

Chapter IITHEORETICAL FRAMEWORKI : Conservatism : Meaning and Nature

For the purpose of analytical clarity, it is necessary to discuss the lineage, tradition and the accepted meaning of conservatism, if only to reveal its conceptual ambiguity. At the attitude level, conservatism, at least semantically, appears to refer to an attitude opposed to change. "Conservatism is a term whose usefulness is matched by only its capacity to confuse, distort and irritate."¹ Generally, conservatism implies a body of thought, either social or political, which emerged in Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth^{century}, as a reaction to the eighteenth century rationalism, philosophy of the enlightenment and the French Revolution, and was particularly associated with the writings of Edmund Burke. It was also used to describe "the political activities and ideas of those associated with parties or groups which proclaim themselves to be conservative, even though their ideas and actions may be far removed from the ideas and principles of conservatism."² The various uses of the term and the widely accepted and employed meanings of the word "conservatism" gave it a unique flexibility. However, in whatever way it is used, by any person or group, all have a common concern with the preservation of existing institutions and traditions.³

A fine summary of Enlightenment thought is given by Zeitlin : "Knowledge of reality, whether natural or social, depends on the unity of reason and observation in the scientific method. The Enlightenment thinkers were as interested in society and history as they were in nature, and these were treated as indivisible unity. By studying nature including the nature of man one could learn not only about what is, but about what is possible; likewise, by studying society and history, one could learn not only about the working of the existing factual order, but about its inherent possibilities" ⁴

The beginnings of Enlightenment are generally linked with the works of Locke. Although Locke laid down the theory of what was later called 'liberal democracy', it has convincingly been shown that his theory can be regarded as the first ideological expression of capitalism. By defining the state in economic terms, the value of freedom could only come to mean freedom from state interference in property rights, whereas the value of equality was formalised as equality before the law, and could never be substantiated in economic and democratic sense.

✓ Edmund Burke was the first exponent of the reaction to these Enlightenment ideas, which quickly grew into a movement which was later called conservatism. His immediate and passionate reaction to the French Revolution already

contains the major arguments of the anti-revolutionary romantic movement. A few citations will set the tone of his reaction.⁵

I. On the Enlightenment Conception of Natural Rights.

The following quotations are taken from Edmund Burke's book Reflections on the Revolution in France, 1790

"Whatever each man can separately do, without tresspassing upon others, he has a right to do for himself; and he has a right to a fair portion of all which society, with all its combination of skill and force, can do in his favour. But as to the share of power, authority and direction which each individual ought to have in the management of the state, that I must deny to be amongst the direct original rights of man in civil society. It is a thing to be settled by convention." (p.87)

"In this sense, the restraints on men as well as their liberties are to be *reckoned* among their rights. But as liberties and restrictions vary with times and circumstances, and admit of infinite modifications, they can be settled upon any abstract rule and nothing is so foolish as to discuss them upon that principle." (p.89).

"The pretended rights of these theorists are all extremes; in proportion as they are metaphysically true, they are morally and politically false. The rights of man are in a sort of middle, incapable of definition but not impossible to be discerned." (p.92).

II. "The characteristic essence of property, formed out of the combined principles of acquisitions and conservation, is to be unequal." (p.75).

"The rich indeed require an additional security from the dangers to which they are exposed, when a popular power is prevalent." (p.260).

"A perfect democracy is the most shameless thing in the world." (p.139).

III. Burke on the value of conventions and traditional ways of life, even the value of prejudice ;

"When men are encouraged to go into a certain mode of life by the existing laws and protected in that mode as in a lawful occupation, when they have accommodated all their ideas, all their habits to it I am sure it is unjust in legislature, by an arbitrary act, to offer a sudden violence to their minds and their feelings forcibly to degrade them from their state and their condition and to stigmatize with shame and infamy that character and these customs which

before had been made the measure of their happiness and honour." (p.230).

"You derive benefits from many dispositions and many passions of the human mind, which are of as doubtful a colour in the moral eye as superstition itself But is superstition the greatest of all possible vices ? Superstition is the religion of feeble minds; and they must be tolerated in an intermixture of it; in trifling or some enthusiastic shape or other, else you will deprive weak minds of a resource found necessary to the strongest." (p.234).

IV. On social change : "By a slow but well-sustained progress, the effect of each step is watched; the good or ill success of the first gives light to us in the second and so, from light to light, we are conducted with safety through the whole series. We see that the parts of the system do not clash."

