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# MALCOLM ADISESHIAH

(1910-94)

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In the post-colonial period, Adiseshiah was the outspoken proponent for a more lucid understanding of education as a vital factor for socio-economic development. In the immediate post-war years, finding that education was not getting a fair share of national resources and international aid for institution building and growth, and that the newly emerging country leaders were adhering to the paper-thin concept of education that they had inherited, he spoke of the ever-increasing importance of education for nation building. It was the voice of an economist and it was heard. It shaped the thinking of bankers and aid givers, as well as the aid receivers; it changed man's perception of the 'human role in development'-a phrase that he often used and gave renown. Thus, the assessment of Adiseshiah's contribution to education must begin with the imperatives of the economic tenet that he himself stated as follows:

The rate of return on investment in education, although not precisely measurable for the various reasons discussed, is nevertheless among the highest in the public and private sectors and I personally believe it is indeed the highest.<sup>2</sup>

The many generations of thinkers in education before him had not specifically addressed education's impact on the issues of poverty, deprivation and inequality. For Plato, education was provided for the elite to perpetrate the status quo by means of selection and stratification. For Rousseau, education was needed to fortify man against corrupt social institutions. In totalitarian societies, the objective of education was to infuse loyalty to the central party. In capitalist countries, education was given to perpetuate a particular spectrum of values, attitudes and beliefs for an open society. It was Adiseshiah, the economist, who spoke out that education had a role beyond these limited parameters, as a crucial public service for the eradication of poverty and for socio-economic growth. In the key positions he held in UNESCO in the 1950s and 1960s, he became renowned as the expositor of education as a decisive contributor to socio-economic development in the Third World.

## **A full life**

Born in the town of Vellore in South India, the young Malcolm Adiseshiah inherited the intellect of his father, a professor of philosophy. His mother, in contrast, was full of verve and energy. She was the first woman councillor of Vellore Municipality, the founding president of the Vellore Ladies' Club, and altogether a natural leader. These two seemingly dissimilar parental currents merged in a marvellous confluence in Malcolm Adiseshiah. Throughout his life he was immersed in intellectual exchanges and moved with some of the greatest minds of his time. He was surrounded by an abundance of books on economics and education. At the same time, and in the well-ordered manner he set for himself, he carried out his functions with remarkable competence in UNESCO and later, upon returning to India, in the Madras Institute of Development Studies that he founded.

Malcolm Adiseshiah had eight years of university education at Madras, the London School of Economics and Cambridge, and spent ten years teaching economics in Calcutta and Madras before joining UNESCO. That was a time when economics was being shaken off of its traditional moorings by John Maynard Keynes. Fresh from studying under Keynes, Adiseshiah taught the dazzling new macro-economics-the revolutionary economic theory on the causes of prolonged unemployment-to his honours students in Madras Christian College. Significantly, the young professor did not neglect the classical study of the individual consumer and the individual investor

interacting in product and service markets, or the determination of price by the interplay of demand and supply, or the factors that make up demand and supply. He taught the importance of the agricultural sector, that economic growth in a country like India centred on agricultural development, and that industrialization cannot be sustained without a break away from subsistence farming. He took great pains, in fact obtained considerable satisfaction, in finding examples in the villages to illustrate these economic theories he expounded in the classroom. He would get into a pair of khaki shorts and set out with his students to the villages around the college and, as he wrote himself: 'where he worked out the economics of hand-pound rice, hand-made paper, hand-loomed textiles, crop rotation and rural credit'.<sup>3</sup>

The top student of his first group of economics honours wrote the following: 'In this dawn of a new age in economic thought, the infectious enthusiasm and the intellectual vigour that this great teacher invested his teaching with, put halos even around his students.'<sup>4</sup>

There are 118 files of Adiseshiah's in the UNESCO Archives and a rough estimate shows that they comprise about 48,000 pages. Here, it is sufficient to record briefly two of his major areas of work in UNESCO. First, his pioneering work of launching and developing technical assistance projects in the Third World; and second, his eight-year spell as the Deputy Director-General.

Though a world citizen for twenty-five years, Adiseshiah remained an Indian. At the age of 60 he returned to India with a passionate interest in furthering the socio-economic development of his country. Without the least delay, he founded the Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS) and set about his task with rare organizational ability. MIDS soon became a valuable research centre for the state of Tamil Nadu and India.

Adiseshiah was eager to get back to the study of the problems of rural India. During the first years of MIDS, he directed a number of studies on rural Tamil Nadu: the economics of dry farming, land reform, irrigation, rural employment, rural housing. Because of his special concern for the poor and the neglected sections of Indian society, he directed studies on poverty and the supply of wage goods in Tamil Nadu, on income earning trends and social status of the Harijan community in Tamil Nadu, on the living conditions of the scheduled castes and of the scheduled tribes, on small fisherman, and on women's welfare.

