

evaluate. A generation of informed young men and women were in revolt. 17,000 young men and women were put in prison. Thousands lost their lives. A democratically-elected government was nearly toppled, and an emergency declared by the government to bring the situation under control was kept in force for six years. The rule of law, the normal process of justice was abrogated. What were these young men and women fighting for? They were fighting to realize a better society — in their perspective, a “better world” — because they felt that the democratic process had been too slow. That revolt, which took place in 1971, shocked our leaders who had forgotten the lesson of history that the “wretched of the earth” can and do assert themselves. The very systems which they strive to eliminate re-emerge in forms a hundred times more vicious, but then it is too late to do anything because those who ride the back of the tiger very often end up inside. Those are the contradictions of development. We have choices to make and the developed countries of the North also have choices to make. It is the manner in which we harmonize our choices and relate our priorities so that what is important to us is also viewed the same way by Canadians, that will guide and influence human destiny.

Growth in dignity

The task of redesigning and redirecting a people's life towards growth in dignity is, of course, primarily a domestic responsibility. President J.R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka told the first meeting of the Group of 77 at Algiers in 1967:

Our first task is to help ourselves. We must as far as possible, by our own efforts, develop our own economies to secure the maximum benefits for our people from our own resources. . . the national income must also be equitably distributed so that the standard of living of our people increases, bringing benefits not to a few, but to many.

In seeking to fulfil this task, every country gains from international understanding, international support and an international policy environment which is both benign and realistic. The world's “development community” therefore has an important contribution to make in defining and influencing the destinies of peoples in developing countries, whether in Sri Lanka, Asia or elsewhere, and in understanding our hopes and aspirations.

To think of development only in terms of theory, to think of development only in the realm of ideas is dangerous and unrealistic. A brilliant performance by the financial managers of developing countries in ‘managing’ their economies and showing projections of growth might win them high praise from international agencies, but such a performance is meaningless unless its impact on the human condition is both positive and tangible. The establishment of a high internal rate of return on an irrigation project brings happiness and a

sense of satisfaction to the economist but the real “rate of return” in land development has to be calculated in terms of how quickly a project will alleviate poverty, hunger, sickness and unemployment.

While in the developed West the fundamental rights to worship, to move, and to publish are very real and constitutionally entrenched, in the Third World those fundamental rights take second place to another fundamental right — freedom from hunger. This is not a right that can be entrenched by experts who may be reacting to crisis management.

Former U.S. President Gerald Ford once said that he expects the average age of an American towards the end of the century to be 70, principally because of better food, vitamins, recreation and all manner of things which will sustain and develop the human being physically and emotionally. The very same vision of the next century, we are told, spells gloom for the Third World. Former World Bank President Robert McNamara has said that he sees the Third World going through the untold hardship of mass hunger and deprivation in the years to come. Two billion people, a little more than half the population of the world, live in the hundred poorest nations of the world. This is a factor which haunts our generation.

Gotama the Buddha, whose teachings or Dhamma, continue to inspire, influence, or condition much of Asia, set the goal of “Right to livelihood” before his followers. The phrase is rich in meaning, carrying overtones that apply equally to philosophy as to economics. It requires, for instance, that men and women must be given the fullest opportunity to use, nurture, and improve their creative faculties; that they should be assisted to conquer egocentricity by working cooperatively with others in society for the attainment of common tasks; that their endeavours ought to be directed at producing a quantity of goods and services capable of meeting society's real needs; and that balance must be achieved between opportunity, performance, need and acquisition. Great powers of analysis are not required to demonstrate that these economic and social implications of a teacher-philosopher's creed anticipated, by several generations, questions such as “basic needs” and productivity of growth versus social justice”, which some of today's international agencies consider inventions of their own.

To some, ‘Right to livelihood’ might seem an unattainable ideal. Historical research has established, however, that the ideal was indeed reached, and as a matter of everyday living, in Asia's past. “Shramadana” (or productive self-help) and “gotong royong” are being revived in South and Southeast Asia today. They are being revived not as experimental oddities but as parts of deeply-rooted social and economic tradition. The revival of the internal, social and economic dynamism of the past, while overcoming the domestic and international inequities of the present and planning for the creative possibilities of the future, is a