

# To the Youth

*In this address to the open session of the first annual convention of the All India Democratic Youth Organization (AIDYO) in 1967, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh laid down the guideline to the youth of the country for their movement, highlighting that to make their movements lead to solving their problems, they should integrate them with the broader struggle of the working class against the prevailing capitalist rule of the country. In course, he pointed out that the economic or political problems and more particularly the abominable cultural degeneration that threatens to swamp youth's life every moment, find their roots in the decadent capitalist order. He also pinpointed how to achieve their petty parliamentary ends, the bourgeois parliamentary parties, more so the sham Marxists are engaged in a conspiracy to dupe and mislead the youth from the real revolutionary struggle against capitalism.*

You have invited me to this annual Convention of the Democratic Youth Organization of yours to discuss the problems facing the youth community and the task before them in the situation now obtaining in India, especially in West Bengal. To begin with, the problem of the youth is not a particular, isolated problem divorced from the problems of the whole of society — I, for one at least, hold it so. Thus, if we are to correctly grasp the problems of the youth, or those facing youth movements, it is imperative that we have a clear view of the general framework of the society, in other words, of the present political, social and economic conditions. For, in the background of this alone, I consider, we should be able to follow the youth problem correctly.

At the stage where the mass movements of West Bengal, and why speak of West Bengal alone, of the whole of India have reached today through many twists and turns, the question that looms large is this — it is not that there have been no movements in this country, nor can we say that there have been no youth movements here — in fact a good many times these have occurred, and this land had indeed reverberated with youth movements on several occasions. Yet there has been no solution to the basic problems before the youth of the country, rather these have taken on more complex forms. There has been no fundamental change at all in attitude in the matter of conducting democratic movements. Youth movements have taken place previously too and more will take place in future ; attempts have been made many times even earlier to build up organization like yours, more perhaps will grow in future, or even right now. But if you fail to grasp the problem I like to place before you, then the fate of this movement, too, as with so many in the past, would perhaps end up just in some temporary gains or some temporary losses.

If we analyse the present society of the whole of India, we would find the political side of it like this : the country has been independent politically through waging struggle, whatever be the way, against the British for a long period — a great many years. What type of independence it has been, or what sort of political, social and economic system has come into being following independence — well, opinions may differ. And I would, of course, express some of my views to you on this as well. But on the issue that the country has become independent, there is perhaps not much difference of opinion, I believe. Yet it is an irrefutable fact, whatever the explanation given by different political parties from different class angularities for what has been established following independence, that people's emancipation — I mean the liberation of the people of the country from all sorts of exploitation, the one basic object of independence movement — has

remained unfulfilled by achieving this sort of independence for the country. By no means whatsoever can this truth be denied today. What is the form of exploitation — opinions may differ on this. But that exploitation, oppression and tyrannical rule are imposed on the Indian society as mountainous burden and have been governing the politics, economy and all the social laws, norms and behaviours in India, there is no doubt about it. There exists no second view about it in any amongst the progressive individuals who desire to move along with the people. Difference hinges on what the character of exploitation is like.

**The only significance of acquiring knowledge  
is to apply it in life**

Right at the outset, I propose to discuss what should be the purpose of youth movement, as also of the cultural movement by them. This I intend to do for the sole reason that youth movement, their cultural movement, the pursuit of manifold knowledge and ideology by them — these are without any purport if they have no real, no effective influence on life, on social movements, on the political movements of the country and on the economic life of the society. It is the same as saying that we are highly cultured, we discuss a lot about the many facts of theory of knowledge, but there is no reflection of it in life. It does not in the slightest influence life to advance and be uplifted. This type of youth and cultural movement is nothing but a sort of idle-talking in fashionable drawing rooms, a matter of idle chit chat, or simply a means to gain self-satisfaction by reading occasionally a few papers and magazines and just that. If this be the purpose of movements, of pursuit of culture, of building up organizations and of youth movement I would suggest it is better to wind up these movements. This country won't benefit from them.

Naturally, a question may arise in this context whether then there exists no other sense in pursuit of knowledge and in getting education. There is no sense in pursuing knowledge for mere self-contentment and in purposelessly acquiring education except to strengthen the hands of reaction alone. Education has one and only one significance so far as people's interest and progress are concerned. The only proper significance of acquiring knowledge attaches to applying it in life. It should guide life in the correct way. It should influence the character of mine and of yours. It should provide the guideline to determine the character of the struggle in which the different classes within the society are engaged against one another. As a result, it would teach me to involve myself in the entire movement and the problems of the country — how to become involved really, and how I can develop into a front-ranker in the struggle and for which class. For, I am a social being, I am one of the society itself. If the society rots, if it decays, it is a loss for mankind as a whole and consequently it is a loss for me, too. If young people do not bother about the problems of the society, about the cause of why the society is going down, if they do not feel any sense of responsibility about it, if they have nothing to do from a sense of duty in this matter, if their job is mere pursuit of 'pure' knowledge without involvement with the class struggles within the society and of relations with the different social movements then I should say it is a mockery of cultivation of epistemology and pursuit of knowledge. However much the reactionaries, or the social parasites may applaud it as the pursuit of 'pure' knowledge it is really no pursuit of knowledge. A lot of tall talks that sound good may embellish it and a lot of apparently dazzling discussions they may make. But, please, keep off from those men of culture who do not exert any influence on mass movements and the life of people and do not come to the forefront of movements, from those in whose minds social problems do not cause any agony, from those who spend no sleepless nights in pondering over

social progress. This is my one earnest request to you. We should, therefore, bear it in mind at all times that organization, youth movement, cultural movement of youth — these are of no import if young people cannot correctly identify the basic problem of the whole country and fail to determine their own task in the perspective of that problem. Because, if this is not done, then the pursuit of knowledge, of culture — all these will turn out to be a fancy, a certain luxury, an unnecessary wastage of time, and a way of deceiving people.

