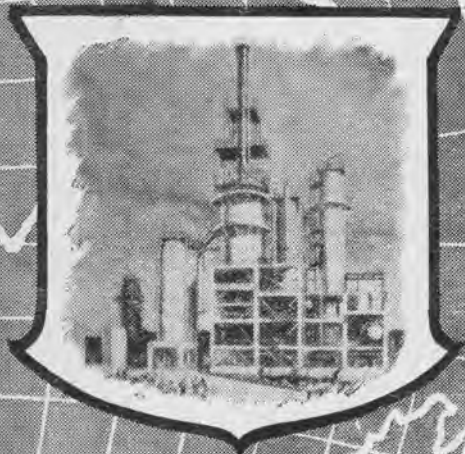
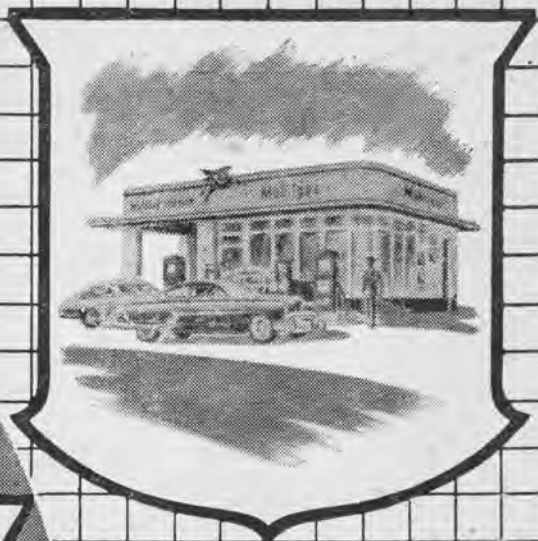


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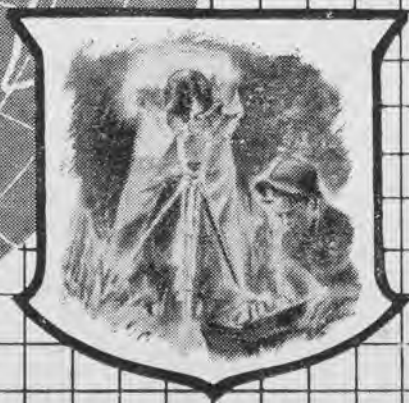
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QUEST

a bi-monthly of arts and ideas

EDITOR: NISSIM EZEKIEL

Feb. - March '56 Vol. I No. 4

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editorial

THE disturbances which followed the S.R.C. Report raise a fundamental question about the forms of political struggle in a democracy. Although a crisis makes it necessary to discuss this question, there is in reality a general need to discuss it all the time. A crisis merely exposes weaknesses, it does not create them. Social prejudices are brought to the surface of national life when attention is focussed on some forthcoming decision which is not universally acceptable. But to fight social prejudices is the *normal* task of those who have everything to gain and nothing to lose if the democratic machinery works smoothly (99% of the population).

In the Indian context, this abstract argument must first be related to a basic political faith. No event except war, and even then not wholly, demands any radical departure from democratic methods of arriving at solutions to political problems. Since these methods work only in an atmosphere of debate, however frenzied and stormy, the advocacy of what is loosely termed 'direct action' must be done only when time, patience and argument have failed. Every conventional move requires to be made before that, within the legislatures, inside political parties and between them, before the next steps are considered. During the past half a century, a rich and varied tradition of social protest has been developed, to which India's contribution is by no means small. There is not the slightest excuse for abandoning it and suffering the inevitable consequences of mob rule.

The unity of India and the common destiny of her people within an accepted framework of institutions is the first and most vital premise of her national life. That granted, the right to carry on political 'agitation' is sacred, though the word has unpleasant associations. Parliamentary debate may be followed by resignations. Delegations may be organised to present points of view in a more intimate manner to the representatives of authority. The orderly mass meeting provides an outlet for public opinion when it reaches a certain intensity on an issue which affects the daily life of the people. The shouting of slogans in properly conducted processions cannot be forbidden without causing acute frustration and despair among those who are ordinarily inarticulate. They do not address meetings, they do not use the written word; what forms of political *participation* are provided for them if not these? Given the atmosphere of tolerance and confidence, there is no need to fear these organised mass expressions. In a young democracy, it is too much, it would even be dangerous, to expect the masses to merely record their preferences at voting time and leave the rest to their elected representatives. The entry of the masses into politics is an accomplished fact of our times. By facing it, one could create the conditions in which their activities do not destroy the very institutions which safeguard their interests.

It may be objected that the irrational factor in mass psychology is here being ignored. On the contrary, it is being deliberately and reasonably allowed for. The masses do not take the law in their own hands except when it is not clear to them what else they are to do. They are asked to 'struggle' for a certain objective, subjected to inflammatory statements and speeches, urged to act decisively and effectively, and promised that they cannot be denied their goal. It is of course considered necessary to add that in all these things the people should

be non-violent. The sincerity of this appeal is not in question. The point is that there is absolutely no guidance as to what exactly is to be done. The techniques of political conflict and controversy are not translated in terms of social action. What can one expect at every crisis if not anarchy and violent outbursts in a society where 'goondas' exist in thousands? It is wrong to judge the issues involved by referring to this anarchy, as some newspapers have done in the case of Maharashtra's claim to Bombay. By that logic, it would have been necessary to give up India's claim to Goa and her expectation of more humane treatment for her satyagrahis. Was not the shooting down of our satyagrahis in Goa followed by disturbances in India which involved police firing on unruly crowds?

Let us imagine that Ahmedabad had a 15% population of Maharashtrians controlling a substantial volume of the city's business. Suppose further that in several respects its history and population structure had been somewhat similar to Bombay's. Are we to think that a decision to exclude Ahmedabad from Gujerat might not have been followed by the same pattern of social upheaval to which we are now accustomed in India? Political sides ought not to be taken because of 'goonda' activities; the correct cue is that the elimination of the goonda is the need of the day. Unless we are going to assume that, like the 'poor', the 'goondas' will always be with us.

A word or two about the Bengal-Bihar Merger. It is in its paradoxical way a typical Indian step. The large-hearted gesture, the sudden movement in a direction diametrically opposite to the trend of the times, is considered to be an ideal solution. Unfortunately, this attempt at integration is as much based on emotion as linguistic separatism. It is not an answer found as we go along but a bid for a dramatic, imaginative reversal of social processes. One might remember Pascal's salutary warning, that 'he would act the angel acts the brute.' Mounier calls the tendency to expect a sudden change over to ideal behaviour on the part of individuals and groups, 'the sin of angelism'. By that sin, we shall be accepting a superficial gloss of integration instead of genuinely learning to live together with our separate roots intact.

There is of course no theoretical objection to the merger of two states, if the practical problems it raises can be intelligently tackled. Similarly, the proposal to divide India into Zones is not in itself a regressive move. The only snag is that its content is purely administrative and geographical, whereas the problem of states reorganisation is political, linguistic and cultural. Language and cultural differences are facts, but the word differences here is merely descriptive, and has no implications of hostility or conflict. Since that is so, they are realities which cannot be abolished by zonal division, since it is impossible to cultivate any feelings for a zone. The states correspond to broad cultural segments and the object of reorganisation can only be to make them correspond more closely rather than less. By satisfying the urges of local loyalty there is some hope of strengthening the larger loyalty and bringing it sharply into focus. By frustrating them one merely intensifies their tribal nature. The ultimate solution to the problem, even if it is postponed for several years as suggested by Mr. Rajagopalachari, would have to be based on reconciliation and harmony between the states, which presupposes that the states would continue to exist as acceptable cultural units within the nation-state.

SATINDRA SINGH

prospects of Indian democracy

the communist challenge

WILL India go Communist or will she preserve in her endeavour to live the democratic way? Never before have the Indian people been so sharply confronted with this question as today. The question is important because upon the choice they make between democracy and communism hangs the balance of power between the East and the West.

The striking success which the Communists gained in some States during the last general election offers an easy incentive for missing many countervailing factors that should be considered equally, if not more, important. The propaganda barrage which the Communists themselves keep up on the issue of neutrality, of the peace front, and on occasions when cultural and other delegations are either visiting this country or paying court in Peking or Moscow, further blur the picture with heavy accents against the proponents of

democracy. To have a clear picture of the situation, it is, therefore, necessary to shift the chaff from the grain.

