

Society and Ideology in Ceylon during a 'Time of Troubles', 1795-1850. (2)

THE RISE OF ECONOMIC INDIVIDUALISM

'No economic order can be brought into existence so long as the corresponding human type does not also emerge'.

(KARL MANNHEIM)

WHEN Sir Henry Maine, in a classic phrase, suggested that 'the movement of the *progressive* societies has hitherto been a movement *from status to contract*', he was adverting to that momentous historical process by which individual obligation took the place of group-sanctions as the organizing principle of dynamic or 'progressive' societies.¹ Certain societies were clearly more 'progressive' than others in this sense, and among the least 'progressive' were the static communities of the Eternal East. Social organization and social philosophy bewray this 'progress', and the processes of social change which characterize a Time of Troubles are seldom intelligible unless society and ideology are regarded as correlated variables. An exposition of two 'ideal types' of social order is a necessary methodological prerequisite for an analysis of the interactions between society and ideology in Ceylon during the period under review.²

In a society governed by what Tonnies distinguishes as *gemeinschaft* social relations, the individual is conscious of himself only through some general category such as the family, the community, the tribe, or the guild.³ In these sociocentric communities, 'individualism' is but imperfectly developed; in extreme cases even natural events are normatively interpreted through the medium of the principle of retribution, and every misfortune experienced (e.g. flood, drought, famine, and disease) is regarded as the

1. Maine: *Ancient Law* (1861, Oxford, 1931 ed.) Maine's own criteria of 'progress' are uncertain. (cf. C. K. Allen's Introduction).

2. An *ideal type* has no ethical connotation: it is a conceptually pure type of social behaviour. Empirical instances diverge from or approximate to this *ideal type*. (cf. Max Weber: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Tr. T. Parsons, London, 1947, p. 81).

3. In Europe this *gemeinschaft* spirit (*volksgeist*) is enshrined in conceptions of society of writers like Johannes Althusius. (cf. Gierke: *Natural Law and the Theory of Society*, 1500-1800. Tr. E. Barker, Cambridge, 1950 ed.) Gierke himself seems to pose the crucial dilemma: 'Organism or mechanism—which will you take?' (vide p. 52 etc.).

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consequence of a violation of a social norm.⁴ This ubiquitous group-spirit is well exemplified in the Indian village community in which the life-conduct and life-chances of the individual are determined by a complex web of social regulations and primary affective ties. These village-communities, hemmed in on all sides by tradition and superstition, 'subjugated man to external circumstances instead of elevating man into the sovereign of circumstances, and transformed a self-developing social state into a never-changing natural destiny'.⁵ Institutional control of social and economic life imposes upon the individual comparatively rigid rules of conduct in all spheres of social life.⁶

'The primordial thing, however, which is owned by human *gemeinschaften*, is the land', says Tonnies. The will to possess what is permanent and hereditary is itself a reflection of the will for preservation, and with the homestead and the cultivated field, the domicile becomes permanently fixed.⁷ Hence Marx's pointed reference to 'that barbarian egotism which, concentrating on some miserable patch of land, had quietly witnessed the ruin of empires'.⁸ In our own case, the British found that 'all the great and petty Headmen keep it as an ancient custom not to sell any of their lands to other castes, nor even to alienate them out of their families, however they may be burthened with debts, and it is a further custom with them to hypothecate their lands

4. H. Kelsen: *Society and Nature. A Sociological Inquiry* (London, 1946), cites an instance of sociocentric anthropomorphism in Ceylon, his authority being Robert Percival's *Account of Ceylon* (1803). Likewise Pareto: *The Mind and Society* (Tr. A. Livingston, London, 1935, Vol. I, p. 96) designates this type of mentality 'non-logical' and cites among his examples of non-logical behaviour the everyday beliefs of the Ceylon villager who places immense emphasis on the *nakata* and other astrological conceptions. Pareto's authorities are Deschamps and H. C. P. Bell.