### **No movement can be apolitical**

Now, I would place before you, in a nutshell, a sketch of the whole of India, so far as I have understood it. The yearning which the people of India had during the struggle for independence — yearning for emancipation from all sorts of exploitation, for a happy prosperous India in the sense of welfare of the people — has not yet come to fruition even after attainment of independence. What has built up instead is a stable, exploitative and oppressive social, political and economic system based on social injustice in the interest of the capitalist class of India, so much so that it is crushing our society and our people under its deadweight. And it is this system, this phenomenon, that stands out as a major phenomenon, as an obstacle, confronting all social problems, youth problems and problems of social progress. Consequently, not one youth movement or cultural movement can be isolated, by any logic whatsoever, from the political movements. The root cause of any and every problem confronting you is the present political, social and economic system of the country. Should you accept it, and there is no way either to deny it if one is reasonable, it follows then that not one progressive youth movement can be a movement in isolation from the basic political struggle of the exploited masses. It cannot be an apolitical movement. There can be no progressive cultural movement isolated from the main political stream, or free from political influence, or simply apolitical in kind. Such being the case, we are bound to be linked, directly or indirectly, with the political movement of either the exploiting class or the exploited class. Surely, you won't be willing to link yourselves, in any manner whatsoever, direct or indirect with the politics of the exploiting class. So, the fundamental problem of today facing the youth movement of yours and the cultural movement you have been organizing is how to integrate these movements with the revolutionary movement of the exploited class for emancipation from exploitation.

There are reasons to nurse suspicion about a group of people and to doubt their honesty, who plead that students and youths should ponder over social welfare only by freeing themselves of politics. There may be a few genuinely confused persons among them — well, that is not the important point. But the class motive that works behind this preaching by them is to make the youth and the student community apathetic to politics. On the other hand, the question of solution to the problems of the whole country is closely interwoven with the fundamental political question of the exploited classes. This is the objective reality, whether we want it or not, whether it pleases us or not, whether we foster a much too highbrowed adverse feeling about the politics of some particular person or whatever else it may be. It can be denied in no way save only by physical force. For example, the discrimination within this society is but a reality. The society is class divided — this is reality too. It is not that the society is class divided because we have been telling it, or because some people like us believe it to be so. This Indian society is class divided precisely because of historical reasons. Whether we want it or not, whether it pleases us or not, this society has become class divided because of the inexorable laws of history. On one side stand the oppressed, the exploited, the toiling masses of the people — workers, agricultural labourers, poor peasants, the lower middle class and the intelligentsia ; on the other

side are the big capitalists, the big business, the rich peasants — all of them, and the system of administration, the bureaucratic power of the state apparatus serving the interest of this exploiting class. We did not bring about this class division. Maybe it were better had it not been so. We would not have objected if employers and workers were not created in history. If rich peasants, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers were not created, we would not have had any objection to it. Not that it happened because we had asked for it. It happened in accord with the inexorable laws of history. It is no use, therefore, laying the blame at our door now. What we mean to say is that we must admit this objective reality with courage. We have to grasp this truth and next determine its character. And what does it mean? It means that the exploiters on one side and the exploited on the other side in this class divided society and an incessant struggle going on between them — this no invention by us and this going on at each moment independently of our consciousness — this is but the outcome of the inexorable laws of history. And centring round this conflict revolve the political, social, cultural and economic life of India. The intellectual faculty in India, its thoughts and ideas, its social outlook, anything and everything we see around us, is but a superstructure on it, born of this conflict and is swirling on under its thrust. In these circumstances we cannot move even a single step forward without correctly determining the character of this conflict. To try to advance will be as by a blind man. And what happens with the blind man when he tries to move ahead will exactly come to pass if one attempts to advance in a like manner. It will so happen with all of us.

### **Two connotations of 'national unity' and 'unity of the youth'**

So, the nature and character of all the movements have to be determined in the context of a class divided nation, a society divided into the exploiters and the exploited — a divided nation that India is. And here I should tell the youth one thing: the reactionary class of the country, the bourgeoisie, take advantage of the patriotism of the youth and almost always lead them astray with exhortations like 'patriotism', 'patriotic feeling', 'call of the nation', 'national interest' and 'national unity'. A point to be always borne in this connection is that to love one's country is noble no doubt but to lick the boot of the employer because one loves the country is not laudable. Nor is it noble for us to protect the interest of the capitalist class in the name of national interest while we think ourselves that we deeply love the country, we serve the country. It is an act of extreme enmity and utter betrayal to the country, even if unwittingly, and does, in the ultimate, nothing but the greatest harm to the country. That is why I have been telling that 'our country', 'our nation', whose problems we are discussing is no undivided nation, it is a class divided nation, on one side of which stands the capitalist class, the working class coming on the other. Thus, 'national unity', 'people's unity', 'unity of the youth' — all these can have just two definitions in this context, these can really be used in two senses — either meaning unity of the youth, of the masses, of the people of the country in the interest of the capitalist class or meaning unity of the youth, of the masses, of the exploited people of the country in the interest of the working class, the exploited class. In a class divided society there can be just these two scientific definitions of the expression 'unity of the country'. Every other explanation is but a bourgeois trickery to deceive the people in the name of the country. So, mere exhortations like 'integrity of the country' or 'interest of the country' without mentioning the class character and the class interest will not do. 'We are fighting for the country' — even this understanding will not serve, in fact it cannot serve. You have to understand precisely which class interest it is with, which is interwoven historically 'the interest of the country' in the sense of interest of the majority of the

people. And if 'the interest of the country' becomes one with the interest of the exploited class, with the interest of the working class, of peasants and labourers and of the lower middle class, then to serve the country means just to guide the country's movements and youth energy and to correctly organize the youth community in the interest of these and these classes alone. While talking of 'the interest of the country' the youth, therefore, must have a clear idea, an understanding about whose interest they want to serve, whose banner they wish to carry as representing 'the interest of the country' in this class divided society of India. Is it of the exploiting class or of the exploited class? If we do not clinch this issue but go on chanting vaguely for the country we would repeatedly walk into the trap of the capitalist class, we would fall victim to them and would perhaps be protecting, though unintentionally, their interest merely. This has happened many times even in the past and may still happen in future.

