Paulo Freire
Rousseau of the Twentieth Century

Asoke Bhattacharya
Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India

“A wealth of literature has been published about Paulo Freire, but nothing as comprehensive as this book. This book distinguishes itself by a detailed account of the historical, economic and social context, and on this basis Professor Bhattacharya draws a fascinating and comprehensive picture of one of the most famous and influential educational philosophers from the last half of the twentieth century” says Professor Ove Korsgaard of Danish University School of Education, Denmark and a doyen of adult education in Scandinavia.

Besides, it provides a chapterwise critique of all the major works of Paulo Freire. This volume should prove to be extremely useful to students, teachers and researchers.
Paulo Freire
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Paulo Freire

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Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India
DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to

Prof. Jens Holger Schjoerring
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I am grateful to Prof. Ove Korsgaard of Danish University School of Education, University of Aarhus, Copenhagen, for writing the preface Prof. Korsgaard is the doyen of adult education in Scandinavia. I wanted to get the book passed through the sieve of his critical evaluation. I am happy that he has found the book worthy.

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In spite of the efforts, direct and indirect, of so many individuals if there still persist inaccuracies, printing and editing mistakes, none but the author is responsible.

Prof. Asoke Bhattacharya

Kolkata
November 2, 2010
Throughout the last long years of my life I’ve been involved with history of educational ideas, I have often returned to Immanuel Kant, who, in his book ‘On Pedagogy’ from 1803, argues that the art of governing and the art of education are among man’s most important social inventions. According to Kant, certain structural similarities exist between the formation of a society and the formation of a human being. To act politically is to shape a society; to act educationally is to shape an individual. Formation of a society and formation of a person are therefore closely related - without being the same. The relationship can be described as an egg-or-chicken paradox: what comes first, the good and proper community or the good and proper citizen.

It is therefore no coincidence that some of the great political philosophers are included in the canon of major educational philosophers; Plato, Martin Luther, John Locke, Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Wilhelm Humboldt, N.F.S. Grundtvig, John Dewey, Rabindranath Tagore, and others. Their educational philosophy can not be isolated from their political philosophy. In much educational thinking, however, the connection between political philosophy and educational philosophy drops out of sight, and pedagogy is reduced to methodological and didactic matters.

With this voluminous book on Paulo Freire, Professor Asoke Bhattacharya reminds us of the close relationship between politics and pedagogy. Professor Bhattacharya’s book clearly illustrates that Paulo Freire, in the latter half of the twentieth century, re-established the connection between educational philosophy and political philosophy. Freire established a conductive connection between politics and pedagogy based on his own experiences. Paulo Freire was born into a prosperous middle-class family in Brazil, but the family lost everything in 1929. As a young man, Freire experienced poverty and even hunger, and he learned that the Brazilian upper class had little interest in the problems of the lower classes, and so he soon became involved in the fight against poverty and oppression through education.

Paulo Freire has been hailed as one of the founding fathers of critical pedagogy, which is not wrong, but not very precise either. For who among the major educational philosophers were not critical? Rousseau was extremely critical to his contemporary pedagogy and school system, and Luther, Kant, Grundtvig, Dewey, and Tagore all formulated their pedagogical philosophies in critical opposition to contemporary educational theory and practice. The same can be said of Paulo Freire. Therefore, it is not Freire’s critical attitude, but his political activism that sets him apart from some (but not all) of the canonical educational philosophers.

Professor Asoke Bhattacharya provides a thorough description of Paulo Freire as a political activist: Freire was one of the founding members of The Movement for Popular Culture, which was the first of a series of political educational movements that emerged in Brazil in the 1960s. The purpose was to empower the
poor to lift themselves out of poverty without alienating them through an education that did not take their culture and their own experience into account. Therefore, the movement put great emphasis on preserving the people’s cultural traditions, their histories, their mythical characters and their religiosity - a philosophical approach that resembles Grundtvig and the Danish folk high school movement, which from the mid-1800s was set up to educate the rural population.

In his masterpiece ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’, Freire gave his definition of the political nature of education and the relationship between knowledge, power and language. In that book, which was based on his own experience from fighting illiteracy in Brazil, Paulo Freire formulated his famous pedagogical method to make agricultural workers aware of their social situation and to contribute to their emancipation.

A wealth of literature has been published about Paulo Freire, but nothing as comprehensive as this book. This book distinguishes itself by a detailed account of the historical, economic and social context, and on this basis Professor Bhattacharya draws a fascinating and comprehensive picture of one of the most famous and influential educational philosophers from the last half of the twentieth century.

Professor Ove Korsgaard, Dr. Ped.
Danish University School of Education
University of Aarhus
Denmark
CHAPTER 1

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONDITION
OF BRAZIL FROM COLONIAL TO MODERN TIMES

SOCIAL

SECTION – 1

I

Around the 1530s the economic and social organizations of the Brazilian society began to crystalize. Over the previous 100 years the Portuguese had been in contact with other nations in the continents of Africa and Asia. This knowledge of other peoples and cultures and the experience of adapting to a new economic, social, and cultural environment were instrumental in the attitudinal transformation of the Portuguese to settle down to an agricultural existence in Brazil mainly in the regions of Pernambuco and Sao Vicente. The Brazilian society, thus, was organized with its roots firmly on the ground. It developed into a patriarchal pattern with slavery as the principal instrument of production. A sort of miscegenation of the Portuguese with the local indigenous inhabitants that took place during this period was also a significant development.

In the parlance of political economy, in tropical America, this was a society which was agrarian in structure, slave-holding in production relations and hybrid in human composition. Thus, a relationship of master and slave – physically exploitative and mentally crippling – developed in Brazil. The rough edges were, however, smoothened a bit by the effect of miscegenation.

The new society in Brazil was an extension of the society of Portugal in some respects. The cultural past of the society in Portugal was a complex intermingling of elements of three continents – Europe, Africa and Asia, and developed a unique character of its own. The African influence gave a sharp relief to sexual life, to alimentation boost and religion. Asian (Arabic) and African bloods ran through the veins of a large section of the population. The cultural influences mitigated the Germanic and Nordic harshness of institutions and cultural forms and corrupted the doctrinal and moral rigidity of the medieval church. The result was salubrious. Christianity, feudalism, Gothic architecture, canonize discipline, Visigoth law and Latin language got rid of the abrasiveness found in their unalloyed existences. Under the apparent rule of Europe reigned an Asianised Africa.

The Portuguese character had been moulded by the tense and vibrant conditions of human contact with other nations and peoples. The constant state of confrontation had made the Portuguese tough as a race. The system allowed the victors in Brazil to utilize their captives as agricultural labourers. Total or partial enslavement was
encouraged in Portugal. Miscegenation also took place as a by-product. This portrait of an historic Portugal existed from time immemorial: before the Arabs and the Berbers or the Libyo–Phoenicians, Semitic and Negroid waves broke against those of the North. To the tri–continentalism which contributed to a sort of dualism of culture and race could be added some other characteristics: the Semitic element might have endowed the Portuguese with mobility, plasticity and adaptability. These could have contributed towards instilling among the Portuguese an acumen for navigation and cosmopolitanism in the 15th century. These could also have contributed towards making the Portuguese colonizer of Brazil endowed with appropriate physical and psychological characteristics for adapting to an alien land and difficult situations.

This mobility and adaptability were instrumental in overcoming the scarcity of population in the mother country and in populating regions situated across thousands of kilometers—in Asia, Africa and the numerous islands and archipelagoes in Portuguese possession. The inadequacy of manpower was made up through mobility and miscibility. The Portuguese colonizers dominated enormous spaces, took wives and concubines in diverse parts of the world and begot off-springs with a procreative fervor that was due as much to violent instincts on the part of the individual as it was to a calculated policy engineered by the state for economic and political reasons.

Warriors, administrators, technicians and businessmen were shifted about by the colonial headquarters in Lisbon like pieces on a chess-board: from Asia to America, from Africa to Asia or from Africa to America. Duarte Coelho, who had amassed enormous wealth in India, was called to Pernambuco. His sons, trained in fighting the American aborigines, were summoned to fight in Africa. Skilled sugar technicians from Madeira island were brought to the plantations of Northern Brazil. Ships constantly plied across the continents. Millions of black Africans were transshipped as agricultural labourers to Brazil.

Experts have claimed that no colonizing people in the modern times could match the Portuguese in miscegenation. Miscibility was the process by which the Portuguese made up for their deficiency in human resources in large-scale colonization of far-flung areas. The effort was effective as the Portuguese of post-medieval times were themselves the product of large-scale intermingling with the Arabs who were highly skilled technically and possessed intellectual and artistic qualities considered superior to the Nordics.

However, in spite of the Portuguese characteristics of mobility, adaptability and miscibility, the undertaking in Brazil was really enormous. In this new land, everything was in disequilibrium. The soil was not suitable for cultivation of products that the Portuguese desired. Rugged, intractable and impermeable, the land could not be utilized for agriculture. The big rivers were mostly rebellious and not conducive to regularized farming. Floods and droughts alternatively ravaged the colonies. There were swarms of larvae and many species of insects and worms which made human life, particularly European, unbearable.

The big plantations in Brazil were created by courageous individuals who received little or no assistance from the state. It is through individual efforts that the first colonies were established and the families were settled. Development of
agriculture, animal husbandry, sugar plantation, trade and commerce were the result of private initiatives. Defense of the settlements was also the responsibility of private individuals and not of the State. The absence of a regular and complicated system of administration and the freedom of action that was enjoyed by the colonists proved to be an effective method in the colonization of Brazil.

From the 16th century onwards, the family played the vital role in colonization. It organized the productive unit, the capital for clearing the bushes, and helped found the plantations. It purchased the slaves, oxen and implements. In politics, it was the social force that set itself up as the most powerful colonial aristocracy in the Americas.

It was due to the presence of a strong and weighty element represented by the big landowning families that Portuguese colonization in Brazil soon assumed those social aspects, which were quite unique in comparison with Spanish or English colonizers. The Portuguese colonialist in Brazil was left with no other option than to resort to a kind of life which was mainly agricultural. Considering the background of the Portuguese in international trade and commerce, the rural mode of life in Brazil was something that the colonialist was forced to accept. Both the land and its inhabitors were in a crude state. The men and women encountered were savages, running about naked, sleeping in hammocks, and feeding on flour, jungle fruit and game or fish, eaten raw or roasted. They possessed no domestic animals to serve them. Instead of wealth that the Europeans found in Asia or in other parts of Latin America, the Portuguese found an infinite number of brazil wood trees and pipe-reeds in Brazil.

Enormous masses of water and extensive jungles conferred grandeur upon this land. The whole scenario was quite dramatic. However, as stated before, the rivers and waterfalls were, to a large extent, unsuitable for satisfying human needs. The floods would destroy everything–crop, houses and people. In the initial stages, therefore, the colonialists had little enthusiasm in populating the land. The smaller streams were more useful. The water from these sources was used for crushing the cane, irrigating the river plains, cultivating the crop and transporting sugar, lumber and other goods across the country.

During the formative stages, Brazilian society did not have to face much racial discrimination. Throughout the 16th century, the gates of the colony were open to the foreigners. If there was any discrimination, it was against the non-Catholics, claim some experts3. This religious uniformity was the primary cause, the same sources claim, to develop the solidarity of the Portuguese and other Catholics for fighting against the French Calvinists, the Reformed Dutch, the English Protestants and other invaders. Brazilianism and Catholicism intermingled to form a distinct entity.

The colonial administration in Brazil lacked the centralism that was displayed by the Spaniards in the spheres of their domination. It was slack and weak. Later on, it was rendered a little rigid with the creation of the office of the Governor-General.

Sugarcane cultivation first started at Sao Vicente and Pernambuco, and was later extended to Bahia and Maranhao. A slave-holding aristocracy developed in the
sugar-cane plantations in these regions. Divisions among these plantation-owners grew later when many plantations went bankrupt. The owners, dispossessed of their property, scattered throughout the backlands in quest of slaves. Many settled as cattle-raisers. In this diaspora grew groups like *sertanejo* (backlander) and *vaqueri* (the cowboy) in Brazil. These groups opposed slavery.

The identity of agrarian and slave-holding interests that prevailed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the sugar plantations in the Northeast continued when the mines were discovered and coffee cultivation was started in the southern regions. Though the economy shifted from sugar to gold and then to coffee, the instrument of exploitation was still the slave. With the emergence of a new center of gravity so far as the economy was concerned, the slaves of African origin, who had remained en bloc in the Northeast, migrated to these new areas causing profound cultural changes. So far as the subsistence economy was concerned, the same native or European plants were cultivated in the new areas of settlement. Thus a cultural miscegenation of the Indian, African and European elements took place throughout the country.

Monoculture (cultivation of sugar, coffee or other agricultural product exclusively for export) deprived the Brazilian society of its natural sources of nutrition. It also caused disequilibrium in nature since the crop was an extraneous one. These two factors affected the physical development and economic efficiency of the Brazilians. The best nourished of the Brazilian society were the whites of the big houses. The black slave was exploited ruthlessly, but they had to be fed. The lower middle class and the lower classes were the most undernourished sections of the population, claimed some authorities. They fell victim to paludic anaemia, beriberi, worms, and buboes. The indigenous people were ruined by nutritional insufficiency, alcoholism and various other ailments. Around six million people out of 12 million were thus affected.

Even the aristocracy in colonial Brazil lacked in their diet fresh vegetables, meat and milk. They suffered from various ailments of the digestive tract. During the three centuries of colonial rules the shadow of a sterilizing monoculture lay over all. The rural gentry were in debt most of the times. Termites, floods and droughts interfered with the food supply for the majority of the population. Only the most privileged families of Pernambuco and Bahia were steeped in luxury. However, even this luxury was superficial since many essential things were in short supply. In Para, in the 17th century, families of certain noblemen were unable to visit the city to celebrate Christmas since the young ladies lacked appropriate dresses. The common diet of game and fish which were abundant in the early days grew rare in proportion as the number of inhabitants increased. The land, left untilled or without intelligent cultivation lost its primitive fertility with the result that many inhabitants left for better opportunities. Salvador de Bahia, a great and prosperous center, was reputed for bad and deficient food supplies.

Nowhere was the scarcity so acutely felt as in Pernambuco. The region was dotted with sugar plantations and large estates. At the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century, it was reckoned to be the best land for agricultural purposes. However, it was here that essential items of daily diet were lacking the most.
The black slave in Brazil, argues an eminent scholar, was the best nourished person of the Brazilian society as his diet contained a large portion of vegetables. The influence of the Africans, particularly in matters of diet, was the primary reason for the physical strength of the cross-bred population formed through the admixture of these races—the indigenous Indian, the black and the white.

The hybrid population—free mulatto or mestizo—was in most cases victim of paludic anaemia, beriberi and worms. It was because of the fact that this population formed largely the lowest rung of the free people and had to fend for themselves. Even a black slave, it has been argued, was protected by the master for sheer economic reasons. Unlike the free mulatto or caboclo, he had the advantage of living in conditions that were preservative rather than depreciative. They were in a better position to resist pathogenic and social influences and were able to propagate descendants who were healthier and more vigorous.

However, they could not resist the onslaught of syphilis which spread from the big houses to the senzalas (slave-hut), or vice-versa. The son of a plantation owner would contract it almost as he played with the black or mulatto girls, acquiring precociously his first sexual experience at the age of twelve or thirteen. From that age onward the lad used to be subjected to ridicule for not having had carnal knowledge of a woman. He would be the butt of jest if he could not show the scars of syphilis on his body.

The new society which was based upon a very unequal relationship between the white master race and the black and Indian slaves, gave rise to a very significant social and physical malady largely due to the outbreak of syphilis, especially in the big houses. The disease was the most deforming in its effect. It drained the economic energy of the Brazilians—especially the hybrids. It has been argued that the disease made its maiden appearance from the first union of Europeans, wandering aimlessly along the shores, with the Indian women who offered themselves to the white man’s sexual embrace. Therefore, contrary to the common belief that civilization and syphilis went hand in hand, Brazil was syphilised before it was civilized. [Recent studies have revealed that indigenous America knew of this disease before the Europeans]

The sexual union of the white master with his black or Indian female slaves brought about a species of sadism on the part of the white man and masochism on the part of the African or Indian counterpart. This became the predominant feature in the sexual and social relations in Brazil. The furious passions of the Portuguese must have been vented upon victims who did not always share his sexual tastes. The sadistic impulses of man towards woman in Brazilian society can be traced to the relationship of the master’s son to the slave boy, companion of the white child in the big houses. Through the submission of the black boy in the games that they played together and especially when they played levapancadas (take a drubbing), the white boy was often initiated into the sadism that he displayed in his later years. The sadism of the small boy or the adolescent was transformed into a taste for administering thrashings or for pulling out the teeth of the slave who had stolen his sugar cane. More sordid actions were displayed as the adolescent entered manhood. It would come out through his passion for giving violent or perverse
commands, either as lord of the manor or as the university educated son occupying an elevated political or administrative position.

One result of this sadism, the sadism of the conqueror towards the conquered, of the master towards the slave—was its extension in the relationship between man and woman of the big houses. The woman was sexually and socially repressed, living under the shadow of her father or husband. A feminine variety of sadism could also be observed when the woman became a great lady. The slaves, especially the mulatto girls, were often treated in the worst possible manner, the reason very often being envy or sexual jealousy.

This sadism of the master and the corresponding masochism of the slave, exceeded the sphere of sexual or domestic life. It made itself felt throughout Brazilian history in a broader social and political life where the passion for command has always found victims upon whom to vent such zeal with sadistic pleasure. The majority of those who may be called the Brazilian people is still experiencing the pressure exerted upon it by a government that is masculine and aristocratic though headed by people who boast themselves as liberal and revolutionary.

The conservative tradition of Brazil has always been sustained by the sadism of the command, disguised as the principle of authority or the defense of order. Between the two opposite mysticisms, that of order and liberty and that of authority and democracy, the Brazilian political life, emerging from the past experiences, sought to strike a balance. The balance continues to be struck between the sadist and the masochist, master and slave, highly educated and the illiterate, individuals with sophisticated culture influenced by Europe and people with absolutely indigenous culture. The interconnection and fusion of diverse and even antagonistic cultural traditions occur freely in Brazil. But since there are yawning gaps between the two cultures, fusion is achieved only with great difficulty.

This economic, political and cultural dualism—the dichotomy that exists in the Brazilian society—that of master and slave, sadism and masochism, white upper class and black and indigenous people—all these might have contributed to the philosophy of Paulo Freire.

II

The Portuguese did not encounter in Brazil a highly formed civilization as the Spanish encountered in other parts of Latin America—the Aztecs, Mayas and Incas. Theirs was not a meeting of two highly developed cultures. What the Portuguese saw on the shores of Brazil was bands of grown-up children with an incipient, unripe culture. The Amerindian reaction in Brazil was one of pure vegetable sensitivity and contractibility, with the Indians shrinking back out of an incapacity to adapt to the cultural standard of the Portuguese.

Hybrid in constitution from the very beginning, Brazilian society showed less disharmony than what was evident in other parts of America—North or South. The conquerors derived the maximum benefit out of their interaction with the conquered race. A society was constituted that was Christian in superstructure, with the recently baptized native woman as the wife and mother of the family who, in her
domestic life and economy, made use of many of the traditions, experiences and utensils of the autochthonous folk.

For the formidable task of colonizing so extensive a territory as Brazil, 16th century Portugal had to avail itself of the manpower that was left there, after the adventure in India and Africa. The leftovers consisted mostly of the mozarbic and poor who did not have much racial consciousness like those of fidalogs and the Portuguese of the North. The lustful inclinations of individuals without family ties and surrounded by Amerindian women in the nude served the powerful reasons of the State to populate the new land with mestizo population.

The native woman should be seen not only as the physical basis of the Brazilian family. She should also be considered a worthwhile cultural element in the formation of the Brazilian society. With the contribution of the primitive woman, Brazilian life was enriched with a number of the food items and habits that the Brazilians display today. Drugs and household remedies, various traditions bound up with the development of the child, a number of kitchen utensils and processes linked with tropical hygiene which include taking bath regularly - all these helped stabilize the new society in Brazil. The indigenous woman taught the Brazilian Portuguese the use of hammocks to sleep or to use it as a voluptuous couch. She used coconut oil for hair. She also contributed personal neatness, bodily hygiene, corn, cashew and porridge.

The Amerindian culture at the time of discovery was nomadic. It was a culture of the forest. Agricultural civilization had not yet sprouted there. Of course, a rudimentary agricultural practice had started; manihot, cara, maize, jerimum, peanut and papaw were being cultivated. This kitchen gardening was the pre-occupation of women. Men despised these tasks. They were mainly hunters, fishermen and warriors.

It is generally assumed that when two cultures meet, the so-called ‘superior’ culture tends to dominate the other. In many cases, as a result of this domination, the other culture becomes extinct. From the 16th century onward, the missionary has been a great destroyer of non-European culture. Under the influence of the fathers of the Society of Jesus, colonization took a puritan turn. This stifled much of the native spontaneity. The Jesuits substituted the songs of the aborigines which were filled with flavour of life in the wilds, with dry and mechanical hymns of devotion. Upon the natural regional differences in speech, was superimposed a single tongue – Portuguese. The caboclos were compelled to do away with the dances and festivals that were impregnated with the instincts, interests and animal energy of the conquered race.

The Jesuits sought to destroy or castrate, every virile expression of religious or artistic culture that was not in agreement with catholic morality or European conventions. They took away art from life. And a foundation was laid in Brazil for an art that was not an expression of the physical and psychical energy of the people. An artificial culture was imposed upon the people.

However, even in the face of a constant endeavour to erase the Amerindian culture, the primitive people retained some of their cultural traditions. The Jesuits segregated the aboriginal population in large settlements. This altered the very
rhythm of their existence. People accustomed to a scattered and roaming life were pressed into an immobile and forced settlement.

The harmful effects – depopulation, degeneration and degradation – were the results of contact with the ‘superior’ culture. The food habit as well as the mode of labour were changed and this affected their metabolism. Many diseases took epidemic proportions when these affected the indigenous people.

It has been pointed out by many experts\textsuperscript{11} that the standard of physical cleanliness of the aborigines was far superior to that of the Europeans. The aborigines were used to taking bath everyday – and some several times each day. The Europeans did not bathe even once a month. When the Jesuit padres clad them, they resisted this alien culture constantly. The garb was coming into the way of their natural contact with nature.

Thanks to some chroniclers\textsuperscript{12}, we are now acquainted with many of the intimate details of the daily life of the aborigines; for example, the sexual division of their labour. The work in the field was wholly assigned to the women. They also tended children and cared for the house. The males used to plant trees in the forest, as well as burn the forest down and clear the land. They were also assigned to look for firewood to be lit near the hammock. However, the chief responsibility of the male was to furnish the village with meat and fish and protect it against enemies and wild animals.

Beside some activities which were shared by men and women, cotton-fibre hammocks and ribbon-like lace work were exclusively made by women. The older women were entrusted to make the flour. They were also assigned the task of making clay vessels, for example, jugs for wine and pots for fermenting beverages. The women planted crops and fetched water from the springs. They also prepared food and looked after the young ones. In the primitive community the old women had a very important role. Importance of women in general was also very great. The art of ceramics must have been the woman’s gift.

Artistic production that was exclusively or principally the work of men consisted of making bows and arrows, musical instruments and certain ornaments. In building houses, men laboured much and also built fences around the village for protection. It was the task of men to fashion out the canoes out of a single log.

The primitive people of Brazil used manihot flour as the staple food. It was more wholesome than wheat, say chroniclers. It was digested easily. The Brazilians all over the country took a liking for this over wheat. The native delicacies made of manihot flour betrayed familiarity of old knowledge – so much so that the Brazilians of today forget that this is basically the forest culture that remains with them. The taste of the palate, the rhythm of the daily speech and many other cultural traits the Brazilians have come from their Tupi or Tapioca ancestors.

The hammock including the hammock-cradle was handed down by the natives to the Europeans. Many an illustrious personality from the Northeast were reared in the hammock. The Indian child grew up free of corporal punishment and of paternal or maternal discipline.

The primitive people of Brazil had no idea of private property. It was in sharp contrast to the Portuguese colonists’ notion about property. The cultural differences
came in sharp focus when the two communities came into closer contact with each other.

Indigenous women came into the lives of the colonists as wives, concubines, mothers of families, wet-nurses and cooks. Through these diverse roles, the native women found outlets for self-expression in activities suited to their sex and this gave them stability which was not available in a nomadic life. The indigenous man, on the contrary, found life among the colonists almost impossible to bear. He had either to work hard in the field or he was forced to read books or do sums which the padres wanted him to do. These activities had the effect of diverting his energy into channels that were most repugnant to the primitive man’s mental framework. The padres did not allow them to get familiar with the European tools. But these were the very things they wanted most. Other practices offended an instinct in them that was deeply ingrained - the sexual division of labour being the most important. They were segregated and interned on plantations and large villages. This was wholly foreign to their normal way of life.

The indigenous male child, who had just developed the milk-teeth, was taken out of his mother’s lap by the padre. He was the axis of all missionary activity. It was through this that the child would gradually be reared by the missionary. The padre would fashion his ideal being. In course of time, the indigenous lad would become the accomplice of the invader in drawing the bones, one after another, from the native culture in order that the soft portions might be readily mixed with the patterns of catholic morality and European life.

In regard to the mode of intellectual intercourse adopted by the Jesuits, the Indian lad was both the master and the disciple. The padre while speaking Latin to the Indian lad, was learning the indigenous language from the speech of the listeners. This provided him with an insight which contributed immensely to the knowledge of the language, custom and culture of the indigenous people. In other spheres also the Indian lad was the master: the master, the teacher of his own parents, of the elders of the community, of the people at large. The Indian lad was the ally of the missionary against the practitioners of magic and medicine – a great helping hand for converting the heathen. Through the Indian lad the whole village would praise the glory of Jesus and Mary in the Tupi language. They would even greet each other in Tupi as they do in Europe – so great became the influence of the converted Indian lad.

Out of this collaboration of the Jesuit father and the Indian youth sprang Brazilian music and poetry. From the first century of colonization, an astute compromise was effected between the Catholic liturgical style and the native forms of songs. In Brazilian lyrical poetry of the era of colonization, the Jesuits taught those songs which resembled the songs of the Tupinabas. These songs therefore played a vital role in attracting the natives towards Christianity. In an age when popular songs were forbidden by the church, in an age when poetic feelings of the multitudes were completely suffocated and atrophied, the colonist by way of giving expression to the longing in his soul never tired of repeating those sacred compositions which the Jesuits authorized.

During this period something fundamental was emerging: the missionaries’ efforts for the fraternization of races. The padres had accorded equal treatment to
the students in the class in the 16th and 17th centuries—both the Indian and Portuguese
children were treated alike. The chronicles of those periods show no discrimination
or segregation due to race or colour. Classes in the schools were a process of coedu-
cation of the two races and an assimilation of two cultures—one that of the sons of
the soil and the other of the Portuguese conqueror. The patio of such establishments
bore this order with maximum ease. The indigenous traditions met and mingled
with the European ones. There took place an interchange of games and playthings—
new words were in the process of being shaped; the young Indians’ double–stringed
bow for hunting birds, the paper kite of the Portuguese children, the rubber ball, the
dances—all began to intermingle.

Later, the missionaries, due to their orientation or through force of circumstances
came to adopt methods of rigorous segregation of the natives in ‘aldeias’ or
missionary villages. Apologists of this system justified this forced isolation as a
remedy against the demoralizing influence of the lax Christians. Through this forced
separation from social life, from their own community, or that of the conqueror,
they became an artificial population, living apart from the colonial one, a stranger
to the latter’s necessities, interests, and aspirations. Thus the indigenous people
become like a community of grown up children in a state of paralysis—men and
women incapable of normal life and normal development. The next generations of
padres did not always remain faithful to the ideals of the first missionaries.

When the ‘heroic age’ of the Jesuits in Brazil had passed, a number of missions
became something similar to export warehouses, dealing in sugar and drugs, and
mate and cacao. The natives then were reduced to mere instruments for commercial
exploitation. The missionaries were then accused of promoting marriage of Indians
with black women and men, baptizing the off-springs as slaves. Many padres
profited from the slave traffic.

Fleeing not only segregation and a sedentary mode of life but violence of the
benefactors as well, in the missionary villages, many of the christianized natives,
especially men made for the jungle, without a thought of the women and children
they were leaving behind. The situation became even more acute when, as the
powerful civilizing mechanism of the Jesuits was dismantled, the natives found
themselves, on one hand, in the light of the morality that had been imposed upon
them, under the obligation of supporting their wives and children, and on the other
facing the economic conditions that made it impossible for them even to support
themselves. The exploitation of the native worker had been so systematized, to the
benefits of the whites and the church, that the indigenous worker would receive
only one-third of the normal wage. Due to sheer economic reasons many indigenous
families broke up. Under such circumstances, the infant death-rate increased and
birth-rate decreased as a result of abortions. Thus the Jesuit experiment of bringing
civilization to a people without setting up a permanent economic base led to an
artificial form of labour incapable of surviving the hothouse atmosphere of the
missions, thereby contributing greatly to the degradation of the race it was supposed
to serve.