5. Marx: *The British Rule in India* (1853), cp. *Capital* (Tr. E. Untermann, Chicago, 1909, Vol. 3, p. 932, et seq.).

6. cf. Sir J. B. Phear: *The Aryan Village in India and Ceylon* (London, 1880); H. Baden Powell: *The Indian Village Community* (London, 1896); R. Mukerjee: *Caste and Social Change in India. (American Journal of Sociology, XLIII/3, 1937).*

7. F. Tonnies: *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. (Tr. C. P. Loomis, N.Y., 1940, pp. 209, 57-58).

8. Marx, loc. cit. Cp. K. S. Shelvankar: *The Problem of India* (London, 1940, p. 29): 'In parts of Bengal, Bihar and the United Provinces, fields the size of a tennis court are common; in other areas too there are ludicrously small plots, some so small that it is scarcely possible to turn the bullocks round in ploughing'. In Ceylon too the average holding is 'ludicrously small', ancestral lands being divided and subdivided through inheritance until an individual's share may be 1/120th part of a coconut tree! (C.O. 416/2). Increasing population has made the pressure on land still greater, the average holding being one-fourth of an acre, and units of 1/138th part of an acre being known (cf. Sir Ivor Jennings: *The Economy of Ceylon*, Oxford, 1948, p. 30).

for these debts'.⁹ The village community was indeed the immutable basis of social organization in the Eternal East: it was also the solid foundation of Oriental despotism.

The emergence of an individualized 'free' man, regulated on the one hand by the impersonal imperatives of an industrial society, and on the other by an inner, personal 'conscience', was a comparatively recent phenomenon whose advent was fraught with momentous psychological transformations.¹⁰ The crucial distinction between this latter *gesellschaft* social mechanism and the earlier *gemeinschaft* feudal community hinges on the general use of money and credit in the modern age, in contrast to the barter economy of feudal communities rooted to the land. In our own times money has so become part of our everyday lives that it is not easy to imagine the mental transformation which its acceptance necessitates. Money 'disappears' in use, it 'circulates' with a greater or lesser velocity, in comparison to land which is permanent in use. 'Currency', 'credit', and 'capital' presuppose still more abstract habits of thought. It marks a great advance in thinking when land is reckoned as a special kind of 'capital'.¹¹

A concomitant of the abstract conceptions of currency, credit, and capital, is the idea of 'accumulation'. In a barter economy rooted in *gemeinschaft* conceptions of the permanence of land, the so-called 'acquisitive instinct' is far less evident than in a society dominated by money. For accumulation of 'capital' is an indispensable condition of the industrial system which we call 'capitalism'. If all ideas of thrift and parsimony were thrown to the winds, and men abandon themselves to an orgy of hedonistic gratification of their every desire, industrial production and 'capitalism' will be at an end. The capitalist does indeed share with the miser the passion for wealth. 'But that which in the miser is a mere idiosyncrasy, is, in the capitalist, the effect of the social mechanism, of which he is but one of the wheels'.¹² Men must postpone present satisfactions if 'capitalism' is to flourish. Money itself fortifies the philosophy of thrift and parsimony. For, as Lord Keynes has said, 'money in its significant attributes is, above all, a subtle device for linking

9. Sir Alexander Johnston: *Ceylon Native Laws and Customs*, 1832. (C.O. 54/123) cf. also the Report of the Agent of Saffragam, October 13th, 1829: 'Scarcely an instance is known of a Kandyan selling his lands, such proceedings being regarded as disgraceful'. (C.O. 416/2).

10. 'The notion and analysis of Conscience is hardly older than 1700.' (Lord Acton in a letter to Creighton, April 9th, 1887). "'Conscience" is a slave driver, put into man by himself. It drives him to act according to wishes and aims which he *believes* to be his own, while they are actually the internalization of external social demands.' (E. Fromm: *The Fear of Freedom*, London, 1942, p. 84).

11. cf. Tonnies, op. cit., p. 98.

12. Marx: *Capital* (Engels-Moore-Aveling Edition, London, 1889), p. 603.

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the present to the future'.¹³ It encourages foresight, business acumen, rational calculation, and acquisitiveness. Thrift was a cardinal principle of Wealth according to the Classical Economists; it was a virtue inculcated by the Protestant Ethic, and with the development of what Sombart terms 'the capitalist spirit' (*geist*), was practically fettered.¹⁴ It is not surprising that Mandeville's heretical *Fable of the Bees*¹⁵ was convicted as a nuisance by the Grand Jury of Middlesex in 1723, since it contained the wicked doctrine that

' Bare Virtue can't make Nations live
In Splendour. They that would revive
A Golden Age, must be as free
For Acorns as for Honesty '.

But such heresy could scarcely stem a deep-seated propensity to which human beings had been conditioned through several generations. Money eventually became the symbol of freedom, power, self-respect, and happiness. We have become so accustomed to living in a business civilization that it is difficult for us to visualise the deep-seated psychological adjustments that such life-conditions demand. It is only through an examination of the mechanisms of adjustment to industrial conditions in crucial historical periods that we can properly appreciate the dynamic psychological foundations of social action. And it is with such a Time of Troubles in Ceylon that we are now concerned.

