



A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO THE STUDY OF PROUT

The Proutist Writers Group, New York Sector

PROUT Study Guide

*A Comprehensive Guide to the Study of PROUT
By The Proutist Writers Group, New York Sector
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INTRODUCTION

Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar propounded the Progressive Utilization Theory (Prout) in 1959 as an alternative to capitalism and communism. His ideas on this subject are enunciated in *Proutist Economics*, *Prout in a Nutshell*, *Neo-Humanism in a Nutshell*, *Human Society, Part One*, *Human Society, Part Two*, and *A Few Problems Solved*.

The experience of contemporary history has exposed the fallacies of cherished social, political and economic ideas, classical as well as revolutionary. The world is full of opportunities – material, mental and spiritual – and so to build a better and freer society is a practical possibility. Yet we are observing a process of social decadence, moral degeneration and the collapse of values which is corroding the springs of human action and corrupting the ideals of a civilized life. Failure and disappointment are bound to follow from attempts to solve the problems of our time with the ideas of previous centuries. These ideas emphasized material progress and scientific development. However, the mental makeup and moral standard of the civilized community have not matched the level of material progress. In other words, the development of civilization – refined cultural progress – has proven far slower than scientific development.

Communism, which promised material well-being and security in an atheistic and socially regimented life has collapsed, creating disillusionment about revolutionary ideals. The great promise of the industrial nations has also remained unfulfilled despite enormous accumulation of wealth, because of the underlying psychology of individualistic hedonism. This radical hedonism postulates that happiness can be achieved by the fulfilment of any material or sensual desire whatsoever, and that in order to fulfil these desires, egotism, greed and selfishness have to be encouraged. The achievement of sensory pleasure has been sold as the achievement of harmony and peace. Radical hedonism, it should be known, is the philosophy of rich people.

The ideals of intellectual liberalism and intellectual refinement have also failed us. The cherished belief that the spread of reason would abolish our irrational outbursts toward each other has all but disappeared. Antagonism between ethnic, racial, and religious groups has become the fundamental reality of the nation-state. When human security becomes threatened, social, ethical and religious energies get expressed through unprecedented oppression, violence and enmity. The disconcerting experiences of the contemporary world compel thoughtful people to reconsider the fundamental philosophical principles from which different political theories – of the Right and the Left, conservative and liberal, reactionary and revolutionary – are alike deduced.

The capture of power, irrespective of the diversity of the means that are advocated, is the common postulate of all political theories. Today, the so-called free world heralds the victory of liberal democracy and its corollary the capitalist economic system. Through modern liberalism the individual has become 'economic man', lured by the glittering projections of a consumer psychology. In the context of capitalist society, people exist mainly as units in the work force, with our thoughts, feelings and tastes manipulated by the government and industry and the mass communications they control.

Simultaneously, gaining momentum among the poor and disenfranchised is a tendency to relapse

into medieval obscurantism in search of an illusory safety in the backwaters of dogmatic faith. With the collapse of the Soviet Empire, movements for self-reliance are being sentimentalized with slogans from religious fundamentalism, slogans presented to the innocent man as an antithesis to pseudo-culture, economic domination and Western values.

This represents a new flare-up in the age-old struggle between religion and science – between faith and reason, and between mystic agnosticism and empirical knowledge. Probably the last gasp of a life and death struggle, it has lasted long, and has always placed civilized humanity in the breach.

The scientific mode of thought, having driven religion from pillar to post over a period of several centuries, is meeting the final assault of a hitherto vanquished adversary. Denying humans the possibility of ever knowing reality through experience, religions preach a neo-mysticism and a teleological view of life, which is the expression of humanity's loss of faith in itself. This is in contradiction to spiritual enlightenment, which leads the human mind to experience the real essence of freedom and the organic wholeness of creation.

Science, attempting to free the mind from the shackles of dogma, emphasized that truth is contained only in that which can be recognized clearly and distinctively. Knowledge is defined as the result of the intellectual analysis of our sense experience. In this way, however, science created a new barrier beyond which the mind could not elevate itself to higher levels of consciousness. Hence, science could not prevent the emergence of a materialistic dogma that devalues human potential, encourages the mechanization of life, and curtails freedom of thought.

The quest for freedom is much more ancient than either religion or science and can be referred back to our earliest struggle for existence. This quest accounts for the human triumph over nature in the course of efforts to satisfy biological needs. It provides the basis for the constant search for knowledge, and it enables us to progressively free ourselves from the tyranny of natural phenomena and social environments. If we are to be guided by this deep human longing, the philosophy of the future should judge the merit of any social organization or political institution by the actual measure of freedom it affords the individual in the physical, mental and spiritual spheres.

Spiritual Humanism

Sarkar's philosophy is founded on the assumption that matter is not separate from consciousness but is rather a metamorphosed form of it. Similarly, consciousness, is not the result of mental activity but rather thought is also a form of consciousness. It is Consciousness that underlies psycho-physical reality and provides the inspiration for a rational view of life, moral integrity, and spiritual wisdom.

Spirituality and morality should not be equated with religious dogma and faith in God. All religions are frank dualist systems that separate humans from their creator and the creation. The rationalist rebels against theology – Descartes, Leibnitz, and Kant – also failed to escape the vicious circle of dualism. To offer security, religion impressed upon people the need to submit before the imaginary will of God or a theological ethical code, sanctioned by the scriptures and defined by religious institutions. Morality in this sense, however, is the absence of freedom.

A philosophy based on spiritual and moral values, on the other hand, is able to explain human existence – including desire, emotion, instincts, intuition, will and reason – as an integrated

framework and do so in a way that is accessible to human comprehension. Such a philosophy is required to build the new social organism and political institutions that can foster not only the harmonious relations of all races and cultural groups, but also the harmonious relation of human beings with all animate and inanimate objects.

For Sarkar, human existence is physical, mental and spiritual. He defined progress as evolution to higher consciousness and ultimately to the state of absolute freedom. Simultaneously, he explained that "spiritual progress can only be attained on a firm physical and mental base. ... This physical and intellectual base has to be progressively adjusted to changing conditions of time and space." The natural human aspiration is to achieve freedom in all three spheres.

In our march towards freedom we cannot neglect other living beings. We have to develop a social system where all living beings can live securely, and where people can move towards emancipation by freeing their minds from superstition and dogma. This universalistic spirit is Neo-Humanism or Spiritual Humanism. Human history thus far is a story of ruling classes trying to enhance their own social and material wealth at the cost of human values. This is why temples, churches, scriptures, laws, constitutions, corporations and international trade agreements have become more important than human beings. To confront this, Sarkar maintains that a fundamental human philosophy is required to cement a new social system and not the changing social values based on self-interest that are embodied in ruling institutions.

Human values find their root in spirituality. Spirituality is not mystic speculation of life after death, but is realized in relation to the manifest universe. The philosophy of monism, which postulates the self to be in union with the rest of the universe and responsible for its well-being, is the essence of spiritual humanism. Sarkar wrote in his book *Neo-Humanism in a Nutshell: Part 1*: "What does the state stand for, what is the use of these regulations, and what is the march of civilization for, if human beings don't get a chance to build a good physical well-being, to invigorate their intelligence with knowledge, and to broaden their hearts with love and compassion? Instead of leading humanity to the goal of life, if the State stands in the way, then it cannot command loyalty, because humanity is superior to the State."

Society and State

In *Human Society: Part 2*, Sarkar described the inner spirit of 'society' as to "move together." Society originated as a family in the early phase, and was strengthened subsequently under the guidance of group mothers and group fathers. Later, with growing social complexity, group leaders emerged as queens and kings during the age of empires. The emergence of classical religion strengthened political power and under the dominance of the priest class the Church State arose.

In modern times, under the rise of the capitalist class, the Nation State has become the norm. In this process, Society itself has lost its identity and importance, and social laws, norms and values possess little meaning. All social structures have been politicized both in democratic countries and totalitarian countries. Nevertheless, realistic relations between society and State could be formulated to create a congenial atmosphere for security and freedom.

Sarkar's main goal was to revitalize society, and through his writings and action he clearly demonstrated that he wanted to establish a 'moral society' which he termed 'Sadvipra Samaj'. He was not so concerned with the political structure because he concluded that it will continue to

evolve and change its character in different phases of history. On the other hand, he felt that in the absence of a strong society, neither moral standards nor strong social relations could be realized or maintained. He also believed that a strong society would balance the power of the political structure. He considered human society to be one and indivisible; hence, he emphasized the formation of a social structure from the village to the global level.

When he laid the foundation of his own organisation, for example, he set up a structure that consists of 35 branches, each extending from the village to the global level. This means that each locality should have at least 35 persons to take decisions on multifarious activities without being dependent on the dictates of the political structure.

Considering the above, the relation between Society and State can be defined as follows:

- Society has a wider scope than the State. As an assemblage of human beings, society should be considered one and indivisible without any boundaries of race, religion or nation. The State is a political machinery within society to maintain law and order and other co-related functions delegated by society.
- The State refers only to the politically organized portion of society. Society takes priority over the State. A sense of collective living creates society, and society in turn creates the State.
- The State needs an organized government to enforce its will. Society also needs a structure to regenerate moral and social values and maintain social cohesiveness free from the influence of the State machinery.
- Society is universal and without any boundaries. But the State may have specific boundaries flexible enough to be changed when there is need.

It is necessary to define the relation between the two structures in the clearest language to be able to set goals and coordinate between the two. Ultimately, however, the success of socially benevolent institutions will depend on the evolution of a proper social culture based on the values of spiritual humanism. The materialistic orientation of life and the marketing character of modern industrial religion has created extreme forms of alienation, isolation and identity crisis in the affluent Western world. Third World countries, besides suffering economic crisis, carry the psychological burdens of passive psychology, inferiority complex, religious dogma and other group sentiments. These narrow and stagnant ideas damage social integration.

The creation of social institutions on the world level with organs on the lower levels can eliminate threats from political and economic oligarchies and religious fanatics. Members of the social institutions should be established in the spirit of universalism. Sarkar explained that to be established in cardinal moral principles is essential for the qualitative transformation of the personality as well as society. He frequently used the term 'sadvipra' in this regard. Value-oriented intellectuals and spiritually free persons, who have moral integrity and are not motivated by self-interest, are the best persons to organize themselves to form the new social structure. Their leadership is vital in creating social unity.

PROUT'S Political Objectives

Security for all members of society must be ensured, without depending on the bureaucratic structure. Security includes not only a guarantee of food, clothes, housing, health care, education

and other minimum requirements of life, but also security in the psychological sense. In Third World countries, the cause of insecurity is the economy. Western countries face a sense of psychic insecurity due to the influence of a quantitative, materialistic monoculture. Overemphasis on materialistic values has created an identity crisis. Extremely alienated, an individual standing before the high wall of organized power structures feels helpless. To eradicate this sense of insecurity and alienation, spiritual awakening of the self is essential. Human beings must restore the sense of unity with their fellow beings, other living beings, nature, society etc. Secondly, the bureaucratic power structure should be replaced by humanistic management.

The basic human urge for freedom is the motivating force behind social evolution and progress. Freedom should be considered in the physico-psycho-spiritual sense. Physical freedom means the guarantee of the minimum requirements of life, and it cannot be unlimited. Intellectual freedom implies an arrangement for the development of intellect that can overcome environmental and pseudo-cultural influences. Freedom of thought is more important than freedom of expression. In every society, education, culture, religious institutions and the mass media manipulate the collective mind. Human values are distorted and pseudo-values are imposed. To ensure real freedom in the intellectual realm, the education system should be reoriented to develop intuitional and creative consciousness. 'Freedom from' hunger, poverty, exploitation, oppression, superstition, dogma, etc. is not enough to guarantee freedom. There must be an idea of 'freedom to'.

Spiritual liberation is a state where the individual mind realizes the sense of unity and harmony with the entire universe. The awakening of this consciousness is the goal of freedom, not the expression of unbridled passion and any demand whatsoever of the limited ego. It is the responsibility of society to create opportunities for every member to pursue their spiritual goal without hindrance. In this regard Sarkar wrote, "I want that every person should be guaranteed the minimum physical requirements of life, every person should get scope for full exploitation of psychic potentiality, every person should get equal opportunity to attain absolute truth, and endowed with all the glories and achievements of the world, every person should march towards the Absolute." The 'Absolute', in a spiritual sense, is the state of total liberation.

PROUT'S Economic Development

The idea that maximum consumption will create happiness has been challenged before. Economist E. F. Schumacher states in his book *Small is Beautiful*: "Economy as the content of life is a deadly illness, because infinite growth does not fit into a finite world. That economy should not be the content of life, has been told to mankind by all its great teachers; that it cannot be, is evident today. If one wants to describe the deadly illness in more detail, one can say that it is similar to addiction, like alcoholism or drug addiction. It does not matter too much whether this addiction appears in more egotistical, or more altruistic form, whether it seeks its satisfaction only in a crude materialistic way or also in an artistically, culturally or scientifically refined way. Poison is poison, even if wrapped in a silver paper. ... If the spiritual value of inner man is neglected, then selfishness, like capitalism, fits the orientation better than a system of love for one's fellow beings."

Sarkar asserted that economic development is only a means for survival and the fulfilment of physical needs. The economy must maintain balance with nature and other aspects of social and cultural development. The spirit of all-round collective welfare, not limitless profit, should guide future economic development.

Considering the above, Sarkar's guidelines and goals for economic development are as follows:

- The minimum requirements of all should be guaranteed.
- Economic power should be decentralized and economic democracy should be introduced.
- Production should be designed for meaningful consumption, not profit.
- The gap between rich and poor nations should be narrowed.
- Production should serve the real needs of people and not the demands of the economic system.
- Harmonious relations of cooperation with nature should be established.
- The psychology of competition must be replaced by a psychology of cooperation.
- It should be accepted that economic fulfilment cannot satisfy the infinite desire for happiness.
- Supramundane and spiritual potentialities should be explored and utilized to balance the mundane, finite character of the economy.
- Psycho-economy, which aims at neutralizing dehumanization by the economic system and effecting the progressive expansion of the individual and collective minds, should develop as a branch of the economy.

This Study Guide is intended to provide an introduction to Sarkar's philosophy of spiritual humanism, which he called Neo-Humanism, and the political-economic theory of PROUT which addresses the practical application of this value system. This introductory material has been presented in the form of a Study Guide because our objective is to do more than share ideas. We want to create organizational cadre who will work to lay the groundwork for a new era in human society.

We encourage the formation of Study Circles to "study" the requirements of a benevolent society. It cannot be created by merely mouthing philosophy. It requires that we first transform ourselves. This is accomplished through spiritual practices and by studying and working together for the greater good we put meaning into our lives.

Sincerely,

The Proutist Writers Group of New York Sector

HUMAN SOCIETY AND PROGRESS

Progress, Utilization and Theory
The Existence of Human Society
Social Development and Progress
Spiritual Realization as a Social Goal

Section One:

Progress, Utilization, Theory

The Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT), as the name implies, is a theory inspired by the idea of progressive utilization.

According to philosophy and science, each and every entity in this universe is moving. Movement has meaning, however, only when a direction or goal is present. Progress denotes movement toward a goal. In the context of PROUT philosophy, progress is best explained by the Sanskrit word pragati which means motion that is well directed. According to PROUT, therefore, progress is movement which is directed toward the goal of well-being for all. Progressive applies to such things that are conducive to universal well-being.

In common parlance the word progress is often associated with an increase of comfort in the material sphere, or with sophistication in the sphere of technology. To go by airplane instead of covered wagon is termed progress. According to PROUT's definition of progress, however, such advancements may or may not be termed progressive. It depends upon their contribution to all-around human welfare. Upon deeper analysis, we find that, in the material world, an advance in pleasure or comfort on the one side is always associated with some adverse effects or difficulties on the other side. Technologies which increase convenience may, on the other hand, have adverse effects upon the environment. Nuclear power, automobiles, plastic, and many other scientific advances have proven themselves to be mixed blessings. This is due to the nature of the material world, which is characterized by the law of cause and effect. Even the most seemingly progressive advances in science are not without negative ramifications. This is not to say, however, that efforts in the physical realm are to be avoided. It is simply necessary to acknowledge that true progress cannot be achieved in the physical realm alone, as any advance is coupled with corresponding problems.

In the psychic or intellectual world, we also find that an increase in mental activity and knowledge is often accompanied by mental suffering due to an increase in mental contradictions. We observe that among intellectuals and educated urban populations, psychic diseases and insanity are much more prevalent than among uneducated village people. Increased intellectual development gives scope for new types of mental maladies to arise, especially in an imbalanced or materialistic society. Hence, it is difficult to say that true progress can come about solely through intellectual development.

The spiritual sphere is concerned solely with linking the finite to the Infinite. Movement or progress in the spiritual sphere is not associated with an opposite movement, but is purely one-directional. The goal of movement in the spiritual sphere is the resolution of contradiction. This allows mental expansion toward the state of perfect equilibrium and equipoise. When the mind is in this balanced state, one experiences true inner peace or happiness. Human beings are always seeking this state of mind. This state of consciousness lies beyond the realm of pain and pleasure that characterizes the mind when it is attached to the physical-psychic world. The endeavor to attain this blissful state is the human quest known as spirituality. Therefore, in PROUT, all actions and ideas that lead to this state of Oneness are considered to be progressive. In truth, human progress in the deeper sense is only possible in the spiritual realm. The spiritual realm is found within the subjective, rather than the objective state of the mind. It is experienced in the inner core of the heart. Knowingly or unknowingly it is the source of all our inspiration and aspirations.

If true progress can be achieved only in the spiritual world, should human beings be concerned with the material and psychic world? Should we shun involvement in physical pursuits and retreat to mountain caves or secluded monasteries? Given the state of human affairs today, this could reflect an escapist mentality, having little to do with the development of spirituality. As human beings exist in three spheres - physical, mental, and spiritual - sincere effort will have to be made for cultivation in all spheres. For spiritual progress, a human body and mind are needed, and to maintain them we require a proper environment. So while spiritual progress in our lives should be the goal, we need to attend to our physical and psychic environment and adjust them in a progressive manner to allow our forward spiritual movement.

PROUT, as a theory, addresses the need to continually make progressive adjustment in our political, economic and social systems in order to achieve the highest cultivation of humanity's psychic and spiritual potential. While the fundamental principles of PROUT are based on the perennial spiritual philosophy of life, the applications and policies of PROUT must change as per the requirements of time, place and person. This built-in adaptability will safeguard against the pitfalls of dogmatism. Freedom from dogma is in itself a sign of progress because dogma keeps the mind from expansion and fulfillment.

Utilization is the second key word in understanding PROUT. Utilization means the capacity of things to satisfy the needs of living beings and spur development in the material, mental, and spiritual spheres. To satisfy human needs is the basic aim of economic activity. Here we find a fundamental difference between a Proutist system and the present day capitalist system. In capitalism, it is well known that corporations are in business to maximize returns on investment. Without this bottom line there would be no support from investors, shareholders or banks. In PROUT, however, the bottom line is to meet the needs and spur the all-round growth of living beings. Hence, the innate potential of different economic variables are not viewed as to how they may create profit for the owners of capital, but rather how they may be progressively utilized for the collective well-being.

It was Karl Marx who first analyzed the concept of commodity value and showed its dual nature -- utility value and exchange value. He went to great lengths to analyze and describe the differences and relations between these two values. He concluded that the capitalistic mode of production is based on the calculation of exchange value, with utility value being secondary. A Proutist economy takes the opposite approach and looks first and foremost towards utility value. PROUT is designed to satisfy human needs. Under PROUT, it may be tenable for unprofitable industries to be established if they provide substantial long term benefit to the people.

Finally, let us look at what we mean by theory. There are a great variety of theories around. These are all mental constructs, with or without practical value. Some are only intellectual extravaganzas, while some have value within a certain intellectual climate. Others seem well constructed, but become a total failure when we try to implement them in hard reality. PROUT, as a theory, is not an intellectual creation. Its perennial principles are based upon spiritual intuition, while the details of planning and implementation are based on the practical human problems existing in a certain place, at a certain time. The development of PROUT arises from the effort to establish rationality and social justice for all and to bring human activity into harmony with our inner spiritual aspirations.

Section Two:

The Existence Of Human Society

Human society provides the framework for the collective movement and growth of all individuals - for the expansion and development of the individual and collective potentialities. As such, society does not indicate merely an aggregate of individuals; rather it implies a degree of collective consciousness and social cohesion. The factors necessary for the existence of human society are known as asti in Sanskrit. The existence and the strength of this human society rests upon the three factors of asti. These are social unity, security and peace.

