

A study of the early folkways reveals a vast literature on elementary conception of folk thinking. Many folk thoughts, or primitive conceptions of social obligations, have been preserved. The early proverbs of man reveal the beginnings of social thought. The maxims prevalent in different countries have had a long history, depicting insight and wisdom implied in them.

In Sri Lanka, for example, a number of proverbs relating to economic life have been found, showing the prevalent inequalities in the society. A local maxim says: "When you eat, think of the poor." It is a sort of philanthropic injunction deprecating the presence of poverty. Professor E.S. Bogardus has rightly concluded that "social thought usually finds its initial expression during social crises. When 'prosperity' reigns and people are in general satisfied, new social thought is at ebb tide."

Social proverbs found in the writings of Spencer, Shakespeare and other English writers represent the European folk thought. Social psychological insight is betokened in the saying: "he is happiest, be he king or peasant, who finds peace in his home."

Old Russian proverbs usually centre around economic problems. Many of them emerged from oppression at the hands of feudal lords: "The kindness of the land lord is as fleecing as the dew," and "our souls are God's, our bodies the Tsar's."

Judged by their proverbs, the ancient people appear to possess a greater understanding of human nature than is commonly acknowledged. As a result of hard practical life and personal experiences, their conclusions reveal their deep insight in men and matters and many elements of far-reaching generalizations.

In short, the primitive social thought on the whole were simple, unorganized and ephemeral. The social thinking of the primitive man centres around the individual himself and it lacked subtle thinking manifesting greater social vision. Most of the proverbs of this period are in the form of suggestions. Frequently the social proverbs pertain to family and other primary groups only and ordinarily the generalizations do not permeate the society at large.

MEDIEVAL SOCIAL THOUGHT

The struggle between the church and the state was the dominant theme of the social thought of the medieval period. This situation was

further aggravated due to the rise of Roman law which encouraged the doctrine of supremacy of the state over the church and other social institutions, while the church adopted the feudal system as a great land holder. The adjustment of the relations between these "two rivals" — secular and spiritual — dominated the writings of this period.

The revival of Aristotelian theory of society by the scholastics in the later Middle Ages re-introduced the notion of the natural sociability of man leading to the final harmony so necessary to give stability to society. Thomas Aquinas elaborated the conception of *organic analogy* advanced by Aristotle. The chief features of medieval conception of society have been summarized by Professor J.H. Randall thus:

"The fundamental note in medieval civilization is the complete harmony between the individual and the society.

... All men exist in and for each other, and are bound to each other by an intricate network of mutual obligations."

The outstanding political thinker of the "Renaissance" period was Machiavelli (1469-1527). He went a step forward as compared to his Greek predecessors Plato and Aristotle by separating ethics from politics. His analysis of society based upon the premise of man's self-interest and the insatiability of human desire presents one of the most accurate as well as frank analyses of human nature to be found in the history. In his "conspiratorial society" there is no place for theology. His well-known work, "The Prince" is an admirable sociological study of leadership and *political pragmatism*. Machiavelli held the view that the end — success — justifies the means "whether fair or foul. Despite the fact that his views have exerted great influence upon practical politics, his analysis of society on the whole was not well balanced."

Another renowned philosopher of this period was Jean Bodin (1530-96) whose views on *secular absolutism* are found in his work "The Six Books Concerning the Common Wealth." He traced the genesis of society from an original family which developed and decayed but in time survived owing to social instinct of man. Society, according to Bodin, is essentially a large union of smaller groups, organized for the purpose of carrying on trade, worship and other similar activities. But, while society's origin was peaceful, the state developed out of force through the conquest of the weaker group by the stronger as suggested by Darwin. His conception of the origin of the state was later developed by Gumplovicz and his followers.