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A Look at Progress, Utilization and Theory



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Proutist Universal

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*Dedicated to the memory of Acharya
Tadbhavananda Avadhuta, Secretary
General of Proutist Universal, who
always inspired us in spite of his
personal hardships and in this way
taught us to sacrifice and work
harder for the dissemination of
PROUT.*

“Human civilization has now reached a critical stage of transition. Exploitation of one human being by another has assumed alarming proportions. At critical junctures in the past, when exploitation had reached the zenith point, history witnessed the emergence of mighty personalities who were able to overcome the problems in society. Today also, the guidance of mighty personalities with a comprehensive ideology is required to lead humanity away from the edge of disaster towards a glorious future. The emergence of such personalities is an indispensable necessity of history.”

P.R Sarkar

Understanding socioeconomics

The mastering of academic subjects requires study over time. People with average or little education may therefore feel that socioeconomics is surely beyond their comprehension. They may even think it is surely a dry subject. Their automatic reflex may be to decide that there are matters of more immediate importance to attend to.

In reality, higher education and great scholarship are not required to grasp some basic truths. Presented in a forthright manner, without much convoluted language and complex formulas, the substance of a socioeconomic system will soon reveal itself to us. It only takes a little time and effort to determine its real value.

When discussing everyday issues, we find that most people have valuable views on the politics of food, housing, clothing, education, and health care. These are matters of fundamental importance to all. Still, only a few are formally trained in these fields. The rest of us continue to apply common sense. We base our opinions on personal experience and the information we have access to. It is only natural for us to make attempts to

understand past and present set-ups in our locality, region, and in the world at large.

Every now and then we all ponder about our social and economic future. At those times it may seem we are born socioeconomic researchers! We would probably do very well by making regular efforts to strengthen our grasp of past and present socioeconomics as well as exploring their alternatives so we can see which do better under comparison. And we would like to know which socioeconomic bits and pieces that may be synthesized into a better, greater whole.

Materialist socialism – Marxism

Although 1989 may seem like a long time ago, Marxist socialism continues to have some relevance. Socialist core values, such as standards of universal welfare and employment, are central building blocks of the mixed (capitalist + socialist) economic set-ups of present socio-democratic welfare states.

Moreover, many feel that socialism is still the only serious contender to capitalism. Socialists at heart may or may not be able to rationally explain their political sentiments. However, their feelings for a world where people take care of each other and move together remain strong. As such, there is a tremendous ideological vacuum after communism.

Marxist socialism does not contain very developed socioeconomic ideas. Neither does Adam Smith's individualist liberalism, the fundament of classical capitalist theory. The common reason for their socioeconomic deficiencies is that both systems argue using powerful sentiments rather than by presenting a rational approach to actual challenges. There are other similarities as well. Capitalism and communism were both hailed as anti-theses to preceding degenerate systems. Smith's evangelical capitalism emerged as the guiding light of the merchant bourgeoisie rising against the restrictive rigid Church. A century later, Marx's socialism challenged exploitative capitalism in its crusade to establish a godless paradise of, by and for the labouring class.

Materialist socialism came into being as a consequence of philosopher Karl Marx' resentment of capitalist exploitation of labour. With poignant feelings for the downtrodden working class, Marx and his ally Friedrich Engels developed passionate proletarian ideas that presented human beings as economic, physical beings. Engels, from an industrial background, attempted to make their sentiment-laden socialist project more realistic and scientific. The resulting system came to have severe shortcomings regarding in basic human concerns and was most brutal in its treatment of dissenters. Communism proved to be the source of some of the most heinous violence and genocide in the 20th

Century.* Its sentiments lacked rational support and turned communism into a harmful and dangerously exploitative system in itself. From the beginning, Marxism's mix of illusory equalitarian appeal and fascist realism proved unpalatable to politically sophisticated Europe. Its message of mass unification caught on in parts of the world where human rights still hadn't taken roots and where the masses still lived under feudalism.

In spite of its thunderous call for economic justice, Marxism was a socioeconomic disaster from Day One. Countries such as the USSR (present Russia), China and numerous others[†] tried to apply certain communist propositions, such as the doctrine "From everybody's capacity to everybody's need". By combining it with State (representing "the people") centralisation, communism made all aware of their basic needs but not of how they could contribute personally by developing their individual potentialities. Marxism

** There is broad consensus that communism took the lives of at least 100 million people, as documented in the writings of French author Stephane Courtois and the Hoover Institution scholar Robert Conquest.

[†] By 1980 nearly half of the world's population lived under communism, including Russia (and its since seceded neighbouring states), Eastern Europe, and China. Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Benin, Grenada, and Nicaragua were all under the Soviet sphere of influence. India too became heavily dependent on Soviet Russia, with states West Bengal, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh all run by communist parties.

simply ignored the individual and removed the ordinary person from the history books. At centre-stage stood the Workers' State and its great ideologists and all were to be equal: comrades living for, by and off the State.

Marxism's state capitalism (centralisation of economic power in the hands of the state), with its tyrannical demand for equality, hampered and even banned normal human industrial and commercial activity. Its dogmatic approach gradually sucked up all economic life into a central black hole of collective ineptitude.

Today we are all well aware of the basic socioeconomic faults of Marxism. For instance, we see through its supposed abolition of surplus value. According to Marx, the creation of surplus value constitutes the main root of economic exploitation. But how did the communist states manage their economies if not by re-investing profit earned by the selling of their produce? From where will future momentum come if surplus value is not generated through the proper processing of resources? In both communist and capitalist countries this important mechanism has fed into centralisation of money power. PROUT on the other hand stands for the decentralisation of all types of value creation in any sphere of life.

Numerous catastrophes took place in communist countries. The forcible agricultural collectivism in communist Russia, Eastern Europe and China is one

example. The ruthless driving of farmers into monstrous working units brought down the agricultural production of those countries and brought immense suffering to millions of farming families and hunger to general society. Communism claimed that forced collectivism was necessary and liberating. Today we know differently, so much that Marxism, once heralded as the redeemer of humanity, is viewed the world over as a “catastrophism”.

In its day, the most deficient theory of materialist socialism attracted worldwide attention on the strength of its analysis of capitalist profit accumulation and its vision of an egalitarian society. The masses of the East and intellectuals of the West revered Marx and Engels as the greatest of prophets. The ideological vacuum left after the collapse of communism is menacing and demands a constructive replacement.

Capitalism

While Marxism is an anti-thesis and reaction to capitalist exploitation, capitalism is a much older and a natural system in its own right, by now well into its frail and crippled old age. The development of capitalist thinking may be traced back beyond antiquity. Its development throughout history reflects the gradual growth of an acquisitive class.

The commercial attitude evolved first due to a perceived need to hedge against a rainy day. Gradually this particular hoarding mentality may have evolved into more active exploration of potentialities to enhance and control such accumulated capital. With time, the invention of money, banking, etc. came about in natural stages of the development of capitalism - the system of, by and for capitalists. Capitalism's growing dominance during the 20th century and its present global hegemony reflect its shrewd ability to respond to and exploit various human needs and sentiments.

A phenomenal strength of mature capitalism is its ability to transform previously established religious, intellectual, martial, ethnic – indeed any social and cultural forces and phenomena – into commercial, profitable capital. Marxist socialism, being utterly materialistic, could never properly understand this special absorptive force of capitalism; its unique ability to commercialise anything and anyone and enslave them to its money power.

With its liberalist outlook and unrestricted buying power, capitalism has kept building and controlling the world we live in today. Consequently, we now know a good deal about its constructive and destructive sides. Equipped with its rich experience of capitalism, humanity is now in a position to discuss in detail whether unrestricted hoarding of wealth, free trade, and

other liberalist principles may be of further or any positive use to the world.

Progressive Socialism

PROUT is short for the Progressive Utilization Theory, a socioeconomic theory propounded by Indian thinker Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar (1922-1990) in 1959. Comprehensive presentations on PROUT and Sarkar are found in various literature on PROUT and on www.proutglobe.org. Offering highly integrated solutions to general and specific local and global problems, PROUT has drawn the attention of not only experts in the socioeconomic field but academics, activists, and lay people of all kinds.

