

CULTURAL MOTIVATIONS TO PROGRESS AND THE THREE GREAT  
WORLD RELIGIONS IN SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA.

The "external" and the "interior" view,

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Manila, June 3 - 9, 1963.

I can safely assume, I suppose, that all of us here around this table have read the memorandum which was drawn up in preparation for this seminar. There is little point in reading it to you now. Rather I should like to make a few remarks in an attempt to reflect on some of the problems raised in that memorandum from a slightly different perspective. This, I think, might be helpful in our discussions by bringing out some of their wider implications.

I.

In the preparatory memorandum, I have tried to enumerate some of the values and attitudes that influence economic development. They bear more specifically on the questions of motivation, saving-investment level, the family system, the class structure and social mobility, and these all constitute important factors in the process of economic growth. The purpose of our discussions is to identify more clearly and fully these values and attitudes in their relevance to the economic development process, and where necessary to discuss ways and methods for further study of them. The identification and analysis of developmental values alone however is not enough. It will also be necessary for us to consider the dynamics of their operation. It is quite obvious for instance that the many exhortations and admonitions from the political leaders have not always led to very impressive results in accelerating economic growth, and that we will have to reach more deeply into the motivational structure of society in order to achieve that goal.

The basic conviction underlying the preparatory memorandum is that to this end it will be necessary for the modernizers to increase their manipulative capacity with regard to the traditional sectors of their society and that more specific and even more basic motivations than those normally used by the politicians will have to be brought into play.

Now the developmental values and attitudes, once identified only come to life if they become part of a wider structure of meaning.<sup>1)</sup> The difficulty is that the developmental process itself is not a selfjustifying proposition.<sup>2)</sup> The possibility to raise living standards and to attain greater material wealth, may in many cultures not be enough of an enticement to make the mobilisation of the motivational forces in the traditional sectors of society very effective. In order to be sufficiently persuasive it will be necessary to relate the purposes of the development process to other worthwhile purposes of human endeavour and of society. The problem here is, that in the period of transition when old value systems are breaking down and no new ones are in sight or sufficiently crystallised, no such wider structure of meaning presents itself. The progressive break down of the traditional social structure with their established customs, and the difficulty of relating to new emergent ones has left many in our transitional societies with a great deal of uncertainty and anxiety, leading in some cases to what one might call a genuine crisis of identity. The image of one self, the answer to who am I, and who I want to be, has become blurred and fractured. Questions like: to whom or to what to be loyal, after whom to model one self, which pattern of behaviour to adopt or to adjust to, have all lost their obvious answers, and no new satisfactory ones are readily available. The problem is compounded by the fact that the modern world - rent as it is by schisms and obviously itself in crisis - into which these transitional societies are moving, does not present a particularly attractive model of any obvious superiority to the traditional purposes of life and society. In fact we see that even where the notion of economic development is



accepted as a worthwhile objective, there is often a simultaneous rejection of what is felt to be the crass materialism and secularism of modern civilisation;

I think we should not underestimate the reality of this identity crisis. It expresses itself in various ways and in varying degrees of intensity. I would venture to suggest that the intensity is greatest in those countries where there is no indigenous commercial and entrepreneurial middle class to speak of, or where the entire social structure has come into question, but it is present in all our transitional societies, on the individual as well as on the collective level.

On the individual level we will therefore have to consider which personality types as structures of integration of values and attitudes, might be effective agents of social change and economic development. This raises the problem of personality formation in our society and the requirements for an educational system that, aside from its other purposes, could also serve as an important tool and accelerator for economic growth. If I may be so bold to say so, education in our transitional society is too important a matter to be left to the teachers, and I am sure that during our discussions several of us will want to address themselves to this problem.