It was Chateaubriand in 1818 in France who gave the word 'conservatism' its distinctive meaning when he called his periodical, designed to propagate the ideas of clerical and political restoration, Le Conservateur. The word was not adopted in Germany until 1930's, while it did not obtain official recognition in England until 1936.⁶

The best way to minimise the confusion that follows the term conservatism is to distinguish it, in ordinary way

from other isms. This can be most readily accomplished by treating conservatism as an attitude towards social change and political reform.⁷

First, the term radicalism insists that the existing institutions are diseased and oppressive, traditional values are dishonest and exploitative, it is, therefore, prepared to force entry into future by subversion and violence.⁸

Secondly, liberalism is the attitude of those who are reasonably satisfied with their way of life, yet believe that they can improve upon that substantially without betraying its ideals and institutions. The liberals try to adopt a balanced view of social process, in short, he is optimistic rather than pessimistic about the possibilities of reform.

Thirdly, the term reactionary conveys a yearning for the past and a feeling that wants to retreat back. A reactionary should not be confused with the conservative, is a man who refuse to accept the present. More than this, a reactionary is willing to erase some laws, enact others, even amend his nation's constitution to roll back the social process.¹⁰

Zeitlin¹¹ summarises the various propositions of the conservative reaction :

1. "Society is an organic unity with internal laws of development and deep rootsⁱⁿ the past, not simply mechanical

aggregate of individual elements."

2. "Man has no existence outside a social group or context and becomes human only by participating in society."

3. "The individual is an abstract and not the basic element of a society. Society is composed of relationships and institutions. The existence and maintenance of small groups are essential."

4. "Customs, beliefs and institutions are organically intertwined so that changing and re-making one part will undermine the complex relationships maintaining the stability of society as a whole."

5. "Man has constant and unalterable needs, which every society and each of its institutions serve to fulfil. If these agencies are disturbed or disrupted, suffering or disorder will result."

6. "The non-rational aspects of human existence have a positive value and are essential."

7. "Status and hierarchy are essential to society. 'Equality will destroy the natural and time-honoured agencies by which values are passed from one generation to another.'"

Karl Mannheim, in his seminal work on conservatism,¹² made an indepth analysis of conservatism. According to him,

modern conservatism differs from traditionalism in general, it refers to a psychological attitude which manifests in the individual as a clinging to old ways and expresses itself in a fear of innovation.

One of the most essential characteristics of conservative way of experiencing and thinking seems to be its clinging to what is immediate and concrete in a practical way. The result of this is a novel, almost emphatic experience of the concrete, reflected in the consistently anti-revolutionary ~~the~~ connection of the term concrete. To experience and to think concretely now comes to signify a specific mode of conduct, a desire to be effective only within the particular immediate environment in which one is placed, and a total aversion to all things that are merely possible or speculative.

Non-romantic conservatism always starts out from the particular case at hand and never broadens its horizon beyond its particular environment. Its aim is immediate action, change in concrete details, and it is, therefore, not really concerned with the structure of the world in which it lives. All progressive action, in contrast, is increasingly animated by a consciousness of the possible; it transcends the given immediacy by recourse to a systematic possibility, and it fights against the concrete not by seeking to put a different concreteness in its place, but by wanting a different systematic starting-point.

A conservative person only thinks systematically when he is moved to reaction, perhaps because he is forced to set up a system counter to that of the progressive, or because the process has progressed to a point where he has lost touch with the present state of things, so that he is compelled to intervene actively in order to reverse the process of history.

From this contrast between the concrete and abstract, it becomes evident, at a crucial point, how far the two types of experience are functionally related to the social. The conservative concrete experience of things can hardly be shown more plainly than in the conservative experience of property, in contrast to the bourgeois experience of it. The conservative notion of property was bound up with its owner in an entirely different way than is the case of modern ownership. There was a definite, vital, and reciprocal relationship between the owner and his property. Property in its old and genuine sense carried within it certain privileges for its owner; it rendered him eligible, for instance to have a voice in the state, it bestowed hunting rights, and it qualified for membership on the jury. Hence, it was closely bound up with the proprietor's personal honour and in this sense inalienable. Similarly, conservatism also sets up the concept of freedom, in opposition to the revolutionary concept. The conservative contention about freedom is that human beings

are unequal in their nature, in their innermost being, and that freedom consists in the condition in which each and everyone, in accordance with his innermost principle, actualises the laws of development uniquely peculiar to himself.