PROUT allows spiritual consciousness to saturate individual and collective socioeconomic life. On the basis of its spiritual view of the human race, PROUT promotes the ideal of one world family sharing the world's wealth together. This concept of universal fraternity is the ideological base with PROUT ideas such as decentralized economy, local self-sufficiency and enlightened active democracy.

Developmental plans based on PROUT principles have so far been prepared for some Asian, African and Latin-American countries. In places, PROUT planning has been applied practically.

Many of PROUT's progressive solutions demand definite and comprehensive changes in the way things are run, not only on the micro- but on macro level, and not only in the socioeconomic sphere but also culturally and educationally. PROUT is a system emerging in the near future when capitalism's absolutely oppressive dominance today will give way to sustainable ways and means that will offer humanity a safe, agreeable passage into the future.

PROUT has been termed progressive socialism, the essence of which is continuous all-round development of the individual and the collective. Before discussing its numerous socioeconomic applications, we should acquire an idea of what the Progressive Utilization Theory means by “progress”, “utilization” and “theory”. These concepts, having been explained quite differently by previous systems and thinkers, have their special interpretations in PROUT. These interpretations, some short discussions, and a few examples of Proutistic solutions to global problems, make up the contents of the rest of this booklet.

Progress

The wind blows gently on the sweet baby moving its arms and legs happily in the soft grass. The baby looks curiously at the passing clouds high up in the sky. Soon the little child grows into an active youth, a determined adult, and experienced maturity. What happened to that baby who grew up so quickly? It seems indeed that movement and change is the real nature of our world – nothing stands still.

In a great many places however, society's movement has come to an apparent standstill. “Catastrophe” is the word we use to describe many developments around the world today, while “recession” and “depression” have just become weary global clichés. Many thinking citizens have been concerned for some time about the simultaneous degeneration in social, political and cultural spheres.

According to PROUT all these are expressions of pause as a consequence of a dominating system – capitalism in this case – being a spent force. A pause, however horrendous you may find it, is not eternal. It has a beginning and an end. Something in the pause, that may seem slow or sluggish if not almost dead, may the next moment leap into fresh life.

In this pause phase, fresh momentum may be formed – the seeds of new development. If not, death will occur. There is no mystery about the nature of pause. Its essential question is: In case there is any life left in us, in our society; which direction will the new movement take? What will be its goal? Will it be benevolent, malevolent, or perhaps somewhat neutral?

Whether human society rises with renewed life or dies depends on its inherent vitality. Something cannot continue to exist for long in the same form. It either has to transform or perish. This is true for individuals and society as well. Society has always changed and will continue to do so.

No particular system of utilization and distribution will be able to claim permanent dominance over human society at the expense of its deep need for continuous change. Those who want success know they will have to accommodate those fundamental liberating forces that demand significant changes at intervals.

Once upon a time western capitalism rose as such a significant force of change. At the end of the Middle Ages it promised liberation from the dogmatic clutches of the Church and progress for all forward-looking people. Today, as a result of numerous changes in capitalism's own motivation as well as in the world around it, capitalism figures as a great impediment that needs to be removed so that humanity again may proceed on the path of real progress.

Here we arrive at perhaps the most significant fundamental idea of PROUT, its concept of progress. The very mention of the word "progress" instils in us a heart-throbbing enthusiasm, an acute sense of forward movement, a deep-felt wish for the good of all. It seems that appreciating fresh development is so much part of us that we cannot help but frown upon the many improper uses of the word progress.

The term progress derives from the Latin *progradi*, which means "forward movement". Its Sanskrit origin, *pragati*, has an even subtler inference: "Well-directed movement". It follows that any development may not necessarily be progressive as it may or may not be well-directed.

Steady, accelerating forward movement toward greater individual and social consciousness lies at the very heart of PROUT. Its concept of progress promotes integrated physical, mental and spiritual development to increase the realization of the entire human and social potential.

Physical limitations

In which areas of life can we expect actual progress to take place? Can progress take place in the physical sphere? We should analyse the matter properly.

No one knows how many physical feats and marvels human beings have produced. A strong urge to make everyday life more convenient and conducive to welfare is part of our human heritage. A few centuries back people depended wholly on animals for land transportation and efficient cultivation. Less than a century ago horse-drawn carriages were in wide use throughout the industrial world. Today we have got motorbikes, cars, planes, and soon we will be riding in superfast family rockets. In this way we will continue to enjoy the great benefits of technological advancement.

There is however a downside to such material development. Movement in the physical sphere is never without drawbacks or side effects. Did you know that the average speed during rush hours in London these days is 13 kilometres per hour, the same as it was 111 years ago in 1900? Not to mention current noise-levels and the stress and pollution we all have to cope with. Some may maintain that the traffic in London still has much going for it. Others argue that something has gone seriously wrong – to the extent that a new trend has emerged of communities who try to minimize their dependency on cars. Some of them do not even want cars to be part of their infrastructure.

Not long ago the automobile was heralded as the very ideal of western civilization and the symbol of individual freedom. Cars, however, kill people, pollute our environment, and traffic jams rob us of our precious

time so much so that no one in his or her right mind would maintain that heavy traffic is progressive. Furthermore, the condition of a city like Detroit, once the car-manufacturing capital of the world, is now worse than that of poor Third World hubs. It has become the symbol of a gasoline car paradigm gone wrong. The question is whether that kind of thinking was ever progressive or if some other motivation or interest was the prime moving factor behind it. Innumerable such examples stem from the simple fact that the world we live in has certain limitations and so have people's motives.

Another example: The introduction of modern plastic consumer goods in the 1950s was first looked upon as a great blessing. Today many countries have banned plastic bags and other polymer-based items, as they have become an indisputable environmental hazard, especially of the marine environment. At present the trend is to shun the use of plastic bags and to promote more ecologically sound alternatives whenever possible, leaving the main use of plastic material to areas where it is really required.

Physical change

One might do better to properly examine the history of any physical development and its environment before lavishing unreserved praise on it. The complex

mechanisms of the physical world make physical development highly relative and actually unreliable in numerous ways.

At the deepest level, anything that is created is subject to changes over time, in places, and in living beings. These basic factors continue to change and never remain the same. The slightest change in any sphere or area may cause something that appeared to be functioning quite well at some point to exhibit destructive traits later on. Physical developments of even a very high and positive order, such as the development of new ways and methods of producing food, medicines, etc. are all vulnerable to unforeseen reactions. This is not at all extraordinary but in fact a regular phenomenon following the natural laws of action and reaction of the physical world.

Here we would like to pause briefly in order to respond to those who now think that this is all starting to look like a rather gloomy attitude towards development in general. In response we emphasize that PROUT's view of physical developments is not pessimistic or denies the value of physical welfare and pleasures. At present we are simply discussing the limits of the physical as regards the meaning of real or absolute progress. By doing so, we are not labeling physical development negative, positive nor neutral but just as relative.

As the physical has several sides to it and therefore is not something absolute, it is subject to the laws of relativity. A faithful recording of the history of material development would include a breath-taking display of the two main sides to physical achievements – their pluses and their minuses. Their story is often one of “What was once good then turned bad,” or vice versa. The irrefutable relativity on the physical plane forces us to dive deeper and still deeper into the mysteries of the created universe. The realizations thus acquired enhance our general awareness and make us gradually more cautious of our movement.

We have learnt, and are still learning, how to direct our materialistic movement in a less harmful and more benevolent way. A growing number of people today want movement that will channel both crude and subtle developments towards more and better welfare for all, and not the opposite. In this way they become more progressive.

So we have established that absolute progress is not found in physical life. We may find forward-moving forms of evolution and revolution, or backward-moving forms of counter-evolution and counter-revolution, but we will not find absolute progress in it. The natural reaction and limit to any physical action and material development tends to nullify any advantage gained.

This natural law in turn becomes the incentive for and cause of renewed efforts to improve matters in the

same sphere, and also to go beyond it. Physicist and philosopher Albert Einstein opined that a problem cannot be solved on the same plane where it was created. Where may such thinking lead us?

The mental

How about mental resources, can they bring about actual, real progress?

Scientifically speaking, the waves of the mind may be short or long, at times even quite sustained. As long as concentration remains within the ordinary mental sphere its waves and vibrations will anyhow remain finite. On the intellectual plane, waves will always fluctuate and never reach a state of absolute peace. Of course, psychic force is more subtle and powerful than any crude physical force. Still, being subject to relativity it too can only function within certain limits. Consequently, the mind with all its mental and intellectual powers will have to deal with its own and others' responses and reactions to its activities.