The method connected with the capture of the native and his/her segregation as
well as excessive forced labour on the plantations or in the missions hastened their
depopulation in quite an infernal manner. The methods of capturing the natives and interning them were so cruel and inhuman at times that the percentage of mortality was more than that occurred when African slaves were captured, transshipped and exploited. The expeditions carried out in the Amazon regions for supplying slaves or help for the plantations of Maranhao and Para were so atrocious that only one-half arrived at the destination and the other half perished during transport. According to some authorities, the number that perished was more than what arrived. And for those who arrived at the plantations, especially of sugar, the continuous back-breaking toil they had to contribute was too much for them to bear. Moreover, the diseases that the primitive people acquired upon contact with the whites, and the ill-treatment they received were the causes of their illness and death, notwithstanding the laws against it. It was a common practice to brand the captives with hot iron so as to distinguish them from free people and also to enable the master to recognize him/her. The wars waged by the Portuguese, with an obvious technical superiority on their side, for repressing and punishing the natives had much to do with the depopulation of the native stock. The victors often displayed their superiority over the vanquished by tying the latter to the cannon’s mouth. They would inflict upon them tortures borrowed from classical antiquity and adapted to the conditions in the wilds of America. One of these methods consisted in tying the victim to two fiery horses, then releasing the animals in opposite directions. In the North of Brazil, this horrible ‘punishment’ was modified by substituting for the horses a couple of canoes to which the victim was bound. The canoes were paddled away from each other while the body was torn into two. The Government, as a means of raising funds for the building of churches would engage in ransoming of the Indians captured and brought from the backlands to the plantations in such conditions that only a third would survive.

The service of the Indians was so indispensable for the colonists that they were unable to do anything without them. This was in the second century of colonization. The plantation–owner was a parasite on the Indians. Everything depended upon the slave whose good right arm was his/her only wealth. The colonists were bent upon getting as many such arms as possible because only these could help the owners acquire the wealth and prestige they so hankered after. But these hands could readily be rendered useless owing to the unhygienic effect of the new mode of life. The stationary and continuous labour and the diseases acquired through contact with the whites or through the forced or continuous adoption of their customs–diseases such as syphilis, small pox, dysentery etc–worked havoc on the primitive people.

A document of 1585 records that there was no food available in the market since the inhabitants did not have slaves to plant and harvest their crops. Another document of 1580 suggests that a terrible epidemic of dysentery killed off thousands of captive Indians. Both the slave-holding system and the Christian missionary activity accentuated the racial divide. The Portuguese tendency to have slave labour, a policy imported from Portugal, found the American Indian an easy prey. The number of Indians possessed by a colonist, whether addressed as ‘pieces’ or ‘administradores’ or ‘help’ became an index of his power and social standing. With his Indians as his capital the owner installed himself on the land. Each ‘piece’ was
equivalent to certain amount of money. Debts were paid, provisions were acquired with these pieces or by ‘ransoming’ them. Therefore, the natural economic policy was geared towards possession of slaves, that is Indians, human beings who could be exchanged like coins. It was also natural that the capital had to be renewed due to old age, sickness and failing health. Due to excessive oppression most of the Indians in the North East Brazil living in the coastal areas perished within the end of the sixteenth century.

The indigenous people had to fell trees, transport timber to the ships, harvest crops, hunt and fish, defend the master against enemy tribes and foreign mercenaries, and guide explorers through the virgin jungle. The aborigines came to realize what was meant by servile labour. He/she was no longer the free savage that he/she had been in the early days of Portuguese colonization. He/she was not yet uprooted from their physical and moral environment—hunting, fishing, making war etc so far as the male members were concerned. This uprooting came with an agrarian form of colonization. It came with monoculture, represented chiefly at this stage by sugar that exterminated the Indians.

III

Every Brazilian carries with him or her the shadow of the aborigines or the black people. In everything that the Brazilian loves—music, speech, delight of the senses, gait, cradle songs—he/she bears the mark of that influence: of the female slave or nanny who rocked him/her to sleep, who sucked him/her, who fed him/her by mashing his/her food; the influence of the old woman who told the Brazilian child his/her first tale of ghost or ‘bicho’; the mulatto girl who relieved the white Brazilian of his/her bicho de pe (a type of flea that burrows beneath the skin of the feet); the mulatto girl who initiated the white adolescent boy into physical love; of the black boy who was the first playmate.

The importance of the black in the aesthetic and economic life of Brazil is inestimable. It was greater along the agrarian seaboard. The contribution of the black people in the technical and artistic capability of the Brazilian is very high. The Mohammedan blacks who were brought to Brazil from Africa were deeply influenced by Islamic teachings. Their culture was superior to that of the natives. They were also superior culturally to many of the white Portuguese who had almost no education and who were semi-literate. The Male uprisings in Bahia in 1835 has been identified by experts as an outbreak or eruption of a more advanced culture sought to be trampled by another, and a less noble one. In the slave shed in Bahia in 1835, there were more literate people than those in the Big Houses. Brazilian society in its formative stage benefited from the best of African culture. While importing blacks to Brazil, the Portuguese colonialists had among others, the following needs and interests: lack of white women; technical skill for working on metals; capability to work in the sugar plantations etc.

The slaves that came from more advanced areas of culture were active, creative and noble and kept their imprint in the formation of Brazil. If they occupied a lower rung in the social ladder, it was due to their condition as slaves. Far from being
merely draft animals and workers with the hoe, they fulfilled a civilizing function. They were the right hands in the formation of the Brazilian agrarian society. Their contribution was felt much beyond the realm of agriculture. They were masters in iron mining, cattle-raising, culinary art etc.

Brazil not only took from Africa the topsoil of a black people that was to fertilise the cane fields, and coffee grounds, assuage its perched lands, and fetch the wealth afforded by the patches of *massape*. They also served as “mistresses of the house” for the colonists who were without white women. They were cloth and soap merchants, schoolmasters and priests for the praying Mohammedans. There were intimate connections between the Brazilian and African coasts. There exist interesting data regarding the trade between Bahia and the African cities of Lagos and Dahomey at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The trade was conducted by former slaves.19

The Sudanese people brought as slaves from Africa had a high degree of intellectual and social capability. Many revolts of the slaves, including the Bahian revolt of 1835, were connected to the Sudanese Mohammedans. As a result of this religious strand, Catholicism was infused with Islamic influence like animism and fetishism of the natives. This Islamic influence affected the Catholicism of the Big Houses though the padres were opposed to it. The padre school master worked hard to mitigate the corruption of the Portuguese language by the native and African dialects.

The Mohammedan blacks of Brazil, once they had been distributed in the slave huts of the colonial Big Houses did not lose contact with Africa. They had constant touch, through various means with the advanced cultural areas of their native continent. They would import religious articles and objects of everyday use from their homeland: kola nuts, cloth, soap from the coast and oil from the dende palm.

It is quite interesting to note that, down to the end of the 19th century, repatriation of Haussa and Nago free men and women from Bahia to Africa had taken place. It was these free men and women repatriated to Africa who founded the city of Porto Seguro. The relationship between Salvador and Dahomey was so close that heads of many commercial houses received honorary distinction from the Government of Dahomey.20

Often the influence of the black people in the Brazilian way of life is confused with the effect of slavery which deeply influenced the Brazilian social plastics. At times, what appears to be the influence of race is purely and simply that of the slave, of the social system of slavery, a reflection of the enormous capacity of the system for morally degrading both the masters and the slaves. The Brazilian black appears, throughout the Brazilian colonial life, as being deformed by slavery and the one-crop system.

It is the habit that makes the monk; so it is true of the slave. The black person was often obliged to divest himself/herself of the male tunic and to don the ‘tanga’ of the filthy slave ships. He or she had to often put on a pair of sack cloth to become the bearer of ‘tigre’ or the fecal urn. Slavery uprooted the black from his/her social environment and turned him/her loose among a strange and hostile people. In such surroundings, in contact with forces so discordant in their effect, it would be absurd
to expect of the slave any other deportment than that immoral kind of which he/
she has been so commonly accused.

The effect of African diseases upon the physical constitution of the Brazilian
people is often emphasized. It is therefore important to note that it was in Brazil
that the blacks became syphilitic. The contamination occurred in the colonial slave
quarters. It still now is the custom to blame the ‘inferior race’ for everything that
the present day Brazilian finds to be a handicap. But it was from the superior race
that the great veneral malady spread to the slave huts and brought havoc. The masters
of the Big Houses infected the black women of the slave-huts. Very often the latter
were virgins, girls of twelve or thirteen years.

The principal causes of the abuse of the blacks by the whites are to be looked for
in the economic and social conditions favourable to masochism which were created
by the process of colonization by the Portuguese–with almost no women to begin
with. This has also to be sought in the slave-hosting system with the all-powerful
masters interacting with passive slaves; such factors explain those sadistic forms of
love which still are prominent among the Brazilians.

Through the old black women and nurses and nannies of children, African
stories, – animals fraternizing with human beings, talking like them, marrying,
feasting and so on – came to be added to the collection of Portuguese tales imported
to Brazil. The language of the young likewise grew softer through contact of the
child with the black wet nurse. Certain words that are hard or sharp-sounding when
pronounced by the Portuguese are much softly pronounced in Brazil owing to the
influence of the African palate. The climate is also another corruptor of the European
tongue in tropical and sub-tropical Brazil.21

The black nurse very often treated words the way she prepared food: she mashed
them, removed the bones, took away their hardness and left them as soft and
pleasing as possible in the mouth of the white child. For this reason the Portuguese
as spoken in the North of Brazil, is one of the most melodious forms of speech to
be found, anywhere in the world, it is claimed.22 And it was not merely the language
of children that was softened in this fashion, but the language of the adults too. The
tongue, through the contact of the master with the slave, went through a softening
process.

Black mothers and slave girls, allies of the boys and girls as well as of the ladies
of the Big Houses, created a Portuguese language that was different from the stiff
and grammatical tongue that the Jesuits endeavored to teach to the young Indian
and semi-white pupils in the schools. It was also attempted by the priestly school
masters and plantation chaplains. All these efforts were in vain too. However, these
attempts to preserve such linguistic rigidity enhanced the disparity between the
written and spoken language in Brazil. There were even, for a time, two spoken
languages: one of the Big Houses and the other of the slave huts. But the alliance
of the black nurse and the white child, of the slave girl and the young mistress, of
the young master and the slave boy combined to do away with this dichotomy. In
Brazil, the African tongue without any motive for continuing a separate existence
in opposition to the language of the whites, got dissolved in the latter, enriching it
with expressive modes of speech and with delightfully picturesque terms that were
new and untamed in flavour. This colloidal mixture replaced Portuguese expressions that were worn and spoiled with usage.

As soon as a child began to crawl in the big house, a slave about his / her own age and sex was given to it as playmate. They grew up together. The slave child was made the stock upon which the young one gave vent to passion. The slave child, as it grew up, was sent upon all kinds of errands and received the blame for all unfortunate accidents. In fact, the white child, thus, was encouraged to become overbearing.

Sadist and masochist tendencies developed in the white and black adults respectively out of this relationship. It was true both for the males and the females. Like the male white child, the white girl child usually displayed a sadistic bent, owing to her fixity and monotony in the relationship between the mistress and the slave girl. Without contact with the outside world, with no other perspective than that of the slave-hut, as seen from the verandah of the Big Houses, these ladies preserved the same degree of domination over the housemaids as they exercised over the black girl children who were their playmates.

Some experts claim that the mistress was more cruel than the master in her treatment of the helpless black maids. There are stories of mistresses who had the eyes of a pretty mucama gouged out and then served to their husband as dessert. There are tales of young baronesses of adult age who, out of jealousy or spite, had 15-year-old mulatto girls sold off to old libertines. There were others who had kicked out the teeth of their women slaves with their boots or who had their breasts cut-off, their nails drawn or their faces or ears burned. The motive was generally jealousy, sexual rancour and rivalry.

In the schools of the colonial time, there used to be a certain laxity that was seen in the excesses, turbulence and perversions of the young; there was also a criminal abuse of childish weakness. The teachers took a real delight in humiliating the child, in doing him bodily violence. This was a reflection of a general tendency to sadism that developed in Brazil due to slavery and abuse of the blacks. The teacher was an all–powerful master. Looking down from his chair, which, after independence, became something very much like a royal throne, and with the imperial crown carved in relief on the back, he delivered punishment with the terrible air of a plantation-owner giving a thrashing to his runaway blacks. The one who did not apply himself to the lessons as he should have was asked to stand with his arms spread apart; the one caught laughing aloud was humiliated by having a dunce-cap put on his head, to make him the laughing stock of the entire school; others would be forced to crawl on knees over grains of corn. There were also the ferrule and the rod, – the latter often, with a thorn or a pin stuck at the end of it – to permit the teacher to hurt a pupil from a distance.  

SECTION – 2

I

The rural patriarchy of Brazil began to lose its grandeur with the arrival of Dom Joao VI in Rio de Janeiro. The discovery of the gold mines in Minas Gerais was
already hurling deathblows to these patriarchs. Brazil therefore ceased to be a land of brazilwood and sugar plantation from this time onward.

The presence of a prince with royal powers and bourgeois tastes as well as those of the queen, court, nobles, soldiers, foreign diplomats, doctors, musicians etc. brought about many changes. The first secondary school, the first library and the first bank were established. These ushered in a profound change in the colonial society. These changes began to strengthen the power of the crown. Industrialists began to wield power in the urban centres. The crown began to interfere with the powers of the patriarchs. The erstwhile sugar barons and rural patriarchy revolted in 1720. This further strengthened the hands of the crown and helped centralise royal power. The independence of the planters, Paulistas, Mineiros, and the ranchers was curbed substantially with proportionate reduction in their arrogance.

In Pernambuco, the lines were drawn up between the backwoods aristocracy and the bourgeoisie of the mansions of Recife. The bourgeoisie were now in collusion with the king and at odds with the plantation owners, their former allies. The higher echelons of the establishment were now allies of the aristocracy – the rural patriarchy. This redefinition of forces was evident in the Peddler’s War which ended in victory for the urban interests. This also led to a resurgence of urban life – commercial and industry. The Spanish and Dutch domination of Pernambuco during 1580–1654 further accentuated this bourgeois development.

Recife, a simple fishing village around a church, developed into one of the finest cities of the colony, and one of the best cities in the entire continent during the Dutch rule. There were four-storey houses, royal palaces, bridges, canals, a zoological garden, an observatory, Calvinist churches, synagogues, etc. Foreigners of various nationalities mingled freely with local inhabitants. The city life reflected massive urbanisation. However, after 30 years of Dutch domination (1624–1654), the North returned to its agricultural and religious routine. The adventure of differentiation in language, culture and religious belief gradually waned and became a memory. Nevertheless, the time of the Flemings left in the Brazilian North, principally in the tenant farmer, a taste for the experience of something different from the drab monotony of life in the shadow of the Big Houses. The urban taste began to be felt by the inhabitants and visitors alike. Free mestizos, artisans and traders of European origin who composed a big chunk of the new urban population retained a taste for material well-being which was encouraged by the Flemings. The Flemings brought to this colony of backwoodsmen novelties of a magical world – the resources of the new industrial civilization and middle class values.

Brazilian documents of the 18th century give evidence of the emergence of a new class thirsting for power. The members of the middle class and the rich merchant community were bent upon destroying the monopoly of the privileged families of landowners in the legislative assemblies and senates. Adventurers who had struck it rich in the mines or had made it good in business converted themselves into ‘mansion merchants’. This new class was hungry for power. The planters and ranchers held this new class in contempt.

However, culturally, still, the rural gentry held their sway. The greatest ambition of the trader and Portuguese immigrants of humble origin was to enter into the
ranks of the rural gentry – even if symbolically. Marriage was often the ladder by
which many of these successful businessmen, of modest background, climbed up
the ‘social ladder’. The social ascent of elements of the town mansions to the
manor houses of large plantation owners became more frequent in the nineteenth
century. This was due to the growing prestige of the city-dwellers. The emergence of
a new brilliant section of society – lawyers and doctors, some of them sons of artisans
and shopkeepers by black or mulatto women; the growing dependence of the
plantation owners on their commission merchants and agents who dealt in the slave,
sugar and coffee trades; the dependence of sugar farming on banks that provided
credit; all these undermined the prestige of the landowners who were often in debt.

The cities took away from the plantations their most illustrious sons, including
those who opted for priesthood or a career in the military. The poor-endowed, or
those having no desire to leave, succeeded in the majority of the cases in the
management of rural properties which were shrinking in importance and size being
divided up among distant heirs who were not interested in farming.

This should not, however, give one the idea that the great landowners, so
prosperous in the early days of colonisation, wound up as King Lears; that they
were betrayed by their learned sons and daughters who deserted the Big Houses of
the plantations; that they were betrayed by the King who was once their ally; that
they were forsaken by the Church. The drama of the decay of their power, which at
one time was almost absolute, is not that simple, nor the rise of the bourgeoisie was
that swift.

The farming pattern, rather monoculture, so destructive for the land, continued
throughout the patriarchal period. This is true for Maranhao and Para in the North,
Pernambuco and Bahia in the North-east as well as Minas Gerais, Rio and Sao Paulo.
They planted only in the cleared forest since this involved minimum effort. Even
during high market prices of sugar, the owners of lands and slaves showed little
profit due to such lethargy. During the period under consideration, i.e. end of the
18th and beginning of the 19th century, the Brazilian society became consolidated
around a strong government. The law courts became quite independent in their
delivery of judgement. Even the clerical establishment showed a high degree of
resilience. This period was also marked by more independence of the lesser beings.
There was less domination of the son by the father, of the wife by the husband,
of the individual by the family, of the slave by the owner. There was greater
individualism of women, children, the blacks and indigenous persons.

The English, with the help of local entrepreneurs, modernized the system of
transportation. City services like lighting, road surfacing and sanitation improved.
Life became freer from domestic drudgeries. The streets, once occupied only by
the poor, including free black people, peddlers and street urchins, acquired status.
Industrialization brought in its wake manufacturing. Factories were established for
making soap, candle, and cloth. Cabinetmakers, hairdressers, tinsmiths, blacksmiths,
dressmakers, cheese producers were setting themselves up in workshops, foundries
and shops. Children went to schools and academies. It was a period of balance
between the individual and the collective. The ability to imitate the foreigner and to
assimilate their culture brought about an urbanity which was non-existent before.
There was nostalgia for the past grandeur and glory; but there were also expectations of modernity.

The city square gradually triumphed over the plantation. But it still respected and even maintained some of the idiosyncrasies of the plantation Big Houses. Brazilian patriarchy did not come to terms with the urban culture immediately. The rural Big House and the city mansion maintained distance from one another for quite sometime. Only gradually did the rural patriarchy come to terms with the ways of the town and the street. The woman remained indoors even in the city mansions. The stores sent to the mansions parasols, shoes, ribbons, ivory combs, hair ornaments, satins etc. The young ladies, imprisoned indoors, would purchase the items according to their desire and taste. They would only visit neighbours and friends occasionally in a covered carriage to show off their recent acquisitions. The peddlers often visited the city mansions to sell their merchandise – satins, ribbons, bottles of perfume, dresses. However, in the cities, the peddlers were shorn of the air of grandeur that they displayed in plantations in earlier times.

Women first began to appear before strangers in Rio de Janeiro. But the rules slackened only gradually. The only women encountered in the streets were black and mulatto girls. Even men kept indoors. However, in Recife and Sao Luis de Maranhao, men spent their afternoons in the street. There, they flirted with the mulatto girls and discussed everything under the Sun seated on benches.

It was almost an adventure to go out into the street after dusk. City streets used to be pitch black; the alleys narrow; there were mud puddles; chamber pots were emptied in the middle of the street; carcasses were strewn all around. In Bahia, Vila Roca and Olinda, a passer-by ran the risk of getting tipped and falling.

The average town-dweller did not take sufficient exercises to remain fit. Confining themselves to the house, and remaining seated most of the time, they usually became victims of a state of fatal laziness. It was to avoid contact with the man in the street that the members of the nobility shunned contact with the outdoor.

However, the city for all its shortcomings was showing improvements over the rural areas. Epidemics like small pox and other devastating diseases could be combated better in the cities. The city in alliance with the Church introduced in Brazil not only hospitals, asylums, orphanages etc. but also public medicine, scorned by the patriarchal families. The black slaves developed a sense of solidarity of race and class. Among the people of the so-called lower classes, there developed a cooperative association with a sense of ethnic brotherhood and militant defense of the rights of the worker. In this connection, it is worth mentioning the founding of Palmares by runaway slaves in 1631. They fled the various plantations with weapons and tools to the interior of Alagoas. There they set up a ‘Republic’. Their capital was a fortified stronghold in a palm grove. From time to time they would raid some Dutch or Portuguese settlements. Their number grew gradually. It required the combined efforts of troops of several captaincies to destroy the settlement seventy-six years later. Some of the inhabitants committed suicide instead of returning to their former state of servitude. Palmares was a real attempt at independence based on the extension of a para-socialist type of culture. Historians claim that the inhabitants of Palmares stored crops in community granary, pooled in their resources in clearing
the land, on the ranches and at the mills. The same cooperation was seen in the street, in the market place, and in ensuring food supply among the inhabitants. A city of straw shacks arose by itself, amidst the forest, in opposition to the Big Houses and stone mansions. It was the first city to rise up against the plantation. Its technique of working the land was the fore-runner of the diversification of crops in contrast to the predominant monoculture of the white planters.

Another example of cooperation was shown by the slaves of Ouro Preto. Here, they systematically joined hands for securing slaves’ freedom. Led by a slave called Francisco, a large number of slaves in the mines of Ouro Preto bought their freedom with their work. First an elderly man would buy his freedom; then the son’s freedom would be bought. Later, father and son together would secure the freedom of the stranger. In this way, many bought their freedom and ultimately became owners of the Encardideira mines.

The former slaves of Ouro Preto organised themselves even better than the white merchants and artisans into a brotherhood known as Saint Iphigenia. They built a church. There, on auspicious occasions, they celebrated with great merrymaking the festival which was more African than European. The main feature of the festival was dance which they did to the sound of African beats. They danced in the street in front of their Church. It was religion which provided them with a holiday air and excitement on the streets of the old cities of Brazil.

The rich came from the plantations and ranches to accompany the processions. The fronts of the houses used to be whitewashed and adorned with draperies. The brotherhood paraded through the streets strewn with sands and leaves; the spaces between houses were adorned with hangings brought from India. The Governor, the bishop, state officials, all participated in the procession. Some of the ladies used to be dressed fashionably, others in antiquated garments. At times, a black man would slash himself or be slashed by razors by others – some would hold his intestines, carrying the body and its parts in a hammock. The processions with bands of music were the meeting place of the Capoieras. Their counterparts were the hired gunmen of the plantations.

Music flourished in the city mansions. In 1850, anyone passing through the streets of Rio de Janeiro would have heard, instead of the sound of the guitar and harp, pianos played by the young ladies of the Big Houses for the exclusive enjoyment of the whites of the upper class.

The contact with English fashions increased after the arrival of Dom Joao VI and exerted a marked influence on the customs and domestic architecture of Brazil. The influence was more pronounced in Pernambuco, Bahia and Rio before it made itself felt in Sao Paulo, Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul. What attracted the foreigners was the wealth of the plantation aristocracy enriched by sugar.

In the second part of the 19th century, coffee took predominance over sugar. Then the houses of the North lagged behind in comfort and opulence from those of the South. The streets were becoming more elegant. However, the distance remained between the street and the house.

The newspapers regularly carried advertisements for sale of black girls and boys. The Diario do Rio de Janeiro of January 28, 1821 carried an advertisement
for the sale of a black girl brought up in a mansion. There were advertisements that
highlighted the ability of the slave to sell merchandise on the street.

The relative ease of life in the sugar-growing region, already affected by the
discovery of gold, declined still further with the initiation of coffee plantation. In
the cities, the mansions owned by the planters degenerated into barns. Rats, bats
and ghosts were taking over the neglected houses. The bank rules became steadily
more stringent for the planters, while prices of slaves skyrocketed. Interest rates
rose so high that the sugar plantations were threatened by paralysis and death. The
ranches of the South began to absorb the slaves of the North. They were left
without slaves.

The prestige of the matured person was so great in the Brazilian patriarchal society
that the child, ashamed of being a child, tended to ripen prematurely. He took pride
in a precocity, which relieved him of the humiliation of being a child. Because of
the prestige claimed by advanced age, the youth imitated middle-aged men. They
attempted to conceal behind bushy whiskers and glasses or at least by a stern
expression, all the glow of the youth, the joy of adolescence. Up to a certain age,
the child was idealized. He was identified with angels, going about naked in the
house like infant Jesus. If the child died at an angelic age, it became an object of
adoration.

But the adoration of the child antedated his reaching the age of reason. Within
his 10th year, he turned into a child devil. He neither ate at the table nor shared in
any way in the conversation of the grown-ups. He was a superfluous being. Since the
adolescent was looked as an alien being, sinful by nature, of a lazy wicked bent, he
was punished severely. The white boy was punished by his father, mother, grand-
father, grandmother, in short, all the elders of the household. Such punishment came
from adults in whom the habit of absolute command, as well as responsibility, over
the slave had developed into an inclination to mistreat children. This system of the
Big House continued in a slightly attenuated form, in the big mansions in the cities.

In patriarchal Brazil, the authority of the father over the minor son – even one
who was of age – was carried to its logical conclusion: the right to kill.

The administration of justice by the patriarch to the members of his own family
members, even in matters of imparting education of their children, took at times
sadistic character. This sadism was only slightly modified when the patriarchal
system of the Big Houses was transmitted to the city mansion.

With the decay of the rural patriarchy, the sadistic pedagogy, exercised at home
by the patriarch, the tutor, the chaplain, got a terrible lease of life in the religious
and state schools. The parents delegated to the teachers and priests the authority to
punish.

If the child did not behave of his own accord, he was made to do so by every
means, even the most cruel. Men who from their infancy suffered like slaves at the
hands of those in authority became stammerers as a result of the despotism of their
fathers and tutors.
The religious school, occupying a huge building, is one of the landmarks of Brazil’s social landscape. It points to the decadence of the all-powerful patriarchy of the Big Houses. During the first century of colonization, the Jesuit school, in cities like Salvador, was already in competition with the plantation houses and the city mansions, in extending its authority over children, women and slaves.

The education system of the Jesuits employed the same method of domination. They employed the same determination to break down the individuality of the child with a view to making him a passive and submissive adult.

The barracks of stone and cement, in which the Jesuits started their first schools, produced the first educated men of Brazil. These people were to become the first university graduates, the first magistrates, priests, judges – men of the city rather than of the country. The literary culture, which made its precocious appearance in colonial Brazil, is indebted to them.

The organisers or consolidators of civil and intellectual life, the revolutionaries of Bahia and Vila Roca, the poets, orators, writers of colonial days had nearly all studied with the Jesuits. The desire for a Bachelor’s degree awoke early in the Brazilian youth. The judge’s robe gave a nobility of its own to the pale adolescent who graduated from the Jesuit’s school. They preceded the University graduates of the nineteenth century who brought about abolition of slavery and proclamation of the republic. All the precocious and melancholy learning emphasized once more the fact that the Jesuits had imposed its discipline and manners on the more intelligent of the colonists and the little ones wrested from the Indian settlements by stern discipline and a policy of ‘spare the rod and spoil the child’, a tradition that remained in force in the religious schools until the end of the nineteenth century.

The Jesuits of the 16th century gave exaggerated importance to the intelligent child with a literary bent, metamorphosing him into an almost sacred being in the eyes of the elders. They, i.e. the elders were filled with admiration for their sons who were so brilliant, gifted and superior to them in attainments. This status was achieved by sacrificing the child’s childhood, stifling his spontaneity, drying up the well spring of his youth. Other religious orders, taking a leaf from the Jesuits, started teaching of young people and charted out even a gloomier output.

The seminaries and Jesuit schools, which operated in Brazil during the most difficult times when the society stood quite fragmented, had a great effect in the integration of Brazilian society. During these centuries of settlement, there were uprisings, revolts, petty interest of the family and private property getting preponderance over general well-being. One of the powerful factors in that integration was the influence of those schools upon the sons of the rich and the young mestizos, and through them on the more refractory social and cultural elements of the population.

Students who studied in these schools brought an element of civility and universality to a society powerfully influenced by the aristocrats of the Big Houses and the patriarchal mansions in the cities. In their attire and mode of living they represented a growing tendency towards the prevalence of European ideas.