The main arguments advanced by the pessimists are as follows:

The Communists now control one-fourth of the territory and one-third of the population of the world. They are, moreover, under one centralised direction. The resources of the democracies are, on the other hand, under the direction of some sixty independent governments, often with mutually irreconcilable interests. Add to this the fact that the Communists operate in secret, have spies, saboteurs, and organised parties of supporters, some of them very powerful, within all the democratic countries. The forces of democracy have nothing comparable to this. True, the present Russian leaders avidly protest that co-existence between the Communist and the Capitalist worlds is both desirable and

feasible. But against that comforting protestation there are numerous authoritative pronouncements of Lenin and Stalin and the Comintern programme containing assertions to the contrary. The conquest of the non-Communist world forms a definite plank in the future plans of the Kremlin. And this is not, to borrow Mr. Philip Spratt's words, 'remote possibility but a likelihood'.

It is significant that since 1948 the Communists have shifted their main attack to Asia. Until that year their primary pre-occupation was with Marshal Aid in Europe and the American bomb reserves, which they tried their utmost to oppose. Their failure in Europe determined the dynamics of the current drive in Asia. Sample some facts. In 1949 they helped the Chinese Communists to seize power. Ever since, they have continued to supply arms to the rebels in Indo-China, Malaya, Burma and Indonesia. Even in India they are working hard and skilfully to spread disorder. India's outer defence zone in the North, where the frontiers are undefined and indefensible*, have already come under threat in consequence of the occupation and militarisation of Tibet by the Chinese Communists. Serious Communist disturbances have, moreover, already taken place on the Assam border, in Telangana and in the Patiala and East Punjab States Union.

Ideologically too, India is vulnerable. She has hardly any democratic traditions; her faith in democracy has not yet won

that ardent devotion which is necessary for resisting dictatorship even unto death. Worse still, the educated Indian middle class—the natural leader in a predominantly agricultural country—is also strongly influenced by the humanitarian appeal of the ideal of Communism. The rising tide of unemployment among them often goes to reinforce this appeal. Vague and undefined and very largely uninformed and romantic, this appeal accounts for the predilection of the educated of this class to deem it a matter of pride, even of privilege, to don the badge of Leftism; the more extreme it looks and sounds, the better. Partly this is an outcrop of their revolt against the encrusted values and standards of the past.

THE pauperization of the poorer sections of the Indian people, a by-product of centuries of imperialist exploitation, is patent and proverbial. Even the middle class, seriously impoverished during the war, has reached its lowest point in penurious living. Inflation and the incidence of the black-market have made their plight worse than ever before. Besides, the purchasing power of the Indian people is about the lowest in the world. That is a serious deterrent against industrialisation, especially under capitalism where production is carried on for profit. India can, therefore, neither be industrialised rapidly nor the conditions of her people be adequately ameliorated. In their struggle for social change, the masses will thus willy nilly become converts to Communism.

Communism is, again, a greater danger in industrially backward countries than in countries with highly developed economies. Pitiful poverty, disease, ignorance, moral frustration and growing population—all natural concomitants of a backward economy—provide a breeding ground for Communism. The natural desire of the people of an economically backward

* It is on the cards that the fairy tales from across the border will find willing ears amongst the ignorant, illiterate and tax-harassed natives of Cheeni, Lahaul and Spiti, who are racially and culturally akin to the Tibetans. There is absolutely no administration in these snow clad areas for nine months in the year.

Yet another factor helping this process is that owing to the comparatively more efficient administration which makes evasions, formerly a rule, now only an exception, the incidence of taxation has increased since the formation of Himachal Pradesh, though the rate of taxation has remained the same.

country like India to build up modern industries also leads to the same melancholy result. Industrialisation is possible only through the improvement of agricultural techniques and the export of agricultural produce. The pressure of population on the land in India is itself an insuperable obstacle to that.

Moreover, even in a backward country like India, public amenities, the armed forces, etc. tend to be of a modern type; hence highly expensive. This also prevents the necessary investment and precludes the possibility of speedy industrialisation. Caught in this economic impasse, a suffering people, not unnaturally, tend impatiently to demand that the examples of expeditious economic reconstruction reportedly tried in Russia and China be emulated in India as well.

These are formidable and, to a certain extent, undeniable factors for pessimism. But a closer scrutiny will reveal that they paint a disproportionately depressing picture.

Let us examine the thesis of the pessimists ad seriatum:

No doubt the Communists control one-fourth of the world's area and one-third of its population, and it cannot be gainsaid that they work under an unified control and have a legion of spies in every country. But it is a measure of the panic the democracies are seized with that these facts have come to haunt them as spectres. Worse still, in their panic they miss a number of sure pointers. The Berlin riots, the reports of rebellion in Eastern Europe, and the 'freedom trains' are unmistakable signs that the empire built by Stalin on terror, fright and oppression is not absolutely secure. Besides, if Russia has mercenaries to subvert the democracies, there are today millions all over the world who have no illusions about the totalitarian regimes and may, if required, be prepared to stake their all to put an end to

them. Malenkov's proclamation 'democratizing' Soviet law and administration, and the public confession of the Prime Minister of Eastern Germany that 'Police methods are not conducive to the well-being of the State', are forced concessions to the undying and immortal urge of Man for freedom and democracy. The Korean War, too, has shown that the apparently divided democrats can act in unison and, if necessary stop communist aggression.

The internal situation in India is not as discouraging as it is made out to be. Despite its faults, the administration in this country tries to be efficient and fights corruption; its system of communication and transport are enviable; and it has a central authority whose rule cannot for the present be challenged on a big scale from within. The Indian Army is solidly behind the elected Government. Moreover, while the democrats have a tested and tried leader in Prime Minister Nehru, before whose stature the Communist leaders appear to be mere pigmies, the theoretical ignorance of the Indian Communist Party's leadership is admitted even by Mr. P. C. Joshi; '.... when the present mistakes are found out and authoritatively placed before the ranks, the spontaneous reaction will be—our party leaders seem to have done nothing but make mistakes after mistakes and they have ruined our young lives. Did we work so hard only to jump from deviation to deviation? Where is the guarantee that the party is again making the right turn....? Signs of cynicism are already widespread.' (*Views*. Vol. I, No. I).

AS to Communist success in the General Elections, facts are more eloquent than arguments. The Communists and their allies had put up 580 candidates for the State legislatures, but they won only 246 seats, and secured only eight million or 7.7 per cent of the total votes polled. They contested 92 seats of the House of the

People and won only 41. About 73 million votes were cast in their favour, which is only 6.7 per cent of the total votes polled. The Congress alone won 2,228 seats of the State legislatures and 363 seats of the House of the People. More than 434 million voters supported the Congress nominees in the elections to the State legislatures and about 478 millions in the Parliamentary constituencies. The Praja-Socialists won a smaller number of seats than the Communists—126 seats to the State legislatures and 12 in the Parliament but the percentage of votes polled by them was 9.62 and 10.1 percent for the State legislatures and the House of the People, respectively, which is higher than those polled by the Communists.

In this context it is relevant to mention that not even one of the former ruling princes who contested the elections was defeated. On the contrary they defeated their rivals with convincing margins. Some of them contested the elections from more than one constituency and won in all of them. For example, the late Maharaja of Jodhpur defeated Mr. Jai Narain Vyas, the present Chief Minister in the Congress Government of Rajasthan, in three constituencies. Another ruler, of Orissa, was elected from eleven constituencies. In the PEPSU the Raja of Faridkot's younger brother defeated Giani Zail Singh, who only a year earlier had forced the Raja to concede certain popular demands.

The extreme poverty of the people of India is no doubt a factor which makes it a breeding ground for Communism. But the significant developments already taking place under the Five-Year Plan and the Government of India's concerted efforts against poverty and unemployment are recognised by the people as genuine attempts to alleviate their distress. Besides, the poverty of the people does itself in some ways make the task of combating Communism easier in India than in the

countries of the West. The total expenditure that may be necessary for withstanding the onslaught of Communism in India would be negligible compared to the billions which have been expended in Western Europe under the various aid programmes.

As regards the weakness of India's defences, it is obvious that to believe Communism can be stopped on a national basis, or even on a purely continental basis, as in Eastern Europe, is unrealistic. We can firmly hold a particular line in one part of the globe, and yet lose the war. An international enemy like Communism can be fought effectively only on a global scale. The Korean lesson is a case in point.

IT must be remembered that the educated class in India is strongly nationalist. Its flirtation with Communism is not ideological; it is sentimental and opportunistic, hence transitory and superficial. Partly it is a reflection of its quest for some abiding faith. By tradition and training the Indian intelligentsia is conformist. Their cynicism about democracy's inability to revolutionise India's economy is already disappearing with experience of actual achievements under the Five-Year Plan. Even today there is a growing section among them who are not unaware that the productivity per head of Russian agriculture is only a little above the level of India or of China and far below that of the advanced countries, that the standard of living in Russia is still at the lowest European level, that the rate of increase in the national income of Russia, though high, is not greater than the one achieved by several other countries over a comparable period. Besides, it is no longer unknown even in India that these none too flattering results have been achieved by a Government in absolute control of a large and virile population, vast and virgin lands, ample raw materials and natural resources,

such as no other country possesses; that it has been able to do so by concentrating all the people's efforts on the expansion of economic production under a political system based on mass terror and indoctrination which cost about 25 million lives between 1926 and 1939.

