

From: AG

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To: CIB *be*

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APPROACHING INDIA

In four or five days we shall reach India. To write out an inventory of my ideas on approaching countries new to me seems worth trying if only to read them again after these oncoming visits to India, Pakistan, and Ceylon have been completed.

Contacts and exchanges between different cultures in this world have not just increased since 1940. They continue to increase, and at a quicker tempo than ever before. More important, they are contacts and exchanges between countries whose circumstances and status have changed and are changing significantly. Whether Western contacts with India, for example, are predominantly religious, social, political, economic, or educational, they must pay more attention than before to the desires, needs, sentiments, and self-esteem of the parties involved. India's long experience of being on the receiving end, of being governed, of exposure to demands and pressures of all kinds, could hardly make Indians now regard representatives of Western countries with simple, naive, and uncomplicated emotions.

One underlying assumption is probably sound: human nature is the same, or, if that is too much of a platitude, all mankind has much in common. Individual experience and personal histories are almost unbelievably different, however. So residual emotions and needs that are universal and human will be expressed and satisfied in ways that are totally foreign to the tastes and past experience of persons from another culture, even those who have the same basic needs and desires. If we are to understand the Pakistanis, the Singhalese, or the Indians, we must know not merely what meaning we attach to what we offer them, but we must understand what meaning they attach to what we offer and to the relationship established by our offer. We may sensibly doubt all assumptions except that deep down - sometimes far down - under the obvious or apparent differences, human nature, under a bewildering accumulation of misleading appearances, is the same.

In preparing to establish any kind of contact with Indians, the prime requisite is to feel that it must be a two-way affair even if there be no true exchange of anything. But if the contact mean exchange of anything, then the questions arise: exchange of what, with what motive, to what end, by what means, at what rate, and for how long a time?

What will India, Pakistan, or Ceylon show on observation? And then, further, what would RF workers in India prove to be? This is important, since an institution may be described in terms that fail to tell what its meaning is. I could tell of India and forget that what matters is what the RF might mean to Indians. Ideology of some kind, explicit or undefined, conscious or unconscious, must precede the creation of a working policy or morale for us, and for the Indians in their relation to us. The more we know ourselves, the better we can understand what that exchange might best be. We must not mistake curiosity for acceptance, hospitality for friendship, surprise for admiration, silence for assent, toleration for enthusiasm, promises for probable performance, inquiry for interest, well-watered blooms for well-rooted plants, results for permanence. And haven't we any delusions that need reflection about the RF, and about American values?

All this and probably other considerations call for study. I should be as alert as can be and observe as widely and sensitively as possible. When I visited Italian medical schools in 1924, I made extensive records of such facts as would have had a meaning in American medical education. Thus I missed a good half of what had meaning in Italian medical education. So the task involves not only observation but interpretation - interpretation not only to myself but to my fellow officers and to the Trustees. And it must be interpretation in terms so nearly fundamental as to have meaning for any culture.....really fundamental.

I suspect that one of the most significant points to watch for is this: what is the Indian's picture of his relation as an individual to his community, in the more inclusive sense of the word community - its institutions and its heritage, social, religious, political and economic?

Another way to pose the possible exchanges between Americans and Indians would take this form:

1. What can we offer the Indians - in our view and their view?
2. What can they receive from us - in their view and in ours?
3. What can the Indians offer us - in their view and in ours?
4. What can we receive from them - in their view and in ours?

We usually have clear ideas on part of No. 1. Those officers who live in India learn some of No. 2. Our vanity precludes even initial consideration of No. 3 and No. 4.

For our experience shows that what is received is seldom just what was offered. But more important, the relationship of always receiving is spiritually intolerable: so we should decide not merely what we might offer but what we can receive from Indians gracefully and profitably. One of the cardinal faults of British imperialism was that it ignored the self-respect of Indians who had something to give.

It seems to me that exchange between two cultures takes place in three stages: first, room must be made for new ideas to be even received; second, an exchange of values must take place; and lastly, there can come a real transfer of practices or methods to create what new value systems value. The things that make for the reception of new ideas are curiosity, dissatisfaction, admiration and imitation, imagined advantages, and wealth to buy or use what may be secured through exchange. Hindering such receptivity are poor communications, poverty, ignorance, preoccupation, fear, or distrust. To the transfer of whole value systems much the same hindrances may exist. Aiding the transfer of value systems between two cultures are education, time, fine characters and good manners of the representatives of each culture, a satisfactory trial experience, and the opening of careers and hence individual motivation for continuing the newly acquired practices. For the actual transfer of practices - such as modern public health practices - much the same factors are in play for and against, plus the demonstration of the value of the practices once they are transferred from one culture to another.

In less abstract terms I think my tasks are to find out and later suggest what kind of ideas or programs seem really valuable for the RF to assist or initiate in India, Pakistan, and Ceylon, remembering that emphasis is the essence of strategy; to offer opinion and information on possible dependable collaborators; and lastly, to

make some estimate of the position of medicine in the general context of Indian society, bearing in mind that one of the most serious aspects in the growth of science, technology, and medicine in the West is that they are poorly balanced with the other needs of human beings.

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