The idea of national identity is concerned with the self awareness of a nation, its selfimage and its values. It springs from a nation's desire for fixed points of reference for its orientation in the world, as well as from the hope to find those within one's own individuality as a nation. A nation's selfimage then emerges from the way it perceives its history, and is shaped by its aspirations, ideals and purposes. The relevance of this selfimage and national identity for our discussion becomes obvious, when we realize that the sense of purpose derived from a clear selfimage, and the purpose itself as part of the selfimage, constitute motivational factors in the decisionmaking process, that determine to an important degree the perception of the outside world, the nature and the order of priority of its problems, and the choices and responses of the nation to them.

In a sense, the introversion, the brooding preoccupation with the national self accompanying the search for national identity, in intensity commensurate with the depth of its identity crisis, is an unavoidable phase in a nation's adjustment to a changed environment. And until this is done, and a clearer image emerges of its own identity and of the broader purposes of its existence, it will be difficult for a nation to define its place in the unfolding of world history, or to set itself consistently and with determination to any major undertaking.

To this extent this search for clearer definition may contain an important key to social cohesion and social action. Carried to the extreme however it may hamper the nation's capacity to view and act upon the new problems it faces rationally and dispassionately, by focussing the national energies on a virtual image. For in the final analysis it is not in selfreflection that national identity emerges, but it is defined and constantly redefined in the continuous flow of actions and choices in response to problems.

The point of all this is to realize that there exist a great gap between the way in which the development oriented modernizers perceives the problems of his nation and the real preoccupations of the nation's political leadership in response to the ways in which the transition process and its accompanying problems are experienced and perceived by the majority of the nation. If therefore we want to succeed in linking up the requirements for economic development in terms of values and attitudes, with the deeper cultural motivations of the nation as a whole, we should know a great deal more of this view from the inside.



## II.

We should, in this connection I think also discuss the ways in which, with varying degrees of success, the major ideologies have tried to solve this problem. There is no doubt that nationalism has proved to be a potent force for national integration and for developing a new sense of purpose, thereby sweeping away the anxieties and uncertainties resulting from the nation's shifting identity. In fact the preoccupation with national identity itself is an inherent part of nationalism. However, the insistence on the uniqueness of its own nation has occasionally also led to the glorification of attitudes and values which were integral parts of the valuesystem of the closed agricultural society from which it is emerging. While the reconfirmation and elevation into permanent virtues of these values and attitudes undoubtedly contribute to a greater self confidence, it may at times make more difficult the creative adjustment to the needs of modernization by prematurely freezing or fixating that self image into a somewhat traditional cast.

There is another limitation to the effectiveness of nationalism as an agent of development. While it undoubtedly is true that nationalism has greatly facilitated the acceptance for the need of economic development, and while it has succeeded in linking much of the national energies to industrial and other development projects, it has by the very nature of its interest, in a sense dematerialized the growth process, by emphasizing the prestige aspects, the physical plant and the outward trappings of modern industrial society, as symbols of national grandeur, without integrating the motivations and the inner dynamics of the growth process itself. Nationalism alone therefore can serve the development process as a motivational force only up to a point. For economic growth to sustain its momentum in its initial stages, most likely other motivational forces will have to be called upon. Increasingly therefore we see post independence nationalism incorporating into its doctrine more and more elements of either socialist or communist ideologies - both more inherently development oriented - in order better to cope with problems for which the nationalist response proved not to be enough.

## III.

Having looked briefly at the ideologies as social mobilizers and integrators of development purposes with the wider purposes of society in our region, we cannot but note the limited success achieved so far. Some of the reasons for this I have mentioned in the preparatory memorandum, but partially this also reflects the difficulty for secular ideologies to communicate with the traditional sector of our societies.

When we speak of the wider purposes of society, we are really discussing the ultimate question regarding, man, society, and the significance of life in relation to the divine. The limited capacity of secular ideologies to effectively mobilize motivational forces in the traditional sectors of our society, is conditioned by the inseparable connection of cultural values and attitudes in our societies, with the complex of religious beliefs.

What is required then is the actuation of more basic and more specific motivations for the acceleration of economic development. And these, in our societies, undoubtedly are embedded within the cultural religious matrix.