The ideological nature of conservatism appears to be more complicated. Originally, in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was the expression of the nobility in its defense against those of the bourgeoisie. This is shown, for example, by the fact that conservatism became fully developed in the countries where the nobility held a strong position. However, conservatism was not completely opposed to liberal ideas. Rather, it opposed the ideology of Enlightenment and also the ideas of the French Revolution.

Secondly, conservatism was more than just an attempt at a defense of the interests of a threatened elite ; as conscious traditionalism, it expressed the traditional way of life that many people were still leading in class-divided society. Thirdly, conservative ideas have often been put forward in religious vocabulary, which pretends to be unrelated to the interests of specific groups or social classes. Finally, there is a developmental aspect in conservatism, which made it gradually accept capitalism as a natural development.

Thus conservatism was first developed as a defense of traditional society. It was subsequently developed further as a defense of capitalism. This tendency was finally strengthened that some conservative ideas can be used by almost any elite that wishes to legitimise its particular position.

II. Types of Conservatism

Clinton Rossiter distinguished four types of conservatism : temperamental, possessive, practical and philosophical.¹³

Temperamental conservatism is simply a man's natural disposition to oppose any substantial change, in his manner of life, work and enjoyment. Psychologists generally agree that all human beings exhibit conservative traits to some degree in their lives and in most men these appear to be dominant. The important traits in conservative temperament, all of them largely non-rational in character, would seem to be habit, inertia, fear and emulation.

Secondly, possessive conservatism is the attitude of the man who has something substantial to defend against the erosion of change, whether it be his status, reputation, power or most commonly, property. Like conservatism of temperament, possessive conservatism is self-centred, non-speculative frame of mind opposed to change of any type and

from any direction. It is only incidentally an attitude towards social and political reform.

The third and most common use of the word is practical conservatism. This is the conservatism of temperament and possession operating in a new dimension, the community, but not on the higher plane of speculative thought. The practical conservative is a man who is prepared to oppose any disruptive change in the legal, political, economic, social, religious and cultural order. The practical conservative has managed to rise some distance above his own interests.

The last and the highest kind is philosophical conservatism. The philosophical conservative subscribes consciously to the principles designed to justify the established order and guard it against the careless tinkering and determined reform. His conservatism is explained in intellectual as well as psychological, social and economic terms. He is conscious of the history, structure, ideals, and traditions of reform and the importance of conservatism in maintaining an established social order.

III. Theories of Conservatism

Samuel P. Huntington outlined three types of conservative theory : aristocratic, autonomous, and the situational.¹⁴

The aristocratic theory defines conservatism as an ideology of a single, specific, and unique historical movement ; the reaction of the feudal, aristocratic and agrarian classes to the French Revolution, liberalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie at the end of the eighteenth century and during the first half of the nineteenth century. In Mannheim's words, modern conservatism is the function of one particular historical and sociological situation. Liberalism is the ideology of the bourgeoisie, socialism is the ideology of the proletariat and conservatism is the ideology of the aristocracy. Conservatism thus becomes indissolubly associated with feudalism, status, the ancient regime, and nobility; it becomes irreconcilably opposed to the middle class, labour, commercialism, liberalism and individualism.

Secondly, the autonomous definition holds that conservatism is not necessarily connected with the interest of any particular group, nor indeed, in its appearance dependent upon any specific historical configuration of social classes. Conservatism is an autonomous system of ideas. It is defined in terms of universal values such as justice, order, balance, and moderation. Whether or not these values are held high by particular individuals depends not on his social affiliations but upon his personal capacity to see their inherent truth and desirability.

Thirdly, the situational definition views conservatism as the ideology arising out of a distinct but recurring type of historical situation in which a fundamental challenge is directed at established institutions and in which the supporters of those institutions employ the conservative ideology in their defense. Thus, conservatism is that system of ideas employed to justify any established order, no matter where and when it exists, against any fundamental challenge to its nature or being, no matter from what quarters. The essence of conservatism is the passionate affirmation of the value of existing institutions. No person can espouse the conservative ideology, however, unless he is fundamentally happy with the established order and committed to its defense against any serious challenge.

According to Huntington, both aristocratic and traditional theories of conservatism are inadequate. In short, the aristocratic definition fails because no necessary connection exists between aristocracy and feudalism, on the one hand, and conservatism on the other: non-aristocrats can also expound conservative ideology; aristocrats can also expound non-conservative ideology.¹⁵

IV. Ideological Development of Modern India and the Conservative Strand in Indian Political Thought.

The dominant influence in the shaping of modern India had been its connection with Britain. The British empire in

India began right after 1757 and lasted little less than two hundred years. For two centuries the history of Europe had been built up, to some extent, on the basis of domination of India.