Social Unity

The degree of social unity in a system is created by, and depends upon, the existence and strength of certain key factors: common ideals, an absence of social stratification (a classless society), collective social functions, and an absence of capital punishment.

Common Ideals: Inspired by common ideals, people move together overcoming all hardships and obstacles. Without the inspiration of a common ideal, their movement becomes thwarted and haphazard. Historical groupings – whether ancient clans, medieval empires or modern nation-states – have all been based upon common ideals and sentiments to achieve social unity. While common ideals are positive, the various "isms" based on these ideals have often divided humanity into mutually belligerent groups. In modern days, for example, the patriotism of nation states have often given rise to national chauvinism, racism and imperialism. Such value systems are fast becoming outdated. Two World Wars, the excesses of imperialism, and the exploitation of global capitalism, demonstrate the need to develop global common ideals and realize that this mother Earth is populated by a single human society. The narrow groupist sentiments of the past, including racism, nationalism, and class elitism must to be overcome to realize greater social unity.

Philosophically, the only ideal which is all-inclusive and synthetic, is to merge one's identity with all of life. Only by offering each of our actions to the Divine Entity are we able to developing feelings of true universalism beyond narrow self interest. This is the required sentiment to inspire people to move toward greater unity.

Classless Society: Human beings have a natural bond of love and affection towards each other and this tender thread should be strengthened. The idea of the basic equality of all human beings is known in Sanskrit as sama samaja tattva: the principle of social equality. This principle of social equality should be the basis for human society. It is essential for the promotion of unity.

Even in an ideal social structure there would be infinite differences of outlook, occupation and opinion insofar as diversity is the law of nature. But this apparent diversity, which accounts for the beauty and strength of human culture, should not be used as a pretext for the creation of a social structure undermining the basic rights, unity, and oneness of human beings. Stressing the apparent differences and dividing people by injecting or promoting irrational divisive sentiments is detrimental to the growth of society, weakening its unity and strength. Ideas of division based on gender, race, class, religion, etc., are the products of self-serving leaders who want to inculcate them into the social psychology in order to divide and conquer. People have to be educated and mentally strengthened to overcome such sentiments.

Social Functions: It is in our common social functions, festivals, gatherings, etc., that the social fabric is woven and where people learn to appreciate each other. Social functions inspire the sense of community that is necessary to collectively face our everyday difficulties. They also give us a chance to express our higher forms of art and culture.

Absence of Capital Punishment: It is morally wrong for society to sanction murder by law as a punishment. It legitimizes killing and creates a psychic imbalance in people. From the social point of view, every executed member of the society will leave behind a husband or wife, sons and daughters, parents, friends, etc., who become alienated and disgruntled by this measurement. Their resentment and pain (with or without any wrongdoing on their part) undermines the unity of society. The situation worsens when racism or class dominance come into play. Similarly, social ostracism (the creation of "outcasts" or permanently rejected individuals) is a sort of capital punishment on the psychological rather than physical level, and also causes negative effects. As such PROUT advocates that education and rehabilitation, rather than punishment, should provide the basis of a criminal justice system.

Security

For the existence of human beings and for the development of their full physical, psychic, and spiritual potential, economic and social security is required. This security primarily depends upon two factors: social justice and discipline.

Social Justice

Many of the insecurities of life can be removed by recognizing the need for social unity despite the world's apparent diversity. When this recognition is linked to a greater effort to ensure everyone the opportunity to meet their basic necessities, according to rational and human considerations, we have the basis for PROUT's system of social justice. Proutists will make a strong effort to remove all exploitative and unjust practices from the social fabric. This will greatly strengthen the well being, creativity and productivity of the individual, making society much stronger as a whole. The economic system of PROUT is this idea of social justice. is based on this idea of social justice.

Discipline

A well balanced and agreeable code of conduct is highly necessary in both individual and collective life because it lessens conflicts due to self interest. All societies have social codes, such as standards for courteous behavior as well as regulations and laws. These help create an environment and attitude conducive to mutual respect and interaction. They give scope for freedom of expression up to the point at which one's behavior creates interference with the basic rights of others. Lack of discipline in individual and social life bring about social deterioration, as unrestrained self-interest,

greed, and immorality erode unity. The rich and powerful puff up their own lifestyles by preying on the weak. Poverty spreads in similar proportion to the concentration of wealth into the hands of a few. The Earth's resources are limited, but selfish desires and greed are unlimited. Without a strong common code of discipline, based upon universal values, society degenerates into a pack of wolves. Social Darwinism legitimizes the exploitation of the weak and the poor by the rich and the powerful.

An overly repressive or permissive code of conduct that does not take into account human psychology inevitably has disastrous results. Discipline must be in tune with the nature and subtle aspirations of human beings. The mechanical discipline of the military or discipline based on the repression of human nature will never serve the whole. The repressive manners and beliefs of the Victorian age resulted in modern days' hedonism. In the former Soviet Union, only the omnipresence of the secret police assured socially acceptable behavior - making individual life a repressive nightmare and ultimately leading to the destruction of that social system from within.

Discipline in social life must develop from a code of conduct which is in tune with the psychos-spiritual nature of human beings, and be adjusted to the needs of different age-groups and cultures. Children will have to be educated with a love for self discipline. Only by such means can freedom in the social and individual sphere be realized. For the utilization of the higher faculties of the mind, self discipline is especially of great importance.

Peace

War is a great blight on human history. Human society thrives in peace and is destroyed by war. War throws human beings back into the animalistic fight for survival and brings out all base instincts, creating untold sufferings.

Peace is of two kinds. Sentient peace indicates the predominance of the forces of unity, justice, and the light of rationality. Static peace, on the other hand, indicates that oppression, suppression and the forces of ignorance and exploitation are dominant. To establish sentient peace in the human society, the well-wishers of humanity can not shy away from struggle. Only by struggling against the forces of ignorance and exploitation can lasting sentient peace be established.

For establishing lasting sentient peace, two factors are important: scientific spiritual practices and the fight for the removal of all dogmas. Through spiritual practices (proper diet, asanas, morality, selfless service, meditation and devotion), selfishness and physical longings are converted into higher mental and spiritual propensities, and the clash on the material level for limited goods can be minimized. Sentiments are broadened as people accelerate the unfolding of their innate potential.

By fighting against irrational superstitions and dogmas, human beings establish themselves in rationality. Various dogmas have been the root cause in the past for much bloodshed. Take for example the clash between two different schools of Christianity that plunged most of central Europe into thirty years of utter destruction; or the dogma of racial superiority which gave the European settlers in America the scope to enslave Africans and eradicate Native Americans. And all this took place under a constitution professing the liberty and equality of all men. Rationality encourages ideological discussion and conflict, but abhors the cruelties of war and destruction. To establish sentient peace, broad-mindedness must be encouraged and universalism must inspire the hearts of all. To do this, the following factors are necessary.

We must strive to develop and adopt a common philosophy of life. This does not mean the adoption of a set of dogmas or limiting of ideological differences. Rather it means the acceptance of universal values built upon a strong foundation of rationality.

We must develop a common constitution for all people and nations, especially a bill of human rights. This constitution should take the best of all experiences from different constitutions and blend them into one, to be ratified by all national governments. This will help protect the rights of minorities, and will be the first step toward establishing a world governing body with legislative powers.

We must create a common penal code for all nations, to be based primarily upon accepted human rights rather than local notions of vice and virtue.

There must be a guarantee of the production, supply and necessary purchasing capacity for the minimum requirements of life. This will assure everyone's security on the existential level and free up the tremendous psychic energy presently bound up in fear, insecurity, and the struggle for the basic necessities. This mental energy can be harnessed for the welfare and development of individuals in all spheres of life, and a quantum leap in the quality of social life can be achieved.

Section Three:

Social Development And Progress

One of the most fundamental notions of PROUT is that society has a collective psychological existence that arises from the totality of the individual minds that make up the society. That is, the human society is more than just an accumulation or congregation of individuals, it is a socio-psychological entity ruled by principles unique to itself. This collective psychology is akin to the "Zeitgeist" of Hegel – a term he used to describe "the spirit of a time."

Human society is a dynamic entity having certain existential requirements. These were discussed above. Aside from its existence, the development and strength of its movement also depend on numerous factors. Amongst these, there are six that are the most essential. They characterize a developed and balanced civilization, capable of withstanding the weather of time.

1) **Spiritual Philosophy** encompasses the attempts at understanding the perennial questions of existence. Generally, philosophy is divided into ontology, cosmology, hermeneutics, ethics, and epistemology, and as such provides a guide to all aspects of human life and existence. Ideally, spiritual philosophy should explain in clear terms the underlying principles and the scientific laws of spiritual practice.

2) **Spiritual Practice** encompasses the intuitional science that leads to Self Realization. This is the science of yoga, the foundation of spiritual culture. It includes all the processes by which one is able to move toward the state of blissfulness and self knowledge. If a society does not possess concrete spiritual practices, only a select few will be able to achieve the sublime mental states that all human beings seek. Intuitional practices help human beings to live their lives happily and make progress in the psychic and spiritual realms. In yoga (literally, to yoke the unit consciousness with the Cosmic Consciousness), these practices are understood as the process of converting physical energy into psychic energy and psychic energy into spiritual or Self-Realization.

3) The **Socio-Economic Theory** shapes the socio-economic life and structure. According to PROUT, it must be based on maximum utilization and rational distribution, and must adjust to changes in the relative factors of time, place and person. Insofar as people can not develop their higher potential without food, shelter, clothing, health care and education, the function of an economy should be to make these “minimum necessities” available to all.

4) **Social Outlook** is the underlying value system that shapes the society. In the past different values have predominated in the society depending on its leaders. They shape the social psychology of the day and give scope to the factors that influence and color it. For ideal development, cardinal human values, based upon a universal outlook, should be the foundation of the social life.

5) **Scriptures** are those authoritative writings, teachings, or books which exhibit a profound effect upon the society by virtue of their universal acceptance. Scriptures (shastras in Sanskrit) may be spiritual, philosophical, or social writings. A fully developed society should possess all three. Ideally they guide and inspire social and individual life, and require diligent study. The delicate question is what to accept as truth and wisdom, and what is to be understood as an expression of a certain time and certain circumstances. Whether the Bible or the Little Red Book (of Maoist China), the influence of scriptures upon society cannot be denied. Society must accept such scriptures which remain a constructive guiding force and reject those which have lost their value.

6) **Preceptor**: The impersonal entities which guide and regulate the society are the scriptures and social codes, but the human heart is sentimental and often seeks a personal leader as a source of inspiration. This is at the root of the personality cult, and it cannot be denied that society's unity and momentum are aided by this factor – whether positively or negatively. Most societies of the past have possessed a preceptor; sometimes it is a spiritual preceptor such as Christ, Mohammed or Buddha, or a social preceptor such as Confucius, Lenin, or Mao. The societies founded upon the legacy of a spiritual preceptor are much stronger and longer lasting than the societies initiated by social preceptors.

All of the above factors determine the structural solidarity and the inherent dynamism of a society and its civilization. For lack of these factors in the past, human groups, nations, and civilizations have perished. The original Egyptian civilization could not withstand the impact of the dynamic and young Islamic Arabian wave. The Americas' Mayan and Aztec civilizations were destroyed and absorbed by the expansive Spanish empire. In most cases, the stronger social structure with more dynamism is able to politically conquer the weaker one, having less strength or vitality and/or fewer of the six factors. However, younger civilizations with fewer factors have also been absorbed by older ones due to their momentum or dynamism. In such an example, the Mongolian empire was able to militarily and politically conquer China. However, the Chinese society was culturally much stronger and thus absorbed this wave within a single generation, gaining vitality from the warrior society of the Mongols as well. India absorbed in a similar manner the Islamic Iranian invaders; so too did the Greek culture transform the conquering Romans.

We will have to nourish all these factors on a global level in order to form a human society that is strong, dynamic and lasting. The existence of all the six spokes in a balanced state leads to a society which can resist any internal deterioration or foreign invasion; hence it is crucial for social progress not to neglect the development of any of the six factors discussed above.

Section Four:

Spiritual Realization As A Social Goal

Where there is movement, there must also be a goal. Without a goal there can be no mention of progress. There can be no direction. The perennial inspiration for the movement of human society is felt on the personal level as a state of composure, peace and happiness beyond decay. This is called spiritual bliss (ánandam). Such a state is beyond the scope of social theory. But it is this state of realization in personal life which inspires the social behaviors of morality and respect for all living beings. When the six factors of social progress, indicated above, are present and in a balanced state, then the social movement will be toward this spiritual goal. The inner aspirations of the human mind will have a conducive social environment for full expression and realization, and a universalistic social outlook will develop.

When the blissful realization of ánandam is taken as the foundation for good will and benevolent treatment of all creation, the scope of humanistic love and kinship is expanded into a universal love that we call Neo-humanism. Neo-humanism is the guiding social outlook of PROUT. It provides the ethics and principles for social movement toward the spiritual goal. In Neo-humanism, supreme recognition is given to the intrinsic existential value of each and every living being. Even inanimate objects are unique expressions of the Cosmic Consciousness. This recognition of the intrinsic worth of every entity is the fundamental social outlook of a truly progressive society.

In our interaction with the environment, PROUT places the existential value of all entities above their utility value. We cannot continue to treat this universe with hungry eyes, looking only at the value of things to satisfy our never ending desires. Frequently we overlook the subtle value of things, as it is still hidden by our limited understanding. Our obsession with turning everything into commodities prevent us from detecting the beauty and harmony in the world around us. As we come to understand and correct our past limitations, this world has all the potentiality to become a paradise for all humanity, animals and plants.

Further Reading:

PROUT in a Nutshell. Part Four of this series contains important elementary PROUT material. In Part Three, a portion is devoted the discussion of unity, security and peace. In Part Six, the article "The Future of Civilization," discusses asti, bhati, and ánandam, particularly the six factors.

THE SOCIAL CYCLE

Social Psychology And Theory Of History

The Social Cycle

The Dialectics Of The Social Cycle

Synthesizing A New Vision Of History

The Role Of Moral Leaders And The State Of Permanent Social Synthesis

Section One:

Social Psychology And Theory Of History

Based upon the relationship formed by the human mind with the natural and social environment, we can identify four different social groupings or behaviors. Each group has a different relationship with its environment and therefore develops different mental tendencies. The first group (the masses) are overwhelmed by the psycho-physical waves of reality. Unable to contend with it, this group spends its energy simply trying to exist. The second group (the warriors) commands the psycho-physical reality by physical force. The third (the intellectuals) commands by psychic (mental) force and the fourth (merchants) commands by controlling the manufacture and exchange of psycho-physical objects.

In Sanskrit, these groups are called varn'as. The concept of the varn'as is a valuable model for analysis of class dynamics. This model applies more toward social analysis than for the understanding of individual psychology, where more complex laws exist. It is both fundamental as well as general, and it is important to not apply it simplistically and rigidly toward individuals.

The concept of the four varn'as leads to a new theory of social dynamics and historical analysis unique to PROUT. This theory holds that, at any given time, society will be dominated by the psychology and administration of a particular varn'a. It is further held that social change occurs in a cyclic fashion. Together these ideas are referred to as the Theory of the Social Cycle, which elaborates the transformation of society as the predominant values and power base shift from one varn'a to the next in a cyclic manner.

PROUT theory of social grouping differs from the caste system of India which, although using the same terms, locks people into a class structure by birth. In our theory, varn'a is only a psychological disposition based upon ways and means to survive and prosper in a given environment. Our theory also differs from the western grouping of social classes based upon income levels.

First we will examine the four groups in our theory, and then give a brief historical analysis from this perspective.

The first group (the masses or shúdras) displays the characteristics of the undeveloped human mind

dominated by the material and social environment and by basic instincts. The shúdra mind lacks vibrancy due to its preoccupation with materiality. There is little original expression of higher ideals or culture. Of course, the shu'dra mind of the modern era is obviously more developed than the shúdra mentality of the dark ages, or of the prehistoric era. Hence, the varn'as are relative categories. Basically the shúdras are those who have few aspirations and little mental dynamism. They live according to the pressures of material conditions and the dominant trends of the collective psychology. Shúdra psychology is essentially the mass psychology. It requires the guidance and inspiration of those with more developed minds who actually define the direction and momentum of the collective psychology. On the individual level, every mind possesses a mixture of and the potential for all the four varn'as – though one psychology tends to be dominant.

The second varn'a (warrior or ks'attriya) is constituted by those with the warrior mentality. They have a fighting spirit. They display bravery and embrace challenge and struggle. On a rudimentary level, the warrior mind seeks to establish domination or control over matter through physical valor. A warrior-dominated society may place great emphasis on social values such as honor, discipline, self-sacrifice, and responsibility or, in a negative sense, on blind adherence to authority, ruthlessness, and competition. Most societies of ancient history, certain medieval societies like the Arabic Muslim society, and various military and communist societies of the modern age are examples of warrior dominated societies.

The intellectual class (vipras) constitute the third varn'a. Those with developed intellect, who seek to influence the external or social environment by virtue of their mental faculties constitute this class. Scientific, religious and cultural achievements are the products of the intellectuals. Intellectual eras are characterized by the social and political rule of the intellectuals, ministers, or clergy (whether in a monarchy, democracy, theocracy, etc.). Here religious, cultural, and intellectual pursuits dominate the collective psychology. The Hindu and Buddhist societies of the Far East and the Catholic Church dominated Europe of the middle ages, and some of the present day fundamentalist Islamic states are essentially intellectual societies.

The fourth social class is that of the merchants (vaeshyas). This is the mercantile or entrepreneurial class that excels in the handling and accumulation of resources. Modern history, which crystallizes with the Industrial Revolution, continues to be dominated by the psychology of this class. Just as the warriors dominated ancient history, and the intellectuals dominated the middle ages, so the merchants dominate modern history.

The beginning of any age is characterized by great dynamism on all levels - politically, culturally, economically etc. as the new leadership frees the people from the oppressive institutions of the old order. The age peaks in a golden era as the new class overcomes the obstacles of the old order and solidifies its control over society. In time, however, social decline again occurs as the dominant class increases its power at the expense of meeting the basic needs of the people. Social unrest builds as the exploitation becomes more systematized.

In this way, the merchant class brought great dynamism to a society suffering under a corrupt priest class and the feudal system of the Holy Roman Empire. The golden age of modern history is probably the period of Pax Americana. Now, however, the era of the merchant is beginning to exceed its welcome. As the dominant class seeks to expand its wealth and power beyond the bounds of governmental jurisdiction, they do so at the expense of greater numbers of people, the majority of whom losing purchasing capacity and many are unable to meet their basic survival needs. In this decline, the labor of the masses, the martial abilities of the warriors and the mental powers of the

intellectuals become increasingly enslaved to the will of the merchants (capitalists), who have an iron control over their wages and livelihood. Political rule is also determined by "behind the curtain" capitalists who hold the true, financial power. All capitalist societies are in this condition now. This is illustrated by the absolute dependency of political leaders on "big money" in order to finance their election campaigns. Though constitutional democracy was a positive development of the merchant age, as practiced today, it is little more than a tool for control of national economies by the international financial giants.

Section Two:

The Social Cycle

The theory of social cycle holds that the natural sequence of historical eras always progresses from shúdra (laborer) society to ks'attriya (warrior), followed by vipran (intellectual) and then vaeshyan (merchant). Subsequently, a new social cycle follows. One may object that a cyclic view of history doesn't acknowledge the potential for human progress, but we are not suggesting that we are continually moving in circles, constantly retracing our steps. Rather, the true movement of the social cycle may be likened to a spiral movement; it is circular, but moving in a definite direction, making definite progress. This progress can be recognized as movement toward a greater expansion of consciousness.

Historically, the period from the evolution of human beings out of animality until the formation of stone-age societies constitutes the shúdras era. In this era, human beings were highly dependent upon the forces of nature, living almost as slaves to the material conditions. Through clashes with the hostile environment, and through inter-group conflict over scarce resources, the human mind slowly grew in complexity, capacity, and strength. Confidence, bravery, and the capacity to rule and dominate the material and social environment developed in some human beings. In the beginning this was expressed mostly through physical force, and it brought about the age of domination by people of the warrior mentality. This was the beginning of human society in a higher sense. As the clan system evolved, unity, discipline and a sense of social responsibility developed slowly, resulting in the advancement of social structure. This early period of the warrior age was led by women in their role as clan mothers. It is necessary to understand the great contribution made by women to human history since they guided human society for nearly 1 million years - from the birth of humans to approximately 10,000 years ago when patriarchy had its first expression.