In part the problem here is one of more effective symbol creation and symbol manipulation. A great deal more can and should be done in this respect.

It has however been the natural inclination on the part of the modernizers to dismiss as unimportant the particular ways in which the leaders and literati of the traditional sectors view the present crisis of transition, and their response to it. Because of this, real communication was rarely established, and the transmission of developmental values has remained defective. Much more serious attention will therefore have to be paid to the prevailing "interior view" within the traditional sectors.



In this task however failure has not only to be laid on the doorstep of the secular modernizers but will have to be equally attributed to the generally more secularized political leadership which has emerged from the traditional sector of society itself, or which has adopted the religious and traditional sectors as their basis for political power. But even if more effective communication were to be established, we would only have partially solved our problem. The mobilisation of the motivational forces embedded in the cultural and religious subsoil is only/fully possible when actuated from the inside, from the wellspring of religious life itself. We could for instance point to the need for legitimisation of the purposes of economic development as well as of the attitudes conducive to it, in terms of the traditional and religious value systems. Or we could say with Prof. Shils that it requires the "dispersal of Charisma"<sup>3)</sup> to the economic sector and its activities. But even with effective communication, I do not think we could make this happen, for we are now confronted with a question regarding the inner vitality and social dynamism of the religion concerned. Essentially, for each of the religions in our societies, the problem is to relate themselves to the great and pressing revolution of our time - the unnecessary of poverty, ignorance, and indignity, to the strivings for a better life on this earth, the emergence of a new social structure and the continuous presence of change - in terms other than regret or wistfulness, fear, grudging acceptance, selfjustification or militant fundamentalist rejection. The intellectual exercise of apologetics, i.e., the attempts to vindicate the validity of one's religion in the face of the significant departures from the old in the new situation, will not be enough for that purpose. Nor will any deliberate, and therefore synthetic, adjustments of the religious system to new social conditions do. When everything has been said and done, it is only a new religious impulse from within the religion concerned, that could give the process of reorientation and redirection a new and real vitality. But here we are entering the almost autonomous sphere of personal religious experience. It is, I would think, only through the spiritual agony in facing the crisis of the times when man is thrown back upon the central core of his faith, and by reaching from the depths of one's own religious experience, that it becomes possible to reaffirm and restate one's religion's essential relationship with society, and to integrate the moral forces impelling the convulsive changes of our time, into the living centre of one's religion. Then it will be possible to meet the "necessity of reinterpreting the unalterable, fundamental positions, without which a religion loses its self identity" and to achieve the "re-directing and re-inspiring of the religious will".<sup>4)</sup>

I think most of the religions with which we are concerned at this seminar have in the past shown the capacity for such resurgence and renewed social dynamism in the face of new challenges. They have also shown the capacity to bring forth the leadership that is required. But if we can only hope for this to happen, we certainly cannot wait for it.

It remains therefore incumbent upon the modernizers to try, as much as possible, to establish more effective communication with the traditional and religious sectors and to increase his manipulative capacity in that respect. For where such religious resurgence fails to take place, leaving the traditional religious leadership alongside or behind the mainstream of social changes instead of being part of it, it is still possible for new leadership to emerge, which although possibly moved by a deep sense of religious obligation, sets itself to the task of modernization in purely secular terms. The emergence of Moslim leaders from the ranks of the military in some Moslem countries, to positions of national leadership undertaking the task of economic development, is, I think a case in point. /very partially open to deliberate manipulation. It is only

#### IV.

The wide divergence in frame of reference between the world of religious values and that of the modernizers clearly points up the need for a clearer



understanding and a greater sensibility on the part of the modernizers for the interior view of the religion or religions in our region regarding man, society, and the contemporary situation. They should take more seriously than before the subjective way in which these religions look at things, at the sense of crisis they feel, or its absence, as well as the terms in which they perceive the present and its problems. Heightened self awareness in relation to the many ways in which their nation's past continues to impinge upon their dreams of the future, can only increase their effectiveness as modernizers, by allowing them to cast their roots deeper and more consciously into the cultural subsoil and thus widening the reach of their empathic powers.

