

QUEST

a bi-monthly of arts and ideas

sponsored by

The Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom

edited by: **NISSIM EZEKIEL**

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THE CONGRESS FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM

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The Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom was set up in March 1951 at a conference in Bombay, inaugurated by Mr. K. M. Munshi with Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan in the Chair. The second conference met in Madras in September 1953 with Dr. Sampurnanand in the Chair and Mr. C. Rajagopalachari delivering the inaugural address.

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contents

ARTICLES

M. G. BAILUR	Bhoodan and Sarvodaya	5
NARENDRA MITRA	Sap	11
S. OOKERJEE	All Play and No Work	27
D. G. NADKARNI	"Gate of Hell"	33
IGNAZIO SILONE	Self-Portrait	37
COMOLATA DUTT	The Future of Indian Music	41
JEAN BOURET	An Indian in Paris	45
M. KRISHNAN	The Long North Wind	47
T. R. RAMIAH	Fever in the South	51

POEMS

MOLLY DANIELS	To . . .	10
DOM MORAES	Cainsmorning	32
P. K. SAHA	The Apples	32
ARUN KOLHATKAR	The Blind	40
	The Renunciation of the Dog	40

BOOKS

LAEEQ FUTEHALLY	Sex, Literature and Censorship	57
YOGENDRA CHOPRA	The Illusion of the Epoch	60
SADHAN KUMAR GHOSH	Echoes	62
ARATI MUKERJI	Everyday Life in Ancient India	64

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Editorial

In offering this first issue of QUEST to its prospective readers, I am not inclined to make any special claims of excellence for its contents. Considered individually, most of them could probably find a place in some existing journal or other. Not only the more intellectual monthlies and quarterlies in India, but even mass circulation Sunday papers do occasionally publish material of the kind assembled here. All I can claim is that a high standard of thought and style was aimed at; the reader must judge if it has been attained.

The most obvious motive for starting QUEST is the form which such a journal is able to take. It can offer itself as an honest and natural vehicle of mind and sensibility, with its appeal on a single level. Every nation needs a few journals not dependent for their circulation on rehashing the stereotyped ingredients of mass media. In India, QUEST will try to be one of these.

I believe it makes a difference whether articles of the sort published here are or are not provided with media *created* for them. The writer who makes a study of a political movement in the South or analyses Indian student life can unquestionably get his article published in any one of a score of papers. A relevant but usually ignored question is about the attention it will receive. Can it win the concentrated interest of the reader and move it in new directions regardless of the conditions in which it obtains communication? Eliot's devastating phrase, "distracted from distraction by distraction", is simply an accurate picture of a common mental condition which magazine-reading often aggravates.

There is a simple human idealism which seeks knowledge and understanding. When intellectually well-equipped, it avoids the distracting and chooses the artistic and the enlightening. These words have today developed snobbish associations, except when they are used historically. Nevertheless, there is a perennial value in them, if separated from the didactic fallacy. Most of the "enlightenment" available in India today is didactic in manner and intention; consequently it is ineffective. It is also usually shallow.

Discussion and exposition are better instruments of the idea and more useful than propaganda pamphlets or speeches. In India we rarely expound ideas—we pronounce our views, we make declarations, we condemn, oppose, dismiss or denounce. Criticism, on the other hand, is a complex and sensitive function of intelligence. I was not surprised to note a friendly columnist's response to the word critical in the sub-title of an article scheduled for the first issue of QUEST. (He was commenting on it in a note surveying the announced bill of fare). It made him "suspicious". It reminded him of "intellectual circles" in which such words must inevitably creep into the conversation. And he was quite right about this. Criticism is necessarily associated with intellectuals, and they have no reason to be ashamed of it.

QUEST cannot, of course, justify its existence on purely intellectual grounds. Its dynamism is also ideological; it is concerned with the relation between politics and culture. Sponsored by the Indian Committee for

Cultural Freedom, it is guided by the motivations of the World Movement of that name. QUEST's policy is to deal specifically with cultural questions and "with politics by implication". It is the politics and not the culture which is dealt with by implication, though I am aware that it may be its politics by which QUEST will be judged. The risk is considered worth taking.

One of my correspondents remarked that "cultural freedom" is a political term, like "peace". So it is, though it implies a different kind of politics. One feature of this difference is that "peace" in the sense my correspondent rightly used that term, is sometimes a method of destroying freedom or an excuse for acquiescing in its destruction. The adherents of the Cultural Freedom movement belong to a variety of political faiths all of which the champions of "peace" seek to liquidate.

All political groups need freedom to propagate their ideas. When that freedom is threatened, it is natural that individuals belonging to different political persuasions should be united in its defence. Certainly their activity may be called political, but there is no deception in it.

Many voices are heard in a free or relatively free country. In a totalitarian country there is only the official voice, though it may change its tone and temper from time to time. Freedom and tyranny may exist side by side, but we must face one inescapable fact. There can be no opposition to authority in a totalitarian state. In a free country, by the very logic of freedom, we have to allow the champions of totalitarianism legal status, and to cope with their legal and illegal machinations. It is hardly a game for political innocents.

It is the political innocents who are constantly cheated and exploited by "non-political" organisations masquerading as cultural movements. "I do not want to be involved in politics," says the political innocent. Then he signs a "peace" appeal because, after all, everybody wants peace. He supports a "Youth Conference" because no one could possibly remain indifferent to Youth welfare. He joins an India-China Friendship Society, because he sincerely wants friendship with China and all other countries. Is it really necessary to tell him that a little political discrimination would enable him to be more authentically non-political?

The writers represented in the first issue speak for themselves, not for the Editor or the Movement; but in doing so, they express the tradition to which QUEST belongs. All material received, whether literary or political, was judged on its merits alone. In ideas as in arts QUEST is interested above all in quality, but perhaps this is not saying enough. I must add that I deliberately sought vigorously written articles of a "provocative" nature. And I hope some of those who are provoked will help to start and sustain the intellectual debate which is necessary to correct our extravagances and castigate our timidities.

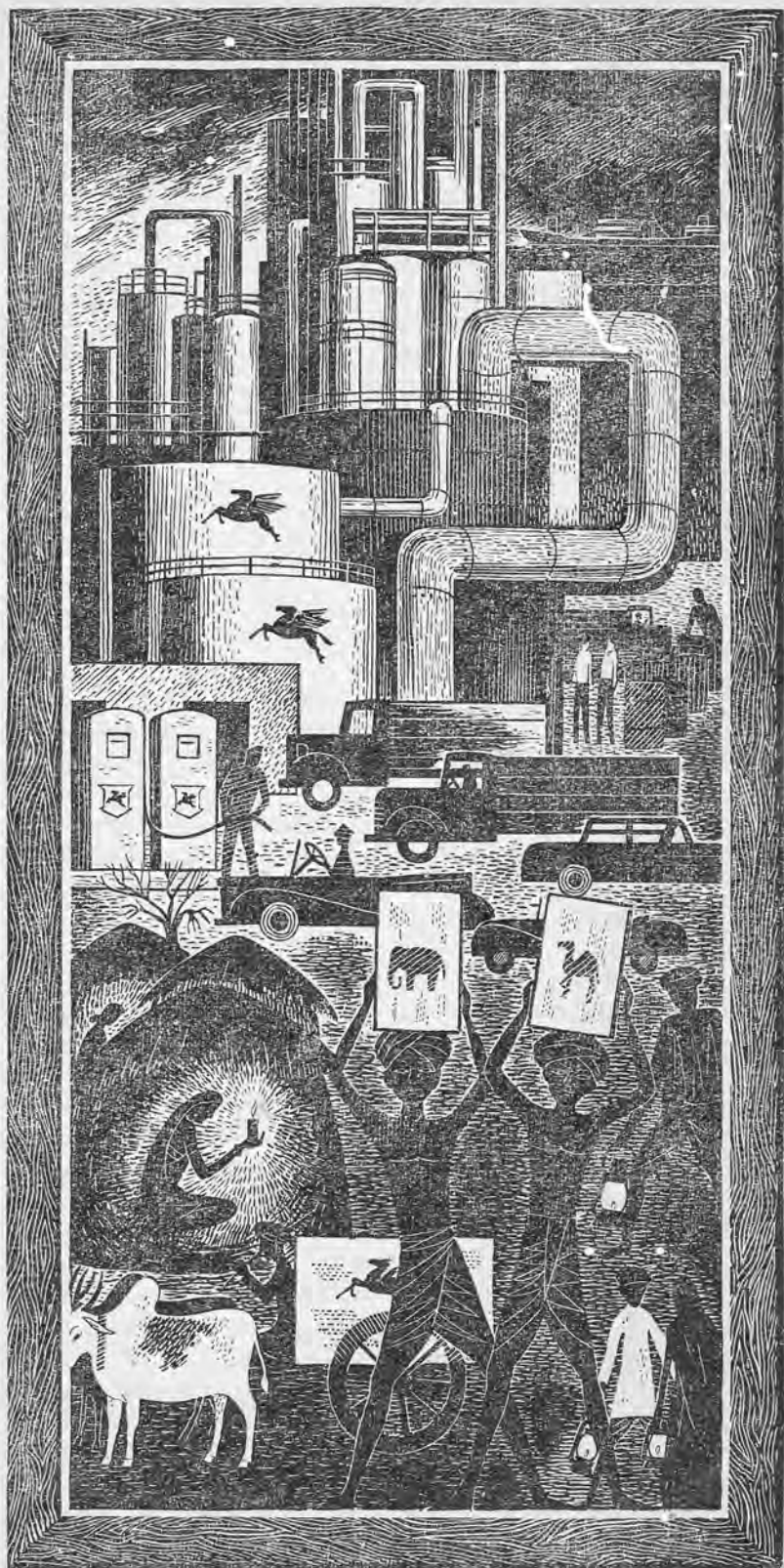
It must be stated, finally, that the purely literary contributions were the most ardently solicited and welcomed. My keenest editorial pleasure is in imagining how much QUEST's readers are likely to enjoy Narendra Mitra's magnificent story *Sap* which is published in English for the first time. For another such in an early issue, I would willingly sacrifice many pages of intellectual provocation.

NISSIM EZEKIEL

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M. G. BAILUR

bhoodan and sarvodaya

a critique of an ideology

THE good of the governed is the professed object of all governments and all political parties. Therefore, to say that the unique distinction of *Sarvodaya* is that it aims at the welfare of all is mere tautology. It is only another way of saying what every party has always professed and every government always declared as its sole aim; that is to say, as a statement it is true only by definition but devoid of factual content and offers nothing by itself for meaningful discourse. Often different and even opposed adjectives may be called by the same name.

Let us, as an illustration, consider basic education, without examining its postulates but merely as an essential ingredient in any social purpose. Mr. Nehru has lent to it the powerful weight of his support and that of his government. No doubt he is convinced that a new generation trained on its principles will be far better equipped for its tasks in the kind of society he wants to create. Not to put too fine a point on the socialistic pattern of society, about which with a wary terminological punctilio, conscientious congressmen are

busy working off their timidity by propitiating the impatient and reassuring the frightened, it is a fair presumption that Mr. Nehru's goal is a rising standard of living for the masses through technology and rapid industrialisation. This probably involves a general levelling up of their lives, socially and culturally, through the widest possible diffusion of scientific knowledge and the scientific temper of mind.

Since it must be supposed that Mr. Nehru has a sober appreciation of the place of education as one of the essential foundations of such a society, it would seem to follow that basic education in his opinion measures up to the required orientation. But as conceived by Mahatma Gandhi, basic education was projected to an altogether different conception of society, and of this President Rajendra Prasad, who inaugurated the *Nai Talim* Conference in Saurashtra some time ago seemed clearly aware. He evidently felt that the idea of basic education was being given a new twist, and minced no words when he told the delegates that by basic education he meant the system expounded by

Mahatma Gandhi. The present system, he pointed out, made people avoid traditional occupations. Escape from the present in a romantic return to the past and the buttressing of ancient traditions are the two things for which basic education, according to him, must prepare the new generation.

Other delegates claimed that "*Nai Talim* was now a powerful wing of the *Bhoodan* movement, and that on *Nai Talim* workers rested the responsibility of spreading the scheme of basic education which would strengthen the *Bhoodan* movement." Mr. Dharendra Mazumdar, President of the Sarva Seva Sangh, who took a leading part in the discussions, "called upon *Nai Talim* workers to organize an effective boycott of centralised production to bring about a classless society." Explaining what he meant by industrial progress and how it could be brought about through *Nai Talim*, he said that "in a decentralised economy industrial production would comprise home industries and village industries..." He said that when students went through these stages (of basic education), they would be "instilled with a spirit of service." Some of it reads strangely like what one would expect to find in a jail manual, excepting, of course, its cheerful illusions about instilling a spirit of service. Now, basic education may be a fit instrument from the point of view of Mr. Nehru; it may be a fit instrument from the point of view of Dr. Prasad; but is it not clear that one of them is mistaken?

In conjunction with the national effort at planned development with the aid of science and technology, the *Bhoodan* and *Sarvodaya* movements working at the rural level have much to offer. From such a massive combination of human and material resources limitless good may flow. But it must be a combination of wills and intentions, to begin with, inspired by kindred

conceptions of human destiny and the ends of life and of the kind of society in which they can be realised. Equally, they must be founded on a belief in the human intellect and in knowledge as the solvent of its problems. Setting themselves at cross purposes with the main stream of national effort, on a foundation of wrong economics, false history, and the pathetic fallacy, the mystic of village self-sufficiency and the idealisation of indigence, they may also slow it down, arrest it, and finally defeat it in detail.

THE *Bhoodan* movement, if it achieves its aims, will have won significant accession of confidence in our capacity for voluntary self-adjustment to the claims of economic justice. That, on the customary view of human nature and of the obscure complexities of human motives, the movement should appear to take too much for granted, cannot be an argument against it, if in the event, its claims are borne out by the results. The logic of both is empirical and must bow to facts. But facts, verifiable results, are the only criterion; not faith, not hypotheses about God and human nature, not elaborate rationales which appeal to false history and untestable aphorisms, nor exalted delusions about the past and craven fears about the future.

If it is claimed that the penal code is useless and unnecessary and that crimes can be entirely put a stop to by a right appeal to the good in each one of us, nothing in reason or experience should prevent us from watching with interest and sympathy and all the support we can give by a willing suspension of disbelief whoever wishes to embark on the experiment. But if such a claim is eked out with a whole mythology compounded of demonstrably false sociology and, even more, of a vision of the future as the end result of which, on the experimenter's own showing, is some-

thing very different from what we have been led to expect, then we have a right to examine its pretensions in some detail.

To begin with, the *Bhoodan* movement stands or falls, on the claims of its author, by the efficacy of moral exhortation. This efficacy is rendered doubtful for two reasons: first, that it is capricious. That is to say, moral exhortation is successful in some cases, but not in others, especially where success can have a definitive bearing on our judgment as to the efficacy of the method. If it succeeds, for example, in inducing the man with ten acres to part with five, the man with a thousand acres not at all, and the man with ten thousand acres to part with a hundred, a fictitious efficacy may be claimed for the method. If the instances are multiplied by the thousand, the impressive total of the acres collected may even serve to disguise the dubious character of the claim. Secondly, it is impossible to determine how much of the success gained, is due to genuine moral conversion on the part of the donor, and how much to the momentary excitement of the hour, herd pressure or the fear of popular obloquy. If its highest expectations are fulfilled, it will still remain true that it is a limited means to a limited social objective, a significant gain, it is true, but certainly far from exhausting the range of human aspirations, though it is on the childish simplifications which furnish its rationale that credulous admiration is lavished.

It is apparently necessary to believe, for example, that "at the time when Europeans came here, India was far more ahead of Europe in science, industry, philosophy, etc. She was also far more prosperous." (*Bhoodan Yajna*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad). The dialectic of *Bhoodan* apparently leads up to the following, though by what process is not made clear: "What I want people to do is,

first, to give some of their land, secondly, they should engage themselves in the service of others. Finally, in their service, they should lose all and voluntarily sacrifice everything. This is the path into which I want to initiate the people." Starting as a necessary economic reform, *Bhoodan* is to end up in universal pauperisation. Acharya Vinoba Bhave does not tell us what we are to do when this beatific vision is realised. Apparently there will be no need for anyone to do anything whatever. However admirable as a counsel of perfection for the individual, what precisely is the social value of such a doctrine, except as a cult of irrationality for its own sake?

Here is his idea of peaceful revolution in the country. "My target is 50 million acres of land. Since there are 300 million acres of cultivated land in India and an average family has five members, I felt that every family could give away one-sixth of its landholding (prince and pauper alike), accepting the poor landless man, as the sixth member of the family." Yet this patrician dream which he admits must take "many, many years" to realise, gives not a thought to social dynamics, but assumes that society will stay put, exactly as it is to-day, five-member families and all.

LAND, he tells us, belongs to all, but not because, as he imagines, it is "God's free gift like sun and air and water," but because, unlike these, it is extremely limited and various and can in theory be owned by one person to the detriment of the whole human race. When he claims insight into God's mind, it is difficult to follow him, but many arguments are advanced entirely on God's supposed endorsement. From dignity of labour which, since labour is essential, surely must have dignity, we pass to deification of manual toil for its own sake as something ennobling. The *Charkha* in the past had an

economic value, he says; but this to him is an unduly tame and unexciting office. "The present day *Charkha* does more; it stands to oust the mill." "A man who wholeheartedly serves society shall be entitled to his living wage." "I have never experienced the feeling that one type of work was of a higher type than another."

"Of course, you can take to mechanisation and build up a certain kind of order," says Acharya Vinoba Bhave. "But it will be far from our ideal. Because mechanisation is bound to lead to its inseparable concomitant, militarization." That puts Switzerland and Scandinavia in their proper place. Why mechanisation should lead to militarization is not explained; from inductive statements of this kind, the most wildly absurd inferences become possible. The argument is of the same order as the assertion that pugnacity is an inseparable concomitant of sound health, since many pugnacious people apparently also enjoy sound health.