The influence of the religious schools and the teaching of the chaplains, resident priests and other teachers and educators restrained the marked differentiation between
the language of Brazil and Portugal. The differentiation took an alarming proportion in the agrarian zones. There the black slave lived in the house as a member of the family. Even a century ago, members of some illustrious plantation families could be identified by special defects of pronunciation which they picked up from their black house-servants. In some regions, the manner of speaking is even now characterised by a peculiar intonation.

The priest tutor was almost a purist, aiming at the language of the Big Houses or city mansions which should not have a trace of the speech of the black – uncontaminated by the slave quarters and the shanties. The religious schools aimed, too, at unifying, mobilizing and Europeanizing the Brazilian upper class.

In the closing days of the colony, Portuguese rulers, in open conflict with the legislative bodies, plantation owners, and other powers that be, sent out as governors young men not more than 30 years of age. This jolted the prestige of the elders. It was during Pedro II’s reign that the practice became manifest and young men systematically began occupying posts reserved for the elderly. With the social and political rise of the young men, respect for age, which until the beginning of the 19th century had been almost a religious cult, began to wane. This was the beginning of the decline of paternalism, which saw the grandfathers being discredited. It was the beginning of the emancipation of the child from the tyranny of the adult, of the student from the tyranny of the teacher.

III

In the patriarchal regime, woman was made as different as possible from man. He was strong, she was weak. He was noble, she was beautiful. She was delicate, soft, motherly – without a trace of masculine vigour and ability. The reason for preferring such type of women was perhaps the desire to eliminate all competition posed by women for the economic and political control wielded by men.

Evidently, there was a dual standard of morality – one for the man and another for the woman. Men were allowed every opportunity for having social intercourse, and contacts of all sorts. However, women were confined only to domestic duties. The system imprisoned women while liberating men.

The ‘typecasting’ of woman in the role of a frail, neurotic, sexual, religious, romantic being was largely due to economic, social and cultural factors which sought to repress and deform women, widening her hips, narrowing her waist and rounding her figure in keeping with the taste of the dominating sex.

The sexual division of labour found in the so-called civilized societies – where domestic activities were performed by women and extra-domestic activities by men – was not existent in the amerindian societies which the Portuguese encountered in Brazil. There, the activities performed by women were not limited to domestics alone. In the primitive societies, there is a resemblance between man and woman; a tendency of the two sexes to become integrated in a single figure. The Botocudos, a primitive tribe inhabiting the eastern part of Brazil, did not have exclusive men and women but men-women and women-men. There are tribes not only in Brazil but elsewhere in the world, where domestic labours are performed by men and
extra-domestic tasks by women. The women in these societies are lean and angular and men are fat, voluptuous and curved. Under a system in which one sex is dominated by the other, this tendency toward the single or common type of woman-man and man-woman which is so characteristic of primitive society, disappears. The difference between the sexes is so accentuated in a patriarchal system that it is shameful for man to resemble woman and vice-versa.

A whole body of facts justifies us in deducing that the artificiality or unhealthiness of the fragile or languid type of women created by the patriarchal system in Brazil gave rise to not only an exaggerated code of etiquette but, as experts suggest, a profoundly erotic culture. The portrait of the woman, reflected in this etiquette and culture, if examined, will reveal that there exists a Narcissism on the part of the dominant sex, the man. He approaches this soft, delicate creature pretending to adore her, but in reality to assert himself.

The women in the patriarchal era in Brazil, especially those living in city mansions, took great pains to attire themselves when they appeared before men on festive occasions or in the church. The woman sought to express her difference not only from the opposite sex but also from women of other classes and races. It used to be reflected in her excessive adornments, laces, feathers, ribbons and jewelry.

The crafts, before they became industrialized around the middle of the 19th century, were mostly domestic crafts of the ladies of the Big Houses and city mansions. Social psychologists suggest that idleness stimulates eroticism in women. In man’s absence, this eroticism finds sublimation in self-adornment.

In Bahia, during the first half of the 19th century, the coloured women, for the most part, had their hair cut short and covered with a turban. To an outsider, this appeared to be a manifestation of cleanliness. The hair of women hailing from aristocratic families used to be full of lice. However, they would let their hair grow as long as possible as a mark of their social standing. Some native-born black and mestizo women also let their hair grow in an attempt to imitate the aristocratic ladies.

One traveller in the middle of the 19th century saw many Africans living in Belem do Para. Some of these were slaves of the fine city residences and the nearby estates. Some were free too. Those free could be distinguished by their shoes which they alone had the right to wear and which they never failed to display proudly.

Even men in patriarchal Brazil used to be highly ornamented when as lord of the manor and master they appeared in the street or at some celebration. The super adornment of the rich city dweller consisted in the use of charms attached to his watch chain, of rings on most of his fingers, of gold-headed canes and sunshades and at times daggers, of fancy hair-cuts and whiskers, of perfume on his body. The blacks or slaves of either sex were forbidden the use of gold jewelry or charms. The female home-slaves who went well-dressed and covered in jewels were seen as alter-egos of their white mistresses.

In studying the political and literary history of Brazil during the patriarchal phase it was revealed that the majority of the members of the ruling class were inclined to favour a subjective, superficial approach. Simultaneously, they had a marked lack of interest in concrete, immediate and local problems. This almost
total lack of objectivity may partially be attributed to the slight or the non-existent part played by women in artistic and political activities. Brazilian politics, literature, education and social welfare suffered from the lack of a feminine touch during the splendor and decline of the patriarchal system. Only slowly, emerged the enlightened woman.

In the later part of the 19th century appeared Narcisa Amalia in the realm of letters. Then a Carmen Dolores. And still later, a Julia Lopes de Almeida. Nigia Floresta’s appearance was a startling exception. A Brazilian woman of the mid-19th century, she distinguished herself for her intellectual attainments. She lived in Europe for sometime when she befriended Auguste Comte.

Recife, in 1848, made preparations to hold a grand masked ball. It was encouraged by the newspaper ‘Diario de Pernambuco’ which wrote in an article on February 18, “Pernambuco, whose capital rivals the imperial court in luxury and refinement, should not remain the victim of the prejudices of the eighteenth century, when the windows were covered with close-woven blinds. Our doors with screens….” Accordingly a great pavilion was built in Recife which resembled a pagoda. There the masked ball was held. A huge edifice stood with rows of chairs on the right for the ladies and on the left for the gentlemen. Only those who wore mask were allowed to dance. The mask was considered sacred. Intoxicating liquors were absent. This refined, fashionable, silent carnival, with its silken elegance existed along with the other common, noisy, plebian celebration, with its opportunity for the young to give free rein to their youth, the blacks to their Africanism, and slaves and children to shout, dance and be merry.

The society was so full of oppression, repression and overprotection of women that the carnival served as an outlet to men and women, children, blacks and indigenous people alike. The masked balls gave these people much psychological relief. It also lowered the social barriers for a part of the population who were bound on weekdays by strict norms of behaviours which could be transgressed on the weekends and festive days.

In the semi-patriarchal life of the mansion–dwellers, the social positions of many a well-born young lady were broadened through a variety of contacts beyond the four walls. There arose many opportunities – theater, the open window, classes in dancing, music, and French etc.

However, the avenues to take part in extra-domestic activities were minimal even in the urbanized regions in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The absolutism of the paterfamilias in Brazil began to fade as other masculine figures gained prestige in the slave-based society: doctors, priests, directors of schools, provincial presidents, chiefs of police, judges, business agents, to name a few. Institutions grew up around the Big House, diminishing its importance and overshadowing it. With the emergence of these figures and institutions, women, in turn, began to free themselves from the excessive patriarchal authority. Together with the children and the slaves, they achieved a higher juridical and moral status. There also took place marriages of the wealthy white girl, the daughter of the planter or a city magnate with the poor university graduate, sometimes a mulatto or the soldier of lower social strata.
The Church, which had fought so tenaciously to exercise authority over the family through the Jesuits in the first century, was forced to capitulate in the second. Later, it recovered certain of its supposed rights and part of the spiritual and moral prestige it had lost as a result of complete surrender of the family chaplain to the paterfamilias. The newly gained authority contributed to the decline of the patriarchy of the plantation house and the city mansion.

Early in the 18th century, in spite of large numbers of unmarried men in the captaincy of Minas Gerais, many girls were forced by their tyrannical fathers to enter a convent where some of them pined their days away in virginity. Some fathers wanted the honour of having a daughter as a nun. Others wanted to avoid the fate of selecting a son-in-law from among men whose whiteness might be open to doubt. One patriarch was reported to have stabbed to death his own daughter, suspecting that she was having an affair with a young man of low-extraction.

The house is one of the most powerful social forces of human experience. The Brazilian patriarchal system frowned upon the street since it represented contact with the outside world. However, contacts began to be made as the city grew, but the system endeavoured to segregate the house from the outside influences. But it resulted only in a limited success. The Big Houses in the sugar plantations were highly insular. Certain extreme features of this isolation were corrected in the city mansion.

Since the towns and cities grew up without plan, out of necessity, the growth was spontaneous and haphazard. There used to be narrow, cramped houses, filled to overflowing with people. As early as 1640, people arriving from Europe had nowhere to stay. Some important people wanted to build houses for the common folk – especially for the new arrivals. But more influential people bought up land in areas slated for development. The rents of houses and rooms reached unbelievable figures.

With the richer burghers moving out to houses that were in the outskirts of the city, the central portion became the business centre as well as the living area of minor government officials, employees of the West Indies company, artisans, workmen, soldiers, sailors and prostitutes. They lived in the most deplorable and unhygienic conditions. This happened noticeably with the growth of the city of Recife.

Recife, with its tenements and houses of ill-fame, was one of the main centres of syphilis in Brazil. The port prostitutes were the principal spreaders of the disease. Not only black, mulatto or half-bred women but also Dutch blond women (during the Dutch occupation) excited the desire of the city bred.

New Holland was the first attempt at urbanisation in Brazil. There the mansions were more numerous than the modest houses or shanties. The province of Pernambuco provides the perfect example for study of the influences of two types of colonization – the urban and the rural, the Dutch and the Portuguese. The Dutch were centred around the city mansion with houses resembling tenements.
growing around it. The Portuguese plan was based on the Big Houses of the plantation surrounded by slave quarters. The urban life was not much superior to the rural life. There were cases of unfaithful men and women. The women were severely punished for such offences. There were numerous instances of bigamy. Diseases like dysentery and influenza, due to polluted water, were common both in the mansion and in the shanty. The city of Recife was a veritable hell due to sexual aberrations. Even priests were suspended from the order for taking advantage of confessionals to seduce young penitents.

Drinking was another vice which took on alarming proportions in Recife during the Dutch occupation – probably because of the greater predisposition of the people of the North towards alcohol. However, this observation should not be generalised as the common people did not have the money to buy even a cassava or a manioc meal. There was an imbalance between the urban population and the availability of foodstuffs – mainly due to monoculture. The imbalance accentuated due to the gold fever in the 17th century.

The mining cities grew up in size, with the poorest among the population suffering from lack of adequate supply of foodstuff and high prices. The lucky adventurers who found gold rose in the social scale, becoming planters and owners of city mansions. They butchered their hogs and turkeys and fattened their dairy cows. The rest of the population continued with the minimum of nourishment. The army officers shamelessly cornered the meat market in the North and grew rich at the expense of the poor. The speculators in food stuff in Minas Gerais were the friars.

With growing urbanisation, the situation became worse. The soaring cost of meat, vegetable and milk alarmed the economists of the day. Some of them diagnosed that the problem was created due to reduced production and growing demand. Some attributed the crisis to the shortage of labour due to tapering-off of the slave-trade as well as the high mortality among the slaves. Some held the opinion that the root cause was an overriding concentration of labour in the cultivation of the export product to the neglect of home-consumption.

It was precisely in the large monocultural provinces that the cost of living skyrocketed by the middle of the nineteenth century. Pernambuco and Bahia were devoted to the production of sugar. Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo concentrated on coffee. The agricultural products consumed in cities like Rio, Recife, Salvador or Sao Paulo were supplied by the provinces of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Mato Grosso, Piaui etc. Some products were imported – tea, cheese, wine, oil etc. Europe supplied salted codfish. Meat came from Montevideo and Buenos Aires. Prices increased further at the hands of speculators.

The shanty dwellers rarely ate any meat or fish in the monocultural provinces. Chronic ulcer and night blindness assumed endemic proportion among the slaves and city poor. Women suffered from miscarriages.

The black slaves of the coffee plantation had to gather coffee at night, even during the rainy season. Excessive work, an insufficient diet, rigorous punishments made the slaves suffer. These miserable beings were veritable money-making machines. The coffee boom represented transition from a patriarchal to an industrial
The mortality rate among the workers was alarming. A slave was bought with the idea of utilizing him for a year. During this period, which often extinguished the slave’s life, he was forced to do enough work to repay his master’s initial investment and also gave profit to the owner. The planters who bought one hundred slaves calculated that by the end of three years only twenty-five would be still alive.

Black and mulatto slaves used to run away from the coffee plantations. In the cities they worked as tinsmith, cabinetmaker, blacksmith etc. and gained professional and social advancement. Attractive mulatto and black women became mistresses of the recently migrated Portuguese or Italians. These women worked as laundresses, vendors and in other similar professions. A few ended up as the wives of the new masters. Others, who were not so fortunate, ended up as ruffians, thieves and prostitutes.

The newly arrived immigrants from Europe, belonging to the working class section, lived in homes which were worse than the shanties. These houses were low, small and with a minimum number of windows. Often these had no floors. Only a roof protected from sun and rain. There were others, which were made of clay with a tin roof and a floor of only bare earth. These places were terribly crowded too. Compared to these tenements, many shanties were better. These had a roof of two or three layers of sape grass, like what the primitive Indians built. The roof afforded protection and comfort.

With growing urbanisation, the lower classes began to be housed in tenements. It started in Dutch Recife. These were built on the river-fronts. In Rio and Olinda, the poor lived in the houses built on the foot of the hills. The wealthy, Jesuits and friars quickly took possession of the hills to build their mansions, churches and convents. To the poor were left the stinking mudholes, mangrove swamps and marshes. Shanties and shacks sprang up in the low, foul parts of the city. As the swamps and marshes got filled up, the rich began to come down from the hills to take possession of the lower parts of the city as well.

The poverty visible in the making of the shanty, still seen in Brazil over large areas, is not due to any lack of building materials. The poverty of the great masses of the Brazilian population compounded with the mobility with which many of them moved from one place to another in search of livelihood, do explain the construction of these hovels. The land in urban Brazil was so heavily concentrated in the hands of a microscopic minority that millions of Brazilians did not possess even a square foot of land. Only a few thousand owners of factories, ranches, rubber plantations, coffee-groves and cane-fields controlled the whole of Brazil. They were also the owners of tenements, settlements and hovels.

Salvador preserved in the 17th and 18th centuries the rustic air of the countryside. There were charming gardens between houses. Woods existed within the city. The mansions of the wealthy rivaled those of the plantations in terms of expanse of the buildings and space given over to cultivation of fruits and vegetables. The mansions had everything, including black slaves imported directly from Africa, Europe or the Canary Island. The cities therefore spread out enormously to accommodate the woods, gardens, sea, slave-quarters, warehouses, coffee bushes, virgin
forests etc. The topography of the cities like Recife did not allow horizontal expansion. These urbanised vertically. It was in Recife that the unique urban architecture of buildings first appeared. Houses rose up to six-storeys and these were owned by the wealthiest few.

The cleanliness of the houses and their inhabitants sharply contrasted with that of the city. The cleaning of the streets, yards, beaches and roofs was left to the vultures or the tides. The beaches below the walls of the city residences of Rio, Salvador and Recife were places where no one could walk, let alone bathe. The garbage used to be dumped there. Barrels of excrements, litter and the refuse of the houses and streets were emptied on the beach. Dead animals and murdered slaves were thrown there. The sea was synonymous with filth. The river, on the contrary, was a noble place. People bathed in the river in the morning and rowed canoes or boats in the afternoon.

The shanties preserved over the years the primitivism of the early days of colonisation. They were the refuge of the mestizos, of the run-away slaves and of the free black. These also housed the whites who had become socially integrated with the half-breeds and the blacks. For many blacks and mulattoes, eager for freedom, the shanty was preferable to the slave-quarters made of stone and mortar. The slave-quarters were also in reality shanties, each cabin being about 12 sq. ft. or smaller and without even a single window.

There were huts of straw standing in the swamps especially near the places where the black slaves used to disembark from the ships. These were, perhaps, the first slums of Brazil erected on muddy grounds or mangrove swamps, land that was good for nothing and uninhabitable.

In other shanties, built on other swamps, the poorest section of the free inhabitants of the city of Rio took refuge, that which would later build its miserable favelas, on the hills.

Brazil’s patriarchal society began to show degeneration as the slave-labour monoculture no longer remained sustainable. This was the beginning of the nineteenth century. Many slave owners had to feed themselves on the earnings of the slaves. A large majority of the plantation owners became quite restless. Some even wanted a democratic order whereby they would be able to get rid of their creditors. Most of the plantation-owners were in a precarious situation. Many who were born rich found themselves as poor in their old age.

By the end of the 18th century, the planters who lacked the means to substitute the slaves and animals with machinery or tools, neglected the labour force at their command. The slaves flogged and fed on a miserable diet began to die in large numbers.

The city began to flourish. In the middle-class residences luxury reached heights rarely attained by the Big Houses of the plantations. Some of the wealthiest planters of Rio, Bahia and Pernambuco converted their city houses into mansions. Big businessmen, their agents and brokers were masters of equally sumptuous houses.
The prejudice against the traders was no longer felt so strongly by the planters as they competed with each other in extravaganzas.

From the beginning of the 18th century, the monarchs of Portugal had been conferring prestige on the peddlers to counteract the excess of economic and political power acquired by the planters. By the beginning of the 19th century, the Brazilian Press began to glorify the image of the merchant, the industrialist, the artisan.

By the second decade of the 19th century, many persons in Rio de Janeiro felt that the national industry should be further stimulated. It was being ardently desired that machines and models that would bring about freedom from foreign technical supremacy should be encouraged. Industrialists and businessmen began to be conferred titles of nobility by the king. Many who started their career as mere clerks were now respectable citizens in the era of transition.

As was expected in a patriarchal society, those who excelled in business or commerce or in industry often assumed titles of ‘colonel’, ‘field marshal’ or ‘brigadier’, thus imitating the rural patriarchs or urban nobility. Successful clerks in time became barons, viscounts or grandees. Tradesmen, manufacturers and even highly skilled craftsmen came to be outwardly identified with the nobility. They possessed huge mansions, fine carriages, resplendent uniforms and glittering decorations. It was possible for the half-breeds, mestizos and coloured persons to rise to the social position of the whites.

The attitude of the nobility towards commercial enterprises underwent a change. The prejudices against trade and commerce were becoming modified. Some of the nobles got themselves involved in manufacturing. However, the importation of slaves continued unabated though industry, trade and commerce were flourishing. The intellectually advanced members of the rural gentry accepted industry, craft, and even trade without giving up the system of slave labour. Hoe and slaves continued to be employed in place of farm implements and machinery as late as the eighteenth century. Transportation was carried out by river. For overland, the oxcart was the only option. Yet, in spite of the edict of 1785, which forbade creation of factories, rice-hulling units, cotton gins, sugar mills, distilleries etc. were being established and operated exclusively by slaves.

In the social plane, free blacks and mulattos imitated the dress of the wealthy whites. While trying to free themselves from the past, the newly liberated slaves imitated their former masters in dress, gestures and postures. Nothing made a former slave or his son so happy as to put on the frock-coat of a doctor or the uniform of the National Guard. Private diaries of many a famous black or mulatto officers will testify how much they suffered when they were mocked in the street for wearing the uniform of an officer of the National Guard. The black woman who sported the French hat, instead of the turban, received the same ridicule.

The villages of shacks, huts or shanties which grew up in the cities under the Empire resembled the African style of living which the former slaves wanted to reproduce. Some of these villages took on aspects of organisation of the African tribal families with ‘fathers’, ‘uncles’ or ‘foster fathers’ in supra-family communities or ‘republics’. The traditional phrase among the free blacks when they moved from the slave-quarters to the shanties is meaningful: ‘Now I am going to have a window
and a back door’. It was complete negation of the typical slave quarters which had neither a front window nor a back door, reduced in effect being a prison cell.

VI

During three centuries of relative isolation, emerged the typical Brazilian – the master and the slave. There also developed an intermediate species – the mulatto. He was coming out into university graduates, or a priest, or a doctor, etc. He had his academic diploma or appointment as captain of the militia. These were his certificates for whiteness. A weak middle-class was bourgeoning.

Observed carefully, many Asiatic, Moorish or African characteristics could be discerned. The houses definitely had Asiatic characteristics – the roofs, balconies. The mode of transportations – palanquins or litters were similar to those in use in Asia. The feminine habit of sitting cross-legged on mats and carpets were Asiatic too. Painted tiles on the front of the houses, fountains and wells were Moorish. The table china came from India and Macao. The Portuguese colony of America had taken on qualities and conditions of life which were quite exotic. Over 300 years Europe had changed beyond recognition – industrial, commercial, mechanised, a triumph of the middle class. But then the reconquest of Brazil by Europe commenced. It continues; however, with an essential difference – the new European is a citizen of the USA.

Asian, African or indigenous elements bequeathed a colorfulness which was tropical. The houses, palanquins, women’s shawls had bright colours. So was the interior of churches. Red, gold and scarlet were frequently used. Furniture were painted red or white. The Oriental tone began to fade in contact with Europe. Black, brown, gray and navy blue replaced red, gold, scarlet and white.

With European influence the dress of the Brazilians and especially children began to show marked changes. The entire upbringing of children was re-Europeanized as Brazil came into contact with the ideas and fashions of England and France. Life became artificial. It stifled the senses and deprived the eyes of the taste for the pure and natural. However, also came in its wake the ideas of Europe. The patriarchs and clerics had dried up this source.

Like monoculture which laid waste the physical landscape, the Jesuit schools laid waste the intellectual landscape. Lost were the relationships between human life and nature, the curiosity of learning, the pleasure of knowing, the joy of the adventure of the mind, and the unravelling of nature through scientific explorations. These forgotten desires, pleasures and adventures were transmitted to the Brazilians toward the end of the eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth centuries by the French and Anglo-American revolutionaries and idealists.

The French and English teachers and the Encyclopedists instilled among the Brazilians a sort of liberalism and opened to them new zones of sensibility and culture, restored, to an extent, their intellectual spontaneity and the ability of discriminating, criticizing and creating.

The Jesuits had created small elites of scholars to whom the reading of Latin was the only reading that was considered worthwhile. Anyone reading a story or a novel in the vernacular felt the mistrustful eye of the Inquisition upon him.
The only intellectual pleasure of the Bachelors or Masters of Arts educated by the Jesuits was to read and learn by heart the old Latin poets. The teaching of Greek never acquired the same importance as that of Latin.

The Franciscan friars established in 1772 in Rio the first institution, which could be called a University. They included Hebrew and Greek in their curriculum. The official study of French and English dates from the same period. The study of modern European languages revolutionized the life of the Brazilians. Study of French helped the Brazilians to come in contact with the revolutionary ideas of the French Revolution. The various revolts in Minas Gerais and Pernambuco in the early 19th century owe their inspiration to these ideas. French books were in great demand by the beginning of the 19th century.

The North-easterners, however, had the opportunity to hear various tongues and speak many languages when Recife was occupied by the Dutch. Dutch was then taught in the schools created for the indigenous people by the Calvinist pastors and missionaries. Thus the Northeast was first exposed to the ideas of the world.

Bahia became the first centre of medicine in Brazil. Dutch-Jewish Recife became an important centre of intellectual differentiation. Under Count Maurice of Nassau, in a grove of cashew trees, the first observatory of the Americas was built. A botanical and a zoological museum were also constructed. The Catholic monopoly was broken here.

In Dutch Recife, as already noted, grew up a multiculturalism as the French, Dutch and Germans, Christians and Jews, blacks, mulattos and mestizos, Catholics and Protestants intermingled with each other over a period of thirty years. In the streets one could hear several of the African languages. Hebrew used to be taught in the synagogues. The Dutch domination was an epoch of transculturation. The influence of the Sephardic culture and Jewish trade, developed a kind of cosmopolitanism which was not visible in other parts of colonial Brazil.

With the decline of the slave-based economy, a middle class culture became relatively important as foreigners began to come as craftsmen, dressmakers, doctors, midwives, dancing and language teachers, governesses, workers, builders, masons, cabinetmakers, carpenters, farm workers and small farmers.

VII

The patriarchal Brazilian society was basically divided into two distinct classes – the rulers and the ruled. The rulers included the white European invaders and their descendants. The ruled, who were utilized as instruments of production, were natives and Africans and their descendants, pure and mixed. Thus on one side of the social divide remained the masters and on the other, the slaves. Sometimes, between the two, remained the products of miscegenation. This brought about the shifting of individuals and even whole families from one class to another, from one race to another, regardless of biological or even cultural differentiations.

The sociological study of Brazil reveals a process of initiation, flowering and decay of the patriarchal form of family organisation, economy and culture. The amalgamation of races and cultures acted as a solvent of the system of relations
between people. This amalgamation of race and class did not bring about violence. The tendency, as claimed by experts, was towards interpenetration. This resulted in a slow democratization of the archaic system. This process of democratization gave rise first to subjects and then citizens. 

The transfer of individuals and even whole groups, from one social level to another, became one of the strongest stimuli to the development of the so-called individual forms. This weakened the patriarchal structure each passing day. 

Among the Brazilians of the countryside, there were the indigenous people and even mestizos, who lived around a catholic church presided over by a Portuguese priest. They dressed and spoke like the Portuguese. They retained the indigenous method of building their dwellings, the use of hammocks for sleeping, clay cooking utensils and two-string bows. They ate manioc. Their greatest ambition was to be looked upon as Portuguese. From this desire, they even hated their own indigenous brethren, whom they called tapuias. 

These people were not to be confused either with the slaves or the tenant farmers. The paternalism of the missionaries had not prepared them for a full life as subjects. And they were not subjects of the land-holding masters. Theirs was a special status – almost as that of free individuals. What they lacked was the initiative to assert for their rights. Their submission to the vicar or priest was spiritual. 

The colonialists did not care for the cultural differentiation that existed among various groups of the indigenous population. The patriarch lumped them together with the black slaves. However, they enjoyed certain rights which were forbidden for the blacks. They could ride horses and go out hunting in the jungle with dogs. They could also smoke tobacco. The blacks could neither ride horses, nor hunt with dogs nor smoke. 

The war against the Dutch provided an opportunity to the blacks in the North to rise to the rank of the nobility through military service. The conflict between the trading class in Recife who had emigrated from Portugal and the planters of Olinda took the shape of a veritable civil war. In this part of Brazil where Portuguese colonisation struck deep root, the distinction of colour and class was clearly marked. 

The Brazilian social ecology always reserved the work of menial labour as something distinct from the job of a gentleman – the former being reserved for the black slave or ex-slave. This tradition continued during the republic down to the present age. 

Brazilian social formation reveals varying predominant elements depending upon the complex of religion, class and race: the whites in relation to the coloured; the owner of a plantation or ranches in relation to poverty-stricken tenants; the masters in relations to the slaves; the old Christian in relation to the new Christian; the native-born Brazilian in relation to the Portuguese or the naturalised Brazilian; the inhabitants of the Europeanized seaboard in relation to the remote interiors. In spite of such inversion or confusion, there were some features in the Brazilian culture, which were preserved as characteristics or peculiarities of class, race or region. St. Benedict, thus, was a saint of the blacks, St. Onofre was the saint of the poor. Samba was for a long time a dance of the slaves and the blacks; The disdain of the progressive Brazilian for the straw-thatched hut or shanty was for a large
measure his association for centuries with a class, race or region looked upon as inferior.

No backwoods man was allowed to come to the city trotting or galloping. Those who would do so would be fined 30 milreis if they were freemen and receive three dozen lashes if they were slaves. Among the ordinances of the city council of Recife, the following is noteworthy: Ordinance promulgated on December 10, 1831 by which the blacks were forbidden “to shout”, scream or cry out in the street – a restriction directed against the Africans and their religious processions. Black porters were forbidden to go about the streets “between nightfall and sun up”. No black slave could go about in the city of Recife by day or night, with a dagger or any arms, visible or hidden, under penalty of suffering 50 to 100 lashes in prison depending on the type of arms. Those games were forbidden “in streets, squares, beaches or stairs, which negroes and vagabonds are in the habit of playing under penalty of two to six days’ imprisonment, if they were free or twelve to thirty six stripes in prison … if they were slaves.”

Anyone found “naked on the shore” or “taking a bath uncovered, without due decency” would be punished by imprisonment or lashing. In spite of these measures, it remained a common custom for the poor in Recife to bathe nude … men, women and children bathed naked with the greatest non-chalance. Slaves and backwoodsmen were forbidden to wear jewelries. The hatred and discrimination against the blacks and slaves were so pronounced that if they complained against maltreatment to the police against their masters, they were doubly punished then and there for daring to do so.