The greatest impediment to the rise of 'capitalism' in Ceylon was, of course, the absence of the individualistic character-type. Several administrators of the early British period pointed repeatedly to the 'Native character, his natural apathy and indifference about increasing his cultivation beyond what yields him sufficient to answer his immediate purposes'.¹⁶ As the Commissioner of Revenue, Robert Boyd pointed out, one fatal obstacle to schemes for the improvement of the Island was the want of Capital, there being few 'wealthy Natives' here in comparison to India: 'I believe it to be an indisputable fact that there is scarcely a cultivator in this Island who possesses more than his agricultural tools and cattle . . . We must acknowledge the inferiority of this delightful, but comparatively unproductive Island, to those emporiums of Commerce in the East' (e.g., Bengal and Madras).¹⁷ Thus

13. Keynes: *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*. (London, 1936), p. 294.

14. cf. Max Weber: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. (Tr. T. Parsons, London, 1930, Chapter V).

15. cf. B. Mandeville: *The Fable of the Bees*, (ed. F. B. Kaye, Oxford, 1924).

16. Report of W. H. Hooper, September 6th, 1815. (C.O. 416/2).

17. R. Boyd: *Report on Orr's Plan*, September, 1815, (ibid).

Governor North's early attempts to abolish Service Tenures had failed disastrously on account of the utter indifference of the indolent Sinhalese to their own advantages, and owing to their tardy appreciation of the seemingly obvious fact that they could 'better themselves' by labouring for money wages.

But gradually the traditional ethos, based on a primarily collectivist ethos, was undergoing a subtle transformation. Bertolacci, who officiated in various administrative capacities between 1798 and 1814, observed that in his time the use of coin and currency had become general both in the new (Kandyan) territories, and in the Littoral. But he also remarked that either from want of capital or from attachment to ancestral customs, barter was very much resorted to in many transactions, and there were all manner of economic relationships besides the cash-nexus.¹⁸ In 1826, however, Captain de Bussche was able to report that 'a considerable stimulus to the exertions of the natives has been already given by the certainty the cultivator feels, under our dominion, that he who sows will reap'.¹⁹ This notion of the practical man that he who sows will reap, mirrors, as it were, the basic postulates of economic reasoning during the Liberal era. A 'free' market for labour was considered to be the hall-mark of an 'enlightened' social order. Mass-unemployment was never taken into account since it was assumed that, except for 'frictional' unemployment 'between jobs', there could be no 'involuntary' unemployment. In short, in a 'free' labour market, all who desired to work could find employment. Effective demand was never inadequate. Hence the celebrated optimism of the Classical Economists who taught that 'all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds provided we will let well alone'.²⁰

The *Rājakāriya* system, odious though it may have been from the point of view of current British ideals of a 'free' labour market, was nevertheless utilised by the government to procure labour compulsorily for public works, in the traditional manner. It was through this convenient device that Governor Barnes was able to procure labourers to open up the coffee plantations. His scheme of constructing roads connecting the once inaccessible Kandyan country to the Coast would never have materialised had it not been for *Rājakāriya*, which enabled him to exact varying sessions of compulsory labour from Natives who held their lands by Service Tenure.²¹ Although the

18. A. Bertolacci: *A View of the Agricultural, Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon*. (London, 1817), p. 209.

19. L. de Bussche: *Letters on Ceylon, particularly relative to the Kingdom of Kandy*. (London, 1826).

20. Keynes, op. cit., p. 33.

21. At a meeting of the Chiefs on March 19th, 1815, the Governor said that he trusted that they would perform the established *Rājakāriya* with Zeal and Fidelity. They replied that they were ready to perform all *Rājakāriya*. (Sir J. D'Oyly: *Diary*, Colombo, 1917). In a Regulation of 1818 Governor Brownrigg reaffirmed the legality of *Rājakāriya*. (C.O. 54/71).

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Colebrooke Commissioners found that private employers had been able to procure daily paid labourers even in parts of the Island where a regular demand for such labour had not previously existed,²² the supply of voluntary wage-labourers was severely restricted in the Kandyan country where labour was urgently required for clearing jungles and constructing roads. Governor Barnes concluded that by *Rājakāriya* alone could the government secure the number of labourers required for the projected public works, in a country where few Sinhalese could be induced to enlist in the Pioneer Corps even at the enhanced pay of nine pence per day, when the highest wage paid to voluntary labourers was six pence. He nevertheless entertained the hope that 'when the country becomes wealthy enough to increase the number of foreign labourers, or when the people value money more than indolence, then there will be no necessity for compulsion'.²³