Yet another encouraging factor. Thanks to the alertness on the part of the democratic forces all over the world, the illusions about Russia's ideal social conditions are fast disappearing. It is no secret today that equality is a heresy in Russia and differences in reward now approximate to those in capitalist countries; that the restrictions on freedom in Russia and the satellite countries have extended from politics to all aspects of intellectual and social life; that people behind the Iron curtain must live where they are told; that not to speak of foreign travelling, the Soviet citizens cannot even travel within their own country without permission; that the secret police have power to arrest and punish with death without trial; and that 'The Soviet judge, in case of any conflict between the law and the general party line, *must unhesitatingly reject application of law... in order to give absolute obedience to the party directions*, which represent for him the supreme law.' (Vyshinsky: Penal Procedure, 1934); that the function of law is to further the purposes of the Government, not to protect the people.

It is obvious that Indian intellectuals, who have led this country's struggle for freedom and do in fact enjoy unrestricted freedom of speech, press, assembly and worship, in a word, democracy, cannot continue to be enamoured of Communism. It is only necessary to acquaint them with the facts so that it becomes increasingly clear to them that Communism would mean not only economic but political and spiritual slavery also. Some Indian intellectuals, of course, complacently assume that if Communism comes to India, it

would be in an 'Indianized' form. But even they cannot for long remain impervious to the whole range of facts about the frightful toll which the democratic leaders of Eastern European countries have had to pay in our time. These European leaders too had fondly hoped that Communism would make some concessions to the democratic traditions of Europe. They have been liquidated along with millions of their countrymen. The Chinese Communists too have shown scant respect for Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism or any other Chinese traditions. Indeed, for the crime of adherence to these traditional faiths, they claim to have liquidated one and a half million people in the midst of public meetings and without any pretence of a trial.

It is no use ignoring the fact that the spirit of Marxian philosophy is opposed fundamentally to the spirit of Indian culture. According to Marxism, consciousness is determined by the conditions of existence. Indian philosophy, on the other hand, regards the world as 'Maya', i.e. illusion. Moreover, freedom, in Indian concepts, does not lie in the 'recognition of necessity' as the Marxists would have it, but in the detachment of the soul from the material world. Further, while the Marxian conception of life is negative, emphasising hate, revenge, rebellion, conflict and change, Indian philosophy seeks reconciliation, unity, peace, harmony and love. Indian history knows no rebellion. Religion too lies deep in the marrow of the Indian people. It will be an uphill task for the communists to wean them away from their way of life. They cannot achieve it except by total subversion of India's culture and thought processes.

NOT that these should justify undue complacency. Indeed we have enough ground for disquiet; and there is need for vigilance, if we are to avoid contingencies

similar to those which enabled the Communists to seize power in China. Such contingencies are already facing the Governments of Burma, Indonesia, Indo-China and Malaya. But panic mongering is hardly the best way to prepare India against these possible, dangerous situations. That would at best be reacting blindly to the fallacies of unthinking complacency.

What is, therefore, the need of the hour? Obviously, in the economic sphere, conscious efforts must be directed towards industrialising India within the shortest possible time. For the amelioration of the abject poverty of the masses, rapid industrialisation through an imaginative plan based on realistic assessments is of supreme importance. To be effective, advances on the economic front will have to be spectacular enough to catch the public imagination. Hence the importance of foreign aid. The U.S.A. should be able, in her own interests as well as that of the democratic world, to continue foreign aid and find out a way for its translation into capital equipment, with a view to expanding India's industrial production. The greater the delay in this, the greater will be the rider against democracy in India.

It is necessary to mention in this context that the Indian Communists are already holding out a rosy prospect before the impoverished masses and the despairing middle class through their demand for distribution of land 'without harming the richer peasants,' cancellation of debts, adequate wages, and allotment of land to the

agricultural labourers. It is significant that they have given up the slogan of collectivisation of land. Their industrial policy favours protection for indigenous capitalism, and demands and promises confiscation of British firms and holdings, dismissal of British advisors and experts and severance of all connections with the Commonwealth. At the same time they press for radical improvements in labour conditions and sweeping provisions for social security at the employers' expense.

The Communist Party of India is, as usual, trying to play upon the anti-imperialist and anti-rich sentiments of the people. Its current bogeys are the landlords and princes, British capitalists and American 'imperialists.' The accent is on Anglo-American 'war-mongers'. For identical reasons, their accent on the home front is on winning over the middle and the lower middle classes, and their championing of the movements for linguistic States.

These are sombre pointers. But they only give a measure of the dimensions of the problems of Communism in India. Surely there is no ground for complacency. More correctly, there is need for vigilance. But there is little warrant for panic or frustration. Contrary to what the Cassandras would have us believe, the battle against Communism has not been lost in India. Our task is to strengthen the innate patriotism of the Indian people and build up bulwarks of resistance against attacks on our economic, political and cultural institutions.

HAMDI BEY

dilemma of the Indian novelist

can he create a free character?

THE Indian novel is a curious image of Indian life being viewed through Western spectacles. The novel came to us from Europe with English education, and we have since worked from European models without realizing that the differences between our ethics and those of the West impose many limitations.

During the hundred years that have elapsed since the first Indian novel was written (in Bengali) differences between the European and Indian outlooks have not disappeared, nor even narrowed down. On the other hand they have widened recently by the failure of post-war man to assure himself a prospect of expanding freedom and steady enrichment of life—a prospect which the nineteenth century liberal, whether in Europe or India, had before him, and hence India and Europe came closest to each other in that century.

In Europe belief has died out that man would gradually become fully human. It has been replaced by two advocacies, both

calculated to meet the emergency posed by the fear of atomic war. A few are of the opinion that mankind has reached the stage at which a great jump forward in its evolution can be consciously taken by it. Others, the majority, find such willed mutation a perilous and foolhardy step and would rather reverse the chain reaction started by the Renaissance and return to the medieval ages from the precarious excitements of the modern, for in the former mankind was not condemned to unending daring and inventiveness.

In India we do not consider the problem of the evolution of the human race as our problem (in the way we consider strictly local issues like those of widow remarriage, child marriage, etc. to be our problems) though we share the same global politics and global threats with the West. And there the differences between the East and the West are not merely a function of the distance that separates the two but also of the gap between their respective

evolutionary levels. We do not think this world and its problems are ours, while to the West most problems are virtually global.

No outstanding fiction which takes universal problems into account has been written in India during the years following World War II, or if one must state it in our particular parochial manner, since Independence. We have not had a book like Albert Camus' *The Plague*, Arthur Koestler's *The Age of Longing*, Vercors' *The Borderline* or C.P. Snow's *The New Men*. The problems of the human race, its future and its survival, have left our novelists cold. This frigidity makes our writers withdraw a little more within their parochial shell, probably to hibernate now that the challenge of intimate contact with the dominant West is removed.

However, to judge the Indian novel on the basis of the shortcomings exhibited by it during the last upsetting decade would be unfair, and so this essay concerns itself with the main problem that the pre-war Indian novelist attempted to solve, that of evaluating Indian life from a modern universal ethics which came from the West and has been largely adopted the world over.

That problem has been over the decades the most serious obstacle to the development of the Indian novel. We borrowed from the West an art-form that belongs to the post-Renaissance period, which is also the period during which science has developed. The novelist's viewpoint is located within the confines of his ethics and his methods of arriving at conclusions are determined by his logical predilections. In our own stagnant culture we did not make much progress with ethics beyond the primitive level of tribal and caste taboos. When taboos are disobeyed such transgressions are offences against custom and tradition and against the society subscribing to these. The means to mitigation and restitution of taboo-breaking are

usually a penal feast to the tribe or its priests, and penance consists mainly of countermanding rituals.

On the other hand in Western ethics an immoral act is also an offence against the doer himself—against his conscience and his estimate of his own goodness. The reparation there is not a mere penal feast or countermanding ritual but prolonged suffering of the soul—the experience for a considerable period of a heavy sense of guilt. The identification of a person with his acts, the only basis on which character can be built in fiction, happens in the West because of the extent to which society has been subdued there through centuries of gradual emancipation. Class, the equivalent of caste in an industrial civilization, is more prominent than society, and the latter only makes a surreptitious appearance among individuals as conscience. But even this appearance is internalized and personalized, and does not frighten an ordinary individual by towering over him as an external colossus as it does with us.