It would be appropriate to point out that his role as a teacher, which came into prominence whatever office he held, reached its zenith at MIDS in the last quarter of his life. From this institute he took a series of steps to rectify the rather low quality of economic research studies undertaken, particularly in the formal doctorate programmes in the social sciences. At first he organized a meeting of the senior social scientists in South India and this became an annual feature of MIDS. Then, with the co-operation of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, he organized in 1971 a six-week training programme in research methodology for Ph.D. scholars in economics from all South Indian universities. He followed this with a special training programme for Ph.D. supervisors. These activities resulted in the publication of *A guide to research in economics* which is now a source book in Indian universities. On the programme side of the newly-established MIDS, Adiseshiah as founder-director launched a monthly seminar series to provide a public forum for serious discussions on a variety of socio-economic issues. The seminar threw open the challenge, and the responsibility, of thinking about and understanding a number of current policy-oriented issues. A sense of participation was introduced at a time when the intellectual life of the city of Madras was not particularly active.

MIDS published a monthly newsletter-the Bulletin. The monthly seminar paper and the discussions around it appeared in this publication for a wider dissemination. But the Bulletin was used as a reference source even more for the 25-page editorial written by Adiseshiah without a break until the end of his life. The editorial was a factual commentary on economic, educational and social factors pertaining to Tamil Nadu, India and the international scene, written meticulously with unflinching dedication every month.

In addition to his work in MIDS, Adiseshiah served as a member of the newly-established Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission in 1972; from 1975 to 1978 he was the Vice-Chancellor of Madras University, and from 1978 to 1984 a member of Parliament. The catalogue of work in the various branches of knowledge which Adiseshiah was immersed in, and his uncommon sense of public service, was extraordinary.

He was a member of the Central Advisory Board of Education, the Indian Council of Social Science Research, the National Council of Teacher Education, and President of the Indian Economic Association. He edited a number of books, notably *Science in the battle against poverty and Towards a learning society*. He authored two books on the socio-economic importance of education: *Let my country awake* (1970) and *It is time to begin* (1972). He had honorary doctorates conferred on him by fifteen universities in India and abroad.

All these activities in India and his assignments in UNESCO, though testifying to the continuing relevance of Adiseshiah's professional activities, have tended nevertheless to obscure the full ideological context in which this work flowed. The full impact of the philosophies he expounded and his contribution to education is yet to be assessed.

## Development economics

Adiseshiah concentrated mainly on the position of education as a primary factor of economic and social promotion, and he consistently stressed the positive relationship between education and development. Education was exposed by him to the rigours of economic theory, resulting in changed perceptions of education as a necessary precondition for economic advancement, both by the providers of aid and its receivers. Education was Adiseshiah's obsession and economics his conceptual framework. This emphasis on education as a major factor in overall economic growth resulted in education attaining a priority position in development plans, in the removal of financial barriers, and in greater attention being paid to educational planning. To appreciate this changed perspective for education, it is necessary to examine the roots of Adiseshiah's methodological approach and the economic tools that he brought to bear in his analysis of the development issues he was confronted with in the newly-emerging developing countries.

Economists construct complex and elaborate models to 'simplify' reality. They deliberately repress some of the features of the real world and emphasize others, according to what they feel to be important. They impose on these features an order, a grammar, a symmetry that is actually the brainchild of their discipline and which leads them to their paradigms or referentially to their theories. No wonder then that differences between economic theorists have led, and continue to lead, to new questions and new controversies: the fusing of classical to the neo-classical, the Marxists to the neo-Marxists, the Keynesians to the neo-Keynesians, the Monetarists to the Modernists.

Though well-grounded in economic theory, Adiseshiah did not wish to be a theoretician himself. It is the dynamics of life and society that concerned him. No economic theory had a monopoly on truth for him. He wrote:

The outer shell of welfare has been coated and recoated, the inner kernel has remained intact [...]. It appeared as wealth (Adam Smith, H. Sidgwick), as pleasure or happiness (J. Bentham), as utility, (A.C. Pigou), as value and price (D. Ricardo), as money, or real income (J.M. Keynes), as ophelemity or the preferred or chosen position (V. Pareto, D. Little), as aesthetic realization (K. Marx). as the or a state of equilibrium (L. Walras, A. Marshall), as the or an optimum (A. Bergson), and finally, as development and growth (WW. Rostow, A. Lewis, H. Myint).<sup>5</sup>

He also held that there is 'the need to take life and society which are not encompassed within the economists' universe of discourse.'<sup>6</sup>

Adiseshiah was very definitive about his own area of interest. His aim was to help the developing countries, as well as the international community, to appreciate the importance of education as an agent of economic development without which sustained development was not possible. He wished to show the relationship between education, productivity and income. He applied the analytical tools of economics to show that increasing the income of the working poor is the most efficient strategy to follow in the multi-faceted contexts of sustainable development and that it can best be achieved through improved public service provisions, particularly education and health. He placed the individual at the centre of development. He strove to keep development aid from falling into the very serious trap of physical development, to the neglect of human resources development, as was the trend of World Bank funding in the early years of its operations. He saw such funding spilling over to make the rich richer in the Third World at the expense of the poor majority. He saw the growth of inequalities as the greatest danger to developing countries. He wrote:

One view is that poverty which is the main product of inequality is a virtue. This view is usually held by some of those who are well-off in our societies, leading a few of them to voluntarily embrace poverty[...] The poor themselves do not consider their poverty as a virtue, but as an evil they are subjected to [...] If poverty is a virtue, then all should be poor. It is the non-poor who point to the meritorious nature of poverty [...] Inequality then, is ethically evil, socially unjust, and economically non-optimal.<sup>7</sup>

Thus Adiseshiah's view of the growing inequality he saw in the early stages of development embraced a variety of humanitarian factors, and the 'economically non-optimal' aspect of inequality was the economic dimension among them. In 1974, the World Bank and the Sussex Institute of Development Studies jointly published a collection of papers entitled 'Redistribution

with growth'. Acknowledging that a trade-off between growth and equity was inevitable, the report explored in detail what sort of uses of redistributed resources would minimize the growth/equity trade-off. The report was meant to provide a theoretical basis for a new approach to development policies. In contrast to that position, Adiseshiah remained consistent in his view that the correct development strategy for the Third World would not result in furthering inequality. Progress, he believed, must lead to an equitable society and not to the growth of excessive income differences and the emergence of an entrenched privileged minority; in fact, economic growth could only be sustained if it was accompanied by structural changes promoting equity.

When the phase of early industrial growth based on import substitution was slowing down in India, Adiseshiah argued that the demand needed to regenerate industrialization could only be achieved by first raising output and incomes in that sector which still contained the majority of the population and the majority of the poor, namely agriculture. Foundations must be laid, he held, for the steady expansion of demand from the rural sectors. Industry must serve agriculture, providing it with the improved inputs and equipment needed. For him, there was no question of a growth/equity trade-off in a large developing country like India so long as the development process ensured that the available resources were efficiently distributed between various competing sectors.

the optimum requires a progressive improvement in the distribution of goods and services in favour of the poorer and less favoured sector, without jeopardizing the allocation of resources, which it need not do, and without diminishing the total resources, the aggregate volume of production, which it should not do.<sup>8</sup>

For Adiseshiah, the typical underdeveloped country simply did not exist. He emphasized, and brought out in pragmatic programmes of action in his mission reports to a hundred countries, that the political and socio-economic circumstances of each underdeveloped country vary, and that the appropriate path of development cannot be determined *a priori* but only in the context of these conditions. Development for him was country-specific. As his career in UNESCO advanced and, after UNESCO, his programme of activities in India grew, he concerned himself more and more with the operational rather than the theoretical issues of economic development. He would say in a lighter vein that he had no time to theorize. Thus, he will not be remembered as a theoretician, an Adam Smith, a Ricardo, Karl Marx, Marshall, Keynes, Rostow, or any such great economists. He did not deviate from his position that one cannot in theory reproduce the whole of reality, but only what one perceived to be certain key aspects of it. Theorizing, for him, entailed a degree of selectivity, while he preferred to deal with the dynamics of life and society.

It is true that the idea of development has displaced previous welfare conceptions and gained general acceptance in the international community. Development is today a United Nations objective. Yet an official doctrine has never been adopted.<sup>9</sup>

If Adiseshiah had an underlying theoretical perspective from which he deduced appropriate development proposals, it was a generally applicable 'basic needs first' approach. The first tenet of the 'basic needs first' paradigm is just what Adiseshiah held most dear all his life, namely that economic development does not include merely economic growth but also progress towards poverty elimination. The proponents of this approach hold that the optimum can only be attained by the distribution of available resources between various competing uses so that the income of the working poor is raised and employment opportunities expanded. It is growth with structural change.

The 'basic needs first' paradigm does not accept a growth/equity trade-off. Adiseshiah wrote:

In some of the poor countries, therefore, a kind of fatalistic social philosophy is spreading that the price of economic growth is disparity and that concentration of incomes in a few hands is needed for increasing savings. In actual fact, large and growing income disparities have not stimulated growth. They have on the contrary acted as a powerful disincentive to growth and have channeled investments into luxury goods production, corruption, tax evasion and expatriate capital flows.<sup>10</sup>

He found that the import substitution industrialization strategy followed in India had resulted in economic power converging to a small group of industrial families. Such concentration of capital had resulted mainly in greater income disparities and a larger poverty base. Structural changes were not made in the vast rural areas, and a basis for more self-sustained growth was not laid. Consequently, the concentration of capital resources in the upper income bracket, where the

elasticity of demand was low, had resulted in domestic demand constraints, and stagnation followed.

