A GENERAL review of the current opinion on youth problems in this country suggests that while evaluating this problem, youth has been given the status of a substantive class outside the social structure, cherishing disvalues which endanger the equilibrium of society. This, as a matter of fact, has become the stereotype image in association with recurrent student agitations throughout the country over a period of time. To a sociologist such a state of public opinion appears to be natural but not objective or scientific because of the particularistic fallacy inherent in this line of thinking. Hence the attempt to place the youth and his problems into the total sociological perspective. From this point of view, however, the discussion of the problem in this paper would be phased into the following stages. First, the analysis of the nature of 'Youth' as (1) a unit of social system and (2) as a group of actors in the social system; second, the nature of the problem of youth; third, the relationship between the social structure and the youth problems and finally, the tentative theory of social planning and youth welfare.

THE NATURE OF YOUTH

Taken as a unit, youth is characterized by peculiar psycho-social traits concomitant with a certain age group usually between 18 to 30. There are exceptional situations in which such concomitance between psycho-social characteristics and age may not be present; for example, one very young may yet be serene and sober or an old man may be unusually jovial and sprightly. But such cases are rare unless deliberately attempted as a part of social structure as customary in some Western Countries. The overall view point, however, is that the psychological traits and sociological space (status, responsibility role etc) are by far the most important criteria of distinction as between youth and non-youth. As these two categories very much overlap, it is better to put them under one term, 'psycho-social', although a discussion of the youth's sociological status will occupy an important place in our later discussion.

The psycho-social traits of youth have positive as well as negative dimensions subject to the social environment and the process of socialization. Some of the positive dimensions are (a) higher degree of ambitiousness, (b) egoism and self respect, (c) high sensitivity, (d) skepticism, (e) radicalism (lack of neophobia), and (f) idealism. These are positive in the sense that a normal distribution of these traits among youth is anticipated and does not present a threat to the existing structure of society or to the personality integration of the individual youth. Some of the negative traits, on the other hand, are (a) immaturity and narrow experience, (b) high manipulability and suggestibility, (c) emotionalism (lack of rationality as dominant trait of behaviour), (d) lack of persistence, and (e) aggressiveness. These are negative in the sense that the very intrinsic quality of these traits in normal condition exposes the youth to situations of maladjustment, thwarted ambition and despair. The pattern of combination between these two sets of (positive and negative) traits determines the nature of youth, its structure of personality and attitude system. For instance, a youth under controlled social situations, who has high ambition of positive character and lack of persistence of negative character will most probably prove a failure in the achievement of his goals and remain frustrated. Any number of similar combinations may be hypothetically constructed.

The second level of the nature of youth emerges when one studies it not as a unit-actor but as group of actors. At this stage, however, the relationship of youth with social structure becomes more clearly explicit, because accordingly as the nature of social structure will differ, the group characteristic and situational factors entering into the problems of youth will differ. For matter of simplicity if we accept a dyadic classification of social structure into rural and urban, four groups of youth can be delineated. These can be: (1) rural male (2) rural female (3) urban male (4) urban female. In the discussion of the problems of youth this group characteristic of youth with reference to social structure assumes enormous significance because in the light of this not only the nature of youth problem will differ but also the technique of diagnosis and welfare planning.

THE NATURE OF YOUTH PROBLEM

The discussion of a problem per se will generally involve two types of references, firstly, the group of factors characterizing the nature of problem with reference to its magnitude and content and secondly, with reference to the subject in relation to which it is considered a problem. Taking the first criterion in hand, the problem of youth may be one or more of the following, (1) economic, (2) social, and (3) psychological. With reference to the second it may be either the problem of rural youth (male and female) or urban youth (male and female). There can also be, however, a third level of reference where the relation- ship between the problem and the subject of problem is analyzed in relation to the nature of the subject: first, as a unit or individual member having self-oriented problems or a group or collectivity, having group oriented problems. From this point of view the youth may have levels of problems as a person as well as a class or group.

Now, having these several categories of problems with which the youth may likely be confronted, it would be only through sound empirical investigation that the exact nature of them can be visualized. A few studies with which the writer is familiar do have shown higher incidence of economic insecurity and psychological tension in the group of youth. As a matter of fact, the study of the problems of youth in separate categories, economic, social and psychological, inherently defies the logical nature of problem which has over-lapping and cumulative character. The causal model of the analysis of social phenomena and social problem has long been replaced by dynamic theory, and theories
of interaction of multiple factors. In the light of these it may be possible that one section of youth has predominant social problems of which economic and psychological are secondary factors and another one has dominant economic handicaps in which social and psychological factors play a secondary or supporting role.

