

"I want that every person should be guaranteed the minimum physical necessities of life;

"I want that every person should have the opportunity to fully develop their psychic potentiality;

"And that every person should march towards perfection.

"In and through this movement everyone should be made conscious of the purpose and meaning of life."

P.R.Sarkar

- * a new economic system for people and for planet earth
- * the successor to capitalism and communism?

PROUT

- the third way

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A brief introduction to the social and economic philosophy of P.R.Sarkar

PROUT

PROGRESSIVE UTILISATION THEORY

INTRODUCTION

* With the downfall of communism in Europe and the increasingly uncertain future of capitalism, the whole world is wondering - surely there must be a better way!

* PROUT is the practical political and economic application of a philosophy known as Neo-humanism. PROUT and Neo-humanism together open a new chapter in human history.

* PROUT takes a holistic view of human beings and an ecological view of planet earth. It is not easy to summarise PROUT in a few words. Some have described it as socialism with a human face. Professor Ravi Batra, internationally acclaimed author of "The Great Depression of 1990" describes it as "mass capitalism", that is a free enterprise system in which wealth is equitably distributed. This pamphlet offers a brief introduction to some aspects of PROUT.

* PROUT was first propounded by the eminent Indian philosopher, P.R. Sarkar in the 1960's. Sarkar has written widely in economics, philosophy, spirituality, linguistics and physics. His works have been acclaimed by academics from both the East and the West. Commenting on Sarkar's sociological writings, Prof. Galtung of the University of Hawaii ranks Sarkar alongside "the big macro-theoreticians such as Marx, Toynbee, Khaldun, Sorokin and of course, Sarkar is one of them."

* But Sarkar is not just a theoretician. He has founded several international service and welfare organisations including; AMURT and AMURTEL - disaster relief organisations that have provided on the spot aid following earthquakes, hurricanes and floods in numerous countries; ANANDA MARGA - teaches yoga and meditation techniques in all countries of the world (including USSR and China); ERAWS (Education, Relief and Welfare Services) - has established schools, hostels, medical clinics and collected food and clothes for the destitute in most countries.

NEOHUMANISM

* From its uncertain origins in prehistory to present day internationalism, the human race has struggled to establish a just, equitable and pleasing social system. We have struggled to put collective welfare before selfish interest, democratic process before tyranny, rationality before dogma, and the softness of the human heart before the law of the jungle. In this struggle, the human race has made a little progress. At best we have embraced *humanism* a social philosophy which accords

emotional stability of small children to control those weapons. Wise parents do not let their children play with matches, let alone

* Why is it that so many revolutions and movements of social renewal end up suppressing the very people they originally sought to liberate? The question is so vitally important because human beings are today discouraged and even cynical about the possibility to create a better world. The answer, says Sarkar, is simple. Those who would like to create a better world must be careful to preserve their simplicity and in particular their sensitivity to the joys and sufferings of others (other plants and animals as well as humans). The only way to ensure this is to tap one's inner source of compassion and sensitivity, the inner Self. This is achieved through various forms of inner contemplation and meditation.

* Maintaining a connection with one's inner Self, softens the heart, sweetens the intellect and sharpens the intuition. It generates what Sarkar calls a "devotional sentiment", the most important treasure of society. Devotional sentiment of a society shines through the subtlety of its music, literature, art and so on. Without it, social life becomes a living hell and cultural expressions become another means of exploitation, such as pornography.

* Sarkar insists there must be constant effort to ensure that the best calibre person's occupy seats of government and administration. Such person's can be recognised by 1) their reputation for moral integrity and honest character, 2) their spirit of selfless service to the local community, 3) their commitment to self improvement through inner contemplation and meditation and 4) their concern for the welfare of all and not just one interest group or class. Such a person, says Sarkar, is known as a Sadvipra. Sadvipras are the best hope for the future.

* PROUT is committed to the democratic process. It is the best system of government devised so far, but as Sarkar observes, it will further evolve and better forms of government will emerge in the future.