VIII

The Orient contributed to the cultural contents of the Brazilians in various ways. The coexistence of the noble and ignoble classes as were evident in the hierarchical family and social life; ways of living, dressing and transportation which affected the ways of thinking. At the close of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, Brazil had an enormous Asiatic presence: palanquin, rush mat, market stall, public fountain, fireworks, concave tiles, women’s shawls and turbans. Whitewashed houses in the shape of a pagoda, the Indian coconut, palm and mango tree, sweet rice and milk with cinnamon, the cloves of Molucca, the cinnamon of Ceylon, pepper of Cochin China, the tea of China, the camphor of Borneo, the nutmeg of Banda, the fabrics and porcelain of China and India, the perfumes of the East; all these formed a mixture of nature and culture in Brazil.

Until the transfer of the court of Portugal to Rio, the seat of European culture was Portugal. The Iberian culture was never exclusively European in Brazil but to a large degree an admixture of Nordic, Moorish, Arabic, Israelite and Mohammedan cultures. To this was added the cultures of India, China and the Far East.

With the growing presence of the British in the economic life of Brazil during the 19th century, those favouring Westernization found the oriental presence awkward. Even ‘European’ trees and plants began to replace the oriental and African ones. The Brazilians began to see themselves through the eyes of the foreigners – meaning the Nordics.
Against the preference for ‘cover’ – both natural and social – the new Brazilians wanted ‘unshadowing’. This meant carriages to be fitted with English glass instead of curtains, wide streets replacing the narrow ones, substituting the capes, mantles, mantinillas or shawls with transparent French veils, unshadowing of men’s faces by the use of English razors; unshadowing by means of the western system of illumination replacing whale oil, tallow and candle; unshadowing customs, manners, habits and gestures in the relation between man and woman.

Western techniques of production, transportation, and urbanisation pushed Brazil to a new era of material and moral existence. But these had their disadvantages too. Orientalism helped Brazilians adapt to the tropical environment. Unshadowing of Brazil interrupted this process. The tropical rays of the Sun or the rains cannot be fought without shades. Narrow streets, shawls, broad parasols or shade-conferring trees offer people protection. Curtains, shutters, blinds, mats give a soothing environmental effect. Brazil learnt these through experience and contacts with the Orient. Brazil was a vast Portuguese Goa. The meeting of East and West produced an admixture of culture which took into account the color, landscape and human beings.

Economically, Brazil and the Orient came closer through both regular and irregular commerce. Malabar, the oriental textile center, supplied the Brazilian demand of cloth. Before the advent of the British in the scene, Brazil imported cheap cloth for the poor and slaves from India. Glass beads, pearls, corals, knife with wooden handles, bullets, pistols, swords, daggers etc were exported to Brazil from the Orient. Huge quantity of tobacco and rum were sent through return voyages. The human traffic from Asia and Africa took place, vigorously at times, over the centuries.

The idea of importing more whites to Brazil gained ground during the 1850s. Some doctors were vociferous against importation of Chinese labour, though, from the hygienic point of view, the Asians were much more clean in their habits than the Europeans. With the advent of industrialization, especially in Great Britain and France, oriental products began to lose out to the West. Brazil became a semi-colony of the West. The very landscape which for long had been shaped by the forms and colours of the Orient, was altered.

English ships, bound for the East Indies, China and other countries of Asia, used Pernambuco, Bahia and Rio as their ports of call. Thus, in addition to the ships from India, English and Anglo-American ships came to Brazil for reprovision, repair and other purposes. And during such calls, these ships traded with the local inhabitants. The official policy of Portugal did not approve of such trades. When Brazil became independent, direct trade with England started. But the English were not enthusiastic about the trade between Brazil and the Orient. Many items from India and China used to find their way to Brazil. An inventory of 1828 suggest that Indian cloves, yellow wax, tea, Indian china, porcelain, ivory, trays, jewel boxes, furniture, etc. were some of the items that entered Brazil.

Diamond, emerald and ruby rings imported from India were marks of an aristocratic status. The sedan chair, common in large cities, till the early nineteenth century, was of oriental origin. So were the palanquins. As English products began to enter Brazil, the end of palanquins and sedan chairs came about. The Orient
began to disappear from stores, newspapers and advertisements, house-interiors and personal habits, as a result of incursion of European, mainly English, articles mass-produced in factories.

The custom of sitting cross-legged on rugs, mats or floors, fondness for parasols, betrothing of girls while still children to men sometimes older than their own fathers, of ladies not appearing before strange men, wearing of shawls or mantillas, liking of bright colours, strong perfumes and highly spiced dishes – all these gradually disappeared. The custom of bowing, kneeling in the street when monarchs passed, eunuchs singing in the church, all these also disappeared. Some of these customs were brought by the gypsies.

The great resemblance between colonial Brazil and Portuguese India was more than apparent. When the Portuguese court of colonial administration moved from Lisbon to Rio, one of the effects was the shifting of a large part of Portugal’s India trade to Brazil. Large quantities of cotton from India came to Brazil. Some were transshipped to various destinations, including the African ports and American ports south of the Equator.

The intense re-Europeanisation of Brazilian society at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which coincided with the decline of the patriarchal system, made the Orient remote and vague. So remote that gradually it had to be searched for in the archives and museums.

IX

Machines, brought by the English, replaced the slaves. The process liberated the blackman from slavery and serfdom. It also freed the animals which had hitherto been treated with unimaginable cruelty. The steam horse, emitting ear-splitting noise, invaded the patriarchal society. A new society began to evolve.

With industrialization, the free black or mulatto of the city became the most enthusiastic advocate of mechanization. He perceived in his mastery of the machine a way of bettering his social position, of improving his status and making himself important. In Pernambuco, during the first part of 1800, the majority of the best mechanics were of mixed blood. The European technicians and workmen, gradually transmitted their knowledge of the machines to the black and mixed-blood assistants who were intelligent and desirous for social advancement. This process took place in Pernambuco and Minas Gerais which were centres of social and technical revolution of Brazil during the early decades of the eighteenth century. In Rio de Janeiro, coloured women quickly picked up from French designers and dress-makers their art. They learnt not only their techniques but also their manners.

Workmen or clerks of English (rather European) companies during the second half of the nineteenth century began to marry into some of the leading families of the region. The colour of the skin, contributed of itself, in the presence of an ‘inferior’ race, an aristocracy of the whites. In certain cases, the parents of daughters of leading families or the girls themselves, saw in these fair-skinned Europeans, the necessary guarantee against the nightmare of the ‘throw-back’ child of colour, result of an union between coloured women and white men of earlier generations.
Introduction of European machines in the cities, mines and plantations, brought about a technical revolution. It was soon followed by a social revolution, as a new class of people, the technicians and the machinists appeared on the scene. They and their machines created a new social relationship which was quite different from that of the master and the slave. The new breed of mechanics or technicians were mostly mestizos and mulattos. Their sole asset was their newly acquired skill. The machine contributed to the emergence of a middle class of a middle race.

Newspapers carried advertisements of the new machines pouring in Brazil. Everyone was affected by the advent of the newer imports. It shook the foundation of the slave-based system. From 1808 to 1820, Brazil experienced an economic, social and technical revolution. Steel, iron, copper, lead, anchors, bullets, wire, harness, carriages and surgical instruments, door locks, copper roofings, tin sheet, nails and vats, furnaces, clocks, stoves and coal figured prominently in the list of imported items. Then came the service mains: water pipes into the houses; sewers to carry off waste to the sea or rivers; sanitary fixtures, gas pipes. These marked the end of the patriarchal era, of the public fountains, water brought by the slave, and night soil carried by human beings, streets illuminated by oil.

The most significant feature of Brazil during the period of the 19th century was the emergence of the college graduates many of whom were of mixed blood. This signified differentiation within the patriarchal society. The spacious big houses began to show a decline. The slave quarters transformed into shanty towns. The sons of big houses, trained in universities across Europe, began to assert themselves in the urban society. The sons of ‘peddlers’, the trading class, returned with an European education and became not only equal but in many cases, superior due to their higher attainments.

The college graduates occupied important positions in the colonial administration–even those educated in Brazil. They represented the political triumph of the refined city man. Those educated abroad, could not, in the beginning, reconcile with the physical and social environment of Brazil. The ideas from Europe, especially from France of liberalism, human rights etc. found in Brazil a new social force – the creative spirits of the black, the mulatto, the Indian and the mestizo creating a new Brazil.

The political rise of the university graduates revealed the transfer of power from the rural gentry to the intellectual aristocracy. For the mulattos and mestizos, a career in the Army was a viable option to rise in the social hierarchy. The war with Paraguay elevated many a person of mixed-blood to positions of authority.

From the beginning of the 19th century, mulattos began to emerge in great numbers from the tenements and shanties. There, the poorer Portuguese and Italian immigrants were ‘shacking up’ with black or mulatto women. These women, in many cases, represented a considerable economic asset for the newly arrived poor European immigrants. They worked as laundresses, cooks, candymakers, and doll makers.
The free mulatto of the city grew up in an atmosphere of antagonism between the shanty and the mansion, between the tenement and the suburban residence. With the gradual bridging of the gulf, the enmity between the coloured people and the whites deepened. The attitude of a large number of whites in Brazil – particularly of the European immigrants – was one of terror at the time of independence. Some advocated protection from some European power so that African elements could be checked. Some advised miscegenation. Colour prejudice contributed many a revolt and rebellion during this period. Colour of the skin or ancestry posed as a serious obstacle to social enhancement. Certificate of whiteness was the passport to social uplift.

XI

Sao Luis, capital of Maranhao, achieved bourgeois affluence by 1800. The population of thirty thousand could be classified as follows: the most powerful were the Portuguese, next came the descendants of Europeans who had settled in Brazil; then came the half-breeds. It included both the mulattos and the mestizos. The various shades of the colour of the skin were regarded as castes within a system. Those possessing a skin colour approaching the whites were favoured more. In Brazilian literature there is a chart called Table of Mixtures which is given below.

To become white
White and negro produce mulatto
   Half white half black
White and mulatto produce quadroon
   Three-quarter white and one-quarter Negro
White and quadroon produce Octoroon
   Seven-eighths white and one-eighth Negro
White and Octoroon produce white
   Completely white.

To become Negro
Negro and white produce mulatto
   Half Negro half white
Negro and mulatto produce quadroon
   Three-quarters Negro and one-quarter white
Negro and quadroon produce octoroon
   Seven-eighths Negro and one-eighth white
Negro and Octoroon produce Negro
   Completely Negro.

In a critical study of the folk-lores of Brazil one discovers the contempt in which a black person was held, even by his/her equals or near-equals.

The mulatto is the son of the white man,
The white man is the son of the king,
CHAPTER 1

The Caboclo, I don’t know of whom,
As he is son of the forest,
He neither wears shoes,
Nor talks aught but nonsense.

Or
An old nigger when he dies
Stinks like hell,
Mother of God, don’t let him
Go to heaven.

Or
The white man eats in the parlour,
The Indian in the hall,
The mulatto in the kitchen,
The Negro in the privy.

Even as late as in the middle of the 20th century, a black woman who ventured out wearing a ‘white woman’s hat’ covered with flowers, ribbons and feathers used to be jeered at by the street urchins.

In the 19th century in Brazil mortality rate was high among women and children. The husband as a rule lived on to a ripe age, with three or four successive wives, and six to eight children by each. It was not rare to find cases of brothers on their father’s side some of whom were white, some Negroid and some with an Indian admixture. The three races lived with the same patriarchal family name. This resulted in great social tension.

The religious traditions in Brazil bore the strongest African influence – more than blood, colour and physique. European religion could not conquer it. They acquired new forms through transculturisations with European and indigenous values. The Africanising influence was exerted by the mulatto nurses who taught the white children to talk. The first lessons in Portuguese transmitted to them African traditions, songs, and superstitions. The mulatto cooks Africanised the European cuisine. The beautiful mulatto women married white businessmen, army officers, police executives, sons of immigrant Germans, Italians and Spaniards.

The “saints room” and chapels of certain patriarchal city mansions in Rio and Bahia are still transformed on certain days of the year into veritable Voodoo shrines. The same candles which illuminate Our Lady with Infant Jesus in her arms are illuminating African divinities disguised as Catholic saints. Nobody is so deluded to think, as the ‘purists’ believe, that the Brazilians with their coloured cousins are really a Latin people. The doors of the shrines opened wide to admit African idols disguised as St. Cosme and St. Damian, coal-black St. Benedict or St. Iphigenias.

In the hands of image-makers, even Our Lady takes mulatto traits. And the most popular image of Christ in Brazil is that of a dark, pale Jew with black or at most brown hair and beard.

The most important characteristic of the Brazilian social milieu is the reciprocity of cultures. This has been brought about by intense social mobility between races, classes and regions across horizontal and vertical directions.
There is, of course, visible antagonism in social and cultural life. This is reflected in politics, too. Clashes and rivalries between groups and regions manifest them. There remains considerable inequality between the haves and have-nots in the industrial as well as agricultural spheres.

The meeting of cultures, like that of races, under conditions which do not sacrifice the expression of the desires, tastes, and interests to the exclusive domination of the other is often disposed towards development of new and richer cultures.

The greatest disadvantage lie in the isolation or the social gulf which hampers the possibility of contact between one group and another, one race and another.

SECTION –3

I

On 15th November 1889, in a peaceful ‘revolution’, the Emperor was made to quit the throne. However, in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, a few incidents took place in which the blacks, loyal to the throne, took to the street, unarmed of course, to protest against Republicanism. They were victims of violence unleashed by the whites who were supporters of Republicanism. This almost jeopardised the fraternization between blacks and whites achieved during the Paraguayan War. Needless to mention that the Republicans did not do anything to undo the past. They pledged to continue the policy of the Empire. Their slogan was ‘Order and Progress’. There took place only a transfer of power.

We shall now present a kaleidoscope of social and cultural realities which dominated the 19th as well as the first-half of the 20th century.

Manuel Bandeira learnt how to read and write in two Recife schools. This was during the last leg of the 19th or the first decade of the 20th. In neither of these schools, there was any playground. The use of *palmatoria* (beating by palm leaves) was still in use. The children played only at home or in the streets. School was a place of study only. There the children received punishment for the slightest demeanour. The street epitomised freedom – freedom from dull domestic and school routine.

The cult of blond, blue-eyed dolls among the upper class girl children during the second half of the nineteenth century had an element of Aryanism. One lady, born in Bahia in 1853, confessed that she considered blacks an inferior race, persons from whom one should maintain a social distance. Another lady, born in 1874, was convinced of the necessity to support white supremacy in Brazil. She was always upset at the news of the marriage of any relative with a person of colour. There were exceptions too. Dona Henriqueta Galeno, who lived in Ceara during her childhood and grew up in a paternalistic environment, wrote that she was free of any racial prejudice.

Playing of the piano was in vogue in the Empire and the Republic. The passage from the concert hall to the private home took place as the grand piano became a status symbol. It was a manifestation of taste and social prestige – in the aristocratic villas of the suburbs, the middle class city homes or the mansions of the planters.

Isaac N. Ford, an Anglo-American publicist, while visiting Brazil to observe the effects of the transformation from monarchy to republicanism, noted that the
Brazilians were not impatient with the republican institutions. They never expected that republicanism would bring about a quick national regeneration. However, they were psychologically living in an aura of future industrial development. They had no objection to the intrusion of the future upon the present as long as the change was gradual and did not involve a complete repudiation of the past. It was a gradual process of transformation, with the new President of the Republic giving himself the air of a constitutional emperor; with separation of the church from the state, without weakening of Catholicism as a national institution; with the employment of the former members of the court in important administrative posts under the republic.

However, there was a visible change in the cultural order. Instead of emanating from France and England, the new inspiration came from the northern neighbour – the U.S.A. It was from this shift that there arose a series of consequences of immense importance. Constitution Law and Administrative Law had to be studied in English.

Just before the proclamation of the Republic, the U.S.A. was influencing the Brazilian culture in various ways. The emperor himself had taken the initiative in this direction. While visiting the U.S.A. in 1876, the emperor declared that he wished to see in Brazil, not cannons but modern industrial and agricultural machinery. He paid a visit to the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, where Brazil had won more prizes than any other South American nation (421 against 80 by Argentina and 40 by Chile).

An exposition of American (U.S.) products took place in Rio de Janeiro. Photographs, maps, books, engravings, lithographs, and farm implements were exhibited there. This exhibition played a historic role in the development of cultural relations between Brazil and the U.S.A. Brazil soon came to admire many U.S. products which they considered superior to those of Europe. During Pedro II’s reign, Brazil started the construction of railways. During this period occurred the laying of submarine cables to Europe, introduction of gas for illumination, extensive modernization of water and sewage systems, and other urban amenities like hospitals, theatres etc. Urban transformation improved with introduction of street cars. Huge American investments were being made in various sectors. In a negative way, too, the U.S. made its presence felt in Brazil. Immigrants from the American South arrived after the defeat in the civil war. The newcomers brought racial prejudice and opposed abolition of slavery. The U.S. influence in matters of politics, economics and technology greatly democratized the Brazilian society.

II

To an outsider in the last decade of the 19th century, Brazil was making good progress in public education.

In 1869, Brazil had one primary school for 540 students (free-born). Within five years the ratio improved to 1:314. In 1889, the year of the Republic, the ratio was 1:40.

The most important institution of higher learning during the reign of the last emperor was the Imperial Academy, also known as Pedro II in the name of the
emperor himself. Under his direct supervision, this institution offered a quality education. It conferred the degree of Bachelor of Letters. The quality control mechanism was such that in 1887, out of a total enrolment of 569, only 12 degrees were granted. Graduates of Pedro II were the higher elites, enjoying free access to all branches of human knowledge.

Carlos learned his alphabets at home. Thereafter, he entered a local public school at Queimadas. Here he mastered the elaborate calligraphy of the time. He learnt reading, studied grammar, sentence analysis, taking dictation, arithmetic up to the metric system, physical geography and religion. Each Saturday, the students carried home a report card with grades for the week in attendance, lessons and behaviour.

Punishment in this school consisted of admonishments, reduction in weekly grades, enforced periods of standing up, loss of recreation periods, detention after school hours, being made to pick up small pieces of paper and in extreme cases, a close chat with the ruler.

There was no ground in the school for recreation of the students. The recess was spent largely in moving around a bit and stretching the legs.

The next school of Carlos was the Portuguese Literary Lyceum. Here he learnt Portuguese grammar and French.

Passing out in flying colours, Carlos was admitted to Pedro II. Since he wanted to be an engineer, Carlos buried himself in the study of mathematics. Engineers were in great demand in the first decades of the Republic.

Carlos began to learn English, German and French. However, he managed to master only French, then considered an essential second language in Brazil.

Raimundo Dias, born in Piaui in 1874, studied in a number of primary schools. The first at Jerumenha was run by one Dona Ludovica. She was a cultivated woman who taught with affection and sincerity. The second one at Amarante had ‘Old Jose’ as the teacher. In these two schools Raimundo learnt the alphabets, formation of sentences and arithmetic tables. These were learned by rote.

‘Old Jose’ was a strict disciplinarian. He resorted to palmatoria whenever he felt like. At times, the unfortunate child was forced to walk in the street carrying ridiculous placards or wearing the mask of an ass.

Neither of these two schools could boast of a playground. As if two schools were not enough, Raimundo attended a third primary school in the province of Maranhao. In this school, use of notebooks (exercise books) for teaching of writing and arithmetic was unknown. The fourth one attended by Raimundo was situated in Recife. Here, under one Dona Maria Rita, Raimundo went through the same teaching sequel and the same punishments.

Thereafter, this experienced teenager got admitted to the Gymnasium of Pernambuco, known as Pedro II of the North-East. The teacher in the first class here was a strict and demanding man. Here the boy made progress in reading, writing and arithmetic. His uncle, now provincial President of Pernambuco, instructed him to study Portuguese and French for the preparation of a career in business.

By failing twice in his catechism lessons, the boy incurred the displeasure of some teachers. Despite being the nephew of the provincial President, he was
punished like any other boy. The punishment was barbarous. Once, while his hands were bleeding owing to *palmatoria*, he refused to submit to further punishments. He was summarily expelled from the school.

Raimundo then got himself admitted to the Military Academy at Ceara and ultimately passed out from there.

Astrojildo Pereiro was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1890. He desired to be a monk. Astrojildo entered the Colegio Anchieta in Nova Friburgo. The teaching method was church-oriented with daily masses and other routines. Here, though doing well in his studies, he wrote a pornographic manuscript.

From Anchieta, Aostrojildo went to Colegio Abilio in Niteroj. Here the atmosphere was quite open. He participated in literary discussions and began to write amorous verses. He became interested in politics, too. Eventually, he became an anti-militarist and atheist. The Colegio Anchieta was one of his worst memories and the Colegio Abilio never taught him what he intended to learn. Finally, he became a Marxist.

Amilcar Armando, born in the province of Rio de Janeiro in 1880, learned his first letters on the family coffee plantation from his grandmother. Thereafter he was admitted to a kindergarten school run by Dr. Meneses, one of Brazil’s foremost educators during the reign of Pedro II. He entered the Brazilian Athenaeum when he was 12. The punishment here was moral. The school was co-educational, an innovation in a period marked by conservatism. He, later, pursued higher education in military and civil engineering.

Manuel Bandeira, one of Brazil’s greatest poets, had his preliminary schooling in Recife. He then went to Rio de Janeiro and got admitted to Pedro II, then christened as the National Gymnasium. He studied drawing, music, mechanics, literature and logic.

The Imperial system of education in Brazil sought to unify the national cultural centres: Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, Sao Paulo, Olinda and Recife. This encouraged maintaining a high standard on a pan-Brazilian scale. Brazilians from all parts of the country sent their children to these centres to train them in law, medicine, engineering, pharmacy, military science and humanities. In these centres of learning, Brazilian children from various provinces got acquainted with one another. Many of them carried this relationship forward even after they became famous in their respective fields.

Dona Virginia Cavalcante was born in Pernambuco in 1879. She attended a primary school where the method of instruction was to recite aloud and memorize lessons down to the last comma. The weekly arithmetic test complete with *palmatoria* was the terror of the students. Other punishments included remaining standing with the book open for a long period of time.

She was fond of making doll’s clothes and became quite skilful at this. Always an admirer of France, she taught herself the French language and came to read French magazines, fashion books and classics. She learnt neither English nor German.

Most of the cultural movements, during this period, originated from Rio de Janeiro, Recife and Sao Paulo. Sao Luis de Maranhao, a conservative centre, was in decline already. Porto Alegre, a future leader in regional and national culture, had not yet begun its rise to prominence. Bahia of course, was a very important city
during this period. Beside sugar, the state of Bahia in the late 19th century produced cacao, cotton, tobacco, hides, wood, ornamental feathers, and fruits. It had a population of 1.8 million of which half were mestizos. Its cuisine was nationally famous. The city could boast of two theatres. There were 120 churches with more than a hundred monks from Germany and Belgium. The most important centre of learning was the Academy of Medicine, which was the pride of the city.

In spite of various centres of learning, the Brazil of Pedro II, according to foreign observers, was deficient in intellectual progress, particularly in the field of experimental sciences. In a patriarchal slavocracy such progress, it was felt, was difficult to achieve.

A host of foreign terms entered the Portuguese language as a result of foreign technical inputs. These terms were, of course, corruption of the original word which underwent transformation by use by workers and technicians. Thus, embasamento (foundation) was a corruption of emvasamento. Workers used the words sulipa (railroad tie or ‘sleeper’), breque (brake), encruenca (from German Kranke) as though these were Portuguese words.

The word ‘Senhora’ was applied to foreigners seeking employment as laundresses, nurse maids, cooks or serving maids, thus using a term of dignity, hitherto inconceivable to Brazilians in association with domestic labour.

The Press, both political and literary, played an important role in the cultural development of the country. Since the beginning of the Empire, thanks to the freedom enjoyed by the Press, there was intensive print media activity throughout the country in which literature and politics were mixed together. This developed a bond between the writers and the Brazilian public. It helped in breaking down the rigid division between ‘popular’ and sophisticated styles as well as those of racial and sexual divide. By the turn of the century, the prestige and influence of journalism had surpassed the supremacy of the pulpit. The position of the writer, owing to a growing reading public, attained a new dignity and independence. The true phase of literary appreciation came at the end of the monarchy with the appearance of esteemed publishers like the Garnier. The first French style paperbacks of eminent authors were now published.

As the old patriarchal family system was disintegrating, along with the code of relations between man and woman, old and young, master and slave, there now emerged the embryo of a new Brazilian society marked by a nostalgia for the past and enthusiasm for the future. The enthusiasm was reflected in the fondness of the young people for Jules Verne with his fantasies involving possible technical innovations either in discussions or on the drawing board.

It has been asserted by some observers that Brazilian literature produced by the mestizos was one of the best in the Portuguese language. The language of Brazil preserved the gravity of Latin, the sweetness and flexibility of the Italian, and did away with the disadvantage of the harsh guttural sounds of Spanish. In course of time, in the hands of appropriate persons, the language would produce a world class literature that would attract the respect and admiration of the entire world.

An Anglo-Saxon writer has opined that the records of Brazilian life as manifested in its current literature had made a considerable social impact. These
works showed that many Brazilians were coming out of the European influences in thought and behaviour. Such manifestations were given epic dimension in the vigorous pages of Euclydes de Cunha’s ‘Os Sertoes’ (Rebellion in the Backlands) and many other similar works.

Many Brazilians of indigenous or African descent championed the thesis that they were a truly Latin race. They opposed the nativist tendencies of young intellectuals like Gilberto Amado. Beside literature, the Brazilians began to contribute vigorously in the science of economics, history of Brazilian literature, historical research etc.

III

The Republican Government, from its very inception, made every effort to retain the monarchical principle of order and authority within the framework of a democratic structure. However, the fluidity among races, classes, cultures and regions, antagonistic at times, created problems, which had to be controlled by application of political force.

The advances and retreats of the paternalism of the crown and that of the plantation – a veritable ballet dance – marked the early decades of the Republic. Sociologically speaking, both survived in the Republic. The President of the Republic assumed, in some respect, the role of the Emperor. An additional element, the army, appeared to play a significant role. It paid lip service to the Republic but in all practical purposes was feudal and aristocratic.

Brazil, as early as the last quarter of the 19th century, was more racially tolerant than the United States, claim sociologists. The Imperial constitution made no distinction between races and colours of the skin. The black or the brown could attain through one’s talent and energy positions which could not be attained in the United States. Foreign observers in Brazil came across many intelligent people who were educated in Paris or Coimbra and whose ancestors were slaves. It has been claimed that in Brazil during the period under discussion, if a man had freedom, money and merit, no matter how black might be his skin, no place in society was refused to him. There was no distinction of colour in the medical, law or theological colleges. Another observer, after living in Brazil for four decades, wrote in 1914 that several Brazilians of African descent during the reign of Pedro II had received decorations and titles.

The process of upgrading men of modest origin or ethnic ‘inferiority’ through academic excellence increased with the advent of the Republic. Both civil and military channels were found helpful in the process. With the armed forces playing a more active political part in the affairs of the nation, a military career offered a greater opportunity than ever for the political and social ascension of mestizos, mulattos and even humble whites.

The idea of white supremacy, however, never occupied a back seat in the psyche of the people. It became quite apparent during the Presidency of Manuel Ferraz de Campos Sales (1898–1902). He made a naval trip to Argentina with the accompanying vessels manned by pure-white crews. Many saw in this move an open hatred towards the African and native-born Brazilians.
Technical and vocational schools, set up during the Empire, served to integrate the races and classes during the Republic. Previously, people used to associate the exercise of mechanical arts ethically with the black or mulatto population and socially with the slave. The notion changed when German and Swiss immigrants dedicated themselves as farmers and cabinetmakers. They, by their example, gave a new dignity to manual labour. The vocational schools, through systematic training, produced master-carpenters, cabinetmakers and other artisans. Not only these advanced racial or class integration, but also developed a sort of class-consciousness among the artisans.

Every effort was made to impart vocational training to the poor. The reason was to emphasise the need to employ whites as well as blacks in tasks previously performed exclusively by the slaves and migrants from Europe. Many Brazilians considered the expense thus incurred necessary to speed up the process of replacing slaves with free workers as a result of the passage of the ‘Law of Free Womb’. Such programmes included the training of poor Brazilian children for gainful occupations and rescuing, through government and private sources, thousands of abandoned children from the depths of misery. Vocational training in specially established schools seemed to be the most effective means of developing the hitherto neglected human resources.

Several higher educational institutions for imparting technology were established during the Empire. The Polytechnic School and the School of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro; a pharmaceutical school, a normal school and a school for horticulture at Santa Cruz; medical schools at Bahia and Rio; schools in the Amazonas for educating the indigenous population. These endeavours assumed further importance during the Republic. Technologists began to assume considerable social and political importance. Representatives of the working class population began to appear in state and national legislatures.

