

The Cultural Movement in India

and Our Tasks

The proletarian revolution presupposes practice and propagation of proletarian culture and values among its other essential prerequisites. But proletarian culture can grow and develop only by exhausting the ethics, morals and tastes of the bourgeois humanist culture, in continuity and break with it. Dwelling on some fundamental theoretical questions in the realm of culture in this era, this address deals with the trends of the renaissance movement in India, particularly with regard to the renaissance in Bengal. And it highlights the tasks of the cadres of the revolutionary cultural movement of today.

The organizers made the request that I speak on the cultural movement in India and our tasks on this occasion of the seventieth birth anniversary of poet Nazrul Islam^[1]. There could be only one object for it. In choosing this topic today, I think the organizers had it in mind that a proper analysis and evaluation should be made of the trends and the height of the cultural movement in our country in that period reached through the contributions of Nazrul, Saratchandra^[2] and Rabindranath^[3] and also that a discussion be made on the correct approach and tasks of those who are now engaged in a cultural movement in the country as successors of that trend. At least this is how I view the topic.

In my opinion, to do this we should examine and analyse at the outset the trend of social-cultural revolution in India which took shape and flourished and surged forward with Raja Rammohan^[4] in the first place, then through Vidyasagar^[5], Rabindranath, Saratchandra and Nazrul. We should also know the fate of that social and cultural revolution in today's society in India. Indeed, what has been its fate? How far have we, their successors, who are in the economic, political, cultural, social movement today tried to advance that trend? How far have we been able to evaluate it correctly? I consider it most important to discuss this point at the outset. Let us examine the condition and the state of cultural movement in our country today.

For a correct evaluation, it is necessary first of all to understand what culture Nazrul and others at that time represented. We should keep in mind that in all phenomena of nature, in every material entity we observe in fact the contradiction of two opposites. In the annals of social progress and civilization cultural movement has been no exception to this law. This is why at each and every stage of development of human culture we always note two trends in cultural movement, one opposing the other. This was so at the time of Nazrul and his predecessors and this is so today. The cultural trend that emerged with Rammohan and stage by stage developed with Vidyasagar, Bankimchandra^[6], Rabindranath, Saratchandra and Nazrul was upheld by a

section of the people, while there were others who opposed it. The followers of the cultural trend of Nazrul and his predecessors who sang in that social and cultural revolution stood for breaking the shackles of the old social order, its outmoded values of life, superstitions and religious bigotry. They exhorted that the old society must go. It must be destroyed and a new society with a new sense of moral values conforming to the new needs of the nation, the new needs of the people, ought to be built up in its place.

The cultural movement led by them echoed this tune. It was the urge for this social revolution that released the then cultural movement. To the downtrodden and oppressed multitude who were victims of so many superstitions the movement conveyed the new message : If we want to lead the country and the people on to the path of progress, if we want to rise together as a nation, if we want to inspire the whole country with the new consciousness and sense of democracy, we must get out of the morass of religious dogmatism and social prejudices, and must leave behind us the age of blindness. This trend in the cultural revolution reached its zenith in the stage from Raja Rammohan to Nazrul. If we can evaluate this trend of cultural revolution correctly, only then shall we be able to realize what our task is at the present hour.

Criterion of evaluation

Before I proceed, I like to discuss a related question. What is the yardstick with which to judge whether a particular thought or trend of thinking is progressive or is reactionary ? What should be the criterion ? Should it be one's individual realization ? Should an individual's realization, however learned and sagacious he may be, be the criterion of evaluation ? Could an individual's view of a thing, his perception or reading of it according to his bent of mind, be the best criterion of judgement ? If so, then every individual shall have the right to claim as progressive whatever he considers progressive according to his own judgement. In that case, it would never be possible to evolve a common standard of judgement for a country or a people — a standard by which they can judge the correct course. This method is not scientific, and hence not acceptable. Because, firstly, there must be a common standard of judgement before people, that is, a general yardstick with which to judge a thing. Such a standard evolves through the scientific process of generalisation.

There can be only one truth about a thing. And it must be borne in mind that truth is always concrete and relative. To give the correct orientation to the people and the mass mind if we wish the majority of the people to accept a correct idea which is beneficial to the country and the people as a whole, and is conducive to social progress, then using the scientific process of analysis we have to determine in the first place the correct methodology of thinking. Only then shall we be able to uphold a general and scientific standard of judgement before the people. The question of involving the broad masses in the cultural revolution is inseparably linked with this point.

Secondly, considered from another angle also, this is not a correct approach. An individual's realization and his personal experiences are all subject to critical appraisal. The individual mental make-up or bent of mind is the subject matter of science. Because, one may honestly believe something to be correct, but that does not automatically make it correct. You may even honestly commit a mistake. And inadvertently you may do something you really did not mean to do. I am

not talking of rogues or shrewd schemers. But this kind of tragedy has really occurred in the lives of many dedicated and honest people. They spent all their life thinking and working for what they sincerely believed were in the interest of the people. But exactly opposite results followed. Some could realize it in time. Many could not, till even the end of life. Such tragedies happen because these people depend only on their personal convictions and honesty. Honesty is no doubt an elementary requisite, and nothing can be achieved without it. Even the reactionaries, when they are after achieving something, need honesty and sincerity for that. The Nazis needed this, so also the Japanese imperialists. They, too, needed dedication. We cannot forget that they used to commit harakiri even. But does anyone today nurture any respect for the aims and objects for which they committed harakiri ? The freedom-loving people look down on them today as arch enemies of civilization and consider their acts patently barbaric. But the gestapos and the followers of Japanese imperialism, too, had dedication.

So, I emphasize, dedication and honesty are essential for achieving anything. Nothing can be accomplished without these. Even then it would be wrong to assume that one can get at truth with honesty and dedication alone. This cannot be therefore the criterion of judgement.

It should be clear then that the yardstick with which to judge whether a particular thought or concept is progressive or is reactionary cannot be one's fanciful formula. Nothing becomes progressive or reactionary depending on who labels it so. Because, whatever one says should first be analysed and judged in the light of science and history to see if it stands the test or not. We have to judge which is progressive and which is reactionary in the light of historical experience and scientific reasoning. That there are two currents in society, one progressive and the other reactionary, is generally known to all. Progressive is that which takes us forward and leads us to advancement. Whatever obstructs progress and pulls us backward is reactionary. In science, though forward and backward motions are relative. However, the essence is that nothing remains static. If one tries to arrest consciousness at a particular stage, if one will remain content with a particular level of consciousness for all time to come — maybe a relatively very advanced consciousness in the present context — one will find in the course of history this advanced standard of today being reduced to a low and inadequate standard in the future. This is because truth is concrete as well as relative. Nothing remains static or fixed at one point.

However much you may try it, you cannot keep a particular advanced standard of ideal, culture and sense of values arrested at one particular level. Be it the cultural standard of Saratchandra, Nazrul or Rabindranath, be it a theory or the ethical concept of Buddha^[2] Jesus, Sankaracharya^[8], Mohammed or even of Marx, Engels or Lenin, all these are bound to become reactionary one day should one seek to arrest them at a particular stage. One must either advance or slide back; it is impossible to remain stationary. Let us discuss another point for better understanding. What do we mean by mental make-up ? What are thoughts and ideas ? We know that ceaseless conflicts and contradictions go on between an individual's brain and the objective world around, on the one hand, and between the brain and a given social environment, on the other. Thoughts, ideas and the mental faculty of an individual are the products of, and they develop through these two contradictions. It is through the process of scientific generalisation and integration of the thinkings of the individuals of the whole society that the social mind grows and develops — what we call in a word the social thinking. Through the process of internal contradiction of the human brain with this social thinking on the one hand and its contradiction

with nature and the external world around, on the other, man's intellect and his spiritual world grow and develop continuously. Nobody can keep this contradiction confined at a particular point. Had it been possible to arrest these two contradictions in the domain of thinking then it would have been also possible to keep man's spiritual world at a standstill. But there is no way to stop anywhere. If you try to make any thought and idea eternal, however progressive these may be at a given point of time, by arresting them at a point, then an altogether different thing happens — they become reactionary in character.

As we discussed it a little earlier, motion is of two types — that which takes us forward, i.e. progressive, and that which pulls us backward, i.e. reactionary. Today, a particular ideology may reflect the most advanced standard of social consciousness in the sense that it conforms to the social necessity and is conducive to progress. But with change of conditions or, in other words, with change of the means of production or the way of life, new necessities arise. What happens if we fail to change and advance our thoughts, ideas, sense of values, or ideology to keep pace with this change ? In the changed situation, at a later time, the progressive ideology of one time turns out to be reactionary in the perspective of the newer necessities of life. Naturally, it pulls us down continuously. This is how an ideology should be evaluated. Man's thoughts and his spiritual world have thus grown and developed stage by stage, each stage superseding the preceding one — from those of the primitive society to the advanced modern thoughts and concepts of today. If you do not accept this view, then none of you, I think, will be able to answer a question. For example, we all know that great men like Buddha, Jesus Christ, Sankaracharya or Mohammed emerged at different periods of history. The religious-minded regard them, of course, as prophets or sons of god, the messiahs. But the humanists or those imbued with modern ideas regard them as great men, men of outstanding personality. These personalities stand head and shoulder above those whom we off and on laud today as big. In their times, they had left unmistakable marks of their genius. In our times, how many of us would stand in comparison to them ! But we cannot lose sight of the fact that even the intellect of such geniuses as Buddha, Jesus, Sankaracharya and Mohammed could not create the modern thoughts and ideas which we very much cherish today. Even with their high intellectual standard they could not propound the modern thoughts and concepts.

For instance, think of the modern thoughts, concepts and ideals like democratic consciousness, democratic principles of life and society, secularism, secular humanism, etc., and the new sense of values, namely freedom of the individual, emancipation of womanhood, liberty and freedom which all developed along with the change of the productive system centring round the industrial or capitalist revolution. Even school students today are more or less acquainted with these. But these thoughts and ideals could not be conceived even by geniuses like Buddha, Jesus, Sankaracharya or Mohammed. It is not that they were lesser geniuses or were incapable of high thinking. It happens because the material condition of human thoughts and ideals appears first and then, on this base, develops the world of ideas. Herein lies the limit of the relative independence of the power of thinking of man. I would ask those who would not accept this truth to answer a question. Why could not the lofty ideals and modern thoughts and concepts which we have produced today be conceived by those great men ? Those who believe in absolute freedom of thinking and hold that it is this free thinking that has given birth to this spiritual world centring round the intellect of an individual will have to answer this question clearly. Faced with this question they may realize that the concept of absolute freedom of mind is only a

myth. In point of fact, the thinking of an individual has its relative independence and its limits, too. And those limits are the limits of the material condition.

What do we find then ? Say, your thoughts or those of Ajoyda's,^[9] or of mine — what are these really ? How does the individual thinking grow ? To comprehend this we have to understand first what 'social thinking' really is. By 'social thinking' we mean a distinct ideological-cultural category within which there are constant conflicts and contradictions between opposite trends of thinking, ideas and concepts. There may be different theories concerning how and why this struggle, why this conflict, why this contradiction, but there can hardly be two opinions on the existence of the various trends of thinking within a particular category of social thinking. A category of social thinking, as we mean it, comprises diverse thoughts and ideas and their conflicts and contradictions in a given situation or context. The thinking of any one and of all individuals is nothing but the personification of social thinking. This personified social thinking is what we call individual thinking. This is how the thoughts of Sankaracharya developed. The thoughts of Jesus or Mohammed, the thoughts of Raja Rammohan, Rabindranath, Saratchandra, Nazrul and also of the political thinkers of different periods developed in the same way. There is no escape from it. The material entity, the physiology, the brain physiology and the contradiction between the human brain and social environment and nature — all these set a limit on it. So man's spiritual world, that is his world of thoughts and ideas, has grown out of the material condition and in accordance with the environment. It exists in contradiction with the material condition. But it is not that as the means of production and mode of living change, thoughts and ideas of man undergo an automatic change. Such a notion is wrong. It is not mechanical like that. The relation between the two is inter-dialectical. Although the spiritual production of man, the spiritual world and the social thinking develop as the superstructure of the material production the spiritual production, spiritual world and the social thinking, in their turn, are continuously influencing the course of change of the material conditions. However, under no circumstances can man's spiritual world supersede the limits of the given material condition. This is why none of the great geniuses of the past could conceive the modern thoughts and ideas.