In the struggle of warrior societies against the forces of nature and each other, the intellectual power of human beings developed, and the ingenuity of the emergent vipras resulted in the earliest scientific achievements, such as the making of fire, the bow and arrow, needle and thread, the plow and pottery, as well as advances in animal husbandry and agriculture, etc. As a result of this long process the vipras enjoyed higher and higher prominence in society, and became the most valued assets of the ks'attriya leaders. Warfare also became a more complex affair as tactics and strategy became as important as valor and skill. Without the contribution of greater intellect, victory in warfare became impossible.

In the second half of the first ks'attriya era, men broke with the matriarchal order and established a new system based upon male dominance. This new system was institutionalized by the establishment of marriage, private property and the creation of city states. Religion replaced Magic as the dominant social outlook and leadership passed from the tribal counsel to the warrior king.

This transition paved the way for the great empires of ancient history – the Aryans, Sumerians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Egyptians, Macedonians and Romans to name a few.

Over time the intellectual ministers and priests gained increasing importance. With the vipran age, the personal authority of the warrior kings became less important as the social administration became increasingly based on scriptures and laws. Through different social, religious and scriptural injunctions, intellectuals in the roles of ministers, priests, law-givers or sages began to rule the society and shape its development.

It is in this vipran stage of the social cycle that the cultural life of society flourishes, and human beings attain new heights of awareness and mental development under the influence of benevolent vipras. Solidification of cultural, religious and governmental institutions occur within the golden age of the vipran era; and under the auspices of these institutions, science, art, and the other branches of knowledge flourished. The early Buddhist ages of India, China, and Southeast Asia all illustrate this, as do the European middle ages with their monastic centers of learning.

In time, the vipran class also becomes oppressive as its concern for the perpetuation of its own material and social privileges becomes more obsessive. To maintain their dominance, one of the most powerful tools historically resorted to by viprans is the injection of superstitions and various psychic complexes into the minds of the other classes. This includes the relegation of women into subservient roles. Male dominance rose to new heights as women were persecuted and infected with inferiority complexes. Women were barred from education in the first vipran era, both in Oriental and Occidental societies.

Gradually, their preoccupation with comfortable living and privilege led the vipras into greater subservience to those possessing wealth - those who had the capacity to buy their land and begin to employ them in their service. In this way, the merchant class slowly grew, infusing new dynamism into the society as it rose. As it gained power it created new social and political machinery to allow it greater freedom. The skillfulness and pragmatism of the vaeshyan class gradually overcame the quagmire of superstitions and decadent institutions constructed in the late vipran era. Proto-democratic movements which led to the House of Commons in Great Britain, the French revolution, etc. and a slow decrease in gender inequality marked the Vaeshyan era in Europe and its colonies. European (and later Japanese) imperialism, however, also traces its inception to the Vaeshyan era. Every thing a merchant sees, even a human being, gets reduced to an element for the increase of profit. This vision began to take hold over society as the trader class, initially under the patronage of the Church or rebel nations like England, utilized the martial qualities of the ksatriya class to pirate other ships and colonize the world. The goal was simply to extract its resources, including human slaves to perform the labor of production. In this way all the industrialized nation-states of the world were built by the merchant class.

In the decline of the merchant age, the economy is pushed toward greater efficiency within the corporations in the effort toward profit maximization. Employment and purchasing power of the working people suffers. The environment is destroyed as consumerism is relentlessly perpetuated. Money becomes highly centralized and begins to circulate less in the society as purchasing capacity diminishes. Those who are intellectual or warrior minded, become reduced to the economic condition of shúdras. Under increased pressure due to market failure and increased difficulty to meet their basic necessities, the people under the leadership of these disgruntled intellectuals and warriors will eventually rise up and begin to take economic and social relations into their own hands. This initiates the end of the merchant era and the beginning of a new shudra era. Though

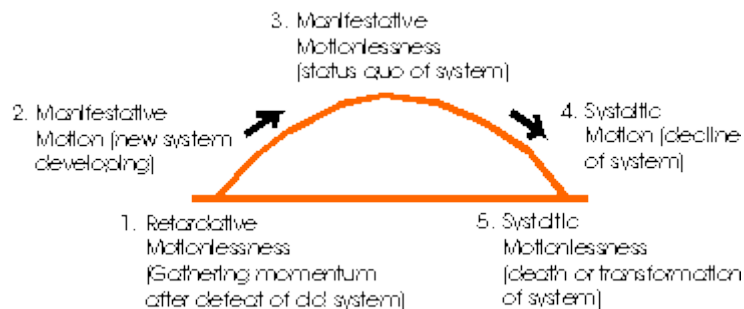
technically speaking, a shudra society emerges in the wake of the overthrow of the vaeshyan order, this shúdra era (essentially anarchy) lasts only as long as it takes the leadership of the revolution to solidify their power. The workers' revolutions of the communist countries, beginning with Russia, represent this stage of the social cycle: vaeshyan rule ended by shúdra revolution, resulting in a new, ks'attriya dominated society. In this way, the cyclic motion of society continues, and humanity enters the second spiral of the Social Cycle.

Section Three:

The Dialectics Of The Social Cycle

The Social Cycle moves in perpetual rotation. Based on the psychological characteristics of the different classes (varn'as), we can detect distinct ages in the history of different societies. Each age is characterized by the social and administrative domination of one of the classes. The dominant class psychology determines the dominant values and social psychology of that age. As a rule, at any given time in the history of a certain society, only one class is dominant. In human history, thus far we have categorized four ages. These are the ages of the shúdra, ks'attriya, vipra and vaeshya. Taken together they constitute one complete spiral of the Social Cycle.

Within each spiral there is also a dialectical movement which accounts for the birth, maturity and death of an age, leading to the birth, maturity and death of the next age and so forth. The life span of an age, or for that matter, any social structure can be graphed accordingly:



In actuality, the social cycle does not always move smoothly forward, but rather moves in a systaltic manner. There are periods of social movement followed by periods of relative pause. When society is in a state of ultimate stagnation, having little vitality or positive momentum, it is termed "systaltic pause." It is in this state, due to great suffering on the part of the people, that new inspiration and ideas emerge, ideas which are antithetical to the stagnant existing framework. When such an "antithesis" develops sufficient strength, the existing social structure is fundamentally changed by the dynamism of the new ideas. This initial stage of change and dynamism is referred to as "manifestative motion." When a new synthesis is achieved by the strength of the manifestative movement, the state of "manifestative motionlessness" occurs. This pause is the apex of social movement, its golden era or the period of its greatest vitality. The strength of this synthesis rests upon the strength of the ideas upon which it is founded. Eventually it begins to deteriorate, however, because the dominant class is able to systematically exploit the other classes, leading to oppression and stagnation. This results in its decline. After some time, its downward motion culminates in its "systaltic motionlessness." In this period new ideas incubate and pressure is

created by the oppressed for a new order. The systaltic motionlessness of the old order is also the same period as the “retardative motionlessness” of the new order.

Thus, every age of the social cycle will begin with a formative dynamic phase, in which new vitality is infused into the social structure. Society attains a sustained peak subsequently followed by decline and staticity, usually accompanied by rampant exploitation. The antithesis of the stage of systaltic pause then emerges from a different varn’a dominating the next phase within the social cycle.

Types of Social Movement

Within this general pattern there are all sorts of small changes and fluctuations, (theses and antitheses), which do not substantially alter the basic social and political fabric. There are also periods of more substantial change which can be referred to as social evolution or counter evolution. Evolution refers to dynamic periods of progressive social change (forward motion in the social cycle), while counter evolution refers to the opposite – times of regressive backlash (regressive movement in the social cycle). The equal rights movement or the women’s movement in the United States illustrates normal social evolution. An example of counter evolution is perhaps the cultural revolution of Maoist China, in which the budding vipran class (the “petty bourgeois”) was rooted out by the dominant ks’attriya class, temporarily thwarting the transition to the vipran era.

There are also periods of dramatic change characterized by the application of tremendous force; these are referred to as revolution (when the social cycle moves forward) and counter revolution (when such changes revert the social cycle to the rule of a previous varn’a). The communist workers' revolutions are examples of revolution, as they caused the exploitative vaeshyan governments to give way to shúdra revolution. The efforts by the CIA to prevent self-reliance movements in Mexico and South America represent examples of counter-revolution.

Counter evolution and counter revolution can only be short lived; the natural movement of the social cycle cannot be checked indefinitely. This theory holds that the forward motion of the social cycle is inevitable. Counter motions are always regressive, as they revert society to a stage of the social cycle which had already reached the point of stagnation or degeneration.

The Mutual Influence of Civilizations

Human society is comprised of so many factions, nations, and states – so many past and present civilizations. These civilizations and sub-civilizations may at times be in different stages of development, and their mutual contact affects the movement of their social cycles. For instance, many societies which were still in predominantly vipran eras rapidly moved into vaeshyan eras under the influence of colonialism (such as in India). This type of mutual influence makes analysis of the social cycle more complex. Nowadays especially, with the rapid growth of international exchange and communication, the mutual influences have become extremely complicated. Most of the nations of the world have been heavily affected by the vaeshyan age of the West, beginning with the advent of colonialism and culminating in the present multinational market economy. Even the communist and the former communist nations have been heavily effected. Because of the globalization of the West's vaeshyan age, the next ks’attriyān age, while breaking away from the global economy through decentralized power struggles, will most likely retain momentum toward a global human culture.

Bloodless Revolution

In PROUT theory, the structural death of a social system need not mean the death of human beings per se. It is theoretically possible to have a bloodless revolution in which an entire new system rises from the fall of the old system. This could happen if, in the process of assimilation there is the possibility of vibrational adjustment. That is, if the ruling class of the old system is willing to relinquish sufficient control of wealth and power in order to meet the requirements of the new age. In this case, and to whatever extent this is possible, the individual and collective structures have a greater chance of acquiring more inherent vitality.

The Role of Individuals in Social Transformation

A society is a composite of individual human beings. The totality of various individual flows of movement constitutes the collective social movement. Each individual flow is influenced by the collective flow. It is impossible for individuals to move exclusively according to their individual inherent momentum. In some instances, the individual strives to maintain adjustment with the collective flow and, in other instances, he or she strives to move faster or slower than it. Society slows the individual momentum by virtue of its rules, regulations, mores, and a host of other road blocks.

The trough and crest of the collective flow is shorter than the trough and crest of the individual's flow. And this shortness of the collective wave-length in relation to the wave-length of the individual sets the stage for evolution or revolution as the number of individual's who want social change increase.

Section Four:

Synthesizing A New Vision Of History

While the Theory of the Social Cycle shows great promise in articulating the movement of human society, it is still undeveloped and requires much research to add details to the structure. Social phenomena and historical trends are very diverse and complex in their expression. Art, politics, economics, religion, philosophy, science, technology, music, dress, and customs all must be integrated into a holistic vision and understood as an expression of the prevalent socio-psychology.

It is a complicated process especially when there is not always consonance in these different fields of human endeavor. Usually a new social psychology will appear first in the subtler fields of art, culture or science while in the fields of economics and politics an older psychology may linger on, dominating the social structure until the transformation is complete. Hence, in transitional periods it is not an easy task to assure whether a certain time is dominated by the former social psychology or already by the new social psychology. The expression of a certain social psychology (varn´a) may also be quite different in the beginning of its age, during its youth, at the time of maturity, and in its old age or period of degeneration.

Our historical records are also lopsided, eulogizing the ruling personalities - kings, ministers, and political leaders – giving little attention to the way of life as experienced by the so-called common people. The internal dynamics of the ruling class itself may also be poorly or only partially understood so far. Hence, further historical research must be undertaken with the specific aim of elucidating the social cycle.

Notwithstanding the complications involved in historical analysis, the value of the social cycle is illustrated by its predictive ability. The rise of student and intellectual dissident movements in China and the former USSR, not to mention the various uprisings in the former communist Eastern European nations illustrates the tendency for the warrior (ks'attriya) era to move toward an intellectual (vipran) one. Counter evolutionary measures were enacted by the ks'attriya regimes, but as predicted by Proutist dialectics, these could not last indefinitely.

Another important point to recognize is that the Western nations should expect to reach the point of revolution eventually, ending the era of multinational corporate capitalism. In some less developed nations, this has already occurred and it is starting to occur elsewhere. The Zapatista rebellion of Mexico, a ks'attriya led shúdra (peasant) revolution, is an example in point. Though temporarily checked by the strength of the capitalist (vaeshyan) status quo, it can be expected to surface again in strength. The revolts against vaeshyan dominance occur first in the less developed countries due to greater exploitation and greater disparities in wealth. It is also important to realize that these revolutions and changes may not always be socialist or communist – a different ideology could also serve this purpose. The social cycle must move forward: proletariat (shúdra) revolution is indeed inevitable, but communism as envisioned by Marx is not inevitable, and for practical purposes it has already lost its dynamism and appeal.

Section Five:

The Role Of Moral Leaders And The State Of Permanent Social Synthesis

We have seen that, in the flow of history, different classes of the human society become dominant and that their leadership changes from a progressive phase into an exploitative phase. This is due to the limited interests of the leadership, whose vision is constrained by the parameters of a specific social psychology. It is due to this limitation that the movement of the social cycle is not smooth; there is revolution and counter-revolution – a stop and go movement which greatly retards the synthetic movement of the whole society and often brings it to the brink of disaster. Is society doomed to continue the internal contradiction of opposing class interests? Is the cycle of progress, exploitation revolution and subsequent human suffering inevitable?

PROUT philosophy envisions the establishment of a quasi-permanent social synthesis under the guidance of spiritual-intellectual leaders called sadvipras (literally, spiritual-minded intellectuals). Sadvipras are those who by virtue of their physical, mental, and spiritual efforts have developed the positive qualities of all classes combined. Guided by a universal ideology and spiritual practices, they have the courage to fight injustice and exploitation. Sadvipras are those whose every action is devoted to self-realization and the betterment of society. By personal example, they are able to inspire and lead the society forward in a synthetic and progressive way. P. R. Sarkar, the original propounder of PROUT, defined sadvipras as "those who are deeply spiritual, who love human beings above everything else and who are absolutely selfless." He said that they "think of themselves as the genuine servant of mankind."

If there is a conscious effort among members of society to collectively work for social progress (as defined by the six factors previously discussed) we will begin to produce more people of this quality.

While the rotation of the social cycle is inevitable, the influence of socio-spiritual visionaries who have outstepped the interests of a single social class, can smooth its progress and limit the extent of exploitation and the periods of turmoil. Sadvipras are envisioned as capable of applying sufficient momentum and force to the social cycle so as to accelerate the times of transition from the period of one varn'a to the next. They are able to accelerate the social cycle as soon as the signs of social decay or exploitation are evident, enacting the transition to the next age in a positive manner. In the philosophical sense, they exist in the nucleus or controlling point of the social cycle, apart from, yet influencing the circular progression of the socio-psychological structure.

In the absence of a well coordinated and organized group of sadvipras, the movement of the social cycle has been uncontrolled. From the spiritual perspective, human society is still in an immature stage. When human beings can consciously control the progressive movement of society through the changing ages of different social psychologies, this will be the beginning of a mature human society. It may resemble what Marx and Engels called human history departing from the "kingdom of necessity" into the "kingdom of freedom." This is not a static vision of an ideal state of society, rather it seeks to harness the dynamic motion of the social cycle for a progressive and ever benign society. An understanding of the complete framework of the Progressive Utilization Theory is necessary to better understand the implications of this social vision. It is important to remember that a spiritual vision of the universe is inherent in PROUT philosophy. PROUT is essentially a framework for harnessing the individual and collective potential on all levels – physical, psychic, and spiritual – and synthesizing them into a progressive and dynamic society.

Further Reading:

Human Society Part II. The entirety of this book is devoted to a discussion of social dynamics and the social cycle.

PROUTIST ECONOMICS

This chapter presents the basic economic principles required to move from a profit-based to a consumption-based economy. A consumption-based economy is premised on the belief that the opportunity to meet one's basic needs should be guaranteed to all the members of a society.

Production for Human Needs and Maximum Utilization

Rational Distribution: Guaranteed Minimum Necessities And Maximum Amenities

Economic Democracy

Economic Decentralization and Socio-Economic Units

Trade

Balanced Economy

Three Tiered Ownership

Planning and Development

Quadri-Dimensional Economics

Economic Depressions

Section One:

Production for Human Needs and Maximum Utilization

The capitalist socio-economic system is based on the motivation of the individual for financial profit. In the pursuit of profit, human beings are treated as capital input, equal to land and equipment. According to PROUT, such a system is the exact opposite of what a socio-economy should be. We hold that meeting the needs of human beings is the reason that economies exist.

Treating people as just another form of capital has allowed for great social injustice and exploitation. Today many hard working people face the loss of their jobs as companies under pressure to increase profit margins look towards downsizing as an easy way to cut costs. Many more people remain chronically unemployed and underemployed due to lack of jobs. For the majority of jobs, related purchasing capacity continues to decrease.

In the capitalist system, production, distribution, and regulation take place through the so-called "free market" mechanism. Consumers are free to purchase or not to purchase goods, and the ensuing competition between uncoordinated manufacturers allegedly ensures high quality goods and low prices. Those goods which do not serve the perceived needs of the society are not bought and since the manufacturer cannot make a profit on them, production of such goods ceases. In effect, this is seen as the consumer directing the manufacturer as to which goods to produce and which not to. However, this is not the whole story. The endless quest for higher profits has led to the creation of psychologically sophisticated methods for the creation of artificial markets for unnecessary or even harmful goods and services. Through the sheer force of advertisement campaigns, markets are created and sustained for items such as cigarettes, junk foods, superficial

entertainment, and a million and one superfluous items and brand names. As long as profits are the basis for production, businesses will always devise new methods for increasing the demand for products. Even if the products are environmentally or socially harmful, this will not matter, so long as it remains profitable to produce them.

Though advocates of capitalism may stress that the existing economy is neither centralized nor planned, in reality the high concentration of economic power in the hands of a few big corporations, individuals, and banks – and they truly are few in number – leads to a centralization which, though less overt than in the communist nations, is virtually absolute. Only a handful of corporations control all major industries, including military technology, energy, real estate, banking, food, and health care. Even political leaders must have their campaigns paid for by the corporate elite.

Highly sophisticated financial control mechanisms have been put in place in today's "free market" economy to increase profits and wealth for the few, while diminishing living standards and destroying self-reliance and local ownership of resources. This is witnessed in the great imbalance of consumption. Today only 20% of the population consumes 80% of the goods and services, leaving only crumbs for 80% of humanity. So too, the concentration of wealth within the fortunate 20% has been dramatically increasing while the purchasing power of the middle class and lower class has generally deteriorated. It is estimated that close to 50% of the wealth in the United States is owned by less than 1% of the population.

In the northern industrialized nations, there remains some semblance of economic self-determination and a few restrictions upon multinational corporate activity, but the poverty and disparity of wealth in the developing nations is truly pitiful.

Today the corporate elite, through institutions like the World Trade Organization, the OECD, the World Bank, and by direct interventions of multinational corporations, seek to bring all local economies under their control. They want to make it illegal for governments to control their activity in the interest of local people. In essence, they want to bind local people to a global economy that exploits their labor and local resources and makes them subservient to the decisions of distant economic masters. Fast Track and NAFTA in the United States, and the Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI) promoted by the OECD are geared to accomplish this end.

The primary economic goal of PROUT is to maximally utilize and rationally distribute the resources of the world. Maximum utilization means that the resources of the world should be harnessed in an efficient and progressive manner, with the sole motivation of meeting the needs of all human beings within the carrying capacity of the planetary eco-systems. This requires that local people plan their own economies and control their own resources. This is the only way to prevent economic exploitation and ensure environmental sustainability.

In this effort, PROUT does not take a technologically phobic attitude, rather it encourages constant scientific endeavor made in the spirit of general welfare and local self-reliance.

Rational Distribution: Guaranteed Minimum Necessities And Maximum Amenities

The most fundamental feature of the Proutist economic system is that the minimum necessities of life are to be guaranteed for all. In this age of rapid scientific advancement, it is irrational that some human beings should be deprived of their existential necessities while others amass great hoards of wealth. The determination of minimum necessities should be done in a progressive way; i.e. there must be continual adjustment of the definition of basic requirements depending upon the resources and scientific standard of the time and place. The minimum requirements are not to be handed out by the central government in a way similar to the current welfare system of liberal democratic countries. Rather, local planning should guarantee sufficient jobs to enable one to earn the required purchasing power. The guarantee of employment that provides sufficient earning power is essential to PROUT. Only as a special contingency, or for those who are deemed mentally or physically disabled, could there be something resembling the welfare system of the liberal democratic countries.