Some of the migrant population mixed freely with the black and the brown races. It was particularly true of the Italians. Off-springs with a pale complexion, blue eyes and blond hair were quite common in the Sao Paulo region.

IV

The Republic brought about considerable progress in ethnic democratization. It extended social and political opportunities to persons of color who had made themselves through education worthy of advancement in different spheres in gaining economic status or in joining military service. The indigenous people and Brazilians having indigenous blood enjoyed a phase of romantic prestige. The patriotic emotions even induced some to change their Portuguese family name. The food habits of the indigenous people once again became quite popular. The credit of driving away the Dutch or the French infiltrators was given to the native Brazilians.

However, such love for native Brazilians did not extend to the corridor of power. There were strong racially-conscious elements in the Republican Government who wanted the Brazilian foreign service personnel to be ‘well-born’ and educated, with pronounced Caucasian features and white complexion. They should be married to
women who, if not always beautiful, should be as elegant as possible in dress and bearing, white or near-white in complexion and reasonably fluent in French or English.

Both the trends influenced the generation that was born during the period of Republicanism. Florence Carlos, who was born in 1882, had observed that his attitude towards blacks and mulattos had always been one of tolerance and goodwill. However, he did not favour the idea of more Asian and African immigration as that would, in his opinion, upset the ethnic order of Brazil.

Heitor Modesto, born in Minas Gerais in 1881, reacted with great sympathy to the abolition of slavery. In his home, the slaves were considered part of the family and many of them, after being free, remained in their homes for the rest of their lives. He confessed, however, that he always preferred pure blacks to mulattos who were, in his opinion, the natural enemy of the white man.

Antenor Nascentes, who was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1886, testified that being a mulatto, his feeling towards mulattos and blacks had been one of solidarity. Since his childhood he had experienced social inferiority of the coloured person. They were victims of prejudice.

Jose Rodrigues Monteiro, born in Ceara in 1887, said that he was always against the union of blacks and mulattos with the whites. He further stated that he would be greatly displeased if any of his relations married a person of a darker skin.

Manuel Duarte, born in Rio Grande do Sul in 1883, felt that there existed ‘a frank distinction between persons of colour and the so-called whites of European origin’. There was a perennial social inequality and an automatic separation of races by voluntary choice. As for marriage between a member of his family and a person of a darker skin, he felt that the old proverb ‘marry equal, marry well’, would apply best.

Dona Isabel Henriqueta, born in Bahia in 1853, confessed that she had always been against abolition. She considered the black an inferior race and felt that any racial mixture, legal or illegal, merited condemnation.

Joao Barreto, born in Pernambuco in 1872, felt most sympathetic to blacks and mulattos. He did not know why he was so fond of Pernambucan mulattos. He felt that Brazil’s racial situation was both historical and social. Society did not create the mulatto, he said. The mulatto entered through the door of history. The Brazilian, though priding on Aryan purity, was always a mulatto in spirit. As for marriage between a member of his family and a person of a darker skin, he said that he would accept the situation without the slightest reluctance or regret.

Plinio Barreto, born in Sao Paulo in 1882, stated that he had never looked down upon the blacks and the mulattos. It was difficult for him to decide how he would react to his son or daughter marrying a coloured person. He felt that he would experience some difficulty unless the person was outstanding in achievement. But if the case was an outcome of love, his hesitation would disappear.

For the Pernambucan Adolfo Faustino, born in Olinda in 1887, the white came first, followed by the Indian, then the mulatto and, finally, the black. He would not look with favour any union of a member of his family with a black-skinned person.
Pedro de Coutto, born in Rio in 1872, confessed that being of Portuguese descent, he had no racial prejudice and would not look for a blond wife but instead marry a mestizo.

Julio de Mesquita, born in Sao Paulo in 1892, confessed that he could not agree to bring people into a world where they would be unfortunate. In Brazil, he felt, the blacks and the mulattos were the unfortunate people.

Guaracy Silveira, born in Sao Paulo in 1893, said that if he were black, he would seek marriage with a coloured girl a bit lighter in complexion than himself... As a white, he would not consider it wise to marry a girl with a black skin even though he felt no repugnance for such persons.

Roberto Cristina, born in Rio in 1881, said that the number of whites had risen from 40% to 65% over the period since 1901 and the remaining 35% of the population seemed to him to have become 50% lighter than they were in 1901. He predicted that in another 75 years the question of colour would completely disappear in Brazil. Nevertheless, he would not look favourably upon a marriage of one of his family members with a person of colour.

Erasto Gaertner, born in Parana of German-Brazilian parentage in 1900, said that if any of his daughters had chosen a coloured husband, he would consider her mad.

The effect of the transformation from monarchy to republic upon society was quite gradual. The changes that took place were more psychological than sociological.

In a study of the Brazilian Foreign Exchange situation published in 1896, its author pointed out that there occurred a weakening of the Brazilian finance with the proclamation of the Republic. He claimed that this was due to a lack of confidence in the new regime. However, in actual fact, as pointed out earlier, the Republic at its birth was infiltrated by monarchial elements. Its anti-monarchism was purely superficial. It was essentially a continuation of the old regime. The weakening of the currency was essentially the result of the abolition of slavery and would have plagued the economy under the monarchy if it continued.

There were indications of material progress. According to an author, the end of the Paraguayan War and proclamation of the Law of Free Womb coincided with the inauguration of the first docks in the port of Rio de Janeiro and the granting of concessions for the construction of railways. From this time on, there was a marked material progress.

It may be pointed that in Brazil, economic and social progress did not go hand in hand. The case of Sao Paulo can be cited in this respect. In the first-half of the 19th century, it had developed an opulence and vigour which was experienced during the early colonial period in Bahia, Pernambuco, Maranhao and Rio. It became a region of Big Houses and slave quarters, of masters and slaves. Previously, the way of life was sober, to the point of being ascetic, balanced by a diversified economy, with an agrarian landscape marked by modest houses and small-scale cultivation. Ethnically, Sao Paulo was similar to Paraguay, with its heavy Spanish-Guarani element and rampant miscegenation.
As the economy of Sao Paulo changed from sugar to coffee, slaves were brought from the North. In addition to that, the nineteenth-century neo-aristocracy attracted college-trained people – sons of the planters hit by the decline of sugar. These young men came to make fortune, married into established Paulista families. Some of these people were even dark-skinned who became leaders in the political, economic and cultural fields. This assimilation and absorption brought about a corresponding transmigration of sociological patterns from the slave areas to the coffee plantations of neo-aristocratic Sao Paulo: a whole complex of forms, values and social rituals expressive of an aristocratic way of life.

As gold mining exhausted, Sao Paulo faced a terrible economic crisis until the cultivation of coffee was started there. Excellent highways were built to facilitate the economic growth of the province. The cost of construction of railways was quickly paid. During 1870–71, 96 transatlantic ships and 151 coastal ships entered the port of Santos. The numbers quickly rose to 475 and 678, respectively, in 1872 and 1873. The rise was unprecedented. It marked the economic supremacy of Sao Paulo over other provinces.

In another study of the Brazilian economy, the author has pointed out that the first decade of the Republic was marked by the establishment of Sao Paulo as the economic center of gravity of the country. During that decade not only the coffee of Sao Paulo had become the country’s leading agricultural product, but the industries of the State had begun producing materials which, by dual avoidance of shipping costs and protective tariffs, became competitive with foreign imports. A great period of Brazilian industry then commenced, noted the author.

Still another author suggested that the period marked the beginning of a shift of capital from agriculture to industry. The Bank of Brazil merged with the Bank of the Republic to form a new organisation to promote industry. This amalgamation was accompanied by Acts exempting industrial machinery from taxes, guaranteeing interest on industrial investments, nationalizing coastal navigation and for payment of bonuses to individual industry. The established distributive network for coffee was utilized for the distribution of products of the newly established industries.

Some authors have explained the North-South disparity in terms of the foreign white immigration. In the South, the slave labour was increasingly being replaced by Italian immigrant workers. Such replacements were lacking in the North and the North-East largely because the electoral interests had favoured the South at the expense of the North, it has been alleged. The Southern climatic condition also favoured such immigration, they say. The prices of cotton and sugar fell in the North. Furthermore, the monocultural sugar economy of the North created feudal employment modes for labour which were not conducive to the frontier European settlements.

In 1872, a colonizing service was created at Comandutuba. This enterprise was no less a failure than that of an earlier attempt at establishing a German colony at Pernambuco. The Bahian land was of superior quality and the climate was also ‘European’. But it was far away from the sea and uncomfortably close to the sultry interior. The Pernambucan colony at Catuca brought immigrants on contract from Austria, Germany and Poland. However, the immigrants were not farmers and less
prepared for tropical living conditions. As a result, the colonists suffered from chiggers, lice, gangrene, dysentery, malaria and other varieties of tropical diseases. The colony folded up miserably. Another ‘European’ colony to fail in Bahia was founded in 1882 at Caravelas. The colonists were Spaniards. Months went by but the settlers could not clear the land. Chiggers, liver ailments, malaria and yellow fever retarded the pace of settlement.

Such were the fate of the new colonies in the North and the North-East because the landlords did not want free white labour in the vicinity of their property. The only plots of land these landlords were prepared to concede for such immigrants were those far away from the fazendas. They were also not interested in encouraging the development of small-scale farming.

In the State of Minas Gerais, economic diversification took place after the end of its adventure with mining in the early days of the Empire. The gold rush which developed in colonial times caused agriculture to play a secondary role. But once the mining fever was abated, the Mineiros were wise enough to seek economic recovery through diversification, which included cultivation of sugar, coffee and corn.

The condition of many a patriarchal family of the North-East declined from splendour to a dismal mediocrity. For many, the collapse of the sugar aristocracy made migration not only attractive but also necessary. Young Northerners were attracted by the romance of the Amazon. The attraction was rubber which rose into eminence as a great foreign exchange earner. Within a short period a rubber aristocracy got itself transplanted in the remote corner of Brazil.

One Brazilian⁸⁰, born in Paraiba in a sugar plantation in 1889, narrates that the Amazon in his youth had the force of attraction like a permanent magnet. Reaching Manaus in a third-class ticket he immediately got a job as a printer in the Journal do Commercio which had, at that time, the most sophisticated linotype machines. He eventually received a salary of 300 to 400 milreis a month which was a fabulous sum for a north-eastern farm boy, more than what was then being paid to a federal judge.

The Amazonas, thanks to the boom in rubber, put all the other States to shame. Manaus was the first city after Rio and Sao Paulo to have an electric street railway, paved streets, electrified port facilities. Its opera house was the most famous and beautiful in all America. Among the newly rich, there were men who lit their cigars with 100 milreis notes and whose patio fountains sprouted champagne. They used to display not one but many French girls brought by British steamships before the envious eyes of less fortunate adventurers.

The year 1915 marked the victory for Rio Grande do Sul’s most traditional industry. This was the raising of beef cattle. From the earliest times, Brazilians had considered dried beef a staple of their everyday diet and an indispensable ingredient to the national dish, ‘feijoada’. But it still seemed fantastic to most Brazilians when the French Government ordered a large quantity of this commodity for its army engaged in the First World War. The order came after the Brazilian meat-packing industry began to adopt modern practices with the installation in Sao Paulo of the country’s first meat refrigeration plant. From this time on, Brazilian meat products, both dried and frozen, began to assume importance in the European market. This coincided with the decline in the demand for rubber.
There was a campaign by the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century to propagate Brazil as a country of the white race. In this campaign the blacks were considered ‘a blot’ on the national civilization and also a great source of shame. It was the opinion of the campaigners that only through a great wave of white immigrants could Brazil develop a modern economy and a modern civilization. In this futuristic miscegenation, the Italians were considered the most appropriate targets. They were not rude like the Germans; they were intelligent, adaptable, friendly, likeable and above all, hard-working. They did not lack in taste for darker-skinned persons. From 1820s through 1914, 1.3 million Italians had come to Brazil. By the end of 1915, the figure reached 2 millions.

The immigrants who came to Brazil were artisans, skilled workers, machinists, and also industrialists. They either established or helped in establishing new techniques of production and transportation. The trend accelerated during the last decade of the 19th century.

The process was less marked in Bahia than in Sao Paulo but it did take place there as also in Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco, Minas Gerais and Para. Both Brazilians and immigrants established these industries with great fervour.

There were approximately 3,000 manufacturing establishments in the country by the beginning of the twentieth century. The most important manufacturing states were: the federal district with 35,000 industrial workers; Sao Paulo with 24,000; Rio Grande do Sul with 16,000; Rio de Janeiro with 14,000; Pernambuco with 12,000. The principal industry was textile. Minas Gerais was still of considerable importance in mining. There was a salt-mining industry in Rio Grande do Norte. Other industries included beverages, cigar and cigarette, mosaic tile, soap, matches, ceramics, canned foods and wagons.

At the Rio Exposition held in 1908, the Brazilian Government sought to demonstrate the progress in industrialization. People from all parts of the country and abroad came to have a glimpse. Many came to see the change of face of Rio de Janeiro. Streets and boulevards were widened, dilapidated buildings demolished, elegant edifices came to dominate the central part. The streets were brightly lighted. Rio was ‘civilizing’ itself.

Minas Gerais developed into a green belt of Rio de Janeiro. Rio lived on products produced in the Minas Gerais province from where milk, meat and fresh vegetables arrived each morning by train. Feeding the nation’s capital became a lucrative business for the Mineiros.

The urban and industrial progress of Sao Paulo was largely due to assimilation of foreigners into the Brazilian culture, opine some experts. The assimilation was carried out by the city and suburban schools. The Italians who came to the coffee plantations on the eve of abolition of slavery did not remain for long as farm hands. After a period, they were attracted by the commercial and industrial opportunities in Sao Paulo. There they competed the native Brazilians. They spoke their language, learnt their geography and history. They acquired technical and scientific knowledge through reading books in Portuguese.
The relationship between the Church and higher education was discussed by the members of the Chamber of Deputies in 1879. Many members did not like Catholic priests hobnobbing with an absolute government. They also opposed the idea of creating more free catholic colleges. They feared that these would be bastions of conservatism and orthodoxy. There were heated debates on the issue of separation of the Church from the State. In 1890 a law was passed in this regard and incorporated in the Constitution in 1891.

A steady decline was observed in the number of people who wanted to become priests. With the break up of the patriarchal system, the career of a priest became a rather risky proposition. Previously, the religious activity had been more under the control of the patriarch than of the bishop. The clergyman comfortably filled the role of ‘uncle-priest’. He was almost a member of the family of the Big House. But in the new situation, the patriarchs were less willing to have their sons taking up priesthood as a profession.

The decline in the number of aspirant priests, however, strengthened the intellectual and moral qualities of the Brazilian clergy. Under the patriarchal regime, far too many entered priesthood for the social prestige attached to an eclesiastical career, with the result that the Brazilian clergy ‘became notorious for its immorality’. There was no class of men in the whole empire whose lives and practices were so corrupt as those of the priests, commented an observer. The two decades just preceding the Republic were decisive in the modern history of Brazil. The Law of Free Womb (1871) marked the beginning of a national revolution in the field of labour. On the political side, the Republican Manifesto marked the emergence of the Sao Paulo–Minas Gerais-RioGrande do Sul region as the leading force in the national life. Positivism in the South and Teutonic-Spencerian thoughts in the North marked the cultural perspective of the nation. All these seriously undermined orthodox Catholicism.

As the Church got separated from the State, many foreigners came to Brazil to fill the gap created by the unwillingness of many Brazilians to take up priesthood as a career. The Catholic schools gained a new vigour with the presence of academically trained foreign priests and nuns. A visitor in 1916 found many of the older schools run by Benedictines, Jesuits and Sisters of the Sacred Heart to be splendid in quality. The foreign priests spoke and wrote impeccable Portuguese. Many of them wrote textbooks for students.

At Anchieta, there was a students’ band under Italian teachers. The training here was so thorough that a student could compose an opera for public performance. The religious educators of all shades accepted the protestant challenge of curriculum reform. This greatly improved primary and secondary education.

The Anglo-Saxon Protestant schools also made much impact on the school education in Brazil. In one such school, there was no punishment. The moral atmosphere was very pure. The teachers did everything for the sake of righteousness and created in the students a horror for everything low and vile. The secondary school curriculum did not have manual arts. This gap was filled up by schools in the late nineteenth century. The French influence in Brazilian religious education
was not confined to the elegant schools in major cities. Many institutions for the poor had French churchmen in their service. There were several schools for orphans and underprivileged children of both sexes. In these schools, the boys were trained in various trades and the girls were given instructions in embroidery and dress-making.

Several rural schools were run by the French. ‘Tremembe’, founded in 1903 by French Trappists, transformed large areas of underutilized land for rice cultivation. The Trappists found that one of the worst methods of exploitation was sale on credit resorted to by feudal elements. This was the reason why a large section of the poor lived in semi-slavery – the tyranny of the storekeeper, who was often an associate of the landowners, was marked. the Trappists fought this evil quietly. Silently and discreetly, they gave protection and social assistance to hundreds of social workers and their families. It is a pity that owing to Republican apathy the system could not spread to other regions.

In this connection, the work of the industrialist Carlos Alberto de Meneses was highly predisposed to initiatives of this kind. It was here that during the Imperial rule Fourierism was propagated by Louis Vanthieu. It was followed by Christian Socialism of Antonio Pedro de Figueiredo.

For a considerable group of Brazilians, the Republic represented an eagerness to rapidly overcome the social and cultural problems. This eagerness became manifest in the so-called ‘ João Candido’ naval revolt of 1910. Black and mulatto servicemen protested against flogging, which was then in vogue in the Navy. Flogging had its roots in the system of slavery.
The abolitionists and the new crop of industrialists liked a pace of progress that was more rapid from the Imperial period. The people craved for a perfection of things – cities, docks, industries, railroads, passenger and cargo ships. However, efforts to change the human resource was not much visible.

Still, the desire for material progress benefited the people at large, though indirectly. It was during this period that Lloyd Brasileiro, with its cargo service and the railroads, with their lines of communication to the interior, brought about an extraordinary development. Automobiles imported from the U.S.A. and Europe were now popular even in the interior. All these acted as a constant challenge to business, industry and government to meet the problem of distance. A beneficial change came about in the social and cultural life of the people.

By 1916, Brazil developed the capability to manufacture railway sleeping and dining cars from native wood. This was instrumental in the expansion of the railways in the Northwest. A company with British name and Belgian management began to operate. The construction of the railways was carried out under the direction of a distinguished Brazilian engineer named Firmo Dutra. Under his direction, the company not only laid tracks but also lined the right of way with the fruits of social engineering – coffee groves, pasture lands and new towns.

In the field of sanitation and modernization of port facilities, the Republic achieved a great deal. An observer, writing in 1940, mentioned that in 1887 the city of Rio de Janeiro was periodically devastated by small pox and yellow fever. During the early years of the Republic, yellow fever was conquered. It was only during this period that boundary disputes with neighbouring states were solved amicably. The army was reorganised, the Navy reequipped, the railway network was enlarged, the principal ports were modernized and new industries such as meat packing came into existence.

Brazil came to be regarded by educated Europeans as a new civilization in the tropics. Rio de Janeiro was now characterised as a city comparable to the most salubrious places in Europe. Foreigners could now become active to exploit the inexhaustible wealth of nature without danger to life or physical health, wrote French newspaper Le Figaro.

With the abolition of slavery and proclamation of the Republic, Brazil seemed to have revolutionized thoroughly. Though the basic form remained intact, the motives and styles of living became more romantic. This romanticism affected literature, politics, and jurisprudence.

The military in Brazil in 1910 was well-fed, well-paid and well-cared for. However, the same could not be said of the vast majority of the workers. There were, practically, no law for social protection of the underprivileged including the industrial and agricultural labourers. An observer writing in 1919 commented that if one looked back over the past fifty years, he/she would have concluded that in the matter of concern for the working people, including the slaves, the record of the Imperial government was much better.

There were, however, individual attempts by private industrialists who did not hesitate to take action in favour of the working people. At Bangu, an outskirt of Rio de Janeiro, the workers lived in cottages which had all the hygienic facilities.
CHAPTER 1

There was a community complex complete with a theatre where the workers could enjoy music and drama. Unfortunately, the number of such industrialists was not many.

Like the generations during the Empire, French was read and spoken by the cultivated Brazilian. Many politicians and men of letters wrote and spoke excellent French. Even those who wrote in Portuguese were heavily influenced by the French language, literature and culture. On the other side of the spectrum there were nativists who were interested to develop indigenous literature and science. A strong contingent was working on pharmaceutical innovations. When, in 1917, the geographer Elliott stated that the world owed much to Brazil in the field of horticulture and medicine, there were already many physicians in the Republic who, having lived and worked in the Amazon area, were using the drug of that region exclusively.

Thirty years after the proclamation of the Republic, many sought to integrate the nation. There was awareness, too, for integration with the natural surroundings to form an indigenous tropical culture. National consciousness manifested itself in such matters as literature, medicine, pharmacology, hygiene and food. Brazil sought to have its own answer to elegant Europeanized tastes for soft drinks and mineral water in its nationally produced brands. The period marked the establishment in various places of hotels roughly imitative of those of the great European spas. With the outbreak of the First World War, Brazilians turned to national resources in cures and remedies, thereby raising both the resort hotels and the drug manufacturing enterprises to the level of major industries. In this connection one can mention the development of a typhoid serum at the Dutanan Institute of Sao Paulo. Institute Osvaldo Cruz of Rio de Janeiro also achieved comparable fame. In such institutes and in the medical schools of Bahia and Rio, doctors joined hands with progressive industrialists and planters to help the Republic recover from the inertia of the Empire.

The so-called ‘cultivated’ Brazilians had two deep resentments: that of being inhabitants of an almost entirely tropical country and having as compatriots a large number of mixed-blood population. However, what these Brazilians really resented but could not perhaps express was that the principal tropical disease was ‘ignorance’: the ignorance about themselves, about the society they live in; also the ‘ignorance’ of the people who belonged to the lower rungs of the society.

The efforts of Brazilian industrialists, in this regard, became a source of national pride. Mention should be made of Assis Brasil of Rio Grande do Sul who combined an elegant political philosophy with considerable specialized competence in industrial agriculture. Former slaves and their descendants were offered by him a means of livelihood. From a vagabond existence, they were able to emerge as useful citizens fully integrated with the cultural and recreational patterns of the Brazilian society. It was a great contribution of the industry towards social uplift. The demonstration effects of such endeavours were tremendous. These were replicated in the field of sports later on.

Thus, the Republic was a new experience with a somewhat less fervour that its most ardent supporters had looked for.
ECONOMIC

From the 11th century onward, the internal trades in Europe underwent an intensive growth. This necessitated supply of high quality products including manufactures from the Orient. The alternative trade route to avoid the ‘road block’ of the Ottoman Empire might be viewed as a major European accomplishment of the second half of the fifteenth century. The chance discovery of the Western Hemisphere was an off-shoot of the Oriental trade.

It was due to pressure from other European powers that Portugal began to think of economic occupation of Brazil.

The Portuguese had been engaged in relatively large-scale production of sugar in the Atlantic islands. The know-how of sugar manufacture, first developed by the Italians, was quickly adopted by the Portuguese. When sugar cultivation and production started in Brazil, the technological developments taking place in Europe came to its advantage.

The Dutch contribution to the expansion of the sugar market in the second-half of the 16th century was the main cause of the success of agricultural settlements in Brazil. The Dutch had developed a commercial network for marketing sugar. The huge Brazilian sugar production benefited from this Dutch commercial skill.

Sugar demanded a huge manpower for cultivation and manufacturing. The Portuguese perfected a method of supplying such manpower from the days of Dom Henrique, the Navigator (1394–1460): the capture of African black people and transporting them as slaves.

The economic and political conditions that were decisive for the Brazilian agricultural enterprise underwent a far-reaching change when Portugal was overtaken by Spain. The war between the Dutch and the Spaniards during 1580 to 1640 had profound repercussions on the Portuguese colony of Brazil.

Sugar marketing in Europe was a Dutch enterprise. They were absolutely determined to defend their interest. To attain their objective they relentlessly strived to carry out their attacks against Spanish interests. They occupied the sugar producing region of Brazil for quarter of a century. They acquired a thorough knowledge of sugar production and distribution during this period. This enabled them to develop in the Caribbean a large-scale sugar industry. By the third-quarter of the 17th century the price of sugar fell to half its former level and remained stationary throughout the eighteenth century.

The average annual income from Brazilian sugar by the second-half of the 17th century reached 50% of the peak period. The price was halved. The real income from sugar, therefore, was only a quarter of the income during the previous century. The Portuguese currency depreciation was of the same proportion by this time. Brazilian sugar, therefore, assumed enormous importance.

The Portuguese Government, in spite of the enormous difficulties faced in Brazil – physical environment, reluctance and hostility of the indigenous population and high freight rates – carried out rapid development of the sugar industry. The privilege bestowed by the Government on the grandees was enormous. They received exclusive rights to manufacture cane-crushers and water mills. They were provided tax
exemptions, guarantees against court attachment of production facilities, honorary recognitions etc.

Since the early days of colonization, some communities had specialized in catching natives for slavery. African manpower was pressed into service to expand an already established enterprise. As the initial difficulties were overcome, sugar settlements underwent rapid development. The total volume of production by the end of the sixteenth century exceeded two million arrobas (sixty million pounds). The expansion was spectacular during the last quarter of the century – a tenfold increase occurred.

There existed around 120 sugar mills by the end of the sixteenth century. Assuming that an average of £ 15,000 was invested for installation of each sugar mill, the total capital invested was around £ 1,800,000. It is estimated that around 20,000 African slaves were engaged in this sector. If £ 25 was invested for each slave, investment in manpower amounted to £ 375,000, assuming that three quarters of the above slave population was engaged in sugar. This amounted to 20% of the total capital outlay. Assuming again that the total value of sugar in a favourable year amounted to £ 2.5 million, and the net income was 60% of the same, and contributing to three-quarters of the total income, the latter amounted to £ 2 million. The European population being around 30,000, the income per head from sugar was quite high.

Needless to mention that the entire sugar economy at the period depended heavily on the external demand. With slackening of the demand, a process of decadence would ensue. However, the sugar economy of the Brazilian North-east managed to resist even protracted depressions over centuries. It recuperated whenever conditions became favourable.

When, in the latter half of the 17th century, prices fell by 50% due to competition from the West Indies, Brazilian entrepreneurs kept production at a relatively high level. The price remained stationary over the next century. Internal conditions reduced the profit margin still further. The system entered into a state of lethargy. However, no structural change was enforced. When in the 19th century the situation brightened up, operations resumed at full vigour.

The economy of the North-east in the 20th century was identified with sugar production and stock breeding. Development in both the sectors occurred through extension. During the period of depression which occurred during the period from the last quarter of the 17th and the beginning of the 19th century, the people migrated from the sea-coast to the interior, causing increase in population there as availability of food was relatively better.

The expansion of the economy of the North-east during this long period consisted of a process of retrograde economic evolution: the high productivity sector was losing its relative importance whereas productivity in the stock-breeding sector declined in proportion to its expansion. Actually, such expansion represented the growth of the subsistence sector within which an increasing number of people was clustering. The economy therefore was converted from a high productivity economic system to one in which the majority of the population produced only what was necessary for its bare existence.
During the period of the Dutch occupation of Maranhão, the Portuguese colonists faced enormous difficulties. The disorganisation of markets for sugar, tobacco and other tropical products created obstacles in the development of capitalism and urbanisation. In the São Paulo region, the inhabitants went into the business of selling indigenous people as input of African slaves slackened. The Maranhão colonists tried to resort to this business also. However, they were constrained by the Dutch occupation of Pernambuco from where this kind of labour could have been imported. In Maranhão, a family could only be self-sufficient if it had acquired a number of slaves. Thus Indian ‘hunting’ was a precondition for survival.

The Portuguese colonists of the Amazon basin, as they searched for indigenous people to work for them became acquainted with the resources of the forest. The region of present-day Para became an exporting zone for forest products: cocoa, vanilla, cinnamon, cloves and aromatic resins. It necessitated an intensive utilization of the Indians. They worked scatteredly in the forest and were not willing to submit to slave labour. The Jesuits tried to obtain their voluntary cooperation.

The impoverishment of the sugar region had repercussions on the economy of the southern region. Hide and leather enterprises grew here in relative importance and stock-breeding gathered increasing importance.

The subsistence sector also became relatively important throughout Brazil. The Portuguese Government could not transfer the small taxes levied in Brazil. It was for Portugal, in the declining condition of the sugar economy, to readjust the entire system in line with much lower levels of imports. Repeated currency devaluation reflected the imbalance of the Portuguese economy.

The cost of maintenance of a colony the size of Brazil became increasingly difficult for Portugal. However, the Portuguese rulers were aware of the enormous economic potential of the mineral deposits in the Piratininga plateau which later became known as the Sao Paulo region. Technical assistance was liberally provided to the prospectors. At last gold was struck. Gold seekers from all over Brazil thronged the region. There took place a steady flow of Portuguese migrants. All of a sudden, the colony underwent a change of face. The mining economy opened up a European migratory cycle. Then the number of Europeans increased 10 times during the mining century.