The mind's range is indeed vast. Psychologists, parapsychologists, sociologists and other scientists have been able to map some of its functions. Neurologists say we only use a small part of our brain potential. Much mental potentiality obviously still remains to be realized. Human emotions and intellect are influenced by subtle and largely unexplored psycho-physical functions, i.e.

the mind's bio-psychological propensities, which are ultimately controlled by the mind's psycho-spiritual and spiritual faculties. The mind is still a mystery to the world's academic community. Leading theories and hypotheses of the mind remain weak, as if researchers are groping in the dark.

Most people know from experience that it is harder to keep one's balance on the mental plane than it is on the physical. Without first-hand knowledge of mind's subtler functions, mental work becomes very complicated indeed. Anyone who has done intense mental work knows what it means to lie awake at night, to always be engaged in something that is not really part of the immediate physical surroundings, to be acutely sensitive to something that others may not really grasp, etc. This state of being is regularly likened to being insane and is universally acknowledged as full of ups and downs.

Actually, the more one delves into emotional and intellectual areas, the more one may be oblivious to the "real world", to the physical world "out there". The reason for it is that the consciousness "in here" is not readily found "out there". The fact seems to be that human beings require a stable goal for their mental journey to be comfortable and safe.

What would such a stable mental goal be?

Focus

If higher consciousness is not allowed to grow, the resulting negative reactions from one's innumerable relative mental actions – thinking, feeling, and remembering – will seriously endanger human welfare. Nowhere is the reality of our acute relativity more emphatically expressed than in our mental world.

The pain of physical hurt may be bad but mental pain is much more intense and agonizing. Loneliness may serve as an everyday example of mental suffering. With its individualistic mind-set, one of capitalism's chief social downsides is that more and more people are suffering a life of loneliness. Research shows that the suffering caused by social isolation goes very deep and takes years and decades off people's lives. People who do not have an outgoing or easy personality suffer most in a society given to narcissism and selfishness. Capitalism's main social trend emphasizes self-interest in various forms, both individually and in groups. We may or may not become more informed by it but we do become much unhappier and less whole when we exist in isolation while living in the midst of others.

In the collective sphere, aggressive expressions of limited thinking continue to effect great harm. Ethnic and social clashes around the world are the results of myopic thinking. Severe economic disparities and poor education serve as potent fuel for the ill feelings between the apparently irreconcilable groups. This fact should

better be understood: The only way out is to expand people's mentality in a constructive way, not to narrow the focus down to negative analysis only. For this to happen, a reasonable measure of socioeconomic justice must prevail. An expansive and productive service-mentality will do so much more good than dwelling on bitterness and enmity. Its requirement is a minimum standard for all as far as basic necessities are concerned. Otherwise no favorable development will come about but only downfall and degeneration.

Everywhere it appears that the negative results of mental development neutralize their positive contributions. The lack of true open-mindedness – the absence of universal consciousness – shows its ugly face everywhere. Accelerating figures for suicide, divorce, drug abuse and a plethora of psychic diseases indicate that positive education and true feelings of love and spirituality are missing in modern society, however educated its members may be in academic terms. PROUT diagnoses it as symptoms of psychic capitalism, the tendency for educated people to care chiefly about their own petty situation and doing little concrete for the betterment of general society.

Both the individual and collective get easily lost in emotional complications and dry intellectuality. A continuous inspiration towards a higher ideal is needed. We will have to look beyond the borders of the quite enormous but still limited spheres of matter, and beyond

the powerful but still imperfect emotions and technical excellence of the human mind as well, to find the source of actual progress.

Beyond relativity

As was previously established, movement is of two types: Backward and forward. There is no third alternative – no permanent pause, no everlasting standstill.

We all have an innate urge that makes us strive for something better in life. This forward drive may express itself more or less in people acting selflessly. Some work mainly for their own betterment and improvement. Others find that their own welfare is inseparably linked with that of others. Whatever the case, everyone aspires for development, for a higher status, for more happiness and satisfaction. This kind of thinking is characteristic of human beings who have moved beyond the purely instinctual. This ongoing search for something more defines the essence of who we are, and it continues to produce an expanded consciousness and a more caring outlook in us.

Just look at the massive changes in this area in recent months and years. We are much more aware now of crude and subtle dynamics in both our own and other areas. Our individual and collective minds are evolving fast.

Human actions are initiated with the motive of achieving satisfaction of some sort or the other. Some seek satisfaction in crude pleasures, others in more subtle activities. This never-ending search for happiness is true for all – even for desperate persons who resort to means and measures that are normally not accepted by society. And those actions that are collectively deemed to be especially positive and constructive and humane are judged by most to be great human actions.

Again, spiritual qualities may be more developed in some and less in others. The need and potential for expansion and social contact however is found in all of us. This socio-spiritual urge is the one human potential we should develop to safeguard continuous individual and social progress.

Spiritual outlook

Limited objects provide for limited happiness and will not yield lasting happiness. Only a truly profound object can satisfy the infinite thirst that we continue to nurture in our hearts. That boundless object is pure unlimited and unblemished consciousness. And the knowledge, the awareness, of being in the process of realizing such pure consciousness continues to motivate human beings and societies to move ahead towards true progress.

Movement in the spiritual sphere transcends the relative temporal, spatial and personal factors. Therefore

practical spirituality is progress in itself. When human beings actively work to realize their spiritual potential they experience rapid higher growth. Their life becomes sweeter and more inspired than before. The awareness of something infinite in their personal and collective life makes existence more meaningful and interesting.

On the social level, spiritual practices like meditation in individual life make a human being mentally strong and service-minded. His or her general understanding, intuition and social awareness unfold spontaneously. The psycho-spiritual process makes it clear that individual progress is the lifeblood of social progress, and vice versa. PROUT supports the view that the harmonious fulfilment of human physical, mental and spiritual longings is the main goal of human life.

PROUT defines a constructive goal for collective life as well: The establishment of a world society on the basis of one universal sentiment for all. It does not differentiate between people of different race, colour, gender or belief. All of us have the same fundamental rights to physical, mental and spiritual progress, and all of us have the potentialities to realize them.

Ultimate and final spiritual liberation is only attainable by the individual. It is not possible for a group of human beings to realize the final supreme state together at the same time. We are all different and will develop differently over time. Rather, we should always think in practical terms for both our own realization and

the all-round welfare of everyone else, including those who will come after us.

PROUT asserts that the concerted efforts to bridge the gap between the initial expression of moral integrity on one side and the establishment of a well-integrated universal society on the other, is how we can define social progress. PROUT emphasizes the importance of collective socio-spiritual movement in order to safeguard progressive development in any sphere – physical, mental, spiritual.

Utilization

What is it that makes utilization progressive? Take the Internet, the World Wide Web, which may be used in so many ways. Some usages of it are useful, valuable, and most practical. Others are criminal, or non-human. In itself the Net, which is a physical thing, cannot be said to be a vehicle of progress. Whether or not it is progressive depends on the motivation of its usage, its practical application, the direction it takes us in.

This is the reality of any technical or material thing. Their value lies in the hands, or the minds rather, of the user and not in the thing itself.

Misutilization: The EU and West Africa

The first that springs to mind, when the discussion turns to the present mis- and non-utilization of so many resources around the globe, is the almost total dependence of the Third World on the First and Second World (Europe and the USA) economies during recent decades and centuries. Third world industrially-underdeveloped countries have just not been allowed to take control over their own resources. A passage from *The Economist*, a UK liberalist weekly, illustrates this global evil:

As the rich world gives with one hand so it takes away with the other. The EU is the main offender. It sends cheap European beef to West Africa. Ostensibly designed to help poor African consumers, the beef programme is really aimed at helping rich European farmers. They produce (fatty) beef than no one will buy at the price at which they want to sell it, so they are subsidized by the European taxpayer to dump it in West Africa, where it destroys the livelihood of poor farmers.