Many people think that since the great thinkers of the past preached for the welfare of humanity and since they had love and compassion for mankind, the ideologies they professed also come under the category of humanism. Even many so-called progressive theoreticians argue in this fashion nowadays. But even the other day, progressive theoreticians adept in theoretical discussions would not have indulged in such loose talks. Today, however, there are many theorists who hold that humanism is an age-old concept. I hold such concepts entirely erroneous and ahistorical. In the history of development of human thoughts humanism and humanist ideology define a distinct ideological category of a particular stage of development of human society. These pundits have possibly confused humanism with humane ideology. They should have understood that 'anything humane is not humanism.' In human society, whenever an ideal, an ideology emerged, it was meant for man and none else. Whether preached by Mohammed, Charvaka^[10], Kapil^[11] or Sankaracharya their thoughts were for human beings in the interest of human society and were, therefore, humanitarian ideologies. But bourgeois humanism, which the capitalist revolution brought along has a fundamental difference with all these humanitarian ideologies of the past. The nature of this difference will be clear if we discuss just one point instead of going into an elaborate discussion on its various aspects.

Almost all ideologies preceding humanism were founded on the spiritual values in the sense of religious values. All men were regarded as sons of god; therefore, love and compassion for all human beings were the basic tenets of all these ideologies. Certain sense of values came from recognition of god which we term, in the language of philosophy, a priori values. But the sense of values germinating from humanism, or bourgeois humanism, developed mainly around man. Recognition of social necessity and social consciousness was its focal point. It is this humanism which brought along, for the first time in human society, secular and democratic concepts, thoughts and values against the sense of values which grew out of religious beliefs and belief in a super-natural entity. Secular means worldly, pertaining to this world. Therefore, all secular concepts start from non-recognition of any supernatural entity. But in India, the term secular state has been reduced to mean equal patronage to all religions. This, no doubt, goes to the credit of statesmen, 'theorists' and political leaders of the country. But we are either erring from ignorance or have deliberately lost sight of the fact that the concept of secular state developed with the object of freeing the state, the social and economic life, the political and cultural movement from the influence of the church and religion. This is the very foundation of the secular democratic concept of life and secular humanism. It is not difficult to understand the role of the Congress leaders and the bourgeois intellectuals, but what is amazing is the concept of secularism betrayed in the idea, behaviour, everyday conduct and in-creasing patronage to religious ceremonies of many so-called Marxist and communist leaders. To what all these leaders together have reduced the meaning of secular state, cannot but naturally give rise to a question in the mind of all right thinking men : If Pakistan is called an Islamic state, a theocratic state, because it patronizes the Islamic religion, can India which patronizes and encourages all religions be called anything but a multi-theocratic state?

What are the principles of secular democracy, of secular democratic way of life ? None would perhaps deny that education plays an important role in developing the secular concept and secular principles of life. It is but natural then that education in a secular state should always uphold the secular values against the religious values. If we want India to be a really secular state, education must be completely freed from the religious tutelage. But what do we actually find in our so-called secular state ? Far from making education free from religious influences, the influence of religion on the education system, observance of religious rites in the educational institutions and even religious preaching through textbooks are very much there and steadily on the increase. That is why those who are now conducting movements over demands for democratization of education should clearly understand two things before anything. First, education has to be freed completely from the religious tutelage. Secondly, it has to be examined whether the outlook which guides the educational reforms is conducive to the political, economic and social struggles of the working class and other exploited masses now going on in the society for emancipation from the capitalist exploitation. And it is with these two yardsticks that we shall have to judge whether a movement for educational reform and democratization of education is progressive or reactionary. Many a commission have been appointed in our country for educational reforms. These commissions have all produced voluminous recommendations running into thousands of pages on details and niceties of educational reforms. But they have not been able to strike at the root of the problem. That is why none of the leaders are able to identify the real cause of the moral degeneration in the country. Many intellectuals and political leaders believe that we are not conducting ourselves properly; hence this depravity.

I wish to bring home a point to those who are honest and are really trying to grasp the problem but who believe that people are not conducting themselves properly. True, there is no personal code of conduct today — neither in politics, nor in the educational institutions, nor in administration. Everyone feels it, so do we. But why is it so ? Just some years back, during the freedom struggle, you, the leaders, used to call the students the 'flowers of Bengal'⁽¹²⁾. They threw themselves into the freedom struggle, giving up everything, paying heed to nothing else, and sacrificing their careers. In those days, the students looked on their teachers as their ideals. Why don't they do so today ? Where are they lost ? Are we to conclude then that god was pleased with us in those days, so blessed us with those worthy sons. But as god has become cross now, he is picking up and sending the bad lots. Surely none of you would share this view. Why then has the standard of morality gone down ? Why is it declining ? Is it not true that we all desire elevation of morality ? Are we not exhorting the people to be honest, to work hard and to save the nation ? But the more we urge them, the more the people are becoming pragmatic in the crude sense of the term. But why ?

Here I wish to discuss another point. I note that now-a-days in every field of political activities as well as in the cultural movement of our country the influence of 'pragmatism' is gradually growing. But this 'pragmatism' is totally alien to the concept of necessity which Marxism and science espouse. This influence of crude 'pragmatism' which we witness today in every sphere of life might have stemmed from vulgarisation of Marxism. Because, this depravity, as I have noticed, is more pronounced among the so-called progressives, the Marxists and the socialists. Many a Marxist have turned pragmatists while they apply the Marxist theory of necessity. They do not bother about whether the immediate necessity reflects the real necessity of mankind, that is whether it helps the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat to develop and is conducive to social progress and revolution or not. The concept of necessity that Marxism advocates, the necessity that science espouses, is that necessity which is necessary in the interest of social welfare and progress.

The concept of necessity that is conducive to the real progress and development of an individual in the course of continuous development of his revolutionary consciousness through growth and progress of the class struggle in society is, according to Marxism and science, the true 'recognition of necessity'. Quite often contradictions arise between this necessity and the necessity of an individual. Contradictions may also arise sometimes between the immediate necessity of a political party and this social necessity. In the case of such contradictions we have to subdue such necessity of the party; we have to surrender such necessity to social necessity. The influence of pragmatism which is increasingly gripping every aspect of political and cultural movement today can be said, in a word, to be necessity of the worst kind. Nowadays, many pundits are heard to comment : 'They are too utopian — their approach must be a little more pragmatic'. It appears to me that either they do not know that 'pragmatism' is a vulgar type of idealistic philosophy or else they are deliberately committing such errors. In simple political terminology 'pragmatic consideration' means 'opportunist consideration'. In fact, they have confused 'practical' with 'pragmatic'. They ought to have known that what is considered 'practical' in science is totally opposed to pragmatic approach. Pragmatic consideration does not reflect real necessity, it is a reflection of wrong understanding of necessity'. This pragmatism is spelling disaster today. It is making men more and more self-centred and eating into the vitals of mass movement.

In fact, the purpose of drawing these points into my discussion is to find a yardstick to correctly ascertain the problems facing the cultural movement. From all this it is clear that we are apt to commit mistakes if we proceed, depending solely on personal realization to determine whether a movement, cultural or political, is progressive or reactionary. We shall have to judge in the light of history and scientific reasoning, and integrating the same with the experience we gather on the basis of history, science and logic. If we want to determine the character and course of the cultural trends of Rabindranath, Saratchandra and Nazrul following this method, then we ought to understand, first of all, the social conditions in which that culture originated.

Socio-political background of renaissance movement in India and its two trends

Every student of history and social science knows that the modern nations and national states came into being in the course of development of capitalism. The growth and development of Indian nationalism, too, is no exception to it. What we call patriotism today does not date back to the distant past. In ancient India this sense or concept of patriotism did not exist, nor was its existence possible in a feudal social system. The concept of patriotism we are talking about cannot grow without the corresponding development of the national capitalist economy within a definite geographical boundary. Only after the establishment of a centralised British administration throughout the country did India step into the process of developing as a modern nation by integrating all the nationalities. And right from this period, out of the necessity to run a modern centralised administration, rail and road communications started spreading throughout the country. As a result, localised agricultural economy started to disintegrate and in its stead developed a trade and commerce system, unifying all the nationality economies and giving birth to, for the first time, a national market and a national capitalist economy. The spread of the modern rail and road communications, ex-change of trade and commerce between the different nationality economies, establishment of a national market and the development of capitalism helped grow a sense of identity of interest between the peoples of different nationalities. This economic and political identity of interest helped unite all the nationalities in the independence struggle against British imperialism with the single object of establishing a national state in India. That is why we find that none of the nationalities — the Marathis, Bengalis, Oriyas, Tamils, Telugus, etc., — fought to establish separate states of their own. In India national consciousness did not grow and develop that way — it could have, but for the centralised British rule. However, from the very beginning, a certain weakness remained inherent in the process of formation of a modern nation through the unification of all the nationalities of India, which started centring round the anti-British-imperialist independence struggle. Because of the failure to integrate the tasks of social and cultural revolution with the political programme of anti-British-imperialist independence struggle, the entire national movement suffered from certain weaknesses. We could not free the nationalist movement completely from the influence of religious thoughts and ideas. That is why, even after attainment of independence, the people of our country remain disunited over language, religion, culture and customs, and have developed as separate communities though we developed nationhood politically. So, instead of developing one uniform democratic principle of life, a 'nationality mental complex' got mixed up with our national mental make-up.

This happened mainly because the leadership of the struggle for independence was in the hands of the Indian national bourgeoisie. In India development of capitalism and the growth of

national independence struggle took place at a time when world capitalism had lost all its progressive character and become out and out reactionary and moribund. Even though Indian national capitalism was anti-imperialist, it was no doubt part and parcel of the moribund world capitalism. That is why, the revolutionary character of capitalism witnessed in the period of capitalist revolution was not there in India in the period of world imperialism and moribund capitalism. So, although the Indian national bourgeoisie, being part and parcel of international reactionary capitalism, provided leadership to the anti-imperialist independence struggle, it did not possess a revolutionary character — rather, became, in the main, reformist oppositional against imperialism. That is why during the period of our freedom movement, we witness two opposite trends and angularities among the bourgeois humanists. One was compromising with imperialism and feudalism and, in fact, this trend was dominant in the entire freedom struggle. The other was an uncompromising trend — uncompromising with imperialism and feudalism.