"Both the rich and the poor are unhappy. The remedy is to change the order and place it on the secure basis of non-possession.... My first step was *Bhoodan*, next is the *Sampattidan*, i.e. donation of property; I will take a third step, which will be nothing less than surrender of everything in the interest of the poor, the acceptance of poverty that all may partake of God's good riches." So it comes to this, that poverty and the poor are to be our permanent dispensation, formally accepted and idealised. This may be high-minded piety, not unmixed, in its cosmic ambitions, with a certain spiritual arrogance which is the peculiar property of mock humility, but at this stage it gives up even the pretence of embodying a coherent vision of social good that is in any sense intelligible to reason. And where, in the name of the poor and the disinherited, does it stand in relation to the Five Year Plans, or Mr.

Nehru's humanistic vision of a forward-looking community enriched by the beneficent gifts of science and technology and the constructive interplay of imagination and reason? That it does not help the plan is, of course, made explicit: "Our main objection against the plan is that it is based on a different outlook, an outlook which is far removed from ours. This is the basic defect; all others are included in it."

THE ideal aimed at is a living wage for the individual, no more, to achieve which everyone is to dispossess himself; and self-sufficiency for the villages, for which a catastrophic decline in the general level of the country's production of goods is to be deliberately engineered. This, of course, will be indignantly denied. But if the denial has substance it is only in the sense that the perverse logic of that ideal is unlikely to make much headway against the refractory commodity called the public. That its faults should be mitigated by its own futility is surely not a high recommendation. Faith, sacrifice and austerity are the means proposed; but it turns out that they are also the end, for nothing higher than living close to the margin is accepted even in theory, and all the faith and austerity and sacrifice will be needed to keep the driven multitudes reconciled to their lot.

It has never apparently occurred to Acharya Bhave to ask himself whether the people want this kind of life for themselves and, if not, what right anybody has to legislate for other people's happiness in this summary fashion. The messianic belief that one has plumbed the secrets of existence and that, having done so, it is one's agonising privilege to subdue the world to one's imperious designs, afflicts those who are immersed in the splendour of their own self-awareness. They disdain

any objective approach to the processes of social causation at any remove from themselves.

Much is made of self-sufficiency for the villages; but, in fact, self-sufficiency can be reached in two ways. We may produce everything that we need, or we may put ourselves on short commons and pretend that we do not need the things which we cannot produce. It is this latter kind of self-sufficiency which is implicit in the economic thinking underlying *Sarvodaya* and *Bhoodan*. It is not the business of economic theory to lay down which of our wants are worthy of satisfaction and which not. That part belongs partly to ethics, but chiefly to politics, since under conditions of emergency such as war, deliberate enforcement of scarcity or denial of satisfaction of specific wants may become necessary.

"Village industries," wrote Mr. Nehru in his autobiography, "without being tacked on to some modern industrial technique can never provide even the essential material and cultural goods that we need to-day". If Mr. Nehru thought that he was correcting an erroneous belief on this point, he was wrong. The economics of self-sufficiency in villages is in part economic and in part ethical. On the economic side, it says that cottage industries and unskilled manual labour should produce everything we want. But it is dimly aware that on this basis we should have to go without a great many things that civilised human beings need. Therefore, on the ethical side, it concurrently preaches the virtues of non-possession and the wickedness of owning anything in excess of needs, needs being defined as the bare animal needs of food, shelter and warmth. This ethic is essential, apart from what faith may counsel, to make up for the muddle-headedness of its economics; that is to say, without some such supporting pseudo-

statement impossible of verification by any canons of experience or sensation, the falsity of its economic premises becomes at once self-evident.

In urging the adoption of basic education, Dr. Prasad expressly rejected science as a source of material enrichment of life, which he contended offended the Eastern conception of happiness. This conception, he said, lay within each one of us. Even if this could be true of well-fed people, was this ever true of the half-starved masses of even so spiritually gifted a country as India? It may seem strange that he should draw this conclusion from the fact, as he claimed, that life is something more than comfortable living. Yet so apparently he does. This is not surprising, considering he also believes that "the West had always looked on material comforts as the hallmark of scientific progress." He might have been kinder, for, whatever the relative advantages were in regard to spiritual growth in the remote past, Europe, in the words of Mr. Cyril Connolly, "is still the chief breeding-ground of ideas, the laboratory, the studio, and the reference library of the world's art, science, and imagination."

But what, in fact, do we mean by the life of the spirit? Those who are proud of our spiritual achievements suffer at the same time from a fatal handicap. With science as technique they have no sympathy, but, also, of science as a logical method, they have no understanding. Narrowness of sympathy or understanding is not a virtue even in spiritual matters; yet our belief in our spiritual pre-eminence is founded on a partial, and to us, interesting account of the nature of spiritual endeavour. Dr. Prasad in a passage earlier quoted summed this up succinctly as the "concept of introspection as the guiding philosophy." From such a view a whole landscape of achievements of the human intellect must remain

necessarily detached. But it also affords an explanation of the relative deficiency in our spiritual outlook of the qualities of tolerance, as distinct from mere indifference, scepticism and ardent devotion in the service of reason.

The extension of human consciousness has come not only from the sage and the saint, but also from the scientist, the philosopher and the creative artist. Though an essential ingredient in the life of the

intellect, introspection by itself is barren unless its primary data are borrowed from experience. It would seem to follow that the more wide-ranging the experience, the richer the data on which introspection can set to work. But the introspectionist tends to abstain from experience as a matter of principle and consequently deceives himself that in withdrawing inwards, he is going back to hidden sources of wisdom independent of experience.

To . . .

I promised you
 I would be faithful
 Unto death.
 But when strangers
 Look at me
 With your grey eyes
 When strangers walk
 Along the cobbled square
 As you did every night
 I become as one
 Possessed—
 Other men
 Have used the words
 You said were yours.
 They do not stammer
 As you did when
 Underneath the moon
 You held your breath
 For want of words.

MOLLY DANIELS

NARENDRA MITRA

sap

a story translated from the Bengali by Lila Ray

MOTALEF began to tap the palms in the Choudhury's garden about the middle of the month of Kartik. Within fifteen days he married Maju Khatun, the widow of his neighbour, Rajek Mridha, and brought her home. It was not, of course, the first time that Motalef had married. His wife had died a year or so before. And Motalef was a young man of twenty-five or twenty-six, strong and full of vigour. Maju Khatun, though not quite thirty, was close to it. She was not encumbered with children, for her daughter was married to one of the Shekhs of Katikhali. But what assets did she have? How many safes full of gold, how many fields fertile with grain had Rajek Mridha left for Maju Khatun to inherit? She had only a tumble-down shack of reeds and a single *cottah* of land. This constituted the whole of her property. Nor was she particularly pretty. What did she have except the well-knit strong figure of a domineering woman? With what could she attract or please men?

"She's used witchcraft," laughed the women of the Sikdar and Kazi households. "She's thrown dust in his eyes."

"Why shouldn't she?" Sakina, the youngest daughter-in-law of the Munshi's, defended her. "It serves him right. Such a fellow deserves no better. He has no lids on his eyes. Don't you know how he stares? If she has thrown dust in them she has only done what is right."

It was not untrue. Motalef had a squint and he was in the habit of staring at every pretty face. His gaze was bold and his eyes always roaming. What he wanted was a young and pretty girl for a wife. But he had not been able to reach an agreement with anybody about the price. The fathers of the girls who were pretty and well-grown held out for not less than a hundred or a hundred and fifty rupees. Motalef liked Fulbanu, the daughter of Elam Shekh of Charkanda. She was eighteen or nineteen and as succulent with youth as a juicy fruit. She had already

seen a little of life. Fulbanu had not liked her first husband, Gafur Sikhdar. He was too old and not at all handsome. She had obtained a divorce on the grounds that he beat her and denied her adequate maintenance. She had quarrelled with him deliberately. But Fulbanu was none the worse for having been round a little. On the contrary. She was sleeker and more attractive than ever. Voluptuousness rippled through her.

Motalef saw Fulbanu one day at the landing place on the Charkanda river. He knew at once that he had been noticed. Motalef was not a bad match. When he wore a blue *lungi* his fair skin seemed fairer and his lithe figure was very handsome. And did any other man in the country have more nicely curled hair? Motalef understood that Fulbanu liked him. He sought out Elam Shekh but Elam gave him no encouragement. He declared that he had profited by his last experience. This time he was not going to give his daughter to anybody without making proper inquiries beforehand. What he wanted was money. His daughter's divorce had cost him a lot of money and a lot of trouble. The loss must be made good. Motalef sounded him. Elam would not take anything less than a hundred rupees. Thirty or forty rupees was not to be considered. Where was Motalef to get so much money?

As Motalef came sadly away he saw Fulbanu again. She was on her way to fetch water. They met in a deserted cottage that was overgrown with jungle. Motalef knew that the water was required at an opportune moment.

"Are you going away angry, Miah?" Fulbanu asked, looking carefully around and then smiling.

"What else can I do? Didn't you hear how much your father asks?"

"Oh, yes, I did. What is wrong with

the price? You will be getting something you like. Why not pay for it?"

"It's not your father who has fixed it!" exclaimed Motalef. "It's you. Why don't you go to market in a basket?"

Fulbanu laughed at his annoyance. "In a basket? You ought to weigh me against gold in scales! I want to see what you can do. How much can you give?"

Motalef, indignant, turned to go. Fulbanu called after him. "Oh, Mr. Handsome, are you really angry? Listen! Listen!"

"What is it?" Motalef looked back.

Fulbanu glanced quickly around her and came close to him. "Let me tell you how I feel about it. Listen," she said, "my father's daughter does not want any money and she does not want any gold. All she wants is to safeguard the honour of the man of her choice. She wants him to show his spirit. Now do you understand?"

Motalef nodded. He understood.

"But do not do anything you should not," she added. "Don't sell land."

Motalef had no land to sell but he was not going to confess that to Fulbanu. "All right," he said, "wait until the spring comes. It is only a couple of months. I'll show you what I can do and I'll keep my honour. But will the lady wait so long?"

"Yes," Fulbanu laughed, "you will not find me so impatient." Motalef returned to his village and tried to get a loan. He approached the Mulliks, the Mukherjees, the Sikdars and the Munshis but no one would accommodate him. Motalef was not in the habit of paying his debts promptly. It was not easy to recover a loan from him. Why should they let him have the money?

But with the onset of the cold weather Motalef did procure the winter contract for ninety or a hundred date palms, if not cash. He had added to the number of trees he tapped the year before and this

year he took on the trees in the Chaudhury's orchard as well. There were about thirty. He made incisions in the tree and tied pots beneath the cut part to catch the sap. Half of the sap Motalef gave to the owner of the tree and half he kept for himself. Not a little labour was involved, for the dead branches had to be cut out of the tree first. Then his bill hook had to be whetted and its point ground to a fine cutting edge. The head of the tree was scraped with the sharpened bill hook and a small bamboo pipe inserted. The pot was securely fastened to the end of the pipe. Only then would the sap drip into it throughout the night. It meant a great deal of labour, care and trouble. Sweat would pour from Motalef's body before sap could be drawn from the dry hard palms. Putting a mouth to a teat was not enough as it is with cow's milk or with mother's.

It was not enough either just to be able to work and to know how to climb trees. Skill of hand was necessary, a skill that could draw the sweet sap from the heart of the tree with the touch of a blade so sharp it drew blood from a man's body at the slightest contact. This was not harvesting paddy or cutting jute where a stroke of the scythe severed the stalks near the ground, roughly. This was tapping date palms. The tree had to be cut and caressed at the same time. One must be careful not to hurt the tree, to prevent any injury. The slightest slip of the blade one way or another and the tree would be dead before the year was out. Steps for a landing place or a house can be made out of the stump of a dead tree but it will not yield sap that fills pots drop by drop with its delicious juice.

Rajek Mridha had taught Motalef how to draw sap from the date palm. All that has just been said about palm tapping was learned from him. He was the best-

known tapper in that part of the country. At the touch of Rajek's hand, sap would flow from a tree three-fourths of whose branches were dead. He could draw a full pot of sap from a tree that yielded only half a pot to others. The owners gave their trees into his hands without any apprehension. The pots were filled and the trees flourished. For several years Motalef had worked with Rajek as his apprentice. He went around with him from tree to tree and helped him with his work. Rajek had other apprentices, Makbul Sikdar and Ismael Kaji. But neither of them had acquired Motalef's skill. Motalef was the only one able to take Rajek's place.

Nor was it enough to tap the trees and bring the brimming pots home by the dozen, swinging them from a long bamboo pole over one's shoulders. Some one was needed who could boil the sap down into sugar. Bringing the sap home was a man's work. It was for a woman to gather firewood, build fires and sit beside the great pans of bubbling sap, stirring it as it thickened. The raw sap brought no profit. To crown his labours with success the sap had to be converted into palm sugar and the sugar into cash. For the last two years he had not had a woman to help him. His mother had died when he was a boy. So when his wife died she left his home empty.

ARE you awake, Maju Bibi?" Motalef called. He came to her house after dark. The door was closed with matting.

"Who is it?" Maju Khatun responded from inside.

"It is I, Motalef. Have you gone to bed? If you'll take the trouble to get up and open the door I would like to have a few words with you."

Maju Khatun got up and opened the

door. "I know what you want to talk about," she said, "the tapping season is here again. You remember Maju. The sap must be boiled. But you must pay me four annas a seer. I can't do it for less. My health is not too good this year."

"Your health is not to blame, Bibi," Motalef spoke gently. "Our health goes hand in hand with our heart. If one is happy one is healthy."

"Say what you please, Miah," Maju Khatun answered, "I won't be able to do it for less than four annas this time."

"Only four annas, Bibi?" Motalef's tone was honeyed. "Will you refuse sixteen if I want to give them to you?"

The way Motalef smiled stirred her breast oddly, but she said: "Stop joking, Miah. If you want to talk business, I'll listen. Otherwise I'll go back to bed."

"Of course you will," retorted Motalef. "The night is meant for sleeping. But does sleep come for the asking, Maju Bibi? Or do you lie awake through the long winter night?"

Motalef stopped hinting and spoke openly of his intentions. He did not want to take advantage of her in any way. He wished to call a Moulavi and marry her according to *nikka* rites. He wanted her to take charge of his household.

Maju Khatun was surprised and scolded a little. "Can't you find anybody else to tease? Are there no young girls left in the country that you come to my door?"

"Why shouldn't there be young girls, Maju Bibi?" answered Motalef. "There are plenty. There may be hundreds! But they are pots of raw sap."

"Really! And what am I?" the turn of his speech interested Maju.

"You are different! You are mellowed palm wine to a tippler, palm candy to the hungry. Who can compare with you?"

Motalef took his leave for the time being. Maju Khatun found it difficult to

forget what he had said. His words kept turning and turning in her mind as she lay on her lonely bed in the dark. She had known Motalef for a long time. He had been a frequent visitor at the house after he had begun to work with Rajek. That was the way their acquaintance had begun. But there had been no depth in it. Now and then they had joked lightly together but it had not occurred to either of them to go farther than that. Motalef had a wife at home and Maju had a husband.

Rajek was a man of a somewhat hard and rough nature. His speech was harsh and bitter. During the winter he brought her pots of sap by the dozen and Maju boiled it down into cakes of sugar. She was very skilful. The sugar she made always sold for a higher price than that of others, a couple of pice more a seer. After Rajek died most of the palms in the neighbourhood went to Motalef. Now and then Motalef presented her with several pots of sap as a matter of courtesy. But pots did not fill her courtyard as they used to do. The year before she had boiled sap down for Motalef.

They had agreed on a rate of two annas a seer. But before a month was out Motalef had begun to suspect that Maju was keeping back some of the sugar and selling it secretly. He was not getting the full amount. The arrangement had broken down as a result and they had quarrelled. This year Motalef had come to her with a different proposal. He did not want her just to do his boiling for him. He wanted to marry her, to take her home. He was asking her to take complete charge of his household. One or two of her middle-aged neighbours had made advances to her but Maju Khatun had not paid any attention to them. And she had threatened to cut the ears off of those of the young men who had tried to be familiar. But Motalef's proposal was of an

entirely different kind. He could not be turned away like the others. And even if she did dismiss him, his words kept coming back. No one in the village spoke so well, so aptly, so pleasantly. And he was the most handsome man about.

Motalef came to see her once or twice again in the evenings. Then Maju Khatun, wearing a glossy blue sari and coloured glass bracelets followed him home.

The house was dirty and untidy. It had lost all its trim beauty. Maju Khatun tucked the end of her sari in at her waist and set about cleaning it up. She swept the refuse out of the courtyard and made it smooth and clean with a coating of cow dung. But Motalef had no time to look either at his house or his new wife. He was busy with his trees. He took contracts for more trees from the Boses and the Banerjees. He made incisions, set pipes, hung up pots, took them down and measured the sap. On the West side of his courtyard he put up a shack of reeds for Maju Khatun. There she sat all morning stirring the pans of sap as they bubbled in a row over the fires. Motalef collected dead branches and straw for fuel. There was never enough. Maju swept up dry leaves in the orchards of her neighbours and brought them home in big baskets. She spent the afternoons splitting sticks and breaking up branches for her fires. She worked without rest, without let, for the man she loved was in the house.

Motalef filled baskets with the palm sugar and carried them to market. It was the best in the market and sold for the highest price.

In the afternoon he hung the pots out on the trees again. A pipe protruded from each tree. When he took the pots down in the morning Motalef tied the mouths of the tubes. They filled slowly with the dirty sap which collects during the daytime.

In the afternoon Motalef scraped the trees afresh, put in a new tube and hung the pot at the end of it. The dirty sap was not thrown away. Boiled down, it made a kind of sticky molasses, *chit gur*, which is mixed with tobacco. It sells in the market for five or six annas a seer.

Climbing so many trees twice a day made Motalef's breath come hard. He perspired freely even in the cold of mid-winter. The grass beneath his feet was still beaded with dew in the morning when beads of sweat stood upon his hairy chest. The neighbours watched him with amazement. Motalef had always been a hard worker but no one had ever seen him work so enthusiastically, day and night, like a machine. What was it all about? Tapping palms was work Motalef liked but did he have the woman he liked at home?