Thanks to the tsetse fly, the countries in which this beef is dumped – Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana – rear few cattle of their own. But these countries have long enjoyed trade with cattle farmers in the Sahel – Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad – directly to the north. Traditionally, herdsman used to walk their animals, often for days, to markets in the Sahel where merchants bought them and drove them to the markets in the south. In recent decades, however, when the EU started dumping beef, the merchants have increasingly given up. European beef can be bought in West Africa at half the price of that produced in the Sahel.

The EU is spending large sums on projects expressly designed to support cattle

farmers: building refrigerated abattoirs in Burkina Faso, improving cattle breeds in Mali and fattening cattle in northern Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana. So far the EU has not even conceded that these projects are undermined by its own beef-dumping policy. It does not want to recognize this specific clash because it does not want to recognize that the entire common agricultural policy rests on a bigger fraud: systematic overproduction of food in Europe, paid for by Europe's taxpayers to please a powerful lobby, European farmers.”

West Africa only buys 0.5% of the beef reared in Europe each year, a minor plus for the powerful rich north making a huge minus for the already weak and dying south. What has post-colonial Europe been up to here?

For many years the world's advertising budget has more than doubled the combined gross national product of Africa's 45 poorest countries. The top spenders are the U.S., Japan and Germany. Besides the fact that the millions of tons of ink and paper involved contradicts all commercial high talk about ecology and environmental concern, we may ask the simplest of questions: Why is so much money being squandered on marketing when so many people live in substandard conditions?

Are those who are in the best position to do something about it, the multinational corporations, at all contributing to continued all-round growth in the areas in which they are involved in? What are their policies? Surely they can join in with Socrates and claim that they are “not an Athenian or a Greek but a citizen of the world.” Have they been acting properly in their privileged position?

Latin America

Let us discuss a random aspect of multinational entrepreneurialism: instant food substitutes. It has been estimated that between one-half and two-thirds of the world's population suffers from malnutrition or under-nutrition. One of the most serious nutritional problems is lack of protein. The supply of traditional sources of protein – meat, eggs, fish, dairy products – are too expensive for impoverished consumers in Third World nations. For instance, per capita income in most Latin American countries has for decades ranged between one fifth and one third of the U.S. Level.

Preschool malnutrition may irreversibly retard the mental and physical development of those who survive. It is seen that the adult population of such areas have less vigour and enterprise and are therefore unable to contribute as fully as they might to economic, industrial and social development. This unfortunate

situation has obviously lead to a lot of thinking in corporate boardrooms and multinationals started to prepare cheap foods from locally available protein sources.

One such giant company is Quaker Oats, USA. This Pepsi-owned food conglomerate operates more than 50 plants on four continents. Its Latin American brand of flour, *Incaparina*, can be used as an ingredient in drinks (similar to low-calorie diet products that are sold in large volume in rich countries). With the help of an intergovernmental agency looking after malnutrition in the area, Incaparina has been marketed successfully in Latin America. Quaker Oats sells other locally produced food substitutes as well: In Mexico the instant-thin porridge *Atolvena*, in Colombia the powdered formula of oat flour, sugar and various other ingredients *Frescavena*, and other similar products in neighbouring countries.

The company has made no secret of its policy of taking a well-established local food and adding “convenience” (typically sugar). Corn is a staple food in many of these countries. So Quaker Oats have long been marketing their locally produced, pre-cooked corn flour with great success.

The Proutistic question is: Have Quaker Oats’ investments in local food traditions in Latin America resulted in greater local self-sufficiency, economic control and competence as far as local minimum

necessities are concerned? Have local raw materials and workforce been engaged properly for the all-round welfare of the people of that region?

Cash-cropping

Cash-cropping is another transnational phenomenon that continues to spread like wildfire throughout the world's poor regions. In strife-stricken Sudan green iceberg lettuce produced exclusively for European markets has been grown in restricted areas. The income from these exports has largely been diverted to the leadership and upper bureaucracy. But the skyscrapers of Third World megacities cannot overshadow the fact that there is practically no local food processing industry there. Therefore there is not much growth in local initiative and talent either.

Such examples abound. Everywhere local raw material is exploited and misutilized while the local workforce remains largely unemployed and destitute.

Half a century ago, African countries were able to trade one ton of coffee in exchange for 32 barrels of oil. Ten years on they could only get nine barrels, and coffee prices kept falling, leaving producer countries to literally drown in coffee beans and with no opportunity to build up industries to supply people with what they actually needed. From the 2008 world recession onwards world food prices have been shooting up and coffee has

more than ever been the subject of various crude and sophisticated forms of financial speculation. Still, conditions for the poor coffee producers have only gone from really bad to even worse. Coffee prices may shoot up skywards but the poor producer countries will still have no means to educate their poor masses.

Under global capitalism there is no way the world's poor will be able to invest in proper local ventures to generate substantial income for their families. The multinationals, who have such means in plenty, have simply been engineering the capitalist system in line with their own economic priorities.

Around the turn of the century more than one fourth of the annual gross world product was generated in North America. In contrast the combined force of Latin America, Africa and Asia (minus the exceptions of Japan and oil-rich Middle East) could produce only one fifth. There is nothing wrong with North Americans being industrious or even involved. The fact remains however that less than 8% of the world's population live there while almost four out of every five persons in the world live in the other areas mentioned. This fact only confirms opinions that global socioeconomic developments are severely imbalanced.

Many observers like to say that Africa is probably the richest area on the planet in terms of natural resources. Africa's future, they hold, is potentially enormously bright but economically it remains the

poorest member of the world family. No one really seems to care about the future development of that continent and home to about 12% of the world's population.

Extensive lists of African hard facts is readily produced by both world and specialized agencies: Child mortality rates, health standards, life expectancy, education standards, water shortage, the increase of fallow land, the spreading of deserts, the percentage of finished goods out of the national product, the ratio of export / import figures, the ratio of higher to lower income groups, and so on. Such sad statistics are representative of the development in the other mentioned poor areas of the world as well, home to more than three quarters of us all.

Let us leave those figures for now. They surely paint a very dismal picture and may not help us much in gaining a greater understanding of how we may generate a positive movement towards local self-reliance and constructive global cooperation.

The capitalist mentality

Before we leave the multinationals, we will reiterate our simple question: Why have the extremely powerful multinationals failed to do anything concrete to fix things in the poor areas of the world? If they would, it may have relieved the world of a lot of suffering. Had

local purchasing capacity been stronger, the global players would have found local markets more stable and potential. The continuous turnover from such a solid world market might have increased the wealth of all.

Why did they not do it?

There are many answers to such a simple question. Basically, “the wealth of all” does not mean much for capitalists. Their motivation is quite different. What makes sense to a capitalist is the capital he or she controls. The active expansion of such personal wealth is capitalism in action. Let us break that basic truth down into some practical aspects of typical big business attitudes.

1. For a very long time the multinationals did splendidly in their trade with the poor. Cheap raw materials were being extracted, refined and sold worldwide with enormous profits. The freedom of multinationals to reallocate has been practically unrestricted. It is really quite difficult to imagine how multinationals could maintain such profit margins if the poor were to be educated about their various rights and paid properly for their raw materials, labour, etc.

2. Capitalists remain preoccupied with foreseeable profits. This particular trait of theirs is the same in good times as well as bad. They avoid investing capital wherever returns seem a long way off. If profits seem very distant they prefer not to invest at all, which is

exactly the problem financial markets face today: A very serious case of “investors’ block”.

Today the world is on the verge of social, ecological, political, moral and cultural bankruptcy. Consequently, many pessimistic capitalists are wary of investing. At one point almost none of them will be in the mood to invest at all. This stagnancy will lead from recession to depression where risk capital will be a rarity.

A vision of contributing to a more humane society is not only too long-term to capitalists. It would appear a very strange and otherworldly notion indeed to one who remains focused on monetary earnings and profit-taking in order to increase his or her control over physical capital.

3. The capitalist mentality is predominantly individualist to the extent of being deeply selfish. As such it is steadily moving away from human values towards cruder consciousness. This means that capitalists’ will to do good and to think and act in a humane manner is steadily decreasing.

4. Capitalists compete fiercely among themselves. There is a do-or-die situation owing to their insatiable urge for capital control. They do not willingly team up unless there is an immediate danger of bankruptcy or a real chance of a larger market share, and such sham team-building is rightly called an “unholy alliance”.