The second tenet of the 'basic needs first' paradigm is that the redistribution of resources in the direction of the poor, particularly in the rural areas, provides greater opportunities for the innate native skills which lie largely dormant in a developing country. It results not only in higher food production but also promotes the development of intermediate goods within the country.

The third proposition of 'basic needs first' is that by raising incomes of the working poor, small-scale savings will grow. Though the unit savings will be small-scale, the base will be large and, Adiseshiah held, the total savings potential will be much greater in the longer run than in the capital concentration paradigm. Furthermore, the participation of the people in the vast rural area in the development process will be secured and that, more than anything else, lays a more effective foundation for sustained growth. He pointed out, often in dramatic terms, that concentration on import substitution and the upper income group had resulted in harmful distortions of savings and investments.

The possibilities of import substitution have been largely exhausted and the countries face a very real danger of producing high-cost, inefficient goods behind their high tariff walls. Protection in these countries today is simply a contribution to high-cost domestic structures. One infamous illustration of this trend is the expenditure by the poor countries of \$2,100 million of their domestic resources in 1965 to manufacture cars and automobile products which had an international valuation of only \$800 million. This one year waste of \$1,300 million, which is more than the World Bank's twenty-three-year total of investments in industry, is a drastic reminder, if reminder there must be [...]<sup>11</sup>

The 'basic needs first' paradigm concerns capital dispersal leading to the restructuring of domestic demand, while the paradigm of import-substitution is one of an expanding capitalist nucleus leading to capital concentration. The supporters of the former claim that the consequences that flow from this restructuring are an easing of the two dominant constraints which are brought about by the import-substitution industrialization: the domestic demand constraint and the balance of payments constraint. Regarding the first constraint, the expansion of an homogeneous mass market is more likely to sustain indigenous demand for the promotion of faster long-term growth than the concentration of expanding demand in the upper income bracket. As for the balance of payments position, the growth of agricultural production and expansion of small-scale labour-intensive intermediary goods industry lead to greater efficiency of land use, reduced use of imported machinery and reduced food imports, thereby saving on foreign exchange. These savings are available for large-scale capital-intensive investments when they become essential and also for essential imports. A more effective foundation for sustained growth is thus laid. The proponents of 'basic needs first' theory maintain that growth combined with progressive poverty elimination can be achieved in market economy countries like Taiwan and the Republic of Korea, as well as in countries pursuing a path of centrally-planned development like China.

Adiseshiah grew up in the turbulent pre-independent years in India, when freedom fighters held the notion that imperialism was somehow in league with capitalism. Opposition to imperialism was routinely yoked with hostility to capitalism. Based on these sentiments, socialism appeared in almost every section of the new Constitution of India. The leaders of independent India wanted industrial development programmes to make progress towards socialism, and the State took ownership of as much as one-third of the economy outright. The mixed economy resulted in the fostering of new relationships that enabled family-held cartels to control a large percentage of the private sector. A small number of Indians became wealthy as manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers. Unwittingly, a new kind of imperialism of a privileged minority was created. No structural changes took place in the rural areas and agriculture remained mostly at the subsistence level. The small-scale enterprises continued to be run by entrepreneurs who had little access to credit and whose growth was further curbed under a web of regulations.

It is to the credit of Adiseshiah that he did not subscribe to the notion that the only moral and economic alternative to imperialism is a socialist arrangement. In his work in UNESCO with the newly emerging countries in the 1950s and 1960s, he never held that socialism was the only option open to them. In any case, UNESCO considered international participation in national politics as undesirable for it would place an intolerable burden on the international organization. As an international civil servant, Adiseshiah did not enter into polemical debates on the various claims of any one political organization over others, but concerned himself with the larger question of development, and with the application of appropriate techniques for sustainable growth and the eradication of poverty.

It is, therefore, wrong to classify all important elements of Adiseshiah's development economics under any, one particular system of political organization. An extreme deference in

classification can lead to a most unfruitful intellectual rigidity. His non-partisan position manifested itself at various points in his evaluation of operational conditions in the newly-emerging developing countries. His work in UNESCO took him on to a broad canvas where, with innumerable designs and compositions, he depicted the virtuous spiral of growth. Specific theoretical models, concepts and analytical techniques, originally developed as part of a particular socio-economic framework in one context, was lifted by him from one operational perspective and adapted to the purposes of another. He succinctly expressed this apolitical position thus:

This condition (optimum) may be generalized, whatever the political or economic structure under consideration. If it can be achieved by the free play of the market, then that is indicated; if it can be achieved only by public ownership and management, then that would be required. In between there are many alternative forms of intervention which planning techniques must encompass.<sup>12</sup>

#### EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Though not over-concerned with theorizing, Adiseshiah had to make a plausible case for the contribution, which he held as primordial, to economic growth. The basic question was that if allowed to mature during the life of a longer-term loan, would an investment in education contribute more, or at least as much, to the national output as would an equivalent investment in a fertilizer factory or a steel plant? Adiseshiah was not the first economist to concern himself in answering that question. There were economists before him who studied the role of education in economic development. He never claimed that he broke new theoretical ground on the importance of education to economic development and, in fact, he cited S.G. Strumilin who could be given that premier status:

The most dramatic exposure of this variable may be found in a communication addressed to Lenin in 1919 by the Soviet economist, Strumilin, on the eve of the launching of the Soviet Union's first great industrialization programme. Strumilin warned Lenin that the vast hydroelectric power grids he was planning, the huge industrial enterprises about to be initiated, the steel mills, the machine-tool factories and even mechanized farms would not produce what was needed, unless an equivalent amount of investment in education were also provided. Strumilin arrived at this conclusion through studies which showed that, in his country, primary education meant a 79 per cent increase in the output and wages of a labourer; second-level education an increase of as much as 235 per cent; and higher or university education, as much as 320 per cent. It may be noted that this relationship between education, productivity and income was established for the Soviet Union at a time when her economy was still largely underdeveloped and agricultural, much like those of Asia, Africa and Latin America today.<sup>13</sup>

There were other studies in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in the United States, and mostly at the micro-level.<sup>14</sup> Adiseshiah, occupying a key position in the international community during this period, made full use of these studies on the relationship of education to income to provide supporting evidence for his advocacy of policies designed to increase expenditures in both formal and non-formal education. Despite a heavy load of UNESCO work, he found time to carry out some studies of his own: desk research, he called them. For example, using data from the UNESCO Statistical yearbooks, he drew up comparative tables of school enrolment ratios, educational expenditures and growth rates of per capita income for the different regions of the world, over the period 1950-65.

Adiseshiah's desk research on the economic aspects of education in the wider context of national income per capita was the characteristic approach of an educational planner. He perforce had to assume fixed coefficients between educational attainments and income, thus providing fixed coefficients between income and different educational levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. He did not claim that there was a precise econometric measurement of education's contribution to growth rates. He only averred that there were certain norms which could be obtained from the data which provided a 'convenient index for comment on the relationship between educational investment and total national resources.'<sup>15</sup>

During his full-time employment with UNESCO in the 1950s and 1960s, Adiseshiah was unable to undertake micro-level studies of the economic effects of education. But as stated earlier, there were many such studies undertaken in that period by economists in universities and research institutions, and he drew on them fully to promote the cause of education. The impressive body of research findings had established that increases in productivity of persons and profitability of firms was brought about by education, by investments in schools and universities, and through adult education, literacy and vocational training programmes. Other researchers, subtracting the contribution of labour and capital to gross national product, came up with a substantial residual factor which they labelled 'the measure of our ignorance'. Despite difficulties in isolating and measuring the various elements thrown together in the residual, they nevertheless proposed that it

consisted mostly of educational inputs. A plethora of literature on 'the residual' appeared and Adiseshiah admitted to the fundamental problems of measurement.

the residue is really another term for expressing the unknown, and disguising a confession of our ignorance. It is the grab-bag for all sorts of factors which include, in addition to education, changes in the product mix, training and public health, research and development, economics of scale and structural changes, each of which accounts for parts of the residue. Tools must be developed to break down this residue in terms of the separate contributions of each of these many elements, before the contribution of education to economic development can be isolated and quantified in this way.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, there was a facile tendency among economists to submerge many human aspects under the general title of education. They used 'education' as an all-embracing factor in which 'learning by doing,' traditional skills in specialized crafts, and learning from environment by osmosis, became indistinguishable one from another.

Despite these continuing theoretical limitations, Adiseshiah answered the basic question of what socio-economic tactics are best calculated to achieve sustainable development of a traditional rural society. He firmly held that improvement in education and health were the first requisites. For they will expand enormously the size and strength of the economic base.

Despite these difficulties, and in view of the various approaches I have outlined and the impressive body of research findings already accumulated, I believe that we cannot conclude that education is a key agent in promoting economic development. I believe that no other single factor can break the interlocking vicious circle of low income, low investment, low production and low income which the developing countries face.<sup>17</sup>

Adiseshiah chose to be an economist and educationist, and was ready on that fateful day—14 August 1949—when the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations adopted a resolution establishing the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance. Thus began the new era of planned international assistance to the developing countries. As mentioned earlier, these funds grew into the much larger United Nations Development Programme and Adiseshiah played an outstanding role in getting a good share of these development funds allotted to education. From \$1,075,454 in 1950/51, UNESCO's share grew to \$10,143,861 of Expanded Programme allocations and \$26,073,904 of Special Fund allocations when Adiseshiah left UNESCO in 1970.