In a Proutist framework, the people's purchasing capacity will be taken as the measure of economic advancement. In order to continually increase purchasing capacity, a number of factors are required. These include the guaranteed availability of basic goods and services, stable prices, progressive and periodic wage increases, and increasing collective wealth and productivity.

PROUT recognizes five minimum necessities of life. These are food, clothing, housing, medical care, and education. Supplemental requirements are the guaranteed availability of energy, transportation and water.

Presently, in the capitalistic countries, there is neither a guarantee of the basic requirements of life, nor is there a limit put on the wealth that an individual or corporate entity may accumulate. Insofar as physical resources are finite in nature, this creates an increasing divide between the haves and the have-nots.

Under a Proutist system the basic necessities are guaranteed to all. This is the bottom line of a Proutist economy. To accomplish this, PROUT recommends that there be a cap on the amount of earnings by an individual or corporate entity. Some have suggested that the ratio between the highest and the lowest paid members of a society be 10:1. By tying these two incomes together, society will work to raise the living standards of its poorest members, and guarantee them more of life's amenities as the collective wealth of society increases.

PROUT holds that the more meritorious, skillful, or service-oriented people ought to receive greater remuneration than the average worker. This will encourage people to do better and develop themselves and their skills. Meritorious people will earn more than common people, and this earning will include their maximum amenities. Amenities include goods and services which increase one's living standard and quality of life.

Common people should also be provided with more and more natural amenities to make their lives easier. While there will always be a gap between the maximum amenities of the common people and the maximum amenities of the meritorious, there should nonetheless be a constant effort to reduce this gap. If the maximum amenities of meritorious people become excessively high, then the

minimum requirements of common people should be immediately increased. For example, if a person with special qualities has a motor bike and an ordinary person has a bicycle, there is a balanced adjustment. But if the person with special qualities has a car, then we should immediately try to provide the common people with motor bikes.

What constitutes both the minimum requirements and the maximum amenities should be ever increasing so long as the needs of the environment are also accounted for. As the need for the minimum requirements is fulfilled and the supply of the maximum amenities increases, the struggle for daily subsistence will gradually decrease and people's lives will become easier and more enjoyable. For this reason PROUT guarantees the minimum requirements and the maximum amenities to all.

In the physical and psychic realms movement toward the satisfaction of human wants and needs should be never ending. But, insofar as everything in these realms is limited, the hunger of human beings will remain unsatisfied and we will always want more. This longing for more can only be completely satisfied in the spiritual realm. Only at the point of merger with the Absolute is human hunger fully satisfied. Thus, while the purpose of PROUT is to satisfy human hunger in the physical and psychic realms, we must remember that true progress lies in the movement from imperfection to perfection. To go beyond this psycho-physical world is to go beyond the realm of PROUT and to enter the world of intuitional or spiritual science.

Section Three:

Economic Democracy

In most of the world today people have come to think of democracy as being the best system of government. But what exactly do we mean by democracy? Generally, people think of democracy as meaning the enfranchisement of the masses. It means a political system that allows all of its citizens the right to elect political representatives who look after their interests. True democracy encompasses much more than this however. In order to have genuine self-determination and economic security, the concept of democracy must be expanded to include "economic democracy."

Certainly it is true that political democracy has given people the right to vote. But what is the practical use of this right? In some democratic countries, such as the United States, many voters have become so disillusioned with the choices offered to them that they do not even bother to vote. Many who choose to vote, do not study the issues involved but base their vote on a candidate's political affiliation, the effectiveness of their advertising, or other issues which ought to be peripheral to the selection of the best candidate. Due to financial and political interests, the media is often ineffective in its portrayal of issues that have the greatest impact on people. Thus, in most instances, political democracy creates the illusion in people that they do indeed have a say in their own future, while the real power continues to lie with the wealthy and powerful, who have a vested interest in seeing that their interests are served at the expense of the great majority. The choice Americans typically make between the two main political parties is a choice between two parties serving the same masters. Having put one or the other party in power, people then sit back in dismay as they watch decisions which affect them and their livelihood made against their best interests. Or if some action is taken on behalf of the majority, the allocation of funds is never enough to change conditions or alter the distribution of wealth.

The underlying idea of economic democracy is that humans should not be exploited by those who are in control of capital. On the political level, democracy may mean a certain degree of choice and freedom; but on the economic level little has changed since the days of feudalism. Workers are still forced by necessity to provide their labor to those controlling capital resources. Their only right is to quit. Although they do the work, they have little or no say in managerial affairs and rarely receive a share of profit. Those with capital are able to compel others into a sort of bondage by force of circumstances - and this is accepted as natural. Allegedly the controlling mechanism is again the free market system, which is supposed to guarantee sufficient competition between employers that they are compelled to make jobs appealing. The reality for many workers is quite different, as they are increasingly compelled to work on others' terms – if at all – even in the industrialized nations.

According to PROUT, one has an intrinsic right to the fruit of one's labor, and an intrinsic right in managing the products of his or her actions. To accomplish this, PROUT recognizes the need for a decentralized economy based upon cooperative management as far as is possible and practical. These concepts will be further discussed in subsequent sections and chapters.

Economic democracy entails the planning of economic development in a particular region by the people of that region. This type of democracy represents a truer freedom than the high sounding but ultimately ineffectual and incomplete political democracy. Political democracy without economic democracy becomes less meaningful as purchasing power is drained from working people to fill the already overflowing coffers of those few with capital.

For economic democracy to come about, four requirements must be fulfilled. The economic ideas of PROUT are geared toward meeting these requirements.

The first of these is that there must be a guarantee that the minimum requirements of a certain time and place are available to everyone, as discussed in the previous section. This will increase the all-round welfare of a society by removing existential fear.

Secondly, people must have increasing capacity to purchase goods and services. Their incomes must be constantly rising. In order to achieve this in an economic democracy, the raw materials and other assets of a particular region ought to stay in that region for purposes of refinement and manufacturing. As improvements in production occur and new, more efficient uses for resources are developed, the benefits should accrue to the local inhabitants rather than to outsiders. Such advances will increase the standard of living rather than making select individuals wealthy. Such a system will help to bring about full employment and raise the standard of living in a region.

The third requirement for the establishment of economic democracy is that local people must have the right to make all decisions in regards to the local economy (that is, the creation of a decentralized economy as discussed in the next section).

Finally, the fourth criteria is that all outsiders must be prevented from interfering in the business of the local economy. Ideally there will not be outside ownership. Such a restriction will serve to stem the outflow of local capital, so that those living near a source of raw materials will be the rightful beneficiaries and also the rightful stewards of that wealth.

Section Four:

Economic Decentralization and Socio-Economic Units

For accomplishing its economic ideals, PROUT advocates an economic system based on decentralization. In a capitalistic system, the quest for profit directs the economic activity. In PROUT, the meeting of human needs is the underlying goal. Production based on this goal is best accomplished in a decentralized manner. Decentralization is the direct expression of economic democracy, insofar as local control of resources allows the best means to achieve maximum utilization and rational distribution of those resources. Conversely, centralization is the direct expression of capitalism because it allows maximum control of local resources by the capitalists.

Decentralization is also required for sustainability, because in this system the local people become responsible for the stewardship of resources. This is completely different from the current system, wherein profits are often made at the cost of social and environmental degradation. Under PROUT, resources are protected and enhanced because the standard of living of the local people is directly dependent upon it.

In order to accomplish decentralization, PROUT seeks to formulate "units of economic self-sufficiency," or socio-economic units. The formation of such a unit would be the decision of local people. Such a decision would be based upon such factors as common economic and social problems, common geographic potentialities and problems, common cultural legacy and language etc. Cultural and ethnic factors are quite relative, and they may or may not be helpful in establishing economic divisions. More to the point is that there should be a sentiment for cooperation among the local people to meet the common goal of economic self-reliance. Local people are those who have merged their economic interests in a particular region. Anyone may settle in any socio-economic unit. Current political bodies (countries, federations, states, etc.) may contain one or several socio-economic units.

For planning purposes, each socio-economic unit is further divided into "blocks," based upon economic, geographic and population considerations. The goal of a decentralized economy is to make each block (perhaps one to two hundred thousand people) self-reliant.

One of the major defects of capitalism is the drainage of capital from local areas and its concentration into few hands outside the control of local government. A company owned in New York may have a parasitic relationship with the economy of the Haitian countryside, thwarting the economic progress of the locals. Resources taken from under-developed areas are extracted at low cost and used to benefit capitalists elsewhere. Centralized economies also lead to high industrial and urban concentration. In a decentralized economy, there is no such problem of industrial concentration and excessive urban growth, or the problem of a growing migrant labor population. There is local control of resources and capital, and opportunity for every locality to develop its socio-economic potential. Each area strives for self-sufficiency and maximum development in all sectors of the economy with due regard for protecting the natural environment. Each is free to develop its own economic plan and methods of implementation.

Guiding Principles of Economic Decentralization

PROUT proposes five guiding principles for economic decentralization. These are:

- 1) There should be local control of resources. This is especially necessary for those resources that are involved in the production of the basic necessities. Raw materials must be utilized as close to their source as possible for maximum efficiency, sustainability and benefit to the local people.
- 2) Production is need-based, driven by consumption rather than profit. Commodities should be produced primarily for the local market to prevent the outflow of capital. The socio-economic unit should be of sufficient size to create stability in the local markets and economy in general.
- 3) Production and distribution should be organized mainly through cooperatives. Cooperatives are largely incapable of competing in a centralized, capitalist environment. With a decentralized economy, however, the cooperative system will provide the means to ensure that everyone at the local level has employment and decision making power in the economy. This is a critical component of economic democracy.
- 4) There should be local employment in local economic enterprises. This is contingent upon strong local education so that skilled people are available in all fields. Cooperatives can play a role in this process by providing on-going educational opportunities for their members as well as opportunities for implementing this knowledge. This also ensures that very talented people can be properly utilized and will not succumb to "brain drain," moving to more developed and affluent areas as is happening all over the world today. Many of the most skilled and talented move from rural areas to urban ones, and from the developing nations to the developed.
- 5) As far as possible, commodities pertaining to the basic necessities which are not locally produced, should be removed from the local markets. It is essential to the development of local production that this rule be applied. Initially, people may have to accept lower quality goods, higher prices, or less availability, but with proper development in accordance with the desires of a population, good results can be achieved by retaining capital within an economic unit. If there is enthusiasm and pride in locally produced goods, this process will proceed very well.

Section Five:

Trade

Under PROUT, the issue of trade must be carefully considered. Guidelines should exist so that trade is beneficial to all parties concerned and to the economy as a whole. In an economic democracy, resources are considered the property of the people of that socio-economic unit. Furthermore, one of the maxims of economic decentralization is that refinement and manufacturing should take place as close to the source of raw materials as possible. Hence, the export of raw materials is considered inappropriate in such an economic framework. An exporting socio-economic unit would lose valuable opportunities for the creation of new jobs and economic vitality. Often, economies which depend upon the export of raw materials are economically underdeveloped and have a low standard of living. Depending upon the nature of the raw materials, the importing socio-economic unit might run the risk of overemphasis on industry; or if food is involved, it may harm the socio-economic

unit's ability to become agriculturally self-sufficient. Generally, such kind of trade is not conducive to economic decentralization or to a balanced economy (see next section).

However, when a socio-economic unit has insufficient raw materials to meet the minimum requirements of its populace, the importation of raw materials may be allowed. It should be carefully verified that the imported raw materials are indeed surplus to the socio-economic unit of origin.

Once a local economy is able to meet the basic needs of its people, finished goods which are not and cannot easily be produced should be allowed to enter an economic unit. Care should be taken, however, that they do not undermine the market for local goods. It is good if such kind of trade takes place through barter.

As an infrastructure develops for the exchange of manufactured goods, the free trade of surplus, finished goods between fully self-sufficient socio-economic units should be encouraged. This will help to facilitate prosperity and socio-economic parity amongst units. As this occurs, socio-economic units may begin to merge. This is a positive development if decentralized production and economic democracy are not jeopardized. One final and important point should be made in this matter. In order to avoid the emergence of a class of rich traders and middlemen, transactions between socio-economic units should be conducted only through producer and consumer cooperatives.

It should be clear how this approach differs from the capitalistic notion of freedom of trade. In quest of higher profit margins, capitalists seek cheap raw materials and cheap labor while targeting markets for finished goods which can give high returns. This is beneficial neither to the people living near the raw materials (who do not reap the benefits of ownership and may simply be employed in low wage mining, agricultural, or other jobs) nor to the populace of the more affluent market, for employment opportunities decrease as industry moves to cheap labor areas. And it is only marginally better for the areas which provide the labor for manufacturing because labor conditions, wages, and benefits will be as low as the capitalists can get away with. It may or may not stimulate much local economic growth or raise the standard of living. Furthermore, tremendous energy is wasted in shipping goods and raw materials between the sites of origin, sites of manufacturing, and the final markets.

Section Six:

Balanced Economy

In PROUT, the need to have a balance between the agricultural and industrial sectors of the economy is emphasized. Each and every country needs to have a steady and reliable source of food, yet too often, especially in Western society, the agricultural sector tends to be overlooked in favor of the industrial. Over industrialization and urbanization have resulted in many social and environmental problems.

The idea of a balanced economy can be defined by the percentage of people employed in certain industries. PROUT suggests that the following percentages can serve as a guideline for a balanced economy: about 30 to 40 percent of the population should be employed in agriculture (this also includes extraction of natural resources); 20 percent in agrico-industry (i.e., pre-harvest industries

serving agriculture such as the manufacture of farming tools and fertilizers); 20 percent in agro-industries (i.e., post harvest industries such as food processing, flour and cloth mills, paper mills, etc.); 10 percent in general trade and commerce; and 10 percent in intellectual and white collar jobs. Those involved in industry should be 20 to 30 percent, drawn from the agricultural sectors. The veracity of these general figures can only be determined by practical experience but they are based upon the following considerations.

If more than forty percent of the population depend directly on agriculture, there is a high probability of excess pressure on the land, and this generally indicates the existence of subsistence farming. It is unlikely that sophisticated farming methods will be used, and many farmers will not be able to earn adequate wages for subsistence. In general, the living standard will be low and such an economic unit will not be able to become highly developed. On the other hand, if too great a percentage of a unit's population is employed in industry, that country becomes over-industrialized. Besides the social and environmental effects of over-industrialization, these countries will need to seek raw materials from underdeveloped areas in order to fuel their industries. A parasitic relationship develops and becomes necessary to maintain. The quest for cheap raw materials was largely responsible for the colonial expansion of the last centuries. This underlying arrangement continues to exist although its present form has changed.

Section Seven:

Three-Tiered Ownership

In accordance with the principles of economic democracy, it was mentioned in previous sections that cooperatives will be the mainstay of a Proutist system. In a decentralized economy, all industries, agriculture and services can be effectively managed in a cooperative way. This does not mean, however, that the cooperatives will own the local resources. Rather the public sector will have to control raw materials as well as certain key industries (industries upon which other industries are built) on behalf of the people as a whole. An example of a key industry is a public utility, an iron and steel mill, a mining operation etc.

Another area where cooperatives may not be efficient is in the small-scale private sector. In some instances, individual private initiatives may better foster economic efficiency and productivity. Family run restaurants or small retail shops, artistic or entrepreneurial ventures, independent research etc., are some examples.

Therefore, according to PROUT there is a three-tiered economic structure. It is composed of key industries controlled by the local government; cooperatives for industry, agriculture and service (including finance) and thirdly, small privately-owned and run enterprises.

Section Eight:

Planning and Development

Planning is essential for decentralized economic development. It is required to ensure the coordination of the production and distribution of goods and services, particularly, the basic necessities. Proutistic planning differs from communistic planning in several respects. In

communism, central planning takes top priority, while local planning is only a reflection of the central planning. In PROUT, decentralized, block-level planning is the basis of the economy. This is called intra-block planning. Blocks (of approximately one or two hundred-thousand people) are divisions of socio-economic units. Planning will certainly occur on district, state, national and global levels, but bottom-up planning is the foundation. Each higher level of planning will involve the coordination of various blocks, districts, etc., rather than making decisions for the lower levels.

Since there are problems that traverse block boundaries and cannot be solved by one block alone (examples are flood control, river valley projects, communication systems, higher educational institutions, afforestation projects, the environmental impact of development, the establishment of key industries, soil erosion, water supply, power generation, the establishment of an organized market system, etc.), cooperation among blocks is necessary. Planning among blocks is called inter-block planning. Inter-block planning is an economic venture into selected fields to organize and harmonize socio-economic development in a few adjoining blocks through mutual coordination and cooperation.

In order to ensure a balance in economic planning, the following factors should be considered:

- The present demand and the demand of the near future.
- The present supply and that of the near future.
- Availability of the factors of production.
- Ensuring basic necessities of life through the application of the principles of PROUT.

As per PROUT, there are also four fundamental principles to ensure efficiency in planning

- The cost of production
- The productive potential of the economic unit
- The purchasing capacity of the unit
- The collective necessity.

Other considerations include natural resources, geographical features, climate, river systems, transportation, industrial potentialities, cultural heritage and social conditions.

Planning should be consistent with the overall goals of PROUT to achieve maximum utilization and rational distribution. Planning must be short term, keeping in mind long term goals and considerations. PROUT suggests six months as the ideal for short term and three years as the ideal of long term planning and projection. If planning reaches far into the future it will become impractical and will fail to adjust with scientific advancement and other unpredictable factors. But, if planning does not keep long term objectives in mind then it will be difficult to fulfill the economic necessities of an area.

Section Nine:

Quadri-Dimensional Economics

According to PROUT, there are four distinct parts to a developed economy, and hence four branches of the science of economics. This four-fold division of the economy is a feature unique to PROUT.

The divisions are: 1) People's economy, 2) Psycho-economy, 3) Commercial economy, and 4) General economy.

Of these, the people's economy is given the most emphasis. This field of economics analyzes the lives of individuals in relation to the economy as a whole, including their living standard, purchasing capacity, and economic problems. The most important aspect of the people's economy is ensuring the guarantee of minimum requirements for everyone. Aspects included under this heading are most aspects of the production, distribution, storage, marketing, pricing, etc., of consumable goods. Hence, the people's economy deals with producing necessary goods and amenities and getting them to the people in a timely and useful fashion.

To meet the minimum requirements for all requires that everyone has a large enough purchasing capacity. Therefore, another aspect of people's economy is ensuring employment for everyone. This includes the eradication of mass poverty, the development of rural economies, skill training and work placement programs. One further concern of people's economy is assisting the development of both private and cooperative industries. This would include measures to help privately-owned enterprises which grow too large to develop cooperative management.

The psychic aspects of economic activity are addressed by psycho-economics and pertain to the psycho-economy. At the present time, economists pay little or no regard to this aspect of economics. Once the basic needs have been attained, the psycho-economy will take on a much more important role. This field covers the relation of psychology to economic activity.

There are two branches of study within psycho-economics. The first is the psychology of exploitation. It is concerned with the elimination of unjust and exploitative economic behaviors. This branch of economic research makes people aware of how capitalism creates demands that are ultimately dangerous to the development of human beings. The second branch of psycho-economics is concerned with nurturing the mental needs of the people and with finding creative solutions to economic problems. Production of goods which have more impact in the mental than physical sphere is also an aspect of this branch. The economics of ensuring wide distribution of, and access to, all sorts of information, entertainment, arts, and crafts is an important aspect of psycho-economics.

The last two sections of the quadri-dimensional economy are the commercial economy and the general economy. These two sectors roughly correspond to what is recognized today as the field of economics, and as such there is no need to deal with them at length here. The commercial economy looks at how to develop more efficient and scientific methods for the production of goods and their delivery into the people's hands. General economy includes the overall organization of the structure of industry and the coordination of all levels of the economy, the goal of which should be to satisfy the collective needs of the society.

Section Ten:

Economic Depressions

From the very beginning, the industrial economy has not been a smooth journey. Years of industrial expansion have consistently been followed by years of depression – the bull market by the bear market. What is at the root of this? Should it be accepted as natural and inherent in any economy, or is it related to a specific mode of production?

All phenomena, whether social or economic, undergo systaltic movement (see social movement). Hence, pause is a natural state in the economic life of a nation. However, depression is not a natural state. It results from a defective socio-economic philosophy and practice. According to PROUT, depression is the net result of suppression, oppression and repression i.e. exploitation.