It was slave labour which was the basis of the mining economy. However, its characteristic was quite different from the sugar economy. The slaves did not constitute a majority of the working population here. The slaves were also given greater initiative. Many worked on their own, paying the owner a certain amount over a period of time. Many purchased their own freedom.

The free white, black or mulatto prospectors had enough possibility to climb up the social ladder. Fixed assets per slave or per production unit was much lower than that of a sugar mill. It was possible to survive in business with even a small asset.

A transportation network was a vital necessity of the mining economy. Situated at great distances from the harbour, dispersed widely through hilly terrains, the population was heavily dependent on a complex transportation system. Mules became vital transporters at the beginning. Even food had to be transported. The mining economy of the eighteenth century, therefore, afforded a market for cattle. This distributed the benefit throughout the Southern region. Rio Grande do Sul developed...
mule breeding on a large scale. The mining economy opened up a new cycle of development of the cattle-breeding and mule-breeding regions.94

The states of Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso and Goias had a thriving mining economy. The export of gold registered a continuous rise over the first half of the eighteenth century. It reached a peak of £2.5 million in 1760. Then it began to drop gradually. By 1780, it amounted to less than £1 million. During the 1750s, the rate was steady at £2 million. The region gradually developed an internal market. There was no long-term infrastructural development for perpetuation of economic activity. As the output of gold dropped, a general decline set in. The slave-labour regime, however, avoided major social frictions. Still those who had invested substantially in slaves incurred heavy losses. As no structural modification was attempted, the liquidation of the productive enterprises was complete.

Looking at the Brazilian economy during this period, it will be observed that it was a series of semi-independent systems, some of which were connected by trade. Others remained relatively isolated. There were two main productions—sugar and gold. The cattle-breeding economy of the North-east was connected to sugar. The Southern hinterland of the cattle-breeding economy was connected to gold. These two regions were networked by the Sao Francisco river. The cattle-breeding regions could thus choose the most advantageous markets.

Maranhão and Para were two autonomous centres in the North. Forest-extractive economy was organised there by the Jesuit fathers. The export from this region rose to £1 million by the end of the 18th century.

The difficulties faced by the Brazilian economy with the collapse of the gold trade continued due to various troubles in Europe. Then coffee began to emerge as a new source of wealth in Brazil. By the 1830’s coffee had emerged as a principal export product. Thus a nucleus of capital formation grew around Rio de Janeiro. This integrated the economies of the North and the South.

By the middle of the 19th century, coffee came to be recognized as the saviour. It had production characteristics entirely in conformity with the Brazilian ecology. As the supply from Haiti faced problems, the Brazilian coffee trade got the boost. In the first decade of Brazilian independence coffee constituted forty per cent of the country’s export value.

Coffee production was concentrated in the hilly regions around Rio de Janeiro. The availability of human resources was abundant as the surplus manpower from the mining economy concentrated there. With a port nearby, there was no problem in transportation. Mule convoy was in abundance. The pre-existing and underutilized resources found effective use. Although prices fell during the 1830s and the 1840s, it did not discourage the producers. Coffee export increased more than five times during 1821–30 and 1841–50. Coffee plantation was a perennial form of cultivation. It needed less capital investment than sugar as the equipment used was simpler and usually of local manufacture. Coffee prices showed an upward trend by the third quarter of the 19th century. During this period there was a migration from the North to the South.

A new managerial class emerged during the early period of the coffee economy. This section played a major role in the industrialization of Brazil. The vanguard of...
this economy was composed of people having business experience. Production and marketing were integrated during the early phase. Proximity to the nation’s capital gave the coffee economy many advantages. The leaders of the coffee economy began to exercise an enormous influence on the Government. The trend towards controlling the political apparatus to the benefit of the economic group attained its climax with the achievement of state autonomy at the time of the proclamation of independence. Decentralization of power permitted complete integration of the groups ruling the coffee economy with the political and administrative machinery. This was utilized to achieve well-defined objectives.

There were around two million slaves serving the Brazilian economy by the middle of the nineteenth century. The death rate among the slaves exceeded the birth rate. This fact alone indicates that contrary to the picture portrayed by many Brazilian sociologists, the living condition of the slaves was extremely precarious. The diet of the slaves in the sugar region was especially deficient. With demands for slaves growing in the coffee plantations, internal migration intensified. This adversely affected cotton production in Maranhão. The reduction in the supply of Africans and the rising prices of slaves led to an intensification in the utilization of slave labour. This caused further depletion of the slave population.

It was during this period that coffee growers organised migration from Europe. This received government support. It included the cost of transportation of the colonist and his family. The number of Europeans entering Sao Paulo rose from 13,000 in 1870s to 184,000 in the 1880s and 609,000 in 1890s. The total figure during the last quarter of the century amounted to 803,000 of which 577,000 came from Italy.

Another great population transfer occurred in the last quarter of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th: it took place from the North-east to the Amazon region.

Rubber, a forest-extracted product in the Amazon, was destined to become the raw material having the fastest growing demand in the world market. Since rubber was an extractive product and available only in the Amazon, the problem of increasing production to meet the growing world demand was an extremely difficult one. Prices of rubber had reached an average of £512 per ton during 1909–11, which was 10 times higher than the prevailing level of the previous half-century. With the far-eastern rubber coming to the market after World War I, the price fell to £100 per ton. Brazilian rubber export rose from 6,000 tons a year in the 1870s to 11,000 tons in 1880s, 21,000 tons in 1890s and 35,000 tons in the first decade of the 20th century. Population in the provinces of Para and Amazonas rose from 329,000 in 1872 to 695,000 in 1900. It is estimated that an internal flow of 260,000 persons was organised. About 200,000 had arrived in the 1890s alone.

This enormous human migration clearly indicates that at the end of the 19th century, there was a substantial manpower reservoir in Brazil.

The plans of the North-eastern migrant bound for the Amazon were based on the price of rubber. As prices fell, poverty spread fast. Without the means for returning home and unaware of what was happening in the world rubber economy, the migrant resigned himself as resident. Compelled to eke out a living through hunting
and fishing, he regressed to the most primitive form of subsistence economy. This was an enormous wastage of human resources at a time when manpower was extremely necessary for development of the Brazilian economy.

By the middle of the 19th century, slave labour was an important issue. It was a long-established way of life in Brazil. The upper classes considered its abolition as a great disaster. It may be pointed out that abolition of slavery, like agrarian reforms, does not imply per se either destruction or creation of wealth. What it amounts to is a redistribution of property within a community. Like agrarian reform, the abolition of slavery entailed some changes in the way of organizing production and in the degree of utilization of the productive forces.

In the North-eastern region of Brazil, the more easily cultivable land was almost fully occupied at the time of abolition. Freed slaves, on quitting the sugar mills, faced serious problems of survival. The urban zones already had a surplus population. Subsistence economy had been extended to the hinterland and it led to population pressure in the semi-arid zone. The result was that many former slaves had to work in the sugar mills at a relatively low wage.

The coffee regions afforded the free slaves relatively higher wages. The abolition of slavery caused an effective redistribution of income in favour of manpower in the coffee region. However, at the earlier stages, this did not bring about higher productivity as the former slaves, raised under slavery, were unable to respond to economic initiatives.

The Brazilian economy attained a relatively high growth rate in the second-half of the 19th century. There was a 214 per cent increase in the export quantum between the 1840s and the 1890s. This increase in the physical volume of exports was accompanied by a rise of approximately 46 per cent in the average prices of export products. On the other hand, there was a reduction of about 8 per cent in the price index of the export products, so that the improvement in terms of trade amounted to 58 per cent. This yielded a 396 per cent increase in real income. Thus the economy grew five-fold.

The North-eastern region had undergone a decline in per capita income. However, in absolute terms, the income registered a rise. In Bahia, the per capita income remained stable. In the south, where the population was increasing at a rate of 3% a year, there was an 1% increase in the per capita income. In the coffee region a 2.3% per capita growth per year could be assumed. In the Amazon region, the absolute growth of income generated within the region attained a rate twice as high as that of the coffee region. On the basis of these figures, it may be assumed that the real income in Brazil multiplied by 5.4, implying a growth of 3.5% and a per capita growth rate of 1.5% during the abovementioned period of 50 years.

The most pertinent event that occurred in the Brazilian economy in the last quarter of the 19th century was the increase in the relative importance of the wage-earning sector. Previous expansions had taken place either through the slavery sector or through the multiplication of the subsistence sector.

The external impulse for growth made itself felt in the form of rising prices for exported products. This yielded greater profits. Entrepreneurs tended to reinvest the profit by expanding the plantations. Given relative elasticity of manpower
supply and abundance of land, expansion proceeded without hindrance. In Brazil, transfer of manpower within the country as well as immigration from abroad took place, independent of rises in real wages in these sectors or regions. The coffee sector was able to keep real wages nearly stable throughout its long stage of expansion. As the new economic order began to operate on the basis of a wage-earning labour system, a series of problems began to appear. This had their roots in the old exporting and slavery economy. One of the problems resided in the impossibility of the system’s adapting itself to the rules of the gold standard which was the basis of the entire international economy. The problem was essentially this: at what prices could the rules of the gold standard be applied to a system specializing in the export of primary products and with a high import co-efficient? The problem did not bother the European economists who had always theorized on the subject of international trade in terms of economics of more or less similar degrees of development, with not very different production set-ups and relatively low import coefficients.100

The existence of a manpower reserve within Brazil, reinforced by a strong migratory flow, afforded the coffee economy a long period of expansion, without of course, any upward trend in real wages. The rise in average wages was reflected in the increased productivity which was obtained through the transfer of manpower from the subsistence to the export economy. Improvements in productivity achieved within the exporting economy could be retained by the entrepreneur to his benefit since he was not compelled to transfer it either wholly or partly, to the wage-earners. Extensive, rather than intensive method of cultivation did not necessitate improvements in technological innovations. Since there was no pressure for increasing the wages, entrepreneurs had no interest in replacing manpower by capital. Since every increase in productivity was transformed into profit, it would always be more interesting to produce the greatest quantity possible per unit of capital and not to pay even the least possible quantity of wages per unit of production. The same was true for land. If land were scarce, the entrepreneur would have an obvious interest to improve methods of cultivation as well as to intensify capitalisation in order to boost profit. But as land existed in abundance, the entrepreneur tried to utilize it by applying a minimum of capital per unit of surface area.

In the 1890s, the situation was exceptionally favourable to the expansion of coffee growing in Brazil. Non-Brazilian sources of coffee faced a period of difficulty. Plantations in Sri Lanka stood practically destroyed by an outbreak of disease of the coffee plant. Brazilian coffee production rose from 3.7 million 60-kg bag in 1880–81 to 5.5 million in 1890–91 and 16.3 million in 1901–2.

The elasticity of manpower supply and abundance of land in the coffee producing countries indicated that on the long term coffee prices would tend to fall under the prevailing condition of investment on railroads, ports, and maritime transportation, all of which were in a state of growth during the last quarter of the 19th century. The Brazilian investors had only a limited choice of further investments. So long as coffee prices did not fall, the capital available within Brazil continued to flow into the coffee economy. Thus it was inevitable that coffee production would grow.
The Brazilian coffee producers controlled three-fourth of the world’s coffee market by the beginning of the 20th century. This permitted them to manipulate the market. When the first overproduction crisis occurred in the early 20th century, Brazilian entrepreneurs realized that they could erect defense against the fall of prices. But they needed financial resources for keeping a part of the product away from the market.

From 1893 a crisis, which was especially protracted in the U.S.A., forced coffee prices to fall in the world market. The average export value per bag in 1896 was £2.91 as opposed to £4.09 in 1893. In 1899, the price of coffee fell to £1.48.

The problem of overproduction began to be felt from this time onward. Accumulating from year to year, it began to have an effect on prices. This had serious repercussions because it was threatening to cause permanent loss of income for the coffee producers as well as the nation. The ruling elites of the coffee-producing States therefore thought of withdrawing from the market a part of the production. The basis was established in the Taubate Agreement of 1906. The idea was coined as a price-boosting policy. This consisted of the following measures: the Government was to intervene in the market and purchase the surplus. The aim was to reestablish the balance between supply and demand. Such buying would be financed by means of foreign loans. The servicing of such loans would be covered by a new tax to be levied in gold on every bag of coffee exported. The governments of the coffee-growing States would discourage further expansion of plantations.

The first such scheme was put into operation under the leadership of Sao Paulo. It did not receive Federal Government support. The State Government appealed directly to the international sources of credit. The outcome was quite encouraging. The Federal Government then came up to take upon itself the major responsibility to carry out the task. This strengthened the political power of the coffee planters. This economic policy was shouldered by the Federal Government till 1930.

With the advent of the world economic crisis, coffee production began to increase even further as the growers had continuously expanded plantations. The maximum production was attained in 1933 as a result of planting during 1927–28. It was impossible now to obtain finance credit from abroad. All the metal reserves of the government had also evaporated due to the flight of capital.

The enormous stockpiling of 1929, fast selling of Brazilian metal reserves and the uncertain prospect of financing the large crop forecast for the near future—all hastened the decline of international coffee prices at the end of 1929. From September 1929 to September 1931, the prices fell from 22.5 cents to 8 cents a pound. However, internally at the consumer end in the United States, the price fell from 47.9 cents to 32.8 cents. Evidently the middlemen reaped a great profit.

It was not enough to withdraw a part of the coffee production from the market. It was obvious that such surplus production had no possibility of being sold within some time. Production forecasts for the next ten years far exceeded the predictable absorption capacity of the market. Therefore, the only alternative open was destruction of the surplus crop.

The reduction in monetary income in Brazil between 1929 and the rock-bottom point of depression was between 25% and 30%. This was quite small when compared
with the situation faced by other countries. In the U.S.A., the fall exceeded 50% despite the fact that the wholesale price index declined far less than those of coffee prices. The price decline in the U.S.A. entailed huge unemployment. In Brazil, the employment level was maintained despite the fact that production had to be destroyed. The value of production destroyed in Brazil was far lower than the amount of the real income created. Brazil was, in fact, constructing the famous pyramids which Keynes had envisaged some years later. During the depression years, though monetary and real incomes declined, the relative price of imported goods increased. These two factors reduced the demand for imports.

The increasing importance of the internal demand as a growing dynamic factor can be realized, especially during this stage of depression. Since the internal demand remained steadier than the demand abroad, the sector which was producing for the internal market now attracted more investment. The coffee economy, because of its precarious nature in the time of depression that necessitated physical destruction of the stock, however, frightened capital away. The capacity of production was halved for the next 15 years. Replacement investment being restricted, a part of the capital integrated with coffee was now disinvested. A substantial portion of this was now invested in cotton. In 1934, the value of cotton production amounted to 50% of the value of the coffee production whereas in 1929, it was only 10%.

The dynamic factor in the post-crisis period was undoubtedly the domestic market. The activities connected with this sector not only grew but received further impulse by attracting capital generated or disinvested in the export sector.

The domestic sector could not increase productive capacity, especially industrial, without importing machinery and equipment which became costlier as a result of depreciation of currency. However, attempts were made for intensive utilization of the available production capacity. The output of the textile sector rose substantially in the post-crisis years without any further input from abroad. Thus a higher rate of profit on the invested capital yielded internally generated resources which in turn helped in subsequent expansion. Second-hand machinery at very low prices were then imported. Some of the largest industries established in Brazil during the depression years were based on equipment from plants which had closed in countries hit hardest during the depression.

Rapid and vigorous recovery ensued. Industrial output grew by about 50% between 1929 and 1937. Primary production for the domestic market increased by more than 40%. Notwithstanding the depression imposed on Brazil from without, the aggregate income rose by 20% between these years, implying 7% per capita increase. It was quite an achievement considering the fact that in the U.S.A. during the same period, the per capita income had declined substantially.

The rise in the foreign exchange rate reduced the buying power of the Brazilian currency abroad by almost half. The situation in 1938–39 was identical with that of the most crucial period of the crisis. That period had permitted a substantial relative scaling down of prices of merchandise produced domestically and it was on the basis of relative prices that the industrial development of the 1930s took place.

The formation of a single market for internal producers and importers, as a natural consequence of the relative expansion of the sector associated with the
domestic market, transformed the exchange rate into an instrument of enormous importance to the entire economic system.

The consequences of the increase in the buying power of the Brazilian currency abroad meant lower prices in cruzeiros for exported goods. Since the international price of coffee was set by agreement, valorization of the currency implied increasing losses in the coffee sector. The counterpart of the process was a reduction in prices of imported goods. Domestic producers, therefore, were seriously concerned at the possibility of sudden imports at a price level far lower than that prevailing in the market. Thus the interests of both the exporting and industrial sectors joined forces to oppose revalorization of the currency abroad. This is the reason why the Brazilian government froze the exchange rate.

The economy in the beginning of the 1940s started from a situation in which the productive capacity associated with the domestic market was being intensively utilized. The index of export prices grew by 75% between 1937 and 1942. It means that there was considerable export stimulus. By freezing the exchange rate, the Government was boosting the monetary income of the export sectors at a time when supply of imported products had fallen by more that 40 per cent.

The contrast is quite apparent. Between 1929 and 1933, the combined effect of stabilization of the export quantum and the lowering of the prices of exported products induced a reduction in the monetary income provided by exports to the extent of approximately 35%, notwithstanding the devaluation of the currency. Between 1937 and 1942, the same factors caused an increase of about 45% in the monetary income generated by the export sector. The reduction in import quantum during the same period was 43%.

The situation during the World War years was of extreme complexity. There was a need for action far wider in scope than mere exchange manipulation. The economy was subjected to excessive strain. The government was increasing its expenditures for military purposes. This reduced still further that part of the national product which was intended for meeting the needs of consumers and investors. There was a decline in productivity due to the War.

Meanwhile, the flow of income continued to grow. The external sector generated a mass of buying power which increased with the rise in international prices. The Government was paying a huge wage bill. In the private sector lower productivity did not reduce the wage bill. The Brazilian economy had recovered by its own efforts during the 1930s. The per capita income in 1937 was accompanied by a sharp rise in prices. The general price level which had increased by 31% from 1929 to 1939, rose by 86% between 1940 and 1944.

The mass of income created in the export sectors was left without a real counterpart as imports fell off. The difference between export and import was 2800 million cruzeiros. The economy continued to produce coffee in quantities which was more than could be placed abroad or consumed internally. Coffee stockpiles in 1942 amounted to 1,000 million cruzeiros. There was a Government deficit of 1,500 million cruzeiros. It was a huge base for growth of the banking sector, which increased by 60% between 1942 and 1943. The total quantity of goods and services increased by only 2% whereas the flow of income rose by 63%. When a sudden
process of price rise takes place, the entrepreneurs acquire considerable capital gains. Between 1939 and 1944, export prices rose by 110% as against a hike of 98% in domestic prices. Between 1929 and 1944, import prices rose by 64% whereas the domestic price level rose by 98%. Between 1944 and 1949, import prices rose by 36% whereas the domestic price level rose by 70%.

The practical consequence of the growing disparity was the subversion of the relative price level which had served as a basis for Brazilian industrial development from the 1930s. The domestic price level, if compared with the import price level during 1929 and 1939, saw a relative rise in the prices of about 60% of the imported goods. On the basis of the price parity, the Brazilian economy was developing. Between 1939 and 1949, the opposite process occurred. The price level within Brazil rose by comparison with the import price level. Hence there was a revalorization of the Brazilian currency, scarcely concealed by the exchange control system.

Imports were liberalised in the post-war years. The external supply became regular. Hence, there was a tendency on the part of the consumers to revert to the relative level of expenditures on imported commodities which were available at competitive prices. However, such a situation was incompatible with the existing import capacity. The capacity was identical to that of 1929 whereas the aggregate income had increased by about 50%. It was natural, therefore, that the urge to import displayed by the population tended to suppress, to a great extent, the actual possibilities of payment abroad. The possible solution was either to devaluate the currency or establish a series of selective import controls. The decision to adopt the latter was of much significance. This heralded the intensification of the country’s process of industrialization.

The practical consequences of the newly adopted exchange policy intended for fighting the rise in prices was a relative reduction in imports of finished consumer goods, to the benefit of capital goods and raw materials. The industrial sector was thus doubly favoured; on one hand, competition was reduced through import control. On the other hand, raw materials and machineries could be acquired at relatively low prices.

Thus an extremely favourable situation for industrialization arose. The situation was responsible for the rise in investment rate and intensification of growth during the post-war period. Whereas the general level of price went on rising, capital goods could be purchased abroad practically at constant prices. Between 1945 and 1950, the price level of imports rose by 7% whereas that of domestically produced manufactures rose by 54% cent. It can be understood why import of equipment rose by 338% between 1945 and 1951 whereas total imports increased by 83%. The industrial sector did not retain the whole benefit for itself. The industries transferred a part of the resultant improvement to the population as a whole through a relative lowering of prices.

POlITICAL

I

Portugal claimed its stake in the new world – a stake recognized in the bulls of Pope Alexander VI and confirmed by the Treaty of Tordesillas. It was formally
claimed by Pedro Alvares Cabral in 1500. A thin slice of what is now Brazil – the line of demarcation cutting through Para in the North and Santa Catarina in the South – was claimed by Portugal by the early 16th century. But over time, as Spain was preoccupied with exploitation of the riches of Peru, Portugal pushed itself far west of the line and gradually laid claim to a domain that constituted half of South America.

Pedro Alvares Cabral, as disclosed by official records, was blown off the sea-route to India and this brought him to the coast of the Americas in 1500. Cabral’s men probed the jungle and found a strange tree. Its wood was as red as live coal. It was similar to the dye wood imported from the Far East, long known as ‘Brazil’. The new land thus got its name.

In 1501, Portugal sent three ships to explore the coast south of Natal. In 1503, another expedition under Gonzalo Coelho was undertaken with Amerigo Vespucci as one of the captains. Spending months probing the inland, detailed notes were made by the crew of the flora, fauna and the human settlements of the region.

Though preoccupied with the Asian trade, Portugal did not wholly neglect Brazil. The primary impetus was commercial. Europe’s expanding textile industry clamoured for dyes. A royal commission authorized Fernao de Noronha, a converted Jew of Lisbon, to gather the red brazilwood and transport the same to Lisbon. The royalty paid to the king by the merchant was quite handsome.

The French, too, exhibited a lively interest in Brazil. French ships went round the Brazilian coast, collected some brazilwood and raided Portuguese ships. Portugal retaliated. It then posted a small garrison at Pernambuco in 1521. The French struck back and destroyed the outpost in 1530. This made Portugal more cautious. Portugal’s India trade was languishing by 1510. Though Portugal made fabulous profit by trading in spices and textiles, the cost of manpower was high. The European market was glutted and price fell sharply. During this time Spain had gained enormous riches from the conquest of Mexico and Peru. Spain was too eager to get a slice out of the Portuguese possessions too. All these factors contributed to Portugal’s consolidation of its possessions.

In 1533, John III, in a bid to control effectively the possessions introduced the system of captaincies. The recipient of this favour was responsible for enlistment of settlers, promotion of farming and trade, looking after the religious activities and protection of his area against the marauders. All costs for such activities would be borne by the recipient. Each captaincy consisted of a strip of twenty five to sixty leagues wide along the coast and extended inland to the line set by the Treaty of Tordesillas.

In 1553, a captain-general was appointed. Bahia became the capital of Brazil. Thus the area came under a central command with a headquarters. By 1580, Brazil had eight well-established captaincies. The new colony could also boast of 60 sugar mills; with a population of 25,000 Portuguese, 18,000 indigenous people and 14,000 black slaves. Brazil was then exporting sugar, brazilwood and cotton.

In 1580, the Spanish King Philip II seized the Portuguese throne. For 60 years, from 1580 to 1640, Spain yielded one substantial advantage to Brazil. Believing that Brazil would remain in Spanish possession forever the new rulers were quite
lax in blocking Brazilian occupation beyond the line of Tordesillas. In 1640, thanks to Spain’s preoccupation with European wars, Portugal regained its freedom under John IV, the first of the Braganza dynasty.

In 1555, several hundred French colonists under Nicolas Durand de Villeganon, established themselves in the bay of Rio de Janeiro with the objective of creating an ‘Atlantic France’. However, in 1580, the Portuguese, led by Mem de Sa,’ evicted the intruders.

The Dutch were more successful. They had long served as carriers of the Portuguese between Brazil and Portugal. In 1604, a Dutch fleet attacked Bahia. In 1630, the Dutch seized Recife and Olinda in Pernambuco. Then, finally, they held the territory covering a coastal distance of twelve hundred miles. The Dutch had dedicated allies in the colony. The Jews befriended them. Many blacks and Indians were convinced of their generosity. The Dutch had an able administrator John Maurice of Nassau. In 1654, they withdrew from Pernambuco.

With the ascendancy of the Braganzas on the Lisbon throne, some changes were brought about in the colonial administration. An overseas council was assigned large powers over Brazil. There were numerous changes in the original captaincies. In 1710, the captaincy of Sao Paulo was created. Then, in 1720, was created the captaincy of Minas Gerais.

Portugal evolved as a truly Imperial power during the reign of Joseph I (1750–77) who appointed the Marquis of Pombal as his Prime Minister. He ruled as a dictator from 1751 to 1777. His boundless energy led him to take drastic measures, wise and unwise, at home and in Brazil. His chief target was the Jesuits who were stripped off their land and wealth and banished from Brazil and Portugal in 1759. Pombal reorganised public services, promoted establishment of schools, reformed agriculture and encouraged industry. He freed education from the control of the clergy. Enlightened beyond his time, he considered slavery an evil and abolished it in Portugal. He also abolished Indian slavery in Brazil. During his period, the Brazilian capital was shifted from Bahia to Rio de Janeiro in 1763.

II

Pedro I severed Brazil’s ties with Portugal by his grito de Ypiranga in 1822. He was fortunate to have Jose Bonifacio de Andrade e Silva as his Prime Minister. Bonifacio, who was fifty seven in 1822, was born in Sao Paulo and educated at the University of Coimbra. He worked and taught for thirty years in Portugal. Considered the father of Brazil, he was a well known mineralogist and friend of such luminous scientific personalities as Humboldt, Volta, Priestley and Lavoisier. He was also a poet.

After he returned to Brazil in 1819, he shaped the events in that country in such a manner that Brazil was peacefully separated from Portugal. He favoured a constitutional monarchy and staked his hope on John’s young nineteen-year old son Pedro whom he persuaded to remain in Brazil against the wishes of Lisbon. Immediately thereafter, he urged Pedro to declare Brazil’s independence. Although he opposed slavery, he advised its gradual abolition.
The young Pedro, due to his inexperience and arrogance, encountered a host of obstacles. He angered many Brazilians by appointing quite a number of Portuguese to high offices. Such measures were construed as anti-Brazilian as many suspected that Portugal was harbouring the ambition of monopolizing the Brazilian trade.

Pedro’s first confrontation with the Brazilians came about in 1823. He appointed some able and patriotic Brazilians to draft a constitution that year. Pedro did not approve of the draft and appointed a Council of State to write another. This constitution, unlike the former democratic one, conferred the ‘moderative power’ upon the Emperor; the Emperor also had the right to nominate senators for life in the upper house of the Parliament. The Emperor had the right to convocation of the Parliament and veto its acts. However, the Judiciary was declared neutral. The constitution was highly centralist.

After a series of fiascos, both personal and political, the Brazilians had enough of Pedro. He was too Portuguese for their taste, too arrogant and too expensive. In 1831, Pedro signed his abdication and set sail for Portugal where he died in 1834 at the age of 36.

The Empire now rested in the hands of five-year old Pedro II. He was endowed with a formidable ancestry. His forbears, the Braganzas, the Bourbons and the Hapsburgs were kings and emperors of Spain, Portugal, France and England. In 1831, he could not remember his mother and his father had just left for Portugal. For nine years, education of Pedro was a national undertaking. Jose Bonifacio, his first tutor, served for two years. He was followed by the Marquis of Itanhaen, an able, austere, and deeply religious person. Numerous teachers taught him over the years. By the time Pedro was fourteen, he had studied history, geography, Latin, French, English, German and the natural sciences. He learnt piano, dancing, art and horsemanship. He read a vast lot and acquired firm habits of study which prepared him to be the best-educated ruler of nineteenth century Latin America.

During the nine years (1831–40), Brazil witnessed a number of rebellions: in 1831 in northern Para; in 1833 in Minas Gerais; in 1834 in Mato Grosso and Maranhao. In 1834, the constitution was modified to create provincial legislatures. These acted as safety valves for disgruntled minorities. Further reforms were carried out. But these did not fully quieten the nation. There was a slave revolt in Bahia in 1835; a ten-year war of secession in Rio Grande do Sul (1835–45) and a new series of revolts in Maranhao.