I don't intend to go into details of these happenings. However, I should like to place the whole thing to the youth from this angularity, inasmuch as it is not the youth of West Bengal alone or of India but the youth of the whole world, and again not the youth of the middle class or of the educated section only but the youth among workers and peasants, as a matter of fact, the combined strength of all these sections of youth, irrespective of sex, that makes up the living soul of these movements. The aged, the calculating, the conservative have never been able to cause any upheaval in society. They could never bring about a change in society, they did never come forward to participate in any movement for a final solution of the social problems, and did never conduct a movement. It is the youth in all the countries who have changed society, it is they who have been conducting mighty movements to build up civilization. And this community of youth comprises not the middle class educated youth alone but the youth coming from the most oppressed sections of society. So, you have to keep in mind the youth of the peasant and worker families and you who are the educated youth have to work together with them keeping in view the task of drawing them in large numbers into the fold of these movements. This is precisely the most vital task of the present-day youth movement of our country.

Remember, the youth belonging to the peasantry and the working class constitute a large section of the country's population and without them what the educated youth alone can do is to usher in a thought, an idea, an agitation, an ideology only. Without them you cannot unleash that mighty storm, that high tide of movement. And without the participation of the youth from the working class and the peasantry you cannot organize powerful youth movements throughout the length and breadth of the country. You shall have to pay serious attention, therefore, to the task of mobilizing youth of the peasant and worker families in greater numbers.

### **The correct way of conducting youth movement in our country**

Now, the most serious problem facing our youth and cultural movement is how to wed these movements with the main political struggle waged by the proletarian class against all forms of exploitation. To accomplish this task it is necessary to build up widespread mass movements of the exploited class against all sorts of exploitation. And those seeking to do this must understand first the present mental make-up of the youth of our country, if they wish to inspire the youth rightly on the basis of an understanding of what should be the form and character of these movements as also of the nature of problems pertaining to these movements. A trait of the mentality of the presentday youth, particularly of the middle class educated youth, which so vividly manifests itself is that our youth are becoming socially indifferent day by day. This appears to be increasing by the day. And you see everyday we are witnessing a highbrowed

apathetic attitude, a completely indifferent attitude among people, among youth and among the enlightened sections towards society and towards all progressive movements. For that you should have a correct understanding of the cause for this growing trend. As soon as you delve into the heart of this problem from a historical perspective and logic and science you would clearly realize that it is the lack of principles in political movements and the hollowness of ideological struggles, in short, the bankruptcy, sheer opportunism of political leadership over a long period which is primarily responsible for this state of affair. Consequently, today you have to tackle the situation from both sides at once. First, you have to build up youth movement by directly participating in the democratic movements and the class struggles of the broad masses which are developing each day against exploitation of every sort. Second, you have to conduct the cultural movement by integrating the ideological and cultural struggle with the fundamental revolutionary political struggle of the proletarian class of our country, creating thereby a new atmosphere for countrywide cultural revolution. You would be able to overthrow the oppressive burden bearing down on this country only when you can thus correctly integrate the cultural and ideological movements with the main political struggle of the working class. But those who would pull down this burden, who would unleash the torrent of a completely new type of movement in this country must understand first what is the cause for the continuous growth of this indifferent attitude to social problems in the mental make-up of the society. Why is it that an indifferent mentality about society is growing by the day in this society, among the youth and among students ? Whereas, it was in this very country that we witnessed educated youth imbued with social consciousness during the independence struggle when ferment and torrents of movement swayed this country. Whatever might have been the nature and level of consciousness there was one thing however with the youth of those days, which is that they thought : 'I belong to this country, I bear obligation for the freedom movement and have duties to fulfil in that struggle'. In those days of subjugation of this country the youth were in ferment with agony, they rushed in swarms to freedom struggle, giving up career, smilingly leaving the examination hall — those who were capable of standing first-class first — without hesitation and in a matter of seconds, without heeding to pleadings of parents, of kins, of anybody for that matter. Yes, it was there, really you cannot deny it any way. It did exist, this mind, among the students and the youth of Bengal, of India. Where is it gone, and why ? You should seek answer to these questions.

The greatest problem of the day is that young men and women of our country do not bother now about ideology or sense of values. A feeling of extreme disillusionment or of extreme detachment to the society and a self-centred mentality seems to overwhelm them. "I should remain busy with myself, I am in no need of getting into so many troubles at all" — this mentality is ever spreading. A trait of unreasonable indifference to politics is growing among them, even if slowly. Politics is a nasty business — this is what they believe.

