentation has perhaps resulted in considerable inefficiency and ineffectiveness of trade unions to achieve the objectives of their members. In the absence of the state of union rivalry existing in Indian industry, workers would perhaps have wielded considerably more power over other groups in the society than they have at present.

However, even the modest results achieved by Indian trade unions for workers served as a model for other sections of Industrial man. During recent years, various groups of white collar and supervisory workers, executives, administrators and employed professionals such as teachers, scientists and medical practitioners have formed unions and acquired some power over other groups in the context of their jobs. On the other hand, there are vast numbers of people in the unorganized sector (in very small, casual and irregular employment) who cannot wield any power over others as they cannot easily form pressure groups among themselves. They are almost completely at the mercy of their employers. Thus one can notice a crude class system among industrial workers. The workers in the organized sector constitute the elite among the working class. Due to their relative affluence, elite workers often are in a position to identify themselves with the middle classes in terms of their behaviour patterns, life style, outlook and aspirations. The workers in the unorganized sector constitute the non-elite and due to their relative poverty are more easily identifiable with the lower economic sections of the society.¹⁴ When public attention is usually easily drawn towards the problems of organized labour, unorganized workers have hardly any choice or voice.¹⁵

Similarly one can establish the class system within various interest groups among other sections of industrial man. There are large, more organized, more powerful employers and small, less

organized, less powerful employers. There are also more powerful and less powerful sections among managers, administrators, teachers and medical men. Since usually there are large numbers of relatively smaller and less powerful men in all these categories, one notices a trend of mounting frustration among these people who probably have the same aspirations as their more unfortunate fellow professionals but less opportunity to fulfil their aspirations. Moreover, there is the classic product of Indian industrial society - the unemployed (especially the educated unemployed). Our ideas and ideals regarding a modern industrial society encouraged us to provide education of the western type to growing numbers within the population. Our political consciousness and local aspirations for economic and social development have driven us to establish modern schools, colleges and universities in all sorts of places. This educational system along with the growing contact of the younger generations with the consumption goods produced by modern industry has raised their social and economic aspirations. But the chances of fulfilment of these aspirations do not seem to be bright for most of these people because of non-availability of the kind of jobs (clerical, supervisory, technical) for which they have been prepared by the educational system. This leads to an understable sense of despair and frustration. Thus industrial men 'on the other side of the river' have provided a reserve force of volunteers willing any time to help anyone who wants to pressurize others through violence, destruction of property and

other kinds of physical force which provide temporary relief from the boredom of unemployment. The youth power witnessed in various places in the country represents this frustrated element in the Indian industrial man.¹⁶

THE USES OF POWER AND INFLUENCE

I would now like to discuss an aspect of the Indian industrial man which I believe is crucial to the achievement of his avowed goals as well as those of his society.

I mentioned earlier that the industrial man of India appears potentially quite rational and may compare well with his counterpart in other industrial societies. There is no doubt that the achievements made by the country in industrial, scientific, agricultural and various other spheres of its development during the three decades of independence are to a large extent due to the rationality of the industrial man's behaviour.

In spite of this potential rationality of the industrial man and his spectacular contribution to all-round development and progress, common experience and news reports provide enough evidence of the many-splendoured irrationalities of this man. This area of human behaviour is not likely to attract researchers due to its obviously 'touchy' character. But common experience may not always be a bad substitute for research-based knowledge and hence may be worth our notice.

Let us look at some randomly chosen examples. Powerful entrepreneurs sometimes launch big business with adequate resources and then allow it to 'fall sick' if they lose interest in it or prove themselves incompetent to deal with it. Who pays the price? Shareholders, government, employees; but not the entrepreneurs themselves who use their business acumen to provide for their own interests before they call it a day. Managers and administrators who seem to possess the best talent and are extremely rational in their outlook on life and work sometimes do not hesitate to indulge in the worst form of nepotism or corruption to get favours from others, to send their children to chosen schools, to get a telephone 'out of turn'. Who pays the price? The honest legitimate claimants of services. Trade unionists sometimes instigate workers, sometimes blackmail employers, to keep up their power and raise their resources. Teachers sometimes (perhaps often and increasingly) sell their knowledge only to those students who offer the highest price. Physicians and surgeons sometimes (often?) cultivate clients into perpetual invalidity. Politicians are known to charge fees to introduce bills in legislatures at the instance of interest groups (traders, smugglers). Highest political dignitaries tirelessly talk about national integrity and solution of basic economic problems, but at the same time allow the political and economic system to be destroyed for personal ends. Industrial yogis are known to rape women and swindle property in the name of God and religion. These industrial

men are as clever, as rational, as modern as you want them. But they know they are not only professionals. They are businessmen. Business is business.