ONE day Motalef turned up at Elam Shekh's with several seers of fine sugar and some pots of the sweetest sap from the best of his trees. He *salaamed* Elam and placed his gifts before him on the floor. Then he took five ten-rupee notes out of his waist band, laid them beside the gifts and said, "I've come to pay half in advance, Elam Shekh."

"For what?" asked Elam.

"For your daughter —"

Motalef had brought fresh clean rupee notes. They were not torn or frayed, neither were they soiled by dirty fingers. Fifty rupees cash down. Elam fingered the money and said; "How can I take money from you in advance now, Miah? I'm told you have married Rajek's widow. Why should my daughter share her home with another? They'll quarrel day and night and come to blows."

Motalef smiled slightly. "You need not worry about that, Miah Saheb," he said,

"Maju Khatun will be in my house only as long as there is sap in the trees and winter in the land. As soon as the breeze begins to blow from the South she will be cleared out."

Elam Shekh pushed a stool forward for Motalef to sit on and held out to him the pipe he was smoking. "You've got good stuff in your head, Miah," he said admiringly. "It is a pleasure to talk with you, a pleasure to work with you."

Motalef was given permission to see Fulbanu once before he left. Fulbanu had missed nothing of what had been said. She pouted: "Which of us was impatient, Miah? I've waited for you but you brought another into your house."

"What else could I do?" Motalef answered. He had been obliged to do it for the sake of keeping his word to her and maintaining his honour. And, unless there was some one in the house, who would look after him? How was he to live? Who would boil the sap down into sugar? How else could he earn the money for Fulbanu except by selling sugar?

"I understand," said Fulbanu, "you have protected your honour and at the same time managed to live. But how are you going to rid yourself of the smell of that woman?"

Fulbanu herself was open to accusation, thought Motalef, if a person's smell lingers after the person is gone. "Why do you let that worry you, Fulbanu?" he was evasive, "I'll buy soda and soap. You can rub the smell off me on the steps of the bathing ghat before I bathe."

Fulbanu drew her veil across her face. "Really?" she said.

"Why not? Lie with me and you'll find I have the smell of a new woman. The breeze from the South will bring the fragrance of hair and flowers. Wait a little longer. Only a couple of months more."

"You will not find me impatient," Fulbanu assured him once again.

Motalef was as good as his word. Fulbanu did not have to wait more than two months. As soon as he had earned another fifty rupees from the sale of his sugar, Motalef divorced Maju Khatun. And he announced the reason to the neighbours with some ado. Maju Khatun, he said, did not have a good character. Her behaviour with Wahed Mridha, her brother-in-law, was objectionable.

Maju Khatun flushed. "You are handsome only to look at, Moti Miah," she said, "inside you are ugly. Have you so much cunning, so much trickery in your heart? As long as sugar had to be made, you stuck to me like an ant. The sugar is gone and you drive me out!"

But Motalef had neither the time nor the patience to listen.

The mango trees filled with buds; tiny, tobacco-coloured new leaves appeared on the branches of the *gab*. Spring followed winter and Fulbanu came after Maju Khatun. Her face was like a flower. Her breath smelt of flowers. "What a nice couple they make!" the neighbours commented, "the house is full of loveliness."

Motalef's joy was unbounded. All day he worked in the fields, coming home to Fulbanu in the evening. "Leave your cooking and housework," he would say, "come sit with me."

"Wait! Wait!" Fulbanu smiled, "you've waited months already, haven't you?"

"My trees kept me busy," answered Motalef.

So deep and strong was his embrace that Fulbanu could scarcely breathe. "Go back to the tree," she said, "only a tree can stand a tapper's love."

"But," protested Motalef, "even a tapper cannot get sap out of a tree for more than a couple of months. You yield sweetness all the year around."

Maju Khatun had gone back to Rajek's tumbledown shack. She thought her days would pass as they used to do. But

though her days passed easily, her nights did not. Motalef had undone her. Neighbours came to see her and described in detail his home life with Fulbanu. "No," they remarked with amused disapproval, "Motalef is really crazy about his wife. He can't talk about anything else."

Maju Khatun's heart burned. She felt she would go crazy with jealousy. She thought her heart would burst and she would die.

SOME days later Rajek's elder brother, Wahed, came with a proposal. Her plight had moved him to pity. Wahed had a friend Nadir Shah, who lived across the river at Talkanda. Nadir was a strong boatman. His wife had recently died of cholera, leaving a lot of useless children. Poor Nadir was in difficulties with them. He did not want a young irresponsible girl who would dress herself up like a woman in a picture and sit around dreaming instead of looking after the children. He preferred an experienced and responsible housewife like Maju Khatun, a woman upon whom he could rely.

"How old is he?" asked Maju Khatun.

"About my age," answered Wahed, "fifty or thereabouts."

"He isn't a tapper, is he?" she asked. "He doesn't cut trees in the winter, does he?"

"Why should he?" Wahed was surprised. "He has never done that kind of work. During the rain he plies his boat, and in the winter he works in the fields, thatches cottages and does other household jobs."

Maju Khatun answered that if she married again at all, she would marry someone who had nothing to do with the sweet intoxicating sap of the date palm, someone who kept away from the trees in winter. She was bitter about tapping and tappers.

"Then shall I speak about the matter to

Nadir?" asked Wahed. "He does not want to wait long."

"There is no need to wait," said Maju Khatun.

Within a week it was all settled. The negotiations did not take long. Maju Khatun climbed into Nadir's boat and crossed the river with him.

"She's gone. What a relief!" Motalef said to his wife. "She used to pant like a witch. She kept watch over me day and night. Now I'm well rid of her, Fulbanu."

"Are you so afraid of her, Miah?" laughed Fulbanu.

"I'm not any more. She's gone," Motalef answered. "Now I behold a little fairy wherever I turn my eyes. It is the fairy that frightens me now."

"Why? What is there about a fairy that frightens?"

"Who knows when the fairy will take wing?"

"No, Miah," Fulbanu said, "she has no desire to fly away. She has everything she wants right here. She'll be happy as long as the man of the house does not change the object of his affections."

"As long as I have eyes to see, my heart will follow you," promised Motalef.

Motalef took the greatest care of his wife and was at pains to keep her in comfort. Before he went to market he asked her what kind of fish she liked and, if he did not have the money to buy it, he would borrow enough to enable him to bring it home for her. And he brought eggs, vegetables and other edibles from the market for her whenever they were available. And every market day he brought her spices and *pan*.

"Why do you spend so much on *pan*," Fulbanu protested. "You are not very fond of it. You are happy as long as your pipe bubbles."

"The *pan* is for you," he answered, "keep your lips red with its juice. It is very becoming."

"Aren't my lips red enough without it?" Fulbanu pouted, do they need to be red-dened with the juice of *pan*? You chew it yourself. Your lips are black with tobacco. The red juice will freshen them up a little."

Motalef laughed. "A man's lips," he said, "take colour from the lips of another. More than *pan* juice is needed."

Motalef had no cultivable land of his own. He took some on lease from the Mukherjees and Mulliks. But he was not a good farmer and the yield of his fields fell below that of others. He also worked as a day labourer on land belonging to the Sikdars and Munshis. He planted jute, put it to soak in water, drew out the fibre when the pulp of the stem had rotted, washed it and hung it out to dry. He worked so hard that his skin lost its fairness and his complexion darkened. His share of the jute was not large. The Sikdars and Munshis gave him cash. Half the produce of four *bigas* of land belonging to the Mukherjees and Mulliks came to him in kind. He brought it home by boat, disembarking at the landing place on the canal. Fulbanu enjoyed drawing the fibre out of the jute stalks but Motalef did not like her to touch it. "Why take the trouble?" he would say. "It is not easy to get rid of the stench."

"What does it matter?" asked Fulbanu. "If you can burn yourself black in the sun, why should I mind drawing jute fibre? The things you say, Miah!"

Their share of jute being small, they did not get many stalks. Fulbanu wanted to work drawing fibre for other people in order to get more. But Motalef would not hear of it. He refused to let her work so hard.

Paddy ripens towards the middle of October. Motalef went by boat to work as a harvester in fields that belonged to others. He cut the paddy, filling his boat with the sheaves as he stood waist-deep in water. But his scythe did not move as

swiftly as Karim's or Hamid's or Azid's. His arm was heavy. Standing in the water for so long was a hardship to him. Now and then leeches attached themselves to his back or armpits. As she pulled them off Fulbanu would say, "Why didn't you pull them off yourself, Miah? You had your hands with you."

"I had my paddy-cutting hands with me," answered Motalef, "but I left my leech-picking hands at home."

Fulbanu carefully rubbed paste into the places the leeches sucked. Motalef joined up with five other labourers and went to thresh paddy, receiving a fifth of the grain as his share. He brought the grain home in baskets. Fulbanu willowed it and spread it out in the sun to dry.

"You are working too hard," Motalef protested.

"It's killing me, isn't it?" Fulbanu retorted. "To whom are you talking? Am I not a householder's daughter? Have I dropped right out of the sky?"

THE spring passed, the rains came and went, the autumn followed and then winter came again. For Motalef the season for sap was the most prosperous. But this year the cold weather came later than usual. To make up for it Motalef took on more trees. The number he tapped grew from year to year. He was known as a good tapper, the best in the village. The Banerjees gave him a contract for some twenty or thirty additional trees.

The tapping was in full swing. Motalef did not have a moment to spare. Rest was out of the question. He was too busy even to chat and joke with Fulbanu. He had debts to clear and his net earnings from the palm sugar must tide him over the rest of the year. Motalef worked like a demon from dawn to dusk. He could

not keep his eyes open at night and was asleep as soon as he touched the bed.

Fulbanu would put her arms around him and shake him, but it was embracing a tree, not a man. Motalef slept like something inanimate. Only his nose responded. He snored. Fulbanu shivered in the cold under her thick quilt. Could a quilt keep out the cold without the warmth of another beside her?

It was not enough to bring the sap home. Fulbanu had to boil it down into sugar. Motalef collected dry branches, straw and leaves. "Boil the sap," he said to Fulbanu, "the sugar must be as sweet as you are. It must be the best and tastiest in the market."

But Fulbanu paled at the sight of so many pots and she trembled. She had never seen such quantities before! At home she had, on occasion, boiled one or two pots, but never so many at a time!

Motalef laughed at her expression. "What are you afraid of? I'll be there. Ask me and I'll tell you what to do. Make the sap bubble in the pans like laughter in your heart."

But Fulbanu did not laugh as she sat in front of the row of fires and watched the sap boil from early morning until noon. The fires died down and the sap did not bubble happily. Fulbanu's face and eyes withered in the heat. Her beauty had a scorched look. But the sugar was not what it should have been.

The cakes were soft and sticky and sometimes they were burnt and bitter.

Motalef's tone was harsh as he said; "What sort of a woman are you? I explain the process to you over and over again but you do not understand. Why should a customer pay good money for sugar like this?"

"Why not?" Fulbanu tried to joke, "They'll buy if you know how to sell."

Her laughter did not please Motalef. "Then you'd better take the basket to

market yourself," he said. "Sell it! If anybody buys it will be because of your pretty face, not because of the sugar!"

Motalef's old customers looked at the sugar and then at him and asked; "What sort of sugar is this, Miah? Your sugar last year was so tasty. I still remember how that melted in my mouth. Chadan Shekh and Madan Sikdar have sugar that is better than yours this year."

Motalef's heart burned. He fumed with rage. His sugar was not as tasty as last year! Why not? He was not working less hard and long. Yet he could not get a good price for his sugar. It wasn't as it ought to be. People were not satisfied. It was not to their liking. It did not bring a good price. They did not praise it as they used to do. Why did he have to listen to derogatory remarks? What was the reason?

As he lay in bed that night he explained the whole process of boiling down the sap once more to Fulbanu, several times over. "You must test it again and again," he said, "by letting it drip off a spoon to see if it is ready to be taken off the fire and poured out."

Fulbanu answered irritably, with distaste, "Yes, yes, I know. Why keep nagging me about it? Let a person sleep."

Suddenly Motalef remembered Maju Khatun. He used to discuss the boiling of the sap and the making of sugar with her at night as they lay in bed. Maju Khatun had not answered him back so rudely, not expressed any annoyance at her loss of sleep. She had listened with interest and discussed his methods eagerly.

The next day Motalef came home at noon, carrying a load of firewood on his head. He put it down near the door of the shed and asked, "How's the sugar today, Fulbanu?"

No one answered him. He called once more and when he received no reply looked into the shed in surprise. Fulbanu was

not there. He became aware of a peculiar odour. Was the sugar burning? The sap was bubbling in a line of five great pans. It was as he thought. The sap in the last pan on the south side was burning. It had stuck to the bottom. The fire was too hot. Motalef felt his heart burn. He shouted at the top of his voice, "Where have you gone to, you low-born woman?"

Fulbanu hurried out of the house. For the last two days she had not been able to bathe, for it used to be late when the work was over. The skin chaps unless one bathes regularly in the winter. It is an unpleasant feeling. So today she had gone early to the bathing ghat with soap and soda. Then she had put on a blue sari. She had just shaken out her hair and was combing it when Motalef's shout brought her out of the house. The comb was still in her hand. Her long wet hair hung down her back. Motalef looked at her with burning eyes for a minute. Then he plunged his fist into her hair. "You *haram-jadi*" he said, "the sugar burns and you pay no attention. You're too busy dolling yourself up! You painted picture of a goddess! The sugar is bad and I am insulted because of you. You've ruined my reputation."

"Careful," said Fulbanu. "You've taken hold of my hair but don't you dare to touch me."

"Oh? Is my touch an insult?" A piece of bamboo lay beside Motalef's foot. He caught it up and beat Fulbanu mercilessly, on the back, on the head, on the breast. "The touch of a stick isn't insulting, is it?" he cried. "You Shekh's daughter! A hand may defile you but a stick will not."

Motalef was quick-tempered. His anger was as fierce as his love was impatient and uncontrollable.

Elam Shekh came from Charkanda when he heard about it. He scolded his son-in-law, upbraided him, reproached him. And he blamed his daughter not a little.

"Take me away with you, Father," pleaded Fulbanu, "I won't live with such a brute."

But Elam Shekh persuaded her to stay. Fulbanu would ask for a divorce with the slightest encouragement. And it was not proper in a respectable family for a girl to change husbands so often. It would cause a great scandal. With patience Motalef would soften and they would come together again. It was a quarrel between husband and wife, a daytime quarrel that is made up at night. There was nothing to worry about.

And it was made up. Motalef came to her not long afterwards and they compromised. He won her over and soothed her anger. The next day Fulbanu took her place beside the pans of sap once more. In the afternoon Motalef filled his basket with palm sugar and set out for the market. As he left he said, "Only about two months more, Fuljan. Then your troubles will be over."

"It is no trouble," answered Fulbanu.

But it was only politeness, an empty form of speech. Neither of them could say what they thought to the other. Each knew. Speech that comes from the heart has a different sound, a different inflection. He who speaks knows it and also he who hears.

MARKET day succeeded market day. The season for palm sugar drew to an end. Motalef's sugar was no better, nor was the price any higher. But Motalef did not argue about it with Fulbanu any more when he came home. He quietly smoked his pipe. The sap flowed from the date palms, dripping through the bamboo tubes into the brimming pots. Motalef climbed the trees at dawn and took the pots down but he felt none of the joy and energy he had experienced the year before. His body was bathed in sweat but his heart

was as dry as a jute stalk and as thirsty as a hot noon. Not a drop of feeling moistened his heart. The courtyard filled with full pots of sap and a woman abrim with youth came and went in his house. Yet he was not satisfied. The earth seemed strangely empty to him.

One day in the market he met Nadir Shekh from over the river. "Salaam, Miah," he said.

"Alekaam asalam."

"Are you all well? The children—"

Motalef could not bring himself to ask about Maju Khatun, though her name was on the tip of his tongue. "Yes, Miah," Nadir laughed, "all's well. By the grace of God our days are passing pleasantly enough."

Motalef hesitated. "Take a couple of seers of sugar home with you for the children. It is good sugar."

"Of course it is. Your sugar always is."

"No, Miah," Motalef found himself confessing, "those days are gone."

Nadir looked at Motalef in surprise for an instant. What a man! Did anybody ever bring something to market to sell and then deary his own merchandise?

"How much are you asking for it?" Nadir inquired.

"Does the price trouble you? I want to give you two seers for the children. You can tell them their uncle sent it."

Nadir was embarrassed. "No, no, Miah, I can't let you do that. You've brought it to sell. Why should I take it without paying you for it?"

"All right," Motalef was cordial, "but take it today. Taste it. You can pay me next market day, if you must."

The words seemed to stick in Motalef's throat. Once more he had to use these methods to sell his sugar. He had to praise his wares but well he knew they would not come back to him a second time, nobody crowded in front of his basket any more.

With much persuasion Nadir agreed to accept a seer without payment. He insisted upon counting out the price of the other two into Motalef's hand.

Maju Khatun flamed when she heard about it. "If you want to give that sugar to your children," she said, "you may do so, but I won't touch it. I am not the daughter of such a father."

Another market day came. Nadir kept away from Motalef and his palm sugar. Maju Khatun had forbidden him. "If you talk to the fellow again, I'll leave," she said, "You'll wake up in the morning to find me gone."

Nadir, secretly, was very much afraid of Maju. She was clever at her work and well-spoken, but she lost all self-control when she got angry.

A few days later Motalef took two pots of the best sap from his finest trees and went down to the landing place on the river at dawn. He walked past the plum tree behind the matting and entered Nadir's courtyard. "Are you at home, Miah?" he called.

Nadir came out, pipe in hand. "Who is it? Oh, you? Come in. Come in. Why have you brought all this sap Miah?"

Nadir invited Motalef into the house but he was apprehensive about Maju Khatun. She could not bear to hear his name mentioned and here he was in person. Who knew what she might not do?