THE remoteness of society in the West gives more room to conscience to hover and brood over its alternative courses of action than in India where society is oppressively close with its orders. Many individuals here feel its warning foetid breath and the agony of its labours to preserve itself when it should have been long dead. Yet we do not feel suffocated. We would have felt oppressed had we wanted to be free, to exercise choice, to be men and women in our own right.

The differences between the West and the East total up to two types of humanity. In Europe it is a brooding type, ill at ease and riven by anguish; ours shows unmistakable signs of complete adjustment of individuals to society, of their being reduced to automatons. Where the individual is not in conflict with the collective there is only scope for delineation of

tradition, but not of character. The soul is born out of anguish and its pathological condition is evidence of its being there and alive, whereas the absence of distress can indicate only two states: such immaturity as to suggest a virtually unborn condition, or such senile atrophy as to simulate death. As an ideal of spiritual health we have for centuries cherished withdrawal from a world in which psychic responses are a function of living. Such withdrawal may bring peace and quiet, even the semblance of serenity, but actually it is a suspension of spiritual life.

With such opposite attitudes towards life it is not surprising that much of our fiction is untranslatable into English or French — the two languages which have altogether shed medieval thought. Translated, our fiction does not sound right — there is discernible absence of freedom, and characters exercise little choice. Yet these characters are not wholly unfree, not as unfree as they are in actual Indian life, for then there could have been only harrowing narratives of disaster. A character in a novel must have some choice, be responsible for his actions instead of merely an instrument of destiny or of the collective. That is a lesson our fiction writers have learnt from the West. Learning is hardly the proper word, for in the absence of an ethical conviction in freedom, choice and responsibility on the part of the author, the conferring of relative freedom and choice on characters appears like a borrowed literary trick.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (the first important Indian Bengali novelist but the last outstanding figure of that period in the nineteenth century when Indian thought approached closest to the West) gave more freedom to his characters than does the Indian novelist of today. His were rather ideal and normative characters, and he could make them free without offence to the Indian atmosphere for two reasons.

Firstly, fiction then was frankly so; secondly, in his time the enlightened section of the population was still trying to catch up with the West and to modernize Indian society. The difficulty came after him and to a certain extent because of him. The real problem came after French realism became fashionable, for it made demands upon the Indian novelist to belong to his age. It was an embarrassing situation for the Indian novelist; he belonged through links of craftsmanship and literary ideals to modern realism whereas the life he had to be real about was largely medieval. His own ethics were only partly modern, polished on the surface by western education but largely and inwardly medieval too. And in the intervening decades nationalism and religious revival had laid upon the intelligentsia the obligation to assert, rightly or wrongly, the superiority of Indian over Western culture.

Rabindranath Tagore sought to strike a balance between recognition in his novels of overwhelming social compulsions and the need of his characters to be free like Europeans, to have especially the freedom to love which Indian society does not concede to its members. Most of his characters came from sections greatly influenced by western education and so do not seem greatly incongruous, but there is a certain amount of falsity about them. Nikhil in *The Home and the World* chooses to be moderate, patient and liberal but he never has any initiative except towards self-effacement. In the slightest of his novels, *Farewell my Friend*, Tagore is able to create a relationship free of orthodoxy circumscribing the area in which characters shall function, but this relative freedom is dearly bought, at the cost of the impact the novel makes on the reader. And there again the characters are ultimately free only to deny themselves fulfilment.

Sarat Chandra Chatterjee resorted to various subterfuges to overcome the

problem of writing a novel about unfree people, and, therefore, about characters who could hardly act in their own right and as they wanted. The most successful of his tricks was to give to a novel one or two characters who are completely free through having broken away from tradition and become outcasts. Such free characters are the greatest charm of his novels and after his books are read and laid away, hauntingly fugitive glimpses of an alternative freer state of affairs linger with the reader.

Even Sarat Chatterjee faltered and very badly too. Kamal in *Sesh Prasanna* had to be concocted a case history of cataclysms to free her from the obligation to be Indian, and even then her freedom was obliquely assigned to her partly European parentage. It amounted to Sarat Chatterjee saying that an Indian could not be free, for the boldness to assert and hold on to freedom is a prerogative of European blood. It was an attitude very different from the one he took in his essays where he was forthright about freedom, but there he recognized a difference between preaching and portraying.

AN ethics which is not able to raise itself above taboos finds expression in an individual's life mostly through erratic and exaggerated concepts of personal hygiene. Three things mainly disturb personal hygiene—physical contact with others, the food that enters the body, and sex. So untouchability is part of our morality; if we discard it we have to hold a full-scale inquiry into our entire ethics, something which has not yet been attempted by either novelist or reformer. Nirad Chaudhuri in his *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* observed that Indian morality was wholly commensal. Years before him Premchand in his *Godan* made a simple exasperated peasant declare: 'My morality resides in the food I take.' Of course, some

of us who are proud of our Western education and consider ourselves enlightened, claim not to subscribe to untouchability or food taboos. No, we do not; we have merely narrowed our morality to the double-bed. Cowardice, bribe-taking, lack of integrity, absence of courage of conviction and similar other aspects of character which do not relate to food or sex taboos are not issues in our life. Nor do they find representation in our fiction to any appreciable extent.

The most successful portrait of our society as an oppressive deadweight is *Godan*. The hero of that novel is not a free character: he exercises only one simple choice, that is, never to rebel. Occasionally he protests but in the end he is reconciled to any inequity. He dies a martyr, not to social oppression but to his own patience and forbearance. Does the Indian society so sensitive to non-observance of minor food and touch taboos even squirm about the waste his life was?

Godan is not a tragedy though it is a long, long tale of woe. And woe all round. For a tragedy to happen a character must attain a certain amount of ego development, become more individuated than a mere organic limb of society, and must rebel instead of accepting his own position and the tradition that puts him there. He must have at least passing moods during which he feels he can make his own destiny.

Jainendra's *The Resignation* is another rather close study of an unfree character—one who remains unfree even as an outcaste (so different from Sarat Chatterjee's scheme) when society has severed all its links and chains from her. She venerates the society that has ill-treated her, wishes its perpetuation and like Hori in *Godan* suspects a lapse on her own part as responsible for her fate.

The unfree character sits heavily on a novel, for novels are mainly about people and not about society, institutions, or

events. People are interesting to us not only for what happens to them or for what they do, but for what induces them to behave as they do. A novel can hardly be successful as a study in motivation if the only motivating factor is the injunction of an impersonal force called society, or fear of its disapproval. A character must be free, otherwise he is merely a name to help clarity of narration.

In the absence of a detailed study of their inner life and motivation, characters become god-given—that is, they are born with particular virtues and vices and monotonously go on producing their identity cards throughout the length of the novel, strictly as written out by Bhṛigu centuries ago. Unfortunately that is how characters are in most of our novels; they do not undergo any change, any revolution, neither growth nor regression. This aspect of our novels, contributory to superficiality and popularity, owes its origin to the Indian novelist's deep-rooted teleological beliefs. To the same beliefs our ethics too can be ascribed, and we have a shimmering idea what a spiritual anachronism the Indian novel is. To think of it as something outside the person of the novelist would be wrong, for the spiritual confusion primarily and ultimately resides in him.

Technically the Indian novel remains close to the folk tale and, as in the latter, wholly fulfils the expectations of the semi-literate readers as to what the characters should and actually do. It is all according to pattern and tradition.

Yet no novel so far has been fully Indian. To be so in spirit and viewpoint our novels should say something about the previous births of the characters and trace their present fortunes and tendencies to the functioning of the law of *karma*. No writer has dared that yet and there is the greatest corroboration that the Indian novelist uses a western literary artifice, remaining satisfied with the mere artifice. He has never

doubted himself or raised questions about himself or his craft. He also does not examine the ethics to which he has been born, nor which he has equally unconsciously adopted from his western or pseudo-western education and the needs of his craft. He evaluates neither, and the two conflicting ethics remain with him as mere habits of thought, without critical qualities, to be donned and doffed as the occasion demands.

He uses the artifice certainly, but finds it difficult to have a completely universal and modern ethics. He has found convenient channels in which an incompletely assimilated and accepted ethics can be expressed. Child marriage, widowed celibacy and dowries are prominent windmills to tilt his lance at, though understandably no novelist has dared attack the burning of widows as *sati*.

And while generations of novelists have harangued about these minor institutional boils none has looked to the basic fact that the novelist and his characters equally are *beings in a society*. They do not exercise the freedom to live their own lives, to be themselves, choosing their own course of action and judging the available alternatives as distinct from the dictates of a society which, two millenia ago, in a different intellectual and spiritual climate codified still more archaic social ideals.