Keeping the methodological difficulties apart, the youth in India is confronted with huge economic insecurities like unemployment, job-uncertainties, and economic exploitation which may be treated as a constant and overall problem. This holds true in the case of urban youth or rural, but generally it finds vehement expression through organized masses of urban youth, rather than rural. It would be interesting and pertinent to note that the rural youth, both male and female, though immersed in poverty generally do not constitute the group of agitators: firstly, because of the peculiarities of rural social structure which is more cohesive and group oriented, secondly, because the rural economy can for a long time absorb the shocks of disguised unemployment; and thirdly, because of the acute social problem of the rural youth which may be enumerated as ignorance, lack of communication, "insulation of the sub-structure," and illiteracy. Hence the relative and interdependent character of youth problem becomes more than apparent in this case where a dominant social problem does for a long time camouflage another class of problem i.e. economic. A summary statement of the youth problem will therefore include that (1) the majority of female youth suffer from dominant social problems e.g. illiteracy, conservatism, lack of social status, lack of opportunity for equal social and economic participation and finally exploitation; (2) the largest section of rural male youth suffer from acute social as well as economic problems, and that (3) the urban youth primarily suffer from economic and psychological problems. Once again it may be explained that the emphasis on selected dominant problems implicitly includes the process of "cumulative causation."

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND YOUTH PROBLEM

Having classified the problems of youth in India, a discussion of the dynamic elements that constitute them becomes a logical as well as empirical necessity in order to suggest scientific means for the solution and cure. Thus the questions arise: What are the forces that create social, economic, and psychological problems for youth? Who should be blamed or held responsible? From the sociological viewpoint a fairly reliable answer can be furnished which lies centred in the concept of social structure. Social structure may be defined as an arrangement of persons bound by a pattern of social relation (including social behaviour). When one refers to economic, social, or psychological problems of youth, in fact, the purpose is to enumerate those symptoms which the behaviour of youth as a unit or as a group expresses in relation to the other members of society; that is, as a form of social relationship and behaviour system. All social problems must express themselves in relation to behavioural situations in order to become sociologically meaningful.

A normal human behaviour is motivated to achieve a goal through institutionalized means. Such behaviour systems of individuals, where there is conformity between socially accepted means and goals, constitute stable and equilibriated social structure and in such a society, no group or individual will have any problems. It would be an ideal type of social structure. But in practice each social structure creates some situations ("mentioned in this paper as economic, social and psychological") which work as bottle-necks for a section of society and blockade the achievement of their goal through institutionalized means, and hence either socially disapproved means are sought by them to achieve the goal, which is called anti-social behaviour or the urge is suppressed by strong public opinion to prepare indirect explosive situations. The series of student agitations in this country may be cited as cases of the latter category; in fact most of our so-called youth problems are of similar nature. Theoretically, therefore, in a fast changing social structure, not only the values defining the institutionalized means to achieve goals go on changing but also the nature of hitherto anticipated goals. This dislodges the member of society from his basic sociological moorings.

THE ECONOMIC WEEKLY

INDIAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Indian social structure has faced during the post-independence period tremendous challenges. Much in the urban and the rural community the values and social and economic systems around which equilibrium was established in the past, have been either abolished by law or stand outdated as legacies of past. In such a hyper-dynamic states of society there is always scope for social and personal maladjustment, and the differential rate of this maladjustment (as similar experience in western society have shown) is higher for the youth than for other age groups. The older generation having hard core of past values looks at new changes with a sense of apathy and "can do nothing" attitude, while to the youth the same are vital issues. The apathy of the one becomes over-enthusiasm and exaggerated hopes and aspirations of the other. Youth begins to expect too much and is smitten with rem our se and resentment, when things do not change as suddenly as he expected. This generates the hyper-critical attitude of youth towards society and the famous "Conflict of the two generations".

There is yet another level where too the dynamic nature of the social structure creates social problems firstly, through the obsolescence of the existing norms of social controls which have yet to be properly replaced by other sets of norms and secondly, through the introduction of radical changes in the economic, social and political status of the people. To both of these tendencies, youth reads with intensity. Under the impress of the disintegrating norms of social control, his action is rendered 'directionless' and the rational bases of behaviour are replaced either by irrational crowd behaviour or lack of faith in and respect for existing order i.e., radicalism. This is a peculiar state of youth psychology in India, when young people find that there is nothing with so stable roots in society to which they could cling for support; that every thing is in a state of flux and things are too dynamic and disjointed to hold together.