It is in the interest of the bourgeois class and other reactionary forces that such thoughts have been craftily implanted in their heads and are being implanted each and every day. To engage in politics is nothing great, it is great however to become an engineer. To earn lots of money as a top executive or as a businessman and to serve the employer is what is known as the fulfilment of life's mission. 'I have to rise in life' — what does that mean ? I have to be an engineer, which means, I have to become a servant. And in lieu of that I will be getting money, I can put on terylene shirts and enjoy life. Whereas life will be simply spoilt by serving politics — only worthless people engage in such activities. And so-called 'worthy people' become educated workmen to act as willing tools of the owners. This mentality is growing among the youth, in fact is being helped to grow. Now, the question may arise as to what might be the reason for the

growth of this despicable individualistic mentality, for this increasing indifference to social problems and for the prevalence of this utter apathy towards the struggle between opposing classes within the society. Many people may think that the cause of all this lies in the moral degradation of youth. But youth behaved quite the other way just some few years back, during the independence movement if you would remember. In those days the tribute to the students and youth of Bengal was : “They are the flowers of Bengal”. Are we then to suppose that it was *Brahma*<sup>1</sup> or God himself who had created those flowers with great affection and sent them down to Bengal ? And is it that *Brahma* is averse today, God has become averse and consequently the youth of West Bengal have all turned disgraceful ? It is obvious, the reason has to be sought within the society, in the nature and character of the politics of the country, in the mental make-up of the leadership of the country and in the standard of that leadership. Only then we would get the correct answer. Otherwise, what is to be concluded is that none else but that *Brahma* does everything around and as for us there is nothing to act upon. That is why even though it is in full view of all why boys are turning out like that — the parents have been watching it and so do the relatives and teachers and it weighs unbearable on all of them — yet hardly could one notice any genuine effort for its solution. It must be told here, even if it sounds queer, that the character, conduct and behaviour of teachers do not hold out such examples to the students now-a-days wherefrom the latter might learn something. Please excuse me if any amongst you happens to be a teacher. If an honest and healthy village boy, untouched yet by the fashion of ultra-modernism, unaware yet of luxury, but, immersed in the ideology of Vivekananda, Rabindranath and Saratchandra, discovers that his teacher is busy with none but his own self, the teacher has himself lost all principles and is engulfed in luxury, what would he learn ? Degradation pervades all walks of life today. Those who teach have no ideology and are themselves misguided. They have even made education a business affair just for the sake of earning. Of course, it is not to imply that teachers are responsible for it. A point always to be borne in mind in this connection is that even though it is all due to the society itself, yet each and everyone bears individual responsibility. If one fancies one has justification in being a thief, for surely one did not become so of one’s own will, one has been made into a thief simply because of social conditions, then it has to be said there exists no rationale for this thinking. I just referred to society simply to correctly analyse the manner in which social conditions influence the mental make-up of all people in varying ways. But every man as an individual has something to do of his own. He has himself to bear responsibility for his degradation inasmuch as he has to bear a responsibility for the development of his own character. In other words, he plays an important role individually and this, in turn, influences the social conditions.

The individualistic mentality has to be driven out from the minds of youth, students and the educated section, if you are to organize a youth movement. Otherwise, the movement cannot reach great heights. And I have already said, this will not come about simply by discussions and preaching of theory and ideology. Movements will have to be linked with these and the struggle against injustice and exploitation of all sorts are to serve as the basis. But if there is no clear ideology before it, if a correct analysis of the entire situation in the country does not make up its backdrop, if it fails to correctly locate the cause of each problem, then that movement would follow a wrong course, it would not be victorious. I am going to tell you about a particular aspect of this problem, please think it over. Why do men get inspired in the society and act, as for example, youth came forward during the independence movement — pray why ? The old mental make-up of the society, because it was built as a whole on the foundation of the feudal social system, was but sectarian, family-centred, isolated and localized. The mental horizon as

understood today while speaking of 'the country' has no resemblance with that old psychology. When Renaissance dawned in the country, the trend that emerged with Rammohan and continued with Vidyasagar, Rabindranath, Saratchandra and Nazrul, ushered in, as a consequence, new morals for the youth of the country, heralded a new ideology, a new concept and a new consciousness about the 'country', a nascent consciousness of the society, in short a new concept of ideas and ethics was established in the society. The new ideology and ethics which fought and vanquished the old prevailing ideology, ethics and concept of morality and could spread its influence over the mind of the youth and over the educated section of the country stood for democracy, independence and patriotism based on a newly awakened humanism in India. It was nothing else but ideology, therefore, which brought this consciousness, this ethics and this sense of value in the society. As it succeeded in seizing and influencing the mental make-up of the society, waging a relentless struggle against the old ideology and sense of values, it was only then that the youth of the country, swept by its turbulence, rushed madly after the new. The attitude of people had changed, narrow-mindedness had shrunk. People learnt to think of the country's independence ; the conception about nation had changed, the localized conception about the country had changed and the narrow conception about family had changed too. With change in all these man became social in a larger context and learnt to participate in social movements. But you have to keep in mind that this ideology was basically bourgeois nationalism and bourgeois humanism, and based on these was its democratic consciousness, the class consciousness of bourgeois democracy.

It was primarily on the basis of bourgeois class consciousness of democracy, on its conception and idea of independence, on its conception and idea of patriotism that this ideology was founded. Though the conception and idea were of the bourgeois class, these were revolutionary in character, these were progressive in those days. That is why those who came forward to fight the British imperialism under the banner of that ideology, those who declared, in whichever manner, be it through literature, through poems, or through movements, that 'freedom of the country is my birthright' had to pay dearly for it. They had to suffer severe punishment for it, they had to make boundless sacrifices. It was the path of suffering, hardship and struggle. In that suffering and struggle itself lay the real joy of life. And it was no joy of the lifeless, the impotent, the inactive and the emasculated.

### **No room for parochialism in youth movement**

But following independence, the bourgeois social system, the bourgeois state apparatus based on capitalist economic structure, the bourgeois democratic political system was established in the society. Consequently, the fundamental problem of the society, that is, people's movement for emancipation from all sorts of exploitation failed to succeed and the basic question of people's emancipation from all sorts of exploitation could not be resolved. What is more, even though India emerged as politically a united nation incorporating the different nationalities, the democratic unity amongst people of different regions in the sense of bourgeois democracy or bourgeois nationalism itself could not be established here. The people of the country remained divided on the basis of race, religion and caste. We, the Indians, are perhaps one politically but in the next breath we are Bengalis-Biharis.<sup>2</sup> This Bengali-Bihari feeling, in other words, the mutual hostility on the basis of nationalities, often assumes such serious proportions among people under the machinations of the reactionary and privileged classes that we feel least hesitation to tear apart the whole of India even. The working people in India are not only divided among themselves on the basis of nationality feelings, they are also divided as Hindus and Muslims.