First, we have to say that before the development of the modern industrial economy, there were no industrial depressions as such. The economy was, of course, much more geared to "production for subsistence" and less market-oriented. There were economic disasters but these were generally due to scarcity, famine or war. In contrast, the modern industrial economy produces depressions accompanied by surplus products. The problem here is that the working people lack the purchasing capacity to buy the produced goods because capital has become too highly concentrated in the hands of the capitalists who see no profitable opportunity to invest their money.

At the root of economic depressions is the inner contradiction of capitalism. Here industries seek to maximize profits while reducing costs, as well as maintain or increase their market share. But in order to increase their profits and decrease their costs, there is a constant pressure to increase efficiency and reduce labor costs. As the economy slows, people's jobs are terminated. As the purchasing capacity of the workforce is undermined the consumption of goods decreases. In this way modern industry constantly cuts away at the branch on which it sits. Under such circumstances, the capitalists can only gamble on the stock market, centralize capital more through mergers and acquisitions or expand their markets in other countries. The net result of this approach is that profits do indeed rise while costs decrease. The problem is that it also results in a tremendous income gap between owners and workers. Ultimately depressions can be tracked to four causes: 1) great concentration of wealth, 2) blockages in the circulation of money, 3) curtailment in the purchasing power of people, and 4) monetary devaluation and the resulting inability of the unit of money to be the unit of economic stability.

Institutions and practices which support these factors become the instruments of exploitation and cause the death of a society.

These factors are not inevitable. They are not inherent by nature in every industrial economy. Rather we can say that the law of productivity is benign when its goal is to meet the needs of the people. Under PROUT, if efficiency increases production beyond the need, "downsizing" will mean reduced working hours at the same pay rather than layoffs. In a cooperative economy there may be no limit to increasing productivity, while maintaining full employment, so long as the carrying capacity of the resource base is not violated. This is because the goal of the economy would be a higher standard of living for all.

PROUT Study Guide

Further Reading:

Proutist Economics.

Parts one, two, and four of this book particularly deal with the concepts outlined in this chapter.

Chapter Four

AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND SERVICES

Part A: AGRICULTURE

Economic Holdings

Scientific Accounting in Agriculture

Agricultural Cooperatives

Ideal and Integrated Farming

Rural Development: Agrico and Agro Industries

Part B: INDUSTRY

Decentralization and Self-sufficiency

Three Tiered Ownership and Economic Democracy

Rationalization (Scientific Planning and Development)

Part C: SERVICES

Taxation and the Banking System

Service and Buyers' Cooperatives

Part A: AGRICULTURE

Section One:

Economic Holdings

According to PROUT, agriculture is the basis of an economy and, as such, it is given a very high status. We advocate developing as many essential products as possible from organic materials in order to maximally use local resources, reduce toxicity and increase the efficiency of recycling waste. This means that agriculture will provide food as well as household items, building materials, fuels, industrial materials etc.

Agriculture is to be developed in accordance with principles of economic democracy, decentralization, balanced economy, and other relevant factors. In essence, PROUT advocates a revolution in the agrarian sector based upon cooperative, integrated farming, using the most advanced biological techniques.

The first step to enacting a Proutist agricultural system is to address the division of land. Lands must be evaluated according to their fertility, and subsequently classified as economic or uneconomic holdings. Economic holdings are ones which are economically viable - i.e. the cost of all the factors which go into production is less than the market price of the output. An economic holding should be neither too large nor too small, the exact size depending on many agricultural factors. Many farmers in the world have insufficient land to provide subsistence (much less a

reasonable living standard), while large farms leave much land poorly utilized. An economic holding should contain land of similar type and fertility, and have sufficient irrigation water available. The size of an economic holding may increase with advances in farming techniques - but the difference between the largest and smallest holdings in an area should be limited. Uneconomic holdings may be developed and made economical using advanced farming techniques.

Each block will, of course, contain numerous agricultural holdings. Block divisions should be adjusted so that lands with similar levels of productivity are grouped together to facilitate planning. A given block should have a certain level of agricultural uniformity, otherwise many unrelated plans will have to be developed for only a small area.

Section Two:

Scientific Accounting in Agriculture

Under PROUT, agricultural accounting will be the same as that used in industry. That is, the pricing of goods will adequately reflect raw material and labor costs, capital, equipment investments, production rates, depreciation, interest on loans, maintenance costs, etc. - all the factors considered in industry. An industry would never price items below their production costs, while farmers are often forced to sell at low prices under the pressure of circumstances. Often in farming families, everyone is working - but is there any calculation of their labor value in pricing? Enacting this reform will ensure stability in the lives of farmers. This will necessitate changes in the economic system, but will have tremendous benefits for the small farmer. This change in economic emphasis recognizes the importance of farmers and their livelihood. Though food prices may rise in proportion to industrial goods, this does not mean that purchasing capacity will be less.

Pre and post-production agricultural industries (agrigo and agro industries) must also be treated in a similar way. This will ensure the stability of the agricultural economic sector and pave the way for all-round economic prosperity based on a solid agricultural foundation.

Section Three:

Agricultural Cooperatives

PROUT recognizes the cooperative system as ideal for agriculture. It has been noted that the cooperative system was a failure in communist countries. The large cooperatives in the Soviet Union and especially China had very low rates of production and resulted in drastic food shortages. These state-run communes, however, are not the cooperatives envisioned by PROUT. Their defects were many. Most importantly, they failed to create a sense of worker involvement by denying private ownership and not providing incentives. Secondly, planning was made by central authorities and the local people had no say over their own work. Forceful coercion, including death, was used to implement the commune system.

PROUT does not advocate the seizing of agricultural land or forcing farmers to join cooperatives. Rather, it is recognized that various factors are required for the success of such a cooperative system. For example, it requires an integrated economic environment, common economic needs and a ready, local market. Furthermore, a phase-wise implementation process is also needed. In the first

phase, an evaluation of economic holdings would be made. Those farmers owning profitable land would maintain the rights of private ownership if desired, while those with insufficient or deficient land (uneconomic holdings) would be encouraged to join cooperatives. They would also retain the ownership of their land. Those who work as employees on privately owned farms would be entitled to a percentage of net produce or profits as well as salary. For cooperatives, compensation would be a combination of ownership and labor, with roughly equal emphasis on both - i.e. shares would be based upon labor and upon the percentage of land owned within the cooperative. There would also be a bonus system based upon profits. Hence people's inherent desire for ownership and self-determination would not be violated. There would also be a system of elected management with remuneration for outstanding skills.

The following chart gives an example of percentages of profit that accrue to members in a cooperative, based upon their investment and/or labor, depending upon productivity.

	ACRES OWNED	PERCENT OF TOTAL YIELD	SHARES	LABOR	PERCENT OF PROFIT
FARMER A	2	7.4%	7.4	33%	9.86%
FARMER B	5	14.8%	14.8	33%	19.73%
FARMER C	10	33.3%	33.3	33%	44.39%
FARMER D	15	44.4%	44.4	0%	26.02%

One of the immediate benefits of cooperatives would be the utilization of land currently used for boundaries. In areas where agricultural land is limited or where population density is high, a good amount of land is wasted on boundary fences and underutilized borders. Another major benefit would be the collective purchasing of farm equipment currently beyond the means of the individual farmers. Through collective capital or loans, irrigation facilities, dams, and other modern equipment can also be purchased or developed. Collective planning can also take place for the development of previously infertile land.

In the second phase of forming cooperatives, all would be requested to join them on a voluntary basis as there would be many successful examples and obvious benefits. In the third phase, there would be re-evaluation and rational distribution of land. The minimum amount of land necessary for an agricultural family to earn a decent living, and the capacity of the people involved to utilize land will determine ownership.

In the ideal stage, ownership of land will be less of a consideration as a true collective spirit develops. This can be achieved only by phase-wise implementation along with all-round human development.

Section Four:

Ideal and Integrated Farming

PROUT recommends a system of integrated farming techniques for increased production, higher produce quality, and environmental sustainability. Insofar as PROUT advocates that each block should be self-sufficient, especially in food production, it is best if farming projects integrate many

different products. Monocrop agro-industry is viable only with a massive and wasteful distribution system – not to mention its environmental damage and low-quality produce. What is needed is decentralized, integrated farming that will incorporate all types of agricultural production and cottage industries. Only then can real self-sufficiency and sustainability develop. Integrated farming could include many areas such as agriculture, horticulture (orchards), floriculture (flowers), sericulture (silk), lac culture (for ceramics), apiculture (bee-keeping), dairy farming, animal husbandry, pisciculture (fish), pest control, fertilization, and related areas. It is best if the processing of any agricultural products takes place locally for maximum efficiency and self-sufficiency. If energy production (bio-gas, solar, wind, etc.), water management, and developmental research take place locally, self-sufficiency and sustainability will certainly be possible.

The maximum utilization of land is one of the main objectives of integrated farming. The mass breeding of animals for slaughter is both cruel and from a food perspective, inefficient. Land that could easily feed many people on a vegetarian diet can feed only a few people if it is used for rearing animals for slaughter. There is increasing awareness of the ill health effects of meat-based foods in the present age, and growing recognition of the damage caused by mass cattle rearing. From this standpoint alone, PROUT suggests that as far as possible, society should reduce and finally eliminate the usage of meat. While advocating this goal in principle, it is necessary to recognize that people's psychology can be changed only through inner conviction, rather than imposition.

To achieve maximum utilization of land, three main crop systems are recognized: mixed cropping, supplementary cropping, and crop rotation. Mixed cropping involves the selection of complementary crops for simultaneous growth. This technique can improve space utilization, reduce erosion, conserve water, and utilize the natural complementary plant relationships. For example, one plant uses nitrogen while another replenishes it. Plant groups may include many interrelationships.

In supplementary cropping, one plant is considered main and another minor or supporting. Crop rotation is the alternation of crops that have different suitable growing seasons. Crop rotation results in less soil depletion, and ensures that land is productive year round, depending upon climate.

PROUT advocates a system of sustainable agriculture and ecological balance. As far as possible, organic fertilizers should be used which maintain soil fertility. Advanced composting and plant combination techniques, along with a strong focus on research, will create considerable harmonious progress in agriculture. Many independent groups and individuals are developing and implementing techniques and systems such as organic and bio-dynamic farming, permaculture, microbial composting, radionics, and much more. Decentralized agriculture is much more conducive for such techniques.

Water management is a key issue in sustainability. Riverside and lakeside tree planting, mass afforestation, desert afforestation, rainfall capturing, artificial pond and reservoir creation, and other techniques would be implemented in a Proutistic agricultural framework. As far as possible underground water reserves would be conserved to maintain ecological balance.

Section Five:

Rural Development: Agro and Agrico Industries

Rural poverty is a major problem facing most areas of the world. Under capitalism, little attention has been given to the development of rural economies. Industrialization has proceeded in a centralized manner, draining the populations of rural areas and creating ever-expanding urban centers. These cities, especially in third-world nations, give rise to numerous social and ecological problems, and in many respects, fail to provide a decent quality of life to their inhabitants. There also seems to be no immediate solution to the rural exodus and global urbanization crisis in the current economic setup. Hence, measures are needed to develop rural economies and provide incentives for the diffusion of urban populations into smaller, more sustainable and humane communities.

While the long term solution to urbanization and rural poverty is an integrated, decentralized economy, the creation of pre- and post- agricultural production enterprises (agrigo and agro industries) is an important step to rural economic vitalization. In most impoverished rural economies, production or extraction of raw materials is the primary source of income, whether food production, plant fiber production or mining. What is needed is to bring all industries related to the processing and production of these resources to the rural areas themselves. This will create a demand for skilled labor in rural areas and raise the living standards. Food preservation and processing, the production of finished fabric from raw materials, oil production, milling, fertilizer manufacturing, tool manufacturing, etc can all be accomplished in rural areas. Combined with educational efforts and the introduction of non-agricultural cottage industries, this will diversify and vitalize the economies and make a decent living standard possible. Combined with modern communications technologies and information accessibility, the possibility of decentralized economies and smaller communities emerges.

Part B: INDUSTRY

Section One:

Decentralization and Self-sufficiency

According to PROUT, economic planning has to begin at the grassroots level in order to make use of and develop the experience and expertise of the local population. This implies that the optimal form of an economy is a decentralized one, rather than the centralized form which is present in both capitalist and socialist countries. Decentralization is preferred as it is the system which best allows local people to retain power over their own economic destiny. And as previously discussed, decentralization is a crucial ingredient for economic democracy.

In order for decentralization to exist successfully, there must be a cooperative economic structure. In such a structure the profit motive would be replaced by the desire to produce goods to meet the needs of the local people. The desire for profit is often at odds with this idea of production for consumption. Capitalists start industries only where favorable conditions for production and sales exist. They therefore often ignore the real needs of a population insofar as profits are often made at the expense of local people and the local eco-systems. Under the cooperative economic structure,

self-supporting economic units will be the norm. Such units must be nurtured and strengthened. This requires a decentralized approach to industry as well as agriculture. Self-sufficiency does not mean only the local production of food – the industrial sector is highly important as well, and cannot be neglected. Hence PROUT advocates the existence of a full range of industries, mostly on a small scale, for every socio-economic unit.

Section Two:

Three-Tiered Ownership and Economic Democracy

Under the Proutist economic system there are three different scales on which industry can be organized: key industries, cooperatives and private enterprises. The largest of these are the key industries, followed by cooperatives and then individual businesses.

Key industries are those which require large capital investment and are on a large scale. Examples might be the railway system or steel mill. Key industries may also function on different levels of decentralization. While the railway system may be administered at the federal level, energy production or raw material extraction would be administered by a local government. It would be difficult to operate key industries on a cooperative basis due to size constraints or their central role in economic production. As such the government needs to control these industries on behalf of the population. These key industries should be operated on a no-profit, no-loss basis, while providing enough worker incentive to maximize efficiency, quality, and worker happiness.

It is a basic right in an economic democracy for workers to be involved in management. As in agriculture, this is best accomplished through the cooperative system. Producer and consumer cooperatives form the mainstay of a PROUT economy. They are involved in the production and distribution of clothing, housing, food, medicines, appliances, personal transportation, etc. To serve the larger producer cooperatives, many smaller satellite cooperatives should be formed. For example, many of the component parts needed in automobile manufacturing can be produced by a satellite cooperative, and then shipped off to the car manufacturing plant for final assembly. In this way, highly decentralized, specialized industries can be developed on a small scale. There is a high degree of autonomy and individual franchise in such a system.

Entrepreneurs or small businesses form the third tier of a PROUT economy. These may be involved in the production of non-essential or luxury goods and services. Goods such as handicrafts or jewelry, and services such as restaurants might be appropriate for this. If anyone is privately employed in such an enterprise, there will be incentive for the owner to compensate well and provide incentive, for at any time the employees could leave to join a cooperative arrangement. And if a private industry becomes too large it will be required to make a transition to cooperative management.

Section Three:

Rationalization (Scientific Planning and Development)

Under a capitalist system, the benefits of scientific advancement in an industry usually accrue only to the stockholders and often results in a loss of jobs. This is due to the outlook that profits are to be

maximized and that human beings are nothing more than another capital input. Since the goal of PROUT is to satisfy the needs of the people instead of maximizing profits, any invention that increases productivity will either lead to an increase in the workers' compensation or increased leisure time without a resultant loss in income. A reduction in working hours, however, would depend not only on increased production, but also on demand for the product and the availability of labor. We have seen a call for a reduction of the average working hours from time to time in the industrially developed countries. Under PROUT such measures would be built-in.

PROUT strongly advocates regional self-sufficiency, yet it is clear that not all regions are blessed with equal resources. Advances made in science, however can help deficient areas to overcome a lack of natural resources. This will come about through advances in the production of synthetic raw materials, and through new methods of utilizing existing resources.

Part C: SERVICES

Section One:

Taxation and the Banking System

Instead of taxing income, as is customary at the present time, PROUT proposes that taxes be levied at the point of production. Essential commodities would be tax free. Hence, there would be less bureaucratic involvement, reducing government expenditure, and the government's income would accurately reflect the activity in the economic sector.

The banking system would be under the control of cooperatives. There would, however, also be a central bank controlled by the government. Two points are important to remember in regards to the banking system; the first is that banks exist to serve the people, not to increase the wealth of a few select individuals. As such, careful regulations must exist concerning the income of banks. This problem is also partially solved by using the cooperative or credit union system. Secondly, in the Proutist banking system, money will not be printed unless there is sufficient bullion in the governmental treasury. To do otherwise contributes greatly to the spiral of inflation and all of its attendant problems.

Banks will lend money to agricultural or industrial cooperatives and possibly individuals for productive enterprises – i.e. only for such endeavors which promise to generate revenue. The maxim of a Proutist banking system is, "Keep money rolling." The more that money circulates the greater its productivity. Idle money makes no contribution to keeping an economy vital. It is, in fact, one of the causes of economic depressions. Therefore, let purchasing and investment be ever increasing, with money moving more and more quickly. The more it changes hands, the more it increases the purchasing capacity of the people and economic vitality. The only factor that should curb the speed of the circulation of money is the sustainability of the biological diversity of the region.

Section Two:

Service and Buyers' Cooperatives

Service cooperatives are considered very important in PROUT. Service providers, such as doctors, dentists, plumbers, etc., may decide to join forces and form cooperatives in the cases where the individual service provider is unwilling or unable to open their own practice. Thus, there is the scope for certain services to be offered either by private business or by the cooperative system.

Buyer's cooperatives would be responsible for the distribution of most essential commodities. As far as possible, PROUT seeks to eliminate middle men who take profits but do not contribute to productivity. In a decentralized economy, buyer's cooperatives become very practical and important. Food cooperatives have become quite popular in many places already, and this success should be extended to other aspects of the basic necessities.

Further Reading:

Ideal Farming Part II.

This book (and its unpublished prequel) provides a basic understanding of the author's system of integrated agriculture.

Proutist Economics.

Part Three of this book is particularly relevant to agriculture, cooperatives, and rural development. Part Four includes discussions upon industry, services, and banking, while Chapter Four is devoted solely to banking and finance.

Chapter Five

THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF PROUT

Partyless, Compartmental Democracy

Selecto-Electional Democracy

Social Boards

World Governance

Constitution and Law

Section One:

Partyless, Compartmental Democracy

Political democracy, as it is practiced in the world today, has a record of mixed success, and has failed to solve certain existential problems due to the absence of economic democracy. Loftily defined as "Government of the people, for the people, and by the people," political democracy is simply majority rule. And when vested interests are able to influence voters and politicians, whether by coercion, propaganda, bribery or clever manipulation of the media, it is easy to see that the real interests of even the majority are not always served. Similarly, under the influence of clever speeches and poor education, unqualified or corrupt leaders may be elected. While running the risk of underestimating people's power of self governance, it is important to realize that majority decision making is not free of blemishes, especially when politicians are bought and corporate media leaves voters poorly educated regarding the issues.

PROUT recognizes that certain prerequisites are necessary for a successful political democracy. Political candidates must be ethical, educated, and socially conscious. Voters must also demand ethical behavior of their leaders and have the requisite education and socio-economic consciousness to make rational decisions. Thus a high standard of impartial education is necessary to ensure that democracy is successful.

Presently money, intra-party status, and media portrayal have more to do with the success or failure of a candidate at the polls than does his or her position on issues and standard of behavior. In many countries, votes are bought and sold openly and corruption is the rule rather than the exception. It is often impossible for moral people to even dent the realm of politics. In the so-called developed countries, the situation is only little better, as financial and political control of the mass media and poor socio-economic consciousness prevail.

A further problem with the present system of political democracy is that as candidates are dependent upon campaign contributions from the wealthy, in most instances, they end up catering to the demands of those influential sections of society. This means that the decisions taken by the leaders in a democratic country do not necessarily reflect the best interests of society as a whole. Political leaders are forced to serve powerful corporate interest groups, even immoral hypocrites, who have tremendous financial influence. They are unable to maintain their offices if they cross

such people. And due to continual pressure to canvass for funding, the role of money in politics is paramount.

The system of political parties seems also to have significant defects. Candidate qualifications, personal integrity, and the spirit of social service play secondary roles to party status and seniority. Candidates are forced to abide by party policies and cannot effectively combat elections without party endorsement. In this way, political parties are also controlled by monied interests. For these reasons, PROUT advocates a system of partyless democracy.

Under PROUT's system, independent political candidates would be required to state their platform policies in black-and-white. Failure to implement such programs could result in termination from office so as to prevent politicians from making empty promises for the sake of an election. A partyless system is of paramount importance for lessening corruption. Of course, it is natural that like minded people will associate and work together out of common interest. Indeed, it would be impossible to enact any positive measures independently. Yet, it is clear that the current formality of party affiliation has significant drawbacks. A more balanced approach without the formalities of party name and the necessity of party endorsement may alleviate such problems.