It was as Nadir feared. Maju Khatun had seen Motalef through a hole in the fence. She called her husband into the house and shouted at him in a voice that Motalef could hear distinctly: "Tell him to get out of this house this instant. Hasn't he the slightest sense of shame? How dare he show his face here?"

"Softly, softly," whispered Nadir, "lower your voice a little, Bibi. He'll hear you. When a person pays us a visit he should not be received this way. Even cats and dogs are treated better."

"You don't understand, Miah," answered Maju Khatun, "there are people who are beneath cats and dogs, worse than devils even. Ask him, has he felt no hesitation in bringing me palm sap? Isn't he ashamed? Isn't he afraid?"

Not a word Maju Khatun said was spoken softly and Motalef heard every one. Amazingly, he did not seem disconcerted by the harshness or anger of her speech. He seemed to find it sweet. Through the shrillness of her voice sounded the hurt of a woman who has been scorned. Drop by drop the juice of the palm flowed.

Motalef stepped up to the verandah and put his pots down. "Miah Saheb," he called, "will you listen to me?"

Nadir came quickly out. His face showed his embarrassment. "Please sit down," he said, "sit down, Miah Saheb. Have a smoke with me."

Motalef took the pipe from Nadir but he did not begin to smoke at once. He held it in his hand and, looking at Nadir, said: "Will you tell the Bibi something for me?"

"Tell her yourself," answered Nadir. "What's the harm?"

"No," said Motalef, "you tell her. I have no right to speak to her. Tell her that Motalef has enough sense not to bring her sap to drink."

Before Nadir could say anything Maju answered herself from inside the room, "Then what is it for?"

"Tell her," Motalef kept his eyes on Nadir as he replied, "he has brought it to be boiled down into sugar. Motalef Miah will take that sugar to market in his basket. He will sell it to customers who do not know him. He has not been able to sell an ounce of proper sugar this year. All his climbing up and down trees has been for nothing."

Motalef's voice caught. He stopped to recover himself. His eyes gazed very steadily straight in front of him. He was about to say something else when he caught sight of two big black eyes through a hole in the fence. They were shining with tears. He looked quietly away. Nothing more was said.

Nadir Shekh suddenly came to himself, "What's the matter, Miah? You are still holding the pipe. Why don't you smoke? Has the fire gone out?"

Motalef put the pipe to his mouth and answered, "No Miah, the fire has not gone out."

(The translator wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Ajit Mukherjee)

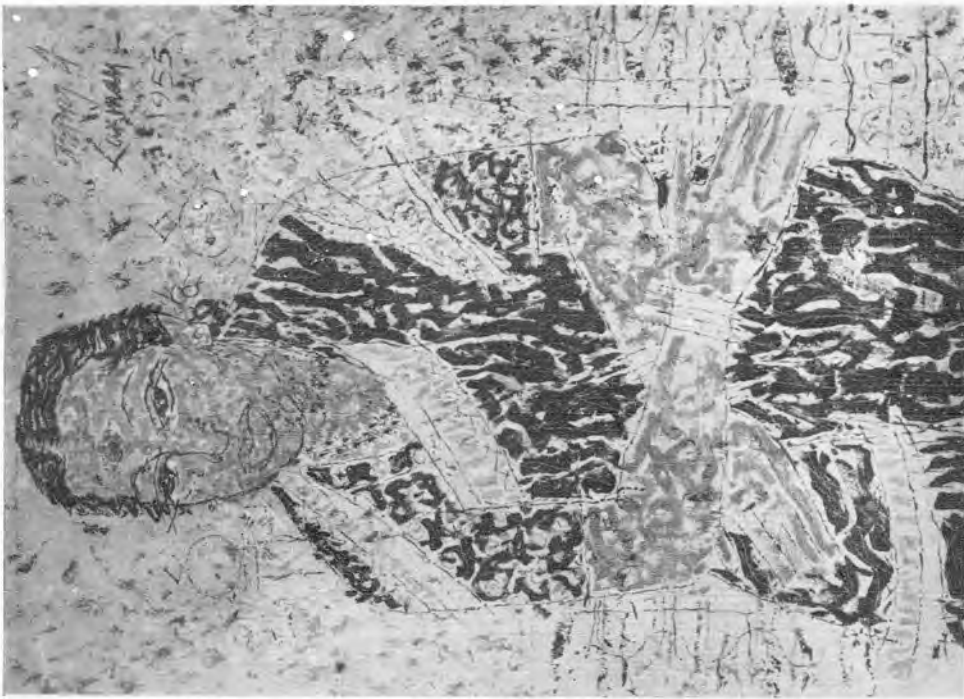


INDIA—PAST and PRESENT: In the Pudumandapam of Madurai's great shrine, tailors have set up their establishments beneath the masterpieces of ancient Indian sculpture.



BAND SHOP IN OLD DELHI

by Richard Lannoy



"MY MOTHER"

Paintings by Laxman Pui, (see p. 45)



"TRICOT"



DRAWINGS
By M. F. HUSAIN

PRIEST, ROME



TRIBAL GIRL, HYDERABAD

S. OOKERJEE

all play and no work

a description of Indian student life

ALL universities have their traditions, and our universities can boast of traditions too. It is, for example, a tradition to avoid attending classes as far as it is possible to do so with impunity, and it is a tradition, when attending classes, to create lots of disturbance; it is a tradition that students should deride all things intellectual and choose subjects in which they appear least interested; it is a long-standing and highly respected tradition that no student should study regularly throughout the term but should only begin to read when the examinations are very close at hand. Another finest of all traditions is that the students should not read their texts, but depend wholly on what are called 'guides'. All those who respect these traditions are looked upon as heroes and heroines, and our universities abound in them. There are a few who do not accept these traditions, and are referred to as 'book-worms' or 'scholars', which, among us, is a term of contempt.

The above remarks may, to an outsider, seem highly exaggerated, but the tragedy is that they are literally true. Let me briefly describe a typical scene. The professor enters a large and tightly-packed classroom, and, in the babel of noises and the movement of students sauntering in and out, he sometimes remains unnoticed for several minutes. He often sees the floor before him littered with wedge-shaped bits of paper, technically known as paper arrows, which had evidently been showered on his predecessor; he may himself, once the fact of his presence has dawned on the students, be greeted by a handful of such missiles.

If he is young or inexperienced or if he believes in treating college students as grown-up and responsible people, his reward is indiscipline and noise which can on occasion be heard echoing through the corridors, disturbing other classes. If, on the other hand, the lecturer is severe, he has to face blank,

inattentive or bored faces. It would be an error to suppose these manifestations of high spirits and inattention during lectures to be a sign that our students are more keen on outdoor or extra-curricular activities. Their outdoor life consists in going to the neighbouring tea shops or standing about at street corners, indulging, at times, in a little horse-play. As for extra-curricular activities, it is only a handful of students in each college that participates in sports or debates or other cultural activities.

Every college has a number of Societies—such as the Literary Society or the Economic Society—at which serious work is meant to be encouraged through lectures, papers or discussions. In practice, however, many of these societies lead a semi-conscious existence, others are kept going by the efforts of the professors who read papers as well as carry on the discussions, while others still have unblushingly degenerated into groups which go for picnics, hold socials and arrange shows. A few enthusiasts often create a new society, but when they leave the college, the society dies a lingering death. Debates attract a miserably small audience, and even the speakers quite frequently fail to turn up, without the slightest twinge of conscience. The present writer once attended a debate where only one man supported the proposition while four opposed it! In a Bombay college of ancient reputation the annual inter-class trophy debates have not been held for the last two years because of poor response.

The tone of inter-collegiate activities is no more inspiring. Colleges—in particular, medical colleges—are proud of their capacity to shout down anyone, teacher or student, who comes from another college to address them. Even if the outsider is a member of the Legislative Assembly or the Governor of the State it

makes not the slightest difference, he must not be allowed to speak in comfort! The Chairman's appeals and warnings go unheeded; he might as well not be there.

A general lack of interest in all intellectual and cultural matters, and wide-spread indiscipline and inattention during lectures are prominent features of our university life. The Genius of Indiscipline, in its most innocent and childlike stage, expresses itself in harmless acts like shooting 'paper-arrows' or whistling or making other beautiful sounds in class, and at its fiercest it breaks out into strikes and hooliganism. In Calcutta, whenever the students feel disinclined to take an examination they go on strike.

NOBODY, except perhaps our educationists, believes our university education to be satisfactory or its products to be well-informed, efficient, cultured young people. Our degrees are not held in great veneration either at home or abroad. Everybody casts his stone at our educational system, and suggests various causes and cures. It has been suggested that the present lack of discipline among students is the legacy of the Civil Disobedience Movement. There may be some truth in it, but I do not think it is sufficient to account for the almost total lack of interest in academic pursuits. That the cause is the very little contact between teachers and students due to the large numbers of students, is much nearer the truth. But the analysis does not go far enough. The real question is, why are numbers so unmanageably large? Is there such an overwhelming thirst for knowledge? If so, it seems strange that there should be such indifference when knowledge is being imparted!

The attitude of the students lowers the efficiency of the teachers. In handling big classes only a part of the professor's

attention can be devoted to the subject of study, the other part being employed on 'police duty'. 'Who could be whistling? . . . Who is shuffling his feet? . . . Where did that arrow come from?' are questions with which he is continually troubled. Often he dare not turn round to write on the black-board. Of course, these noises and attacks must not be taken to indicate that the students do not find his lectures good enough. Most of them cannot discriminate, and in any case they do not usually listen! The brilliant lecture and the feeble one meet with identical reactions—the same turbulent atmosphere, the same wooden faces. The teacher has no incentive to improve or even prepare his lectures. Why should he alone labour, when all the others rest? His reading decreases, his knowledge deteriorates, his ancient notes become his stand-by. No scholarship, no originality, no inspiration.

In this process of decay our professors are considerably aided by a special breed of men, the manufacturers of what are called 'guides to examinations,' sometimes camouflaged under the title of 'text-books'. This large body of men has sprung up, like the Sophists of old, to cater to the growing intellectual needs of a new generation. They resemble the Sophists in that they are unprincipled and indifferent to ends and ultimate values, and only pander to a current demand. They are, however, unlike the Sophists, in that the Sophists, whatever their subjects, taught them well, whereas our modern masters are themselves largely ignorant of what they profess to teach. Their publications, although blessed by 'eminent' scholars in our country, are as devoid of originality as of wisdom, and each one endlessly repeats, 'ad nauseam', what the others say. One 'author' even admits that he has nothing 'new or striking' to offer on what he is pleased to call a 'worn-out,

dry and uninteresting' subject, and says, quite openly, that the only reason for writing the book is 'the vanity of seeing one's name in print.' These people sell their false and counterfeit wares and spread 'spurious education' far and wide.

Students are not the only victims of their spells. Teachers, who should know better, also frequently succumb to their charms. I know of professors who not only recommend these 'guides' to their students—hundreds do that—but also use them as text-books in class. The nature of the university question papers favours this pernicious practice by setting, year after year, a series of stereotype questions to which stereotype answers are expected. This gives our modern Sophists an impetus to produce 'model' answers. Our teachers 'impart' them to their young charges, who, in turn, pass them on to the examiners. The examiners are delighted to find exactly what they had expected, and, thus assured that they are on safe ground, proceed to set similar questions in future examinations 'ad infinitum.'

If, for example, you ask Philosophy students to show how Socrates searched for definitions and to explain Plato's theory of Ideas, there is a fair chance that they will understand your question and produce some kind of answer (for these questions are asked time and again in the examinations), but if you ask them to show how the theory of Ideas developed out of the search for definitions, about 80% of the students will fail to realise what the question means (because this is not a usual question, and no 'model answer' can be found).

ONCE you set a false value on academic education, fraudulent practices and corruption follow in the wake of ignorance and indolence. It has been said that in our

colleges there was very little personal contact between staff and students, but often the only fruits the students wish to receive from such a contact is to discover the 'portion' for the examination and, if possible, the questions that will be asked, lest, by any unfortunate chance, they might prepare a little more than what is absolutely necessary. Attempts to approach the examiners and malpractices during the examinations (in which supervisors play their part) are not new features, but recently these subterranean activities have been helped by new techniques. We have heard of professors (who have been appointed examiners) earning additional income from their students by setting and correcting extra essays on subjects likely to come in the examination. We have also heard of the smuggling into the examination hall of a radio set, through which communications were exchanged with a friend outside!

I am not suggesting that cheating is a phenomenon peculiar to Indian universities, but I do believe that wherever learning is not held in due respect and the acquiring, by hook or by crook, of degrees is the primary aim, there the soil is specially suitable for the growth of evil practices.

THUS the farce continues with vicious and never-ending rotation. The pace is set by the external world, and our universities are unable to resist its over-whelming pressure. The busy world clamours for two things: firstly, it requires large numbers of men for clerical and similar work, and so it wants the universities to produce them; and secondly, not satisfied with the quality of the products, it calls out for less of 'bookish' learning. The clamour for practical and technical education is ubiquitous and loud. Our universities respond to the demand for numbers by lowering the examination standards and

by allowing the colleges to be packed to overflowing. And they meet the attack against 'bookish' learning, not by opening more technological institutes or in any way changing the kind of education they have been giving (which would at least be logical), but by not taking that kind of education seriously.

Thus there is a levelling down and a deterioration in quality, and instead of being bulwarks against the swelling tide of all kinds of vulgarity, cant or superficiality, our universities have been pandering to the prevailing demands (whether sound or otherwise) and have become factories for turning out large quantities of spurious goods, persons who do not know even a fraction of the subjects in which they have obtained degrees, and who, even if they had the knowledge, would be misfits in the jobs that are open to them. Our universities have no ideals, no fixed purpose, no plan; they are drifting and blundering along somehow.

The question of academic and technological education would require separate treatment, but we may touch briefly on a few important points. The criticism against 'bookish' or academic education should not always be countenanced, although it is so fashionable. Technical or 'practical' training, in the sense of a specialised skill, is really not education at all. Technological advances are ultimately based on theoretical knowledge, and mere practice, in any field, is not likely to go very far unless backed by sound theory. Of course, if the theory taught is entirely unrelated to practice, it may, perhaps, be justly condemned as bookish, but one cannot hope to know one's subject thoroughly unless one knows, through books, what work has been done by others in the field. There is nothing wrong with theoretical or academic knowledge, if that means that it is the knowledge of principles and not

merely empirical or immediately practical. In fact, such theoretical education is the primary concern of a university, whatever other technological departments it may open in response to popular demands.

Instances are often quoted of great men who had not had academic education, but such instances are irrelevant, first, because there is nothing to prove that had they had such education they would not have been even greater, and secondly, because geniuses are relatively rare and are not the persons for whom universities can primarily cater. A university must, first and foremost, foster and assist the Spirit of Inquiry and Research, disinterested and independent of any motives extraneous to the desire for knowledge, wherever the inquiry may lead, whatever truths, pleasant or unpleasant, 'useful' or 'useless', it may reveal. In addition to this, there is nothing to stop a university from providing any other kind of training.

Only when Indian universities free themselves completely from every external influence, political, economic, social or any other, and have at heart only the interests of sound education, which they pursue undeterred and unashamed, is there any hope of improvement in our educational system and all the harmful consequences that it involves.

The possibility of a real cure lies in a drastic overhauling and a radical change of attitude. Once and for all we must give up the notion that academic education is for all, in the sense that everyone, whether capable and intelligent or not, must be admitted into the universities and finally given his degree, even though everybody knows that his degree means nothing at all. We must stop overcrowding our colleges—not with students eager to learn, which would still be an evil—but, which is much worse, with apathetic and irresponsible young people. We must raise, instead of periodically

lowering, the standards at our examinations, and we must change our entire examination system from the farce that it now is into a sensible means of measuring the students' real capacities.

OF course these reforms would hit some people very hard, and so they would resist them to their utmost, for all our writers of 'guides', and our lazy professors, and corrupt examiners and incompetent paper-setters, and, most of all, the vast majority of our students who have no desire and no aptitude for learning and scholarship, all these and many others would have to go. Such reforms can come only from the top. It is the business of the universities, and they must concentrate their whole attention on this urgent and vital problem, instead of making minor adjustments and tinkering about with worthless details, like changing the Honours course into a Special one, or, as is being proposed, deducting a year from the degree course and adding it on to the school course. These things are going to get us nowhere; it is like repairing the furniture when the house is about to collapse!

Our universities, so far as the essentials are concerned, are going to the dogs. Of course, all the outward trappings and the empty show persist: there are lectures and socials and examinations and convocations, compliments are exchanged, platitudes uttered, and everyone plays his appointed part in the farce. Meanwhile the Soul of Education is being steadily and systematically murdered, and every undeserving graduate is one more nail in its coffin. Courage, imagination and determination can save it still. Is it too much to hope that the 'guardians' of our education will, before it is too late, wake up from their dogmatic slumber?

CAINSMORNING

Having eliminated his dear brother
 He wandered slowly through the springhung street,
 Angry with Cain, his heart, and not another.
 He sighed, My life runs past on rivered feet.

The wine the Law forbade me I have swallowed.
 Still (understand me) I did this for good;
 Though I am sorry now that I have hallowed
 My thirst for freedom with my brother's blood.

The day grew luminous and cold like starshine.
 He looked so odd that people stopped to stare.
 Shopwindows rich with Cadillacs and Rheinwine
 Poised their glazed questions on the lightfilled air.

These things, he thought, do happen; what surprises
 At first palls later, hocused by the eye.
 The soul and after life are still surmises.
 Being for my bettering, let my brother die.

Suburban houses sneered. The stones said, Slayer!
 He felt a saraband start in his brain,
 And turned his face to heaven, and saw his prayer
 Melt in the cold, the grey, the faceless rain.

DOM MORAES

THE APPLES

Apples in the sunlight like
 billiard balls:
 The whole season I have
 Seen them bloom into loveliness
 As the sunlight turned
 Their green sap into blood.
 At sunset the tinged earth
 Turning sunlight into blood,
 a billiard ball:
 Darkness coming over it juggles
 A memory of the coolie-woman's
 Dark hands at plucking time.