5. Capitalism in its present debased stage is struggling hard with its main inner contradiction: Its unlimited thirst for the world's limited physical resources. Capitalists want to expand their kingdoms forever and in the process they suck the life-blood out of their subjects. It is not a sustainable situation. Like parasites on a tree, these supremely greedy capitalists will die when the tree they parasite on dies.

There may be many more reasons for capitalists not to do good in a real way. They would all indicate the same: The approach of capitalism as a system is not at all progressive but short-sighted, narrow-minded and profit-motivated. Many genuine capitalists might have functioned more constructively under a different paradigm. As players within capitalism they continue to perpetrate evil in the form of causing hunger and a long list of other deprivations that harm large numbers of people if not most of us directly.

Proutist mentality

PROUT asserts that human capabilities do not originate or end in the world of crude matter. If the human thirst for limitlessness is forced to remain within certain limits, people will sooner or later end up in utter despair, unable to satisfy this infinite need, not to mention their immediate obligations towards their family and locality.

If such a situation is allowed to continue long enough a time will come when these downtrodden people will revolt and either throw off their exploiters or die with them in an all-out battle.

The reason why the final clash may be late in coming is that to most people, a life in poverty is no more about long-term living but about short-term survival. For many people, having been pushed into poverty is as good as being forced into selfishness. Being utterly deprived of fair chances in life, the really poor have few resources left for sharing an interest in matters of indirect or remote concern.

Below the poverty line, education and sophisticated social commentary are rare commodities and may be viewed as a luxury. As a result it becomes next to impossible for the poor to get the real picture and act properly. For many poor people, crime and self-destructive patterns become the norm. In the world's slums and poor neighbourhoods the full utilization of personal and social potentialities remains a distant dream; a peculiar fantasy of some sort, a lost treasure.

Sooner or later we will all realize that the material world cannot offer us the infinite fulfilment we really desire but what the poor need is purchasing capacity and basic education. Therefore the present exploitative economic order must first of all come to an end. In order to solve the problem of world poverty we need to initiate a system of local economic control.

Without such basic economic justice for everybody, there is no solution to poverty in sight.

A just and dynamic socioeconomic system can be brought about by a powerful motivation for universal cooperation – the spirit of a world family working together. The generation of such a great ideal requires education for everybody. As soon as the basic necessities of life are made available to everybody by providing a minimum of purchasing power through work, authorities should not hesitate to allow for extensive ethical and spiritually-inspiring education in addition to providing general and specialised education free for everyone.

Sooner or later we will all realize that the material world cannot offer us the infinite fulfilment we really desire. By delving into more subtle spheres we will enable ourselves to realize newer forms of glorious wealth in all the spheres of life. But we cannot undertake this important journey if we are still hungry and feel deprived. It is only possible to advance further in one's life path if the basic requirements and minimum necessities are in place, such as sufficient food, clothing, etc. and an ethical compass with which one may navigate properly in the world.

Progressive utilization

Material resources and physical potentialities are quite common whereas mental strength and intellectual wealth

are comparatively rare. Most of us can flex at least some of our muscles but only a few of us can control and channelize our mental faculties at will. Persons endowed with extensive mental capabilities should get the opportunity to serve and inspire society in their special spheres of knowledge. According to the second and third fundamental principles of PROUT, everyone should be given the maximum scope and opportunity to progress while one's current abilities of serving society should be utilized in a rational manner

No two people are exactly the same and everyone may be of great service. It may be mentioned here that to order highly educated and developed human beings to toil crudely in the name of equality and solidarity, as was the regular practice in communist countries, is decidedly regressive and detrimental to both individual and collective progress.

The principle of progressive utilization proposes the harmonious development of human potential. Those who are mostly physically gifted should contribute according to the best of their ability. Simultaneously they should be offered abundant opportunities to take up education for their intellectual growth and spiritual fulfilment. In the same way, persons of intellectual or spiritual dispositions and resources should be urged to continue with their integrated development so that their valuable services may grow and expand. Only to make use of a person's immediate potential without giving any

scope for further development may lead to stagnancy and degeneration. Social progress would also suffer. Again, the collective good is found in the individual and individual good is found in the collective.

The spiritual

Spiritual inspiration has the tremendous power to move even the uninspired. Even more valuable than intellectual competence therefore are spiritual awareness and insight. Intuitively and spiritually developed people may offer society service of the highest calibre as they are able to understand the subtle needs of their fellow beings and aid them in areas where the physical and intellectual do not suffice.

Unfortunately, spiritually inclined people have been known to live a life of withdrawal and reclusion. As spiritual aspirants, they should serve others in a selfless way while living in the midst of society. PROUT suggests that spiritually adept men and women should be in the center of society where they will be given the task of securing all-round development for everybody.

A tiny stream of water in the high mountains gradually flows into a mighty river, passing through different landscapes while watering and nourishing various fields so that harvests and lives are fed and developed. This tiny, almost invisible but all-important headwater in the high mountains is the spiritual source – the universal source of individual and collective interest.

Progressive utilization recognizes the importance of this spiritual source. It will continue to espouse universal human values and a common spiritual ideal, guaranteeing the distribution of material necessities to everyone and special amenities for some.

The proper utilization of objects and personal capacities brings about development. The refinement of so many crude and subtle objects has caused a continuous upgrading of human civilization and will continue to do so. Nowadays new technologies and phenomena are invented and discovered daily, so that many have come to see rapid change as the most natural thing there is. Naturally, all of us hope that such dynamic development will enrich future generations as well.

Theory

A large number of theories have been put forward since human beings first expressed their capacity to put their thoughts into conceptual strings of ideas. In eras long gone, philosophy commanded the greatest respect, enthusiasm and attention. It was then, in ancient Greece, in Renaissance Italy, under India's Gupta rulers, and during China's Zhou dynasty, that the study of the good, the beautiful and the virtuous was regarded as the supreme achievement.

So far thinkers have not been able to come up with successful solutions to the fundamental problems facing human beings. Humanity of the 21st Century still does not know how to live together, understand each other, serve one another.

In the previous chapter we commented on the colossal failures of Marxism and Capitalism, the two most favored theories of the previous century. The sole reason for the inability of thinkers to come up with satisfactory solutions is that human intellect is limited and subject to the continuous changes in the relative factors of time, place and person. The intrinsic relativity of the creation is the very cause of the inability of philosophers to formulate a theory which may be valid

for a long time, in a great many places, and for all types of people.

Causes of theory failure and ideological vacuum

Why exactly do theories end up on the rubbish heap of history? There are various reasons for it. Some of the most common causes identified by PROUT are:

1. The theory isn't practical but amounts to castles in the air. "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" and "Does the cup contain water or is there water in the cup?" belong to this category of useless speculative theorising. The interest for such a *Logician's Theory* ultimately fades because it lacks in practical value and is only of vague relevance.
2. The thinker imagines future conditions more than taking past and present circumstances properly into account. The result is a *Utopian Theory* with little or no practical relevance. Marxism is a case in point.
3. The propounder or promoter of the theory isn't sincere. The *Hypocrite's Theory* is in reality a smokescreen for vested interests and exploitation with a new face. Numerous political and economic initiatives of recent years fall into this

category, such as “peaceful co-existence”, “mixed economy” and “quantitative easing”.

4. The theory may have its fair share of relevance but those who comprehend it aren't much interested in the real world. Instead they choose to remain secluded, satisfied with their own personal achievements. Certain religious and philosophic schools with a tendency towards nihilism and denial of the value of the world fall into this category of *Theoretician's Theory*.

All of the above varieties, due to their deficiencies and harmful effects, have led to various prolonged periods of moral and socio-political vacuities at different times throughout the world. They have opened up for prolonged periods of static pause where societies have suffered severe setbacks in various spheres as a consequence of lack of proper inspirational dynamism.

Practice before theory

Isaac Newton came up with the law of gravitation after observing the apple dropping. He never recorded apples having fallen according to some law that he had previously invented. What Newton did was to suggest a natural law after having seen it practically expressed in nature and then go on to apply it in various spheres and fields.

A workable theory for human beings in the world must necessarily be preceded by practical experience. Only then will it be possible to go ahead with further application. Mere speculation and abstract theorization may produce more or less wholesome hypotheses but not a workable theory with practical universal relevance.