* PROUT advocates increased powers for the United Nations because it is only through cooperative global efforts that global problems, such as greenhouse gases, ozone layer depletion, acid rain, third world debt, nuclear arms proliferation and human rights violations can be solved. Unfortunately the United Nations is ineffective. It is impossible to govern the whole, when the parts which make up the whole are economically and socially unstable and when there are extreme disparities of wealth. Hence solving global problems depends on establishing local economic security. Only when small countries are free of the threat of domination by big countries will global cooperation be possible. Hence PROUT's policy is economic decentralisation and political centralisation.

* PROUT is a socio-economic theory that provides for the good and happiness of all.

leads to social problems and pollution. Sarkar envisages "garden cities" where agriculture, industry, housing and wildlife reserves are harmoniously integrated.

b) 20 to 40% of people employed in agricultural industries. Import / export of raw materials and agricultural produce is undesirable because their prices are unstable. Trade in manufactured products offers the best economic security.

c) Only 20 to 30% of people should depend on non-agricultural manufacturing, ie minerals and energy, computers. The destabilising flight of people from country to city is the result of unbalanced economy.

d) No more than 10% of persons engaged in trade and commerce.

e) No more than 10% of persons employed in public service or service industries such as education, hospitals, clerical administration etc.

5) Develop local resources before importing from other units. This policy encourages full employment and maximum security in times of difficulty disaster.

* PROUT organises production in three tiers or economic sectors;

1) Key industry; whose products provide essential resources for economic activity (eg minerals and energy, large scale transport and communications) are managed as public utilities. Board of directors is elected democratically by the region concerned. These industries work on a "no profit, no loss" basis and workers should participate in management.

2) Cooperatives; constitute the largest sector of a PROUT economy. They include most manufacturing industries and agriculture. Cooperatives are owned and managed by their workers with scope for private investment but not control.

3) Private enterprise; includes remaining small scale manufacturing, retailing, service industries. This is the free enterprise private sector where prices are determined by supply and demand.

* Banking must be taken out of the private sector. The central bank is a key industry while trading and commercial banks operate as cooperatives.

GOVERNMENT

* There are two issues here; the structures created to govern and the calibre of persons who fill those structures. The latter issue is by far the most important.

* Prout is not a utopian philosophy. It does not claim to offer the perfect society nor does it make assumptions about the 'perfect' class or leader. There must be checks and balances on individual power but at the same time there must be concerted effort to improve the calibre of persons who exercise power.

* PROUT believes that today's global crises are largely the making of egotistical leaders who think only for their selfish interest. At a time when weapons permit the destruction of the world, we allow politicians with the moral discipline and

equal respect to all, regardless of race, sex, or religion. Simply by virtue of being human, everybody adds colour and variety to human existence.

* But humanism is defective in two respects; it does not have a vision of the further evolution of the human race and it does not accord the same respect to animals and plants that it does to humans. Thus it has been unable to resist the impact of materialism, which recognises only the utilitarian value of people so reducing them to robots. Nor has it prevented the pollution and destruction of most of our planet.

* Neohumanism is the philosophy which takes human society beyond humanism and into the 21st century. It has a future vision - the integrated evolution of all species and the full flowering of their physical, psychic and spiritual potentialities.

* According to Neohumanism, every human being has three fundamental desires; 1) the desire to physically survive, 2) the desire to expand one's horizons and realise one's maximum potential and 3) the desire for an inner spiritual peace. The fulfillment of these desires brings happiness. Their frustration brings sorrow.

* Happiness depends on maintaining coordinated balance between the physical, mental and spiritual spheres. Likewise social and ecological happiness depends on maintaining balance between all the multifaceted aspects of life.

* Human beings are social beings. They cannot achieve happiness individually. Animals and plants also have a desire to survive, to express themselves and to enjoy inner contentment. Thus the welfare and happiness of all humans, animals and plants are necessarily interwoven.