Apart from Bengali-Bihari and Hindu-Muslim issues, you would notice, if you further watch the Hindu community, that even here they are divided as Brahmins, Sudras, lower caste and the like. Maybe these have diminished to a great extent in the heart of this city of Calcutta, but they are not altogether absent. True, people now-a-days do sometimes enter into intercaste and widow marriages but these have not yet gained the honour of place widely in the society. It may enjoy a place of respect among a handful of people but the society as a whole remains plunged in darkness even today. We have made some progress towards industrial revolution, some achievement in terms of national wealth. If our society is analysed economically and politically, it is fundamentally a capitalist society. But if we look at the social and cultural life, if we take note of the customs and behaviours, if we watch the social aspect of people's way of life, we would find that even today the people of our country remain divided and isolated on the basis of religion, caste and race, as they were in the dark age.

The reason for the above lies precisely in the weaknesses and shortcomings inherent in the main freedom struggle of this country, a movement whose leadership was in the hand of the political representatives of the capitalist class of India. Because capitalism in India or the capitalist class here is part of the reactionary class of world capitalism, it no longer possessed, in this era, the traits of their revolutionary character of the past. They wanted freedom but not revolution. Freedom was to them the fulfilment of their need to seize the state power from the Britishers. They had no need of modernizing the society by changing the whole of it with the impact of revolution. That is why they fought the Britishers, on the one hand, and shut the door to social and cultural revolution, on the other, simply because of their compromising attitude to imperialism and feudalism. That is why the bourgeois nationalism in India could not free itself from religious tutelage, it could not rid itself of the Hindu religious influence. What is more, if you probe a little deeper you would notice that the national independence struggle could not entirely keep itself free from the Brahmanical influence even. This religion-oriented nationalism has hindered the social and cultural revolution in India. Consequently, it was not possible to free the democratic consciousness which awakened the people in the independence movement in this country from religious influence. The task of social and cultural revolution which ought to have been completed in the course of freedom struggle and the task of democratization of the entire country even in the sense of bourgeois revolution itself was not fulfilled by the capitalist class of India because of their fear complex of revolution and because of their compromising attitude towards imperialism and feudalism. This task could be accomplished had the leadership of the freedom movement lain in the hands of the working class, in the hands of the working class party. But those who projected themselves as the working class party at that time, that is, those known to be the Communist Party in this country made no earnest attempt to oust the bourgeois leadership and thereby establish the leadership of the working class. Moreover, their practice of countless wrong policies and their political practice of appeasing the national bourgeoisie have helped the national bourgeoisie to consolidate and firmly establish their leadership over the national freedom struggle. Even as they claim themselves to be leftists, socialists and communists, they could not uphold the banner of social and cultural revolution which the bourgeoisie had thrown overboard during the freedom movement.

### **In a class divided society no individual can remain free from class interest**

The banner of social and cultural revolution which was held aloft first by Rammohan and then by others, including Saratchandra and Nazrul, was contemptuously trampled over by the leaders of political movement and, what is more, even by leaders who claimed themselves to be

communists. The consequence was exactly as could be anticipated. Movements had taken place, immolations were made, lives had been laid down, and at the cost of all these freedom was won at last, whatever the way. But the capitalist class reaped the entire harvest. The country became politically united but its people continued to remain divided on the basis of racial discrimination, superstition and casteism. Is it that our nation is divided into two, only in the sense of classes of a class divided society? No. The exploited class is further divided on the basis of religion, race and caste. And this division among the exploited masses gives the capitalists a further handle in the sphere of class struggle to abet this disunity and use it in opportune moments for carrying on unrestricted plunder, exploitation and oppression. So it devolves upon the revolutionary youth of India today to resolve a highly complicated problem and this means they have to build unity, strong as steel, among the exploited masses, freeing them from the evil influence of religious fanaticism, provincialism, casteism, etc., in the course of completing the unfulfilled task of social and cultural revolution, while at the same time organizing the main political and economic struggle. What is however necessary to make it a success is to resolve the question of ideology in the first place. The bourgeois concept of liberty, nationalism and patriotism, once an ideology for which lives would have to be laid down at its mention, has now been reduced to a privilege in the hands of the exploiters. In other words, the old ideology has been reduced to an ideology sustaining the rule, coercion and domination of the exploiter class. There is nothing to be surprised at it. No ideology is eternal or permanent in history. 'Man is for ideology' — if you mean thereby that an ideology works in all the movements, and the society has to be changed in accordance with it, then this understanding may be partly true. But the idea expressed by the language of this saying is basically wrong. It is not that 'man is for ideology', but it is ideology which is for the society, for progress, for man. Ideology is born of the constant struggle between the thinking of man and nature, on the one hand, and the contradiction between the individual and the social environment, on the other, and in this sense human brain is the creator of ideology. An ideology suddenly drops from somewhere and is borne thereafter by the human brain — well, ideologies are not born like that. The spiritual world came into being as a result of creation of the mental faculties through conflict between the human brain and nature in the struggle for existence and progress in society. A further point to be kept in mind in this connection is that social consciousness awoke for the first time in the human mind and man was socially organized as the human brain came in conflict with nature from the necessity of living and of production. Hence, inasmuch as the human life is changing, nature and society are changing, so do the form and character of the conflict between man and nature. And as a result, the nature of social problems, too, is undergoing a change. Ideology, in consequence, cannot remain idle at any one stage. Ideology is bound to change as well. That is why all ideals and ideology pass through a history of rise and fall and indeed such histories are there. Terms like eternal ideals, eternal principles, unchanging and eternal sense of values are sweet words, but are sweet nonsense, and these serve no purpose. An ideology cannot be regarded as an eternal truth simply because it comes from the lips of a great man. This is because even the thoughts of a great man are conditioned by his surroundings. He is no blessed son of *Brahma*, he is a social being. His thoughts revolve centred round the movements within society, under the impact of all conflicts and the thrust of the conflict between man and nature. All great men are pivoted on these conflicts, none possesses the capacity to rise beyond. That is why Marx said that the relation between man and man is a production relation. There are many who interpret this statement by Marx as suggesting a narrow economic relation. But this is wrong. By production he meant both spiritual and material production. For instance, what we call knowledge, art, science, literature,