Obtaining World Bank funds for education was not such a smooth and swift process. Its Board of Governors was reluctant to get involved in the 'sensitive area of education'. The World Bank officially began operation in 1946, concentrating at first on power and transport sectors and later including agriculture and industry. For nearly twenty years of its functioning, much technology and a great deal of money were thought to combine all the ingredients of overcoming poverty. The importance of education for the absorption of technology and for advancing the productivity of capital was ignored. It was in that circumscribed framework of the World Bank that Adiseshiah provided the official UNESCO interpretation on the direct relationship of education to sustained economic growth. The bankers were finally convinced that education was credit-worthy and that educational projects were bankable. The first lending operations in education were made in 1962—a medium-term credit to Tunisia. Today, the World Bank, which is dominated in its staff composition by economists, with efficiency in terms of value for money inevitably determining decisions, has taken education as a leading sector for its lending programme.

In the developed countries, such as Brazil, India and the United Arab Republic, for example, education promotes development first and foremost by acting on their socio-cultural infrastructure. It influences, changes and moulds their social and cultural institutions. It encourages the individual attitudes of rationality and co-operativeness. It provides a means of reducing the large mass of unemployment and underemployment and of changing land tenure systems which do not promote productivity. It multiplies the institutions for spreading knowledge, promoting innovations, widening choices. It influences the local and central structures for self-government. It awakens the mind and the imagination. It kindles hope and awareness and the will and determination to create a different future [...] what I wished to stress was rather that an even more important, direct and in the long pull, decisive contribution of education in such countries is its effect on their socio-cultural infrastructures.<sup>18</sup>

Adiseshiah declared in the international forum with forceful clarity that physical growth with its neglect of the human factor is just not productive enough and the initial momentum cannot be maintained. Structural changes necessary for sustainable growth can only be achieved through education. He recognized education not only as an individual consumer good for vocational preparation but also as an instrument for national development and an important capital investment in a nation's future.

## WHAT EDUCATION?

It (education) must itself be a factor of social change and technological progress while continuing to transmit a cultural heritage. It must be more and more closely linked to preparation for an employment market where competition is ever more ruthless, training more diversified and specialized skills obsolete before they can be fully mastered. And it must reconcile the rapidly evolving social and economic requirements of society with the awakening aspirations of the individual. At the same time, education must continue to fulfill its age-old role: to build character; to combine and balance scientific and technological knowledge and training, and humanistic, ethical and cultural values; to help the student achieve an idea of purpose, a sense of underlying unity and permanence in the midst of extremities and accelerating change.<sup>19</sup>

Adishesiah thus clearly understood that the concept and aims of education must reflect the values and norms of society. At the same time, he emphasized that education is an intentional enterprise: It involves a programme of learning with the intention that some aims and objectives ought thereby to be achieved. What he did at the level of the social and political macrocosm was to inquire what sort of learning to impart which would be substantial as well as coherent, given its values. He took the values of a particular society and inquired as to what sort of achievements education should provide which would be considered progressive.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Adishesiah had to deal with a great number of governments with vastly different social and political values, policies and institutions. The Pearson Commission described this period as follows:

After World War II, over sixty new countries gained formal independence within fifteen years. Emancipation from alien rule was accompanied by a growing political consciousness within these countries and by demands for modernization and progress. They entered political independence with a backlog of deep poverty, with little accumulated capital or experience of industrialization, and with a vague understanding of the complexities of rapid change in their societies and economies [...] Rarely, if ever, has the world faced and absorbed political change on so large a scale in so short a time.<sup>20</sup>

In the former British Colonies, such as India, the values of Oxbridge saw the role of education as the preparation of leaders, and certainly not to reduce inequalities. Thus the British had high-quality schools as feeders to universities whose graduates found their way into positions of leadership. The traditional village schools became irrelevant and disappeared, resulting in widespread illiteracy on a massive scale. The French, by contrast, emphasized French culture, the *mission civilisatrice*. Education in their colonies was, in effect, the process of becoming French in social and cultural terms. For nationals of French-speaking countries, the right to education included the right to be a Frenchman. Indigenous culture became redundant. In other colonial traditions, such as that of the Portuguese, the objectives of education were even narrower, usually based on certain modest economic advances, such as access to the lower-level jobs. Many of these countries achieved independence in the 1960s having no more than ten university graduates.

The aircraft carrying Adishesiah would arrive and soon it would no longer be possible to have an exclusively British pattern of education in India, or a French influence in Algeria. They would no longer be dependent on Senior Cambridge School Certificates or University of Sorbonne degrees and continue to be condemned to a position of servitude from which there was no escape and from 'brain drain'-for the best graduates never came back. He took with him a worldwide experience in assisting the new nations to change the equation. From the beginning, he helped developing countries to set standards of excellence relevant to their needs. And he worked tirelessly. René Ochs, who was in UNESCO's Technical Assistance Department with Adishesiah right from its inception in 1950 wrote:

Those were the days when between two round-the-world trips which took him to twenty-five countries in succession-visiting projects in remote areas in a jeep or on mule back, interviewing every expert, visiting schools, attending official functions and signing agreements, explaining procedures and calling ministers at midnight to the gangway of his plane in order to dictate requests to them-he came back exhausted by time-lags, changes of climate and of diet, and sleepless nights, but never admitting to be tired; instead being full of fresh experience, stories, new ideas and new plans. His buoyancy, his resourcefulness and his enthusiasm which swept away all obstacles, galvanized everyone into action. This applied equally to his partners of other agencies and to representatives of governments.<sup>21</sup>

## EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Adishesiah often remarked that his greatest responsibility in UNESCO was to co-operate with the ministers of education. He was keenly aware that problems of education were intertwined with political, economic and social questions. And so the best aid that could be rendered was to assist those who were permanently a part of the educational landscape in the Third World countries, the

leaders who had the greatest stake in their country's future, so that they be unmistakably in charge of their own development. He saw his first priority as to generate local perceptions of the vital contribution that education makes to development, then to assist the nationals to set education targets and objectives which were socially needed and culturally harmonious, and to provide expertise to enable them to apply rational planning axioms of maximization of benefit and minimization of cost. On the need for an endogenous approach to educational planning, he wrote:

In fact, guidance as to desirable allocation of resources to education must be sought from the national policy objectives and national development plans or programmes, using the usual economic calculus mainly as a check-point. National planning as the elaboration of objectives and targets and the means of attaining them is generally accepted today in all countries, and it is in the light of such programmes that educational sectoral plans may be drawn up and the desirable allocation determined. A national plan or programme is thus the first desideratum for determining the resources to be allocated for education and for defining its place in the economic development of a country.<sup>22</sup>

Educational planning represented a new phase in international co-operation in the 1960s. With his knowledge of economics, a knowledge background which was constantly renewed and enriched through a personal habit of lifelong study of expository writings uniquely accessible to UNESCO, Adiseshiah was acknowledged as an authority in educational planning and his advice and assistance were widely sought. He decided, when the time came, that the developing countries should pool their new-found expertise to design and adopt regional plans in education. The first of them was organized in Karachi in 1959 when a regional plan for the development of primary education in Asia was adopted. Its success led Adiseshiah to organize the African Regional Conference of Ministers of Education and Ministers of Planning at Addis Ababa, another for the Arab States (the Beirut Decision), and also for Latin America (the Santiago Declaration). These ministerial conferences became a central part of UNESCO programme activities and were held every four years in each region.

Endogenous development required training of nationals and Adiseshiah took the leadership for UNESCO to establish the International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP) in Paris in 1963 with the financial and material support of the World Bank, the Ford Foundation and the Government of France. The IIEP provides seminar-type training, intensive training courses at the national level and a unique documentation centre of books, reports, research papers and other widely circulated publications on educational planning.

'If you go to any Member State, you will find in the Ministry of Education, a planning cell, a planning body, a planning machine, and at the head of it a man or a woman who has been trained by the IIEP.'<sup>23</sup>

It was fitting that Adiseshiah, after retirement from UNESCO, should be elected in 1981 as president of the Governing Board of IIEP, the first president from the developing world, and re-elected for a second term of five years from 1986.

Also, MIDS under Adiseshiah's leadership undertook a study commissioned by the Indian Council of Social Science Research on 'Development of Education 'in Tamil Nadu (1976-1986)'. This study resulted in three publications, all edited by Adiseshiah: *Towards a learning society-a plan for development of education, science and technology in Tamil Nadu for 1976-86*; *Towards a functional learning society--a plan for non-formal education in Tamil Nadu*; and *Backdrop to the learning society-background papers to the education plan for Tamil Nadu*. Together they formed the Tamil Nadu State's perspective plan for education.

#### ADULT EDUCATION<sup>24</sup>

Adiseshiah's convictions animated his actions. He practised what he preached, and his convictions were born out of his logical thinking and analysis. Thus there was a harmonious blend in his thinking and in his actions. His brain assimilated and synthesized an incredible amount of information on the multiple interactions of human beings in an increasingly complex and unequal world and steered him towards education as an instrument, a strategy and a goal capable of providing the solution to the problems such interactions had created. Education in his thinking was an entitlement of every human being. Education would open a new universe of experience to the illiterates, create awareness about their rights, destroy their blind acceptance of their poverty as an inescapable fate, empower them to master their surrounding circumstances, enlighten them about the need to plan their family size, help them acquire new skills to increase their productivity, change their life styles and enable them to become capable citizens of a progressing country. Thus Adiseshiah's message of education was a message of reassurance, a message of confidence. This single theme of education ran through his whole life as a teacher, UNESCO administrator,

planner, researcher, critic, institution builder, editor, university vice-chancellor, parliamentarian and humanist. He firmly believed and acted on the premise that education simultaneously promotes both equity and growth. 'Adult education is the necessary condition for the successful attainment and execution of the redistributive development programmes which are aimed at moving towards a more equal and just society [...]', he wrote.<sup>25</sup>

Adiseshiah worked actively in the field of adult education. It invigorated him with vitality to put what he cherished into practice in rural India.