P. K. SAHA

D. G. NADKARNI

"gate of hell"

a dissenting opinion on a Japanese film

ONE can judge the Japanese film *Gate of Hell* (recently given a private showing in Bombay) only in the context of two other Japanese films, *Rashomon* and *Tora-no-o*, the first of which has been seen here. The three films can be grouped together with reference to the historical period they bring to life, a time of unrest, lust and deceit in medieval Japan. There are common possibilities in these films neglected by the director of *Gate of Hell* while grasped with both hands and exploited by Akira Kurosawa, who made *Rashomon*. Kurosawa's *Tora-no-o* has to be mentioned only to convey that the other, later film which brought him international repute is not necessarily his greatest. Otherwise it has little in common with *Gate of Hell* which has also reaped a worldwide harvest of awards.

Let us start by giving *Gate of Hell* its due. Photographed in Eastman colour, as it unrolls before our eyes it astonishes us as much as the black-and-white *Rashomon* did. The fluidity of camera movement, the almost musical variations it plays on groups in motion seen sometimes through a static

wall of leaf or fabric, is striking. Before making *Gate of Hell* the Daiei company sent its technicians to train in the Eastman Laboratories and the Warner Studios in the U.S. There is no doubt that they have performed the feat called "drinking deep at the Pierian spring" and come out with a product that is a testament of colours. Sanzo Wada, a painter, who served as colour consultant, and Kohei Sugiyama, the cameraman, have been responsible for some superb visual effects.

The film opens with scenes of a revolt against the Emperor Goshitakawa being suppressed by his regent Kiyomori. From the very outset our senses are delighted as we perceive the texture of things, the tone of colours shot by shot. The flurried panic at the palace is imaginatively seen through windswept curtains of transparent cloth, spiralling screens broken and trodden down, and a languorous mist that pursues the film throughout, especially in long shots. The colours in their wet reality appear to be such as we have never seen before; dark and light are graded with a loving hand, the sheen and texture of

sat in is brought out with a sensuous touch. This prologue to the uprising incidental to the main plot of the film, is (to use a hackneyed phrase) a Japanese screen-painting come to life. We are immediately transported to a past that was primitive, brandishing inviolable concepts of honour and extremes of psychological pattern, something we call "essentially Japanese."

Unfortunately, the film loses sight of this background, this mute but relevant screen on which the events that follow are set. The three main characters are ultimately cornered within the four walls, our interest begins to sag here and there (though we are ashamed to confess it), and the film ends on an anti-climactic note which has, rather defensively, been labelled "typically Oriental." Rarely has something superbly filmic petered out so sadly, with all the colour serving no purpose before our very eyes, into something conventionally melodramatic. But most of us have been sufficiently hypnotised by the energy of the colours in the first half to forget their inconsequential presence in the lethargic second half.

HERE then is the very simple story of *Gate of Hell*, and one must assert that this apparently harmless simplicity itself is the curse of the film.

The revolt leads to an accidental meeting between Kesa, wife of Wataru, a warrior in the service of the Imperial Palace, and Moritoh, one of the Regent's loyal soldiers. Moritoh falls for the beautiful lady. As reward for his services he asks the Regent for permission to marry her. Knowledge that she is already married only spurs him on. He tries to impress Kesa in various manly ways. Ultimately he corners her alone and threatens to kill both her and Wataru, unless she yields to him. Kesa pretends to join hands with him in the assassination of her husband. On the

fatal night, however, she manages to change beds with Wataru, and, in the dark, Moritoh kills his own lady-love in error. Wataru characteristically forbears to chastise him. The repentant Moritoh departs for a monastery, passing through the very Gate of Hell under which he saw and talked to the victim of his folly.

The crux, the purpose, the excuse of any work of art is "to drive a point home." The trouble with *Gate of Hell* is that it has no point to drive home—and it has no drive either. Grandma's story, told in order to lull a child to sleep, for all its directness and simplicity, has subtle, if fantastic, points which make it worthwhile listening to. *Gate of Hell* has the simplicity without the subtlety. A far more stylised presentation, in acting especially, with characters as in a ballet or a masque to be called Husband, Wife and Lover, would have been true to the nature of the story. As it is, the plot of *Gate of Hell* has as many dramatic possibilities as Milton's *Comus*!

One can, indeed, pin down the little drama in this film to one head: Moritoh confronting Kesa. A short but exquisitely conceived scene, for example, shows us Kesa in a dead faint after the escape from the uprising. Moritoh, who has rescued her, gulps down water to quench his thirst and spits it into Kesa's tranquil face in order to awaken her. The tension mounts as he goes on fruitlessly, till at last he gives up spitting, bends down and kisses the lady full on the wet mouth. In its erotic-emotional implications, this scene reminds us of the bandit kissing the fair noblewoman by force, and she so irretrievably succumbing to him, in *Rashomon*. Another, less subtly symbolic, scene has Kesa playing a doleful tune on a string instrument for the Regent's pleasure. Moritoh, given the unusual, and unwise, privilege of seeing her alone, breaks into the room, pleads

violently with the woman of his dreams, and ultimately kills the music with his paw. No scene between Kesa and her husband has the dramatic tension of these, though the portrayal of their nuptial life may be termed "touching". For tone, though not necessarily tension, we have a couple of stylised views of the Regent's court.

What a change is this from *Rashomon*! Kurosawa's masterpiece also has a savage lover driving a wedge between husband and wife. The husband is killed by the bandit, who later enjoys the left-over fruits of his dispatch. The different versions of this brief incident, told by its protagonists, bring to light their characters and their considerations with such rare subtlety that the trio in *Gate of Hell* appear like wax figures in comparison. Again, how poetically does the maker of *Rashomon* merge the lush environment with the passionate drama unfolding in its midst! On the other hand, *Gate of Hell* forgets the meaningful tone of its initial environment, and plunges, unattached to any background, into the hole of drawing-room tragedy. A strong thread of commentary, of impending destiny, runs through Kurosawa's film. The Regent in *Gate of Hell*, in a way presiding over the destinies of the trio, could have functioned unassumingly as Chorus, whereas he disappears completely from the scene after the first half, and the bearings of the tragedy hang limp.

Rashomon has not only an awe-inspiring unity of style, but an otherwise elusive poetic tension rippling rare rhythms into the weird progress of the plot. While *Gate of Hell* starts by bringing a distant Japan vividly and pointedly to life, its latter half is Western in conception—a Japanese counterpart of *The Rape of Lucrece* we may call it at the most—and no amount of Kabuki playing is going to make it less "modern". Not even the much appreciated

twist in the last reel—the murderer cropping off his pigtail and riding away to become a monk—can wipe away the toning down of context on the part of director Kinugasa.

Only a brief reference can be made to Kurosawa's modest little film, *Tora-no-o*. Compared with the luxurious artistry of *Gate of Hell*, it appears almost hand-made. One can spot out the studio back-drops, and yet the film has, shall I say a Machiavellian punch that technical superiority cannot bring to *Gate of Hell*. It tells the story of a teen-age prince fleeing from his enemies and being escorted through rugged terrain by his loyal entourage. (Note the initial resemblance in atmosphere to the rebellion in *Gate of Hell*, which is also a 12th century affair.) They stand the hazard of being exposed when they cross an enemy post; but, led by a crafty senior of their party, they turn the tables on those that challenge them. Ironically enough, the end shows them disintegrating in a drunken orgy of triumph.

HERE, too, the story is simple; but the delineation of character through sparseness of dialogue and concentration of gesture turns a battle of wits and endurance into a poetic whole with more impact than has the polished *Rashomon*. Beneath the placid mask of cold calculation we can sense a storm rumbling, and the effect, in terms of a cat-and-mouse drama, is terrific.

Both in *Rashomon* and *Tora-no-o* we have a feeling of things happening for the first time before our eyes. This is especially notable when one considers the slight repetition of incidents in the first film and the limited locale of the second. In *Gate of Hell*, which is also a period piece, only the first part gives us this impression. The tragedy is prepared, ready-made, and though not exactly wrapped up in cello-

phane, bereft of a telling sense of doom. The characters are abstractions of Loyalty, Lust and Love, with little scope left to develop or to change.

Rashomon, on the other hand, comes close to a demonstration in psychoanalysis (with all the Japanese trimmings, of course), while *Tora-no-o* provides a pithy study of men under stress, *walking on the tiger's tail*, as the title puts it so bluntly. Since Wataru and Moritoh are never developed either with depth or subtlety *vis-a-vis* the lady Kesa, their meeting after her death and their respective reactions fail to stir us. They sound more like a standing-and-squatting post-mortem. The death and the consequent renunciation lose meaning, in spite of being decoratively sacrificial, because Wataru, the husband, has all the while been passive, wooden, unresponsive—and I do not here mean the restrained portrayal of Isao Yamagata which is a perfect Kabuki foil for the fine frenzy of Hasegawa.

I shall not devote any comment to the competent acting which is, after all, to be expected of any major Japanese film. Especially notable is the way Machiko Kyo, the petite actress with a face so innocently, girlishly sensual, who showed an expressive range of emotion as the wife in *Rashomon*, flits through the role of Kesa with an ethereal grace. But all her delicacy and silent strength cannot, from my point of view, introduce any dynamism into the lily-white symbol of chastity that she is. She remains a gently carved ivory figure, more in tune with a revered museum than a convincing screenplay.

One last question about the colour—the feature of *Gate of Hell* that seems to have swept the critics off their feet. Are we, with our naked eyes, capable of judging colour purely in the abstract? Or is it the exotic content of this film that influences us in favour of its unusually sensitive dis-

play of colours? One can cite a host of pictures like, say, *Gone with the Wind* (Selznik) or *The Yearling* (M-G-M) to demonstrate that the more unfamiliar and distant the content of the scene the greater the subjective appeal of the colour. In contrast, note the subtle gradation of tones in a scene depicting the nondescript interior of a small town sheriff's office in a recent film called *Bad Day at Black Rock* (M-G-M), also photographed in Eastman colour, which can go unnoticed for the extreme drabness of its scenic content.

In fact, colour alone cannot make a great film, even merely from the visual point of view. For instance, *Gate of Hell* sets a definite visual style in the first half typified by such imaginative dissolves as join the shot of a contender of Moritoh's tumbling dead into the sand to the succeeding one of white waves of the sea rolling majestically on to the surf. In the second half the sequences are longer, the visual technique conservative and the cutting nonchalantly abrupt. *Rashomon* and *Tora-no-o* with all their difference in styles, had a distinct visual unity that we do not see in the pictorially absorbing *Gate of Hell*.

It may be passingly pointed out that *Gate of Hell* is considered in Japan to be one of Kinugasa's worst films. This opinion, of course, is no instrument with which to damn the film. The post-war neo-realistic films of Italy, the early products of Rossellini and De Sica, too, were unpopular in the country. Unpopularity, in the East, is a critical, if not financial, blessing. *Gate of Hell*, while making a substantial contribution to film craftsmanship, takes us back to the stage where a sensibility suffering from *katharsis* feeds on theatricals with an overbearing, though simplified, moral. The moral of *Gate of Hell*, handed down without provoking the slightest pang in our hearts, runs: "A heart is not to be won by force."

IGNAZIO SILONE

self-portrait

in questions and answers

Editor's Introduction

Readers unfamiliar with the name of Ignazio Silone may be able to appreciate his self-portrait more keenly with the help of the following outline of his life and work. He has a secure international reputation, based mainly on his novels *Fontamara* and *Bread and Wine*. Both have been published in inexpensive popular editions, and in spite of their seriousness and political themes are best-sellers in Europe and America.

Writing is not a full-time occupation for Silone; nor is it his main incidental preoccupation. He is a professional politician and has been engaged in political activities since he was eighteen.

Silone went into exile after the establishment of the Fascist regime in Italy, and it was 17 years before he was able to return. He was born in 1900 and joined the Communist Party as a youth. Books, he admits, have played a very small part in his intellectual formation. "I became writer by mischance" he says.

In *Bread and Wine*, which is largely autobiographical, Silone tells the story of his gradual turning away from Communism. The narrator is Pietro Spina who is led to Communism by his revolt against social injustice and the intellectual dogmatism of the Church. He chooses a life of action against the cloistral virtues recommended by his religious tradition but cannot admit that he must therefore resign all ethical and spiritual principles in a struggle for power.

For many years Silone thought that the way out for Italy and the world was Communism. Later he discovered that the motivating principles had been destroyed and replaced by a fanatical orthodoxy which is intolerant of opposition and contemptuous of moral values. In an agony of introspection Silone (Spina) wrote in his diary: "Has not truth for me become party truth? Has not justice for me become party justice? Has not party interest ended by deadening all my discrimination between moral values? Do, I, too, not despise them as petty bourgeois prejudices? Have I escaped from the opportunism of a decadent church only to fall into bondage to the opportunism of a party? By putting politics be-

fore everything else, before all other spiritual needs, have I not impoverished, sterilized my life?"

Spina, the hero of *Bread and Wine* is the conscience of the revolutionary movements of our time. He loses faith in Communism but preserves in his thought and life the ideals which had led him to Communism, which Communism had deserted. He is so good a Communist, that in the eyes of the Communists he is a traitor. Spina understands that there are neurotics for whom revolution is a form of lyrical exaltation. He sees clearly that those who are mere malcontents and perpetrators of violence will never carry through the kind of revolution which will mean freedom and dignity and self-respect for the masses. Deep and sincere attachment to the masses, to the poverty stricken peasants in particular, makes him revolt against the revolutionaries. It is a grand irony of history that, contrary to the Marxist dogma, such a revolt should produce a good novelist.

Why do you write?

To communicate with others.

What sort of readers do you have most in mind when you write?

Individual men and women given to thinking for themselves — restless spirits.

What do you think your books can give them?

A little companionship.

And to the chance reader?

A flea in the ear.

What do you think of critics?

It's a big world; there's room for everyone.

What influence has criticism had on your writing?

Absolutely none.

Your favourite novelists?

Cervantes, Tolstoy, Verga.

Your favourite modern painter?

Rouault.

If you weren't a writer, what would you like to be?

A miller.

What do you like doing in your spare time?

Reading and talking.

Do you ever think of returning to active politics?

If freedom were in danger, yes.

What gift of Nature do you most desire?
Health.

Who, of the people you have met, have been most important to you?

A few simple people: among the well-known, Don Orione, Gramsci, Trotsky, Ragaz.

What characters in Italian history do you find most stimulating?

Joachim da Fiore, Francis of Assisi, Thomas Campanella.

What contemporary character?

Simone Weil.

What do you consider the most important date in world history?

December 25th of the year 0.

And of recent times?

The workers' revolt in Eastern Germany on June 17th 1953.

What do you think about third world war?

It would prepare the way for the fourth.

Among military heroes, whom do you most admire?

Joshua, when he stopped the sun, and the good soldier Schweik.

Do you believe progress to be inevitable?

No.

Do you believe that man is free?

I think man can be free.

Do you think man is responsible for his actions?

As far as he is free, yes.

Do you think man can overcome his destiny?

Yes, if he accepts it.

What do you think about suicide?

It is one of the many things that I cannot understand.

Do you believe in the possibility of a perfect political order?

No.

Or in the possibility of perfect laws, institutions, authority?

No.

In a Christian State?

No; it would be a contradiction in terms.

In a Christian society?

That alone would be a Christian society in which love replaced the law.

What do you mean by socialist revolution?

The elimination of the economic and social obstacles which at present impede human freedom.

Do you think it will bring happiness to mankind?

Not necessarily. Old troubles will linger on and new ones will develop.

Do you think freedom can survive in a socialist country?

In the age of monopolies, I think that without a certain number of socialist measures, freedom is impossible.

As in Russia?

In Russia there is no socialism, but its opposite — State capitalism; no freedom, but its opposite.

Do you think the educated classes have a leading part to play in society?

No.

Do you agree with the maxim "you can't go wrong if you always follow the working class?"

As a compass it has lost its usefulness. The working class is not going in any one direction.

But on the whole, can it not be said to tend in one direction?

Its direction varies from one country to another, from Labour to Social-Democrat to Communist to Titoist to Syndicalist to Peronist and so on. To say that one should always follow it is meaningless.

Are proletarian organizations, when free from external pressure, not spontaneously progressive?

Not spontaneously.

What ultimately decides the real nature of these organizations?

The conscience of their members and of their leaders.

Are you a pessimist?

No.

Have you confidence in man?

I have confidence in the man who accepts suffering and transforms it into truth and moral courage. And so I now think that out of the terrible polar night of the Siberian slave labour camps, Someone may come who will restore sight to the blind.

Someone? Who?

His name does not matter.

Leonhard Ragaz: ex-Protestant minister, ex-professor of theology in Zurich University; he inspired and fostered the Christian-Socialist movement in Central Europe. Silone met him during his exile in Switzerland.

Don Luigi Orione: a Catholic priest who founded a religious order called "Order of Divine Providence". Silone knew him during his boyhood.

Antonio Gramsci: One of the founders of the Italian Communist party and its chief intellectual. He died in a Fascist prison.

TWO POEMS BY ARUN KOLHATKAR

THE BLIND

Riddle of the world is brailled
Reader am I

My parents' fallen house
A tear shed from their eye

Five senses for fingers
My oracle I

Blind god's wayward hand
His forecast eye

Subject god and predicate I

THE RENUNCIATION OF THE DOG

Tell me why the night before we started
Dogs were vainly
Barking at the waves;
And while we slept in an unknown temple
Days and waves away
A black dog dumbly
From out of nowhere of ourselves yawned and leapt;
And leaving us naked
And shame faced,
Tell me why the black dog died
Intriguingly between
God and our heads.

COMOLATA DUTT

the future of Indian music

some constructive suggestions

MUSIC, though national in character, should have universal appeal. So it is strange that, though every country is eager to give of its music to the world and imbibe the music of other countries, India always seems to wish to cling to her old traditions which make her music exclusive. This is particularly noticeable in the way that Indian notation is prevalent in all the regional languages. It would be so much simpler to adopt the notation used throughout the world. This is used even in China and Japan. Then only would our music be appreciated, understood and played in all countries. However, foreign influences have crept into Indian Music and are likely to do so increasingly in the future.