I must repeat I have no clue¹⁷ as to how representative this sample of the Indian industrial man is. Perhaps it is insignificantly small. Perhaps the examples I have given above portray deviant cases. But I firmly believe that the moderate versions of such deviants abound in our society. That is not the point. The point is : howsoever insignificant this sample is, its fallout is quite large. Each action of the type I have illustrated provides a model of behaviour. More alarmingly, each such action sets in motion a chain of actions and reactions. Such behaviour cannot be indulged in by people with no money, power or influence. Hence those who suffer on account of such behaviour are in large numbers. For each such action, there are two categories of concerned people : those who get away with what they want and those who feel victimized or exploited. These are not classes in the Marxian sense. With the diversification of industrial activity and growing number of levels within organizational and social hierarchy, authority, power and wealth are distributed among various groups in the society. Hence more and more people get the opportunity to use their power or influence to 'get things done'. Correspondingly, the feelings of frustration, exploitation or victimization are also distributed among various sections of the

society. In balance, everyone discovers that in the struggle for social and economic promotion, the fittest survive. But those who are fittest in terms of money, power, influence. Not those who are fittest in terms of competence and effort - in getting a job, in passing an examination, in securing admission to a medical college, in allotment of a government-subsidized house.

The Indian industrial man may not soon face some of the negative social consequences faced by the industrial man in advanced industrial society as I illustrated earlier - the heavy technicization of life and happiness, the alienation in the work place etc. But he faces the prospect of survival of the 'most powerful'. He faces the prospect of positions being filled by the powerful rather than by the competent - a sharp antithesis to Weber's concept of rationality in industrial society.

What factors have lent the Indian industrial man into this situation?

There is no easy answer to this question. As I mentioned earlier, we need a totalistic comprehension of the industrial man's behaviour, values and aspirations in specific social conditions. However, it is possible to identify some important factors which seem to have contributed to the problem I have posed. I shall briefly discuss these factors here:

The way I have posed the problem in this section it can be regarded as essentially a moral problem. Moral problems can be

examined and analysed carefully but they often elude solution. However, such moral problems exist and grow in concrete economic and political conditions. More importantly, the corrupt and irrational practices among the industrial men contribute to growth in inequality and social injustice which these men are supposed to fight against. Hence this problem deserves close attention.

In the first place, the irrational, corrupt behaviour I have illustrated partly arises from the enormous population pressure and the consequent economic despair among vast sections of Indian society. In view of the stupendous population problem of the country and the basic poverty with which it entered industrialization, economic growth and opportunity have been extremely sluggish. Also, the available opportunities have always been seized by the small proportion of higher socio-economic groups who monopolize modern education. In the Indian cultural context, those who are in privileged positions want to keep up these positions and also ensure that their children maintain (or improve) the position. As the culture of corruption has been built up over the years, most people doubt whether one's aspirations can be achieved through hard work and competence. Hence most are interested in securing positions through dubious means - money, influence, quid pro quo, etc. The wheel of irrationality grinds on and on. Inequality breeds inequality.

The core of the solution of this problem, as is well recognised, lies in increasing the economic opportunities for those at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy. This solution was recommended by Gandhi and the economists influenced by him many years ago. They advocated avoidance of modern technology and diffusion of small industry, based on indigenous technology to cover every Indian villager. This approach did not appeal to the more westernised and 'rational' economists and politicians who believed that it was essential for India to adopt the goal of rapid overall economic growth through the use of the fast changing western technology. Such industrialization, it was argued, would lead to availability of surplus resources for progressive economic growth and greater employment opportunities for various sections of the society. India's strategy of social and economic development through planning incorporated this view of industrialization.¹⁸

However, the results achieved so far have been far from encouraging. Myrdal (1968) in his monumental work on problems of economic development in Asia has clearly and strongly expressed his reservations on the prospects of reduction of inequality with the help of large-scale industrialization. In fact he suggests that modern industrial techniques create a backwash effect on traditional industry and hence reduces the economic prospects of indigenous craftsmen and artisans, thus widening the gap between elite and non-elite industrial men.¹⁹ Accordingly, Myrdal advocates

greater emphasis on the development of indigenous industry covering masses of the population.²⁰

This economic issue is far too complex. A major national commitment against modern large scale industry has serious implications for the country's role in the world community. Such an approach may also mean a progressive downward levelling of the existing elite groups which would naturally resist that prospect. However, a solution on these lines seems unavoidable if the main problem is to be dealt with effectively. Illich (1973) has recently brought out the inevitability of manipulation of man in modern industrial civilization, especially its seemingly disastrous consequences for man's physical environment. The awareness of this ecological problem as well as the more recent energy crisis in the west have set technocrats and politicians thinking about the human relevance of modern technology and created an urge to save man from that monster.²¹

In another sense, the problem of irrationality of the industrial man is partly a political problem. For some time, the incidence of corruption, discrimination and favouritism have been so rampant within public organizations and political parties that people in power cannot seriously claim ignorance of such behaviour. To a large extent politicians and their parties depend heavily on corrupt practices of their supporters for survival. There is thus a vicious circle in the sense that corrupt practices help sustenance

of political power, hence politicians feel obliged to help those who indulge in such practices. This vicious circle of interaction at the level of political superstructure percolates down to other organizations which treat political parties as their model of behaviour. It seems that the basic problems of the society and also their effective solutions are known to the political and administrative elite who have imbibed the necessary rationality and outlook to understand them. However, it is often inconvenient to implement the known solutions as these solutions hurt either personal prejudices or vested interests. When questions are raised about non-implementation of rational solutions the same rational politicians and administrators are capable of producing convincing reasons for such non-implementation. This pattern of rational behaviour is labelled by an observer as tendermindedness (Kennedy : 1967) and regarded as a special characteristic of Indian culture.