If you critically analyse the trend and course of the cultural movement from Rammohan to Nazrul you will find that these two trends of humanist outlook were likewise reflected in the literary thoughts of our country. Rabindranath, Saratchandra and Nazrul — their thinking provides a complete category of humanism in India. A close examination of this entire category of humanist culture will reveal that there exist within it these two trends side by side. One is agnostic — it does not enter into any debate on whether god exists or not although not believing in god either — its tendency, in the main, is to believe in matter and the objective world. That is its main inclination. So its outlook is essentially secular. In the field of literature this trend was represented by Saratchandra and Nazrul. The other trend is one which tried to combine humanist values with religious tradition and this trend was mainly represented by Rabindranath. When our humanist movement attained its maturity, we found both these two trends being reflected in the literary and philosophic thoughts of our country. Why did this happen in India ? Why these two trends in the entire humanist movement of our country ? One, the youthful humanism which was uncompromising, secular, agnostic and echoing the revolutionary tune of the humanist movement of the time of Shakespeare or of the renaissance which we find reflected in Saratchandra and Nazrul. Yet we do not find that youthful vigour and revolutionary fervour in the literary thoughts and ideas of Rabindranath who was in the forefront of the literary activities of the entire humanist movement of our country and who covered a much wider span than Saratchandra and Nazrul did in the field of literature. He too struck the tune of humanist thoughts and sense of values and echoed the same song of freedom — the same concept of liberty, the same humanist values that developed centring round man — all these were there in his creations. Yet, very subtly at that, Indian traditionalism and religious values were interwoven with all this. By this I certainly do not mean that religion in the crude sense, or religious fanaticism had any place in him. What I mean is that in Rabindranath there was a fusion of spiritualism and humanist values. And this fusion of spiritualism and humanism made humanism in our country outworn and crippled.

In the political movement too we have made a peculiar compromise between the concepts of democracy and religious and social prejudices. We did not fight religion. We could not bring to the fore the new thoughts and ideals of nationhood and nationalism, freeing them from the shackles of religion. As a result, our nationalism became a religion-oriented nationalism and under the circumstances, quite naturally, it became a Hindu religion-oriented nationalism. No matter how elegantly the leaders of our freedom movement spoke of the ideals of democracy, it

did not touch the Muslim community. Towering personalities like Gandhiji^[13] personally who had no animosity towards the Muslims, attracted numbers of influential Muslims into the fold of the movement. Thus came Abdul Ghaffar Khan^[14] who is more popularly known as the Frontier Gandhi, Dr. Khan Saheb^[15], Maulana Abul Kalam Azad^[16] and many others, renowned or not, who participated in the nationalist movement of our country. But we failed to stir the Muslim community as a whole. We failed to dispel their apprehensions. But why ? And is that all ? We could not eradicate the evils of casteism, too, in the Hindu society ! Despite such a great national upheaval taking place as a result of national independence movement in the political field, we could not accomplish in its stride the task of social revolution ! So the Scheduled Caste Federation was born. The leadership of the national movement was in the hands of the Brahmins, Kayasthas or the caste Hindus in the main. We were all 'comrades' in maidan meetings and in struggles, but did not allow scheduled caste people or Muslims access to our homes. You come from a scheduled caste family and I from a Brahmin family. I can lay down my life for you, we are comrades, we are fighters in the freedom struggle, fighting for a democratic India, and there is no bar in delivering speeches from the same platform. We do not hesitate to die for one another, but beware, you have no right to fall in love with my daughter. Marrying my daughter to you is impossible ! She must be married within her own caste ! In personal conduct, only a few leaders were exceptions to and free from this. Personally, leaders and distinguished personalities like Gandhiji, C. R. Das^[17], Subhas Chandra^[18], etc., were free from this. But was that enough ? They sincerely tried to break this barrier of casteism, they patronized inter-caste marriage, marriage with the 'untouchables'. It was Gandhiji who personally pursued this matter among his disciples. But could it suffice ? What was its impact on the social movement ? How much could it influence the life of those freedom fighters who joined in thousands, or the life of those who led it ? We all know that it could not stir the ideological movement at its root to make it capable enough to untie the knot in the national mental complex. To do this, to do away with this narrow-mindedness, feudal outlook and disunity, it was the foremost duty to incorporate the task of social and cultural revolution in the programme of political revolution of the country. But this could not be achieved since the leadership of the whole movement remained in the hands of the reformist national bourgeoisie.

So, what was advocated by Raja Rammohan Roy which Vidyasagar advanced further, the banner of social and cultural revolution held aloft by Saratchandra and Nazrul — we threw that away in utter negligence during our political movement. Contented as we were with political movement alone, we set aside in neglect this banner of social and cultural revolution. The reason behind this weakness of the social, cultural and political movement of our country, a reflection of which we find in Gandhiji and Rabindranath, is not because they personally lacked boldness or were less talented. To think so would mean to belittle the gravity of the problem. Because, it goes without saying, both of them were highly talented. The class thought they represented, which was personified in them, knowingly or unknowingly, was the thought of the Indian national bourgeoisie which became reactionary, degraded and which stood against social progress — herein precisely lies the reason of that weakness. Since our freedom movement was not a movement completely free from the influence of the contradiction between the two world outlooks in the international arena, it was historically impossible for the Indian national bourgeoisie to remain free from the influence of the ideological degeneration of bourgeois humanism and the ideological impact of conflict and contradiction based on class struggle in the international arena.

It must be remembered that in the era of capitalist revolution, which we call democratic revolution, bourgeois democratic revolution or national democratic revolution in our terminology, the ideal of bourgeois humanism was born as being conducive to that revolution itself. That is why the thoughts and ideas of humanism in those days were revolutionary. The bourgeois democratic revolution took place, overthrowing the feudal order, bringing about revolutionary changes in the means of production and the production relation based on private property and private ownership. That is why, in this sense, it was a revolution for freedom and flourishing of the individual. So on the basis of the slogans like equality, fraternity and liberty in the bourgeois sense, this revolution waged an untiring struggle against all sorts of religious bigotry and social prejudices, it pulled down the domination of the church, liberated the serfs, brought in individual freedom and emancipated womanhood. Naturally, although an ideology of the bourgeoisie, humanism was revolutionary then. By establishing the national state and democratic system in the country, ensuring individual freedom and women's emancipation, and through unprecedented technological development, modernisation of agriculture, etc., they brought about a revolutionary change in the socio-economic life.

But as a result of establishment of bourgeois class rule in the name of democracy and a social system based on private ownership over the means of production and an exploitative economic system, capitalism, after advancing a few steps started to squeeze the purchasing power through exploitation of those, whom they made free from the feudal bondage and gradually gave birth to monopoly capital. Shortly, it itself created a crisis of the market. From the very moment monopoly capitalism was given birth to it created a crisis of the market necessitating its expansion abroad. This is the inexorable law of capitalism. When it first grows, it grows with national consciousness with the object of building up the nation on the concept of humanism and democracy. When it comes, it comes with the object of establishing the national state and democratic principles in order to modernise the livelihood of the entire nation. But as it takes root, it gives birth to monopoly capital, invites its own crisis and at once lays hands on the foreign market, acquiring the character of cosmopolitanism and gives birth to imperialism. When world capitalism had reached the stage of imperialism — that is, when *the bourgeois revolution had lost its revolutionary character and turned reactionary, when it had become a hindrance to social progress, restricted scientific technological advancement and development of the productive forces generating a tendency of stagnation in the economy — from that very moment the revolutionary bourgeois humanism of the past started to compromise with religion and all sorts of prejudices*. Indian capitalism developed at such a juncture of world capitalism, likewise did the concepts of nationalism, individual liberty and humanism develop here. Since these ideas and concepts appeared in our country as part and parcel of world capitalist class concept, from the very beginning we find two parallel trends in it. Thus came the revolutionary concepts of the heyday of capitalism, that is the humanism of the period of renaissance, itself revolutionary, and also came the humanism of the period of decadent or moribund capitalism — the humanism which was trying to compromise with religion, trying to turn its face once again to racialism, leaning towards spiritualism — these outworn humanist concepts and ideals, too, came at the same time. So, both these concepts came together.

Dominant class character of the two trends of movement

The youthful, revolutionary humanism found its expression in the literary creations of Saratchandra and Nazrul. Even as Rabindranath trod a much wider span in humanist literary creations than did Saratchandra and Nazrul, the decadent, outworn humanism in the main found expression in his thoughts and ideas. So, one created Pather Dabi^[19] the other Char Adhyay^[20]. One created 'Kamal'^[21], the other 'Labanya'^[22]. One gave the clarion call : demolish what is old and obsolete — morality cannot be irrational and illogical, there is no way to remain static anywhere; if we are to step onward to the path of progress then our sense of values of life must change accordingly; you cannot stop anywhere. The other wanted to remain static, wishing a permanent abode in the safe refuge of 'eternal beauty'. So Labanya's love does not find culmination in life, because the stark reality of life is its enemy. That is why her love is platonic, a utopia. A platonic lover needs to marry someone else to do the household chores and his love, which he considers to be sacred and divine, is to be kept away in the safety of a shelf, only to be savoured in dreams. While Saratchandra believed that life's struggle and class struggles were continuously influencing man's emotions like love, affection, compassion, etc., Rabindranath, on the contrary, viewed these emotions and feelings as eternal, transcending the limits of time and space. So Saratchandra was a realist — his approach to life was to view it in the background of conflicts and contradiction. That is why he was a visionary of life and was a successful creator of rasa^[23]. So in the field of literature he expressed the flaming urge and aspiration for freedom from colonial rule and was the concrete symbol of militant patriotism. But Rabindranath, under cover of intellectual discourses and exquisite literary expressions, wanted to escape from the struggles and realities of life. So, such a great genius, a great intellect, a man of such wisdom ultimately became an escapist. Naturally, in most of his literary activities he cultivated, to put it in his own words, "flowers of trivial words". His longing for freedom and patriotism was no less deep than that of anyone else, but on the question of opposing imperialism his outlook was liberal. I am quite aware that this discussion might hurt many, because the prevailing sentiment for Rabindranath is somewhat different. But I am helpless. It is my duty to express fearlessly what I believe to be the truth. The object of this discussion is not to hurt anybody's feelings — nor it is aimed at belittling Rabindranath. A great man as he was, how could I at all undermine him and for what at that ! The main object of this discussion is to show the dominant class character of the literary thinking of Rabindranath, Nazrul and Saratchandra. Because, if we cannot correctly grasp what is the dominant class thinking in the thoughts of a poet, a litterateur or a philosopher then it is not possible either to make a scientific-historical analysis and correct evaluation of any culture, any literature or literary thinking in a class-divided society.