The social and political situation of India was extremely propitious for its conquest by a well-organised, economically united and militarily more advanced foreign power. Karl Marx raised the question thus : "How was the English supremacy established in India ? The paramount power of the great Moghuls was broken by the Moghul viceroys. The power of the viceroys was broken by the Marathas. The power of the Marathas was broken by the Afghans, and while all were struggling against all, the British rushed in and subdued all. A country, according to Marx, which was not only divided between Mohammedan and Hindu, but between tribe and tribe, between caste and caste, a society whose framework was based on a sort of equilibrium, resulting from a general repulsion and constitutional exclusiveness between all its members : such a country and such a society, were they not predestined prey of conquest?"¹⁶

India had been conquered earlier many times, but those conquests had led to a change in political regimes only. So far as the basic economic and social structure was concerned, these conquests did not affect it. With self-sufficient

village industry and agriculture, the village was the unit of revenue assessment and finally village production almost exclusively for the village use, this economic structure of pre-British India triumphantly survived, in all its outlines, for centuries all foreign invasions, military convulsions, religious upheavals and dynastic wars. All these events, spectacular and cataclysmic, affected only the social, political or religious ideological superstructure of the Indian society. The self-sufficient village in which practically the entire population lived successfully survived the most violent political storms and military holocausts.

Thus, the British conquest of the Indian subcontinent during the eighteenth century was one of the epochal events of modern Indian history. According to Marx, the English interference in India had produced the greatest, so to speak the truth, the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia.¹⁷ Rammohan Roy, hailed as the father of modern India, argued that India had much to learn from the British in the fields of politics, science, literature and religion. Most of the early Indian leaders were convinced that their salvation lay in creating a strong Indian state. Such a state presupposed industrialisation, modern science and technology and a rationalist culture. In other words, India's salvation lay in embracing modernity. Since Britain has successfully modernised itself and was, indeed, a world leader, India had

• good deal to learn from it. And Dadabhai Naoraji could not help but see a divine hand (i.e. British domination of India) at such a ripe moment.

Thus, from the very beginning of the nineteenth century, Indian leaders welcomed the British rule and urged the Indians to take advantage of it. Rammohan Roy contrasted the civilised British with their tyrannical predecessors and saw the new rulers not as a body of conquerors but rather as deliverers. He went on ;

"From personal impression, I am impressed with the conviction that greater our intercourse with the European gentlemen, the greater will be our improvement in literary, social and political affairs; a fact which can be easily proved by comparing the condition of those of many countrymen who have enjoyed this advantage with that of those who have not the opportunity."¹⁸

Rammohan Roy concluded that the British rule spelt a loss of autonomy, but what mattered really was ;

"National independence is not an absolute goal; the goal, so to say, of society to secure the happiness of the greatest possible number; and when left to itself, a nation cannot obtain this object, when it does not contain in itself the principles of future progress, it is better for it that

it should be guided by the example and even the authority of a conquering people who are more civilised."¹⁹

In the Presidential Address of the Congress, B.K.Dhar spelt out the blessings of the British Raj more clearly :

"Peace, order, and perfect security of life and property have been secured to us and to degree never known to the old Roman Empire and even now not be seen anywhere beyond the limits of the British Empire. A genuine and an active interest in the welfare of the masses, as is shown by its famine, plague, sanitation and agrarian measures, is its abiding and noblest features. Perfect religious and social freedom it has given to us unasked; and Railways, Post Office and thousand other instruments and appliances are the means by which it has added to our comfort and social advancement. The educational system which has immortalised the name of Bentinck and Macaulay is perhaps the greatest gift to the people of India. The spread of English education, as it has instructed our minds and inspired us with new hopes and aspirations, has been accompanied by gradual and cautious concessions of political rights the admissions of Indians into public services, the instruction of local self-government and the reform of the Legislative Councils on a partially representative basis. We have a government whose justice is exemplary and a civil service which in ability, integrity, zeal, and genuine regard,

according to its own lights, for those entrusted to its case, had no rival in the world.... I thank God that I am a British subject, and feel no hesitation in saying that the government of India by England faulty as it is in many respect and greatly it needs to be reformed and renovated from top to bottom is still the greatest gift by the Province to my race . For England is the only country that known how to govern those who cannot govern themselves."²⁰

Valentine Chirol was the first person to give a sophisticated version of what may be called the claim that India was a mere geographical expression which could never develop into a nation in the western sense of the term; and whatever political movements, with pseu-national colour existed in India, had their roots in deep traditional, instinctively anti-western sources. The so-called national movement, according to him, was engineered by small elite groups of traditional society, who had in view the particular interests of their own castes and not the general interest of the people. These groups, being of high ritual status in the caste hierarchy of the Hindu society, were deeply committed to one or another form of revivalist Hinduism.

