

A Rejoinder

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Two juxtapositions may be helpful in assessing Goonatilake's contributions:

"Ultimately the reference group towards which the social sciences in Sri Lanka have to address themselves is the public of this country and the social and political processes occurring within it. And to fit this purpose the conceptual apparatus of the social sciences will have to be purely that which can stand the test of explaining local social reality." (Goonatilake, **IDS Bulletin**, April, 1975).

"I would hasten to add that my argument is not . . . a call . . . for evolving an individual social science for every developing country." (Goonatilake, **IDS Bulletin**, November, 1975).

"The state of Indian economic analysis . . . of that country's problems seems to me far better than in most developed countries, Western or Communist (the failure of that analysis to get through to the policymakers is another problem)." (Lipton, **IDS Bulletin** April, 1975).

"Lipton's admired Indian economists, who (according to him) cannot carry through their excellent suggestions because of the perfidy of politicians . . ." (Goonatilake, **IDS Bulletin**, October, 1975).

Now to comment on his latest contribution. Accurate reading and citation are necessary for useful work on social science. It is not accurate to use Kuhn's analysis of paradigm change as a warrant for the statement "that knowledge is to a large extent socially determined"—a statement that, depending on its interpretation, is either trivial or false. It is not accurate to refer to Arghiri Emmanuel's brilliant analysis of unequal exchange to back up the vague statement that in the realm of ideas "a relationship of unequal exchange exists parallel to that in the economic sphere."

Nor is the concept of self-reliance used any more accurately: ". . . a degree of social scientific self-reliance has been successful in development strategies, as witness the cases of the USSR, China, North Korea or even Japan." Japan is a thoroughly researched, open society, 'self-reliant' only in the sense that it has first-rate social scientists (including leading Marxists) who openly analyse the problems of Japan, of other societies, and of high theory. The USSR, China and North Korea are 'self-reliant' in the sense that objective and scientific evaluation of their 'development

strategies' through field research is impossible. If it becomes possible, I shall be on the next plane.

I am intrigued by Goonatilake's references (in his fourth paragraph) to research access. There is a community of scholarship of almost all custodians of research information, and every effort is made to render it freely available to those who require it. Such access is not a special privilege but a normal, non-racial, non-national scholarly right. Surely, to say that "no Third World scholar is ever reciprocally afforded" that right is inaccurate? Nobody has ever called me a "neo-colonial economist" before. I suppose my published work speaks for itself. I always try to work closely with "local academics" wherever I am: but "direct supervision" of one qualified researcher by another—now there's a neo-colonial concept for you!

To me the most important problem is that of international equality of research access. A Sri Lankan researcher in Britain should, in the relevant respects, be just like a British researcher in Sri Lanka—and about as frequent. Let me give an instance typical of many. A young scholar from Sri Lanka has been at IDS examining the UK tea market. If his work succeeds, he will help the workers on Sri Lanka's tea plantations to become less desperately poor, at the cost of some well-covered Britons. In any event, he is undertaking objective intellectual enquiry, in an area of central concern to Sri Lanka. There should be much more of this sort of thing. Researchers should accept intellectual challenges unimpeded by national boundaries.

It is quite true that—partly owing to colonialism—Sri Lanka and the UK do not 'start equal'. Therefore 'free' trade can (arguably) reflect or even confirm inequalities. However, there is no analogy at all in intellectual life. Free academic environments are full of debate and disagreement, and there is little risk of a researcher from Sri Lanka being pushed into a 'British' view by research at IDS.

Let me close with a postscript on neo-colonialism. Like Goonatilake, I agree with the bulk of the Delhi and Santiago resolutions. But what is 'academic neo-colonialism'? In its most obvious sense, this is a meaningless expression. Knowledge is not like dollars, doctors or power: if someone in the UK 'takes' knowledge from someone in Sri Lanka, there is no less knowledge in Sri Lanka than there was before.

There are, however, a number of worrying problems. The first concerns **intellectual seniority**. Ideally, the search for knowledge is carried out by persons of comparable intellectual status. In

practice, inequalities in both training and experience often require that some members of a research team are intellectually 'senior' to others. That relationship ought to have nothing to do with 'neo-colonialism'. I have served happily under the guidance of LDC and DC scholars alike; and I have also guided both. In serious research, nationality and skin colour don't matter: clear thinking does. It is important to ensure that the process of learning—often by disagreement—is not cut short by suspicions that intellectual seniorities are 'really' to do with colour, nation or class. The remedies to such suspicions are equal promotion prospects, free international exchanges, and above all good and non-hierarchical working relationships.

Such relationships cannot exist in institutions or research teams pervaded by a second problem often linked to 'academic neo-colonialism': the problem of **arbitrary hierarchies**: Frequently, in DC and LDC research alike, supervision and grading are due not to achievement (in the form of successful teaching or good published research) but to other things: usually to 'age and experience'; sometimes to regional or linguistic background (I can think of bad examples in Wales); to 'pull' in academic or national politics; or even to nepotism. Researchers are not saints, and when such realities—or even suspicions—cloud the normal process of intellectual ranking (in which people are happy to learn from each other, but expect to learn most from their formal 'superior') there is likely to be more resentment than research. Of course it often happened in colonial times that second-rate professors from the metropolitan country 'directed' first-rate scholars from the colony, and expressed their sense of intellectual inferiority by bullying their staff and students. That still happens, with powers of patronage or the aid relationship (the professor's country often financing the supervisor's institution) replacing the colonial link. Arbitrary hierarchy in intellectual life is a disgusting thing, a pollution of the research process. But—as Fanon said of exploitation in general—its face can as well be brown or black as white.

A third problem is that of the outside agency or researcher that does not publish findings in a manner useful to the country where the research is done. Sometimes this is plain 'CIA research' and as such, quite simply, disgraceful. More often it is due to delay, incompetence, insensitivity or even problems of language and distribution. Such issues are not 'neo-colonial' but universal; plenty of British doctoral students do not complete, let alone publish, their research on Britain.