Monarchism in Traditional Ceylon was 'woven into the very tissue of their institutions'.²⁴ *Rājakāriya* is therefore unintelligible except in the context of Kingship. The spirit of the macrocosm resided in the King, the preserver of the traditional law. The monarch was enjoined to administer the law justly—'If not, may thy head be split into seven parts', an early King is admonished. The line which divides the royal and priestly functions has everywhere been a faint one. The secular King of modern times is 'a differentiation of an original genus into two species'.²⁵ In Ceylon, although deification of Kings may have been incompatible with pure Buddhism, Kingship was never secularized, and the relation of King and Church was very similar to that between English Kings and the Established Church.²⁶ And there was an underlying continuity of atavistic political ideas despite diverse expressions of these fundamental ideas. Thus Tennent records a survival

22. *Abolition of Rājakāriya*, Goderich to Horton, May 3rd, 1832. (C.O. 55/72). In *The Colebrooke Papers*, ed. G. C. Mendis, to be published shortly. I am indebted to Dr. Mendis for permitting me to use his manuscript of these valuable documents.

23. Answer to Question 9 of the Colebrooke Commissioners, by Sir Edward Barnes (Ibid).

24. cf. Brownrigg to Bathurst, February 28th, 1817 (C.O. 54/65).

25. A. M. Hocart: *Kings and Councillors. An Essay in the Comparative Anatomy of Human Society*. (Cairo, 1936). Originally the issue is expressed in the naive equation, King = God. In Europe Christianity spiritualised this pagan symbolism of divine Kings. The triumph of the spiritual King came after the break up of the Roman Empire. After A.D. 312 the coronation ceremony of temporal Kings was continued with the addition of a religious service so that the ritual followed the original structure which prevailed when Kings were Gods. The ancient ritual thus survived long after the theoretical interpretation was abandoned. (cf. E. O. James: *The Sources of Christian Ritual and its Relation to the Culture Patterns of the Ancient East*. In *The Labyrinth*, ed. S. H. Hooke, London, 1935).

26. cf. F. A. Hayley: *Sinhalese Laws and Customs* (Colombo, 1923), p. 533. Many a pious monarch intervened to purge the Church of heresy (cf. *Mahavamsa*, XXXVI, 41).

of the traditional attitude to Church and State when a tithe payable in kind to the government by fishermen was finally abolished in 1840: the fishermen thereupon voluntarily paid the tax to the Church, in some cases increasing the amount of the tax.²⁷ 'There are, or were, two institutions which gave prosperity to Ceylon, the Church and the State. If one withdrew, there remained the other', is Hocart's interpretation.²⁸

The attitude of Traditional Ceylon to *Rājakāriya* is epitomized in the proverb, 'King's business is greater than God's business'.²⁹ Faith in future salvation rather than temporal reward motivated popular acquiescence in the system. This attitude is well illustrated in an incident recorded in the *Mahavamsa*: when Dutugemunu announced that 'No work is to be done here without reward', and ordered that work people engaged in building a relic chamber be allotted 'wages' in money and in kind, more than one person had to resort to a ruse in order to elude being paid, and so share in the merit of the work.³⁰ Merit accrued not only to performers of the primarily religious duties, but also to those who were attentive of the public weal. It is a significant fact that when Gaja Bāhu built a canal, 'as a believer he placed on the height of the causeway a bodhi tree, an image house and a relic shrine'. The canal was part of a scheme of clearing a great wilderness in order to cultivate 'many thousands of day's work' of paddy fields.³¹ Clearly, in the definition of 'works of merit', projects such as the provision of food were included along with purely religious undertakings such as the building of relic chambers. The important point was that 'Merit, that a man has thus heaped up with believing heart, careless of insupportable ills of the body, brings to pass hundreds of results which are a mine of happiness; therefore one must do works of merit with believing heart'.³²

With the deposition of the last King, the rationale of *Rājakāriya* disappeared. King's duty was so long a moral and religious obligation; now the term *Rājakāriya* was being used in a sense approximating to 'that's my business', or 'mind your own business', its connotation of Duty being obliterated. In the eyes of the people, King's Duty without the King was an anachronism.³³ Even under the Kings, *Rājakāriya* was considered to be

27. Sir E. Tennent: *Ceylon*. (London, 1860, Vol. II, pp. 130-132).

28. Hocart, op. cit., p. 206.

29. රාජකාරිය ලොකුයි දෙසියත්කාරියට (cf. L. de Zoysa: *Specimens of Sinhalese Proverbs*, JRASCB, 1871).