So, in addition to economic democracy, PROUT advocates a democratic political system with certain modifications. PROUT favors the three branch system of Executive, Legislative, and Judicial with the addition of an independent Financial or Public Exchequer department. This is an important addition that would monitor federal spending and publicize the strengths and weaknesses of government programs. This department would keep the accounts of the other three departments. All of these departments should function independently.

It should also be stressed that there should be no political involvement in economic affairs by the central governments, as the economic system is to be decentralized. Local governments would be responsible for the running of certain key industries, but for this purpose, independent managers would be hired. Key industries would not be run by politicians, whose skills are much different.

Section Two:

Selecto-Electional Democracy

Under democracy as it is known today, the right to vote is based, in most countries, upon a person's age. This system has been selected owing to the tremendous moral difficulties arising out of excluding some from the voting process. Naturally, the question arises as to who has the moral right to decide who can and cannot vote. This dilemma is avoided by the adult franchise system. Such a system presupposes that upon reaching a certain age people will have the ability to fairly and intelligently weigh the pros and cons of each candidate and arrive at the best choice. While this may be true for some, it is easily seen that this is not always the case for everyone. If the educational system is excellent, this may very well be the case; but unfortunately the facts are different at this time. Not only is there widespread voter apathy (judged by low turnout), but socio-economic consciousness is conspicuously low in most places of the world.

How then can society arrive at the optimal method for selecting who is eligible to vote? In the past there have been many abuses when it came to allowing people the right to vote. This has often taken place as a method for the elite or a majority ethnic group to retain power. PROUT suggests that the

fairest way to select voters is through some sort of test which must be passed in order to show the individual's knowledge and interest in participating in the election process. This can be termed "selecto-electional" democracy. Just as a new driver must demonstrate his or her capability before being let loose on the roads, so it should be with electors. Testing methods have been misutilized, however, to prevent black people from voting in the southern USA. Hence, universal suffrage and free access to equal education is imperative in a Proutistic system. In this respect, the involvement of politicians in the school curriculum must be scrupulously forbidden. Public Social Boards of qualified educators should be responsible in this regard.

Since many people had to fight so hard in order to attain the right to vote, it is likely that this particular aspect of PROUT may cause some consternation at first glance. However, it must be remembered that the goal of PROUT is real democratic freedom in the form of economic democracy. The political democracy we presently have provides little more than an illusion of true freedom. Nonetheless, a balanced blending of both should be formulated for everyone's benefit. As long as everyone is given a chance to pass the examination for voting in political elections, and there is no discrimination in this process, nor in the education system, it can be seen that the suggested selecto-electional process has some distinct advantages over the present system. Educated and aware voters are less likely to be fooled by the extravagant publicity machines of politicians. Money, also, will be less of an influence in deciding the outcomes of elections, whether that money be put into a media blitz or used more crudely through bribery or the buying of votes.

Section Three:

Social Boards

Political democracy leaves many human problems unsolved, as evidenced by the fact that even in today's most advanced societies, a small monied class of less than 1% of the population is allowed to own half of society's wealth while half the people are deprived of a living wage. Nonetheless, PROUT supports political democracy over other forms of governance while working to alleviate its shortcomings.

As a valuable complement to partyless, selecto-electional democracy, PROUT advocates the existence of grassroots Social Boards composed of individuals interested in community service. These voluntary boards would not contest elections, their function being to render social service in a combined way.

The object of these boards would be to help create economic democracy, environmental sustainability, and ensure that all local people have their basic needs met. Boards would begin to address the social, cultural, scientific and welfare needs of the people and serve as a catalyst to organize the community. Social Boards would address such issues as education, relief, animal rights, culture, art, industry, commerce, farming, etc. The formation of such boards is an important phase in the exploration and implementation of PROUT.

Proutist Social Boards need not wait for a change in the economic and political systems to begin their work—they may immediately be formed by those eager for social transformation and the alleviation of poverty. They may also organize local economic self-reliance movements and initiate projects such as local currencies, producers and buyers cooperatives, credit unions, etc. Their activities could then extend into the social and cultural spheres, promoting literacy, the arts,

continuing education, etc. Social Boards should be composed of members of all segments of the community and be as encompassing as possible. Proutist concepts of partyless, compartmental democracy and selecto-electional democracy can be tested and improved within the social board administrative structure.

Such Social Boards could have a valuable role to play as a check and balance to elected governmental officials. Free from the restrictions of partisan politics, Social Boards transcend the traditional limitations of politicians who depend upon creation of an "electable" image and solicitation of monied interest groups. As respectable non-political bodies, Social Boards would also be in an excellent position to monitor governmental officials and check potential corruption. While members of Social Boards could potentially run for office, in no circumstances should boards engage in party-politics. They should support the selection of candidates based upon individual merit alone.

Such a platform for moral leadership will do much to address the faults in the current political system and empower local people. Even so, there will be a perpetual fight between progressive and regressive forces. Class rivalry and other forms of social conflict are bound to persist, to a greater or lesser extent. Corruption on a Social Board can occur but it is much more difficult because of the integrity of the other members of the Board, and because of the higher expectation that the public will come to have of these Boards.

Cynics seem to believe that human nature is corrupt and as such claim that the Social Boards of local organizers will be as susceptible to corruption as are the capitalist political parties. Such cynics have obviously never worked among the poorest of the poor and had their heart go out to them. Nor do they know what its like for the people to love them in return.

PROUT envisions Social Boards as the primary media for aspiring sadvipras to serve society. Who are sadvipras? Sadvipras are those moralists, intelligent and compassionate people, who by virtue of their beliefs and practices, fight injustice and corruption in society and stand for the well-being of all. In the struggle to achieve self-reliance for the local people, local organizers having moral integrity and self-discipline will be tested by fire and in so doing will rise to positions of responsibility. These will be the sadvipras.

Moral leaders (sadvipras) have different objectives than the average capitalist politician. Generally, political parties do not advocate for basic needs for all, or for full employment. They understand that the riches of the rich must come from the hides of the people – for where else could it come from? Spiritually indifferent politicians do not want to stop this dynamic even if they deliver high sounding speeches, release white pigeons or throw a few dollars here or there. To stage a war against the forces of ignorance and corruption, people will have to become powerful within. For this, physical, mental and spiritual powers are necessary. Insincere politicians will not resort to spiritual practices.

Sadvipras, on the other hand, are motivated by selfless service. They have a spiritual goal, which can only be achieved by personal sacrifice for the greater good. As they continue their spiritual practices, they become even more selfless. Their reason for living and their joy of life comes from this.

Section Four:

World Governance

Many wars and conflicts between nations take place due to the narrow ideas of nationalism, religious dogma, racism, etc., fueled by the interests of economic imperialism. It is obvious that humanity should strive to eliminate such conflicts for the greater good. To do so, PROUT proposes a world governance system to serve the interests of humanity as a whole. Such a system would guarantee that cardinal human rights will be universally accepted. These rights will be guaranteed by a universal constitutional structure, a common penal code, and full support to ensure the availability of the minimum requirements of life for all. Combined with decentralized economic democracy, such a system is a clear reflection of the ideals of spirituality applied to politics.

The creation of a world governance system could involve reforming and strengthening the United Nations. In the first phase, a law framing body would be formed. It would develop a Bill of Rights and a Constitution and ensure that no country was allowed to pass laws that were detrimental to the interests of its minorities. The actual execution and enforcement of such laws would be left up to the local governments. The purpose of the world legislature would only be to provide the guiding principles for local legislative and enforcement bodies. It would have no administrative power. This body should consist of an upper and a lower house, with representation based upon nationhood and population respectively. The existing UN General Assembly and the proposed People's Assembly could serve as the organs for such functions.

In the first phase of establishing such a global legislative body, the emphasis would be on eliminating or reducing those factors causing disunity. Imperialistic interests would be reduced by supporting the formation of decentralized socio-economic units based upon the principles of economic democracy.

In subsequent phases, the executive and judicial functions of the world government would be slowly increased. Gradually the national militias would be replaced by a world-wide reserve force. This would be instituted as the local socio-economic units would increase to form larger federations.

The most fundamental economic aspect of PROUT is that the minimum requirements for all should be met. This will have the effect of restoring economic balance throughout the world, and will help to bring about true economic democracy. Clearly there are many potential problems and details to be worked out in this process. PROUT offers a broad overview leaving details to be worked out in the process of practical application. A world government becomes more desirable as an institution when coupled with economic democracy and decentralization because it provides the political means to achieve lasting peace and social synthesis.

Let us also keep in mind that PROUT holds spirituality, in the most universal sense, as the only factor which can truly unite people. Hence, without increasing acceptance of a spiritual philosophy of life, even a benevolent world government cannot in itself establish unity, security and peace.

Section Five:

Constitution and Law

Hand in hand with the evolution of a world governance system, there exists a need for a World Constitution. Such a document will have to include the following: a guarantee of complete security to all of the world's humans, as well as plant and animal species; the citizens of each country must be guaranteed a minimum level of purchasing power; the four fundamental rights of spiritual practice, cultural legacy, education, and the expression of one's native language must be guaranteed; and finally if the practice of any of these rights conflicts with universally accepted human values then that practice will have to cease. That is to say, a practice such as the binding and crippling of women's feet for cosmetic purposes (like in ancient China), even if considered part of one's cultural legacy infringes upon basic human values/rights and should be discarded.

Prout proposes that three socio-political principles must be included in the world constitution to prevent injustice, disunity and exploitation from continuing to plague humanity. The first is that people should not be allowed to lose their jobs until and unless alternative employment can be arranged for them. The second principle is that people should never be forced to convert from one religion to another. And third, no one's mother (native) tongue should be suppressed. These three things, employment, spiritual practice, and mother tongue (discussed in the next chapter), are very important to people. Human progress will certainly be hindered if any of them are violated.

Presently all national constitutions suffer from some defects. The adoption of the above mentioned points will help to alleviate these defects in the future. Similarly, the penal code ought to be based on common constitutional tenets. This will necessitate a complete overhaul of the present concepts of vice and virtue, and crime and punishment, taking a Neo-humanist approach not limited by any narrow social or religious values.

There are three kinds of laws: cardinal law, moral law, and human law. Cardinal law refers to universally accepted law – basic principles such as existential rights. Moral and human laws are based upon changeable values varying from religion to religion and culture to culture. Humans should work with a view to minimize the differences between these laws until they are finally one and the same. Laws will, of course, vary according to time place and person. Every effort should be made to develop universality amongst laws. Universal spiritual values as opposed to social and religious values must be the basis.

Further Reading:

PROUT in a Nutshell.

Parts Four, Six, Fourteen and Sixteen contains articles relevant to the political dimension of PROUT.

Proutist Economics. The articles on Economic Democracy in this book are relevant to the discussion on politics.

THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF PROUT

Definition of Culture

Psycho-Economic Exploitation and Pseudo Culture

Three Levels of Capitalistic Exploitation

Dogma versus Dharma

Spirituality and Mental Balance

Geo-sentiments, Socio-Sentiments, and Humanistic Sentiments versus Neo-Humanism

Local and Global Language

Indigenous Culture

The Role of the Arts

Section One:

Definition of Culture

Our collective life is characterized by our culture and civilization. Culture is to be distinguished from civilization. In the PROUT context, culture connotes the number and variety of human expressions, including beliefs, customs, arts, etc.. Civilization, on the other hand, pertains to the level of humanness and rationality present in the society. An elaborate social structure may represent a high degree of culture, but if it embodies discrimination or exploitation (based on racism, sexism or class oppression) it is uncivilized. Likewise, skillful but superficial art may also exhibit culture but lack in civilization. Hence, one may be cultured but not civilized, or civilized but not cultured. Many indigenous peoples may be relatively "uncultured," i.e. not having a large number of customs, crafts, technologies, etc., but be highly civilized. Similarly we see many scientifically and culturally "advanced" human beings whose demonic behavior has and does display an utter lack of civilization.

According to PROUT, civilization must always take prominence over culture and science. Culture develops naturally as human intellect develops, and it is crucial that it be based upon the solid foundation of civilization. And when science enjoys a higher position than civilization (the case in the Western World, especially, and increasingly in other parts), society is bound to be materialistic and imbalanced. This leads to phenomena like the creation of advanced weaponry while basic problems such as the food needs for much of the world go unsolved. Science which is not at the service of civilized people is antithetical to progress.

PROUT philosophy is based upon a universalistic outlook and seeks to acknowledge unity in human diversity. Hence, Proutists consider human culture to be essentially one entity, with many local variations. These variations should enhance the beauty of the totality rather than create divisions. The fundamental tendencies of the human mind are the same everywhere; but due to various factors, they are expressed in different ways and proportions. In order for true unity to develop, we must honor this diversity while recognizing our inherent similarity as human beings.

Section Two:

Psycho-Economic Exploitation and Pseudo Culture

Essentially, there is one human culture, with local variations in how it is expressed. This variety in human expression is interpreted as different cultures. The history of humankind has shown that from among the myriad of local “cultures” a few emerge which try to destroy the cultural expression of other localities in order to put forward their own agenda. Nowadays, we can see that the first world capitalistic countries are attempting to force their way of life, both culturally and economically, on many of the other societies of the world.

One specific type of exploitation which has increasingly been used by capitalists is called psycho-economic exploitation. This often begins with the suppression of the local language and culture by the foreign invader. In the past foreign invaders have done this by force. Imperialists used superior weapons to invade and conquer the lands of others and even enslave the population. They told the defeated people, “Your culture is primitive, your religion is defective, your language is unsophisticated.” Colonialists have used both violence and the imposition of inferiority complex to break people's will to resist. By the end of the Second World War, the world's people became increasingly intolerant of the violence and injustice of colonialism. Hence, capitalists have developed more clever techniques to continue their exploitation of newly independent countries.

To supplant local cultures, pseudo-culture is imposed. Pseudo-culture refers to that set of ideas, actions and products that paralyze the collective outlook of a people and prepare them for economic exploitation. On the surface it may resemble culture, yet it is antithetical to it. Such pseudo-culture consists of many things which might seem to make life more pleasurable than was the case under the previous native culture, but in fact it serves to undermine the resolve of the indigenous people. The widespread dissemination of “consumer culture,” with its appeal to material pleasures ultimately has a debilitating effect psychologically and spiritually. It also lowers the resistance of those who try to maintain their cultural heritage. Over the last decades, cultural diversity has suffered tremendously as local cultures are drawn into a “global market” dominated by corporate pseudo-culture. Fast food franchises and the sex and violence of “pop” culture are challenging indigenous cultures throughout the world.

In psychological terms, pseudo-culture has a devastating effect on personality. Advertisements of many products project an image of making life more “modern” and “pleasurable” than in the previous native culture. They make people want to be rich and white – to enjoy the glamour they see projected in advertisements and television. One of the results is that third world children see their parents as poor and backward and their culture as primitive. The tragic result of the loss of local culture and local economy is the hundreds of thousands of runaway children and prostitutes on the streets of the world's cities.

Pseudo-culture also breaks the will of indigenous people to resist those who would rob them of their natural resources. For example, the imposition of a foreign tongue and mode of dress can cause a people to regard their own native language and dress as in some way inferior to that of the intruder. The psychological effect is that not only is the intruding culture seen as superior, but the native people may become, to a greater or lesser extent, paralyzed in resisting it. The people come to welcome it, not realizing the negative effect it will have on their well-being before it is too late.

Of course, this sort of exploitation also takes place within the capitalist nations themselves. Under

the banner of freedom and individual rights, people are bombarded with a materialistic worldview that masks the social and environmental destruction that is caused by a profit driven, consumerist economy. The wide spread use of drugs, alcohol, pornography, cigarettes, guns, etc., especially in poor neighborhoods, that are victimized by the system, is particularly notable. The people are cowed and pacified, or instead turn to "street crimes" to meet their basic needs. They lose their self-esteem and cultural identity. The educational system does little to address these issues or explore alternative lifestyles. Capitalism promotes a "values-free" educational system that produces future workers but does not teach critical thinking. Hence there is little opportunity for the upcoming generations to develop a critical socio-economic consciousness, or any other consciousness beyond consumerism for that matter.

Yet psycho-economic exploitation is not the exclusive domain of corporate colonialism. Restricting the role of women in society (thus forcing them to be subservient to men economically), has its roots in religious institutions. Psycho-economic exploitation has been a device of the ruling class throughout history. Today, however, with the advent of mass media, it has been honed to such a science that people don't even know they are being exploited. They blame their misery on themselves.

Section Three:

Three Levels of Capitalistic Exploitation

In order to resist any type of exploitation, the nature of that exploitation must first be clearly understood. Prout points out that exploitation must be understood on all the levels in which it is occurring. Capitalist exploitation takes place in the physical sphere, the intellectual sphere, and the spiritual sphere.

Much has already been said about exploitation in the physical sphere. The capitalist system permits many people to suffer poverty, sometimes without even the basic necessities, while a few people grow fabulously wealthy. Capitalistic profit maximization leads to such anomalies as the extraction of a region's natural resources for export, followed by the sale of the finished products to the people of the area from which the raw materials were originally taken. Since Prout stands for decentralization and economic democracy, this scenario would never be allowed under a Proutist system.

What is meant by capitalist exploitation in the intellectual sphere? It manifests itself in several ways. First, the education of large numbers of people is neglected and their literacy skills are not encouraged. This can be seen in the US where 50% of students do not have the learning skills to read or write at required academic standards. Secondly, there is a lack of development of social and economic awareness, a factor which maintains the cycle of exploitation. Thirdly, those who are doing the exploiting like to encourage fear and inferiority complexes in the minds of the people in order to keep them subjugated. All of this hinders the moral and intellectual development of the people, leading to an increase in irrationality. This has led to narrowness of mind and an increase of racism, nationalism, and class oppression. Ultimately all of this exerts a very negative and destructive influence, keeping people from identifying the real enemy while maintaining consumerism.

When challenged, the capitalist system has always shown itself to be very resilient, changing itself

sufficiently to silence its critics. Feudalism, capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, multinational corporatism, neo-liberalism, the global economy, etc., are all expressions of different stages of capitalism as it expands and adjusts to avoid its destruction. As people voice their criticisms, capitalism as a whole changes just enough to save itself. For example, as people become fearful of the astonishing destruction of the natural environment, the corporations put on an ad campaign expressing their concerns about recycling etc. Behind the scenes however, they maintain their destructive practices. This can easily be seen by the destructive social and environmental policies imposed on third world nations by the rich and powerful at the United Nations deliberations.

Often in the past capitalists have been able to pacify resistance through buying off the agitators. Once those who have the ability to see capitalism's defects are on its payroll, they are less likely to voice their protests. It would seem that intelligent and educated people under a capitalist system are unmotivated and unwilling to use their talents in the name of the public welfare. Apathy and elitism are evident in such attitudes. Such an outlook is fostered by an economic system in which the rules hold that one need only look out for oneself, and that if everyone behaves accordingly all will be well. In truth, millions are dying each year from hunger and preventable diseases. This crime against humanity has been called "the hidden holocaust," but it is hidden only to those who close their eyes or make excuses for needless starvation, suffering and death.

Finally, capitalist exploitation also manifest itself in the spiritual realm. (This is different than religious exploitation, as discussed in the next section). This happens when one is concerned only with his or her personal spiritual elevation, disregarding the rest of humanity. To guard against this, spiritual aspirants should devote a certain portion of their time to selfless service of society in whatever way they can have the biggest impact.

Section Four:

Dogma versus Dharma

In addition to material exploitation, exploitation exists on the psychological level as well. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to all-round human progress is dogma. Dogma is a belief or conviction no longer supported by rationality. Dogmas are deeply rooted in the human mind and entrenched in most belief systems. These irrational and contradictory beliefs cause tremendous conflict and suffering. They continue to be used for exploitation throughout the world. In the name of spirituality, religious, business and civic leaders consciously or unconsciously allow their irrational beliefs to divide humanity. By creating fear of God or by using God to prop up their goals, they serve their own selfish interests.

Similarly, the dogma of racial superiority, a belief not supported by any scientific evidence and refuted by common sense, has caused tremendous suffering. Another dogma is that of male superiority. Such beliefs and superstitions cause the human mind and society to lose its inherent vitality.