Indian Music dates back to prehistoric times. In fact, the present day *samagas* or temple singers, claim that the musical tradition they receive is 2,500 years old. It is through the ear that musical knowledge has been transmitted from genera-

tion to generation. This has been possible because our vast musical material is as common to all parts of India as the major and minor scales are to the West. It is interesting to reflect that the old Greek modes are found among Indian musicians even to-day.

Since 1,600 A.D. Western music has gradually built up its musical structure on the major and minor scales. These, one major and two relative minor scales, are only three out of our vast number of melodic progressions called *ragas*. The Russians through the Greek Church and their folk songs have still retained many of the old modes, and modern Russian composers use them in their compositions, making it easier for a rapprochement between Eastern and Western music. Incidentally, it was originally my hearing the Russian Orchestra and Choir conducted by Serge Koussevitzky in Paris that inspired me to write Indian Music for Indian and Western Orchestras.

It is surprising to find how, fundamentally, a folk song from Norway or Britany has almost identical melodic intervals and even melodies as those which can be heard in certain parts of India.

Indian Music, having such a rich heritage of melodic material and unlimited rhythms to choose from, has been conservative about using harmony. But the recent revival of classical music does not satisfy the newly awakened craving for some sort of harmony in Indian Music. This is very noticeable in film music, which imports jazz rhythms and South American melodies to the delight of many in the audience. This kind of music seems to be some sort of answer to those wanting something more than melody and rhythm, which has so far been sufficient for Indian listeners.

The restlessness of the present age is reflected in modern art, whether it be in music, painting, poetry, or sculpture. We have only to see the modern trends in painting to realize that not only beauty but horror and disgust are fully portrayed in all their aspects. This is also the case in modern Western music. Whether this type of art will endure remains to be seen. There is no doubt that there is no modern Beethoven or Thyagaraj. A deep religious experience seems to be missing from much of the music composed today. One turns gratefully to the past for the sublime and the beautiful. But we cannot prevent music from being written in the present and in the future. We may be conservative and wish to revive our traditional classical music, which is as it should be, but we cannot escape the trends of our time.

in the daily life of our people. Our classical music has melodic patterns and rhythmic accompaniments which astonish the world. There is no doubt also that music with harmony, which is only a recent innovation in the West compared to our long period of musical activities, has attained great heights. Not that there is no harmony in Indian Music. The very fact that there is a background of fifths, *Sa* and *Pa* (or *Do* and *Sol*) played generally on the *Tamboura* means that there is a constantly changing harmony in our music for each note of the *raga* performed against this background of fifths.

But in Western Music the change from scale to scale gives countless variations of harmony. It is possible to derive innumerable changes in emotion and effect from one note of the melodic line. This is called block harmony. Harmony is divided into two parts. There is the combination of melody with a harmonic background, called block harmony, and there is counterpoint, which means the weaving together of two or more independent musical strains. Much subtlety is possible in the use of counterpoint, and there is rich pleasure in listening to this woven music, which has to be thought of horizontally, whereas block harmony is considered vertically.

It is intrinsically easier to follow blocks of chords but I feel that contrapuntal music would be perhaps easier to listen to from an Indian point of view, as it is purely melodic, although two or more melodies may be woven together. I have tried doing this within the scope of some of our Indian *ragas*. It is an interesting experiment, and probably the best way of developing the future Indian Orchestra which has not progressed so far beyond rhythm and melody. The structure of a symphony or concerto is based on the ternary form and is like a great temple or

INDIAN Music has portrayed for centuries the hopes and aspirations of the individual, his yearning for the Divine, his joy and sorrow in everyday things, in folk songs and dances. Music plays a great role

cathedral. Beautiful themes are expressed, interwoven, and analysed in a myriad changing keys in the symphony of today. This was originally taken from the *sinfonia* which was played before the opera in the 17th century in Italy. It gradually became detached and was played only in concert rooms; becoming independent of stage music.

Whereas the first *sinfonias* before opera consisted of one movement, the later *sinfonias* soon expanded into three and four separate movements, the first movement being usually divided into the exposition of the first and then the second theme. Then came the development, followed by a recapitulation of the first theme, and the Coda or ending. This is derived from the Minuet. It is a form in which the root principle is that of three distinct periods or clauses. The basis of it all is that a piece starts with some musical thought which is more or less complete in itself and also sufficiently defined to leave a clear impression on the mind. Gradually the music moves away from the first idea either in outline or key (or both), finally returning to the original conception as a conclusion to the whole (in its original key). Of this type there are literally hundreds of examples in the national music of all countries.

It may be legitimately inferred that this particular design has something in it inherently appropriate and logical. The majority of national tunes have not been produced as the outcome of scientific musical knowledge but are the expressions of the natural poetic instinct of the people. It is therefore significant that so many tunes of this character, from all parts of the world, should be based upon the three parts, or ternary plan. In Indian music too we have three divisions. *Pallavi*, *Anupallavi* and *Charana*, in the South, *Sthaye* and *Anthara* in the North, starting

with the exposition or *Alap*, the statement of the melody, followed by the development and recapitulation.

It is interesting to note that the major and minor scales are only three out of our many thousands of *ragas*. Yet, so many varieties of harmony have been built from these three scales. There are fourteen major ones, and 28 minor scales with their sharps and flats. Yet each major scale of these fourteen has the same intervals as occur in the *Shankarabharana Raga* of South India, which is called *Bilaval* in the North.

BUT time moves on, and just as India seems to be searching for harmony in her music, so in the West composers are searching for new rhythms and melodic patterns. Just as Indian composers are studying the harmony and counterpoint of the West, similarly one finds composers from abroad coming to India and the East to study Oriental music. There are composers in the West who have intuitively and sympathetically identified themselves with Nature. Debussy is one of these with his whole tone scale identical with a derivative of the South Indian scale, C,D,E,F, sharp, G sharp, A sharp C (named *Rishabhapriya*). So similar is the source of his inspiration to that of the Indian *ragas* that his pieces have surrounded themselves with their own appropriate times and seasons, and to a sensitive performer refuse to express themselves except at those particular times.

Scriabine, the Russian composer, introduced another scale to Western Musicians, using it as the tonal material of one of his greatest compositions, *Prometheus*. Scriabine found the scale C,D,E,F sharp, G,A,B flat. This happens to be the identical tonal sequence classified under the name *Vachas-pattya* meaning the Mother Substance of sound, the basis of manifestation. It is interesting to note how Scriabine, a Russian

composer, was able to express his deepest feelings through this melodic progression of notes without knowing anything about South Indian *ragas*, of which it is one. In his incorporation of the augmented fourth in his tonal system he had touched on the South Indian system of music which is based on 72 fundamental scales, of which 36 have the augmented fourth instead of the perfect fourth. He and other composers have discarded the major and minor scale system which was polytonal, and now atonal music, which has no particular scale, has come to its own. There must be other such instances, for more and more composers of the West are turning to our *ragas* for inspiration. For within their scope every mood is expressed and yet rigidly confined.

INDIAN Ballet or Dance Drama has now taken a firm hold on the imagination of our people. Old classical styles of dance have given us music based on ancient modes. But what of the music that is yet to be composed for the ballets of tomorrow? Surely this is likely to be more elaborate in structure, involving a multiplicity of rhythms interwoven with several melodies, at the same time remaining within the scope of the *raga*. In the West, Ballet was often set to music which had already been composed like the well-known "Les Syphides," based on the music of Chopin, and "Les Presages" based on the fifth symphony by Tchaikovsky. Brahms's fourth symphony also inspired the choreography for the beautiful ballet, "Choreartium." These are experiments in expressing through movement the beauty of music already written. But many composers have written special music for the

ballet. The future dance drama in India will surely use music expressing our culture in all its facets. It is a still unexplored field, fascinating to contemplate and full of possibilities. As the *Natya Shastra* says, the arts are one and dancing combines all of them.

However much purists may seek to evade foreign influences, it is not possible for the new music to escape them, and that surely is as it should be if we are striving for the one world of tomorrow. Foreign influences come in through film music as I have already mentioned. Most of the composers never having studied harmony or counterpoint, yet introduce bits of Spanish and American dance music without any reason except to vary the monotony of the melodies used, but creating hybrid music of the worst possible taste. The people, who are developing a liking for harmony since they do not get anything better, seem to be enjoying it. The only remedy is to introduce the study of harmony and counterpoint in the principal schools and colleges of Indian music. Composition, especially in relation to the composing of the new Indian music, should be taught in our universities. In Europe it is a full nine years' course.

No doubt there are a few Indian composers who have attempted to write the new music on classical lines. But it is the foreigner who has recognised and encouraged them. There is certainly no dearth of creative talent in India, which only needs financial help and appreciation. The adoption of a universal musical notation would also enable our music to be played and understood all over the world and not in India alone.

JEAN BOURET

an Indian in Paris

a letter about Laxman Pai

IT was some four years ago that three young Indian painters from Bombay came one morning to see me in my editorial office of the Paris weekly paper *Arts*. Their names were Padamsee, Raza and Laxman Pai, and they had come to Paris after having studied in Bombay in the J. J. School of Arts. When they began to open before me the portfolios of their work that they had brought along, I saw an unbelievable treasury of legendary subject-matter unfold before my eyes. Beautiful women in hieratic attitudes combed their hair beneath palm-trees as minutely painted as those of a classical Persian miniaturist; sacred cows with golden horns wandered through the waters of crystal-clear streams; beneath the varnished tiles of a temple-roof, a statue of the Buddha glittered, its gaze concentrated on its rounded belly; once in a while, through the midst of a crowd all clothed in white, a street-car passed like an unbelievable anachronism.

All this was indeed a description of India today, with its intermingling of the modern and the sacred that rarely suggests to any of those living there any topic for more than passing thought. In the work of all three of these young painters, one felt that their schooling had taught them above all a very strict technique, leaving them free to choose their own subject-matter according to their individual inspiration, whether from their ancestral heritage or from the many things that the contemporary Western world had brought them.

Today, I would not be able to say what has become of Padamsee and Raza. But Laxman Pai has persevered in his will to conquer the Paris art-world. In one of the leading galleries on the Right bank of the river Seine, he has recently given us an outstanding exhibition of works selected from among those of recent years.

What course has he followed in his development, since he first came to Paris? It has not been the total transformation that

one might have expected, but Laxman Pai has substituted, for his former conception of the image, a new system of plastic notations that maintain the sacred character of his art while at the same time reducing its chromatic developments to the bare essentials.

Laxman Pai has remained faithful, in his illustrations, to some of the wonderful Sanskrit poems of the twelfth century, to his habit of alluding to ancient and traditional artistic themes; at the same time, however, he has taken a jump right into the midst of the daily life of France, his country of adoption. Just as, some years ago, he seemed to experience a kind of ecstasy as he contemplated a Goan girl whose locks became a kind of spring of life, in his eyes, as she combed her hair, so has he now learned to stress the individual, in the Western sense of the word, but without any possible references to sacred themes, and recreated his art only as a relationship between colours and tones so that his picture, stripped of all that is but accidental in human life, becomes something almost abstract.

Another aspect of this change is that Laxman Pai, in his earlier work, still experienced the need to cover every inch of the surface of his pictures with details and colours, whereas he now leaves great spaces without any colour; and this reveals how much he has become sensitive to a

typically French conception of light in a picture, as a kind of intermittent glimmering. This proves also that he has been able to assimilate the great discoveries of Impressionist painting and, which is far more strange, now actually reaches, in some of his pictures, the same technical conclusions as Van Gogh, devices that Van Gogh had indeed borrowed from some of Laxman Pai's own ancestors.

As a painter, Laxman Pai thus corroborates Andre Malraux's theory that the artist is not merely a reflection of his social and racial background but, above all, an individual who is capable of sensing imponderable elements that he detects according to the changes brought about by time and also according to his own increasing maturity in any given discipline.

Laxman Pai's experience, in this respect, is of interest not merely from a plastic point of view but also as something eminently human. After a few years of associations in an entirely new background, the artist has expressed his allegiance to the abstract and constructivist wing of modern art rather than to the realist wing. He has thus chosen deliberately the views of an intelligentsia that is more interested in constructing a new world on the basis of new cosmic data than in patching the old world together according to theories that were already popular some fifty years ago.

M. KRISHNAN

the long north wind

notes on a classic of Sangam poetry

I should like to comment briefly on one of the oldest pieces in extant Tamil, Nakkeerar's *Nedu-nal-vaadai*. Being really old, it is free from the conceits and formal niceties, the self-conscious pursuit of euphony and rhythm, the masterful parade of skill in prosody, the mystic grandeur and devotional inspiration of later periods in the literature. In fact, it would be quite modern in style—had we any body of really modern poetry in Tamil. However, the non-existence of such literature need not bother us, for some of the characteristics of contemporary English poetry are to be found in the older Tamil classics.

The skilful use of assonance by present-day English poets is well known, the just sufficient accent so achieved in preference to the sharp punctuation of rhyme. I realise that skill in assonance, pithiness of expression and freedom from set rhythm can never by themselves make poetry, but these qualities, so much in vogue among English verse-writers today, often mark

the work of Tamil poets who lived some seventeen hundred years ago or earlier. Not that this coincidence of idiom is typical of their work or is important; these early poets did often employ the adventurous support of strongly-patterned rhythm and rhyme, and verse-forms peculiar to their period. Moreover, it is bad literary appraisal to go by such tokens, for poetry, the most authentic poetry, is as old as the hills.

However, I think that it is the classics of earlier Tamil (the Sangam period) that are most likely to appeal as poetry and not as ebullient displays of virtuosity, to the modern reader of English. But there are two difficulties in the way of presentation. First, most of these pieces are lengthy narratives—epics and sagas in verse are natural to the earlier part of any literature—or else they need much explanation of their conventional setting. These are truly inspiring to the Tamilian seeking to recapture the glories of his past, but

requires too comprehensive and native an understanding of early social and literary traditions for recommending, except in annotated excerpts, to anyone else. *Nedun-al-vaadai*, as I said, is happily not too dependent on formal flourishes and conventions and, moreover, it is brief. It is just 188 lines of great poetry.

The second difficulty is more pertinent. In introducing any piece belonging to the Sangam period, it is hardly possible to avoid a prefatory discussion of its date (which is usually not definite, and which may well require a latitude of three or four centuries), and the usages of those times. Nothing has a more prosy foretaste than such discussion, or is likelier to induce literary dyspepsia. Luckily, there is no difference of opinion over the date of *Nedun-al-vaadai*—it belongs to the 3rd century A.D., and has unmistakable contemporaneous reference to a celebrated Pandiya king (Nedunjezhian) and the battle he won at Talaiyaalanganam, unaided, against two rival kings and their five allies. Historians place this king's reign very early in the third century.

Nedun-al-vaadai also describes, in passing, many local customs and sights. These references are invaluable to the historian seeking evidence from literature, for few, even among the Sangam poets renowned for their verbal integrity, have that ring of authenticity in their word which is found in Nakkeerar. It is not merely the conviction that the sound of firm words creates that I have in mind, but close observation of actuality and an objective vision, however poetically expressed: the absence of poetic license.

Little is known about Nakkeerar's life. His father was a learned pundit, and it is said he was a Brahmin. Legend (no doubt subsequently invented) tells how Nakkeerar, finding a factual error in a verse composed by Siva in the guise of a mortal

poet, pointed it out to him at once. The God tried to argue the point, but the poet would have no sophistry; a fault, he maintained, was a fault. Then Siva half opened his terrible third eye, whose look scorched all that it beheld, so that the stubborn poet might know whose verse he was criticising and feel the fire of the immortal huff. Burnt by the flame, instantly aware of his opponent's overwhelming identity, Nakkeerar's one reaction was scorn for the unfairness of the argument. "Should all your body be eyes," he replied, "like the body of Indra, King of Heaven, the fault in your verse would remain a fault still." This is merely a fanciful legend, the kind of thing that only serves to make the poet seem remote and unreal to us today, but in its way it vouches for the regard that subsequent men of letters had for Nakkeerar's poetic integrity.

Besides *Nedun-al-vaadai*, a few other works are also attributed to Nakkeerar; not all of them have survived to this day, and it is by no means certain that the few that have are all from his pen.

THE theme of *Nedun-al-vaadai* is superbly poetic, for it is a wish—a wish set against terse, graphic description, a deeply felt longing, weariness at midnight, and the imminence of a famous battle, and sustaining it all with physical continuity, *the constant north wind and the chill November drizzle*. To those who know the South only as a land of exsiccant heat, I should explain that we too have a season of windy cold in October and November, when the main force of the monsoon is spent. It is not so much a season of bitter cold as of a depressing, moist north wind that blows steadily all day and keeps blowing through the night. We call it the *vaadai*, i.e., the north wind, but sometimes we prefix an uncomplimentary adjective to the

word. It is easy to forget it in the long hot weather that follows, but I live in a house facing the north and I can assure you that the *vaadai* is a very constant wind and one that encourages people to keep indoors.

I realise that this is just the kind of plain explanation that promotes a distaste for the topic, but I must add that a thousand years ago the South was much greener and thicker with vegetation, and that the windy months were much colder. No wonder, then, that in the old days conjugal love was thought the pastime most natural to this stay-at-home season. This point must be made unequivocally here, for it is relevant to my theme.

Nedu-nal-vaadai, rendered literally, means "the long, good north wind." A pathetic-sounding title in English, but it has strength in Tamil. The north wind is unquestionably long, long with the tedium of uninterrupted draught, but why call it "good"? The answer to that lies in the wish conveyed in the poem.

The poem begins with vivid, brief depictions of the chill, wet season. Here are close renderings of some of these lines. (Quotation marks indicate verbatim translations.)