We do not claim even the minimum freedom to love whom we do, to marry those whom we love, not to have children if we do not want them and to partake of food and drink to our taste. And then we sit down to write a novel—to compensate ourselves as writers for our failures as men; we attack society, we rant for reforms. We forget what D. H. Lawrence said about an artist himself living out his social protest, and what Freud observed about the close connection between genius and sincerity. And sincerity, like charity, begins in the immediate environment—in the novelist's case, in his personal life and ethics.

to our readers

Although only four issues of QUEST have so far been published we feel in all modesty that it has made its mark. The opinions quoted below are not for self-flattery or to 'sell' the journal to the sceptical or the dissatisfied. Our critics do us as much good as our friends, and suggestions, both 'destructive' and constructive are welcome. We quote some of the excellent things said about us to hearten those of our readers who may agree with them. And we ask such readers to help us in every way possible to promote QUEST on a world-wide scale, to obtain the best available contributors in India and abroad, and to participate in the debate on current issues, political and cultural, which it is QUEST'S function to conduct.

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JEAN ERDMAN, noted modern American dancer.

TOMOO OTAKA

authoritarianism in Japan

past and present

IN order to understand the authoritarian trend of thought in modern Japan it is necessary to analyze briefly its historical background. As is generally the case in a feudal society, Japan in the Tokugawa Period (1600-1868) was characterized by a clearly defined class hierarchy, on the top of which stood the warriors (*samurai*). When the Tokugawa Shogunate established unity and order within the country around 1600, the *samurai* became the professional bureaucrats and engaged in executive functions, both central and local. The country was regionally divided into feudal domains of various sizes, each governed by a local administrative body of *samurai*, headed by feudal lords (*daimyo*). Although local centers of feudal power remained, the system as a whole was, nevertheless, centralized under the superior power of the Tokugawa Shogunate in the city of Yedo (now Tokyo). The entire country was

governed, indirectly at least, by the *Shogun* with his commanding authority. It is little wonder that foreigners who happened to observe this hierarchical political system of the period should have believed that the *Shogun* was the omnipotent Emperor of Japan.* The *Tenno* (usually translated as Emperor), who resided in Kyoto, actually possessed little more than the ecclesiastical authority with which he performed the traditional religious rituals of ancestor worship.

The historical fact that the feudal system of the Tokugawa Period had remained stable until the Meiji Restoration of 1868, a period of about 270 years, had tremendous effects upon the mentality of the Japanese people. The stereotyped structure of their social and moral life was strengthened by the strict policy of exclusion enforced

*Montesquieu: *De L'Esprit des Loix*, Livre VI, Chapitre XIII.

by the Tokugawa Government. Isolated from historical developments outside the country, Japan preserved her heritage of ancient Oriental culture in its pure form. The Chu-Hsi school of Confucianism, transplanted in Japan in ancient times and authorized by the Shogunate, taught the virtue of behaving according to the rigorous discipline of the *samurai*. It taught, in particular, that the hierarchical order between ruler and subject, master and servant, should never be confounded. At the same time, the Buddhist religion, which had taken deep root among the common people, inculcated in the lower classes the virtues of endurance, resignation, and submission in their earthly life, and held out to them the hope of other-worldly happiness in a future life. Both Confucian ethics and Buddhist faith, therefore, served to maintain the hierarchical order. The one functioned among the *samurai*, or elite, class; the other regulated the lower classes under the domination of the *samurai*.

The Meiji restoration turned the feudal system upside down. This revolutionary change had both internal and external causes. Internally it was brought about by the corruption of the bureaucratic government of the Shogunate and its financial collapse, by the rise of the merchant class with its increasing economic power, and by the suffering of the oppressed farmer class which often, in spite of the religiously enjoined resignation, rose in revolt. Externally, the unexpected visit of Commodore Perry and his fleet in Uraga harbour, near Yedo, in 1853 plunged the country into panicky fear and confusion. The Tokugawa Government, aware that it was too weak to resist, decided to submit to the request of the United States to open ports and enter into trade relations. Immediately a strong movement for the expulsion of the foreigner arose, aiming at the overthrow of the authority of the Shogunate. This movement was initiated and pushed for-

ward by some of the larger *daimyo*, whose fiefs were situated in the western part of Japan. The driving force actually arose within the younger generation of the lower strata of the *samurai* class. The *Tenno* with his spiritual and ecclesiastical dignity was brought out from his long secluded and almost forgotten position into the heart of the political struggle to become the new source of an authority exceeding that of the *Shogun*. This rising political movement, stimulated by the ideology of reverence for the *Tenno*, was able to weaken the resistance of the Shogunate and its allies to the point where the fifteenth *Shogun*, Yoshinobu, yielded sovereign power to the *Tenno*. Following this example, all the *daimyo* surrendered their domains. Thus a new government was established under the reign of Emperor Meiji in 1868.

IMMEDIATELY after assuming power the new government of the Meiji Period changed the foreign policy and opened the country to foreign intercourse. The modernization of Japan was carried out with great enthusiasm. Industry developed; the science and technology of advanced countries were rapidly introduced; the modes of life were westernized. Japan demonstrated her enormous ability to adjust to the impact of the Western world, with the result that she rapidly acquired the status of a modern nation-state in international relations. Liberal and democratic thought advanced at an accelerated pace. Prompted by progressive public opinion, Emperor Meiji instructed Hirobumi Ito to draft a constitution after the pattern set by Western constitutionalism. The promulgation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889 brought into being the framework of modern Japanese political organization.

The process of modernization of Japan, however, went on *side by side with the deification of the Tenno*. As noted above,

a recentralization of the governing power was needed in order to overcome the disorder accompanying the breakup of the feudal system; and this in turn made necessary the exaltation of the position of the *Tenno*. As Dr. Norman has pointed out, "The historical legacy from Tokugawa society did not permit of a social transformation taking place from below through democratic or mass revolutionary process, but only from above, automatically."⁹ Accordingly, the *Tenno* was elevated to the top of the new moral and political value pyramid, a point from which his eminence might radiate like rays of brilliant sunshine to every corner of the land. Thus, during the same period that the liberal democratic movement was gaining momentum, the seeds of absolutism, in the form of the deification of the *Tenno*, were already taking root.

Nevertheless, the rapid growth of authoritarian thought and of ultra-nationalist movements which followed World War I should not be attributed to the *Tenno* system alone. Ultra-nationalism, which had its causes primarily in Japan's economic difficulties and in the weaknesses of parliamentary government, used the *Tenno* system as an instrument to accomplish its purposes. Capitalist economy began to develop in Japan during the Meiji Period and made amazing progress. It was not, however, accompanied by measures necessary to prevent the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few plutocrats nor by measures to protect the welfare of the working class through the fostering of trade unions and social security. Japan's favourable situation during the First World War resulted in a temporary economic prosperity and made possible her rise to the status of one of the world's large industrial nations. In spite of this outward prosperity, Japan's national economy was still

too weak to withstand the postwar slump. When the worldwide depression struck Japan, it reduced the common people, particularly the farmers, to a state of extreme poverty. The political parties, lacking vitality and lacking also the confidence of the people, were unable to cope with the situation. The real cause of the rise of irrational authoritarianism is to be found precisely here, in this weakness of the constitutional government, which was unable to overcome the economic depression.

IN many respects, authoritarianism in Japan was quite similar to the totalitarian political systems in Europe, to Italian Fascism or to German Nazism. The similarity of political ideology and foreign policy among these three countries undoubtedly served as the basis for the alliance of the Axis Powers.

Yet, there are remarkable differences between the authoritarianism of Japan and that of the European countries. The most striking is that in Japan there was no fixed person, no Duce or Fuhrer, who was invested with omnipotent ruling power, like Mussolini or Hitler. It is true that important orders and decrees were issued in the name of the *Tenno* and were obeyed by the people as his commands. But this was a purely nominal attribution. In fact, the *Tenno* did not decide political questions himself, nor did he personally exercise state power. The so-called 'will of the *Tenno*' was actually constructed by whoever occupied the position which represented his charismatic authority. Japan was therefore never under the dictatorship of the *Tenno* because he did not, in ordinary practice, make decisions on state functions. Nor was Tojo a dictator in the proper sense of the word, because his rule was not charismatic and he was not indispensable. It will be recalled that he was forced to resign as Prime Minister during the War. Japan's military autocracy was the dicta-

⁹Norman, E. Herbert, *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State* 1940, p. 102.

torship of an undefined circle of persons who were in a position to make use of the sacred *nomina* of the *Tenno*. It was an 'anonymous dictatorship' or, however paradoxical it may sound, a 'dictatorship without a Dictator.' In this respect it was essentially different from the dictatorship of Mussolini or of Hitler.