A much more interesting interpretation from an analytical point of view was given by M.N.Roy, who analysed the emergence of Indian nationalism as a historical phenomenon. Here his views coincided on one important point with that of

Chitral, namely, the absence of any political nationhood in India before the British rule. Briefly, his argument ran as follows. The East India Company conquered India with the help of the nascent Indian trading classes of the late Mughal India and later suppressed this class. So there could be no national development until the Indian bourgeoisie rose from its ashes once again in the late nineteenth century, and slowly accumulated capital until the World War I quickened the pace of development of native capitalism and its political ideology the national movement. The intellectuals trained in modern political thought laid the theoretical foundation of Indian nationalism. These were the objective conditions in which the Indian National Congress came into being. M.N.Roy in his book, India in Transition posed a challenge to Lenin's thesis that India was under a feudal system. By marshalling a formidable array of facts and figures, Roy argued that, contrary to the general notion, India was not under a feudal system, but was already within the orbit of capitalism and was moving towards a capitalist mode of production.

R.P.Dutta whose India Today still remains the most authoritative Marxist work on modern India, wrote that the growth of modern industry in the second half of the nineteenth century led to the rise of the bourgeoisie, together with a new educated middle class of lawyers, teachers, administrators,

and journalists. But gradually there was a shift of emphasis from R.P.Dutt's bourgeoisie to intermediate groups variously designated as the educated middle class, the petty bourgeoisie, and the intelligentsia. A.R.Desai's work on Indian nationalism took up in this respect the earlier threads of M.N.Roy. With the growth of modern industries, wrote Desai, the modern bourgeoisie and working class came into existence, along with professional classes. The intelligentsia drawn from the professional classes developed before the industrial bourgeoisie and led the national movement in each phase.

The construction of Indian nationalism, thus, commenced in the mid-nineteenth century among the urban, anglicised strata to whom the appropriation of a range of western discourses became a vital element in their comprehension and interpretation of social experiences of domination and subordination at the hands of what seemed an invincible western modernity.

European orientalist scholars of Sanskrit and history had since the eighteenth century created a comprehensive body of research on classical Hindu culture. This particular style of imperial scholarship had constructed India as the

symmetrical other of the west. Hinduism was in the main seen as an amorphous religion devoid of central doctrines or organisation. Indian culture was portrayed as essentially spiritual and irrational as spawning hierarchical and barbaric practices such as the rigidities of the caste system, burning of widows, fire-sacrifices etc.²¹

Early Indian nationalists, such as Vivekananda, internalized this construction of India as pure spirituality, holism and cultural depth, and invested them into a positive construction of India as the antithesis to western rationalism and materialism. This discursive inversion opened the entire inventory of civilisational criticisms developed by European romanticism and cultural nationalism to the Indian nationalists. These early discourses emphasised the fundamental ontological difference between India and the West and saw the ancient Indian cultural heritage as a universalist spiritual correction to the excessive materialism of western industrial civilisation.

The other simultaneous strategy strove, while accepting the basic analysis of Hindu culture as weak and incoherent, to reform and organise Hinduism into a more egalitarian, doctrinaire and organised religion. The largest of these reform movements, the Arya Samaj, reacted against the proselytising activities carried out by Christian missionaries. The Arya Samaj emphasised the physical training and organisation of young men. The rationale was to emulate the basic

institutions and practices of semetic and monotheistic civilisations.

Gandhiji's rise to the status of uncontested spiritual figure and political saint in the Congress from 1920 onwards brought about a significant change in the nationalist discourses and strategies. Gandhiji combined the early nationalist's discourses on India as spiritually superior to the West with a range of mass mobilisation technique. His philosophy of non-violence and religious populist syncretism the doctrine of equal respect for all religions did not challenge caste or social hierarchies in any radical sense. Along with the emergence mass politics, the dominant liberal leadership of the Congress organised the broad sections of the elite and urban middle classes which remained the primary social basis of the emerging project of a modern nation state.