*Revulsed by the floods that have drowned
their low-lying pastures, herdsmen drive
their cattle to the upland jungle-side, where
they stand close around a fire, "chafing their
chattering jaws with fire-warmed hands."*

The briefest, the most suggestive mention of the cold-afflicted creatures follows:

*"the huddled nonkeys"
"cows viciously kick aside their (milk-seeking)
calves"
"the very hill stood shivering in the cold."*

The scene shifts, and the hour is later. It is evening now and nearer the city, but still on the outskirts.

*The rain abating somewhat, "flights of thin-
winged, green-legged herons rise, and scour
the black-sludged, flooded white-sand flats,
looking for fish."*

The heavy rains have yielded to a steady drizzle—"clouds, white with sped downpours, sustain the cold, thin drizzle".

The poem moves on to the city, and it is almost night now. The main street lies "broad as a river, flanked with storeyed dwellings." Foreign mercenaries,

*"with humped, muscle-bound shoulders and
leafy garlands,
sturdy of build and powerful of body,
with the warm delight of liquor in them,
patrol the streets, unmindful of the rain."*

Evening chores in the households are then described. The young women must light the lamps for prayer at nightfall, but in the uncertain, heavily-clouded gloom it is hardly possible to know when day gives over to night. To know this hour, they watch trays spread with the buds of the night-flowering jasmine, and when "the green-stalked buds unfold their fragrance", they know it is time to light the lamps. This may seem a far-fetched concept, but of course it is nothing of the sort. Those who know how regular the flowers are in their unfolding will know that this is a quite reliable way of knowing when it is nightfall.

*"the red-legged cock-pigeon, confused
between day and night,
Sets not out with its well-beloved mate to
glean the yards,
but, moveless, mopes within the loft,
shifting from leg to tired leg."*

What a true picture of pigeons in wet, windy weather! The birds perch dully on their pegs, neck and a leg withdrawn into the low-held body, and their depression is almost communicable!

WE shall skip the next eighty lines, which provide some of the most reliable pictures of the domestic life and architecture of those days. They tell of the mansions of the rich, the grinding of scented pastes and the burning of incense, the structure of the mansions, the toilet of women, the loneliness of separated lovers;

a rather full description of the king's palace is given and then of the queen's bedroom. Hereabouts there is reference to a lamp in the hand of a figurine wrought by a Yavana craftsman; I am not sure, but the "Yavana" here probably refers, not to a Greek, but to some other foreign craftsman. There is an elaborate account of the queen's opulently-wrought bedstead, which has an overlay of swan-down on a mattress, and a smoothly-starched sheet on top. And on this lies the queen, filled with longing and weary with waiting.

Imperceptibly through these descriptions the hour has advanced to midnight. Surrounded by her handmaidens, the queen lies, beautiful but forlorn and unbedecked, "like a drawing in outline untouched with (the joy of) colour." The cunning persuasions of her maids to induce sleep in her are futile. It is midnight, and she sighs for the king's return from the battle-field.

Note that she does not sigh for his *safe* return. No hint of wifely, domestic anxiety mars the deftly-lined picture of woman, consumed with restive loneliness, awaiting her lover. With masterful abruptness the scene shifts to the battle-field at Talaiyaalanganam, destined to fame tomorrow. The transition is both sudden and considerable, in contrast to the gradual movement of the poem so far, but, with what poetic equity and freedom from stress it is made! For it is no longer only the chill, midnight drizzle, slanting down on the unwearying north wind, that sustains the extent of the beak—the queen's desire

lends natural direction and span to this movement.

In his battle-side camp, the king is going round visiting his wounded warriors. A lamp "with many thick wicks, whose full flames slant southward from the breeze," lights his way. He is preceded by his commander-in-chief, who points out the wounded men to him one by one—men "whose might had felled and twirled in the dust the mighty arms (trunks) of war-elephants" in the past. "Swift, proud-mettled chargers, with bridles bunched with precious stones, twitch the cold rain-drops off their sides into the dark mire of the pathway." "The rain comes down with a swish." The king shows no sign of his own fatigue at this late hour, but smiles, and cheers his wounded heroes.

A wish, addressed to the goddess of war and victory, Durga, faultlessly completes the poem. The descriptive passages so far have also, presumably, been addressed to the goddess. The structural craft of this wish is interesting, for it is not actually in the last few lines of the poem, but is interposed between the depiction of the queen's loneliness and the king's rounds at the battle-camp, and links up the last lines of these images. Here are the actual words of this flashforward, if I may borrow and adapt a familiar term from movie technique, without importing the suspicion of anything else from the loan:

"To relieve the pangs of separation of this young woman (the queen), grant swift victory to this wakeful king in his battle with conjoint foes; this is my wish."

T. R. RAMIAH

fever in the south

an account of southern separatism

THIS is an attempt to describe some of the elements that make up the political programme of the Dravida Kazhagam (Dravidian Federation) and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Dravidian Progressive Federation). The movement of which these two organizations are the political expression is not well-known outside Tamil Nad; but it can lead to developments unpleasant for the whole of the country. That is the justification for discussing this subject in a journal which claims to be "first Indian, then Asian and finally International." (Editorial policy statement of QUEST). Though it is Tamil Nad which is directly concerned and has to come to grips with these organizations and their ideas, no Indian who wishes to treat politics "as a human concern" can afford to neglect them.

There is not much difference between the Dravida Kazhagam and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. Their object is the same: the establishment of an independent

"Dravida Nadu" or "Dravidam" ("Country of the Dravidians"). The D. M. K. was formed by a group of people who broke away from the D. K. because of their dissatisfaction with the way in which it was being managed by its leader, E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, popularly known as "Periyar" (Great Man). The D.M.K. is led by C. N. Annadurai, and it desires to act more vigorously and decisively than the D.K. Briefly, the political programme of these two organizations is to establish a Dravida Nadu *independent of the Indian Union*, in which a casteless, classless society will prevail.

To call it a political programme, however, is misleading. It is difficult to say whether the leaders of these organizations seriously believe that secession from the Indian Union is possible or desirable, and whether, in the event of such secession, they will really attempt to establish a casteless society. There is an air of unreality about the whole programme. It is to be

feared that the leaders are only interested in inciting their followers to violent agitation. Egalitarian Dravida Nadu is, nevertheless, the announced goal of the movement, even if it is used by the leaders only as a magic formula with which to inspire their followers.

The ideology (if one may give it such a dignified name) of the movement is a most peculiar mixture. First, there is what might be called the purely political aspect: the theory that South India is dominated and exploited by the North, and must therefore get rid of this incubus. Of late, complaints have been made that in planning the location of irrigation projects or big factories, the South has been neglected. Whether this complaint has any justification or not it has added to the vague resentment against the North that was already prevalent. And linguistic patriotism further aggravates this resentment. In Tamil Nad to-day there is a new pride in everything Tamilian and especially in the Tamil language. This fervour, this devotion to the language, makes even those who are not supporters of the D.K. or the D.M.K. susceptible to the suggestion that the imposition of Hindi is an affront to the dignity of Tamil Nad. Opposition to the alleged "Hindi imperialism" is nowhere more fierce than in Tamil Nad.

To talk in terms of North and South, however, does not give an account of the ideas of these organizations. What they have in mind is not merely different regions of the country but different *races*. The basis of their programme is a race theory. South India, according to them, is the land of the Dravidians, and North India that of the Aryans; and ever since the dawn of history the Aryans have been persecuting the Dravidians. The time has come for the Dravidians to shake off the yoke of the Aryans. It is to be observed that all the inhabitants of South India are not regar-

ded as Dravidians: the Brahmins are really Aryans who came and settled down in the South, and imposed their religion, their customs, their caste-system, their Sanskrit learning—in fact their whole way of life—on the Dravidians.

Members and sympathisers of the D.K. and the D.M.K. believe that Tamil has been corrupted by the borrowings from Sanskrit. They affect a stilted "pure" Tamil whose vocabulary is free from Sanskrit. If a Dravida Nadu is to be established, the Brahmins must be driven out first. Hostility towards the Brahmins is not a new development; it is not a mere corollary of a race theory: it is the natural outcome of certain historical facts. Political and economic domination by Brahmins was a hard reality till recently; and even now it cannot be said to have entirely disappeared. The resentment and the bitterness produced by this are now finding an outlet in movements like the D.M.K. And when people are nursing grievances, past and present, with bitterness and resentment, it is no use telling them that hatred is not wise or profitable. Hatred of Brahmins is being persistently inculcated in the journals and other publications brought out by members or sympathisers of the D.K. or the D.M.K.

These organizations are concerned with more than race and caste. They have vaguely communistic aims: their pamphlets frequently refer to a classless society. They appeal to the poor to wake up from their slumber and shake off the yoke laid upon them by the Brahmins. They connect the exploitation of the have-nots and haves with the exploitation of non-Brahmins by Brahmins—and this in turn becomes the exploitation of the Dravidians by the Aryans. There are quotations from and references to Marx, Lenin and Mao-Tse Tung. Annadurai is described as the Dravidians' Mao. The ideology is thus a

racial-political-economic complex; it is completed by one more element: atheism.

Religion is like a narcotic drug: the poor and the oppressed will not rise because they have learnt to accept their lot. The Brahmin priests and the non-Brahmin *Mathadhipatis* (heads of religious bodies which are akin to monastic orders) have inculcated resignation in order to exploit the dumb masses. The D.M.K. therefore tries to go to the root of the matter by propagating atheism. It is only when people cease to be afraid of gods and demons and the next birth that they will have the courage to shake the foundations of society. The propagation of atheism thus becomes one of the main pre-occupations of the D.M.K. Annadurai has written scripts for several films and I have seen two or three of these. In each there is a purple patch which is eagerly waited for and applauded by his admirers in the audience: a long, rhetorical, violent denunciation of the gods.

This atheism has another aspect. Not only is it the result of a feeling that religion is superstition. Rationalism! Enlightenment! The D.M.K., whose ideology is a curious bundle of false and half-baked theories of race and caste, whose appeal is deeply irrational, proclaims itself a supporter of rationalism and commonsense! In one of the D.M.K. publications, there is a strange digression—at least, I thought it was a digression, till I understood how vitally all these elements are connected in the minds of these people. In the middle of a political pamphlet, the writer turns aside to write an imaginary conversation between an orthodox Brahmin priest and a “rationalist.” The subject of the debate is the chastity of Kunti (the mother of the Pandavas) and of Sita. Chapter and verse are quoted to prove that Sita was polluted physically when she was married, not by chanting a *mantra* as we have been told,

but as a result of sexual intercourse. The Brahmin, unable to bear the light of reason and commonsense, runs away.

Why this examination? In order to give us a sample of our beliefs. We believe that Kunti and Sita were chaste whereas they were not; we forget what is inconvenient. This is a sample which proves that all our religious beliefs are superstitions which will dissolve like dew in the light of reason. There is a tiny booklet devoted to the life of Rasputin. Its ostensible purpose is to delineate his lustful, sadistic character and the strange power he exercised over the political life of his country, as a type of the deceit and immorality practised by all priests and heads of religious institutions. Actually, the pleasure that the writer derived from recounting the amorous adventures of Rasputin is very obvious. The mixture of race-hatred, caste-hatred and hatred of religion can be no where better seen than in that now notorious play, M. R. Radha's “*Ramayanam*,” which is the literary *piece de resistance* of the movement.

THE writings of members of the D.M.K. are fantastic and blood-curdling, and leave the reader profoundly depressed. People who can admire and love a leader of the intellectual calibre of Annadurai—he is known affectionately as “Anna” (“Elder brother”)—would seem to be beyond redemption. Nehru was certainly right in calling the movement “childish nonsense.” But we should not make the mistake of ignoring it. What is one to do, faced with such an irrational movement? Perverse logic, bad history and race-theory can be refuted; but the movement appeals to powerful feelings. The readers of this article will be surprised at the rhetoric which is devoted to “*Dravidam*.” There appears to be a not inconsiderable num-

ber of people who are thrilled by the name and will rally to its banner with enthusiasm.

If it were merely a violent movement aiming at chaos, it would doubtless find adherents, though many would be repelled by it. But the D.M.K. offers scope for the exercise of generosity, a sort of patriotism—and magnanimity! They stage plays and donate the proceeds to schools; they are ready to go to jail; and they even claim allegiance (at least they pay lip-service) to Ahimsa. In one of their publications, there is a reference to Nehru's phrase "childish nonsense." The writer comments: "We turned with indignation to our leader Anna. He smiled magnanimously and said 'Forgive and forget.' We forgave, we forgot." A movement becomes dangerous when it enlists the loyalty of people in this manner. The depositions of some of the members of the D.M.K. before magistrates are such a mixture of stupidity, race, and caste hatred, self righteousness, pride in serving a cause, and a fantastic loyalty to their leader Annadurai, that one is left speechless and bewildered. One is reminded of the way in which Nazism appealed to obscure but powerful feelings in the German people. There is the same political-economic-religious complex. There may be no resemblance at all between the personalities of Annadurai and Hitler; but the appeal of the ideas of the D.M.K. is similar to that of the ideology of Nazism.

Brahmins react to this movement in one of three ways. Some attempt to ignore it as not serious enough, others adopt an attitude of self-righteous indignation; and yet others are immobilised by bewilderment. The first attitude is an unrealistic one. It is true that the D.K. and the D.M.K. had so little chance of success that they did not even fight the last elections. It may be that, as yet, they constitute no serious threat to law and order, nor boast

of an impressive membership. But it is not in these ways that the strength of this movement is to be judged. The power and influence of the movement lies in the way in which one or more of its ideas have infiltrated into the minds of a large number of people. The race theory, the resentment against the North—these have infected many intelligent and sensitive non-Brahmins. The writings of the members of the D.M.K. are so immature and childish that one is amazed that anyone can take them seriously; it becomes intelligible only when one reflects that it is difficult to resist the suggestion that one has been exploited.

The second attitude, too, is unrealistic. Instead of grasping the historical causes of the movement and trying to remove them, some Brahmins react in a militant way. They feel indignant at the suggestion that when the D.K. and the D.M.K. talk of Brahmin domination they are not inventing a fiction. The atheism preached by these organizations has produced particularly indignant reactions.

Those Brahmins who are intelligent and sensitive enough to see all the relevant facts are puzzled and bewildered. They can see the past and present folly of Brahmins; and when they see their fellow-Brahmins not having the sense to acknowledge this they become frustrated. They realise that Non-brahmins have many just grounds for complaint; but they are unhappy at the racial complications and the hatred introduced by the D.K. and the D.M.K. Foreseeing disastrous consequences and observing around them the blindness of their fellows who are unable to jump out of their Brahmin skins, they are bitter and pessimistic.

I can give a striking instance of this. Some time ago I happened to ask a distinguished professor of Madras whether any grammar of colloquial Tamil was available and whether any study had been made of

Tamil dialects. He replied (rather strangely, as I thought at the time) that all academic pursuits are a mockery now; that no one can rid himself of the bias which being born into a particular caste gives him; and that we should therefore not attempt to pursue intellectual matters academically—because it can't be done. Freedom from bias, he thinks, is really impossible. He quoted a remark of a wise statesman, the late Srinivasa Sastry: Tamil society is in a fever, therefore leave it alone. Let the patient recover by himself.

Leaving it alone, it might seem to many of us, is not going to improve matters. The Movement will, if left alone, gather strength slowly, imperceptibly, and will spread like poison through the entire society. Someone may ask: what then must we do? It is not the purpose of this article to suggest a programme of action for countering this pernicious movement. Hatred, blind and stupid, such as this movement is trying to foster, is not to be countered by political manoeuvres.

One last word, to clear up a possible misunderstanding. This article has been written in order to let people outside Tamil Nad know the fever that is raging there; but it is not an appeal to them to do something about it. The less interference from outside the better. And it is my fervent

hope that events in Tamil Nad will not take a turn which will necessitate interference from outside. As already pointed out, the movement is not strong in the sense of impressive membership or of success in elections; and an agitation for an independent "Dravidam" is hardly likely to be successful when it evokes so little interest in the other "Dravida" states like Andhra and Mysore. But all this need not prevent the leaders of the movement from losing their heads and starting a violent agitation on a big scale for the secession of Tamil Nad from the Indian Union.

In such an event, the loyalties of a large number of Tamilians will be divided and strained to the utmost. Such an agitation will have no chance of success; it will be put down in a matter of hours. And that will be a great misfortune; for then the people of Tamil Nad will begin to feel that they have been conquered and enslaved. It is to be hoped that such a misfortune (which may seem to many fantastically improbable but which, nevertheless, is not utterly beyond the bounds of possibility) will not come to pass. It is to be hoped that Tamil Nad will be saved from the irrational, obscurantist theories that threaten to cloud the sanity of her people.

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book reviews

SEX, LITERATURE AND CENSORSHIP
By D. H. Lawrence. Edited by Harry T. Moore, with Introductions by Harry T. Moore, and Harold Rubinstein. William Heinemann Ltd. 15 sh.

THE recent prosecution of Messrs. Secker & Warburg—a publishing house of great name and standing—for bringing out a book which was considered “an obscene libel”, focussed the attention of the British public once more on the inadequacies of their law as it now stands relating to libel and obscenity. In being tried—though not in being acquitted—Mr. Warburg was in very good company. Some of the most important books in literary history have had to face the charge of obscenity when they first appeared. Zola’s *La Terre*, Havelock Ellis’ *Sexual Inversion*, Boccaccio’s *Decameron* and Lawrence’s *The Rainbow*, have all been banned at various times. And no doubt most of the other classics including Shakespeare’s plays could be proved to come within the terms of the law of obscene publications.

The law as it now stands—in fact as it has stood since it was formulated in the year 1857—has one unforgivable defect. It takes no account of the intention of the writer. Apart from this, the loose wording of the clause might be thought, by some, to have advantages as well as disadvantages. A great deal is left to the justice, discretion, and common sense of those who enforce it. A very concrete definition of what constitutes an obscene libel would never have done. Obscenity means different things to different people, and different things at different times to the same people. Nor are a people’s susceptibilities always rational or consistent. Many foreigners in India, for instance, are

startled to find our temples covered with carvings of a most erotic character (whose true meaning D. H. Lawrence would have understood at once)—and it seems to them an extraordinary inconsistency that there should be cases of people being arrested for kissing in public.