I have already discussed that *during the renaissance of our country, that is, in the era of freedom movement and bourgeois democratic revolution, due to historical reasons, the outlook of the national bourgeoisie became, in the main, liberal and reformist-oppositional against imperialism and feudalism. So, the revolutionary ideals of the early period of capitalist revolution was reflected in the upsurge of petty bourgeois revolution in our country. In the thoughts and ideas of Rabindranath and Gandhiji there was domination of this liberal, reformist and compromising outlook of the national bourgeoisie. But in the thoughts, ideas and activities of Saratchandra, Nazrul and Subhas Chandra was reflected this petty bourgeois revolutionism.* Those who want to follow the ideals of Rabindranath and Gandhiji and to mould their lives accordingly even today fail to see how their humanist thoughts and ideals have become

conducive to Indian capitalism. That is, while evaluating, they do not give any credence to the class character of their thoughts and ideas. Because, since the concept of 'class struggles', 'class thoughts', 'class ideas' are after all Marxian so, in their opinion, these are meaningless. To them it is the individual or individual thinking that matters and the question of class or class struggle is futile. What they do not know is that in a class-divided society — our society too is class-divided — thinking of any individual, whether we like it or not, is in reality bound to be the thinking of this or that class. If one refuses to accept this objective truth, then one may unconsciously become a victim of the class thought of that very class which one does not want to serve. I hold that in the case of Gandhiji, too, this was what had happened. So, when almost all the Marxists in a voice called Gandhiji a hypocrite, I could not agree. I was totally opposed to such an evaluation of Gandhiji. I firmly believed, and do so still, that he was an honest man and a very powerful personality too. Otherwise, how can it be explained that so many honest and dedicated people were attracted in thousands and became disciples of Gandhiji, people who were not of any ordinary stuff, but who could sacrifice their all, and about whom we have personal knowledge ! Had he been a hypocrite, he could not have drawn the whole country behind him in such a manner. Such an oversimplified explanation and analysis of the role of Gandhiji is ample proof of the theoretical and ideological bankruptcy of the leadership of the revolutionary working class movement at that time. And because of such an oversimplified analysis of the class character of Gandhiji we failed to free the country and the people from the overall ideological influence of the Gandhian leadership. In our attempt to denigrate him in this way we have only degraded ourselves. But we could not tarnish the image of Gandhiji, even a bit. My opposition to the Gandhian philosophy is no less critical than that of these Marxists. True, the Gandhian ideology pushed the country to ruination, Indian capitalism got the chance to consolidate itself. 'But Gandhiji acted deliberately as an agent of the capitalist class' — I consider such an analysis oversimplified and erroneous. In my opinion, with his fanciful ideas and beliefs — since he spoke of the welfare of the people in general terms without any specific reference to class, even went to deny the existence of class struggle — Gandhiji, in fact, reflected, unknowingly of course, the class interest of Indian capitalism in his thoughts and activities. With its class instinct the capitalist class could feel it very easily. That is why they backed him, blessed him and extended help in every way. The capitalists correctly understood that in him they had nothing to lose, rather they had much to gain. Yet despite being such a talented personality Gandhiji could not identify this class character of his mental make-up.

If they are not class conscious, many a genius may undergo such an experience — and such was the case with Gandhiji too. Say, for example, most of you probably hold that you do not reflect any class thinking or class interest in your thoughts, conducts and activities. The thoughts and activities of every individual, at every moment, knowingly or unknowingly help this or that class. If you are class conscious you will be able to know it, otherwise it happens beyond your knowledge. I hope an example will illustrate it better. The father in a middle class family, finding his son engaged in politics, would advise : 'First look after your own interest, take the responsibility of the family. If every individual takes the responsibility of his own family, builds a happy home — this alone would do good to the country; for, a nation is but made up of individual families!' If the father is a little more progressive and possesses a little patriotic feeling then he would at best say : 'It is good to serve the country no doubt. But first establish yourself and then go in for it. After all, everyone is for himself'. But if this gentleman loses his job for some reason and has to approach the union to get himself reinstated then he comes to

learn that it is impossible to get back one's job by fighting alone. And we would hear him say just the opposite of what he had said before. He would then start talking about the necessity of a united struggle against the injustice meted out to him. Because, defeat or victory, come what may, it is necessary to protest and struggle against injustice unitedly. Naturally, he would then say : 'united we stand, divided we fall' or 'win or lose there is nothing to be ashamed of'. Do they know what makes him invoke these two contradictory sayings current for a long time in our country to suit their particular purpose, which class interest is served by this and how ? Most of them do not know, nor do they care to think about it. Otherwise they could have easily understood that the saying 'united we stand, divided we fall', or 'win or lose there is nothing to be ashamed of' came into existence during the struggle against exploitation and injustice and is conducive to the interest of the united struggle of all the oppressed people — the struggle without which development or progress of society was impossible and to resist injustice was impossible. That is why it stands for social progress. The progressives, the exploited class created this proverb from the experience of their struggle.

The reactionaries, the vested interest, who do not want to change society any more, for their own class interest want that people remain disunited. In order that people cannot unite and can be made self-centred, the reactionaries propagate another idea, they develop another mentality in society, that is 'everyone for himself. Each one of you should look to your own interest — society is but made of individuals!' So it is clear that these two sayings are reflecting two antagonistic class outlooks and interests. Yet, how many of us are conscious of this ? Most people do not know even that their conduct and ideas at every moment are being patterned by this or that philosophy in society. The way everyone talks, the ethics one reflects in one's behaviour — these all are being influenced every moment by the philosophical thinking prevailing in society through one's prejudice, and forces of habit. That is why, even if unknowingly, every individual's thoughts and activities at every moment are being influenced by this or that philosophy. And in a class-divided society each and every philosophy is bound to be a class philosophy. So we are not free from class influence in our thoughts. It is true even for a philosopher. That is why, once I observed — Gandhism is a sublimatic transformation of the bourgeois class instinct, originating through a process of fusion of the sense of bourgeois moral values and the fear complex of revolution of Gandhi. That is to say, since he contemplated the welfare of all people in a class-divided society — that is welfare of both the classes at the same time — denying the law of development and progress of society, the appeal of the bourgeois moral values created in him a great compassion for the common people on the one hand, while on the other the fear complex of the bourgeoisie about revolution unconsciously worked in him at the same time. As a result, even though he thought of the welfare of the common men with sincerity and honesty, the ideology he gave birth to, Gandhism, in reality served the capitalist class interest and is still doing so.

Gandhiji used to believe that the root cause of exploitation, tyranny and all other evils of the human society was greed, meanness, cowardice, and above all, want of love of man for man. So, he thought that the solution to all these problems was possible if all the men of society could be imbued with a spirit of 'magnanimity' and 'moral courage', with the ideals of 'love for man' and 'dauntless outlook of *satyagraha*'^[24]. Unlike the Christians, he started from the premise that man was 'originally good'. But the satan has eclipsed this inherent good in man. As a result, exploitation, tyranny, oppression, avarice, meanness, etc., have grown rampant in society.

Clearly, thinking as this, is quite ahistorical. The fusion of spiritualism and the humanist values of life is responsible for such a confusion of Gandhiji. I would like to say here only a word or two on the concept of god found in idealist philosophies. You can easily verify that belief in god generally warrants belief in satan. You know why ? Because, belief in god automatically leads to the conclusion that god is responsible for everything, god contemplates everything and thinking is the contemplation of god. Then it follows automatically that whatever I do, whatever is done by a thief or, say, the Birlas^[25] — those who retrench or who even loot — can they at all be held responsible ? For, it is god who makes them act that way — 'god contemplates everything and thinking is the contemplation of god'. Thus belief in the existence of the almighty god, through logical deduction, leads to such a ludicrous proposition — to get rid of which necessitates the recognition of satan as an anti-thesis of god. Can god be held responsible for all these mischiefs ? Then how do these occur ? Well, it is satan who is responsible, and none else. So, god alone is not all-powerful, we should also conceive of an equally powerful satan as an anti-thesis of god to explain this fallacy. So, as there is god, there is satan too. Queer indeed ! God does not possess such power enabling him to save his sons from the clutches of satan ! While it is the responsibility of the sons of god to save themselves from the clutches of satan the credit of their salvation goes to god himself. What a funny proposition ! Being a believer in an almost similar concept of god, Gandhiji too had to take the position that the inherent good in man is being masked by satan. So this trouble !

Exploitative social system begets greed in man not the other way round

Had Gandhiji scientifically traced the history of gradual development of the human brain since man's first appearance, and of development of his intellect and of society, if he had not held that man was the best creation of god, or that the human mind and its capacity to think was through which god contemplated, if he had not placed undue emphasis on his personal beliefs and convictions, had he tried to understand the development of human thoughts, ideas and morality, the history of progress and degradation of humanity on the anvil of science and history, he would have realized easily that greed, meanness or the mentality to exploit did not grow in society because the inherent good in man had been eclipsed by satan. He would have realized that it was only after the emergence of an exploitative social system, that is, only after the appearance of the material condition in society necessary for exploitation, that satan did appear in man's mind. It was not greed that created the exploitative social system, rather, it was the exploitative social system which begot greed in man.

Turning a few pages of the history of primitive human society will bear me out. What do we find from the little history available about clans when men lived in primitive society ? Were they civilized like man today ? Were they humanists ? They had no knowledge of the ideal of Rabindranath, nor did they care about the theory of non-violence and *satyagraha* of Gandhiji with which we are acquainted today. Then their mental development was almost at the stage of animals. There was only this difference with animals that whereas the activities of animals are always conditioned by reflex action, that is conditioned reflex and unconditioned reflex, and they are completely subjugated by natural laws, the human brain on the contrary possesses the 'power of translation' acquired owing to its more developed and complex structure. As a result, in the activities of the human brain, in its interaction with the objective material world works a process which starts from sensation to motor action, and through the process of translation develops,

first, perceptual knowledge and then conceptual knowledge. Save and except this difference in the brain physiology, the behaviour of the primitive clans was almost at the stage of animals. Over a piece of meat they used to bite each other, scuffle and fight among themselves just like animals — just like a pack of street dogs. Yet the clans did not break down and society still did not get divided into classes. In spite of the primitive stage of mental development and behaviour and constant tussles and fights, the mentality to exploit or the mentality to extort profit by exploiting the labour of others did not grow in the primitive clan society. Human society did not witness such mentality till stable property, which could be preserved and increased, was created, or so long as the method of engaging man's labour for continuous development of production and extorting profit out of it was not found out. Introduction of cattle breeding and agriculture changed the mode of production and created stable property. With the creation of stable property and introduction of cattle breeding and agriculture in society, which for the first time could engage human labour for production — at the early stage of development of such production — there was constant contradiction between scarcity of production and constantly growing human necessity which, in fact, led to the idea of exploitation. The heads of clans found that due to equitable distribution of clan property amongst its members their own necessities were not well-met. So, if they could become owners of the clan properties by force and turn the rest of members into their slaves, then by engaging the latter's labour in production they could get profit, increase their property and live in comfort. These heads of clans and the physically stronger ones subjugated other members by force, made them slaves, turned all the clan properties into their personal properties. Thus, the collective properties of the clans created by collective labour of all the members were gradually transformed into private properties. Not only was the collective clan property transformed into private property, with the advent of private property the matriarchal society broke down and for the first time patriarchal society emerged which still continues in full force. Of course, this did not happen overnight. With change in the mode of production, that is, with the introduction of cultivation, since womenfolk had to bear children, it put a handicap on them for undertaking the necessary physical strain and thus they lagged behind menfolk who by taking its advantage established their domination by force, revolting against womenfolk. There is hidden, in the annals of mankind, a very tragic history of the protracted struggle for dominance between menfolk and womenfolk. In this new situation, after the establishment of private property, even though womenfolk were completely suppressed by menfolk, they did not accept this without opposition. So, in order to make the womenfolk accept this domination, the necessary sense of morality, ideals were gradually introduced to suit the need of the patriarchal society based on private property and gradually womenfolk became accustomed to these codes, principles, sense of morality, customs and ideals of the patriarchal society. And in the course of time, womenfolk too became private properties of menfolk. The condition grew such later on that we find women themselves standing against their own freedom. This short history reveals that despite paucity of production the mentality to earn profit or to exploit did not grow in society till stable property had appeared and the method to step up production and increase profit by engaging human labour was devised. Whereas the savages of the clan communist society despite tremendous want did not know how to exploit, yet today's civilized men, the humanists and the Gandhiites are failing to free themselves from this mentality to exploit, from greed and meanness — their pious wishes, ideals and exhortations for the same notwithstanding. Why ? The very capitalist social system — the capitalist mode of production and production relation is the root cause of all sorts of oppression, tyranny, social injustice and it is again this very system that is continually giving birth to these mentalities and attitudes in

society. So, even if we accept for the sake of argument that through personal endeavour and after much persuasion some people are freed, even if temporarily, from such mentalities, we shall find, by the time a batch of people is reformed, millions more in society developing such mentalities as an inevitable outcome of this exploitative capitalist order. Naturally, this is a kind of fetishism. It is clear that in the line suggested by Gandhiji the problem, therefore, cannot be solved. What is more, this is helping perpetuate, indirectly and in a subtle way, this exploitative capitalist order — it did so in the past and is doing so at present as well. It is all the more dangerous in the field of ideological movement since it is helping perpetuate exploitation in a subtle and indirect manner. For, unless the people are thoroughly class conscious, they will fail to realize its real character.