The supreme human experience is the ultimate awareness of all-pervading consciousness. The key to both individual and collective social success lies in the awareness of the inter-relatedness of all things. PROUT maintains that the realization of universal love, and thereby a spirit of caring for the welfare of all living beings, ought to guide our actions and development. This is the basis of the economic, industrial, political, cultural, social and other principles of the Progressive Utilization Theory.

What does history say? Let us return briefly to the previous examples related to communism and capitalism.

Materialist socialism

Marxism was the brainchild of a sensitive humanist strongly moved by the suffering of the working class. While developing his theories of history, classes, exploitation, socioeconomics, etc., Karl Marx depended heavily on his personal impressions of the gruelling exploitation of labour that prevailed in Europe at the

time. His theory of history states that one class has always exploited another and for this to come to an end, only the exploited class – the working class – should flourish. Marx did not take into account the fact that all classes had not always been exploitative and that various classes had dominated society one after the other and therefore some other class could come up and dominate after the working class also. In this way he failed to correctly depict the dynamics of exploitation that run parallel to the growth and decline of the respective classes.

The historical need of the rise and fall of classes, their dynamic succession one after another, their initial constructive phase and successive exploitative phase, has no place in the materialist socialist project. PROUT presents a particular theory of the movement of the social classes throughout history, called the Theory of the Social Cycle. It explains and foresees fundamental shifts in the collective outlook throughout human history and seeks to minimize exploitation by dominating classes of the rest of society. PROUT's theory of the history of social classes is linked to its theories of leadership, revolution, and exploitation.

Marx' theory of class was extremely limited and so was its successive practical development. The working class is everything in Marxist materialistic socialism. The idea that such prominent social contributors as the proud military-minded and the

shrewd intellectual classes should accept a retreat into a common prehistoric primitive stage, out of some assumed deeper need for being simply equal, indicates an impractical and illusory approach to social realities on Marx' part. Indeed, the effort to materialize Marx' egalitarian ideals would prove as effective as would an attempt to force a colourful butterfly back into its narrow caterpillar cocoon.

As previously indicated, the basically reactionary tendency of Marxist theory, its glorification of the working class at the expense of the other classes, allowed a great number of inhumane and highly regressive developments to take place behind the Iron- and Bamboo curtains. In the name of "proletarianization" the dream of turning all of us into labourers resulted in the nightmare of expediting millions of dissenters into exile, the mass murder of countless members of the opposition , while highly educated people were ordered to work as labourers in the fields.

Today we perceive the dark shadows of materialist socialist thinking in the present mixed socioeconomic systems where vast numbers of unemployed and destitute are maintained as hopeless, "unemployable" sections of society on very low incomes and with even bleaker futures. The requirements of capitalism have not changed much since the days of

Marx but may be more sophisticatedly managed these days.

According to PROUT, no one is hopeless or unemployable. Everybody has a bright future and possesses numerous potentialities. In a Proutistic society the socioeconomically passive members of society would be reinvigorated, put to work, and given proper education in order for them to progress. PROUT's decentralized, localized economic system offers enough opportunity for the employment of all of us. No one should go unemployed and unpaid. It is said that under capitalism people run after jobs, while under PROUT jobs will run after people. The dynamics of PROUT guarantee plenty of opportunities for meaningful employment.

Capitalist theory

The first capitalists may have been people who simply saw the need for a hedge against a rainy day. Subsequently the opportunity to make a living out of this particular tendency resulted in the increasingly large accumulation of capital and gradually structured market mechanisms. The invention of money, banking and other means of efficient exchange led to the formalised tools of capitalism, a system devoted to capital control.

The nascent capitalist class emerged on the backs of previous social and intellectual classes. Prominent

capitalists would be expected to uphold core values of the previously dominating warrior and intellectual classes who tried their utmost to maintain their dominance but in the end gradually succumbed to capitalist rule. Traditional noble values carried over to capitalists from earlier dominant social forces would include a sense of nobility, urge for exploration, support for innovation and the fine arts, etc. Such classic capitalists termed themselves “value-conservatives”, which means they expressed or actively supported the core values of the classes that dominated before them and the capitalists did it essentially to sustain and strengthen their own particular interests of capital control.

The classical iconic image of the cultured capitalist gentleman was soon to be tarnished. In fact, the real interest of a capitalist is increased capital formation. If nobility and support of the arts do not produce the amassing of still larger amounts of wealth, directly or indirectly, then what is the value of those fine values! And if “fine” values can be transformed into commercial value, what is wrong with that? In this way, the capitalist mind moves to crudify everything on Earth into profitable capital. Anything and everything must be measured in terms of economic value in capitalism. This degenerating tendency of capitalism has definitely a negative bearing on capitalists themselves as well as on society as a whole.

The father of capitalist theory, Adam Smith and his ideas of the free individual, unrestricted enterprise, and the divinely regulated market, helped unleash an entrepreneurial spirit of gigantic proportions. Banking and stock exchanges were institutionalized, industrial trade was organized across the globe and commerce placed at the centre of human affairs to such an extent that it transformed the collective mind from being state and church-oriented to being profit-motivated, and from being group- and religious-minded to being self-centred and worldly.

Today new liberal theories are being hastily applied in grotesque attempts to keep the sinking ship of global capitalism afloat. Needless to say, the financial markets provide the testing ground for most of their destructive creativity, where old and new ways and means are experimented with, in ever-new efforts to suck just another drop of profit out of the socioeconomic body of humanity. Greed and grab are the inner motivations of these hypocritical inventors of new market devices, laws, regulations, etc. that are the brainchildren of the cream of the intellectual community employed by the super-rich in their effort to become even richer.

So entrenched is greed today that it is universally accepted as the very soul of the current form of capitalism. Gone is the desire to lend a helping hand, to create and be of practical use to society, gone is the

classical capitalist with his fine values. Only greed prevails as the chief sentiment of socioeconomic life at this time. It is well reflected in media's pseudo-culture, and it expresses itself in a steep increase in tax evasion, gambling and other socioeconomic decadence. Having made the entire social body degenerated, capitalism has brought the world to the brink of all-round collapse.

PROUT characterizes the type of theory that professes capitalism, such as Smith's theory of God's invisible hand that regulates the market of free enterprise, as hypocritical. Here, hypocritical indicates someone who says one thing but in reality has some other intent. Adam Smith may or may not have been a sincerely religious-minded person but it is quite clear that his "hand of God" theory has been differently conceived of by capitalists after him. It is direct manipulation by big business interests that regulates today's financial markets.

Capitalism and capitalists

The capitalist mind-set is a natural human trait. PROUT acknowledges the value of all human competences and utilises them for progress, maximum utilisation and rational distribution. Natural capitalist-constructive capabilities such as capital formation, financial management, etc. will continue to serve human beings under PROUT. Society cannot do without natural human

traits, and their suppression by any violent means would only lead to bitter reactions.

Capitalism, on the other hand, is the collective form of capitalist exploitation. Under PROUT, capitalists, like the other psycho-social classes, will function constructively in the natural rotation of the social cycle. The successive onset of the dominance of the various psycho-social classes will be ensured and resolved through the leadership of the de-classed “sadvipras”.

According to PROUT, capitalist exploitation is three-fold: Economic, Intellectual and Spiritual. Economic exploitation will cease when money no longer may be accumulated freely by a few. Intellectual capitalism will cease when the intelligentsia no longer will slave for money but will focus on collective welfare. Spiritual capitalism will cease when spiritual seekers will come out of seclusion and emerge in the midst of society where they may contribute to its vitality in their own way.

- In a Proutistic socio-economic setup, profits will be minimized to the advantage of increased consumption and rational distribution of basic necessities and increasing amenities. Hence capitalists will not get any scope to exploit workers.

- Under PROUT, the distribution of essential commodities will be done through consumers' cooperatives. As a consequence middlemen and profiteers will be eliminated.
- Under PROUT most industries will run as cooperatives where shares will not be transferable without the permission of the cooperative, which will make the amassing of shares an impossibility.
- PROUT recognises the importance of 1) internal urge and 2) external pressure in the effort to strengthen individual morality and public morale. Every person has an internal desire to become good and fulfil his or her infinite potentiality. At the same time everyone needs to be supported and guided in their development. This compound principle will have to be applied in the case of capitalists, too, with their strong tendency towards accumulation and economic control.