Another distinguishing feature of Japanese authoritarianism as compared with Italian Fascism or German Nazism is that there was no one-party system in Japan. Authoritarianism, or totalitarianism, is essentially absolutistic. It does not tolerate opposition. The totalitarian political system therefore does not allow the existence of an opposition party. The one-party system of Fascist Italy, of Nazi Germany, and of Communist Russia, is the logical result of the absolutist concentration of political power. Nevertheless, authoritarianism in Japan did not take the form of a political party movement. Although the leaders of the Government, like Konoe or Tojo, tried to set up a supra-party 'Imperial Rule Assistance Association' for the purpose of strengthening national unity, this could hardly be called a political party in the proper sense of the word. The absence of a party of Japanese authoritarianism is attributable in part to the Japanese people's lack of experience with party politics. More important, however, is the fact that the political ideology of *Tenno*-worship stresses the union of the people as a whole under the all-embracing grace of the *Tenno* without distinction between party members and non-members.

ANOTHER important feature of Japanese authoritarianism is that in spite of such powerful weapons of thought control as the Law for the Preservation of Public Safety, no concentration-camp system ever developed and no large-scale executions took place. As the movement was held to be all-embracing there was scarcely room

for resistance. Even those who inwardly opposed the militaristic policies of the Government would never dare to resist orders issued in the name of the *Tenno*, with their absolute authority.

The defeat in the Pacific War and the occupation by the Allied Forces that followed brought a fundamental change in the social structure and political mentality of Japan. The Army and Navy were completely disbanded. The *Tenno* declared he was not a personified god but a human being. That such a simple fact needed to be particularly declared shows symbolically how deeply the charismatic character of the *Tenno* had taken root in the mind of the people. Militarists and ultra-nationalists were 'purged.' The new Constitution, promulgated on November 3, 1946, solemnly proclaimed that the sovereign power resided with the people and that the *Tenno* was the 'symbol' of the state, without powers related to government. The dignity of people as individuals was recognized anew. Representative democracy with universal suffrage for both men and women, together with the principle of judicial supremacy, has been established. Democratization is going on in every sphere of social life, in the family, the agricultural village, the factory, the trade union, the school, and the local government. Liberalism, once held down by the heavy pressure of authoritarianism, has gained fresh strength. Seldom has a nation gone through such a complete metamorphosis within a short period of 10 years.

The fact that the Japanese people, hitherto so deeply penetrated by authoritarianism, could accept the policy of democratization with such astonishing readiness can be explained in two ways.

First, in spite of the overwhelming domination of authoritarianism during the War, there has been a liberal undercurrent fostered and developed since the earliest

stage of the Meiji Period. With the removal of the heavy burden weighing individual freedom down, this undercurrent has risen vigorously to the surface. The more painfully the people have reflected on the totalitarianism of the past, which led to the disaster of the War, the more strongly has individual freedom been justified. The Japanese people firmly resolved that they would never again repeat the mistake of the past. They therefore cooperated spontaneously in the Occupation's programme of annihilating the authoritarian tradition.

Second—and this reason is rather paradoxical—the Japanese people have had a long training in obedience; they therefore followed the directives of the Occupation authority as obediently as they had in the past the orders of their own leaders. The *attitude* of obedience to authority was the same as before, but its *direction* was diametrically opposite. The Occupation was able to carry out its policy of democratization smoothly because the Japanese people, with their long training in obedience to authority, adapted themselves readily; in other words, *democratization was successful because of a mental attitude which can hardly be called democratic.*

The young intellectuals who experienced the complete breakdown of the past value system of Japan were suffering from a deep uneasiness, not knowing what to believe. The more insecure they were, the more eagerly they searched for some absolute principle which allowed no room for doubt. The materialistic interpretation of history, with its definite prediction of approaching revolutionary changes in the social structure, had an irresistible charm for them. Once captivated by the dogma, they clung to it with fanatical enthusiasm. They lacked the resources to criticize the theory objectively. What Marx said or what Lenin wrote passed as absolute truth, for the sole reason that it had been said by Marx or written by Lenin. The *Tenno*

seems to have been replaced in their minds as charismatic authority by Marx and Lenin as charismatic prophets. A small number of fanatic university students saw it as their mission to act as the vanguard in the fight against the 'bourgeois-democratic social order', just as their elders found their mission in the fight for the glorification of the authority of the *Tenno*. It is no accident that a similar attitude may be observed, first, in the young *samurai* who stood up for the defense of the Land of the Rising Sun against foreign intervention at the end of the Tokugawa Period; second, in the junior officers who wanted to destroy by violence the 'corrupt plutocracy' at the time of growing militarism; and third, in the radical communists of postwar Japan who saw themselves as patriots fighting for the 'emancipation' of their nation from the domination of 'international finance capital', which was symbolized for them by the 'Stars and Stripes.'

ALTHOUGH this is typical of the state of mind of many young people in the confused situation following the War, now that Japan's economic rehabilitation is well on its way, this trend seems to be on the downgrade. Generally speaking, the attraction intellectuals have felt for totalitarian patterns of thought—in its right-wing form during the War, and in its left-wing form after the War—can be attributed to the absence of a real tradition of empirical thought in Japan. This leads people to an easy acceptance of dogmatic conclusions. The world of experience is many-sided. Empirical observation of social phenomena leads one to a less rigid, a pluralistic, conception of the world. If we accept the premise that individual members of society have divergent views and that no one has the authority to decide which view is 'true', it follows naturally that the only way for society to run is on

the principle of relativistic trial and error. The principle of relativism—which means that the rights of the individual are respected, freedom of speech is guaranteed, dissenting opinion is tolerated, and the decision of the majority leaves open the possibility of change if experience proves its inadequacy—is the very essence of democracy. To deny this principle means to adhere to a dogma which claims to have absolute validity. Those who believe in the absolute and exclusive validity of a dogma do not tolerate opposition. Absolutism thus turns out to be authoritarianism, which destroys the freedom of thought. There is therefore no more adequate way of preventing the revival of authoritarianism than the cultivation of a more empirical type of reasoning, which holds close to the facts. The growing tendency to respect experience and to rely upon facts, now in evidence in Japan, may be the best safeguard for freedom of thought and democracy.

Now, as the bitter experience of the past in Japan shows clearly, authoritarianism is the twin brother of economic distress. One of the factors which contributed to the Meiji Restoration and brought charis-

matic authority to the *Tenno* was the poverty of the common people, particularly of the farmers. The frequent terrorism of the thirties, which forced Japan to adopt her policy of armed invasion, was stimulated by economic depression together with an increasing unbalance in the distribution of wealth. The acute suffering of the people, after Japan's disastrous defeat in the Pacific War and the disorganized condition of society offered a very fertile ground for radical movements of the extreme left. Economic stability, if not economic prosperity, is a prerequisite for reasonable management of social affairs. If Japan can succeed in overcoming economic difficulty, in humanizing industrial relations, and in elevating the living conditions of the people, there will be no need to fear the reappearance of the nightmare of authoritarianism. The defense of freedom must be built intellectually on an attitude of empirical reasoning, domestically on the humanization of industrial and labour relations, internationally on the strengthening of economic and cultural cooperation among nations for mutual welfare and the prosperity of mankind.

D. G. NADKARNI

pilgrimage to Pandharpur

a Marathi literary conference

WHEN the old year was about to collapse, with a load of conferences on its tail, I got down at Kurduwadi with just enough luggage to see me through a short, obligatory, vacation. That was on the morning of the 30th of December. Our bogey was hesitating at the wrong end of the station platform, and so, in the early dawn of a chilly day, my companions descended rather gingerly on *terra firma*. We wrapped ourselves in all the shawls and *chaddars* that we had brought with us, and straggled towards the little junction beyond the inevitable bridge. All except me entered a very insignificant-looking vehicle, reminiscent of the Bombay tram-car. In the dark, I helped them find a few seats in a third class compartment. We met a few other writers waiting for the train to start. It would take them over the property of the old Barsi Light Railway, a feather-weight corporation which has recently been devoured by the winding dragon of the Indian Railways.

Even after a leisurely round of cheap railway-stall tea, the train does not start.

Day dawns with a soft, steadily languor far away over the railway yard. Strips of light, in crayon orange, fight through the railing, beckoning our restless photographer, Somnath, to play once more with the shutter. I would like to detach myself from this group of literary pilgrims, if only for this morning of my arrival. So while they wait for the engine to shriek, I bid them *au revoir*. We shall meet at Pandharpur.