That no thought and ideal of man is eternal and absolute, the material condition for their development appears first in society upon which these grow — since Gandhiji failed to realize this truth, he was unable to understand the law of progress and development of society as well as that of class struggle. That the natural culmination of class struggle in a capitalist society was in the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state machine and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Gandhiji was unable to realize this truth as well. So we find that with change of social system, the mode of production and way of life, men's mentalities and ideas change — ideas and attitude grow centring round new productive system and production relation in the new social order. Thus human society, since class division, changed from one form to another in the course of development and progress of class struggle which has reached its extreme and final stage in the capitalist society today. The sharp conflict of ideas gradually manifesting itself in the field of ideological-cultural movement is nothing but the reflection of the acute class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in our country.

I have already pointed out in my discussion that since Gandhiji was not class conscious the thoughts and ideas of the national bourgeoisie unknowingly dominated his thinking in the main. Naturally, the ideology he preached is a fusion of religion and Indian traditionalism, and the bourgeois humanist thoughts and ideas; and the method or struggle he followed, in reality, helped consolidate ultimately the interest of the capitalist class, despite his best wishes to do good to the people and the country — and all these happened against his will and without his knowledge. So, his was the condition of an affectionate but superstitious mother believing that her sick child would die if administered a foreign medicine. To save its life she would be having to please her god through rigorous fasting, devotion and self-sacrifice, for she believed that her god had become displeased with her, her soul had been polluted — it required to be purified, and her moral character to be raised through fasting and self-renunciation. By this example I tried to bring home the fact that whatever his belief, Gandhiji's path was wrong — he could not realize that in the ultimate his path was destined to serve the bourgeois class interest. Once Romain Rolland asked Gandhiji: 'Suppose, this belief of yours that through the ideal of *satyagraha* you would be able to persuade the owners to come on to your path, the *satyagrahees* would be able to attract them by their ideal and examples — for, you think that the owners too are after all human beings, supposing your effort does not bear fruit, does not stand the test of history, and the owners do not accept your path, what will you do then?' So far as I remember, if I am not mistaken, Gandhiji said: 'If they do not come and my experiment fails, I shall remain with the people and shall take to the path of bloody revolution'. Since through his lifelong and arduous struggle Gandhiji could not conclude the question whether the owners would accept his theory,

and since he was not in a position either to conclude that he had ultimately failed, it was not possible in his whole life to stand by revolution and the people. Because, there can be no end to such experiments. And I have already told you that this is a kind of fetishism. Clearly, these beliefs that through strict discipline, self-renunciation and ideal of *satyagraha* the moral character of a people or a society has to be uplifted and all injustices have to be courageously faced through this path of non-violent struggle — all these theories are complementary to the bourgeois class interest. This theory deceived Gandhiji himself as also the country and the people. The moral character is to be uplifted — we have no quarrel with Gandhiji over it. The contradiction lies in determining the nature and character of morality, in finding out which sense of morality in this era of the final stage of class struggle is conducive to social progress and complements the struggle for emancipation of the working class and the exploited millions. The contradiction lies actually here and in this point. While Gandhiji believed that man's morality and sense of values were independent of classes and class struggle, we consider, on the contrary, that these are all class based. In this connection I would like to emphasize that those 'big' revolutionaries who are trying to completely denounce or belittle the question of morality under cover of revolutionary verbiage have degraded themselves and dealt severe blows to the backbone of revolution. Such confusions on the question of morality prevail in the revolutionary movement even today; we have no truck with those 'revolutionaries'.

Crisis in morality is the main problem before the cultural and revolutionary movement of today

So, the problem facing those who are engaged in the progressive cultural movement today, who want to develop revolutionary movements, who are determined to pursue a relentless struggle against the bourgeois ideals and values of life, is the crisis of morality all around in the country. Families are breaking up, family ties are falling apart. You want your son to grow into a man of worth, but you find that he has made Raj Kapoor^[26] his idol or a local *mastan*^[27] his *guru*^[28]. Very often I hear these days this word *guru*. *Gurus* are sprouting everywhere. Think, you engaged yourself all your life in looking after your family for the sake of your son and shunned politics because you thought politics would not do any good. What a dream and expectation you wove in your mind while you set about rearing up your son and daughter ! But you find your son belying your expectations. So has your daughter. If the son is after Raj Kapoor as his idol, the daughter has become a fan of some film actress, each becoming a type by him or herself. Why is it happening like this ? There is no happiness today even in love ! What a dream you had when you loved her so dearly ! But that love, too, is gradually drying up, and you feel something is wanting somewhere, something is missing. I can say all this because I tried to know our society, I tried to understand our people. Looking at faces around one can notice that they carry within them a deep pain, an agony and constantly at that. What is the cause of the increase in incidence of schizophrenia and such mental disorders among the people ? Even in affluence there is a suppressed pain, as if something is missing. That is why people are obsessed with anyhow earning money and they are running after pleasure and luxury and try to warm themselves up in drinking sprees at night clubs. There is every sign of restlessness in the psychic state of the whole nation. Nowhere there is peace. Can we call it a sign of health ? Many of you seem to think that if you get enough money nothing will be wanting and peace will be restored in the family. Taking a closer look you could discover that despite affluence there is no peace in many families. Otherwise, how is it that moneyed men are exciting their nerves for nothing in drinking

sprees and dances in night clubs till next morning. The fact is that there is no peace at home actually. So they think : what is the use of going home early ? Maybe the wife has gone out with someone else for pleasure to another night club ! This is the state of affairs with many in the high society, the society to belong to which many of you have become crazy and are trying hard for it day and night. Even sparing a cursory look you will find that more and more among the educated and the intellectuals an indifferent attitude towards social problems is growing. People are getting increasingly self-centred and ego-centric. The influence of the bourgeois idea of eternal and pure aesthetics, or the idea of a pure culture is gradually breeding an escapist mentality, a tendency to live in a world of fantasy, turning away from life and its struggles. And pressed hard in the complex struggle of this phase of intense class struggle and in today's complexity of life, this state of mind is leading to schizophrenia. Many young men and women are nowadays living in such a dreamy world of fantasy. If you ask doctors, they will confirm that, thanks to so much of 'progressive' movements, the moral standard of the people has been elevated today to such 'commendable' heights that madness or abnormality among young men and women is continually on the increase ! The number of schizophrenic patients or of split personalities is increasing every day. People are turning away and fleeing from the reality. What one imagines to be the source of happiness does not turn out to be so in reality. One can have joy and happiness only in dream, in illusion, and the life of reality has become a drab and prosaic affair shorn of all joys. Why are all these happening ? *Whereas the appeal of the old religious moral values has long been completely exhausted and the bourgeois humanist moral values too are almost exhausted, and since the revolutionary ideology and new moral values of the proletariat are yet to influence the political-cultural movement and the social life adequately, a vacuum has engulfed the field of ideology and morality. That is the root cause of this all-out crisis.*

Due to dominance of the decadent, compromising humanist thoughts in the freedom movement the tasks of cultural and social revolution were neglected

But this all-out crisis in morality has not yet assumed such proportions among the people in the lowest rung of the society — the workers, agricultural labourers, poor peasants and share-croppers whose want is most acute and who live in dire poverty. Because, the appeal of the old religious values and the moral values of bourgeois humanism are not yet completely exhausted in them. It is still working to an extent. But if we cannot immediately develop in the country an atmosphere of new moral values conducive to the revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants by widening and strengthening the proletarian cultural movement, then the crisis of morality will pervade their life, too, and will cripple the revolutionary struggles of the workers and peasants from within. Because, the gradual intensification of class struggle, on the one hand, and this vacuum in the field of ideology and morality, on the other, are already leading to disintegration of whatever moral standard they possessed so long.

I have already referred to two trends in the bourgeois humanist thoughts prevailing in our country during the freedom movement, that is in the period of national resurgence. One was the trend which made a fusion of the humanist ideology, values of life and the Indian traditionalism and spiritualism. As a result, it was a crippled, escapist, decadent humanism, and against imperialism and feudalism it was liberal in attitude — compromising and reformist-oppositional. But it was this trend which was dominant in the political and cultural life during the entire period of freedom movement of our country. And in the political and cultural fields this trend was led

by Gandhiji and Rabindranath respectively. There was another trend beside this, the trend of youthful, fervent and revolutionary humanism of the early stage of bourgeois revolution which manifested itself in this country, as I already said, in the advent of petty bourgeois revolutionism and was, in the main, agnostic and secular in outlook and uncompromising with imperialism, feudalism and religion. The then revolutionaries led this trend in the political movement, and in the cultural field this was led by Saratchandra and Nazrul. This truth will be apparent to all who are aware of Gandhiji's closeness with Rabindranath and of Saratchandra's with Subhas Chandra and the revolutionaries of Bengal. *It was due to dominance of the decadent, compromising humanist thoughts in the freedom movement during its entire period that we failed to incorporate the tasks of cultural and social revolution in the programme of political revolution. And this was the main weakness of the entire freedom movement. Even though this compromising trend could not be effectively opposed in the political field, in the spheres of social and cultural activities, however, Saratchandra and Nazrul tried utmost to hold aloft the much neglected and discarded banner of cultural and social revolution. Although this attempt could not meet with complete success because the leadership was in the hands of the national bourgeoisie, it can never be denied that amidst the many weaknesses of the freedom movement this was the bolder trend.* Encompassing both these aspects of weakness and boldness, the new standard of morality which developed on the basis of the humanist ideals and sense of values and inspired the people in their struggle against the imperialist exploitation as well as against all sorts of superstitions, religious blindness and bigotry of the feudal society. Because, in those days bourgeois humanism was conducive to the country's freedom and social progress. Since the attainment of national freedom, with establishment of the bourgeois state and consolidation of capitalism, the bourgeois humanist ideals and sense of values of those days have been reduced today to a privilege in the hands of the ruling capitalist class. In other words, the bourgeois humanist ideals, sense of values and concept of morality have long since lost their progressive character and have been transformed into an ideological weapon in the hands of the exploiting capitalist class to mislead the toiling people and suppress their movements. But there is nothing to be surprised at ! An ideal which at one time develops in the interest of social progress as being one conducive to the struggle of the exploited class, later on, at a different historical stage of development of production, that is, in the changed condition of class struggle, and in the perspective of newer necessities of the struggle for emancipation of the exploited class, it gets reduced to a privilege in the hands of the exploiters, losing its earlier progressive character. In the particular historical stage of development of production, that is, in a given stage of class struggle when the struggle against imperialism and feudalism was the main political battle of the exploited people of our country, the ideological struggle between bourgeois humanism and scientific socialism of the working class was, in the main, a fight for establishment of the hegemony of the working class over the people in the anti-imperialist movement. Even though the struggle between bourgeois humanism and scientific socialism of the working class continued in the ideological sphere for establishment of hegemony, it must be kept in mind that in the context of an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal movement the bourgeois humanist values had not wholly lost their progressive character. But today, in a different condition of development of production, that is, in the particular historical stage when the contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie has become the main or the principal contradiction among the various social contradictions and when the interest of the struggle for emancipation of the working class from the bourgeois rule and exploitation has historically become inseparably linked up with the interest of progress of the entire society, bourgeois humanism, its sense of values and concept of morality have not only

lost their earlier progressive character but have become the main obstacle today to the ideological-cultural struggle for emancipation of workers and peasants. So, in the changed circumstances today if you try to stick to the height to which Rabindranath, Saratchandra and Nazrul once elevated the standard of morality and sense of values in our country, then, as I have already said, that will pull you down continuously. In this particular historical stage of development of production we are all placed in the midst of such complexity of class struggle where there is the problem of retrenchment, on the one hand, and at the same time the problem to keep the industries running; the problem of security of service for the workers, on the one hand, and the problem of periodical recession on the other. So, let alone keeping up the pace of industrial development uninterrupted, we are faced with the problem of even keeping the already existing industries running. There is the necessity to modernise and mechanise agriculture, on the one hand, but that will create the problem of providing employment to lakhs of rural unemployed who will become jobless at one stroke as a result. All these problems are more and more exposing the ugly face of the all-out crisis of the capitalist system and civilization. So, the problem before social progress today is the problem of emancipation of the working class and other exploited people from the grip and tentacles of capitalist exploitation and oppression, that is, the problem of freeing production and the productive forces from the shackles of capitalism and along with this the problem of freeing epistemology, science, technology, art, literature — in a word, man's entire cultural world — from the profit-making motive and the bondage of capitalism.