“The incapability to recognize the requirements of others because of insensitiveness is a psychic disease.” – Sarkar

Today capitalists are exploiting local economies and draining their wealth. 99.9 % of profits are spent outside the local area and remitted to outside stockholders and parent companies. Such dynamics will simply not be allowed under PROUT where members of

society will have to merge their socio-economic identity with that of the locality.

The present system of investing capital by engaging others in productive labour to earn a profit will not be allowed under PROUT. Private enterprises will exist only outside the sphere of essential goods. Such enterprises will be limited in scope and size and owners will have to be employed.

“The first branch of PROUT’s psycho-economy endeavours to eradicate exploitative and unjust economic practices, behaviours and structures. It will counter all economic and psycho-economic exploitation and make people aware of how capitalists, in their singular or collective roles, exploit society and create unhealthy, artificial demands which not only poison the mind but encourage dangerous habits detrimental to psychic sanctity and expansion. The first and foremost duty of psycho-economics is to wage a tireless fight against all degenerating and dehumanizing economic trends in society.”
– Sarkar, in “Quadri-dimensional Economy”

“In order to follow the principles of PROUT, rich people will have to fight against sin and injustice, and in order to conduct such a fight

properly, they will not be able to keep their wealth – they will have to become middle-class.”

– Sarkar, in “Shudra Revolution and Sadvipra Society”

PROUT is a practical theory

If theory precedes practice many difficulties will be encountered. But when theory succeeds practice it has a practical application. The empirical basis of PROUT has already been discussed. Its deepest and most profound reality is universal, infinite spirit. Now let us have a look at some potential practical applications of that spiritual truth.

PROUT

Progress or regression are the two options available for human beings who have risen above the stage of blissfully innocent animality. According to PROUT, there are two forces dragging at human beings: Forward and backward.

The forward unifying force is a synthetic force, whereas the backward divisive force is analytical. Today the whole world is becoming polarized for a conflict between the forces for progress and exploitation. The reason for this major violent antagonism is that the analytical force reigns supreme. An overwhelming lack of local unity and world fraternity plagues our newly globalised world. PROUT asserts that the analytical force must be subordinate to the synthetic force in order for us to ensure growth in all spheres and areas. We live in a world of new demands where human beings everywhere continue to express their eagerness to develop and grow. A universal code of basic unifying values and principles is needed.

We know that humanity is facing unprecedented problems. At present the entire human race and world civilization may be in jeopardy. Who knows the real number and dimension of global problems? What is their root cause and where is their solution? Which is an

individual problem, which is a collective one? It seems we simply just have to find out. Our great dormant potentialities and abilities, once activated and utilized, will surely allow us to solve problems of any size.

Present political leaders clearly lack well thought out plans and solutions. It is as if they want only to get through another election. They also seem bent on doing so by fooling their electorates with numerous short-term solutions and powerful strategies of exploitation in order to prolong their rule indefinitely.

On the other hand the seriousness of the situation seems to have a paralyzing effect on most. It is as we are hell-bent on dozing all the way to Armageddon. The few who have woken up and voice their concerns are being ridiculed as people crying wolf and madmen. Has the world, our global home, really come to this, so soon after the twin catastrophes of two world wars?

Food distribution

Take the global problem of the unbalanced and unfair distribution of wealth. In one country or region people die from obesity. In the next they die from lack of food. This is perhaps the one problem demanding our most immediate attention. The hoarding of enormous wealth by a tiny minority and the poverty of the vast majority has made welfare for all an impossible dream.

PROUT stresses that material objects are limited and should therefore be restricted; too much for some means too little for others. The solution to the problem of wealth disparity is that no one should be allowed to accumulate any physical wealth in excess of limits set by society. Simultaneously the government must guarantee every one a minimum of purchasing power – the power to maintain the minimum standards of living: food, clothing, housing, health care and education.

PROUT will guarantee purchasing power in the form of work. Under PROUT there will be no unemployment as its socioeconomic system is not profit-but consumption-motivated.

Education

PROUT advocates free education from preschool through to university graduation. For poor young people and adults there should be proper income generating employment harmonized with students' needs and ideally with the particular educational programmes. PROUT's policy of combining debt- and loan-free education with guaranteed purchasing capacity through work, is the way forward in a world of fast mechanization and galloping sophisticated technology. Everybody should be given ample opportunities to develop their fresh potentialities while utilising their current skills and competences.

There is no way anyone can satisfy their innate infinite thirst in the material sphere alone. The only satisfactory solution to the incessant inner demand of human beings is to turn to more subtle mental and spiritual spheres and partake of these domains to one's heart's content. Education is an integral part of PROUT's solution to poverty, both for those being exploited and the exploiters.

Morality and democracy

Now that we have established the need for a non-corrupt and efficient political society, it would be appropriate to discuss the proper way out of the present political crisis. This crisis is wholly a moral one, as corruption and careerism are plaguing the political world at present.

PROUT upholds a system of enlightened organized democracy. The most obvious requirements for both the candidates and the electorate is education. In a number of industrially and politically backward countries, democracy means a democracy of illiterates, and so it is just a farce. In the so-called developed world, people generally do not know more than a fraction of the party program. The turnout on election day is poor in most of these countries as well, since democracy has become just another hollow public institution. Such a system of election makes it possible for only a minority

of the electorate to stand behind the leader who finally gets elected to office from the party platform.

For instance, in an election of poor voter turnout one party or a coalition of parties may capture power by a slim minority, and from this party or coalition of parties ministers, etc. are selected by a process not directly determined by the electorate but by party dynamics. The final result of elections may therefore be far removed from the actual wishes of society. The gap between the electorate and the elected leads to structural alienation and moral degradation over time. Only relevant ethical and political education and intimate structural rapport may generate vibrant local consciousness with the required integrated fiber for the system of democracy to really work for the people.

The electorate should be qualified. An age limit is simply not enough to make people conscious of their democratic duties. The qualification demands will naturally vary from country to country. Common general requirements will include education about the program of candidates, about the background and current status of the area, about the rights of voters to intervene between elections in case elected office bearers do not keep their election promises, about ways and means to organize the electorate and their representative monitoring bodies, etc.

Political education must be backed by real support of governments, without which their will to

work for the welfare of all will be deemed to be false. For instance, the so-called democratic demand for the removal of the requirement of literacy on the part of voters in the USA in the late 1950s was a false populist move and not something borne out of sincere concern for the downtrodden poor. The fact is that the politicians in those states had not done enough to raise the educational standard of the illiterate, and only created this "democratic" slogan as a smokescreen to cover up their lack of will to generate real welfare for all.

World governance

The present United Nations is a weak and partial world body. It has not been able to deal properly with serious situations such as the wars in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In spite of its proud declaration of human rights it has not been able to prevent genocides in Africa and elsewhere, and it looks powerlessly on as more than 1 billion people go hungry every day and a global water crisis is setting in.

PROUT proposes the formation of a world constitution as a base for a world government. A bill of rights should be included in the world constitution, including the following points as a minimum:

1. The existential value of all plants and animals around the world should be recognized.

2. Each country must constitutionally guarantee adequate purchasing power to all its citizens for the basic necessities of life: food, clothing, housing, health care and education.
3. The four fundamental rights – spiritual practices, cultural legacy, education, and indigenous linguistic expression – should be guaranteed by the constitution.
4. Basic human values must take precedence over other rights including the above.

The government will consist of one lower house and one upper house. The lower house will accommodate representatives of the countries of the world on basis of their population. The upper house will have a veto right and will consist of an equal number of representatives from each country irrespective of their population, say two from each. In this way, small countries that are less represented in the lower house will get the chance to voice their opinion on matters to be approved by the upper house.

Cooperative banking

The present banking system has developed serious capital problems as a result of hoarding and speculation. The present market is an extreme expression of capitalism's exclusiveness with hardly any entry point

for the young and earners of an average wage. The economic dynamics of the capitalist global market at the very end of its exploitive phase shows the very face and essence of capitalist thinking: Me, Myself and I, and nobody else. It is this utter lack of service-mindedness and collective spirit that is now driving this system into a bottomless abyss at a breakneck speed.