On the other hand it becomes important that a better understanding is reached on the part of the religious and the traditional leaders and literati of the terms in which the modernizers see the problems of the nation and the legitimacy of the purposes they want to serve through their commitment to development. This calls for a continuous dialogue between the two worlds through which the one world could explain itself in terms of the other, in the hope that gradually a clearer understanding of each other will be achieved, from which might grow a greater mutual recognition and willingness to cooperate in the modernization process. This would require the existence of a group of scholars and intellectuals willing to devote themselves continuously to this endeavour; who would take it upon themselves to bring the many often unconscious assumptions on which social action and decisionmaking are predicated in our transitional societies to the daylight of consciousness, to try to make them explicit and open to rational examination. This would clearly be of great importance for more effective communication and might facilitate a fuller mobilisation of human resources for the purpose of speeding up economic development. In this way also, these scholars and intellectuals might help to ease the painful confrontation of the traditional sectors of our societies with their changing social environment and the insistent demand for a better life that is now abroad. Eventually this might, when and if the traditional religions find it within themselves to respond positively and constructively to the new challenges, facilitate that adjustment. And this possibly, who knows, might even help to inculcate into the modernization process values which may help in shaping a uniquely new society.

I have raised these questions here in the conviction that if we want the developmental values and attitudes we are going to discuss, to become operational and effective, we will have to link them up with broader motivational forces. This brings us face to face with questions regarding existing views on the ultimate purposes of life, and regarding the possibility to integrate new and old purposes into a meaningful whole. To this end it will be necessary to take a closer look at the subjective, interior view, prevailing in the traditional sectors of our society - as opposed to the modernizer's external view - on the challenges they face. This could be done through various foci. In this brief introduction I have tried to do so by focusing on the identity and on the religious crisis.

#### V.

I should like to raise another point here. The integration of new and old values into a value system more conducive to economic development, is not only the result of the leadership and the manipulative capability of the modernizers on the one hand, and the capacity for adjustment and reorientation of the traditional frame of reference. After all, all this is taking place in a society already in motion. The modernization process is already under way and quite inexorably so. Urbanization is going on, secularization, education and there already is much greater social mobility, inducing in turn other changes in all sectors. The traditional sector for instance is certainly not as traditional as it was 20 years ago.



The modernization process in fact is a dynamic process involving a complex set of factors in continuous interplay. If we have discussed our problem here in terms of the tensions between the modernizers and the traditional sector, we have actually imposed a polarity on social reality which is not there to that extent. None of the modernizers, for instance is himself entirely free from the traditional valuesystem. It shows up in sometimes surprising forms at surprising times, and I think that in our own environment, and in our own life, we can point to sufficient instances of this kind. Likewise, as I have said before, none of the religious or traditional leaders or their literati have remained free of the compelling impact of some aspects of modern life. Also there are social conditions which by themselves facilitate the modernization process and the emergence of new valuesystems. As Nash<sup>5)</sup> for instance points out, if the prevailing distribution of wealth, power and prestige is in some contradiction to the value pattern, then social change and new economic patterns are likely to find sanction among a sizable segment. He also suggests that the presence of conflicting religious systems, philosophies and world views in a society may indicate the malleability of the value complex, and in that way make social change and emergence of new patterns easier. In any case I think that we would benefit from looking also at this particular aspect of our problem. And I am sure that in the course of our discussions other such conditions will emerge.