So, today's main struggle for progress in the fields of both material production and spiritual production is the struggle for establishment of the hegemony of the proletariat in place of the hegemony of the bourgeoisie — the struggle to establish proletarian democracy and proletarian dictatorship in place of bourgeois democracy and bourgeois dictatorship.

In such a complex and completely new situation the mentality to still stick to the bourgeois humanist ideals and values of life is creating confusions on the question of how to maintain the standard of moral character and what is proper and morally justifiable. So, in reality, what we practise in the name of protecting the interest of the country's industries is to sacrifice the interest of the workers at the feet of the owners. And we try to rationalise it thus that for a greater cause we have to accept many losses — we have to bear happily many petty losses. That is why all the present-day humanists, however honest they may be personally — those who are not yet imbued with the proletarian revolutionary ideology, that is, those who have not been able to elevate themselves from the stage of a humanist to that of a communist — since they are trying to live with these exhausted humanist values they are becoming pragmatic in their approach on the plea of practical consideration and gradually, following this course and rationalising these pragmatic approaches, they are unknowingly degrading themselves morally, and are giving birth to all sorts of political opportunism at the same time. What a tragic fall of honest men ! Look at the present-day humanists of renown and you will see how these humanists, ardent disciples of Rabindranath, conveniently keep themselves aloof, without the slightest compunction, from the legitimate struggles of the people against exploitation, and how they are keeping themselves in blissful comfort in pursuit of pure culture and aesthetics. And they constitute the brand of present-day successors of Rabindranath, Saratchandra and Nazrul ! They observe Rabindranath's birthday with great fanfare. Yet we do not find them by the people's side in their struggle against all sorts of social injustice and economic, political and social exploitation. But Rabindranath said

: Let your hatred burn those like straw who do injustice and who tolerate injustice. But do we find any reflection of its understanding in their life ? Where is that anguish and burning in them against exploitation, oppression and constant humiliation perpetrated upon the human soul in society ? Are these robbing them of their night's sleep ? They do not take part as fighters in any of the people's struggles, yet they are the interpreters of Rabindranath's thoughts today. To them the values upheld by Rabindranath, Saratchandra and Nazrul are not instruments of struggle — not the instruments with which to fight injustice. Rather, these have been reduced to mere privileges with them, only a means to pose themselves as intellectuals.

Two extreme and opposite poles of reaction among the humanists in the face of decay of humanist values

Those of you engaging yourselves in organising proletarian cultural movement, will have to wage untiringly an uncompromising struggle today against the bourgeois humanist thoughts and ideology. You must clearly show the people the true picture of various distortions and deviations, that have set in, in the humanist ideology and sense of values; and what a sorry pass they have come to being faced with all-out acute crisis of capitalism. In view of the fact that the old bourgeois humanist values are of no avail today, two totally opposite reactions are discernible among the humanists. One has led to the emergence of fascism and the other to the existentialism of Sartre — the two extreme and opposite poles of reaction found among the humanists in this most acute stage of class struggle in the twentieth century. It may sound surprising to you. But if you look into the history of rise of fascism, that is, if you judge the economic, political and cultural aspects of its emergence, it will be clear that the *humanist mental make-up, from fear complex of revolution, has laid the ideological-cultural foundation of fascism by making a peculiar fusion of science and spiritualism in order to organize counter-revolutionary national uprisings against the working class revolution.* Philosophically and culturally, fascism is a peculiar fusion of spiritualism and science. And for this very reason, long back I had defined Gandhism as the ideological prop of the Indian fascist culture. It must be always borne in mind that in no country was fascism established under the leadership of the conservative section of the bourgeoisie. Because, to establish all-out fascism the necessary conditions include forging unity on the basis of national jingoism, that is, organising counter-revolutionary national upsurge against revolution, concentrating the total economic power of capitalism, minimising the internal contradiction among the capitalists as much as possible, gradual drive towards bringing about a coalescence of the state and monopoly capital by adopting social democratic measures like nationalisation and planning, and thereby making the state virtually subservient to monopoly capital in the aggregate interest of capitalism; and along with all these economic measures, in the political and cultural fields it is necessary to bring about national unity and rally the entire country behind the bourgeoisie in favour of counter-revolution, using the smokescreen of socialism and national traditional and spreading the venom of national chauvinism. It is impossible for the conservative section of the bourgeoisie to accomplish these two tasks at the same time — only that section of the bourgeoisie can accomplish it about whom the people have the illusion that they are progressive. This so-called progressive section of the national bourgeoisie smuggle into the political field ideas like 'national socialism', 'democratic socialism', 'socialist pattern of society', or 'national communism', 'radical socialism', etc., etc. All-out fascism strikes root under cover of these so-called and seemingly radical ideas, programmes and slogans by forging a counter-revolutionary national unity, given favourable circumstances. This

is in short how *a section of the humanists is helping fascism develop in this phase of all-out crisis of capitalism by making a fusion of science and spiritualism, on the one hand, and a compromise of the humanist ideals and values with the religious values and national traditional, on the other.*

At the opposite pole, the bourgeois humanism of today has culminated in Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism. Since that trend of bourgeois humanism which refuses to compromise with religion and traditionalism under any circumstances whatsoever, and which still carries the old mental make-up and is thoroughly opposed to the concept of all sorts of a *priori* values, could not free itself completely from the influence of the bourgeois humanist thinking, although the bourgeois humanist values of the early period of bourgeois revolution have been completely exhausted and become obsolete — just like Christian and other religious values — the bourgeois humanists belonging to this trend failed to grasp the law of emergence, development and withering away of classes and also the law of gradual development of man's spiritual world and ideals. And because of this, it was not possible for them to become communists transcending the stage of humanism; and Sartre's existentialism has appeared as a culmination of this trend. Under cover of crass materialism, Sartre's existentialism is simply chewing the cud of bourgeois idealism. That is why, *Being and Nothingness* is the main theme of his philosophic thought. Although, later on, he himself admitted that just by this conception of Being and Nothingness, that is, coming into being and going out of being, it is not possible to coordinate all the activities of this material world and establish a 'system of discipline.' So, after a vain attempt to establish a new philosophy by writing hundreds of pages on this theory of *'Being and Nothingness* he had to admit that *dialectical materialism is the only philosophy which can build a system of discipline' in a comprehensive way by studying all the phenomena of this material world in contradiction, that is in struggle and unity at the same time.* Sartre, like Feuerbach, failed to realize the objective process of emergence of idea from matter. So, even while accepting dialectical materialism as the only correct philosophy, Sartre had been following the bourgeois idealist outlook and thinking, opposed to dialectical materialist outlook and thinking, and was unable to realize the objective process through which idea developed from matter itself as also the dialectical interrelation between matter and idea. And thus it was not possible for him to realize that idea was a product of matter, and since any thought or ideology actually represented a particular ideological category which was but bound up with a particular historical phase in the development of production, so personality, individuality, individual thinking and individual realization were after all spiritual production, being the superstructure of material production in a particular historical phase of development of production — this truth was not comprehended by him. Feuerbach and Sartre recognise the existence of contradiction and conflict between human thought and environment. Though both of them do not consider idea an entity independent of matter and though both are opposed to the Hegelian concept of 'absolute idea' they failed to correctly grasp that the material condition appears before the appearance of *any thought and that the limit of this material condition is the determinant of the limit of freedom of thought.* Although both of them generally accepted all the conclusions of science and history, the concept of existence of thinking as a virtually absolute, independent entity greatly influenced their thought process. That is why, even after recognizing the influence of environment on human thought, both of them were greatly influenced by the bourgeois idealist philosophy in their thought process. So, following the same idealistic process of thinking at two different stages of development of capitalist production these two philosophers formulated two apparently contradictory ideologies. One is Feuerbach's humanism of the heyday of capitalist revolution,

and the other is Sartre's existentialism in the days of acute crisis of moribund capitalism. During the early stage of capitalist revolution the sense of values and concept of manhood grew in society as a social thinking conducive to the newer needs of material production in that particular historical stage of social progress and development of the individual; and Feuerbach's humanism was nothing but a personification of that social thinking in him. But though he himself laid the philosophical foundation of dialectical materialism he considered these humanist concepts of morality, ethics and values eternal and absolute and could not completely free his thought process from the influence of the concept of idea as an absolute independent entity. Sartre, too, because he could not free himself from the influence of the bourgeois humanist thinking about individual freedom, right and liberty, and about the existence of thinking as an absolute, free entity, failed to realize how and why and following which law the very lofty humanist values and ethics of one day have been reduced to dogmas and have become privileges in the hands of the exploiter class today in this phase of moribund capitalism and why the humanists, who one day sang the song of individual right, liberty and freedom, are curtailing individual freedom every day, under this pretext or that, on the plea of reasonable restrictions, etc., just for the sake of the bourgeois rule and exploitation. Sartre's concept of individual freedom, existence of the individual and individuality is in reality the bourgeois concept of individuality based on private property. Sartre was not able to realize that *his concept of individual freedom and individuality, even his concept of 'freedom of choice' was intimately bound up with private property, that is, these concepts were not free from the private property mental complex.* Moreover, the idealist bourgeois individual psychology too, exerted a great influence on Sartre's concept of existentialism. In a society there is separate existence of each and every individual. The existentialists consider this to be the existence of individuals as absolutely free entities, ignoring the way they are bound in time and space. That is why, they are believers in 'absolute, free existence' of individuality. So, whatever effect the behaviour and conduct of an individual may produce on himself or society, the individual's 'freedom of choice' could by no means be interfered with for that. For, according to Sartre, 'individuals are condemned to freedom'. What a beautiful expression of an ultra-conception or ultra-sense of freedom of individual liberty ! But this concept of absolute freedom of individuality is ahistorical and unscientific, its literary value notwithstanding. Because, such an expression of Sartre reflects the idea as if an element of intellect which is not a product of matter, neither supra-matter nor completely dependent upon matter, is ingrained in matter from eternity in the form of an element of thinking. Although Sartre did not admit it, yet analysing his concept one is bound to conclude that it is this idea of existence of such an absolute, free entity of individuality, despite its being in the midst of conflict and contradiction with the environment, that has led to this concept of freedom of choice of Sartre's. Moreover, another point should be noted here. When Sartre, who raised his voice so strongly against bourgeois morality and ethics, says that 'individuals are condemned to freedom' in order to establish his concept of 'freedom of choice' and explain the 'free entity of individuality,' the process at work in deriving this concept is in reality influenced by the sense of ethics and morality of bourgeois jurisprudence. It is, however, surprising that despite his fine power of analysis he failed to notice it. Otherwise, it could not be unknown to him that according to the ethics of bourgeois jurisprudence, once condemned a man cannot be condemned again for the same offence.

