

# Eclipse of intellectual

By: M. J. Audi

An intellectual is one who influences the course of history and destiny of humankind. He is an arbiter of tastes and harbinger of culture. Integrity of character is his hallmark and intellect is his tool to grasp mysteries of nature and social dynamics. Egoism, snobbery and vanity are attributes of the lesser minds. Intellectual is not tainted by them. He acquires ability to see the things as they are. He reads between the lines. Hence he is never deceived by the appearances. He is a fearless soul. Hence he calls a spade a spade and cheerfully faces the consequences. No wonder, throughout the world, true intellectuals are few and far between. Mere possession of knowledge does not make one an intellectual. The learned differs from an intellectual as chalk from cheese. The learned is a beast of burden carrying the load of information and delighting in quibblings and trivialities. The intellectual is a swan separating milk from water and focusing on the fundamentals.

## Prime duty

Prime duty of an intellectual is to attack. As there are always many to defend the vested interests, an intellectual is frequently a lonely figure. His responses are not conventional, but strikingly original. He strikes at the roots of the problems plaguing his society. He is a ruthless exposé of hypocrisies and injustices. He probes the evils vitiating the social order. He pines to establish a just social order. Every society and every country is ultimately known by its intellectuals. These intrepid spirits are always humane and rational. They ardently work to make earth a happy place to live for the weakest of the weak. They are the instruments of creativity. They play a unique role in the life of their nation and through their nations the intellectuals reach the global society. They act locally and think globally. In fine, the intellectuals are the salt of the earth.

Broadly speaking, intellectualism in the western world begins with Socrates and ends with Marx. Between them, we find excellent intellectuals making handsome con-

tributions to the cultural treasures of the world. Notable names are Plato and Plutarch, Michael Angello and Raphael, Copernicus and Galileo, Rousseau and Voltaire, Shakespeare and Shelley, Dante and Goethe, Beethoven and Mozart, Kant and Darwin, Gibbon and Ranke, Newton and Einstein, Mazzini and Lenin. Their lives were dedicated to the conception of ideas, development of ideals, advancement of art and architecture, literature and science. They were repelled by the hideous cruelties and tortures inherent in the exploitation of man by man. Two significant revolutions of modern age — the French and the Russian — are the handiwork of these intellectuals. Unfortunately, the fruits of these revolutions are not yet within the reach of every person. To that extent, these revolutions have betrayed their mentors. Freedoms which mankind enjoy in our times are neither complete nor perfect. Yet but for these intellectuals, people would not have had even these limited liberties.

## Cultural map

Ancient India had a galaxy of intellectuals of the tallest order. Because of them India is known as a land of Philosophers on the cultural map of the world. They were the lovers of Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram. Truth, beauty and goodness are reflected in the Upanishads, in the works of Valmiki and Vyas, Buddha and Shankar, Kalidas and Bhavabuti, Prof. Max Muller mused: "If I were to ask myself from what literature we here in Europe, who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of the Greeks and Romans and ... the (Jews), may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more universal — in fact more human, I should point to India." The Temples of Konarak and Khajuraho, Madurai and Sanchi, the Ajanta frescoes, the mural paintings, the sculptures of Sarnath and the statue of Gomateswar have stood the ravages of time and vandalism of man. And that speaks of their solid achievements.

The period between 1857 and

1947 is the crisis period in the life of modern India. During this period the British used brute force to enslave Indians and subjugate India. It was India's good fortune that this period saw a few intellectuals known for integrity, intellect, sacrifice and service. The task of the liberation of motherland consumed their time and energy. Outstanding amongst them were Bankim Chandra, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekanand, Tilak, Aurobindo, Savarkar and Mahatma Gandhi.

Swaraj has been let down by the intellectuals as could be seen from India's plight during forty years of freedom. It is tragic but true that in Swaraj, intellectual, in true sense of the term, has become as rare as Gir lion. Admittedly, decline and fall of intellectuals is a global phenomenon. We do not find even first-rate commentators let alone first-rate thinkers in the western world which is supposed to be a pacesetter of intellectual movements in our times. When one reads the works of the intellectuals of Europe and the United States of America and their imitators from India, one strongly feels the need of a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to the Readers. To a large extent, the intellectuals themselves are responsible for their eclipse. Craving for patronage that provides luxurious living is the cause of their decline. Taking patronage as the basis of their classification, we find three types of intellectuals in today's world. They are the Establishment Intellectuals, the Business House Intellectuals and the Dependency Intellectuals. Whoever in power commands the loyalty of the Establishment Intellectuals. They worship the rising sun.

In India many intellectuals court Establishment because the State controls patronage. The powers that he can make them Governors or Ambassadors. The fortune of Business House Intellectuals is linked with the fortunes of the Business House concerned. The rats instinctively desert the sinking ship. The Business House Intellectuals

(Contd. in Col. 8)

# Eclipse of intellectual

(Contd. from Col. 5)

instinctively search stable markets. The Dependency Intellectuals depend upon foreign masters. In international politics, India stands for Non-alignment. It immensely benefits the Dependency Intellectuals. Their alignments with foreign masters are limited only by their capacity to court them. Unlike India, Indian Intellectuals do not insist upon aid without strings. They only urge that the strings should be invisible. Hence aid for them is channelised through charitable, cultural and missionary organisations, research institutes, universities and national and international centres.

## Patronage

Patronage converts intellectuals into weathercocks. Intellectual today has ceased to be a force to reckon with not because he lacks intellect but because he lacks integrity. He lacks integrity because he is not certain of security. If intellectual is to deliver the goods expected from him, he must enjoy reasonable financial independence. Should intellectual be His Master's Voice? How to liberate intellectuals from the bondage of patronage? Why should the intellectuals be at the mercy of powerful and prosperous Philistines? These are the pressing problems everywhere in the world more so in India.