* The system of values in PROUT centres around the notion of *achieving happiness through realising potential*. Sarkar calls it Neo-ethics. That which helps individuals (whether human, animal or plant) realise their potential and enhances the collective evolution of life on planet earth is GOOD. That which causes individuals to shrink back inside a shell, which inhibits unfolding potential, which does not enhance the vigour of life, is BAD. Definitions of beauty, utility and truth revolve around similar notions.

* Neohumanism and PROUT are not dogmas which impose a fixed view of life. Neohumanism draws on the social and scientific wisdom of both East and West. For example, it accommodates both the spiritual insights of eastern science and the ecological insights of western science. Similarly, PROUT draws on the accumulated economic experience of capitalism, communism and past societies.

* Social progress is most accurately defined as the collective struggle for happiness. In common parlance we would say that modern humans have progressed far beyond stone age humans. But do we enjoy greater happiness? In Sarkar's analysis, social progress is only achieved in the spiritual sphere.

* The material developments made possible by advances in science and technology cannot be called Progress, for the greater degree of happiness apparently achieved is offset by an equal degree of unhappiness.



ECONOMICS

* PROUT recognises that most economic problems are social and political problems, that is economics is not a science of impersonal laws that are independent of humans and their welfare. PROUT also affirms that the purpose of economic activity is first and foremost to satisfy the needs of humans, animals and plants and to encourage the unfolding of their potential. This is economic progress.

* To this end, PROUT recognises the need to manage physical, mental and spiritual resources. There should be maximum utilisation, rational distribution and proper balance between these physical, mental and spiritual resources. Hence the name PROUT -- Progressive Utilisation Theory.

* PROUT advocates a policy of economic decentralisation. A country such as Australia would adopt three tier economic planning; 'block' level planning, regional level planning and federal planning.

* A 'block' is something akin to a Shire Council with a population of 10,000 to 100,000, but it is much more. It is best described as a bioregion, an area of land that can be regarded as an ecological and economic unit. It is the smallest unit of economic planning in PROUT and the most important. Stanthorpe's granite belt, the Darling Downs and the Sunshine Coast are examples of Bioregions.

* The intermediate level of economic planning is the region or province which reflects not only ecological and economic but also cultural factors. State boundaries in Australia, as in most countries, reflect accidents of history and are not natural units. Federal level economic planning would regulate inter-regional trade, transport and communications and so on.

* All economic units, whether bioregion, province or nation, follow basic economic principles as follows;

1) every person must be guaranteed the minimum requirements of life ie adequate food, health care, clothing, education and housing.

2) Additionally PROUT advocates an incentive system to encourage initiative, entrepreneurial skills, creativity and to reward those who put in extra effort. Incentives are best given in kind and not money to prevent concentration of economic power. For example a scientist might receive an electron microscope, factory workers better recreational facilities.

3) Collective incentives ('social income') are provided to ease the collective burdens of life. For example community resource centres, sporting facilities, recreational parks, public concerts, art galleries and so on.

4) Every economic unit should attempt to develop a balanced economy;

a) Approximately 30% of people should depend directly on agriculture, not much more or less. Sarkar is opposed to concentrated industrialisation because it

* Likewise the advances in the subtlety, beauty and power of our intellectual wealth cannot of themselves be called Progress, for the greater degree of mental pleasure so derived is offset by an equal degree of psychic unrest.



"DON'T LAUGH, HARKNESS—BUT EVERY TIME I START AN EXPERIMENT THESE DAYS, I WONDER WHETHER IT'S GOING TO BE THE ONE WHERE I END UP FINDING RELIGION."

* Social progress ultimately depends on the collective accumulation of "inner" or "spiritual wisdom" for wisdom never generates its own reaction. Despite this, the struggle for physical and intellectual 'progress' is essential for human welfare because it is on the foundation of these that spiritual progress is achieved.