It was not so long ago in Europe and the United States that women were burnt at the stake in the name of religious dogmas. In India, Hindu women were compelled to join their deceased husbands on the funeral pyre. Today, though less overtly violent, fanatic followers continue to encourage blind obedience to their doctrines. It may seem as though dogmas are becoming less in this present age, but they still pervade the inner recesses of the human mind. They just take on more subtle

forms and adjust to increasing skepticism. One very clever and time-honored strategy used to maintain dogmas is to declare religion "off limits" from rational analysis. In order to be progressive religious leaders must encourage rational discussion and exchange. It is the nature of human beings to search for the Absolute. This is not achieved by adopting a few rituals and customs and clinging to beliefs not supported by personal experience.

A distinction must be made here between religion and spirituality. According to Prout theory, spirituality is the universal quest by human beings to discover the nature of their innermost existence – to discover their relationship to the vast cosmos and the quiescent Divinity within. Religion is what happens when spirituality becomes institutionalized and codified, or confined and limited by dogmas. It is doubtful that any of the founders of religions ever directed the followers to create a religion as such. This happens sometimes hundreds of years afterward. The inner core of religion is spirituality, and this is, in fact, universal. In Sanskrit, spirituality is called *dharma*. Roughly translated, it means "innate purpose." It is the "innate purpose" or nature of human beings to become spiritually realized. This represents our highest potentiality.

An integral part of the social transformation envisioned by Prout is that people should cultivate spiritual practices, including scientific meditation for all-round human development. Meditation is ninety-nine percent practical, thus leaving very little scope for dogmas to develop. The minds of those who practice meditation develop the strength to penetrate the quagmire of dogmas. This intuitional science has been highly cultivated in Tibet, India, China, Japan and other places at different times, and is certainly the basis for both Oriental and Occidental religions. It is devoid of purely ritualistic and external practices which are characteristics of religion.

Section Five:

Spirituality and Mental Balance

The underlying cultural goal of Prout is to enable all move on the path of spiritual fulfillment. In individual life this is achieved by the continuous endeavor to create a balanced mind. And just as mental equilibrium is indispensable in individual life, it is indispensable in collective life as well. The greatness of a social structure, culture or civilization is derived from the degree of mental equilibrium which that community attains. What is strange is that we do not feel the necessity of establishing this equilibrium in individual and collective life. Although the western world, for example, has made considerable material progress, it has done so at the expense of mental equilibrium.

What is mental equilibrium? It is a balance between the extroverted and the introverted tendencies of the mind. The extroverted tendency of mind is to identify with the objects of the material world. The introverted tendency is to move towards the Cosmic Entity (merging our individual mind with Cosmic Consciousness). Spiritual bliss is achieved by mental equilibrium attainable as a result of on-going spiritual practice (meditation). Spiritual practice focuses the mind on Oneness. As such the multiplicity of endless desires becomes reduced and eventually one achieves freedom from them. Unless attraction and repulsion are both transcended, the mind can never attain a state of equilibrium or spiritual bliss.

As a result of the extroverted tendency of mind we maintain our day to day relationships. Without such a mental projection we lose our ability to maintain adjustment with objective reality. On the

other hand, without introverted movement, we lose our mental balance. If we analyze the history of different countries in the world, we notice that despite our tremendous physical, psychic and spiritual potentialities, we do not utilize the opportunity we have to establish a balance in our individual and collective lives. As such this remains the task of human beings today.

Section Six:

Geo-sentiment, Socio-Sentiment, and Humanistic Sentiment Versus Neo-Humanism

Sentimental feelings without the support of rationality lead to narrowness of mind and dogma. The collective psychology today is manipulated by three basic sentiments – geo-sentiment, socio-sentiment and human sentiment. The first of these centers around a particular geographic region, thus the term "geo-sentiment." Geo-sentiments can express themselves in the political, religious, economic or other spheres. Many religions, for example, are fueled by the idea that their land is the land of God. Religious leaders manipulate geo-sentiments by saying that one place is "holy," one direction is best for prayer; that pilgrimages are to be made to "sacred" places, while not acknowledging the "sacred places" of others. This feeds irrationality.

Geo-sentiments also underlie material exploitation. Imperialism and colonialism are partially expressions of geo-sentiment. One may have great compassion for fellow countrymen, but will not hesitate to starve and bleed the people of another area. Such groupist sentiment supports all kinds of injustices toward others. This kind of narrow thinking is a serious mental weakness often fueled by clever politicians and vested economic interests to maintain their power.

Socio-sentiments are even more dangerous. These sentiments pertain to the placement of one's own society above those of others. The belief that one's nation, race, religion or lifestyle is superior and needs to be imposed on others, leads to the oppression of the weak by the strong. It leads to the suppression of minorities everywhere. Cultural superiority is one of the main expressions of socio-sentiment expressed as an imposition of a culture's art, literature, language, etc. on others. Without making an attempt to understand or appreciate another culture, socio-sentiment dubs it inferior, strange, etc. One can easily observe this in the attitude of westerners toward the cultures of third world countries and peoples. The languages of various peoples are termed vulgar, inferior to the colonist language and not permitted to be used in local schools. Socio-religion declares one people as God's people and their scriptures are the true word of God. One can see that the effects of socio-sentiment can be far more disastrous than geo-sentiment.

The third category of sentiment is the so-called human sentiment, or Humanism. In an attempt to overcome the limited outlook embodied in the above sentiments, the idea of humanism blossomed. "All humans are deserving of equal fundamental rights, having similar minds, feelings, etc." The only defect in this is that the same person, after having given a high-blown speech on humanism, may not have any regard for other living beings. In eating meat, wearing furs or buying other products of endangered species, this humanist has a sentiment for human equality, but he or she does not see that animals also suffer. And should we not also have a responsibility to plants and even inanimate matter?

When we are able to extend the spirit of humanism to all living beings, and we begin to take responsibility for the inanimate world as well, we begin to adopt a universal sentiment which can be

called Neo-Humanism. Neo-Humanism has spirituality as its source of inspiration. One who seeks true inner knowledge will be filled with love for the entire creation, and will certainly have innate love for living beings and a sense of responsibility toward the environment.

In order to make progress today it is a dire necessity to overcome these limited geo, socio, and even humanistic sentiments. The dissemination of unbiased knowledge is an absolute necessity. In order to free our minds from these dogmatic sentiments, the spirit of social equality must be widely held. The only way to accomplish this is for intellectually developed people to engage themselves for the welfare of others and to take active roles in mass education. So many intellectually developed people are not interested in involving themselves in the upliftment of humanity. Many are solely interested in maintaining their elitist positions. Others, although actively engaged in social service of various types are forced to work for the capital gain of exploitive interests.

There is a need to develop "benevolent intellect" – intellect used for service and upliftment. People with developed minds should consider the impact of their work and use their discriminating power to help people overcome their irrational sentiments. They should help expose exploitation in the social, political and economic spheres. A small number of intellectuals today have created considerable positive influence with their benevolent intellects. One who has developed the spirit of Neo-Humanism along with benevolent intellect is an incredible asset to human society. PROUT seeks to create such people, and to help them occupy leadership positions.

The educational system should be re-cast to promote Neo-Humanism. Education should be society's highest priority. It should be available to all free of charge. Educators in a Proutist system would have status as high as judges, for they, along with the parents, are the true social foundation. It is indicative of society's neglect that in some parts of the USA, teachers receive less income than sanitation workers (not to belittle the importance of sanitation workers). Child care workers earn from \$2 to \$7 an hour which puts them in the category of the working poor. Needless to say, under such conditions, only the most dedicated become child care providers and school teachers nowadays.

Education must free people from the bondage of narrow sentiments and promote universalism. It must focus on developing all-round human potential – cognitive skills, sensory-motor skills, the creative and analytical faculties, social-emotional maturity, universal morality, practical skills, and all branches of knowledge. The main purport of Neo-Humanist education is the inculcation of respect and love for all living beings in the universe in which we exist. Intellectual growth without such a base becomes used for selfish or destructive purposes. Therefore, let education first create moral human beings. Such educated people will easily follow the path of universal spirituality and be a great asset to society.

Section Seven:

Local and Global Language

Communication is an essential aspect of everyday life. In the present age of mass media and global communication, it is even more important that people, whether of the same or different cultures, are able to communicate and understand each other. PROUT recognizes the benefits of having a common language which is used for global communication.

As well as having a universal language, it is important that people are free to speak in their own native tongues. Indeed, all languages should be able to enjoy equal rights and recognition. Since language represents the foundation of the culture of its people, its use should be encouraged in daily working life and not just as an academic exercise. Education, commerce, legal matters, etc., can all occur in the local language, except in such situations where the need arises for a common tongue (the global language). This will provide a firm foundation for culture, while not promoting backwardness and regionalism. Through their own language people are able to express thoughts and ideas much more clearly than they are able to in a less familiar language. Among those people who are forced to speak in an unfamiliar language, an inferiority complex often arises and they tend to lose their moral courage and power to protest. This leads to a defeatist psychology in such people. This is the status of many colonial and post-colonial peoples and immigrants.

The language which today is most suitable to become the global language is English. This is because it is spoken so widely in many different countries. It also has already become the language of the modern technological and business world. However, the suitability of one particular language as a universal language may very well change over time, so it should not be written in stone that English, or any other specific language will always remain as the universal language. There was a time not so long ago when French was considered to be the best language for such a purpose. Also, a common script is necessary if communication is to be optimal. Presently the Roman script, as used in English and many of the other languages of the world, is very suited to this purpose. But that should not mean the demise of local scripts. On the contrary, both Roman and local scripts should be encouraged to live and thrive side by side.

Section Eight:

Indigenous Culture

Encouraging the development of indigenous cultural expression holds a high place in PROUT. The many distinct variations in local dress, speech, arts and crafts, mannerisms, and social outlook add to the beauty and richness of humanity. The collective strength of a people is directly related to the strength of their culture. The most important facet of a local culture is the native language (discussed previously) and its literature. Any attempt to undermine these is a form of psychic exploitation. Besides lingual suppression, pseudo-culture is perhaps the most powerful enemy of local cultures. Every effort must be made to curtail the ability of exploiters to supplant indigenous cultures with the mindless consumerism that accompanies the spread of the global economy. By now this is a difficult task, as we are all affected by pseudo-culture and are often unable to even recognize it. Exploiters hide themselves under the cloak of free speech - not at all caring for the freedom of humans to live and develop their innate potential in a society free of degrading influences. This a problem which deserves the serious and benevolent attention of all educators and leaders.

PROUT advocates the maximum admixture of strong local cultures. People should be encouraged to learn multiple languages and explore different cultures for maximum expansion of mind. Also, if enthusiasm for inter-cultural marriages can be developed, the barriers between human beings will slowly drop and a true global culture can develop. PROUT suggests the abolition of the visa and passport system to allow people greater travel and cultural exchange. True cultural synthesis can become a reality in this way. This is not the synthesis taking place today in which the first world pseudo-culture supplants the native culture.

Section Nine:

The Role of the Arts

PROUT theory recognizes the extraordinary role that the arts play in human life. Art can be defined in the broadest sense as bringing subtlety to any expression. When language, sound, visual forms, etc. become subtle then they come within the scope of art. The fine arts of music, dance, painting, literature, etc., as well as the culinary arts, decoration, speech, architecture, and more are included.

Art is a specialized area of culture. Art develops the subtle faculties of the mind and transforms cruder tendencies into subtle expression. It is art (also called "aesthetic science") which brings human beings from animal existence to the threshold of spirituality. Hence, it is impossible for true art to have a degrading affect upon human beings. If art does not benefit the human mind it can't be called art. The idea of "Art for art's sake" has no positive role in a dynamic and progressive social order. Rather, let the ideal be "Art for service and blessedness (anandam)." The various expressions of pseudo-culture are antithetical to the existence of art. Pseudo-culture appeals to and strengthens the cruder human tendencies toward materialistic and sensual gratification. Art, on the other hand, inspires noble qualities and sentiments, producing a subtle mentality that culminates in spirituality.

Artists have a tremendous impact upon the collective mind, and hence a corresponding responsibility. Their primary duty should be to ensure that they are having the greatest possible benefit upon society. Art is not the depiction of fantasy worlds or daydream images; rather art is an expression of reality, the reality of the human mental world. Expression of the multifarious longings of the human heart can awaken the dormant subtlety of others, provided that the portrayed concepts can be grasped. Hence, art should always be a few steps ahead of the collective mind or target audience. It should be within reach, yet drawing it forward. Artists themselves must be of a high moral standard, possessing benevolent intellect and creativity along with highly developed talent and skills. They must make all efforts to selflessly accelerate human development.

Perhaps literature is the most accessible and effective media for most people, as it is normally less abstract than visual arts, music, and dance. It portrays directly the realm of ideas. People engaged in writing literature have a special responsibility because they are able to portray images of future potentialities. Hence, it is within their capacity to show glorious images of the human future as a feasible outcome of the present.

Dance expresses human sentiments through rhythm and gestures, refining human expressive capacity. Visual arts and music develop the subtle facets of the human mind through abstraction, directly vibrating and awakening the subtlest layers of the mind – hence they are the subtlest of the arts. These four artistic modes can be found in almost every past and present culture.

Art must always be dynamic. In a Proutist framework, the arts would be given maximum encouragement. They would be considered an integral aspect of education. Aesthetics will be encouraged in any human endeavor, be it constructing a house, planting a garden, or cooking food. This consideration gives maximum scope for mental development. As the collective mind is a dynamic entity, progressive change in art is to be encouraged while drawing upon the strengths of the past. A balance must be strived for that respects adherence to cherished traditions without rejecting creativity and the need for progress. Without such a balance we will have sub-standard art.

PROUT Study Guide

Further Reading:

Neo-Humanism: the Liberation of Intellect.

An exposition on society and Neo-Humanism, essential for a deep understanding of PROUT.

PROUT in a Nutshell.

Pertinent discourses can be found throughout the twenty plus volumes of this series, but Volume Six in particular has relevant material to this chapter, while Volume Thirteen is pertinent to language issues.

A Few Problems Solved, Part One.

The essay, "The Practice of Art and Literature" discusses this topic in further detail.

INTEGRATED PROUTISTIC SOLUTIONS

Samaj

Multipurpose Development Plans

Master Units

Proutistic Solutions for Crime and Punishment, Population Growth, Environmental Destruction and Pollution

Section One:

Samaj

The Sanskrit term for society is samaj. It means a group of people working together for all round development toward a single goal. In the context of PROUT, samaj further denotes a socio-economic unit formed on the basis of common economic potential and problems, geographic similarity, cultural and historical similarity, etc.

A strong local culture is the prerequisite of a healthy society and also of economic prosperity. Essentially, a samaj is a socio-economic group having strong historical, lingual, and/or cultural ties, a progressive decentralized economy based upon the principles of economic democracy, a flourishing cultural and intellectual life, a general atmosphere of social equality and collective spirit, and a strong moralist leadership. The goal of the samaj is to assist its members to meet their physical requirements and achieve their highest intellectual and spiritual potentiality. The establishment of samaj is the culmination of PROUT in three spheres: socio-economic, socio-political, and socio-cultural.

To various degrees, in almost every part of the world, national and state boundaries have been formed along primarily political lines. Hence, if the guidelines for the division of samaj units are followed, many boundaries could be expected to change. Samaj divisions are both natural and inevitable if capitalist exploitation is to be confronted. We see many movements around the world that show peoples' natural desire for regional-economical-cultural independence: A movement for an independent French Quebec; the Zapatista and Guatemalan uprisings of poor Mayan natives; the Republican movement of Ireland; numerous bloody conflicts by African nations in the aftermath of colonialism; the Kurdish uprising in Iraq, and many others.

Many existing political boundaries have been established to allow colonialism to divide and conquer. The first blow was always to the local language and customs. One of the fundamental tenets of capitalist exploitation is to divide a people and make them mentally weak, by imposing lingual and racial inferiority complexes and by exciting regional and religious narrowness to create infighting. Taking the example of Great Britain, it can easily be seen that several cultures and language groups have been subjugated, on both the cultural and economic levels. Scotland, Wales, and Ireland are all examples of potential socio-economic units and future samaj areas. They all are

faced with various degrees of economic and political satellite status to England, dying languages and loss of local culture to a colonial culture. In India, Bengal was divided into numerous pieces by the British and again later by the post-independence government. This occurred in order to cripple a cultured and prosperous people and exploit them economically. In almost every corner of the globe this same phenomenon can be observed. The Proutist solution is to develop strong local cultures and economies, united by a World Constitution and Bill of Rights.

In time, many samajas together might form a nation or a state. PROUT does not advocate a sort of cheap regionalism or nationalism; rather, we see the samaj as the basic unit of a strong global culture. So many of the international relations of the past and present are relationships of exploitation. PROUT promotes the admixture of different strong cultures. The more they interact, the more human beings will develop. Any person should be able to live anywhere, provided they merge their economic interests into their locality. The formation of socio-cultural-economic zones is for the purpose of removing exploitation, not to disseminate fissiparous tendencies. There are many indications of the beginnings of samaj movements, and as the defects of capitalism and communism become clearer and social consciousness increases, these movements will increase in magnitude.

Section Two:

Multipurpose Development Plans

PROUT recognizes the need for emergency economic relief activities and short-term multi-purpose development plans. There are a billion hunger-stricken people throughout the world, and there should be an immediate influx of food from outside to these malnourished people. The cause of this problem is global economic maldistribution. Economic democracy, decentralization, and an end to imperialism are the long-term solutions, but solving the immediate food shortages is an urgent necessity. The excess food of the developed world could easily satisfy the shortages of the developing nations if there was a willingness.

Multi-purpose development schemes are based on the degree of poverty in a country and aim to immediately elevate the standard of living of the people and bring about integrated development throughout the world. Such programs are suitable for the entire globe, and include undertaking temporary and permanent relief and upgrading the standard of education wherever required.

Different types of service, both extensive and intensive, have to be done in all the poor countries. Extensive service means that service must be provided down to village level, while intensive service means that as many people as possible must be benefited. This is necessary due to defective economic management in many parts of the world, and has nothing to do with party politics. Mass feeding and cheap kitchens are appropriate everywhere, plus other items like the distribution of clothes, medicines and school supplies, etc., according to the situation. Essential items are to be provided to the poorest and most needy people in each locality.

Secondly, you can see that in most of the countries in the world – in almost the entire world – the vast percentage of the economically disadvantaged people are illiterate. They are lagging behind in the realm of education. This deficiency is initially alleviated by teaching literacy. Literacy programs should be initiated wherever the necessity exists as the first stage of educational development plans.

We have said that the progress of human beings requires an internal spiritual approach and an

external approach which maintains equilibrium in the different arenas of our socio-economic life. Society is presently suffering from two problems – one is affluence, and the other is a shortage of physical and mental resources. Most of the developed countries suffer from over-consumption of consumer goods. If the consumption patterns of the industrial countries can be regulated, then an adjustment can be made so that physical shortages and psychic deficiencies of the other 80% of humanity can be minimized. Today, many admit that there should be such an adjustment; nonetheless, little effort has been made on the part of the developed nations to meet the needs of other human beings with their excess. Such an adjustment is necessary until the economies of the post-colonial and developing nations develop sufficiently to meet their populations' basic living requirements.

Section Three:

Master Units

PROUT recognizes the need for model development projects that promote integrated communities. These centers for applied Proutistic principles are called "master units." A master unit combines the ideals of self-sufficiency and decentralization with spiritual community committed to all-round social service. Beginning with agriculture and cottage industries for local economic development, master units expand their services to cover many facets of human needs, including education, culture, and spirituality. Integrated agricultural projects based upon progressive farming techniques, and cottage industries that use local raw materials are among the essential projects of master units. Medical clinics and hospitals with a focus on alternative modalities, and housing for the very poor are other important projects. Other important services provided by master units are schools based upon a holistic, Neo-humanistic approach to education and human development.

Master units incorporate a variety of economic and service projects. Some examples of existing master unit projects include: flour mill or wheat grinding machines; bakeries; seed bank; cheap seed distribution centers to meet the needs of local people; distribution centers for plants and seedlings; sericulture and silk weaving centers; bio-gas plants, utilizing organic waste; butter production (and dairy processing in general); apiculture (bee-keeping); farming training and research centers; and sanctuaries for animals and plants.

By their ecological vision and their role as community centers for progressive and spiritually minded individuals, master units also offer even economically developed nations a valuable model for the future of human settlement. Whether in economically developed or impoverished areas, they provide a model for balanced and integrated centers of human culture, meeting the physical, mental and spiritual requirements of life. They demonstrate the practical application of the PROUT philosophy, addressing human, animal, and ecological needs in an integrated way. Master units exist currently in many countries of the world at various stages of development. For information concerning these, one may contact Proutist Universal.