ACCELERATED RATE OF CHANGE

The accelerated rate of change in social structure, apart from the maladjustments at the behavioural level, generates also problems at situational levels such as economic.
social, political and psychological. This is because with the changes in the super-structure of society the economic, cultural and social sub-structures do not furnish stable phenomena to adjust with. There are too rapid and too many changes taking place in the economic and social status system which create fear and uncertainty, not only in the mind of youth but also among those directly concerned with production and investment activity, thus, indirectly also affecting the nature of economic progress and the youth's opportunity for economic adjustment. In the process of change too, there is some indispensable loss to be shared by each section of society of which the share of the youth is significant.

**APPROACH TO WELFARE**

After the theoretical construct which has been used for the analysis of the nature and magnitude of the problems of youth, it is relatively easy to demarcate the areas where attention should be first focussed for the diagnosis and correction of the problems of youth. The problems of youth having been treated as "dysfunction" of the social structure, the planning of youth welfare activities must be devoted into the overall frame of national social and economic planning. Attention should be focussed on two levels, firstly, on the level of planning of the society as a whole in order to bridge the emerging gaps of social structure with effectiveness and speed, and secondly, at the level of youth as a group.

In relation to the overall national planning, it is needless to emphasise that rapid economic growth supplemented with adequate institutional reforms will in the long run prove to be the only solution for the present economic problems of the youth. Unemployment, which is one of the most serious problems of modern Indian youth (and which is specially assuming very explosive situation among the urban youth and educated rural youth) can only be solved through accelerated rate of industrialization and economic reconstruction. Such transformation will in the normal course take time and, therefore, during the period of lag, some operational schemes should be launched for full utilization of the resources of youth. One possibility may be to organize in the country a series of hierarchical youth brigades according to the skill and training of the unemploy-ed youth and to assign them suitable work as apprentices and then promote them into grades such as (a) on nominal salary (b) half salary and (c) finally on full salary. As these work youth brigades will be the gateway to future employ-ment, the incentive to join them will certainly be high. Even if it may mean radical changes in the organization of present system of Employment Exchanges, the experiment is still worthwhile. Because, firstly these youth brigades will accelerate the pace of progress in the country and energise the process of what Myrdal calls "spread effect" in the country, secondly, it will serve great purpose through diverting the energy of youth from the path of social damage, indiscipline and aggression to social reconstruction and thirdly, the youth's sense of egoism will find adequate passification in the feeling that he, as a member, is contributing his share in the stupendous task of nation building, and finally such a system of recruitment in services will gradually replace the purely monetary and selfish attitude in services with a real sense of altruism and nationalism.

**SOCIAL PLANNING**

Social planning is another instrument which may enormously help to check and minimise the process of dysfunction in the social structure undergoing too fast changes. To make such planning effective, the internal contradictions in the policy of plans with reference to various sectors of society and economy should be obliterated.

As for the special measures for the welfare of youth as such, attempts can succeed only through systematic organizations with adequate incentives. These incentives may not always be economic; they may be social, cultural, and psychological. The failure of many youth organizations may be traced firstly to the lack of substantial incentive in their plans, which rendered them only as an imposition from without. Secondly, such organizations have failed because of the role of the partisan spirited leaders and ulterior manoeuvrings which create vested interests; and finally, because the policies of these youth organizations often do not have vital links with the overall national goal of planning. The need, therefore, is to create such organizations of youth which are scientifically planned, are free from political vested interests, and offer adequate incentive to youth. The idea of youth brigades may be treated as one such humble suggestion.

At the group level of youth welfare it has often been argued that "a code of conduct" for youth should be evolved to implement formal control on the disruptive activities of youth. Such a problem is posed because of the lack of sociological realism. As a matter of fact, the formal canons of social control hold fast and are adhered to only so long as they emerge out of the structural-functional-compulsives of the social situation. The main problem, therefore, is not whether there should or should not be a code of conduct for youth but whether the formal elements of social control are integrated into the social structure, in the absence of which no "code of conduct" howsoever pious will ever prove effective. Hence, the main problem is not of evolving a code of conduct but of pooling of efforts for achieving social equilibrium at a higher level so that the dysfunctional expressions of the social structure are obliterated.

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