He viewed rural India as an area teeming with people who, despite their innate wisdom to survive, have much greater productive capacities than are presently being tapped. The problem was massive illiteracy of adults in the rural areas. Given this perspective, it was plain to him that top priority must be improvements in education and health as the first requisites for the expansion of commodity output in agriculture. 'Adult education is the tool for the farmer and the country's rural masses to raise their subsistence standard', he said.<sup>26</sup> A massive programme of adult education was of the very greatest importance for him for any truly comprehensive development of the Indian economy.

After returning to India in 1971, besides editing books on adult education in the face of inequalities and, as stated above, the book *Towards a functional learning society*, he played a leading role in the programme area of adult education. He was for two decades the president of the Tamil Nadu Board of Continuing Education and Adult Education, and the State Resource Centre has been named 'Adiseshiah Bhavan' as a tribute to his zeal and intellectual integrity. At the national level, he was the president of the Indian Adult Education Commission and was the chairman of the Standing Committee of the University Grants Commission's Adult Education Committee. At the international level, he served as a long-standing chairman of UNESCO's International jury for Literacy and was president of the International Council of Adult Education.

Thus Adiseshiah worked for education, that the fear in the minds of the people be replaced with hope for a better life, made possible by enlarging the opportunities and providing productivity all around. It was for him the only rational route to follow. He had fundamental optimism about the prospects of education for development.

#### ADISESHIAH'S WILL AND TESTAMENT

During a period of more than fifty years, Adiseshiah laboured for the educational advancement of Third World countries, particularly India, with a solicitude, zeal and self-denial that was academically distinguished and intellectually rewarding. On his death, he bequeathed all his property to the Madras Institute of Development Studies which he had nobly founded, and to the creation of a trust for teaching and research in economics. In this continuing awareness of the polyvalence of learning we recognize the mark of the true educator.

## Notes

1. Eric Prabhakar (India) Former Olympic athlete and Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University. Former Chief of Asia Section in UNESCO's Education Sector. Author of *The way to athletic gold: a training manual for Indian athletic excellence* (published in twelve Indian languages), as well as a historical novel. Member of the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu. Former Vice-President of the All India Amateur Athletic Federation.
2. M. Adiseshiah, *Let my country awake*, Paris, UNESCO, 1970, p. 65.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
4. C.T. Kurien, E.R. Prabhakar and S. Gopal, eds., *Economy, society and development*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1991, p. 24.
5. Adiseshiah, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
7. M. Adiseshiah, ed., *Adult education faces inequalities*, Madras, Sangam Publishers, 1981, p. 1-3.
8. Adiseshiah, *Let my country awake*, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
10. M. Adiseshiah, *It is time to begin*, Paris, UNESCO, 1972, p. 15.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
12. Adiseshiah, *Let my country awake*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
14. The following were studies in the 1950s and 1960s on the relationship of education to income:  
Abramowitz, *Resource and output trends in the United States since 1870*, New York, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1956. (Occasional research paper no. 52.)  
Becker. *Human capital*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1965.  
H. Correa. *The economics of human resources*, Amsterdam, North Holland Publishing Co., 1963.

- Denison, *Measuring the contribution of education (and the residual) to economic growth*, Paris, OECD, 1964.
- Friedman, Kusnetz, Simon, *Income for independent professional practice*, New York, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1946.
- F. Harbison and C. Myers, *Education, manpower and economic growth*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1964.
- McClelland. Does education accelerate economic growth? *Economic development and cultural change* (Chicago), vol. 15, no. 3, April 1966.
- T. Schultz, Capital formation by education, *Journal of political economy* (Chicago), December 1960.
- T. Schultz, Education and economic growth, in: *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Chicago, IL, NSSE, 1961.
- T Schultz, *The economic value of education*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1963.
- B. Tinbergen, *Econometric models of education*, Paris, OECD, 1965.
15. Adiseshiah, *Let my country awake*, op. cit., p. 64.
  16. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
  17. *Ibid.*, p. 64-65.
  18. *Ibid.*, p. 66-67.
  19. Adiseshiah, *It is time to begin*, op. cit., p. 91-92.
  20. L. Pearson, *Partners in development*, New York, Praeger Publishers, 1969, p. 25.
  21. Kurien, Prabhakar and Gopal, eds., op. cit., p. 33.
  22. Adiseshiah, *Let my country awake*, op. cit., p. 73.
  23. Speech by M. Adiseshiah. International Institute of Educational Planning, twenty-fifth anniversary celebration, 1988, p. 10.
  24. 'Till recently, UNESCO had two programmes, one called Adult Education and the other called Fundamental, later Community and more recently Literacy Education. It is only now that the two programmes have been merged into a single Adult Education programme'. Adiseshiah, ed., *Adult education faces inequalities*, op. cit., p. 11.
  25. *Ibid.*, p 10-11.
  26. Adiseshiah, *Let my country awake*, op. cit., p. 57.