30. *Mahavamsa*, XXVII, 21-23, XXX, 29-37.

31. *Culavamsa*, LXVIII, 21-31.

32. *Mahavamsa*, XXVIII, 44.

33. In the Maritime Provinces the original basis of *Rājakāriya* 'has in great degree been lost sight of and the demand upon the people for service may be considered as a tax upon the person'. (Sir Edward Barnes to the Colebrooke Commissioners, in *The Colebrooke Papers*).

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'oppression' if utilised for unmeritorious purposes.³⁴ The last King of Kandy was able to employ Temple people to repair the Lake on the plea that construction of tanks was work of piety.³⁵

The British administration made use of *Rājākāriya* as a convenient device to exact labour for all manner of economic undertakings such as repairing rest-houses and *tappal* stations, clearing jungle land, and constructing roads and buildings attached to Agents' residences, frequently without payment, some of the labourers being old men and boys not above the age of seven. When the work was not properly executed, an overseer flogged the malingerers. The workers were sometimes kept out for several months at a distance of twenty miles from their homes.³⁶ Yet Governor Barnes crassly argued that 'looking fairly at compulsory labour, there is generally speaking, nothing hard in it . . . and considering that this is a nation of labourers and that they are not able to provide the pecuniary means to enable Government to introduce foreign labourers for all purposes, I can see nothing unreasonable in their contributing a portion of their manual labour for the public good, particularly as they are paid for their services what is considered the value of labour in the District'.³⁷ But the social context in which *Rājākāriya* was levied was such that the people were far from willing to labour for purposes which the British administration considered to be the 'public good'. In March-April 1829, for instance, a hundred labourers to be furnished from the Walapana District, were required for public work in Kandy. They refused to serve, and on the Governor's orders the ring-leader was tried for 'disobedience of the orders of Government', an attempt to rescue the prisoner having been thwarted by the troops. The Board of Commissioners sentenced the accused to thirty lashes on his back, in addition to imprisonment in the Kandy Jail, and assignment to hard labour for two months. When the prisoner had received sixteen lashes, the people came forward in a body and consented to work for the 'public good'.³⁸

34. cf. the *Mahavamsa*, XXVIII, 4-5, for Dutugemunu's reflections on this 'oppression' D'Oyly records in his Diary (March 5th, 1812), that a Mohandiram, an Aratchy, and a Kankan were reported to have been impaled by the King for releasing people who came on *Rājākāriya*, taking money from them instead. Apart from 'oppression', the reason for the extreme penalty was probably on the ground that such corruption amounted to a desecration of the entire system.

35. Colebrooke's Report on *Rājākāriya*, to Viscount Goderich, March 16th, 1832 (in *The Colebrooke Papers*, ed. Dr. Mendis).

36. *Ibid.*

37. Governor Barnes' Answers (*ibid.*). There is an undertone of sarcasm in Barnes' replies to the Colebrooke interrogations, particularly in his references to reformers. 'There are gradations in all societies, and not being, as I said before, a Leveller, I should be sorry to see all distinctions in society destroyed'.

38. Colebrooke on *Rājākāriya* (*ibid.*).

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The Colebrooke Commission (1830-1831) had little sympathy for the activities of this 'paternal' government. Imbued with the ideals of Adam Smith and Bentham, the Commissioners endeavoured to ascertain, by means of a comprehensive series of questionnaires circulated to administrative officials and others throughout the Island, whether the economic restrictions of caste, *Rājākāriya*, and state monopolies were really favoured by the people. In spite of repeated statements regarding the apathy and indolence of the Sinhalese, the Commissioners discovered manifestations of a nascent individualism, particularly in some of the petitions they received. The children of the Parental Government did not therefore seem to have had any very great affection for the parent, nor to feel perfectly contented to remain under such a parental rule. Besides, under this *patria potestas* the *peculium* which they were allowed to retain out of their hard earnings, was so exceedingly small, and so great a proportion of their means was exacted by way of regular revenue, labour, or extortion, that on this account also they felt in no small degree dissatisfied'.³⁹ The Commission accordingly recommended the abolition of *Rājākāriya* and its proposals were implemented in 1832 despite the objections of the Ceylon administration. The government cinnamon monopoly was also abolished, and government offices were thrown open to all qualified persons. The significance of these reforms was that the caste system was no longer legally recognised. Formerly, the cinnamon monopoly tied the *Salāgama* people to the appropriate government 'department'. Caste was recognised even in the compilation of lists of eligible jurors. Ordinance No. 9 of 1844 which abolished this stratification of would-be jurymen, was the outcome of a tussle between the 'reformers' and the 'exclusives', the case having been heard by the Courts and the Legislative Council.⁴⁰

The people themselves were becoming increasingly impatient of the irksome restrictions of caste and *Rājākāriya*. An 'enlightened' Sinhalese wrote that he was 'really intoxicated with Joy on hearing that the compulsory labour of the lower class of the natives has been abolished by the present liberal and ever blessed government'.⁴¹ But one of his countrymen ruefully confessed that he could not honestly recommend that administrative and judicial offices be open to the Natives 'until the prejudice of caste is quite done away with, for until then, we cannot place sufficient confidence in ourselves for the proper exercise of judicial authority towards the lower classes'.