In 1840, being urged by the liberals, Pedro accepted the responsibility of the state. Pedro’s administration looked like an English parliamentary system. A Prime Minister selected the cabinet, nominally answerable to the Chamber of Deputies which was controlled by the Emperor. Two main parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, assumed power alternatively. Over this system Pedro exercised his ‘power of mediation’, conferred by the Constitution of his father. However, there was no significant middle class to voice their demands. The illiterate, inarticulate proletariat did not have the right to vote. The electorate constituted of a few thousand landowners, priests, businessmen etc. Pedro held the whip. Many claim that Pedro furnished as much democracy as immature Brazil could absorb.
Pedro’s 49-year rule could be divided into three distinctive periods: 1) suppression of civil wars, 2) relationship with neighbouring countries and 3) growth of liberal, and democratic ideas leading to creation of a Republican Brazil.

The 1840s was a decade of pacification. Revolts in Maranhao were suppressed in 1841; the 10-year-old civil war was finally crushed in Rio Grande do Sul in 1845. The uprising in Pernambuco was put down in 1849.

British recognition of Brazilian independence came in 1826 with the promise that slavery would be abolished by 1830. But instead of declining, the slave trade flourished even after 1830. This increased British pressure on Brazil. In 1845, the British parliament declared that henceforth Brazilian slave-ships seized on the high seas would be subject to arbitration by British courts. For five years the British seized Brazilian slave-ships. Shipments increased also. In 1847, 1848 and 1849, 50,000 new slaves were unloaded each year. In 1850, British cruisers entered Brazilian harbours and captured some slave ships. There were minor incidents in the Brazilian ports involving British ships. In June 1863, Brazil broke off relations with Britain.

During the civil war in the U.S.A., Brazil’s relations with Washington were strained as Brazil declared neutrality and granted concession of belligerent rights to the confederate States.

The most important confrontation with neighbours was the war of Triple Alliance in which Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay attacked Paraguay which was experimenting with the formation of an egalitarian society. The war continued for five years in which 50,000 Brazilians died.

The 1850s were marked by a burst of economic prosperity. Stock-breeding in the South was increasing. Pernambuco and Bahia were producing more sugar, tobacco and cotton. Production of all the commodities except gold and diamond was on the rise. A few industries were established in the province of Rio de Janeiro.

The chief leader of this new economic expansion was Irineu Evangelista de Souza, the Baron of Maua, (1813–89). A self-made man, he was nicknamed the Baron of Industries. He built a banking empire and helped finance Brazil’s war. He built railroads, roads, ports, canals all over Brazil. He introduced shipping lines. He initiated gas lighting of Rio streets, laid telegraph lines and transatlantic cables and built textile mills. His was the first effective voice against the colonial economy. He favoured tariffs for protecting industry.

For 30 years, Pedro II shaped a Brazil that was very different from that of his predecessors. During this period he had the affectionate respect of the people. From 1870 onwards he began to lose grip on the course of events in Brazil.

The first conflict was with the church. He was quite liberal in religious tolerance. He respected the sincerity of the Protestants, the Jews and the Mormons. He admired the heretics. He found inspiration among the Unitarians and Quakers. The controversy which soured his relations with Rome was the issue of the Freemasons. When the Pope pronounced a ban upon Freemasonry in 1865, Pedro refused to have the encyclical published in Brazil. His conciliatory attitude alienated him from both the clerical establishment and the freemasons.

Then he got involved in a conflict with the army. Guns and marching men bored him. The Paraguayan war brightened the image of the military. The army was willing
to take an active part in the affairs of the country. Although Pedro was willing to meet their fair demands, he could not swallow the political ambition of the men in uniform.

The abolition of slavery was the third point of contention. On assuming power in 1840, he freed his own slaves. In 1866, when the Benedictine Order of Rio freed 1,600 slaves, Pedro made a call upon this abbot to congratulate him. Pedro’s daughter Isabel and her French husband were active abolitionists. In 1871, a movement led by Nabuco de Araujo, Viscount Rio Branco and Joaquim Nabuco took action. The Emperor was then in Europe. But no one doubted his support of the measure adopted by the Parliament and signed by Isabel, Pedro’s regent.

The crusade for the Republic was formally launched in 1870 with the founding of the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *A Republico*. It carried the Republican manifesto in its first issue. Pedro never disputed the right of the Republicans to vent their sentiments. He himself appointed one of the ablest leaders of the positivists, Benjamin Constant, tutor for his grandson.

The Rio Branco law was a gradual way to free the slaves. It declared that all children born to slave mothers should be free. The law affected 1,700,000 persons thus born. The antislavery society became highly active. Local movements abolished slavery in the northern State of Ceara in 1883 and in Amazonia in 1884. Many slaves were freed in Rio Grande do Sul. In 1888 slavery was abolished in Brazil.

The stage was now set to get rid of Pedro. He had infuriated all the conservative elements. The liberals wanted the Republic. Now the army struck. General Manoel Deodoro da Fonseca, Benjamin Constant and Floriano Peixoto presented an ultimatum to Pedro to abdicate. He did so and left for Europe where he died in 1891.

III

It was a veritable coup that transferred power from the hands of the Emperor to the military. Deodoro da Fonseca and Floriano Peixoto took over power from the civilian Government. They had the approval of the propertied classes. Although the generals professed Republicanism to seize power, there were genuine Republicans among the civilians who supported the move. Benjamin Constant Botelho de Magalhaes and Ruy Barbosa were genuine positivists for whom the Republic was the dream come true.

The Republic was now ruled by the generals. Deodoro da Fonseca was the de facto dictator. By decree was created the United States of Brazil. The ties between the Church and the State were severed.

A commission was chosen to write a Republican constitution. The new charter came into force in 1891. It was fashioned after the Constitution of the United States. The same distribution of power among the executive, the judiciary and the legislative branches was provided. The States were to control their own affairs. They could impose duties on goods coming from the other States. The national chief executive could impose a ‘state of seize’ at will, intervene in any State’s internal affairs and supplant elected governors.
After several years of dictatorship marked by internal trouble and virtual civil war, the army transferred power to Prudente Jose de Moraes Barros. It was a relief after five years of confusion. Prudente, a Paulista, was caught between the power struggle between the military and civilian factions. Despite these handicaps, he made some headway and achieved substantial progress during the first couple of years in office. Then he had to tackle a revolt in the Sertao region. The armed forces were dispatched to crush the rebellion of Antonio Maciel, a strange zealot nicknamed ‘Conselheiro’. Euclides de Cunha immortalized the resistance of the followers of Conselheiro in the novel ‘Os Sertoes’. Prudente took leave of office in 1898.

The next 12 years were the most constructive period in the history of the Republic. Three able men served in the presidency: Manuel de Campos Salles, 1898–1902; Francisco de Paula Rodrigues Alves 1902–1906; and Affonso Pena, 1906–9. The first two were Paulistas and the third a Mineiro. It was a period of peace, economic recovery, constructive international agreements, physical rebuilding of the capital and fight against diseases. Provisions of the constitution were generally respected.

President Campos Salles had an able Finance Minister, Joaquim Murtinho whose methods were spartan and effective. He withdrew and burnt much paper money, imposed rigid control on credits and improved the economy of the Government. During these years, Brazil won prestige in the family of nations, thanks to the Baron of Rio Branco. He spent thirty years in England and Germany and was well-versed in European affairs. He helped strengthen Brazil’s relations with the U.S.A.

The next two decades saw five presidents: Hermes da Fonseca, 1910–14; Wenceslau Braz 1914–18; Epitacio da Silva Pessoa, 1919–22; Arthur Bernardes 1922–26; and Washington Luiz Perreira de Souza, 1926–30. Three perennial problems dogged them - the interference of the armed forces, anarchic regionalism and a stumbling economy. A fourth complication arose due to the outbreak of the World War I.

The army, held in check for a dozen years, came to dominate Brazilian politics in 1910. The presidential campaign was a contest between soldiers and civilians. The men in uniform supported the candidature of Hermes who was opposed by the liberal candidate Ruy Barbossa. In an election manipulated by the army, Hermes won.

The first truly national party ‘The Civilistas’ was launched by Ruy Barbossa in 1910. State loyalty still prevailed over allegiance to the nation. Each State had a political machine and a party chieftain. Those of Sao Paulo and Minas Gerais were the most dominant. They passed the office of presidency back and forth between them. These two states furnished all but two of the presidents who served during the first forty years of the Republic.

In 1914, Wenceslau Braz Perreira Gomes, a conservative Mineiro took the office of the President. It is generally believed that he was an honest man. As the War broke out, Brazil’s economy faced an enormous crisis. The prices of coffee and rubber fell in the international market. German submarines were blocking trade and sinking ships.

Internally, Brazil was sharply divided. Many people, including the cultured upper strata, sided with the Allies. Most of the Italians supported the Americans. But there were elements who were openly pro-German – especially those living in
the southern provinces. In 1917, after repeated sinking of Brazilian ships and entry of the United States into the War, Brazil revoked its neutrality and declared war on Germany – the only South American nation to have done it.

The war years finally brought prosperity. By 1917, despite German attacks, Brazil's sales of beans increased four hundred times, sugar six times and chilled beef ten times. In 1918, Brazil took part in the Versailles Peace Conference where its representative Epitacio Pessoa asserted his country's place among the world powers.

In 1924, an episode marked the emergence of the Communist movement in Brazil. Luiz Carlos Prestes, an army Captain, recruited an expeditionary force of enthusiastic rebels. For two years they journeyed over the interior, south to the Parana, north to the Sao Francisco, west towards the lowlands of Bolivia. This adventure has been recounted most lyrically by Jorge Amado. For some years the exploits of the Prestes band caught the imagination of the people of the nation and inspired songs in every village. In this long march Prestes discovered the intense poverty of the caboclos. The long march came to an end in Mato Grosso. Prestes went into exile - to Moscow.

There was a brief relief under Washington Luiz Perreira de Souza (1926–30). Coffee prices improved and the military gave the civilians a respite. Freire's father who served in the military police during this period was totally disillusioned with the Government. In 1930, Brazil was caught in the worldwide depression.

As the election approached in 1930, Washington Luiz made a political blunder by choosing a fellow Paulista Julio Prestes as his successor, ignoring a Mineiro. The infuriated Mineiros threw their support in favour of Getulio Vargas of Rio Grande do Sul. The election, controlled by Washington Luiz, declared Prestes elected. The disaffected Mineiros, Gauchos and Paulistas conspired to reverse the scenario. A formidable body of army officers and politicians moved to Rio de Janeiro, removed Washington Luiz from office and placed Vargas in the presidential palace. His advent marked the end of the First Republic and the beginning of fifteen years of dictatorship.

Vargas, says Gilberto Freyre, must be understood against the landscape and heritage of Rio Grande do Sul; he was spiritually akin to the Jesuit missionary fathers who shaped the religious and cultural life of the area. Like them, he was silent, introspective, subtle, realistic, distant and cold. This 47-year-old man, trained first for the army, then for the Law, served as Minister of Treasury under Washington Luiz and, then as governor of his own State. He ruled for 15 years by playing State against State, group against group and man against man - always with a smile.

Vargas' first two years in office inspired confidence among the Brazilians. He made it amply clear that state loyalties must yield to national unity. He imposed a rigid censorship, removed elected state officials and posted his own chosen men as governors and mayors. The Government of the country was now truly in Rio de Janeiro and in the hands of Getulio Vargas.

His economic policy was wise, vigorous and audacious. He imposed new taxes, removed ridiculous tariff barriers between the States, encouraged creation of new
industries, optimized coffee production and marketing and declared a moratorium on foreign loans.

Vargas showed great political acumen in 1932. The State of Sao Paulo had demanded a return to the constitutional order that had been set aside by the first acts of the Vargas Government. Berthold Klinger, the former Chief of Police, rallied 30,000 troops of the State. Vargas showed his ability for compromise. On one hand, he prepared the federal troops for an eventual confrontation, and on the other, offered a comfortable retirement scheme for the leaders of the uprising. Once the rising was contained, he carefully avoided taking any reprisals against Sao Paulo. He declared that he would provide the constitution people demanded. Later on, when the city of Sao Paulo opened the Avenida de Julio, commemorating their unsuccessful uprising, Vargas himself participated in the ceremony.

Vargas convened a Constituent Assembly in 1933 which prepared the Constitution of 1934. It resembled the Constitution of 1891. The new Constitution reinforced national unity by vesting larger power in the hands of chief executive, provided for social legislation to safeguard labourers in the fields and factories and granted suffrage to women. The Assembly then named Vargas President for four years.

In November 1935, the third infantry regiment, stationed in the capital, hoisted the red flag and their example was followed by a number of officers of the Air Force Academy. They had hoped that all the garrisons in Rio Grande do Sul would follow their example. But this did not happen. This Communist uprising of 1935 proved to be abortive. It lasted only a single night but the consequences were more serious. After this incident Vargas proscribed the Communist Party in Brazil. Its leader Luis Carlos Prestes, was arrested and sentenced to 46 years of imprisonment.

A group called Integralists had been growing rapidly since 1934. Its leader was a neurotic zealot called Plinio Salgado. He spoke of Sun worship, Italian Fascism, anti-semitism and ‘leadership’. His several hundred supporters wore green shirts, gave a distinctive salute, used the Greek sigma as their identifying mark and exalted ‘God, Nation, Family’. The followers of the Integralists spread into the Army, Navy and Government offices.

The next Presidential election was set for January 1938. Three forces dominated the campaign: Vargas, who was constitutionally ineligible for election; the Communists, whose leader was in the prison and the Integralists, the most numerous of all the parties. Vargas declared an emergency of ninety days in October. He claimed that the Communists were preparing for an uprising. Then in November Vargas struck. He proclaimed himself President for another term, dissolved Congress, and announced a new constitution for the ‘Novo Estado’ or the New State.

Now, Vargas named all officials – high and low. His social programme, launched by decree, guaranteed collective bargaining. The new constitution promised an eight-hour day, restriction on night duty and child labour, medical assistance for worker and expectant mothers, etc. The slogan ‘Brazil for Brazilians’ had a nationalistic tinge. Foreign enterprises were caught in a tangle of new regulations.

His was a ‘disciplined democracy’. Civil liberties were curtailed. The Press, radio and educational institutions came under censorship. Foreign correspondents were debarred from sending unauthorized despatches.
Vargas utilized the services of able men – even those who differed with his policies. Afriano de Mello Franco, his Minister of Foreign Affairs during the first three years, belonged to the fine tradition of Brazilian international lawyers. He was a delegate to the League of Nations and a judge at the Hague. In 1933, he represented Brazil at the seventh Pan-American Conference in Montevideo.

Oswaldo Aranha, ambassador to the U.S.A., was another useful colleague. He became President of the Assembly of the United Nations. Candid, open, friendly, he was Vargas’ most effective spokesman. Aranha was always on the side of the Allies. Cynical bystanders described him as ‘Vargas’ American Front’.

Vargas has been rightfully credited for his efforts to improve the living conditions of the people. He made some headway in providing better housing, more medical care, and increased wages. The War brought a brief period of prosperity as the demands for Brazilian goods increased. Industries whose number multiplied during and after World War II got a boost. Total industrial outlay in 1907 was around U.S. $35 million; in 1920, it was U.S. $153 million; in 1940, U.S. $1300 million. The industrial output multiplied by 43 times over 36 years. Textile, paper, rubber goods, leather, cement and machinery all registered a rise. Vargas built the Volta Redondo steel plant which was a novelty for a third world nation.

The swamplands in the State of Rio de Janeiro were drained for farming. Highways and railroads were extended. In 1938, Vargas launched the National Petroleum Council. The National Council of Hydraulic and Electrical Energy was created in 1939 to exploit the vast unharvested power of the rivers.

Brazil’s trade registered a significant increase. During 1934–37, Brazil operated under a barter agreement with Germany. Locomotives, iron, coal, dyes were exchanged for Brazilian coffee, cotton, tobacco and oil. By 1937, Germany was selling twice as much to Brazil as Great Britain and half as much as the United States.

During the initial phase of World War II, Vargas’ sympathy was unclear. His generals were cultivated by Germany. Many felt that Novo Estado resembled German and Italian models. He sent one of his sons to the U.S.A. and another to Germany and Italy. Vargas discouraged popular enthusiasm for the Allied cause. Even in January 1941, the newspaper Diário Carioca was closed for publishing an article in praise of Inter-American solidarity. When the Russians were defeating Germany, the Brazilian press made it appear that the Germans were still victorious.

After the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour, all the American nations got together. Vargas treaded the path very cautiously. In the month of January, 1942, Rio de Janeiro hosted a conference of the foreign ministers of all the Governments of North and South America. They took a unanimous decision to close the ranks against the Axis. On August 22, 1942 Brazil declared War against Germany. A military force of 25,000 men was sent to the Italian Front.

By the beginning of 1945, there were clear signs of discontent in the country. Many politicians, military generals and professionals wanted change. In February that year, the newspapers were writing about Vargas’ promise to hold the elections. Democratic parties began to reorganize themselves.

The National Democratic Union nominated Gomes. His candidature was supported by the liberals. The Social Democratic Party supported Dutra, Vargas’ Minister of
War. The Communists also entered the contest. In October 1945, Vargas dismissed the police chief of the capital and installed his own brother who was notorious as a dishonest and immoral person. The Generals demanded Vargas’ resignation. On October 28, 1945 Vargas resigned and flew to his firm in Rio Grande do Sul.

V

General Enrico Dutra assumed office on January 31, 1946. Heavy, taciturn, un-smiling, colourless, Dutra the soldier proved to be an awkward man in politics. Though he was supported by Vargas, he was more conservative in approach than his predecessor.

The Communist Party fought this election to become the fourth largest party with a total vote of 568,000 cast in its favour. Prestes was elected to the Senate. The lower house had fifteen communist deputies. In the congressional election of 1947, the Communists increased their representation still further. During this period the party was quite active in the labour unions. Alarmed at the rising influence of the Communists, Dutra banned the party in 1948.

A Constitution drafted by Dutra was promulgated in 1946. It contained many social measures of Novo Estado. The Constitution also provided for direct election of the President for a five-year term. However, presidential power was curtailed. The Press became free.

After the World War II, Brazil had an accumulation of about half a billion dollars in foreign credit. Politicians and businessmen resorted to reckless spending that pushed up inflation and reduced earnings in revenue. Prices shot up while wages lagged behind. Private entrepreneurs, mostly foreign, were awarded all sorts of projects – textile, cement, automobile, farm machinery, chemical, drugs, fertilizer, etc. The expansion of private investment was matched by enlarged federal investment in public works. Most of the foreign-owned railway lines were taken over by the Government and new tracks were laid. The steel plant at Volta Redonda was expanded. Development of the Amazon region started in right earnest. Hygienic conditions were sought to be improved. Planned expansion of hydroelectric projects were under way. Various other developmental schemes were also drafted.

Running for office again in the 1950 presidential elections, Vargas travelled systematically all over Brazil. He won by an impressive margin. People voted him to see things changed. But things had changed enormously in a different direction over the last five years. Vargas now declared that Brazil would draw inspiration from the Scandinavian countries. A chronic economic crisis had gripped the nation. There was a combination of an endless outflow of capital, deficit in balance of payments, frost in the coffee plantations in Sao Paulo, speculation, a desperate drought in the North-east, and a rise in the cost of living.

Vargas doubled the wages of the lowest-paid worker. He refused foreign capital investment in the Brazilian petroleum sector, – especially in exploration and exploitation. He tried to pass a law that would put a spanner on profits of the foreign companies – especially in remittance. He tried to cope with many enemies and many problems. In January 1954, the military leaders urged for dismissal of Joao Goulart,
the Minister of Labour. Goulart had begun to transform the trade unions into a powerful workers’ movement. Shortly thereafter, the Generals warned Vargas of ‘demagogic politics’. The conflict between the President and the Army became sharper.

On the dawn of August 24, 1954, after a night spent in deep thought, Vargas committed suicide. This created a tremendous effect on the Brazilian politics. Sobbing crowds came down from the favelas to kiss Getulio’s face. Thousands of people joined the funeral procession.

Vargas left a letter for the nation. He wrote: “After so many years of domination and exploitation by international economic and financial cartels, I led a revolution and I won. I began the work of liberation and established the rule of freedom in the society. I had to abandon it. Then I was returned to power by the people. The clandestine campaign of the international cartels then became allied with that of the national groups fighting a regime which gave guarantees to the workers. The profits of foreign business rose to 500 per cent per year. I fought month after month, day by day, hour after hour, but they did not want the workers to be free. They did not want ordinary people to be independent. I have nothing left to give now but my blood. I was a slave to my people; I fought against exploitation of Brazil; I fought for the people; now I give my life”.

Juscelino Kubitschek became the new President. During 1956–60, the term he was in the presidency, he showed that he carried the mantle of Vargas. Kubitschek was the founder of Brasilia, Brasil’s new capital. Construction of Brasilia was Kubitschek’s crowning glory as well as his reason for failure. The idea of transferring the capital dates back to 1853. In 1891, the possibility of such a change was embodied in an amendment of the Constitution. The first Constitution of the Republic actually stated the place where the future federal district was to be situated: on a plane of 14,000 square kilometers, at least 200 km from the present State capital Goiana. In 1934, a special government commission visited the area in order to settle on a precise site for the administrative buildings and the chamber of deputies. In 1953, exactly a hundred years after the idea had first been mooted, the Congress passed a law stating that the site chosen for Brasilia must have a good climate, be easily reached both by land and water, and have soil suitable for both building on and cultivation of vegetables. It was further stipulated that the future capital should spread over 5000 square kilometers and have about 500,000 inhabitants.

Kubitschek’s victory in October 1955 came to many as a surprise. Against him was a coalition which, though oddly assorted, proved a match for all those who opposed Getulism. As the candidate of the social democrats, the workers and the Communists, he had all the conservatives and the right to the centre elements against him. A large part of the Army was hostile. However, in the end Kubitschek won by a margin of 400,000 votes over the conservative candidate Juarez Tavora. A careful study of the results made it clear that Vargas’ shadow loomed large in the election. Joao Goulart, leader of the Workers’ party, former Minister of Labour in the Vargas administration, got more vote for the vice-presidency than Kubitschek got for the presidency. The Pro-fascist Plinio Sagrado received 700,000 votes.

Kubitschek’s greatest achievement – and disaster – was Brasilia. As he took office, he announced that he intended to cram fifty years into five. His first step
was to set up a state body to study and implement The Novacap (new capital) project. By October 1956, the work began.

Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, pupils of Le Corbusier, and well known among rising young Brazilian architects, who had designed the amazing Ministry of Education building in the centre of Rio de Janeiro, with its revolutionary sunvisor and beehive construction, won the contract for building the capital. The future city had Dom Bosco as its patron saint.

Lucio Costa began by tracing a cross on a blank sheet of paper. The horizontal axis, designed for residential areas, eventually became a curving line. From the sky the city looked like a bird. The vertical axis was given over to official and public buildings, ending in the symbolically named Square of Three Powers, where the ‘executive’ palace stands between two semi-circular areas - one designed for the Chamber and the Senate and the other for the Court of Justice. The city was built in a fantastically quick time: it took only three years for 50,000 workmen to finish the major work for the new capital. The palace in the Square of the Three Powers, the cathedral fashioned in the shape of an exotic flower, the palace of the Alvorada – all architectural masterpieces, poems in glass, steel and, concrete – were in place close to the artificial lake formed by drawing together the waters of half a dozen streams.

On the state policy level, Kubischek carried on the Vargas line of benefiting the urban workers and the national bourgeoisie though he also tilted towards foreign capital. He stressed on an accelerated economic growth. Foreign capital inflow started vigorously (U.S. $ 743 million). This investment was mainly in the high profit consumer durables such as the newly developed motor vehicles industry. The concentration of foreign control in the most dynamic and capital intensive sectors of the economy not only made economic independence of Brazil more unlikely than ever, it also undermined and aggravated the contradiction between national capital aligned with foreign capital and the broad masses of the nation - both rural and urban.

Therefore, national private capital rapidly lost to foreign capital in its competition to secure a strategic position in the economy. When the possibility of substituting home produced goods for imports was exhausted, private Brazilian companies and groups had no other alternative than to submit to foreign interests.

The consequence of such a policy was increased productivity at the cost of employment. Wages were forced down, the market shrank, and the number of big enterprises declined. Because of monopoly or semi-monopoly conditions, the companies were still able to raise prices, regardless of the demand. By the early sixties, inflation was running at eighty to ninety percent a year and the domestic market saturated.

In such a condition, the potential for class conflict was greatly enhanced. With the national bourgeoisie getting weakened and an increasing number of industrialists getting allied with the foreign capital, the workers were finding themselves in a precarious condition as both wages and jobs froze. The popular discontent grew. During the late fifties and the early sixties there was an upsurge of peasant movements. The Catholic Church organised rural unions to ameliorate the plight of the
peasants. Some of the leading churchmen were quite vocal including Dom Herder Camara, the Archbishop of Recife.

Kubitschek set up the Instituto Superior de Estudios Brasileiros (ISEB) which served as an official/academic forum for discussions on Brazilian development. Simultaneously, he started finalizing Government planning with the Programma de Metas (Target plan). Following the drought in 1958, funds for the North-east were channelled through the new ‘Superintendency for the Development of the North-east’ (SUDENE) whose Director was Celso Furtado. Because it saw the need for structural changes and agricultural reforms, SUDENE was soon denounced as a hotbed of Leftist agitation.

The next president was Janio Quadros, a puzzling and complex personality. He provoked numerous attacks during his brief six months in power. Quadros won his first victory in the election of the key post of Governor of Sao Paulo in 1954. He had defeated his rival Adhemar de Barros, the former governor, a truculent and dynamic politician. He fulfilled his new obligation with a great sense of responsibility. His austerity and efficiency impressed the people of Sao Paulo. It was without any real opposition that he won the election to the presidency in October 1960. He took possession of the Presidential palace in Brasilia in January 1961. However, the charm did not last more than half a year. On the following 25 August, the Brazilians were stupefied to learn that President Quadros had decided to resign.

Quadros himself read out his letter of resignation to the people. His voice shook as he said “I feel myself destroyed. Hidden forces are even now mustering against me. Were I to remain the head of the Government, I should not be able to preserve the peace and tranquility I need to do the job. As I turn this page in my personal and public life, my thoughts go out to the students, the workers and the whole vast family of people who make up Brazil… ...”. 105

The man who was supposed to succeed Quadros was the Vice-President Joao Goulart. He was at the time touring China. Goulart had not been elected on the Quadros ticket but had run as second to Marshall Teixeira Lott, the candidate of the Workers’ Party. The fact that he was seen as Vargas’ political heir won him more votes than as Quadros’ number two.

Having been vice-president in the Kubitschek administration, Goulart felt quite at home in the job under Quadros. As an aide to Vargas and a native of the same district in Rio Grande do Sul, Goulart founded his political fortunes on a close connection with the trade unions and the machinery of social security.

At the moment of Quadros’ resignation, Goulart was delivering a courtesy speech in favour of the Communist regime in China; the expression he used in his toast to Chou En Lai, gave the Army an excuse they needed to veto his accession to the presidency. Goulart returned to Brazil post-haste and landed in Porto Alegre where his supporters were in a huge majority. Their anger against the military leadership was mounting alarmingly. Troops were sent by the Federal Government against the Third Army of General Machado Lopes who was supporting Goulart. But the military leaders and Goulart were wise enough to recoil at the thought of a civil war. A compromise formula emerged. Goulart would be made president, but would not
have the kind of presidential power enjoyed by Kubitschek or Quadros. Both houses of the legislature were summoned in Brasilia and they agreed on the plan.

The compromise soon became quite inadequate to the needs of the country. Goulart, though officially president, had to work in harmony with the president of the council. He soon discovered that his position was quite vulnerable. He tried to fight against such amputation of presedential power. The administration in Brasilia came virtually to a standstill. The economic situation meanwhile deteriorated, the value of the cruzeiro fell, the cost of living sky-rocketed - all these resulted in a riot in Rio de Janeiro in June 1962.

After the elections in October 1962, Kubitschek demanded a referendum to give Brazil its old form of presidential rule. In the referendum on 6 January 1963, the Brazilians by a vast majority decided to bring the old system back.

This infuriated the conservatives and a section of the Army.

Goulart endeavoured to restore the foreign policy of Quadros. He intensified relationship with the socialist countries and extended hands of friendship to newly emergent states of Africa and Asia. On the agricultural front, he tried to push through agrarian reforms. He planned to expropriate all the uncultivable land along the arterial roads, the railway lines and the dams up to a depth of ten kilometers.

Some of these policies were announced by the President himself in large gatherings of workers and peasants. Leonel Brizola, the governor of Pernambuco and Miguel Arraes, the leader of the Left, stood by and supported such measures in a meeting held on March 13, 1964. On March 24, the Government decided to increase the salary of the civil servants by 50%.