ethics, education system, legal system and jurisprudence — these are all spiritual production of man. And material production is what is produced on an economic base and what we consume. Marx remarked at the same time that the class which controls the material production is the same that controls the spiritual production as well. It follows that in a given society the class that governs, controls and dominates the material production also influences the spiritual production, that is, the whole mental make-up of the society. It has always to be judged whether the education system, the sense of values and ethics prevailing in a given class divided society are right or wrong, whether these are progressive or reactionary in character and whether these would benefit us or would obstruct the social progress of today — for however long these may have prevailed and in whichever manner these may have influenced mankind. And while judging the same, we must keep in mind the production system, on which this sense of values is a superstructure. When society had not been class divided and the production system had not come under control of individuals or of any class and when all production was based on social needs as a whole, social thinking too had not been class divided. But since society became class divided social thinking too assumed class character. On one side was the thinking of the employer or the exploiting class and, on the other was the thinking of the exploited class. Both were there — the reactionary thinking on one side and the progressive thinking on the other. Social thinking as personified through an individual in a given society is what we call individual thinking. Hence, how can the individual rise above the class and the society? The thinking of Rabindranath or of Vivekananda is a particular personification of the social thinking. And no doubt, of course, that such thinking, in its turn, influences the social thinking. The mutual relation between social thinking and individual thinking is dialectical in nature, that is, it is a relation of unity and struggle — one influencing the other. The basic point to be taken note of here is that it is the social thinking which is reflected in individual thinking, or is personified in the individuals — and this is what we call the individual thinking. Personification of social thinking is individual thinking. No individual in a class divided society where social thinking is split into class thinkings is free from class interest. Every man, no matter how great he is, has to be linked with one of the class interests, whether he realizes it or not, and has to reflect one or other class thinking. Under the circumstances, therefore, when everyone is bound to be linked with this or that class, with or without one's knowledge and has to move in reality with this or that class interest, what more ignorance and self-deception can there be than musing to one's self: 'I am not chained to any of the classes, I am rather thinking in terms of the interest of the entire society.'

It happened exactly like that with many of the great men in the past. When they spoke of the whole of mankind, they had no knowledge that they were, in fact, reflecting one particular class thinking. Maybe they were not in the know of it, and probably no one would question their personal integrity for that. It is however impossible to agree, on grounds of scientific analysis, that there could be an individual free from the influence of class thinking in a class divided society — unless, of course, we believe thinking is not a function of the human brain, thinking is some such faculty which enters the human brain much like the radioactive energy, or enters from an absolute source, an absolute *Brahma*, that is, an absolute entity. But if thinking is a function of the human brain, if it is a result of biochemical action and physiological function of the brain, then there is no other alternative than to admit that every individual thinking is a reflection of social thinking, is but a personification of it. And where the society is class divided, all thoughts are necessarily class thoughts. Individual thought, likewise, is a mere reflection of class thought in that case.

### **Capitalism is the root cause of the deepening crisis of life**

Under the circumstances, the fundamental issue to be decided by those who wish to be reckoned as progressive is to determine which class thinking is progressive and which, in a given society and in a given context, is reactionary. The thinking of the bourgeois class at the time of the freedom struggle and, based on it, its ideology and concepts of patriotism, national unity, liberty, humanity, sense of values, aesthetics and justice were progressive in that society in the context of the anti-imperialist freedom struggle, the struggle to break the feudal social order — even though it was bourgeois thinking. In effect in a limited way though, it had a revolutionary aspect. And as the victory of that ideology was heralded and its dominance over the old feudal thoughts and ideals established, the psyche of the whole country was agog with life, and the mind of the individual was awakened to social consciousness. The youth of that revolutionary period of the bourgeois ideology was not indifferent to the society, rather people were inspired with social consciousness. But today we live in a different social system. The bourgeoisie, the national bourgeoisie to be particular, after they won power through independence struggle brought the country under their oppressive rule. And it is they who now stand as the main obstacle confronting the progress of the society having established their regime of capitalist exploitation, oppression and plunder. The wealth created today by the labour of millions of people in India has assumed a social character and the labour they do to meet their needs has also a social character. Their labour mingles with what they produce. But what they produce in factories are not for their own consumption ; in lieu, they are given wages. We call this kind of labour as social labour, that is, a labour which is social in character. When the bourgeoisie exhort the people to work hard, they also ask them to build up national wealth. They do not say, however, that people will have to work hard to earn a square meal. It follows then that the labour of the common people enriches the national wealth and brings benefit to the society. Their own statements prove that the labour of the worker is social in character and the production by them is also social. But the ownership of production remains private. As a result, the social wealth created by the labour of the people of the society is being appropriated by the private owner, it is being robbed through exploitation. As a sequel to appropriation of social wealth by the owners, the working class having been cheated, the purchasing capacity of the workers is continuously declining and the national market is shrinking. As a result of this constant shrinkage, the capitalists can no longer provide larger number of jobs by expansion of industries. This is because the industries still surviving are becoming ridden with crisis. And this leads to growing unemployment. In this condition, when people in urban areas are losing their jobs in large numbers and swelling the ranks of the unemployed, it is not possible any more to make radical land reforms and all-out modernization of agriculture today within the capitalist economic framework, not to speak of creating provisions for more employment in urban areas. For, if the agricultural system is ventured to be modernized by mechanization, it would be impossible to make suitable provisions within the present capitalist economic framework for the millions of surplus rural unemployed created at one stroke. A lot of such topics are there which need to be discussed. It is not possible, however, to explain them in details in the present discussion. But the basic point I wish to emphasize is that the internal contradiction and discrepancy within this capitalist social system are the source of all types of economic, social and cultural crises.

