

PRESENT: LFK, CBF, EFD, RWJ, CG

460  
P+P  
xcd - India - P+P - Humanities

filed : 911

P & P

4. General discussion of RF work in India opened with comments by LFK, summarized as follows:

(a) India is improperly called an underdeveloped area, since its social upper crust is a considerable population of highly educated, talented people: an elite which would compare not unfavorably with elites of developed countries. One great problem, of course, is how to strengthen interactions between this elite and the vast village population of India which seems to be in more primitive condition than mere backwardness.

(b) There are many problems of language and communication, partly from the point of view of Indians who have many difficulties in dealing with each other, and partly from the point of view of the outsider.

(c) India has important accumulations of wealth, both on the part of individuals and in such states as Bombay, which has a budget surplus. Note, therefore, India has funds to meet some of its own problems, e.g., has allocated substantial sums for malaria.

(d) The Ford Foundation may be envied for its situation in having a definite allocation for defining and executing a program in India and a team working in India relating parts of program and taking an over-all view. On the other hand, RF divisions have not only worked separately, but there has been considerable diffusion within divisional activities.

(e) It seems desirable for the RF to plan and carry out its work with more internal coordination, notably in ties between humanities and social sciences.

(f) American plans and action in India are handicapped by the limitations of seeing India through U.S. eyes, e.g., population studies are conceived quite differently by Americans from Indians. Indian leaders such as Nehru, Radhakrishnan, and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur are rooted in that situation and have views of needs on projects which should be taken seriously into account and certainly not by-passed. An example is AG's views on the undesirability of a central medical institution in India. Rajkumari, the Health Minister, on the other hand, feels there should be and will be a central medical institution. Even if RF support is not given, we should respect and not obstruct this commitment.

(g) Dealings with India should take account of pervasive Indian suspicions of U.S. motives. It is striking how strong the friendly feeling is for the British, which does not carry over to the U.S.

(h) The current Indian views about RF work are somewhat sentimental in that respect is based on earlier RF work and not on current RF projects and activities.

(i) The second great problem about India is future leadership. Present leadership is capable and strong but consists largely of older men with no sure prospects of good successors. As Radhakrishnan puts it, Cabinet members and other governmental leaders "can't retire and don't dare die." Thus the fundamental question: "What we want to know about leadership in India and what can be done to develop and strengthen future leaders?"

CG said that DH work on India had been regularly, if informally, coordinated with DSS (Roger Evans) and increasingly with DMPH. Two general objectives governed. One was studies of India to increase American knowledge and sound assessment of Indian developments. The main action here was in the U.S. The second objective was to give training and other strengthening to intellectual and scholarly leadership in India and also to give some help to writers, later artists, who could boost morale, inspiration and a sense of the future. With regard to both objectives, almost all DH grants had been made within four avenues of approach.

(i) The first and most fundamental are studies of Indian languages insofar as these are barriers to effective communication within India and barriers which Americans and other foreigners must penetrate. The immediate need is to train individuals to handle language problems of which the most significant are political and social, not of the narrowly linguistic sort. Hence, the current phase is identifying the most promising students of language problems and to give them the necessary training and direction for later research.

(ii) One of the prominent paradoxes of India is that it is a country dominated by its past as are few others, but at the same time, its history is not studied in a rational way. India is full of superstitions and mythology on how its past shapes its present. It is vague about social forces, individual leaders, ideas and other historical aspects of the recent past as, at least to the outsider, these operate powerfully in the present scene. Hence, the DH interest in the development of historians who will select, study and interpret major factors of recent Indian history, partly to give Indian leaders a better sense of forces at work and partly to give Americans background for evaluation and forecasting Indian affairs. Clearly, the historical interpretations available to Americans mainly from British historians are distorted and becoming out of date. Here again, the need is to develop Indian scholars and to relate this to the strengthening of American historical work on India.

(iii) Encouragement and help to outstanding Indian writers, with the presumption that a good writer expresses aspirations, tensions, and attitudes of contemporary India. The difficulty is that only one out of a hundred so-called writers is any good. Hence, one has to be somewhat

opportunistic, watching and waiting for an able, sincere and influential writer. As more is learned about other arts, attention will be given to individuals of unusual originality and force, but there again, one will have to move only in response to the exceptional and carefully examined opportunity.

(iv) The fourth item is values, including philosophy, which in terms of ideas is clearly the most important. One difficulty is that by western standards, Indians are fuzzy in their thinking and don't ask or generally answer the kind of questions we do. It seems necessary to develop both a formulation of key problems and individuals who can pose and answer them. Very little has been accomplished in this direction so far.

CBF raised general questions about Indian leadership; for example, what role does intellectual training or interest play in the development of Indian leaders? Might there be any programs or projects to train future leadership? CG expressed the opinion that while present leadership was strong at the center (Delhi), attention should also be given to the powerful regionalism within India and to the emergence of leaders in different key regions. It is also important to distinguish dynamic and prospering regions such as Bombay and Madras from others which appear to have little influence in India as a nation or outside.

Discussion concluded with no agreement on guide lines for the future.