Again, the Japanese people have always used public baths—to the outraged horror of Western puritans, and yet a storm of indignation flamed across the country when Lady Chatterley’s lover was translated into the Japanese language two years ago. Perhaps no people in the world except the South Sea Islanders are entitled to consider themselves logical where prejudices of what constitutes obscenity are concerned. And the South Sea Islanders only happen to be logical because they have no taboos at all in sexual matters. It stands to reason that they cannot have obscenity either.

The novels of D. H. Lawrence have been accused by the law and by many private people of being obscene, because there is in them a great deal about sex. And yet, dirty-mindedness about sex was exactly what Lawrence was trying to fight. “The whole trouble with sex is that we dare’n’t speak of it or think of it naturally. If there is one thing I don’t like it is cheap and promiscuous sex. If there is one thing I insist on, it is that sex is a delicate, vulnerable, vital thing that you must’n’t fool with.”

Every one in Britain, says Lawrence, is in a “state of funk” about sex. It is the “hush-hush” about it, which has made people’s attitude to sex inhibited, perverted and furtive, and therefore objectionable.

“Only a natural fresh openness about sex will do any good, now we are being swamped by secret and semi-secret pornography. And perhaps the Renaissance story-tellers, Boccaccio and the rest, are the best antidote we can find just now.”

Lawrence has an interesting explanation of why, from having been a perfectly open and natural part of life during the middle ages, sex in England should suddenly have "gone underground" in the 17th & 18th centuries and become a taboo word. He thinks that the widespread incidence of venereal disease during the Tudor and Stuart times so frightened the people, that "the great hush-hush was imposed." "The appearance of syphilis in our midst gave a fearful blow to our sexual life. The real natural innocence of Chaucer was impossible after that. The very sexual act of procreation might bring as one of its consequences a foul disease, and the unborn might be tainted from the moment of conception. I am convinced that the secret awareness of syphilis and the utter secret terror and horror of it has had an enormous and incalculable effect on the English consciousness and on the American."

But now, with the remedies discovered, we need no longer be *too* frightened. We can begin, after all these years, to face the matter.

It must be clearly understood that what Lawrence is trying to bring out into the fresh open air is not pornography but the sexual urge itself—which is really the basis of all life. Indeed, Lawrence's attitude to pronography is clear enough to please all the self-appointed mentors in this country.

"Even I would censor *genuine* pornography rigorously. It would not be very difficult. In the first place, genuine pornography is almost always underworld. It does not come into the open. In the second, you can recognise it by the insult it offers invariably to sex and to the human spirit. Pornography is the attempt to insult sex, to do dirt on it. This is unpardonable."

Curiously, Lawrence's views on marriage

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are very similar to those held by orthodox Hindus.

"The Church created marriage by making it a sacrament, a sacrament of man and woman united in the sex communion and never to be separated except by death. And even when separated by death, still not freed from marriage. . . . It is marriage perhaps which has given man the best of his freedom, given him his little kingdom of his own within the big kingdom of the State; given him his foothold of independence on which to stand and resist an unjust state. Man and wife, a king and queen with one or two subjects and a few square yards of territory of their own: this, really, is marriage".

The present volume of Lawrence's essays taken together add up to a denunciation of the British mentality with regard to sex, and the British laws affecting obscene literature. Lawrence has a very strong case, but the fact that with him feeling seems to be more important than reason, detracts something from his thesis. I must admit—how Lawrence would scorn me for it!—that as an indictment of censorship usages, Shaw's preface to *Mrs. Warren's Profession* seems to me a more effective piece of writing than the present essays.

India was never, luckily, very much affected by the British fear and taboo of sex. Like all communities which lived close to the soil, we have kept a balanced view of these things. But it is possible that the new vigilance of the guardians of our conscience, the "censor-morons" as Lawrence calls them—might, by a series of censorships, prohibitions and bans, succeed in making us self-conscious. And then the natural functions of life might become for us too, something to be hidden, giggled at, and played with furtively all the time.

Should all censorship, then, be done

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THIRTY-THREE years have separated the conception and the completion of this undertaking which is on a scale comparable with Gibbon's. Dr Toynbee's outlook has inevitably undergone changes but, although the most significant of these—his estimate of the role of Religion in History—has led him beyond the limits of his original purpose, it has not disrupted the basic plan. The first five Parts of *A Study of History* dealt with phases in the internal history of civilizations: the topics in later Parts bring into operation a wider vision—of Human Society as a whole.

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away with altogether? One feels that it might indeed be wisest if the State decided to give up trying to suppress literature of a purely sexual nature. To forbid a people to read "obscene" books seems a little like the effort of the gallant man "who thought to pound up the crows by shutting his park gate." Besides, the haphazard application of the obscene law often puts the State in a very embarrassing position. Lawrence tells us that "when the police raided the exhibition of my pictures they did not in the least know what to take"—which recalls to us the somewhat similar experience of a certain artist in Bombay not very long ago.

However, there is now a new form of evil trash which could and should be vigorously pursued and killed. That is the horror comics. It is pornography mixed with sadism and crime—all in pictures, so that even the illiterate may "read" them. The crusading zeal of the Indian Govern-

ment which too often earns it nothing but ridicule and ingratitude has for once justified itself by banning its import altogether. And, had Lawrence been alive now, he would have been the first to campaign for its being banned everywhere else.

"Even I would censor *genuine* pornography rigorously."

LAEEQ FUTEHALLY

THE ILLUSION OF THE EPOCH: Marxism-Leninism as a Philosophical Creed. By H. B. Acton. Cohen and West, London. 18 sh.

PROFESSOR Acton's book on Marxism-Leninism, the latest of a number of valuable studies which have appeared after the war, is the work of a middle-of-the-road philosopher with a rare gift for adapting analytical techniques to the study of sociological doctrines. It is strongest perhaps in its remarkable lucidity and in its technique, made familiar by the writings of G. E. Moore, whose outstanding results have been refutations of imposing theories rather than any proofs of original theses. If it is not more successful, it is not for lack of sound argument, but perhaps by the very effectiveness of its logical rigour, which in philosophy can never be a fault. It is the quasi-philosophical part of Marxism which has generally impressed people most, and it is this which receives the worst belabouring from Professor Acton's analysis. Error, as Bacon said, is generally more fruitful than confusion. But in social science, where there is often an astonishing lack of new ideas, it is not uncommon to see muddled theories rather than erroneous ones suggesting new pathways.

Professor Acton finds that what vitiates Marxism radically is not so much its vagueness or obscurity as its ambiguousness. This is comparatively easy to detect when Lenin, following Marx and Engels, sets out to defend the realist platitude against

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the subtlety of phenomenalism; and here Professor Acton shows some sympathy with Lenin's defence of common sense. He even finds similarity between it and G. E. Moore's attempt to prove the existence of an external world by holding his hands to his own view to show that at least two objects exist. The ambiguity increases when we come to what Professor Acton calls "Marxist naturalism", a philosophical theory that scientific knowledge is independent of theology or metaphysics and, apart from dialectics and logic, the only genuine knowledge. What bedevils Marxism as a theory of reality even more than its ambiguity is its attempt to combine positivism with Hegelianism, which, as has been shown before, are not reconcilable in their metaphysics.

It is in his discussion of the Materialist Conception of History that Professor Acton's book appears at its best. He agrees with Buber that it is only as a technological theory that it makes any sort of sense. Since non-Marxists are generally most impressed by Marx's alleged contribution to a revolutionary technique of interpreting history, it is an important question how far Professor Acton is successful here. The passages he chooses for discussion are among the passages most often quoted by Marxists in exposition of the theory and no Marxist can reasonably blame him for building his case by discussing passages of doubtful importance. What Professor Acton succeeds in showing is just the kind of thing which modern positivists try to show in the writings of metaphysicians—fatal ambiguities which condemn their attempts from the start.

This is not because Professor Acton is a positivist; in fact he joins issues with the positivist philosophers of to-day on a number of questions and is rather out of sympathy with their general toughmindedness. Professional philosophers do not often,

except in the Communist countries, regard dialectical materialism as an important contribution to philosophy in any technical sense. If the Materialist Conception of History is, as a theory which claims to explain historical phenomena, shown to be, not fallacious, but logically below the true-false level, it would be exposed as a curious blend of tautologies which no one would dispute. If it could be shown that it is a set of patently untenable theories, which on analysis prove to be based on incoherent conceptions, this would do more to destroy Marx's prestige as an originator of great ideas than anything else. Professor Acton is astonishingly successful in doing this. Except in the thirties, Marxism has never enjoyed more than a shaky prestige in the English-speaking world. To some logically trained minds Professor Acton may seem to be labouring home something which never required great philosophical acumen to see. But where

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philosophers continue to repeat a dead idiom it is vital to see the most widely held philosophy of our time minus its mystifications (to borrow from the Marxists a word they are very fond of using against their opponents).

In discussing Marxist ethics Professor Acton gives some illuminating quotations from Marx's *Paris Manuscripts*, which though untranslated into English except in extracts, has been recently brought out in a French edition of his philosophical writings. It is curious how Marx was fascinated by two key words in Hegel's *Phenomenology*; (1) *Entausserung* (alienation) and (2) the stronger word *Entfremdung* (estrangement). Via Feuerbach the Hegelian *summum bonum* of "self-consciousness" appears in Marx as the ideal of a perfectly planned society. Professor Acton draws a rather close parallel between Marx's rejection of moralism and the modern attempts to explain away individual responsibility. His own philosophical predilections come out in a sweeping passage: "Phenomenalism, the Materialist Conception of History, and the 'attitude and persuasion' analysis of morals are all of them, in their different ways, results of misleading abstraction, that fabricates unreal units, sense-data, the 'material basis' of society, and 'wants, desires, and persuadings.'"

This is not a thesis that can be defended in a few pages; it should rather be the subject of another book. Only by ignoring obvious differences of a fundamental nature could Professor Acton lump Marxism and contemporary positivism so closely together. Fortunately, however, this detracts very little from the value of a book which, besides being a major contribution to the study of Marxism, constitutes an extremely suggestive exercise in the philosophy of social science.

YOGENDRA CHOPRA

ECHOES By Compton Mackenzie. Chatto and Windus. 10s. 6d.

INDIAN readers of the *Spectator* feature "Sidelight" may have some acquaintance with the delights of Sir Compton Mackenzie's prose. It is likely to be, however, a limited acquaintance. Those in their late thirties or early forties will recall the pleasure evoked by memories of *Guy and Pauline*, *Sinister Street* or *Bygone Summers*. Even more than Sir Osbert Sitwell, Compton Mackenzie is the chronicler of lost summers.

Of unfading summers too, a reader of *Echoes* will feel. As a literary form, the essay seems to be on the decline even though Sir Max Beerbohm is still alive. When Stephen Spender came to Calcutta, I suggested to him that *Encounter* would be the better for a little more *belles-lettres*, personal essays in particular. Mr. Spender, a charming and affable person, seemed to be at a loss at this suggestion. "But do people write essays nowadays? I mean, after the death of Robert Lynd?" I mentioned William Sansom who contributes much to *Encounter*. "Does he write essays?" Mr. Spender asked. I cited his *Pleasures Strange and Simple*.

I said nothing of Sir Compton Mackenzie because Mr. Spender was thinking of the younger generation. Sir Compton Mackenzie belongs not merely to the generation but also to the tradition of Sir Max Beerbohm. The essay at its best is a little nostalgic—maybe about dreamchildren, or about lost youth—but always about the days that are no more. And so Sir Compton Mackenzie ransacks his memory to produce material for the literary form he has chosen. Only a few of his memories are of encounters with the eminent, Ellen Terry, Henry James and Cunningham-Graham. His more intimate memories are of caramels and lozenges, old

omnibuses, China cockatoos in Piccadilly and, of course, the vanished colour and scent of London. He recalls the marguerites and geraniums, the smell of the oranges and the gas in Drury Lane Theatre and the perfume of the lavender sold by the girls. It is all very nostalgic.

An essay of special interest to Indians is "A Passage to India." His impressions of India are of a miscellaneous nature and include the centenary of the Lawrence School at Sanawar which Lord Mountbatten attended. He repeatedly mentions that the seemingly violent contrasts in this great country merely made him aware of an intrinsic unity. That is a rather unusual statement from an old-guard Englishman. And Indians as well as Englishmen will be intrigued by the following lines: "If my passage to India has left me with my faith in democracy confirmed, I venture to think that the voyage was as profitable for me as any voyage for

silk and ivory and spices was for the European mariners that first sailed across the Indian Ocean almost five centuries ago. Therefore I avail myself of this opportunity to thank the people of India for what they have taught me about the potentiality of man. I came back to this small green island of ours spiritually enriched, and though I may be only one unimportant individual I cannot but believe that many from the West in ever increasing numbers during the years to come will gain from India a spiritual enrichment."

Sir Compton Mackenzie has been aided by a trustworthy memory, curiosity (the *perpetuum mobile* of the human mind), an endless search for experience, a constant delight in people, books, and in nature. A man who can recall the loveliness of April when December is drawing to a close, is, by any tests, a remarkable person.

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EVERYDAY LIFE IN ANCIENT INDIA
By Padmini Sengupta. Oxford University Press. Rs 5/-

IT is not easy, even when writing a novel or short story, to take the bare bones of B.C. 3000 and cover them with flesh, so that the layman reads about human beings instead of wraiths. But in her little book, which is straightforward history, Padmini Sengupta has managed to do this.

Her compact vivid sentenceces make the people of ancient India—as ancient as B.C. 10,000—really live and breathe. Well known facts are related in a pleasing style, making a fit background for little-known, gem-like details that quicken the interest and instill familiarity into the centuries long before the Vedic era.

This book is not for the research scholar, but rather for people who have heard of Neolithic man, of Mohenjodaro and Harappa, and are not quite sure of the context. We are given a clear picture of what these ancient people looked like, of their proficiency in agriculture and pottery, skill in hunting, their early artistic efforts.

We learn that by B.C. 2500, a “regular city civilisation” flourished on the banks of the Indus. It was so famous that India got her name through it. The excavations at Mohenjodaro in Sind and Harappa in the Punjab, show that the inhabitants lived at the same time, and were in close contact. They were very “advanced”. They had developed a pictographic script, used copper and bronze tools and vessels, wore golden ornaments, made beautiful clay toys for their children.

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great civilisations is their sudden and violent end, brought on very probably by Aryan invasion.

The Aryans evolved the Vedic civilisation, which in turn grew into the age of the epics and Buddhist and Mauryan times that we are more conversant with, through tradition and the arts.

Padmini Sengupta sums up her thesis by stressing the cultural unity of India, which was formulated in those very ancient times, in spite of lack of communication and modern amenities, and which led to the use of the expression 'Bharatvarsa'. Yet this unity never caused the components of a great nation to remain static. Rather, it helped them to grow and develop and flourish, retaining their individual characteristics. The qualities, she states, that made India wise and powerful once, can be nurtured and used to bring future greatness.

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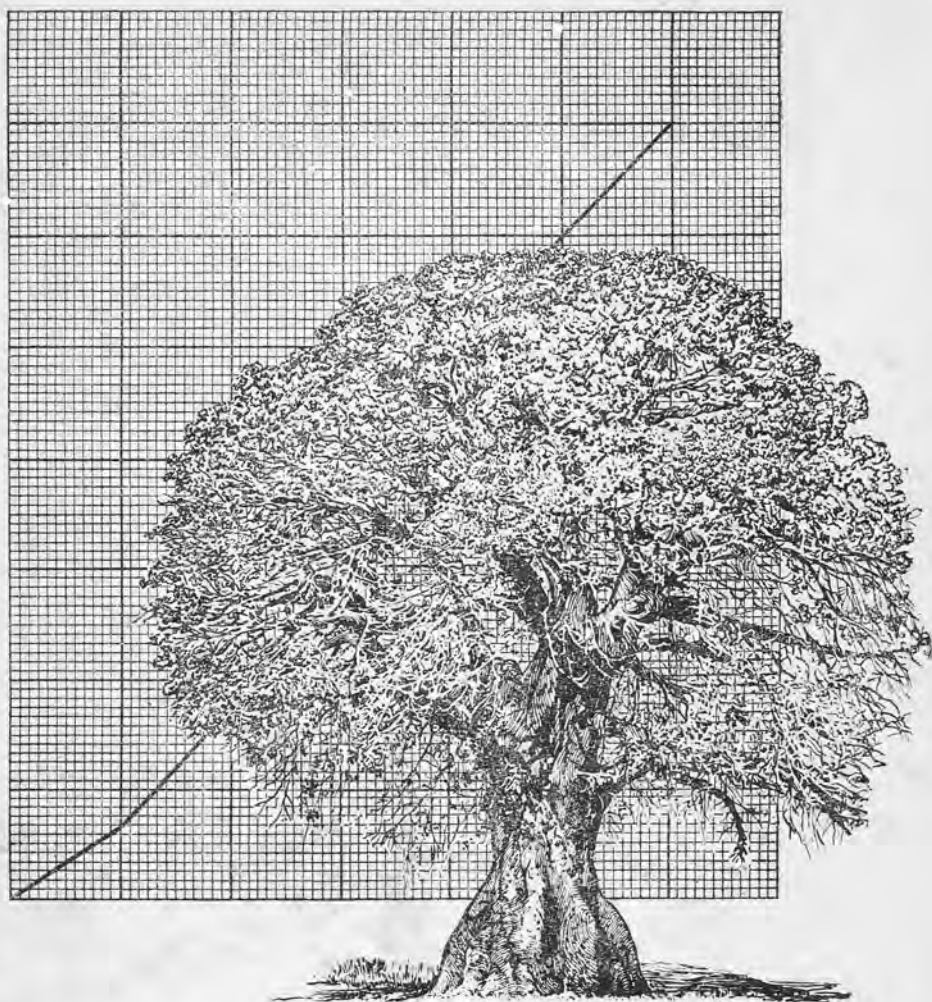
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