So, we find that however strongly he might have voiced his opposition to the bourgeois humanist morals and ethics, Sartre failed to free himself completely from the influence of the

bourgeois concept of individuality and individual freedom which bourgeois democratic revolution produced. And since he could not free himself from the bourgeois concept of 'free entity of individuality', he failed to notice the new values of life, morality and ethics which were gradually developing within society centring round the anti-capitalist revolutionary struggle of the working class, after the bourgeois morals and values of life had been reduced to privileges in the hands of the reactionary bourgeoisie of today. On the question of individual freedom and individuality, the behaviour and conduct of the humanists of today proved to be such a bitter and shocking experience with him that in his reaction to it he developed this ultra-conception of individual freedom. Witnessing the degeneration of bourgeois individuality, a product of bourgeois revolution, and with the burial of all concepts of *a priori* values and of belief in god and in absolute truth brought about by modern science, Sartre considered that the question of morality itself was irrelevant and meaningless. So he thought that not only were the bourgeois humanist moral values and ethics erroneous, just like the Christian moral values and ethics, but, on the same logic, the communist values of life, sense of ethics and morality too were dogmas to him like those of Christian morality. But what rationale could there be in denying emergence of newer and newer concepts of values in life, ethics and morality — following burial of all concepts of *a priori* values, denying the concepts of ethics and morality that were developing in society on the basis of the real necessities of development of individual and social progress at a particular historical phase of development of production? Moreover, I have already pointed out that despite accepting dialectical materialism as the only correct philosophy, on the question of how idea first came into being out of matter and as an outcome of a complex material process and on the question of dialectical relationship between matter and idea, Sartre had been following the bourgeois idealist concept and outlook. And since he could not realize the proper significance of the scientific theories like the 'theory of relativity', 'particle theory' and 'scientific law of probability', he was unable to accept that *truth meant concrete truth*. But since according to modern science *all truths are relative truths*, it is clear that Sartre minimised the significance of the scientifically verified particular truths and the process of arriving at the general truth in a particular field through the process of generalisation of all *particular scientific truths*. In his opinion, since all concepts of absolute truth have been proved erroneous with the discovery of all the theories of modern science, these particular truths of science have no special significance at all. That is why he saw no necessity to develop a 'general guide to action' by establishing general truths in particular respective fields through the process of generalisation of particular truths at a particular phase of development of production, that is, at a particular historical phase of development of human civilization. Since, in science all conclusions are probable, so he put this question: 'Could science establish any truth?' From this it is clear that he had totally failed to recognise the fact that the *'law of probability' of modern science did not counter-pose the 'law of determinism', rather it freed the concept of 'determinism' from the preconception of predeterminism and made it clearer and more elaborate*. I would like to discuss another point in this connection. Today many Marxists and communists even do not realize that according to the dialectical materialist method of analysis the general truth established through generalisation of particular truths of science is in reality a particular category of understanding of that general truth in a given condition. As a result, they consider these general truths of science and the concepts of dialectical materialism as absolute truths. For example, the general truths revealed by dialectical materialism — like 'things in themselves', 'matter is a philosophical category', 'existence of objective reality independently of consciousness', 'contradiction within contradiction', etc., and the general truths of science like 'infinity', 'conservation of mass and

energy,' law of determinism', 'law of causality', etc., are all considered by them 'absolute truths'. One comes across similar confusions in the latest Dictionary of Philosophy on scientific terminology published in the Soviet Union. Truth has been defined in it as both 'absolute' and 'relative'. *But the understanding of these general truths cannot remain static, it will either be growing and developing constantly or will become inadequate if it cannot grow and develop keeping pace with the changing material condition. So, the understanding of all the general truths is a particular category of understanding of all the general truths in a given condition. So, no category of particular realization and concept about general truth is absolute.*

Absolute and ultra concept of freedom of the individual forms the basis of Sartre's existentialism

Although Sartre, at a later stage, accepted dialectical materialism as the correct philosophy, but owing to the influence of bourgeois idealism on the question of existence of absolute, free entity of the individual, even in the midst of conflict and contradiction with the environment, he, too, just like Feuerbach, failed to realize the historical significance of emancipation of the individual. Could he have freed himself from the fanciful idea of existence of the individual with absolute freedom of choice, he could realize easily that the revolutionary change that took place in the productive system through the bourgeois revolution based on private ownership of the means of production, was in fact the first organized attempt to free man from the coercion of the state and from all sorts of social injustice, and it gave birth to the ideology and sense of values of humanism centring round the bourgeois class concept of individual freedom and individuality, etc. So, the humanist concept of individual freedom, individuality or liberty born of the bourgeois revolution can, under no circumstances, remain free from the concept of 'free entity of the individual' and the private property mental complex. He could have understood why, in this era of moribund capitalism, humanism had been reduced to a privilege in the hands of the reactionary ruling class, becoming an instrument to curtail the individual's liberty instead of being an instrument for the individual's struggle for emancipation, and why the bourgeois humanists were gradually becoming more and more attached to militarism and bureaucracy. Under the new circumstances, the real struggle for the individual's emancipation has become the struggle to free production from the capitalist grip and tentacles and, along with it, to free epistemology, science, art, literature, in a word, the entire culture of mankind, from the capitalist profit motive, bondage and the fetters of old humanist values. Had he understood this, Sartre would easily have realized that the struggle for the emancipation of the individual had historically become interlinked today with the anti-capitalist socialist revolution and with the struggle for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. He would have understood then *that the struggle for achieving the ultimate victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat after the overthrow of the bourgeois class from state power, was a struggle, at the same time, for the withering away of the state, and thus for the complete emancipation of the individual from the coercion of the state.* He would have understood that in a socialist system, at this new historical phase, the struggle for emancipation of the individual has reached such a stage that the main problem did no longer remain a question of struggle to achieve freedom and individual right from the hands of any class. At this stage *the main object of this struggle should be to transform the antagonistic contradiction still existing between individual necessity and social necessity into a non-antagonistic one.* In order to be victorious in this struggle we shall have to abolish classes in the economic field by creating abundance in production, accelerating the process of

elimination of small production, commodity circulation, theory of values etc., through continuous development of the productive system, on the one hand, while freeing the sense of individual want and longing from the private property mental complex by conducting an unceasing cultural revolution and thus bringing about a radical change in society, on the other. But, at this stage of struggle for emancipation of the individual, the old bourgeois concept of individual freedom, sense of individuality, etc., stand as the main obstacle in the form of forces of habit and prejudices which prevent identification of individual interest with social interest. So, in this complex stage of struggle for the individual's emancipation, the influence of bourgeois individualism or that of existentialism of Sartre stand as the main obstacle in the way of the individual's struggle for emancipation. *So long the influence of individualism exists in the superstructure, that is, in the social mental make-up be it in the form of bourgeois individualism, socialist individualism or Sartre's existentialism, the withering away of the state is not possible even after abolition of classes in the economic field, and hence emancipation of the individual will have to wait.*

So, it is clear that Sartre could not at all comprehend the beginning, development and culmination of the historical process of struggle to attain individual freedom from all sorts of social injustice and coercion of the state. The concept of bourgeois individuality, that is, the concept of existence of 'free' entity of an individual which bourgeois revolution has given birth to, received a blow at the hands of the humanists in this period of acute crisis of capitalism in the twentieth century. And as a reaction, it did develop an absolute and ultra-concept about freedom of the individual which forms the basis of existentialism of Sartre. If Sartre could understand this, he would have realized why he is a loner. Why does he not find his existentialist disciples beside him when he comes forward and stands alone by the side of the working class and the exploited multitude in their struggle for emancipation against imperialism and capitalist oppression, or why have his disciples reduced his doctrine of existentialism to a vulgar privilege ? And why are they so eager to keep themselves aloof from people's struggles against injustice and oppression and gradually becoming ego-centric and self-centred ? Because, Sartre's existentialism is just another variant of bourgeois individuality or individualism, and that is why in today's circumstances it is bound to be reduced to a privilege instead of being an instrument of struggle.

Since humanism is a distinct ideological category embracing the concept of absolute freedom of individual thinking despite the influence of environment upon it, the concept of 'free entity' of individuality even in the midst of contradiction and conflict with the environment, the concept of bourgeois individuality, freedom, etc., born of bourgeois revolution, are inseparably linked with the private property of the bourgeois social order and system. Marx, in the light of dialectical materialism, could easily grasp the truth that *under no circumstances could the humanist mental make-up remain free from the private property mental complex.* That is why Marx could grasp the law of appearance, development and withering away of the class struggle and the law of change and development of man's spiritual world and ideology. The completely new ideology, values of life, sense of morality that developed within the very capitalist society centring round the struggle for emancipation of the working class was personified in Marx, and thus the concept of scientific socialism or communism was born. So, when Marx was once questioned as to why he called it communism and not humanism since communism was also humanism, Marx replied : *communism is humanism minus private property.* By this Marx indicated the law according to

which communism was born as a culmination of and in continuity with humanism, that is, though one was born of, and in continuity with the other there was a break which completely separated one from the other, and which indicated the two particular historical phases of development of production responsible for the emergence of these two distinctly different ideologies.

Now, from what I have said, you surely realize what a great responsibility has devolved upon the workers of the revolutionary cultural movement. And to fulfil this responsibility you should always remember that even though all sections of the exploited people, including the working class of our country, are engaged in a bitter struggle, they are not at all free from the influence of various bourgeois ideologies. *In fact, the bourgeois ideology, values of life and concepts of morality, in the form of 'forces of habit' are still exerting a great influence on the thought process of many leaders and workers directly engaged in the cultural and political movement of the working class.* This, in turn, is creating serious confusion in every step of the struggle for emancipation of the working class, and has already misguided the cultural movement that ought to have been conducive to this struggle. Wearing sometimes the masks of ultra-materialism and raising slogans of revolutionary verbiage sometimes, and sometimes through other means, bourgeois humanism and bourgeois individualism are still influencing the working class movement. For example, nowadays many influential leaders of political parties claiming to be Marxists or communists very often observe openly : Is there anything like morality ? Is not morality a product of bourgeois idealism ? These leaders very often opine as if morality is alien to Marxism and dialectical materialism. What a masterpiece of interpretation of dialectical materialism and Marxism ! What a tragic fate for Marxism and dialectical materialism, at the hands of these so-called 'thinkers' ! Such utterances, conduct and behaviour of these so-called revolutionaries unmistakably prove how the influence of bourgeois individuality, reduced to a privilege today, and of Sartre's existentialism are at work, deeply and unknowingly in their thought process. These ideas and conduct of a section of the so-called Marxists and communists are dealing severe blows to the backbone of the movements of the working class and to the proletarian cultural movements from within. In order to save the proletarian cultural movement from the pernicious influence of all these you will have to wage a bitter struggle against them.