39. 'Law Reform in Ceylon: its History, Progress, and Tendency, by a Member of the Ceylon Junior Civil Service' (Colombo, 1849). Governor Barnes argued that 'the natives are perfectly content'. He clearly had no idea of the trend of public opinion (cf. his Replies, dated September 10th, 1830, in The Colebrooke Papers).

40. cf. E. W. Perera: *The Jury System in Ceylon; its Origin and Incidence* (Colombo, 1933).

41. Letter from Don Juan Artesinghe to the *Colombo Journal*, May 2nd, 1832 (C.O. 59/2).

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This 'Admirer of British Humanity' was full of praise for the government's efforts 'to make us happy by the advancement of our education as well as our wealth'.⁴² Others were more ambitious:

'... Yet we lack one thing needful to make us quite contented. Are we not excluded from all share in the government, and from all important offices, both judicial and revenue?

'It would be difficult to surmise the motives which operate against our holding high offices. *Are we too black?* This cannot be considered a fault though (if it be a hindrance to the attainment of our wishes) it is a misfortune. But the wisest of our countrymen has accounted for our colour by asserting that "the sun has looked upon us".⁴³ Is it because we wear petticoats? Surely this custom can be no impediment among those, whose superior knowledge teaches us to venerate them!⁴⁴ The adoption of the European costume would not only prove expensive, but to us, cumbersome habiliments, living as we do, in the pleasure garden of the first man. Perhaps it may be argued that we have not yet attained that state of civilization which capacitates us for offices of trust—but how can this be rationally expected, when there is no inducement held out, to incite us to exertion? . . .'⁴⁵

The above reference to the cost of European costume, which subsequently came to be regarded the hall-mark of a 'gentleman', indicates that the gentleman-ideal in a business civilization dominated by the cash-nexus, is

42. *Colombo Journal*, March 17th, 1832 (C.O. 59/1).

43. cp. The Prince of Morocco's apology for his colour:

'Mislike me not for my complexion
The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun,
To whom I am a neighbour near bred . . .'

(Shakespeare: *The Merchant of Venice*, II, i).

44. cp. the similar admission of the superiority of European knowledge in a letter from Ram Mohun Roy (1774-1833) to Lord Amherst: 'If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the Schoolmen, which was best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be best calculated to keep this country (India) in darkness . . .' (in C. E. Trevelyan: *On the Education of the People of India*, London, 1838).

45. *The Colombo Journal*, February 29th, 1832. The nascent individualism discovered by the Colebrooke Commissioners is evident in these letters to the short-lived government *Journal*, and made the Editors comment that 'the thirst for knowledge has been excited'. (January 18th, 1832). There were even demands from eager students for solutions of mathematical problems. One 'Scribe' wanted to know whether 'stationary' was correctly spelt with an 'e' or an 'a'. Some letters could not be printed owing to their faulty English; others were translated from the vernaculars.

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inseparable from the money-ideal. 'Invention is the mother of necessity' is surely as true as its hackneyed obverse, in view of the multiplication of 'artificial wants' which an industrial society entails.

'If life-conditions change, the traditional folkways may produce pain or loss, or fail to produce the same good as formerly', contends Sumner.⁴⁶ The unconscious philosophy of the *mores* is thereby undermined, and the traditional sanctions lose their binding force. The 'freedom' of a laissez-faire social order in which labour is converted into a commodity whose worth is measured in terms of objective criteria of efficiency and productivity, is sometimes more attractive than the restrictions imposed by a feudal ethos. In contrast to *gemeinschaft* conceptions of familial support, an individualistic ethos places a premium on self-reliance and self-help. The transition from a collectivist organism to an individualistic mechanism is accompanied by appropriate psychological adjustments, a common reaction being the outward projection of problems of personal adjustment—that is, an externalization of the 'inner' conscience of the individual. A recent study made by Ai-Li S. Chin of letters written by Westernised Chinese adolescents, showed that the sense of anxiety and guilt attendant upon revolt against ancestral and familial authority found its expression in a new attitude to love and marriage which came to be regarded as rights to be earned rather than as rules of conduct imposed by society.⁴⁷ Parallel behaviour-patterns are evident in Ceylon in the first half of the nineteenth century, the outward projection of problems of personal adjustment being reflected in the mimetic behaviour of the elite, their eager acceptance of alien values and cultural symbols.