Section Four:

Proutistic Solutions for Crime and Punishment, Population Growth, Environmental Destruction and Pollution

PROUT seeks to solve many existing problems in a creative, integrated way. No problems exist outside a larger social context, so it is necessary to address the very root causes. Here we shall address aspects of PROUT regarding crime, population, and the environment. Any one could of course be discussed at great length.

Crime and Punishment

The concept of justice is largely dependent upon society at a particular time and level of development. What is justice for one society may not be accepted as justice by another society. The common conception of justice is that there should be fair punishment to fit a crime. This is a kind of trader's justice – an exchange where harm done must be paid in full. But this is a relative process. What is justice in one era, or in a particular society, may not be the same in a different time or place. PROUT advocates that reformation should be more important than punishment. As humans, we are incapable of perfect judgment and will always have a limited capacity of evaluation. Hence we should not have the right to punish each other, only to correct each other as best as we are able. Therefore justice under PROUT is to be a code of corrective measures. And in such a world of relative justice, a great importance must be put upon the selection of judges. Judges need to be learned and possess penetrating intellects. They must also have indisputably good character.

Under the trial system there is much scope for error. There is no way to verify the testimony of witnesses. Investigators should research and present evidence too. Relying on lawyers' interpretations is too dangerous; clever lawyers can be troublesome within the trial system. Perhaps judges should be able to make final decisions, with juries acting as their assistants. There should also be an appeals procedure to go along with this system.

Criminals should not all be classified the same way. There are many different reasons that people turn to crime. PROUT recognizes five distinct criminal types. First, there are criminals by instinct. Generally these are quiet people who enjoy petty crimes. Though easily instigated by others, this class of criminal typically does not commit major crimes. However, they are not easily educated so rehabilitation may be difficult.

The second category consists of those who are criminals by habit. People in this category may or may not be intelligent, but they revel in cruelty and are unable to understand compassion. Generally they are quite clever in committing their crimes. They also tend to become addicted to criminal behavior, and possess low moral strength. However, they are capable of being cured of this defect through rehabilitation.

A third class of criminals become so due to their environment. Family or peer pressures are the most common cause of this defect. Often parents with depraved tendencies will pass them on to their children. In dealing with these individuals it is important to discover where the bad influence comes from so that it can be dealt with. People who fall into this category are likely to degenerate even further if they are put into prison with those who are criminals by habit.

Criminals by necessity make up the fourth category. Most of the crimes in this world are motivated because of want of the basic necessities. Under PROUT, society will increasingly provide the basic

necessities, and this category of criminals should be eliminated. People who do fall into this category ought to create social pressure to force a change in their circumstances. Society has no right to judge such behavior, since society itself is responsible for it.

The fifth and final category of criminals are those who become so through snap volition. This is a treatable mental condition. It expresses itself in temporary mental ailments such as crimes of passion or kleptomania. Mental rehabilitation here would be more effective than imprisonment.

Population Growth

Two factors need to be considered when dealing with the question of population growth—the availability of resources and the availability of space. Although this planet is large enough and abundant enough to satisfy the food needs of all, there are many who lack sufficient food due to lack of proper coordination and planned efforts. If the living space of this Earth were properly utilized, there is also abundant living room for humans and all species.

According to PROUT there are four factors which will lead to the population growth finding a natural level. First there needs to be economic democracy so that people have sufficient scope to meet basic dietary needs. Secondly, there should be access to medical care so that people can remain in good health. Thirdly, as far as possible, people should be free from unnecessary worries and mental stress. And fourthly, the intellectual standard of humanity will have to be elevated through education. Taken together, these changes will tend to keep the birthrate at a reasonable level. In those countries where the people have become relatively educated and affluent it is a fact that the birthrate decreases. In undeveloped countries like China and India, and also developed countries with large numbers of impoverished people, like the USA, the birth rate is increasing. However in places such as Switzerland, France, and the Scandinavian countries the birth rate is stable or even declining due to affluence.

The science of agriculture has taken great leaps forward, and a properly managed earth will surely be capable of meeting the needs of its population. The idea that the world is in danger of becoming overpopulated is one that has been used by vested interests to misguide and exploit people, and to divert attention away from issues of exploitation and economic injustice.

Environmental Destruction and Pollution

It can be safely said that financial interests are for the most part responsible for environmental destruction. Most advances in modern science create detrimental side effects which require considerable time and effort to understand, and then to minimize. This corrective process is expensive and cuts into profits – resulting in great opposition from corporate elites to implementing new safety standards and methods of environmental protection. This is especially problematic as the direction of science is largely determined by what these elites decide upon. It is well known that independent research that strives to address environmental problems often has difficulty being funded, especially if the results might damage an existing industry. Research into non-fossil fuel based automobile engines, for example, is certainly going on, but with a fraction of the resources poured into fossil fuel research. Alternative energy in general (solar, wind, bio-gas, etc.) is researched but with only a fraction of the funding nuclear energy receives.

In PROUT the control of science would not be determined by profit seekers. The large scale key industries would be run by the state on a "no profit no loss" basis, and research would be out of the hands of corporate interest. Each locality will rely on whatever resources are naturally available or can be synthesized artificially. In this case the "polluter pays" principle is not just a slogan, it cannot

be avoided.

Essentially, pollution is beneficial for only a short time period. Corporate profits are increased through throwing off negative side-effects onto the environment and society as a whole. Eventually, however, the long term effects of raping and polluting the environment will require tremendous effort and resources to correct. PROUT maintains that the calculations of profits must include not only the cost of production, distribution, labor, etc., but equally important, the environmental and social costs involved. Social costs includes all factors that negatively affect the mental, physical and spiritual capacity of people immediately and into the future. For instance, the trucking industry is uneconomical from the stand point of social costs. Currently highway maintenance costs are not calculated, the environmental impact is not properly evaluated, the damage done by depleting the earth's oil reserves is not considered, and the health problems resulting from environmental pollution are not considered – not to mention traffic congestion, accidents and the mental and physical strain on the drivers and their families. Although trucking allows faster delivery and thus greater profits, from the social perspective as a whole, the railway system would be a better alternative.

The concept of social costs is integrally related to the idea of environmental sustainability. In agriculture especially, the costs of using chemicals far outweighs the alleged short term benefits. Agricultural pollution resulting from pesticides, chemical fertilizers, etc., would be reduced by decentralized agriculture using the techniques of integrated, ideal farming (see Chapter Four). Agricultural research could then focus on sustainability as well as quality and efficiency. Already there is indication from applied research that output can even be increased using advanced natural techniques – not to mention the increase in taste and nutritional value.

From the point of view of sustainable economic development, anything that reduces the productive capacity of the earth and destroys the health of human beings and other life forms is definitely to be avoided. Yet this is the path of the so-called global economy. In capitalism, the quest for short term gain usually overrides consideration for the future. It has been stated by scientists in international conferences, such as the Earth Summit, that the global economy is destroying ecologies at a rate of a thousand times faster than they can reproduce. It has also been predicted that given the current rate of destruction, it will destroy the planet's life support systems – ozone, breathable air, arable soil, potable water and the forests – in about fifty years. It is therefore a life and death matter to reduce the economic decision-making powers of the corporate elites. They have ignored repeatedly the considerations of the general welfare and they will continue to do so without governments and people intervening to curb their efforts.

Further Reading:

Discussion of the above topics can be found scattered throughout the PROUT literature. References to various samajas are found in the *PROUT in a Nutshell* series, while much material on Master Units is as of yet unpublished. For a discussion on crime and justice, one may refer to *Human Society Part One*. An article on population growth and control is found in *Proutist Economics*. For case studies on integrated, applied PROUT primarily in the economic sphere, refer to Part Six of the above book.

The Fundamental Principles of PROUT

The Progressive Utilization Theory, as previously discussed, incorporates a unique understanding of human potential, history and class dynamics, as well as a broad social, political and economic perspective. Despite its expansive scope, however, the essence of PROUT can be reduced to a number of basic principles. Shrii Sarkar, the author of the theory, summarized it in sixteen principles. These five are regarded as the most fundamental. They embody the multi-dimensional approach of PROUT, addressing the physical, mental and spiritual needs of individuals and society at large.

1) No individual should be allowed to accumulate any physical wealth without the clear permission or approval of the collective body.

Several points are embodied in this statement. The most important point is that ownership lies with the collectivity, while the individual has a right to usage only. Society shall have the right to determine to what extent private ownership will be accepted. The over accumulation of wealth by an individual may easily deprive others. Similarly, the misuse of wealth and resources by an individual may also bring harm to the collectivity, or at least hinder its general affluence. Therefore, the right to accumulate wealth cannot be accepted as final. Individual liberty, in the economic sphere, must be in balance with the collective well-being. This refutes the basic notion of capitalism, which allows virtually unlimited liberty for individual accumulation. This also refutes communist theory that prescribes uniform salaries to all, regardless of labor and merit. In the Proutist philosophy, absolute uniformity of wealth is viewed as idealistic and unpsychological, while unchecked accumulation is also to be avoided.

This principle also implies that the very notion of ownership may vary considerably according to the collective psychology. Obviously different notions have existed in this regard. A comparison between modern Western concepts of private ownership with those of various tribal societies of the past and present illustrates a difference in viewpoint. This first principle of PROUT essentially assures that the extent of private ownership will be in adjustment to the well-being of the collective. Note that no particular mechanism for determining ownership is specified, for such methods are also not absolute - it is only the general principle which is unchanging.

This principle is the basis for PROUT embracing economic democracy (as defined in Chapter Three) insofar as the notion of collective ownership implies a democratic approach to the utilization of resources.

2) There should be maximum utilization and rational distribution of all mundane, supramundane, and spiritual potentialities of the universe.

This statement supposes the existence of material as well as more subtle resources, which should be fully utilized and distributed in a rational manner. For the maximum utilization of physical resources, constant scientific endeavor must be made to understand the latent potentials of the

physical world. No one would have imagined the latent potentials of the atom a few decades before its energetic potential was harnessed, regardless of how one may feel about the uses made of the discovery. Newer and better ways must be found to get maximum benefits from minimal resources, reducing environmental impact and increasing efficiency. Constant endeavor to find uses for different resources (such as the medicinal use of plants) will increase the potential standard of living.

However, depending upon the distribution of wealth, a high standard of living for the general population may or may not be guaranteed. Hence rational distribution of wealth is necessary. Though different opinions may exist upon what is considered rational distribution, clearly a need-based, rather than profit driven economy will lead to a more rational (and more equitable) distribution of wealth. This principle of PROUT contains the philosophical basis for the guarantee of the basic needs. This is achieved by providing employment opportunities in those industries that produce products and services to meet these needs and by ensuring that the jobs created provide adequate purchasing power to secure the essential products and services.

Rational distribution, as opposed to equal distribution, may also include the recognition of special needs and reward for special abilities. The idea of maximum amenities for all is derived from this principle. Indeed, many of the basic principles of the PROUT economic system are based upon the ideal of maximum utilization and rational distribution - including cooperatives, decentralization, etc. PROUT's ideas on agriculture are also related.

The inclusion of supramundane and spiritual resources within the scope of maximum utilization and rational distribution acknowledges subtle layers of existence. Utilizing the arts for development of the subtle mental faculties may be an example of supramundane utilization. Higher supramundane and spiritual potentialities should also be developed (one can refer to Shrii Sarkar's books on Microvita, Yoga Psychology and other topics for his views on these potentialities). Though perhaps not obvious now, Sarkar envisions a time when these potentialities can also be utilized for the collective benefit, and hence the same approach should be followed as with physical resources. The utilization of the subtlest resources will require systematic research into the nature of consciousness itself.

3) There should be maximum utilization of the physical, metaphysical, and spiritual potentialities of the unit and collective bodies of human society.

The second principle refers to utilizing the objective world, crude and subtle, while this principle refers to the utilization of human potential in the physical, metaphysical and spiritual spheres. Development of the collective and individual potentialities are equally important, and the two are inexorably linked. The physical, intellectual and spiritual potentialities of individuals must be used in a constructive way, and maximum effort must be made for their all-round development. In a similar way the collective strengths of different groups should be utilized according to their circumstances. Those with outstanding abilities should be given maximum scope for utilizing their skills and creativity, while additional effort is to be made for the development of the innate potential of all.

In order to develop the potentialities of all, existential fear must be removed by the guarantee of the minimum requirements of life. Only then can people at large have the mental ease needed for psychic and spiritual growth. Free and ample educational opportunities must be made available to all. There should also be opportunities in the workplace for the development of new skills and

expertise, which should then be creatively utilized. The development of the collective mind has, of course, the development of the individual mind as a base. Special effort should be made to include factors in the educational system that will help ensure the development of the collective mind, such as socio-economic consciousness, ethical conduct, service mindedness, social awareness, and spirituality. Most of the socio-cultural Proutist ideas pertaining to education, language and the arts are elaborations upon this fundamental principle.

4) There should be a proper adjustment amongst these physical, metaphysical, mundane, supramundane and spiritual utilizations.

This principle asserts that the previous two principles must be applied in a balanced and integrated way. Neither should physicality and the material world, nor metaphysical, supramundane and spiritual potentialities be developed to the exclusion of the others, or society will exist in a state of imbalance and meet with degeneration. People must be encouraged and challenged on various levels, otherwise widespread idleness or lethargy and apathy may develop. For example, increasing purchasing power is the best method of meeting people's needs on the physical level rather than handouts which would be both impractical and destructive to initiative.

"Proper adjustment" in this context also means that people's role in society should be determined in a balanced way. As a general rule, employment should be guaranteed which is both agreeable and suitable to people, drawing upon their inherent talents and interests. It is generally recognized that intellectual and artistic skills are comparatively rare as opposed to physical skills, while spiritual wisdom is even more rare. Society should require comparatively less mundane service from those utilizing their higher mental and spiritual faculties for the benefit of society, following a balanced policy. Shrii Sarkar feels that it is imperative for the leaders of society to be developed intellectually and spiritually and to be physically fit as well, which certainly requires a degree of all-round development.

The concept of the six factors of *bhati* is somewhat akin to the spirit of this principle (see Chapter One). The concepts of the "master unit" and *samaj* are also related to the application of this principle (see Chapter Seven), as they require the integration of many aspects of human life in a balanced way.

5) The method of utilization should vary in accordance with the changes in time, place, and person, and the utilization should be of a progressive nature.

This fifth principle holds that new and better methods of utilization should be continually developed in accordance with scientific and human development, considering changes in human psychology, the physical environment, etc. For instance, in accordance with maximum utilization, better ways should be found to harness the energy of manual labor, increasing efficiency. But of course, this should lead to increased productivity and decreased work hours, not a loss of jobs. Economic, social and political policies must be adjusted to human needs, and there should be efforts for their continual improvement in a progressive, humanitarian way.

Scientific research must be guided by progressive ideals as well. An anti-technological attitude is certainly antithetical to human development. Some may argue that the environmental impact of technology is such that it will eventually destroy our ecological balance. It may be more reasonable to conclude that this state of affairs is the result of the regressive utilization or misutilization of science. Progressive utilization of science necessitates continual effort to assess and mitigate the

environmental impact of new technologies.

The progressive utilization of mental potentialities may include increased computer assistance, new developments in art and philosophy, improved educational methods and the like for general progress. Progressive utilization in the higher sphere of life may include the development of new intuitional techniques for self-realization, and the harnessing of the spiritual inspiration and transformative power of self-realized individuals in a better way. Shrii Sarkar surmises, "Through struggle, society will have to move forward towards victory along the path of all-round fulfillment in life." (*Ananda Sutram*).

PROUT Compared with Capitalism and Communism

To distinguish PROUT clearly from communism and capitalism, the significant differences between these respective systems are reviewed below.

Human development

Human development under communism is primarily concerned with the political and economic spheres of life. Under capitalism there is a pluralistic expression of personal freedom, with no clear conception of human potentiality. PROUT promotes the integrated development of the full human personality.

Freedom

Human liberty under communism is limited by the primacy of the interests of the state. Under capitalism, a licentious freedom of expression is permitted, but not a freedom from want and material insecurity. In practice, capitalist societies will restrict freedom of expression when this expression challenges the interests of capital. PROUT grants full freedom of psychic and spiritual expression, but recognizes the need for society to place limits on individual hoarding of wealth. Without this limitation, collective interests will be violated and universal freedom from want cannot be guaranteed.

Privileged Interests

Communism privileges the interests of the party and state. Capitalism gives primacy to property rights, and thus privileges the class controlling capital. PROUT gives central importance to promoting the common welfare while protecting ecological integrity.

Progress

Both communism and capitalism regard material development as the basis of progress. PROUT defines progress as the increase in inner fulfillment of individuals. While this is primarily a spiritual conception of progress, PROUT recognizes that material development is necessary as a foundation for seeking spiritual fulfillment.

Culture

Communism compels culture to be consistent with state ideology. Under capitalism, mass culture primarily serves commercial interests. As a result, it is creative but not authentic, energetic but often destructive of higher values. PROUT sees need for culture to emerge out of regional and ethnic experience, and for these diverse cultures to instill values which empower the human psyche.

Motivation

Communism emphasizes income equality at the expense of individual productivity. Capitalism's system of incentives motivates high productivity, but the excess of its monetary rewards wastes collective wealth, encourages greed, and disrupts social unity. PROUT strives for balance: maximizing the efficacy of incentive while minimizing social inequality.

Environment

Both communism and capitalism lack a clear value context for environmental protection. PROUT has adopted the value framework of Neo-Humanism, which affirms the inherent, existential value of all life. Both communism and capitalism are unsuited to sustaining environmental integrity because they emphasize short term gain of profit or productivity and ignore long term costs of environmental degradation. PROUT's planning system aims to create ever higher orders of balance, and therefore inherently protects biodiversity and promotes ecosystem vitality.

Planning

Under communism, economic planning is highly centralized and controlled by the state. Capitalism centralizes the major part of economic planning in the hands of huge, transnational corporations. PROUT decentralizes planning authority to the level at which people are most aware of economic problems and potentialities, and therefore best able to plan for their common welfare.

Labor

Workers in both communist and capitalist economies are alienated due to lack of ownership or control of their workplace. PROUT's enterprise system is based on worker participation in decision making and cooperative ownership of assets - conditions which increase motivation and enhance possibilities for personal fulfillment.

Economy

Communism's command economy is responsive to production quotas. Capitalism's free market economy is profit motivated. PROUT's economy is consumption oriented. It seeks to increase consumer purchasing power and availability of consumer goods as the means for maintaining economic vitality and meeting people's amenity needs.

Glossary of Terms

Anandam: Infinite bliss, perfect mental peace; the transcendental state beyond pain and pleasure which characterizes Self-Realization or God-Realization. It is considered the goal of bhati (development and progress), of individuals and of society.

Asti: Existence. In PROUT this encompasses the existential necessities of living beings and of society.

Bhati: Development and progress. In PROUT this encompasses the six factors necessary for social development and progress – spiritual philosophy, spiritual practice, socio-economic theory, social outlook, scriptures and preceptor.

Dharma: Innate purpose; for human beings, spirituality is their dharma.

Ks'attriya: The varna or social class which displays the warrior mentality; i.e. the class consisting of career soldiers, police, athletes, explorers, etc.

Pragati: Progress; movement which is leading toward betterment.

Sadvipra: An ideal human being. One whose every effort is for the attainment of anandam and the betterment of society; one who by virtue of tremendous capacity can accelerate the movement of the social cycle, thus minimizing the scope for an exploitative social order to develop. A Sadvipra also embodies the virtues of each varna.

Sama Samaja Tattva: The Principle of Social Equality; i.e. the principle of the basic equality and unity of all human beings in spite of tremendous diversity.

Samaj: Society. Also refers to a socio-economic unit meeting certain other requirements (see Chapter Seven), such as having a thriving local culture, progressive government, and a Proutistic economic structure.

Shastras (Dharma, Darshana, Samaja): Spiritual, philosophical, and social scriptures.

Shu'dra: The varna or social class which displays a lack of mental vibrancy or higher aspirations; the uneducated masses.

Tantra Yoga: The science of expansion; the path which leads to the liberation of the self. This refers to the spiritual science incorporating intuitional practices (meditation and concentration), leading to the attainment of spiritual fulfillment (anandam).

Varna: Literally, "color." In PROUT, this refers to one of the four psycho-social classes (shudra, ks'attriya, vipra, and vaeshya), who make up human society.

Vaeshya: The varna or social class which excels in the production, accumulation and management of resources; i.e. entrepreneurs, traders, industrialists, capitalists, etc.

Vipra: The varna or social class characterized by engagement in mental pursuits; i.e. intellectuals, clergy, government ministers, artists, etc.