In the second-half of 1963, the Goulart Government found itself repeatedly deadlocked in battles with a Congress unwilling to cooperate with democratic solutions to change. The preceding two years saw the most extensive development of radical and revolutionary groups in Brazil.

Goulart’s shift away from the balanced ‘positive left’ towards a more radical stance paved the way for the coup in 1964, claim some analysts. The PTB based Furtado-Dantes group had been entrusted with management of the economy and the introduction of an economic stabilization programme, after Goulart regained full presidential power. They proposed a foreign borrowing scheme, pruning of Government expenditure and a three-year plan to attack cultural bottlenecks involving agricultural reforms and offering of technical and financial assistance to the peasants.

The package was not a simplistic effort to improve working class living standards. It involved basic reforms and nationalization of foreign communication and power firms. It tried to tread a middle path away from the extreme Right and the far Left.

Goulart pigeon-holed the plan and moved closer to the far Left stance espoused by his brother-in-law Brizola. His incessant attacks on all sections of the Right alienated him from the petite bourgeois middle class. The military began to plot. Meanwhile, Goulart called for tax reforms, nationalization of foreign-owned property, rent control and other measures.

After the arrest of 40 sailors allegedly for unionizing the Navy, another 1,000 Navy men rose in mutiny. Goulart refused to allow the naval authority to punish the erring men in uniform.
In April 1964, the Army and the Navy together ousted Goulart. A regime of terror and repression took over.

**POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DURING 1960s**

The Brazilian economy underwent profound changes during the quarter of a century prior to 1960. Essentially a feudal nation specializing in the production of few tropical commodities, Brazil changed itself to a semi-industrialized economy. There took place a large concentration of population in urban areas. Out of an 80 million population, with a growth rate of 3.2 per cent, the urban quantum stood at 35 million and was poised for a higher growth.

The Gross Internal Product stood at 30 billion U.S. dollars. Thus Brazil’s position was eleventh among the nations of the world. The per capita income being U.S. $ 382 in 1962, Brazil was at the top among the developing countries.

Brazil, at this time, had a sufficiently large domestic market necessary for an autonomous industrial development. The essential characteristic of the post-war years was a steady substitution of locally manufactured products for imports. It was around 6.4% of the total value of Brazilian imports.

The degree of industrial development made it possible to meet the demand of consumer goods by domestically produced goods and allowed investments based on internal supply of capital goods. Imports, however, continued to play a major role for acquiring the most advanced technology available in the industrialized countries. The nation’s level of domestic activity was no longer dependent upon the quantity and prices of the products exported.

**Post-War Development**

The post-war period was characterized by a rapid growth and important changes in the economic structure. Between 1947 and 1961, the average annual rate of growth was 5.8%. During the second half, there was a distinct rise in the rate of growth which was 7% between 1957 and 1961. This increase was essentially due to an extraordinary expansion of the industrial output. The output of consumer goods grew at the same percentage rate as the gross product. The reason was rapid expansion of capital goods industries. Between 1955 and 1961, while industrial production as a whole grew by 80%, the steel industries grew by 100%, mechanical industries by 125%, electrical and communication industries by 380% and transportation by as high as 600%.

**Problems of 1960s**

The social tensions that characterized the development of Brazil by the middle of the 1960s could be explained within the framework of a deeper analysis of the national historical process. The tension aggravated in Brazil due to intensification of the development process. The Brazilian institutional framework was established as a result of the secular process of growth of an economy almost entirely based on
the great estates producing the primary goods for export. Only three decades prior to the 1960s, the ruling class of Brazil was almost entirely composed of great landowners. The small urban population had limited political expression. The practice of slavery which lasted almost four centuries, gave way to a system in which labour relations were marked by a profound social differentiation between the employer and the employee. The representative system, constituted during the monarchical regime, continued under the republic. It was a top-down system.

After 1930, the old semifeudal agrarian structure, which served as a prop for the political system, began to break up. With the decline of agricultural exports and the development of an urban industrial sector, new bases for political power emerged. The industrial entrepreneurs and workers' organisations started participating in political movements. However, the effectiveness was somewhat reduced by the rigidity of the old institutional framework. The Federal system, providing for an exclusively large representation in the Congress of the less developed regions, contributed to the difficulties of the transitional process. On the other hand, incorporation of the working class into full political activity was made more difficult by the law that gave voting rights only to the literate minority.

The greatest obstacle to a gradual transition lay in the fact that the most urgent reform which would give the system a greater capacity of self-adaptation, happened to be the most difficult to introduce. This was the political reform to increase the representation of the people’s organs. If this higher degree of democracy could be achieved, other changes could be introduced without excessive tension in the political system.

The structural changes that had already taken place indicated that the most crucial phase of industrialization had been approached. The basic dynamic impulse could now be internally generated since the country was able to produce most of the equipment needed to maintain a high rate of growth.

Economic Causes of the Crisis

The Brazilian development in the 20th century is distinguished by the advent and progressive predominance of the factors favouring the formation of an industrially based capitalist economy. This industrial capitalism, however, was an outgrowth of a colonial economic structure. Therefore, it carried strong traces of mercantile development.

The first three decades of the 20th century were a transitional phase in which dynamism of the exterior factors had been weakened. It was marked by the coffee crisis in Brazil. The withholding of large stocks and valorization schemes supported by overseas financiers were initiated in the first years of the century. Moreover, the short-lived Amazonian rubber boom, together with the development of other export items of limited significance such as cocoa and mate, kept hidden the true nature of the crisis that gripped the national economy. The ruling class of the period thought of economic policy only in order to ‘mend’ the country, to re-establish the schemes that had formerly worked. During these three decades, Brazil’s exports increased less in comparison to the growth in population as well as the growth in urban
population which was closely committed to the export economy. On the other hand, a growing share of export earnings was being used to meet the external debt, contracted chiefly to support the coffee valorization policy.

The coffee economy disintegrated after 1930. The world economic crisis of 1929 and the overproduction of coffee in 1931 resulted in a collapse of the coffee economy. This situation continued till 1945. On the political front changes took place which managed to keep groups directly connected to coffee export out of power. New ruling elements, under the dictatorship of Vargas, who were less committed to the overseas market, initiated a more realistic policy conditioned less by the ideology of the coffee producers. A phase of ‘political realism’ which made an attempt to counter severe economic ills with drastic cures - being less concerned with maintaining a consistent attitude and unaware of the consequences of such measures - was observed.

This is exactly the period when industrial capitalism was enforced and consolidated in Brazil. No one should have any illusion that the predominance of the industrial capitalists was caused by an open conflict with the traditional, more or less feudalistic, ruling classes. The fact was that industrial capitalism began to make a significant initial progress when the colonial economy began to disintegrate; its leaders were abandoning their previous ideological position to dedicate themselves to an improvised political opportunism.

During the transition from a ‘colonial’ to an industrial economy, the archaic superstructure remained unaltered despite emergence of new productive forces which sought expression in the political sphere. As already stated, the crisis was not an outcome of an antagonism between the incipient productive forces and the superseded ideologies of the ruling class. The decadent ‘colonial’ economy did not encounter any rivalry from the newly developing system. The decadence was simply due to weakening of the external stimuli. There was no indigenous development in the country that conflicted with the interests of the exporting sector.

With the collapse of the ‘colonial’ economy, the country entered a phase of irreversible structural changes. The policy of defending the coffee economy continued despite the impossibility of gaining any external support. Huge stocks of coffee were built up. Around 80 million bags were physically destroyed in a ritual of political realism that lasted for more than a decade. The objective was to provide relief to the coffee growers by transferring to the bulk of the population the losses that would otherwise be concentrated in the coffee growing sector. The practical effect of the policy was much wider. What happened was that the level of employment in other sectors was defended although the capacity to import was declining. Thus one of the side effects of the ‘realistic’ defense of the coffee sector was the creation of highly favourable conditions for investment in the home market. From this point began the process of industrialization which led to the final collapse of the ‘colonial’ economy. Industrialization, which supported a new capitalist class, was caused by the crisis in the colonial economy and by the way in which this economy had attempted to defend itself and was not itself a causative factor in the crisis.

Many years passed before the changes that had taken place in the economic structure were recognized and a policy aimed at consolidation of industrialization
taken up. Nevertheless, the political opportunism of the new rulers, far less rigid in their ideological outlook, than the Mineiros and the Paulistas, indirectly paved the way for industrialization. A dynamic centre, based on the domestic market was created. From now onwards, the Brazilian economy did not depend on the external stimuli for its growth.

To start with, the Brazilian industrialization sought to replace imports. At a later stage, the need arose to satisfy the demand created by the development itself; i.e., satisfy the demand for capital goods. The formation of industrial capitalism required an ample accumulation process. The maintenance of a high level of income during the depression in the external sector increased the competitive capacity of existing industrial activities which were established at a time when they could be indirectly protected by successive depreciation of the Brazilian currency. The depreciation operated as a mechanism for socializing the losses of the exporting sector during periods of depression for primary products in the world market. During the period between 1929 and 1937, industrial output increased by 50 per cent while imports declined by 23 per cent. This expansion of industrial output was made possible due to an intensive utilization of existing capacities and by importing a certain number of equipment, mostly second-hand, offered at reduced prices during depression. The intensive utilization of productive capacity, including the labour force which worked two or three shifts, was paralleled by a relative rise in the prices paid by the consumer. This facilitated a greater return on investment. The first wave of inflation, caused by the purchase of coffee stocks for accumulation and destruction, operated as a mechanism for transferring income to the industrial sector, creating the conditions for ample accumulation. This accumulation was reinforced by the spontaneous transfer of resources from the exporting sector whose rate of profit was on the decline.

During the period of the three decades starting from 1930, industrialization was supported by the convergence of two factors: substitution of imports and transfer of resources caused by inflation.

During the first phase of substitution of imports, the objective was to fill in the gap. In view of the collapse of the import capacity, imported goods had become relatively more expensive. Domestic products, hitherto neglected because of their inferior quality or higher price, began to be accepted in the market. In other cases, demand was deflected to similar products, as was the case with overseas tourism. Expansion of certain domestic lines of production had its effect on the composition of demand for imports since it created the need to import intermediary products, raw materials and equipment. Once the import capacity became stagnant, the pressure created by the new demand for imported products pushed up the prices of products purchased abroad, thus permitting the import substitution process to continue. Since the import capacity remained depressed for a considerable period of time, the substitution process continued unabated. First, those non-durable products which could be manufactured were produced. This was followed by replacement of durable products, certain intermediary products and a fair amount of equipment. Nevertheless, this process reached a relative saturation point. Some products were hard to replace – wheat, coking coal, sulphur, for example; substitution of some required a great deal
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of effort and were time-consuming – crude oil, copper and heavy machinery. When this point of relative saturation was reached, substitution ceased to be a dynamic factor and became a serious handicap to accumulation. Thus, an obstacle to development was created that could only be overcome by the development of an autonomous technology and an independent supply of equipment characteristic of full economic development. Once the economy could base itself on the domestic industry for effecting investments, was it able to overcome the obstacles created by the import capacity or at least reduce the limitation to manageable proportions.

Accumulation was supported by an inflationary process which assumed various forms over the decades from the 1930s. It redistributed income for the benefit of the groups linked to investment. The government policy of buying up the coffee stock benefited the small industrial sector indirectly and created conditions for a rapid growth.

The transfer of income made possible by effective utilization of the productive capacity was a phenomenon of the first inflationary process of the 1930s. The substitution of imports enhanced its scope. The foreign exchange policy influenced the mechanism most profoundly. By stabilizing the exchange rate and introducing selective control of imports with a concomitant rise in the level of domestic prices, conditions were created for the great transfer of income that favoured industrial accumulation in the post-war period. Massive transfer of income occurred between 1949 and 1953 when internal prices went up by 15% and the foreign exchange rate remained stable.

Weakening of the Dynamic Factor

Industrialization was directly based on the system of replacing imports with domestically manufactured substitutions. Accumulation in the industrial sector was directly bound up with various waves of inflation. The inflation operated as a brake on structures and transferred recourses, to the most dynamic sector, by taxing consumers and causing an increase in investment.

It was difficult to find investments for substitution of imports in the sixties. These were highly capitalised investments involving long maturation periods. The obstacles were quite formidable since 1955 due to a serious deterioration in the trade process. In order to overcome the difficulties, the nation was led to incur an increasing external debt. The medium term effect of this debt made itself felt on the economy. It caused further shrinking of the import capacity – this, in order to service large debts. A cumulative circular process was created in which measures to circumvent the barrier of the import capacity tended to strengthen the barrier.

The factors supporting the industrialization process disappeared before capital formation had reached a self-growing stage vis-à-vis the external supply of capital goods. This fact seemed to indicate that the difficulties the country had been facing had deeper roots than initially suspected. Brazil was very close to the position where development could become a cumulative circular process creating its own expansionary momentum, argue some exports. The worsening of the terms of trade in 1955 put Brazil behind this decisive stage, the same sources maintain.
Important consequences resulted from the decrease in the rate of growth. The agricultural production for the home market was notoriously slow to respond to the demand generated by the industrial development. Unlike many other countries where agriculture commonly bore the whole weight of industrial accumulation in its early stages, in Brazil, the mass of consumers in general and the exporting agricultural sector, in particular, were the mainstay of industrial accumulation. The predominance of feudalism in agriculture caused great inelasticity in the supply of food for the urban areas which created serious obstacles to development. On the whole, prices of manufactured products went up less than those of agricultural products intended for home consumption. This phenomenon indicated the fact that the industrial capitalists as a class allocated a part of their profit to the interests tied up with the large estates. The process was further aggravated by an aggressive action by the working class and the spread of social conflict to the rural areas. There took place an ideological polarisation that obscured the internal contradiction of the propertied classes.

This could have been avoided if there was industrialization of agriculture. Industrial support for agriculture was still in its early stages – the stage of supplying agricultural machinery at a high price in relation to price of imported goods of the same nature. With the industrial growth rate declining, there was a decline in agricultural labour, being engaged elsewhere. This reduced the overall demand for agricultural products. Consequently, investment in agriculture was discouraged and thus reduced even further the prospect of spontaneous changes in the structure.

In view of the anachronistic and obsolete nature of the country’s sub-structure, which had been organised for the colonial economy, there was a pressing need for a massive effort for investment in the basic sectors: transportation, electric power, liquid fuel, steel works and so forth. These investments were required on a wide scale by public authority, if strangulation of the industrialization process was to be avoided. These could not be effectively done due to vacillations of the ruling class.

The structural problems of a transitional economy became more apparent with the decline in the rate of growth. Those sections of the ruling class which had been demanding increased participation in the product, supported by a semi-feudal agrarian structure, exposed their anti-social character as soon as the rate of growth of the product decreased. A widening circle of opinion groups now became aware that development possibilities were being hampered by the activities of some groups. The people were being subjected to permanent rationing of essential agricultural products. Another structural problem was the Government’s incapacity to find adequate financial backing for the investments for which it was responsible and which were vital for the actual process of development.

**Condition in Northeast**

There were 25 million people in the North-east in the 1960s. Two-thirds of this population worked on land. These people had no political organisations of their own and, therefore, had no idea how to demand better living conditions.
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The bulk of the population lived over a narrow humid coastal strip, 30 to 40 miles in width. The great estates devoted to sugar introduced by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century were situated here.

The *usina*, a typical sugar cane establishment, comprised four to five agricultural units (engenhos) and sheltered around 10,000 people. At the centre of the *usina* was located the industrial unit, producing sugar and employing 5% to 8% of the estate workers. The rest of the population was the peasant mass who planted, tended, trimmed, harvested and transported the sugar cane. Agriculture was the principal activity of the *usina*. These people, till 1963, had no contractually defined labour relations. Their living in the feudally structured estates did not teach them to behave as normal citizens, conscious of their rights and duties. They lived and died in the estates. Their psychological horizon was unusually truncated.

Cut off from all human, social and community relationships, working for the *usina* from morning till night, without any contact with the outside world - this was the pattern of living of these hapless people. This began to change from the 1950s and the process accentuated in the beginning of the 1960s. The great industrialization process generated an increase in income. Intensive urbanisation resulted in an appreciable increase in the consumption of sugar. National consumption rose from 30 million bags in 1953/54 to more than 46 million in 1962/63. An extremely favourable condition in the world market permitted export of sugar on a large scale. The output rose by 50 per cent. This resulted in extension of the acreage of sugar cane cultivation to the progressive elimination of areas previously used for growing food crops. There was a tendency for a rise in real costs which created a heavy pressure on the workers’ wages.

Thus a section of the peasants who cultivated food crops and vegetables (called *morador*) for their own consumption were transformed in a relatively short period of time into wage-earners from the previous status of share-croppers. This raised the cost of production.

By carrying out its policy of expanding sugar production, the landlords cum owners of *usinas* unleashed powerful forces that called for structural changes in the sugar economy. Now, deprived of their small plot, these workers very soon organised themselves. The class consciousness was stimulated by the hard conditions imposed on the workers by the landowning class. Between 1960 and 1962, at the peak of this pressure, a peasant’s daily wage was hardly enough to buy even a small amount of cassava. There were widespread international concerns at the plight of these peasants in the Brazilian North-east.

The organisation of the peasants till 1962 showed all the characteristics of a revolutionary structure. The league declared that it was fighting against an unjust social order. Where even organising a meeting was considered a crime, the peasants
retaliated. The Congress passed the Rural Workers’ Statute at the beginning of 1963. It had a profound effect on the Peasants’ League movement. By the force of their organisational strength, the sugar workers managed to achieve their objective in a surprisingly short period.

After 1960, significant changes took place in the world sugar market due to the revolution in Cuba. As Cuba was eliminated from the U.S. market, the prospects for Brazilian sugar brightened. Thus, the north-eastern sugar industry began to export its total surplus, abandoning all concern for the country’s southern market. The social pressure for a rise in wages was now regarded with complacency since it was a powerful argument for raising the domestic price to the international level and eliminating the export tax recently introduced. A common bond was forged between the estate owners and the workers.

Some political analysts have argued that the period of the great victories for the peasants of the sugar zone during 1962–1963 was also the period of compromise of the revolutionary potential of the peasant movement. With their wages on a par with those of the urban workers and supported by their superb organisation to implement the provisions of the Law, the peasants of the sugar zone were placed well above the typical share-cropper, artisan or even the small landholder.

The Intermediate Zone

The humid coastal lowland covered with typical forests is known as the Mata Zone. This zone extending from the state of Bahia to the state of Pernambuco constitute only a fraction of the North-east. In Paraiba and Rio Grande do Norte, this zone appears only at intervals in a few valleys and then reappears in Maranhao, outside the geographical boundaries of the North-east.

The Caatanga zone, which means white forest, is the largest part of the North-east. Covered with sparse vegetation, this zone experiences a long dry season. However, there are some areas in the zone, which are a bit elevated, and experience a greater rain precipitation.

The zone lying between Mata and Caatanga is called Agreste. This zone is distinguished by a higher degree of moisture and better quality of the soil. The soil is good for cereal cultivation.

The Caatanga zone was appropriated by the landowners from the colonial times. In the Caatanga economy cattle is considered to be the capital. The community that inhabited this zone was permitted to do so by the landowners.

The Agreste region was inhabited by people who had migrated from the Mata zone during the decline of the sugar economy. The Palmares Republic of the runaway slaves was situated in this region. After the abolition of slavery, many former slaves also came to settle in this region. Those who inhabited this region were directly or indirectly connected with the sugar economy.

Bush cotton, introduced in the Agreste zone, was cultivated by the inhabitants. Earnings from this supplemented their income.

The estates in Agreste were generally smaller in size. Some of the estates were divided due to fractured inheritance giving rise to a regime of small holdings.
The evolution of these estates was based on stock-raising because of a curious association with subsistence forms of agriculture. The surplus population that came to settle at Agreste were allowed to cultivate the soil within the boundary of the great estates on condition that the land would be abandoned whenever the owner needed it for grazing of the cattle. In some cases the landlord would demand one or two days of free labour per week.

The small cultivator was only provided with the amount of land that could employ the family at the most primitive technical level. To increase income, the peasant was needed to use more up-to-date methods of cultivation, which would require much more capital and land than available. Improvement in agricultural techniques could not be carried out without reducing the number of workers attached to the estate. Decrease in the number of workers and an increase in their income would have to result in a rise in the cost of manpower employed by the landowner in stock-rearing and other activities. Thus there was a conflict of interest between the mass of cultivators and the estate owner.

Since the peasants here lived in communities, they were more conscious and organised. Here the Peasants’ League developed more rapidly. The struggle of the peasants here was directed towards defending possession of the land. The victories of the sugar cane workers had important repercussions. Once the wages of the rural workers were increased, it was apparent that the rent paid to the landowner during the period of subjection would either be reduced or eliminated.

Sertao Region

Sertao is a semi-arid region in the North-east. Rainfall is significantly less than the other two regions. It experiences rains in the summer. It is the root cause for the droughts. With the exception of the mountainous terrain, precipitation throughout Sertao is much lower than Agreste. The strip of Sertao extends from northern Bahia to Rio Grande do Norte, passing through the interior of Pernambuco and Paraiba where it receives the lowest precipitation. The characteristic semi-aridity is also the result of regional hydrological and geological characteristics. The underlying rocks hold very little moisture owing to lack of sedimentary beds which allow a high rate of evaporation. The most important constituent elements of the soil are washed away due to ‘leaching’. Vegetation in this region therefore is even more scanty.

The natural vegetation of the region adapted itself to the natural conditions by a process of xerophytism. For eight months, in order to survive, the vital activities of the forest almost come to a stop. It then becomes a phantom forest. During this lethargic period, the plants live on reserves of water stored in their roots. This enables them to recover as soon as the rains appear. Thus the process continues.

Occupation in Sertao is more or less similar to that of Agreste. For a long time, the only kind of organised economy in Sertao and Caatinga was extensive stock-raising. In the 19th century, the growth of cotton acquired significance in the Sertao region. An arborescent variety began to be cultivated. Cross-breeding with other varieties enabled cotton production to increase. During the U.S civil war, this cultivation became quite important.
By creating the condition for absorption of an increasing amount of manpower, cotton cultivation provided an outlet for the people. The labour force planting cotton also planted food crops. After harvesting, the stubble was used as cattle feed. Thus drought became more of a social problem. The appropriation of cotton was done through ruthless exploitation of the workers by the landowners.

With the drought problem assuming the proportion of a national calamity, the Federal Government built many reservoirs in the cultivation areas to store water during the rainy season for utilization later. However, taking advantage of these measures, the landowners started using the land for cultivation of cash crops such as sugar. This put the population at high risk since sugar cultivation eliminated subsistence farming. The sugar boom in the sixties proved to be a curse for the Sertao peasants.

Events Leading to Military Coup

The economic system and social structure of Brazil in 1930 had changed little from the century before. The economy was based on exportable commodities, especially coffee. These were produced in the great estates and financed by the state, chiefly on the basis of taxes imposed on foreign trade. About 80% people either lived on large estates or were directly or indirectly subject to the authority of the great landowners. Only 1% of the population participated in the political process. The landowners held control of the municipal and state governments.

Stagnation in the export economy, concentration of investments in the manufacturing sector, and growth of State activities brought about important changes in the country’s social structure. As the urban population grew from 7% in 1920 to around 30% in 1960, with a much higher literacy coefficient than the rural, the political activity showed an important shift of its centre of gravity.

These changes in social structure did not find an adequate reflection in the political institutions. The lack of an industrial class hindered the emergence of a new leadership capable to bring forth necessary changes for the modernization of the political institutions. There were many reasons why such a situation developed. One of the reasons was that Sao Paulo came to represent an increasing proportion of the total Brazilian industrial output, contributing around 40 percent during the 1960s. This geographical concentration of industrial activity in a country with a federal power structure tended to reduce the political importance of the industrial sector.

The lack of political influence of the industrial class and the slow process of modernization of the political institutional framework left the traditional oligarchic power almost intact. The federal system which provided considerable power to the Senate in which the small agricultural sectors of the most backward areas had a decisive influence, placed the legislative power under the control of the minority of the population living in areas where the interests of the great estates held undisputed sway. On the other hand, as representation of the individual States in the Chamber was proportional to the population, illiterates were represented by fellow literate citizens. Thus the vote of a citizen living in a State where 80% of the population
was illiterate was worth five times as much as the vote of a citizen living in a State with 100% literacy. As traditional oligarchy was most powerful in the most illiterate States, the electoral system contributed towards maintenance of the oligarchy in power, finding in illiteracy one of its props. This was the reason why various groups – industry-owners, religious leaders as well as progressive parties – tried to inculcate literacy with an eye to the future vote bank. This fact is also not without a bearing on the strong reaction shown by many local authorities in the more backward regions against the introduction of techniques for simplifying the spread of literacy. As we know, necessity is the mother of invention. Freire’s methods for quick access to literacy as well as his theories of liberation came from the concrete Brazilian reality which needed political representation of the popular classes in the democratic institutions.

Experience in Brazil has revealed that with the creation of new political parties that would champion the cause of the emerging working class and middle class, it was possible to develop movements in the urban centres that would affect the results of major elections. In fact, election of the President of the Republic and State Governors in the more urbanized states had been increasingly influenced by forces that would evade control by the oligarchy. Conditions had arisen in which the Executive Power represented emergent political forces that defined control of the establishments which concentrate its forces in the Congress. Tension between these two powers continued increasing after the World War II.

The Brazilian industrialization was not accompanied by disorganization of craft industries as in Europe and therefore the workers did not suffer from the complex of social degradation. On the contrary, having emerged from conditions similar to those of a rural serf, the worker was aware of having risen on the social scale. Increased public expenditure with a heavy concentration of income creating an expanding market for services, was another factor responsible for the creation of urban employment.

This urbanization process was also linked to conditions in the rural areas. There was a decrease in the average area of the small holdings. This phenomenon coupled with the soil exhaustion and increased distances from the consumption centres caused a decrease in the standard of living for a greater part of the rural population. This population tended to move to other agricultural regions to try to find some form of occupation. From this inter-rural migratory process, a growing proportion of the population tended to filter in the urban areas, where even the most precarious livelihood seemed quite attractive. Thus in all Brazilian cities, big and small, great masses of underemployed population began to concentrate, occasionally being employed in public works, building construction and unstable jobs in services.

This heterogeneous urban population in which a privileged middle class existed side by side with a growing mass of the proletariat had become the decisive factor in Brazilian political struggles. The social tensions expressed states of dissatisfaction among a growing urban mass. This amorphous mass constituted the backbone of the populist movements that characterized Brazilian political struggles in the late 1950s and the early 1960s of the last century.
The emergence of a mass society paving the way for populism, without the formation of new ruling groups able to work out a plan for national development as an alternative paradigm was the chief characteristic of the historical process. The populist leaders, dictated by the psychology of the masses called for rapid modernization through ‘basic reforms’ and ‘structural changes’. Control of the lever of power was in the hands of the oligarchy. The tension and contradiction between the two forces were primarily responsible for the growing political instability which resulted in the military coup in 1964.

NOTES

2 Ibid, p. 11.
5 Ibid, p. 72.
7 n. 1, p. 76.
8 Ibid, p. 77.
9 Ibid, p. 78.
11 n. 1, p. 113.
12 Ibid, p. 113.
14 Ibid, p. 171.
16 Ibid, p. 175.
17 Ibid, p. 177.
18 Ibid, p. 299.
21 Ibid, pp. 343–347.
22 Ibid, p. 351.
23 Ibid, p. 394.
26 Ibid, p. 42.
27 Ibid, p. 57.
28 Ibid, p. 28.
29 Ibid, p. 77.
30 Ibid, p. 79.
31 Ibid, p. 79.
33 Ibid, p. 97.
34 Ibid, p. 147.
36 Ibid, p. 231.
38 Ibid, p. 234.
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41 Ibid, p. 262.
42 Ibid, p. 461.
46 Ibid, p. 56.
48 Ibid, p. 89.
56 Ibid, p. 156.
57 Ibid, p. 159.
59 Ibid, p. 179.
60 Ibid, p. 189.
61 Ibid, pp. 203–204.
62 Ibid, p. 204.
63 Ibid, p. 204.
64 Ibid, p. 204.
65 Ibid, pp. 204–205.
70 Ibid, p. 207.
71 Ibid, pp. 207–208.
73 Ibid, p. 209.
75 Ibid, p. 218.
76 Ibid, p. 220.
77 Ibid, p. 222.
78 Ibid, p. 222.
79 Ibid, p. 222.
81 Ibid, p. 269.
82 Ibid, p. 269.
83 Ibid, p. 294.
84 Ibid, p. 310.
85 Ibid, p. 313.
86 Ibid, p. 315.
89 Ibid, p. 347.
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93 Ibid, p. 366.
96 Ibid, p. 140.
97 Ibid, p. 143.
98 Ibid, p. 149.
100 Ibid, p. 171.
102 Ibid, p. 211.
106 Celso Furtado, *Diagnosis of the Brazilian Crisis*, University of California Press, 1965, p. 89.