A characteristic feature of the individualistic character-type is its addiction to certain types of sport which mirror the ideology of the larger society.⁴⁸ Simmel has explained that 'the more profound, double sense of "social game" is that not only the game is played in a society (as its external medium) but that, with its help, people actually "play" "society"'.⁴⁹ Social relationships such as competition, browbeating, and conflict, which are imbued with

46. W. G. Sumner: *Folkways. A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals.* (Boston, 1907) p. 58.

47. Ai-Li S. Chin: Some Problems of Chinese Youth in Transition. (*American Journal of Sociology*, LIV/1, 1948). This is a reaction of self-control; but there is a common reaction of *abandon*, which imbues love and marriage with irrational romanticism. A mystic process known as 'falling in love' becomes the vogue—a reaction against the traditional conception of marriage as an arrangement governed by principles of rational calculation (cf. the interpretation in E. Fromm: *The Fear of Freedom*, London, 1942, pp. 149-150).

48. Veblen: *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times* (N.Y., 1923) sees a family likeness in the rules of 'the great American game', Poker, and the rules of real estate business, e.g. 'watchful waiting'.

49. Simmel: *Sociology* (Tr. H. K. Wolff, *Glencoe*, 1950) p. 50.

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purposive contents in the real world, lead their own lives in sport, propelled by their own rules.⁵⁰ Sports shade off from hostile combat and the bloody duel at one extreme, through skill, to cunning and chicanery. The very fact that a referee or umpire is habitually employed, and detailed rules prescribe the limits of cheating and fair play, demonstrate that dishonest practices are not exceptional. Neo-spartan sports like football and boxing fetish those barbarian predatory traits such as self-reliance and 'toughness'—qualities which, as Veblen rightly pointed out, are characteristic of upper-class adherents of these sports, and lower-class delinquents: the difference is that what are called 'high spirits' in University students become criminal misconduct in the case of lower-class 'toughs'.⁵¹ It is a significant fact that the more violent and brutal of these emulative sports emerged *pari passu* with the rise of individualism in Europe, particularly after the Industrial Revolution. Even a relatively innocuous sport like cricket was still a boorish village 'game' in the early eighteenth century. But that aspect of industrial civilization which made men compare social behaviour with the law of the jungle with its remorseless elbowing, crushing and trampling, found its apotheosis in 'manly' sports like boxing and all-in wrestling. In England, 'outside the prize-ring men and boys were in the habit of settling their differences with their fists', a practice which Trevelyan describes as a national custom of which everyone was proud.⁵²

There is clear evidence of a parallel trend in Ceylon, and the rise of individualism is faithfully reflected in the increasing popularity of emulative sports completely unsuited to local climatic conditions. The traditional pastimes of the Sinhalese were *games* in the true sense—the care-free spirit of *play* predominates. These spontaneous acts of self-expression were confined to children, and reflected the 'tame and undemonstrative nature of the national temperament'.⁵³ The emulative spirit in athletic sports was encouraged

50. J. Huizinga: *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play-element in Culture* (London, 1949) distinguishes the *game* which is marked by spontaneity and carelessness, and the *sport* which stresses regimentation and systematization, and tends to lose the quality of care-free *play*. Hence the expression 'compulsory games' is a contradiction in terms. Cricket, even in the early nineteenth century, was *played* by gentlemen in top-hats. Professionalism and seriousness atrophied the play-element in the latter half of the century.

51. Boxing, like fencing, was originally an aristocratic pursuit, prominent patrons of the sport being Lord Althorp and the Marquis of Queensbury who was responsible for the celebrated Queensbury Rules (1866). 'Gentleman Jackson', who was champion between 1795-1800, trained aristocrats in the art of 'hitting without getting hit':

'And the men unpractised in exchanging knocks
Must go to Jackson ere they dare to box'. (Byron).