The third aspect of the problem of irrationality of the industrial man lies in the educational system. If there are deep-rooted irrational behaviour patterns they can be resolved more effectively in the long run only by an educational system at various levels geared to their solution. The Indian educational system has been examined and reexamined by some of the most modern and rational educational experts who have offered excellent suggestions for changing the system to suit the aspirations and values idealized in contemporary Indian society. For instance, attempts have been

made to introduce bias for rural employment and social services for the under-privileged sections of the society. However, it is common knowledge of such schemes have hardly produced any concrete results inspite of considerable lip-service and expenditure of resources. On the other hand, the educational system continues to emphasize the formal aspect of knowledge and information and only marginally deals with concrete issues to which education is supposed to be oriented. At the same time, corrupt practices of a thousand types have become the hallmark of educational system in the country. The torch-bearers of modern education in India who are supposed to inculcate the values of hard work and social justice are known for their laziness, greed and sectional disputes.

Many people many times have reflected on such problems and prescribed solutions. If problems and solutions are both known and still not implemented, it indicates an extremely unhealthy state of affairs in a society. Some may say these problems can be solved by some moral regeneration of the society. Others might want the intellectuals to make a start somewhere. Still others may advocate a straightforward economic regeneration through some sort of revolution. Apart from all final solutions, political action may still be the crucial point of departure. Political action has to be clearly focussed on the desired goals. This implies ruthlessness in political action. There is, of course, a price (uncertainty, resistance from established vested interests) to be paid for such

ruthlessness. The main question is whether we want to pay the necessary price to achieve the desired goal (liberty, equality). If there is reluctance to pay the price in the short run, one may have to pay a higher price in the long run (mounting frustration among larger masses of the non-elite). Meanwhile the faceless Indian industrial man will wait for a catalyst to start action. The following observation made by Landes may be relevant by way of conclusion for the present essay :

'Just as all enterprises fall short of absolute rationality yet survive and even flourish thanks to the imperfections of the market place, so societies live and even prosper in spite of the contradictions of their structure. By the same token, however, just as deviations from rationality have their price and if pushed too far can result in elimination of the enterprise, so deviations from economic and social logic entail costs, and if pushed too far can have analogous consequences for an entire nation.'

- Landes (1969: pp. 79-80).

NOTES

- 1 In this essay, 'man' includes woman.
- 2 The two terms are often used interchangeably. For instance, Kerr et. al (1960) and Burns (1969) use the caption 'industrial man' for their analysis of industrial society.
- 3 For a deep insight into the implications of personal bias in social science research, see the last chapter entitled 'Some Thoughts on the Study of One's Own Society' in Srinivas (1966, pp. 147-163).
- 4 This summary is based on contributions on the subject by scholars such as Kerr et. al (1960), Aron (1961), Burns (1969), Hoselitz (1963).
- 5 For an enlightening analysis of the capitalist versus socialist approach to industrialism, see Aron (1961). Similarly, Crozier (1964) has brought out the cultural dimension of the bureaucratic organizational structure. See also Halmos (1964) for a discussion on the theme of divergence of roads towards industrialism.
- 6 I have borrowed the observations in this paragraph from scholars such as Ellul (1964), Reich (1971), Toffler (1970), Drucker (1968) and Galbraith (1973).
- 7 For instance, see Buchanan (1935), Broughton (1924) and Anstey (1957).
- 8 See Royal Commission on Labour in India (1931), Buchanan (1935) etc.
- 9 This phrase is borrowed from Kerr et.al (1960).

- 10 See Kapadia (1955), Chapters X and XI.
- 11 See Srinivas (1966).
- 12 This interpretation is ably summarized and expressed by Chinmayananda (n.d.), especially Chapter II.
- 13 This information is based on sources such as Moreland (1962), Gillion (1968).
- 14 See, for instance, Breman (1976), pp. 1939-40.
- 15 See, for instance, Sinha (1976) and Anonymous (1977).
- 16 See Shah (1977) pp. 19-20
- 17 Recently I had an occasion to address a group of eminent businessmen and professionals where I shared my views on the many forms of corruption I have illustrated here. To my amazement, a large number of the distinguished participants who were in an introspective mood accepted the validity of my statements. Some later told me privately that my statements were mild.
- 18 See Government of India (1954), pp. 87-88.
- 19 Myrdal (1968), Chapter 19.
- 20 Ibid. Chapter 20
- 21 In this context, it is interesting to note a unique experiment being made by a team of action researchers in a village in Rajasthan. The members of the team have used their technical and management skills to help village craftsmen to modernize

their production programme through need-based education and market their products to affluent consumers without the intervention of middlemen. The path of this action research is laden with difficulties, but it seems to be a rational approach to the development of the 'equal' industrial man as discussed here.

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