Again, there are many calling themselves Marxists who consider the individual the focal point of contradictions. Yet, in none of the conclusions of history, science, dialectical and historical materialism has the individual been considered the focal point of contradictions. If one moves along with this idea then even while canting Marxist-Leninist slogans one will fall prey, in the end, to either Gandhism or Sartre's existentialism. *So, we must always remember that the individual is not the focal point of social contradiction. Rather, it is just the reverse. Among the various contradictions between various opposite forces in a particular society, at a particular historical stage of development of production, there exists a contradiction between two main opposite forces, which is the principal contradiction, and the principal aspect of that contradiction is the focal point of all the contradictions of that society. All other contradictions of society are revolving centring round this principal contradiction, and individual entity is appearing in newer and newer forms.*

This idea of the individual as the focal point of contradictions is resulting in two kinds of deviations that are discernible in the communist movement today. Some within the communist

movement, in the guise of communism, are still nurturing the concepts of bourgeois individuality and bourgeois sense of individual freedom even in the case of inner-party struggle. As a result, in the struggle within the party for identification of individual interest with party interest, these are objectively creating serious obstacles. *If the influence of bourgeois individualism exists inside the party under cover of ultra-democracy and liberal democracy then, even if its pernicious effect does not appear at the surface so long as the wave of mass and revolutionary struggle is there, that is, so long as a revolutionary current exists, but in its absence or in a situation when frustration prevails, its frightful and pernicious reaction is sure to happen.* If we are unable to give complete defeat to this thought process and individualistic trend by waging an intense and unceasing cultural movement, the existence of this individualism will time and again show its ugly face in various forms, even in a socialist social system and will create various problems.

Another type of deviation is found among a section of communists who, under the influence of this wrong process of thinking, consider that the cause of shortcomings of the present-day communist movement is the failure of the communists to follow with sincerity the Leninist code of conduct. So, they believe that to build up a band of genuine communists what they need, first of all, is to practise the Leninist code of conduct. They totally fail to understand that when the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the working class has today become the principal contradiction within society, the struggles of the workers, peasants and lower middle class people developing, right or wrong, every day, every moment centring round this principal contradiction it is not at all possible for one to acquire and practise and to follow the Leninist code of conduct correctly by keeping oneself aloof from these political and economic struggles of the working class. Only by remaining in the movement of the working class and correctly integrating the struggle to conduct these movements on the correct revolutionary political line with the struggle to acquire the Leninist code of conduct will one be able to realize the actual significance of the Leninist code of conduct at the different particular stages of the struggle, and only in this way can one learn to practise the Leninist code of conduct. Unable to understand that the Leninist code of conduct is not a dogma and that its realization appears in ever newer forms amidst conflicts and contradictions, they think, since in their opinion the leadership of the movement is not correct, the struggles of the workers and peasants are all useless, and so, in the name of following the Leninist method and creating a band of genuine revolutionaries, they are falling prey to a form of code mongering individualism, keeping themselves aloof from the struggles.

Witnessing the sorry plight of the cultural movement that is being passed as progressive and proletarian culture today, I cannot help making another observation here. It is time to realize that one cannot give birth to the proletarian culture just by repeatedly narrating pathetic stories of the gory episodes of dreadful tyrannies of the owning class and the jotedars (rich landowners) on the workers, peasants and the lower middle class people. Nor is the proletarian culture a photographic image of the everyday nasty living condition of the workers, peasants and the lower middle class slum dwellers, distressed in every way and pressed under the grinding wheel of capitalist exploitation.

Those who contemplate building up of revolutionary proletarian cultural movement must understand first the composition of the working class of our country. Like in other relatively backward countries of the world, the working class in our country too is divided into three

categories. One, whose relation with the rural peasant life has not yet been completely severed. This section is bringing into the working class movement superstitions, religious bigotry, fanaticism, orthodoxy and other rustic habits of rural life. The second section of the working class comprises those who, owing to the pressure of economic exploitation, have been gradually pushed to the stage of workers and slum dwellers from lower middle class families. Though reduced to working class economically, their mental affinity with the middle class people has not yet been severed completely. This section brings into the working class movement the petty bourgeois sentiments and vacillation, individual opportunism, ego-centricism, individualism, liberalism, economism and all other sorts of opportunism. In the case of the last section of the working class, all links with the urban middle class people and the rural peasant society have been totally cut off. Although very small in number, they are the most revolutionary section among the proletariat in our country, and so most desperate in nature. But it should be borne in mind that so long as they do not grow really class conscious, that is, so long as they do not develop revolutionary consciousness, this desperateness is bound to be aimless and the influence of bourgeois individualism, which has today reached a vulgar stage in society, is very much there in them. The contradiction between the mental make-up of these three sections constitutes the inner contradiction of the working class.

Through active association with the correct revolutionary politics alone is it possible to realize the higher and nobler standard of proletarian culture and ethics

But the life-and-death struggle going on every moment between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the political, economic and cultural fields, constitutes the principal contradiction of the present society. And this principal contradiction is continuously influencing the internal contradiction of the working class. So it must be always kept in mind that in the working class movement the concept of socialism, scientific socialism, always comes from without. And for this the leaders and workers of the cultural movement should note carefully, keeping their eyes open, and realize properly how only by gradually increasing the influence of the proletarian revolutionary politics, the still existing influence of bourgeois, petty bourgeois and feudal thoughts within the working class can be fought out and a new revolutionary consciousness, values of life and sense of morality is growing among working class. But neither by remaining cloistered within drawing room culture, nor by associating yourselves loosely with the working class movement could you accomplish this task. It is most essential to acquaint yourself with the correct revolutionary politics of the proletariat and to associate yourselves with the revolutionary movements of the exploited people conducted on the basis of correct politics and in direct and close relation with the leaders, workers and the people participating in the movement. Because, the working class gets imbued with these new values, concepts of morality and ethics only with the spread of this proletarian revolutionary political ideology among them. And when thus you are able to actively associate yourself with the correct revolutionary politics of the working class will you realize *how much more developed, greater and beautiful these revolutionary thoughts, values of life, concepts of morality and ethics of the proletariat are, compared to the highest standard of bourgeois thoughts and values of life which once developed in the early stage of bourgeois revolution.* A group of people, just like the humanists of the past, since they have no link with the real proletarian revolutionary movement, so far developed in our country, are busy making a photographic representation of the day-to-day struggles of workers and peasants

against the owning class and the jotedars, and in producing an exact image of the nasty living conditions of the proletariat, pressed under the grinding wheel of capitalist exploitation — putting in the mouth of characters they portray some revolutionary jargons and passing these for proletarian culture. By this, however, one may at best evince one's sympathy for the proletariat and the exploited people, but can never give birth to the proletarian culture. The class conscious revolutionary workers hate this kind of sympathy and mercy, they look with contempt at it. Besides, they also fail to realize that by thus producing photographic images of the day-to-day life of workers in minute details, in the name of working class culture, they are, in reality, simply giving expression to the bourgeois, petty bourgeois and feudal thoughts still existing in their mental makeup. As a result, their works are getting lower in standard ethically, let alone transcending the level of bourgeois humanist culture of the renaissance.

So, proletarian culture grows in the course of exhausting the humanist moral values. It does no longer suffice to sing songs of praise for Rabindranath, Saratchandra and Nazrul. It is incumbent on you to help the people understand these great men by evaluating them with a completely new outlook and by determining the dominant class character of their literary thoughts. Your cultural movement today starts from the high standard to which Rammohan, Vidyasagar, Rabindranath, Saratchandra, Nazrul and the like elevated the cultural movement of our country, stage by stage. Right from there will commence the victorious march of proletarian culture. You should bear in mind another point. Of the two trends in the bourgeois humanist movement during the freedom struggle of our country, which I have already dealt with, *proletarian culture will grow, in the main, as culmination of and in continuity with the uncompromising, youthful and revolutionary trend of humanism* which Saratchandra and Nazrul represented. Today there is bound to appear a contradiction, following the inexorable law of history, between the thoughts of all those of you who wish to be the successors of Saratchandra and Nazrul, in the true sense, and the thoughts of Saratchandra and Nazrul. Today's exponents of proletarian culture are the successors of Saratchandra and Nazrul, and to be true successors means *to be in an inevitable contradiction in the realm of thought with those whom you succeed.* Those who are only chewing the cud of the old thoughts, even in the changed circumstances today are by no means the true successors of Saratchandra and Nazrul. What is more, these blind followers have reduced that culture, once an instrument of struggle, into a privilege today. So, the main task before today's progressive cultural movement is to hold high the noble banner of social and cultural revolution, illumining it with ever more glittering knowledge — the banner of social and cultural revolution which was neglected and discarded by the political leaders, rushing in hot haste for a political change of power, and which Saratchandra and Nazrul tried utmost to hold high, the banner which has been left lying in the dust by the democrats, the socialists and pseudo-communists in consideration of the exigency of their election-oriented politics. If you can carry forward this cultural movement, stage by stage, fighting against the vile attacks of 'pure culture' and all sorts of bourgeois thoughts, if you can build up a powerful cultural movement in the country, making it conducive to the proletarian revolution, only then can you become the true successors of Rabindranath, Saratchandra and Nazrul. Only this way will clear the crisis in morality prevailing in the national life today; the stagnation in the cultural movement can be removed only then. Be bold and step ahead, ultimate victory is yours.

Notes

1. Nazrul Islam, eminent poet and revolutionary freedom fighter.
2. Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, great literary genius whose vision of life had its soul in secular humanist ideals and who championed the cause of the revolutionary freedom fighters of India.
3. Rabindranath Tagore, great poetic genius in whom the literary creative spirit of renaissance blossomed in its widest span, mingled with spiritual traditionalism of India, and who advocated universal brotherhood.
4. Raja Rammohan Roy, pioneer of Indian renaissance.
5. Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, leading light of Indian renaissance and agnostic social reformer who fought traditionalism for introduction of modern education in India, based on science and logic, and pioneered women's cause and education.
6. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, pioneer of modern Indian literature, with conservative outlook.
7. Gautama Buddha, great preacher and teacher of Buddhism.
8. great Vedantist philosopher of India.
9. late Ajoy Kumar Mukhopadhyay, then chief minister of West Bengal, who was present at the meeting as chief guest.
10. Charvaka, materialist philosopher of ancient India.
11. reputed founder of Sankhya school of Indian philosophy.
12. reference to students and youths of Bengal, for their heroic struggle and sacrifice during freedom movement of India, which brought them high acclaim and acknowledgement throughout the country.
13. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, outstanding leader of Indian freedom movement and a preceptor of non-violence and satyagraha.
14. late Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, distinguished leader of Indian freedom movement and an ardent follower of Gandhiji who opposed, to the last, the partition of India.
15. nationalist leader of Indian freedom movement, one time chief minister of West Pakistan.
16. distinguished nationalist leader of Indian freedom movement.

17.Chittaranjan Das, outstanding leader of Indian freedom movement, who upheld its uncompromising trend.

18. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, who spearheaded the uncompromising trend in Indian freedom movement.

19. a novel by Saratchandra espousing the cause of the revolutionary current of the Indian freedom struggle; proscribed by the British imperialist rulers.

20. a novelette by Tagore in disapproval of the revolutionary current of Indian freedom struggle.

21. principal character (female) of Saratchandra's novel Sesh Prasna, in portrayal of freedom of love and freedom from bondage of prejudices and traditionalism.

22.a major character (female) of Tagore's Sesher Kabita, in portrayal of the poet's ideal of love.

23. aesthetic pleasure.

24. passive resistance to what is deemed evil.

25. a leading industrial house of India.

26. late Raj Kapoor, a matinee idol.

27. a rowdy.

28. mentor (in derogatory sense here).

**Speech delivered by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh
at a public meeting on the occasion of the
seventieth birth anniversary of the revolutionary poet Kazi Nazrul Islam
on 26th May 1969**