The question which inevitably arises at this point is, how important is all this? Are we not allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed by problems the magnitude of which is of our own making? Are we not overestimating the force of cultural factors and exaggerating their drag on the momentum of social change or their capacity to accelerate or direct it? After all, cultural values are not the sole determinants of social action, nor are they autonomous forces, although they of course constitute an important ingredient in determining the choice between alternatives of action. Also no man lives by a single value system alone. It is quite possible to function reasonably well as part of several valuesystems at the same time that may not be consistent with and even contradictory to one another. Won't many problems just disappear with increased industrialization? I think, the answer to the last question is yes. But at the same time, our problem, at least in some countries is how to get the industrialization process started at all. And once started, could we then leave the matter to a kind of natural expansion of spread-effects? We should also ask ourselves, can we afford the time? There is of course between our countries a wide range of variety in the degree of urgency felt. There certainly are situations in our general area, where there is not much time, on account of population pressure, or on account of the prevailing type of political dynamics, for instance a high degree of mass participation in politics with heightened popular expectations for material improvement as a crucially important political factor. There rapid economic development is a conditio sine qua non for some measure of political stability. And if more coercion is to be avoided, the mobilisation of motivational forces embedded in the cultural religious matrix becomes unavoidable.

## VI.

The range of problems which our seminar has staked out for itself is quite formidable, and we can hardly hope to do justice to all of them. Also, while we will be speaking about Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity we will most likely be obliged to ignore the varieties of forms in which these religions manifest themselves in our various countries. We can only regret this, for the very differences between these forms of manifestation just might open interesting insights into various types of economic behaviour. Also in several of our countries there are religious manifestations which can not adequately be dealt with under the heading of the dominant religion within the country. Javanese mysticism is an instance of this.



I think we should also be aware of another limitation, i.e. the fact that we are all speaking from different situations, from different histories, from different social structures, subjected to different pressures and priorities and so, while we may be using the same terms and concepts we may, initially at least, not really be speaking the same language. Additionally our own situations are often not entirely clear to ourselves. Most likely each of us will know just a few segments of the many faceted and pluralistic complex of cultural reality in his own country, while our journey of discovery continues. Still, we are gathered here to talk about these very problems, in the hope that we will gain clarification, illumination and encouragement from the exchange of the ways in which each of us is grappling with these problems. I am sure that at least this much we will be able to achieve. We may also hope for an additional result of our seminar. Namely, that it will help universities in our area to concentrate the developing intellectual and scholarly capabilities of our nations on these problems of national integration and economic growth, the principal pivots of the modernization process through which our nations are going. To that end considerable reorientation will be necessary. The study of the social sciences as well as orientology for instance will have to break away from the traditional preoccupations of their disciplines and to direct their attention and energy much more deliberately, and especially, much more imaginatively to these great problems of our nations.

Finally I should like to end with a suggestion. I think we should, possibly best at the end of our sessions, consider the desirability and feasibility of a journal of reprints culled from various scientific and scholarly journals dealing with the problems of modernization and the cultural factors impinging upon it for distribution in our area. It has proved to be exceedingly difficult for the intellectuals in several of our countries to keep track of such articles and it would be of great help if such a journal could make these available to them. So far these articles have been scattered in various journals in the field of political science, sociology, anthropology, international politics, communications, history, religion, and philosophy. A journal of the kind I am suggesting would I am sure, contribute a great deal to facilitating the dialogue between the modernizers and the traditional sectors of our societies.

#### Bibliographical Notes.

- 1) The term is Reinhold Niebuhr's, although he uses it in a different context. Reinhold Niebuhr "Faith and History" p. 19. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1949.
- 2) Manning Nash "Some Social and Cultural Aspects of Economic Development" in Economic Development and Cultural Change Volume VII, No. 2, January 1959, p. 147. (Research center in Economic Development and Cultural Change) The University of Chicago.
- 3) Edward Shils "The concentration and Dispersion of Charisma", their bearing on Economic policy in Underdeveloped Countries. World Politics. Volume XI, Number 1, October 1958, p. 12. A quarterly Journal of International Relation, Princeton University Press.
- 4) Hendrik Kraemer "World Cultures and World Religions", p. 349. Lutterworth Library, London 1960.
- 5) Manning Nash l.c. page 141.