52. G. M. Trevelyan: *English History in the Nineteenth Century and After*. (London, 1939) p. 170.

53. cf. L. Ludovici: *The Sports and Games of the Sinhalese*. (*JRASCB*, 1873).

by a school organisation which emphasised the importance of the playing field in instilling habits of independence and self-reliance in immature youths, thus giving a barbaric twist to their minds at an early age. At the close of our period, an English traveller, struck by the popularity of cricket in this distant Oriental colony, observed that 'the juvenile Cingalese appear to have imbued a taste for the sport. I saw a party of little copper-coloured urchins engaged in a game of cricket with all the glee and eagerness of English schoolboys'.⁵⁴ The 'tame and undemonstrative', national temperament was soon replaced by the barbarian attitude which made 'toughness' a supreme virtue, and an useful asset in the 'battle of life'. The relatively unexciting sport of cricket was subsequently augmented by 'manly' sports like boxing, which depicted the more ruthless social competition for the survival of the strongest, which characterised a business civilization.⁵⁵ Such a state of society engendered the paradoxical ideology of 'compulsory individualism' which regards individualistic strife as an inevitable and inescapable consequence of Human Nature, and assumes that social relations will somehow be regulated on lines analogous to the rules of fair-play which govern the playing-field. But whereas a fatality in the boxing ring could be countered with the moral and legal caveat *volenti non fit injuria*, participation in the relentless game of society was compulsory.⁵⁶

Different individuals achieve spiritual maturity in different ways, but arrested spiritual development frequently expresses itself in adult participation in youthful manifestations of ferocity and barbarism, at times merely as on-lookers or abettors.⁵⁷ It is often supposed that sports perform the 'healthy' function of keeping adolescents from the mischief to which idle hands are prone. Such a view naively equates physical energy with psychical

54. R. B. M. Binning: *A Journal of Two Years Travel in Persia, Ceylon, etc.* (London, 1857), Vol. I, p. 28.

55. 'Abandoning their own racial excellences, they seek to emulate what passes for the ideal Englishman. In the East this is the sahib, apparently a he-man with an infusion of gentleman. One writhes to her them call each other "good sports", or say that someone played the straight game'. (P. R. Smythe: *A Ceylon Commentary*, London, 1932, pp. 21-22).

56. One escape from society is by means of self-destruction, and Durkheim in his classic study of Suicide has shown that it is a common phenomenon in societies undergoing *anomie*. There has been a progressive increase in the suicide rate in Europe from 1861 onwards, excepting for the war period. (cf. S. Smith: *Suicide. The Practitioner*, 841, 1938). The Ceylon statistics show a parallel trend (cf. the forthcoming study by Dr. N. D. Gunasekera in the *Journal of the British Medical Association*, Ceylon).

57. At Eton 'the noble art of self-defence' was held in high honour. When a bout culminated in the murder of a combatant, the headmaster Dr. Keate, said simply, 'This is regrettable, of course, but I desire above all things that an Eton boy should be ready to return a blow for a blow'. (A. Maurois: *Ariel*, London, 1924).

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energy.⁵⁸ Freud has argued that substitutive-gratifications such as Art, Science, and Religion perform the vital task of transferring man's grosser 'instincts' into 'higher and finer' channels. For Goethe

' He who has Science and has Art,
Religion, too, has he ;
Who has not Science, has not Art,
Let him religious be ! '.

Freud grants that where there is no special disposition in a man which imperatively prescribes the direction of his life-interest, his daily work, particularly if it gives expression to the 'instinct of workmanship', can be an important element in the 'economics of the libido'.⁵⁹ But he makes no mention of the role of sport, because the diversion of interest is only transitory, unless sport is so fettered as to occupy an overwhelmingly important part in a man's psychic life. Where the opportunities for higher forms of spiritual expression are few, and where charlatanism and chicanery are at a premium, 'physical culture' occupies an honoured place even in the institutions of higher learning. The result is a one-sided reversion to barbarism and animalism, an accentuation of those ferine proclivities which make for destructiveness, with no corresponding development of the creative faculties.⁶⁰ There can be no better evidence of the cultural malaise which we are experiencing than this exaggerated development of the lower forms of instinctual gratification at the expense of the higher.

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58. cf. C. G. Jung: *On Psychological Energy*. (*Contributions to Analytical Psychology*, London, 1928).

59. Freud: *Civilization and its Discontents*. (Tr. J. Riviere, London, 1930).

60. cf. Veblen: *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (N.Y., 1899, Chapter X); also the discussion in R. W. Pickford: *The Psychology of the History and Organization of Association Football*. (*British Journal of Psychology*, XXXI, 1940). There seems to be a recognition of the role of games in fostering a community spirit, in some quarters (cf. the proposals for a revival of the national games by the Panadura Rural Development Society, *Ceylon Daily News*, August 21st, 1951).