Thus, the Indian National Congress, during the British rule, combined nearly all ideological strands in expedient manner. There was an implicit faith in the richness and superiority of Indian culture in all kinds of nationalist explanations of colonialism, national emancipation and self-rule. This also produced and sustained an amorphous conservatism in the main currents of nationalism despite conflicting views regarding social and religious reform and political strategy. Reacting to the impossibility of avoiding change and the urgency of preserving the religious and cultural

moorings, the nationalist ideologues endeavoured to evolve a rationally defensible and practically effective discourse. In the event, the Indian society changed, yet stuck to its traditions.

Thus, the question of identifying the conservative forces in Indian politics is quite a difficult one. According to Rudolph and Rudolph, "one of the paradoxes of Indian politics is that ancient India's regime, surely one of the oldest and most deeply rooted in the world, produced no reaction only a few minor local parties today stand for full return to the rule of Brahmins and Khatriyas according to the precepts of dharma and traditional duty, and they are ineffectual."²²

The problem is compounded by the fact that India's landed aristocracy, ever since the Mutiny of 1857,²³ sided with the British for protecting honour and property which could have provided an articulate conservative platform. However, in the absence of stable, indigenous and macro-political institutions and the broad class identifications and cohesion meant that there was no national focal point for aristocratic conservatism. The latter was at best regional and was often formed around antagonistic rulers. Moreover, the national movement attracted the industrial classes and segments of middle class peasantry at a time when the aristocracy came to be aligned increasingly with the British. Also

After Independence, the Congress hegemony and flexibility enables the ruling party to use assorted carrots and sticks to allure and weaken the conservative elements, often making important concessions but paying lip-service to the socialist rhetoric. The Congress willingness to buy off some potent conservative forces and to intimidate others has helped to keep the conservative forces in a state of disarray.²⁴ In the decades after Independence, the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Nehru established an effective political hegemony bent on the development of a strong, interventionist state apparatus. Through import substitution strategies, economic planning and an effective distributional coalition of dominant economic and political interests within the patronage structures of the party, the Congress party provided the economic development and political stability for decades. This hegemonic Nehruvian state elevated the principles of secularism to the central elements in the official liberal nationalist doctrine of India. Through education and dominant political rhetoric, the slogan 'unity in diversity' became the ideological crossing point of a variety of policies seeking to accommodate diverse linguistic, social and religious demands for official recognition and protection. Nehruvian secular nationalism sought with considerable success to construct Hinduism as a multifarious, integrative and tolerant set of principles. Hence, secularism became in the post-colonial mass democracy a privileged signifier of equal accommodation and competitive patronage of social groups and cultural

communities through state and party.

Another strand of Indian conservatism is much more difficult to analyse, the village-oriented conservatism, which H.L.Erdman called, "disguised" and is available and persuasive to many Indians including C.Rajagopalachari.²⁵ This doctrine in its core has an image of an idealised village community, sometimes thought to have existed in ancient India. It has its principal roots in the views that the village India, is the real India. The association of Gandhiji's name rightly or wrongly, with this strand of thought, accounts in large measure for its potential emotional appeal. "The fact that this doctrine does defend India against the West," observed Erdman, and that it can be sanctified by the invocation of Gandhiji's name makes it almost uniquely attractive refuge for all manners of knaves, scoundrels, reactionaries etc., as well as genuine conservatives, in addition to those who earnestly desire substantial change along Gandhian lines.²⁶

CONCLUSION

In the Western countries, along with steady industrialisation and development of capitalism, society became stratified and conservatism became the ideology of the landed aristocrats in different forms in different countries. But in case of India, the new political and economic environment

created by the British conquest and rule of India, posed before the Indians problems which were quite new and could not be solved by the theories and methods which the old Indian culture provided. For example, to solve the national economic tasks arising out of the new economic problems such as greater industrialisation of India, Indian economists turned to the theoretical works on economics of Adam Smith, Ricardo or Marx. Neither Chanakya, the ancient author of Artha Shastra, nor Vyas, the immortal composer of Mahabharata, could arm Indians with theoretical means to solve modern economic problems.²⁷

In such an environment conservatism in India took the garb of religious revivalist movements both Hindu and Muslim. These movements appealed to the centuries-old traditional values, were able to build up a powerful following among the less modernised masses where Congress could not. For example, Tilak did not hesitate to appeal to explosive communal religious sentiments. He defended child marriage and organised cow protection society and began to worship elephant-god Ganapati as a means of stimulating mass participation in politics. This type of religious and revivalistic conservative politics is still a powerful force in Indian politics which will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

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