PROUT's answer is an extensive system of cooperative banking. The people involved will be the owners of the cooperative. There will be no system of outside shareholders; in this way speculation will be a thing of the past. Interest rates will be nominal. Consequently the financial growth of the banking cooperative outside that of necessary administrative costs will depend wholly on the success of its involvement with local enterprises. In other words, PROUT's banking cooperatives will function directly in connection with other kinds of cooperative enterprises. Naturally, those who are more involved with the bank, both in form of financial and other services, will receive a proportionate part of the yield.

Taxation

The rich and the wealthy have easily been able to manipulate income tax laws and other such regulations to their advantage. This has been next to impossible for ordinary wage earners.

In general, PROUT favours the system of value-added taxes, a progressive tax on property and inheritance, as well as a small rise in levies on imports and luxury goods as compared to most systems of taxation around the world today. Income tax should be abolished. Not only will the removal of income tax allow black money to come to light and join the white economy thereby rejuvenating the entire economy, it will also bring about a much needed moral boost.

Ownership

The problem of worldwide unemployment can be solved by abolishing large private corporations, to be replaced by cooperative ownership of the large and middle-sized sections of the economy, in other words by economic democracy. In order to introduce economic democracy, a system of decentralized economy is needed. In PROUT's system, all industries which produce consumer goods will come under the cooperative umbrella.

Only very large industries and small firms come outside of PROUT's cooperative structure. Large key industries, for example which extract raw materials, should be owned by the public whereas small enterprises may be privately owned (subject to PROUT's first fundamental principle of limited accumulation). In this manner, the people involved in the largest section of the economy, the cooperative sector, will be able to exert

decisive influence over policies concerning production, employment, and increases in the average amount of free time, wages, etc., in their own area.

The need to limit accumulation

PROUT sees the idea of wanting to become infinitely rich as an expression of psychological ill-health and inimical to human rights. PROUT's view on the need to limit the accumulation of wealth considers certain aspects of the nature of wealth and human longings in particular.

Firstly, mundane wealth is in limited supply. When a few financially-adept people acquire lots of material wealth and go on manipulating its value without the slightest concern for the basic needs of large masses of people, such misuse and abuse is sure to have an adverse impact on the lives of very many. Basic human rights violations which result directly and indirectly from inordinate capitalist accumulation include: Large income and wealth gaps, pervasive lack of proper education, hunger, and physical, social, intellectual, cultural, and spiritual poverty. The inability among the affluent to empathise with and act firmly on such disproportional disparities is certainly an indication of mental illness and is not their human right.

Secondly, physical wealth, being limited, cannot satisfy the human thirst for limitlessness. PROUT's

concept of progress suggests that the path to human happiness and existential fulfilment leads via higher pursuits. As long as capitalists accumulate physical wealth beyond reason, they only make life more and more miserable both for the deprived and destitute masses and personally for themselves. Capitalists will not become happy in this way but only increasingly frustrated, disturbed, deranged and in the end dangerously mad.

For these two reasons first and foremost PROUT limits the accumulation of individual wealth as a primary step towards rational distribution and human rights for all.

Localization

PROUT says the economy should be controlled by local people. However the art of running businesses successfully and the science of economics require particular skills and expertise; how can we expect “local people” to manage it?

“Localization” is a popular term among those who are looking for an alternative to capitalism. PROUT’s concept of localisation has several important aspects to it.

Firstly, any society, large or small, needs people of various capacities and competence for it to develop in a balanced way. PROUT suggests that human resources

initially be particularly allocated wherever localities have suffered from a brain drain in the past. It is the job of policy makers to see to it that persons of sufficient social, cultural, economic and other calibres deem it profitable to take up residence and occupation in local areas.

Secondly, PROUT's concept of nuclear revolution aims at promoting individual value-shifting in localities. PROUT goes for a bottom-up approach and not top-down imposition. This approach involves various forms and systems of public education and empowerment.

PROUT's decentralised economic approach generates agro-based or "agrigo-" societies where each and every citizen would like and enjoy living in closer proximity to their actual life resources. Overall, PROUT aims to liberate and renew people's lifestyle-choices and career paths in general. What is typical today will be marginal tomorrow just as the norm of the future may not be recognizable today.

The present centralization of economic power and competence into the hands of a few will be a thing of the past when people with all sorts of know-how and capacities will prefer to live their lives "out there" instead of inside the machinery of capitalism.

Leadership

Democracy is one current form of rule in the ongoing history of various forms of governing human society. After two world wars and numerous recent serious ethnic and religious clashes around the world, this particular system of governance “by, for, and of the people” (Abraham Lincoln) has gained currency as the only enlightened political system of any hope to humanity. However, in its present shape democracy allows political parties and agents of whole social classes to rule at the expense of other interests and social classes. Under capitalism, democracy has matured as an efficient tool of manipulation where votes and influence are bought and traded.

PROUT proposes a number of democratic reforms and introduces the concept of moral-spiritual guidance and leadership to ensure freedom from exploitation and progressive socio-political dynamics. PROUT suggests the employment of an ethical-spiritual leadership, by persons termed as *sadvipra*^{*}, who themselves do not wield direct policy-making or executive powers. The *sadvipras* form their own collective bodies at any administrative level in order to sustain progress and help guard society against exploitation.

* *Satya* (“truth”) + *vipra* (“intellect”) = one whose mind is embedded in truth.

The job of this moral leadership and their boards is to monitor and initiate necessary popular action and if necessary organize a revolt against government slackness, corruption and stagnation. Their source of power is people's respect and confidence earned by their selfless service, practically-expressed constructive social outlook and high personal values. Sadvipras are guardians of society, independent of class and detached from the regular aims and objectives of the regular social classes.

Under PROUT, the policy-making portion of governments will be elected while the executive will be appointed (selected). Compared with today's system of party-based politics, the concept of sadvipra leadership is really a vision of a higher order. An ethical and spiritual initiative will place collective interests before class interests and will be capable of providing society and governance with the necessary inspiration for continuous forward motion. Sadvipra leadership brings in a new dimension of governance, the people's representative monitoring boards, and PROUT views it as essential for democracy to evolve in a benevolent way into the future.

PROUT's sadvipras will emerge as the personification of humanity's regained self-respect, dedication to selfless service and active social interest in the post-capitalist world.

Act locally, think universally

PROUT claims Universality but promotes Groupings along ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic and other lines. Isn't it a contradiction in terms?

PROUT's concept of *Samaj** is dynamic and progressive. A samaj is defined socioeconomically by such criteria as a common background, common needs, and common potentialities. Samaj is not a static concept, as nationalism is for instance, but it is dynamic and expansive in character. Ultimately we all have a common background – the Earth, the World – and mutual physical, mental and spiritual needs and potentialities.

Practically, it will take some time and all-round development still for the people of the Earth to reach a steady stage of universality. In the meantime we will all need to take certain common factors into account as we attempt to review and reform society's boundaries. Ethnicity is one factor that still plays a main role in numerous areas around the world. In other places natural resources, opportunities for trade and other factors are of more immediate concern for forming well-functioning societies.

The concept of cooperating and eventually merging samajas allows for the natural development of greater socio-economic zones and their mergers again

* *Samaj* = “society”; a body of human beings moving together in life.

into still larger regional zones based on common factors vital to all people of those areas at that time. The ultimate goal of PROUT is one universal samaj, One World Society.

All-round integration

The true genius of the socioeconomic theory called PROUT is the idea of integrating physical activities, mental development and spiritual emancipation within a comprehensive pragmatic socioeconomic setup. PROUT upholds the need for progressive practices in all spheres. The theory extends spirituality to the entire social organism, its implications reaching deep into each and every aspect of life. PROUT is an ideology in the true sense of the term, taking both the individual and the collective towards all-round liberation.

PROUT stands for a happy blending of individual freedom and collective interests:

- Economically, there is plenty of scope in PROUT for both private and cooperative initiatives.
- Politically, PROUT blends moral integrity, a sense of active responsibility, and democratic values.
- Socially, PROUT calls for a leadership capable of moral and spiritual excellence, offering a sure

guarantee against corruption and prolonged exploitation.

- Culturally, PROUT stands for one universal family -- one multi-faceted human culture.

On the one hand PROUT can bring an end to all sorts of exploitation. On the other hand this theory can offer the individual the opportunity and the means to serve a progressive society and strive to reach the final goal of human life.

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