If we are to open the road to industrial revolution and development of cultural and moral values in the society at an unhindered pace we shall have to maintain all-out advancement of

science. But how can science progress here ? The capitalists are controlling it. They utilize it to a technological end and to the extent necessary for modernization of the state apparatus and for boosting production, and no more than that. But if the production has no market, if the urge for continuously mechanizing and improving the means of production no longer exists today and if the market is in recession, they would block the road to development of science. And, in fact, they are doing it. This is why, when we say that India needs one more revolution today, a revolution to open the door to emancipation, and that socialism has to be established to open the gateway to social progress, we also speak of liberation of production, science, art, literature, sense of values, norms and behaviours and the economic system from the capitalist greed and profit motive. Struggle for socialism is no mere struggle for liberating the workers from economic exploitation, no mere struggle for winning jobs for the unemployed millions. This struggle for the establishment of the socialist society freed of the capitalist exploitation is a struggle for liberating the entire production and the whole world of human knowledge. It is the struggle for liberating our sense of values, our aesthetics and art, our literature and all creations from the capitalist yoke and motive which have chained us down. What is more, it is a struggle for liberation even in the domain of love, in the sphere of peace at home. You will see for yourself, should you care to, that most of the men and women who are mad after love in their youth are not finally rewarded with true love these days. Today it has become much like running after a mirage. None can be trusted and trust appears to be missing from love, too. We can hardly call any family a happy union. Actually, the social mind is becoming crippled, which contributes to all this. You have to trace the cause of why it becomes so. A sense of frustration about life is creeping in — somehow to pass this life. As against this, a kind of desperateness is growing among the youth. But this desperateness, the one we witness now, is not oriented to initiating change in life, to its uplifting or to its remoulding in conformity with a higher ideology. It is like extinguishing oneself by any means whatsoever. Actually, it is an aimless desperation which insists getting along doing something, whatever that be and come what may. There isn't time to think over all so many things. Even the mind to ponder and think deeply seems disappearing. This is a dangerous trend. This desperate trend, one that is unconcerned with reason and judgement, has gripped the entire mindset of the society. Hence, it is no use blaming the country's youth alone when they are falling victim to this trend. It is only to be expected that the Congress, the party of the ruling bourgeoisie, would aid the growth of such a mindset. But I am surprised when I see that most of the powerful opposition parties, in their bid to maintain their influence and hold, are resorting to fabrication and lies and are helping the growth of illogical, irrational, slogan-mongering mind among the people, and are least concerned about the harmful effect this will ultimately have on people's democratic movement and revolutionary struggle. The leaders and cadre of the youth movement must comprehend this basic problem correctly and go to the youth with the correct revolutionary ideology and programme for youth movement in order that the confused and misguided youth may be inspired anew.

**Bourgeois motto of life :  
be a willing tool of the exploiters**

India is ideologically deviated today. The new revolutionary ideology, which can today make the Indian masses vibrant with new vigour of life, has yet failed to appear in full force in the public life, engulfed as it is with streams of difficulties. In other words, it has failed as yet to occupy fully its position in the mind of the people. This is not to say that this revolutionary ideology has not yet emerged in this country, only that it has not yet been able to spread its

influence over the masses. And as for the old ideology, it has been reduced to a privilege. It is the same bourgeois nationalism or humanism which one day taught people to brave death, to wage struggles, to remould society and to sacrifice life in freedom movement but now tells people simply to rush after the moneybag. Spelt in terms of influencing life, in reality its meaning now comes to this : 'Keep yourself engaged in your vocation and be servile'. The bourgeois interpretation of love for the country comes to : 'Lead a trouble-free life and do not engage in politics ; if you must however, you should serve the politics to the liking of the capitalist class, the bourgeoisie. If every member of the society looks after the happiness and welfare of himself and of his own family, only then would the real benefit descend.' That is what the bourgeoisie preach. Individuals and families together make the country, they argue. Of course, when they feel the necessity for going to war they raise the hue and cry that it is the noble task for everyone to give his all for the country. When in their own class interest the bourgeoisie do not need war then this theory of theirs means, in short : 'Your duty is simply to look after your own welfare. Be a technician or an engineer. And then serve the capitalists like slaves and the more efficiently you do so, the more you assure the capitalist production system, that is, the more you assure the peace of the employer, and the greater you become a patriot'. And those who are loud against it are the enemies of the country in their view. Now the real problem centres around what we mean by 'country'. To whom does this country belong — to us or to them ? To whom does it belong — to us, the suffering multitude of forty-nine crores of people out of fifty-two,<sup>3</sup> or to those three crores, the employers and their agents ? How does the production, the national wealth grow ? Do we increase this wealth with our sweat and toil or do they do it by investing money ? This is the fundamental, the pivotal issue.