After an idle afternoon at my host's in Kurduwadi, I start in a dark old Chevrolet for Pandharpur. I am flanked by two ladies of my clan. One of these, my hostess in the place, is a member of the Reception Committee of the Pandharpur Sahitya Sammelan. They have enrolled these members from among the towns surrounding Pandharpur, in the Sholapur district, at a fee of five rupees; and ultimately I join this distinguished fraternity, only to be honoured with a badge of two ribbons. Thus adorned, I have freedom not only of the Sammelan pandal, but of the entire town of Pandharpur. For pilgrims of the God Pandurang come and go, through the

season, but the pilgrims of Parnassus meet in such small places only once in a blue moon. And this time, at the only place hallowed by the memory of Maharashtra's poet-saints, the moon had but recently started waning in the sky.

From Kurduwadi it is thirty miles to Pandharpur. The old car, fresh from a much-needed overhauling, glided smoothly over the quiet dust of the local winter. Our driver, Mallappa, had dressed himself in a conspicuous uniform, as he was well aware that he was taking his beloved car to some solemn ceremony of the idle rich. As we raced mildly over the Pandharpur road, we could see fields of *jowar*, interspersed with shoots of sesame, on either side. After a while, the yellow of the tiny sesame flowers, in reticent bloom, crossed monotonously with the reckless green of the *jowar* stalks, to add a touch of variety, there was some sugar-cane, and a cluster of banana trees appeared from time to time. This country rarely presents a waterscape, and I longed for the sight of a stream, whenever I saw a wayside puddle.

By road, you cross a low bridge over the Bhima before you enter the portals of Pandharpur town. This river, lying like a crescent-shaped scarf round the old, temple-haunted town, is very naturally called Chandrabhaga: it is a name that has been celebrated in the ancient songs of the saints. A wide stretch of desert holds truce between the shallow, shrinking waters of the moon-like river and the steps that lead to the temples over age-old ramparts. Even in these sands a bevy of little shrines has cropped up through the ages.

My last visit to Pandharpur was several years ago, during the regime of the Barsi Light Railway. I remember the train passing over a ponderous old bridge spanning the Chandrabhaga. It is the same train that carries rustic pilgrims from villages far and near, incredulously huddling together in goods bogies meant for edible

sheep. There they squat on rags, waiting for the citadel of their God to appear below the giant bridge. Once, it is said, on its way to Pandharpur, a pilgrim train started sliding backwards. And then the pious passengers prayed. Panduranga hurried to the scene from the side of his spouse, and with his bare hand stopped the weakling on wheels from jumping into the pit of doom. A prodigal called Pundalika, some centuries ago, returned to nurse his parents. While the God Panduranga came to visit him, Pundalika tossed a brick over his doorstep, beseeching his Benefactor to wait on that solid foundation. And there, to this day, stands the God, affectionately called Vithoba, dark-skinned, with his arms akimbo, as He has been all these years. His spouse, Rakhumai, joined him; and there they are in the great temple which draws a flux of the pious during cholera-ridden sacred seasons.

I remember straying into a forlorn bog, to pick up a few white lilies. In the days of my 'youth', I did not have a thought for nearby Vithoba. And while his feet waited for the floral tribute of hallowed tradition, mine got stuck in the mud. I could hardly stand, waiting for my devotee to rescue me. A toddling cousin was at my footsteps. As I reached the Sammelan pandal in the December evening, I could picture the lilies and the wet earth and that babbling follower of mine, all pressed flat in the well-thumbed pages of the diary of time.

Last year, the Marathi Literary Conference had held its session at New Delhi. That was the first I had attended, for the simple reason that the going (and coming) was cheap, thanks to the Minister for Railways. I was among a vast horde of travellers that had turned literateurs in spite of themselves, on the eve of the 1954 Dusserah festival. The New Delhi Sammelan was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, in appropriately vague words, in

a modern theatre-hall on Panchkuin Road. The rains beat mercilessly on the delegates, who were patently fleeced by the taxi-driving proletariat so thoughtlessly pampered by the capital's diplomatic circles. On the intellectual plane, it was as purposeless a meeting as the present one. Local bigwigs had rounded up some innocuous intellectuals, silently practising the art of writing. Discussions and seminars and *mushairas* and concerts and plays ran galore for a few days. The Maharashtrians of New Delhi attended all these, with the ceremony proper to their central status, while the middle-class visitors had the time of their lives, sight-seeing in the newly discovered cheap glory of the cycle-rickshaw. I myself remember a night in Connaught Circus, so different from prohibitive Bombay.

THE Pandharpur Sammelan followed the same pattern, only on a more idealistic scale. The place breathes devotion. A few days before the Sammelan was scheduled to start, local politics had flared up to a dangerous point over issues which were vague to the casual visitor. It was feared that arrangements for seating the delegates, feeding them and lodging the visitors would come to nothing. One heard echoes in the press of a general alarm that the Sammelan this time would be a fiasco. However, like the Heavenly Hand that stopped the derailing train, some last-minute *rapprochement* was responsible for stopping the spread of the rot. It is difficult to credit individuals with this miracle; and none would object to Vithoba seeking a share in the ultimate success of the Sammelan.

Near a centrally situated tonga-stand stood the open-air pandal, called Viththal Mandap, as one would expect. As I entered the main gate, I chanced to see an idol of the saint-poet Dnyaneshwar, made by a local artist. Obviously influenced by

the film version of the poet's life, the artist had produced a lackadaisical effect, much appreciated by the pious onlookers. The pandal had two entrances, one for males and the other for females, with thinly divided blocks for squatting in the auditorium. The President of the session, Dr. S. D. Pendsay, had just risen to deliver his address when I reached the scene.

I was glad to come across my morning companions, who were just planning to desert the battle-field. This is the usual procedure with those who are literate enough to get a copy of the President's printed speech. While Dr. Pendsay launched on a scholarly peroration, covering the traditions of the saint-poets, the S.R.C. report, and finally a few literary problems of the day, those that got restless left the pandal for the nearby tea-stall. The President's speech has had a pattern of its own over all these thirty-eight years the Sammelan's life. Often distantly venerable and full of the spirit of accumulative, slightly illogical research, it goes the vale of seniority when it comes to modern literature. Even last year's President, Tarkateertha Laxmanshatri Joshi involved himself in various contradictions, by quoting the wrong authorities on fields of literature which he had not crossed in the course of his very scholarly life. Dr. Pendsay is a thoroughly Forsterian figure, and by emphasising a false divergence between the scientific intellect and the literary emotion, he got mixed up when he supported the traditional objections to new writing in Marathi.

A few years ago, some writers, who were more intimately in touch with Western literature, because of their academic commitments, decided to branch out and hold an annual Sammelan of their own. Conducted on a more informal basis, this meeting, which is usually in the nature of a three-day outing, chooses its agenda in advance. The seminars naturally hinge

on previous preparation, which, in the bigger Sammelan, is concentrated only on the ceremonial frame.

This year at Pandharpur, there was quite a to-do on the morning of the first day. It has all been described by E. M. Forster in the last part of *A Passage to India*. The literature of the great poets who had immortalised Pandharpur in the minds of the illiterate, who learn by word of mouth, was carried in palanquins through the streets of the town, while cymbal and *mridunga* echoed around the literate throng. Like the Maharashtrian Professor so vividly created by the sahib, later to become a Cambridge don, every busybody connected with the Sammelan danced in ecstasy and sang. I was not a witness to this wild demonstration of the common reader, but from photographs and reports, and above all from Forster, I can make out that this, inclusive of the noise, must have been a very auspicious beginning. I wonder if the Films Division has exploited its photogenic possibilities in a timely newsreel.

The frenzy of this procession naturally put the items on the agenda a little off schedule. So that, after the President's speech (thirty-six pages), Shri N. V. Gadgil had just time enough to speak on the main resolution. The latter supported the claim of Maharashtrians which had caused so much unnecessary bother during the previous few weeks. Gadgil spoke in a personal vein, which I thought was uncalculated for. The masses that stretched out in thousands before him responded generously. Waves of applause greeted the most forceful proclamations of this Congress politician. Rhetoric flowed glibly from his tongue, and the next night the resolution was passed unanimously.

On the next day, there were two symposia: one on new trends in the Marathi short story, and the other on women writers in the field of realistic literature. The

first, in the morning, was conducted by Prof. Gangadhar Gadgil—no relation of the politician—while the second, a strictly feminine affair (meant for a mixed audience,) was rounded up by Smt. Malati Bedekar. Gadgil had asked each of the participants to treat a different aspect of the short story; but this tended to compartmentalise the topic in an undesirably school-masterish way. Several of the speakers were either short-story writers of various grades or lecturers in the languages; in every way they were thoroughly ineffectual. I myself stammered out a few points, which deteriorated into newspaper headlines as the twelve minutes given to every member of the symposium wore on. Shri Mukundrao Kirloskar made a fiery speech harping on the art for 'life's sake' theme. His headlines were much headier than mine, and he got a deserving response from the audience. They had evidently heard of Life; they had heard very little about us. Shri Vyankatesh Madgulkar, a comrade-in-arms of Gadgil in the province of the new Marathi story, specialising in a detached treatment of rural life, sat solemnly as the deriders of new trends lauded laurels loosely on his formidable head. He did not speak, much to the advantage of his supporters who have never understood how close he is to Gadgil so far as the form of the modern Marathi short story is concerned.