What I wish you to realize by the foregoing discussion is that bourgeois nationalism or patriotism cannot advance the country any further today. Those unpatriotic people who never participated in the freedom struggle have now crowded the Congress party after the latter established its regime. These are the people who overnight changed into great patriots. And who do we find as the ideal people to be projected before the public and the student community by the Congress leaders ? Subrata Mukherjee, General Thimaya and General Chowdhury. And each of these three 'great men' was a lackey of the British during the freedom struggle. When the youth of the country had been fighting against the British gun, they were the British military Generals then. And it was under their command that the Indian army and police opened fire on the soldiers of the freedom movement and the people of the country. Had we witnessed Subrata Mukherjee to have turned his gun along with his men against the British, we could have agreed that he was a hero. The youth of our times are advised to follow those who had acted as agents of the British during the independence movement. They are told that Subrata Mukherjee and General Chowdhury are the pride of Bengal.<sup>4</sup>

Such a Bengal, I venture to say, is about to be ruined and it has hardly a chance to rise up again. They never urge you to be like Kshudiram, to arise in the spirit of those who gave their lives on the gallows, and not to care for anything when fighting injustice. They do not call upon you to follow in the footsteps of Vivekananda, Saratchandra and Nazrul. The specimens they uphold as ideals before the youth are none but the downright treacherous bootlickers under the sun. These are the specimens of those ever servile military generals and mercenaries. Why will not then individualism and indiscipline grow among the youth ? Why will not selfishness grow ? You must uphold the truth before the people that the bourgeois liberty, bourgeois patriotism, bourgeois ideology or doctrine can no longer lead the Indian masses. That is why, the same ideals of humanism, which once inspired Saratchandra and Nazrul to respond in tune with the

political movements even as they were engaged in literary pursuits, do not stir a bit any more the litterateurs of today. For, bourgeois humanism no longer bears that revolutionary character. The humanists of our times are passive theorists ; they are supercilious, they lead a smooth life, and now and then warm up gatherings interpreting Rabindranath, Saratchandra and Nazrul. I say that you earn the right to spread the message of Rabindranath only when you bear his agony in your heart even today. What will he teach — he, who lacks that agony ? That is why Nazrul once remarked — what would they teach, those who are slaves ? And what would the students learn from them ? To attain the sense of dignity through struggles, to acquire the consciousness of freedom, to learn to develop oneself as an independent man, these are the most valuable lessons to learn.

This point remains almost the same in a different context, and in a different sense even today. Still now our education system remains just an inseparable part of the system of capitalist rule, oppression and exploitation. It makes sense in receiving this education only when you can utilize it in the struggle against capitalism. Otherwise, this education is meant to turn out slaves and you should remember that none but the slaves impart this education.

### **Establish the new revolutionary ideology in society — the call of the hour**

The society in India, in Bengal, is in the throes of birth of a new ideology. The old ideology is fossilized —the sequel to the inexorable law of history. The sense of values of the bourgeois ideology, of bourgeois humanism of the days of freedom struggle has lost its character, and immediately following the establishment of the bourgeois rule it transformed into an instrument for oppression and domination of the bourgeoisie. There is nothing to be surprised at this. In every era an ideology is born which advances society and when new necessity arises with the passage of time, the old ideology, rooted in old interests, stands out as hindrance to the growth of the new ideology. The new sense of values, the new ideology arising from newer necessities struggles hard to combat and defeat the old ideology, and thus it establishes itself. This is the law of history. Today we have to free ourselves from the bourgeois ideology and mentality, and from the sway of Gandhism. Abusing Gandhiji does not mean becoming free from the influence of Gandhism. It is not possible to get rid of Gandhism simply by decrying nonviolence as worthless. We have to wage a struggle to disentangle Gandhism from our mental make-up, our ethical outlook and the complex process of our thinking. Unless the youth can get over these stiff hurdles, neither people's emancipation nor development of powerful revolutionary mass movements being one with the exploited masses would be possible. In that event, even as you will think you are fighting along with the exploited masses, you will be ultimately serving the owners actually. You will be serving the capitalist class in the name of country's interest and national interest. India needs thus a new ideology. We are living in a transitional phase. Whereas the old ideology is rotten, the new revolutionary ideology has not reached the masses yet. For that this frustration, this indifference. You have therefore to establish the thoughts and ideals of scientific socialism in the thick of public life and mass movements. And while you do this, guard against intrusion of fake socialism in the mass movements. You have to fight untiringly against it. For, socialism of different descriptions, of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois varieties, are now in vogue. The socialism I am speaking of, is the socialism which imbibes the idea of class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat as the logical culmination of the class struggle. You shall have to fight for these new ideals, this new ideology. You should make it clear to the youth that the cardinal task of youth movement is to support unhesitatingly the day-to-day movements of

the exploited people. For, we are part of the exploited masses. If 'country's freedom' has any meaning, it means the emancipation of the exploited masses from all sorts of exploitation. You should be active participants and in the forefront of each of the movements — in the sphere of politics, economics and against social injustice — which people have to wage each day. This is what I expect of you. Not that you should only explain theories, only make discussions, only write tracts. Of course, you have to do all these to bring the new ideology to the fore, but along with that without hesitation you shall have to extend strong and active support to each just struggle by the people, to each struggle against exploitation. If you can move along, carrying out these two tasks at once, then the youth movement can be said to have a prospect in India. Only then would the youth of India emerge again as the pioneer of mass movements, as the leading core of the revolutionary forces of India. The face of the country will begin to change, this society will begin to transform. The appearance, the demeanour, the conduct and behaviour of the youth about whom I made this long discussion, I used some strong words, too — all would begin to change. An altogether new atmosphere will be created in the country. The primary task of the youth movement is to create this new atmosphere. Last of all, I offer my revolutionary greetings to my young friends and conclude my speech here.

Speech on September 17, 1967.

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