Gadgil rose to wind up the discussion, and made a good speech. He neither played to the gallery, like a few of us, nor, I think, was he unintelligible to the masses that listened to him. This was not surprising; for he is almost the only modern short story writer, who, inspite of prodigious prolixity, has kept awake the critical elements in his creative results. A studious critic of modern Marathi literature, he was in his element, both as a story-teller who knows the knack of keeping an audience at bay and a commentator who is fearlessly

objective. He left the field a victor, never to appear again, so far as I know. The Marathi papers have tried to condemn him for his very rational speech; but he is an old hand at controversies, some of which he fights below the belt, strangely enough, with those that do not reach up to him.

SMT. Bedekar, on the other hand, made a very poor, albeit popular show of all her erudition. The writers of the morning were not present to listen to all the earnest speeches of our erstwhile Mrs. Henry Wood. To say the least, they were old-fashioned, crying over the advances made by modern Marathi literature at the cost of what they termed decency. Those ladies that have really contributed something worth preserving to Marathi literature were absent from this scene of tender-hearted turmoil—except, of course, Smt. Bedekar, a novelist who shocked the orthodox a few decades ago. She seemed not to have gone beyond the achievements of those decades. A docile kind of demagogue, she pretends, on the platform at least, to be a non-entity, and spouts forth statements that have an immediate, irrational, sentimental appeal. I am not surprised to see that the Marathi press has treated her as a sort of lone, Joan of Arc.

The main session started immediately after this meeting of the fair sex, and, as the Samyukta Maharashtra resolution rolled on again into endless speech-making, I left the pandal, and lingered by the idol of my very illustrious namesake. A local student approached me, and said, 'May I speak of a few doubts I have regarding a short story of yours?' As I nodded, I guessed that he was referring to a recent short story of mine that had been condemned by some as obscene. We get atalking about the Marathi short story in general, and suddenly I burst into a fluent defence of the new trends over which I had stumbled in the morning. Ever since the morning,

autograph-hunting school-children had robbed me of ink and messages by the pound. But, the centre of a discussion, I gauged the seriousness of my representative position early enough. The group was large, but pliant, and, happily, ready to listen to my arguments. This went on for half an hour, in an atmosphere of Socratic education, till I bid the boys goodbye. Misled by what they read in the press, and neglected by their college teachers, they need to read what they talk about. That will solve half the doubts in their mind.

Feeling very important, I left Pandharpur on New Year's Eve for nearby Kurduwadi. There was a symposium of Indian linguists on the next day; but, well, it is impossible to stretch a personal vacation too far.

A few stray impressions stand out in my mind, at this distance of time and place. I remember Shri Dingre, a slight, khaddar-clad figure, an incarnation of industry itself, enquiring after the delegates with unusual charm. He was the Secretary of the Reception Committee, and I am quite sure, that, though a local product, he must have seen through the more sophisticated among us. He has made his name by starting many an original controversy of a scholastic type. Shri D. M. Mirasdar, another son of the Pandharpur soil, organised the symposium on the short story at a few days' notice. Although he stands somewhat in Madgulkar's shadow, he has a picaresque vein all his own. Now doing his B.T. in Poona, he knows what he is writing about, and how; he belongs actually to a very recent generation of short story writers. Perhaps all of us brought together more by accident than by purpose, may meet together in a more purposive forum. By that time, Gadgil, our urbane Socrates, will have put some of us in our places, with the help of a lucid and critical temper.



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S. OOKERJEE

appearance and reality

an account of the Indian Philosophical Congress, 1955

EVERY year, towards the end of December, philosophers from all parts of the country stream into some University town in India to hold a session of the Indian Philosophical Congress. Although the Congress consists largely of teachers of Philosophy in the various Indian Universities, membership is open to anyone claiming an interest in the subject. It is therefore, a fairly representative body in this great land of Philosophy.

The latest session of the Congress was held at Nagpur. Our philosophers could be easily recognized by their grave countenance and by the splendid badges which adorned their bosoms, as they were seen hurrying to the Convocation Hall on the morning of the 21st of December 1955. The hall had a festive appearance, and the august personages ranged on the dais looked impressive. There were the Chief Minister, the Governor, the Vice-Chancel-

lor, the President of the session, the Sectional Presidents and distinguished foreign visitors. Speeches of Welcome, the Inaugural Address and the long Presidential Address were delivered one after the other; messages from persons of high repute and foreign universities were read out; Sanskrit quotations were frequently cited and even 'slokas' from the ancient scriptures were chanted.

The Governor, in a speech full of homely proverbs and good advice, told us that he did not know what exactly Philosophy was, since at school he had learnt about heat, light and sound, which was called Natural Philosophy! But he was nevertheless sure that Indians were born philosophers, and whatever Philosophy meant, students wishing to study it need not go to the philosophies of other countries, as India had 'lots of it'. Dr. Mahadevan, the President, took a vast survey of different

philosophers, and concluded that no philosophy, except the wisdom of our venerable 'ancients', turns man's eye inward upon 'the inner sanctuary of his soul.' Thus even before the Congress had begun its deliberations, these eminent men had already judged the issue between Western and Indian philosophy, and our philosophers were warned in time that no good was to come out of Western ways of speculation, and that there was not a shadow of doubt that the Indian technique could solve—nay, had so gloriously solved—all problems regarding man and God.

What! are there sceptics who require proofs for these things? So much the worse for such people, for do they not know that to doubt is to be lost? And is it not enough that our sages have said these things, and our learned scholars have repeated them *ad nauseam*? Have we fallen a prey to those perverse Western ways of demanding reasons, when Truth is 'self-luminous'? Hence, vain delusions! As the true sons of this land of Philosophy, we should enter the ensuing discussions (so the inaugural speeches suggested) with our mind's half closed, so that we may the better see the light. This lead was, on the whole, unflinchingly followed during the rest of the conference.

The remaining activities of the conference fell under four heads—Sectional meetings; Sectional President's Addresses; two Symposia; and teas, entertainments and the photograph. It will suffice to say of the last of these heads that it was all very pleasant and successful. The same cannot honestly be said of the other heads. The Addresses of the Sectional Presidents need not have been read, as they were printed in the Proceedings, and no discussion followed them.

The simultaneous working of the four Sections makes it impossible for anyone to attend all the discussions. This is inevitable. But what is not inevitable is that an

individual should be able to so adjust things that he can at least attend a few of the ones he is particularly interested in. However any planning on his part is impossible, since papers are accepted till the last minute and thus one cannot have any idea as to how many papers will be read in an afternoon, and since the speakers show no respect for the time allotted to them. Asked to summarise their papers, some gentlemen not only read out their papers, but even added superfluous explanations! I do not know whether too much concentration on the Eternal and the Supra-rational produces a disregard for time and cogency, but it was evident at the Congress that the dialectical method of precise question and short clear answer was almost unheard of. The desire to deliver sermons was very strong in most people, and it seemed that the one quality required to be a philosopher is the capacity to talk long and talk irrelevantly.

IT is likely that my readers have by now charged me with exaggeration, but let me assure them that in the Congress things happen which cannot be exaggerated. Let the facts speak for themselves. I shall describe one of the Symposia.

The Symposium papers had not been circulated among the four Symposiasts, with the result that no paper touched any other at any point and there was a total absence of the development or criticism of one another's arguments. Apart from the Symposiasts, 13 other speakers addressed the gathering. The subject of discussion was 'The Nature of Error'—i.e. an analysis of error as such and its place in reality. But a large number of our philosophers (including one of the Symposiasts!) believed—2000 years after Socrates taught Meno—that they were expected to furnish a list of errors that have been committed in Philosophy and elsewhere! One man even gave us a lecture on Death! If the

subject of the Symposium was an unusual one, there might be *some* excuse for such a magnificent 'ignoratio elenchi,' but teachers of Philosophy cannot be excused so staggering a misunderstanding of a problem which is to be found even in the most elementary text-books of Metaphysics.

There were others who took it upon themselves to instruct the Symposiasts as to the angle from which the subject ought to have been tackled; others, not caring to analyse the nature of Error, told us—in the grand manner—how error was to be overcome by going through a spiritual experience. One young man proclaimed vehemently that all metaphysical, logical and psychological theories of Error were just so much nonsense; another was convinced that unless one is prepared to die for what one says one is in error; and yet another used up his allotted five minutes in relating a poor joke, which greatly entertained our philosophers. And one 'wise man among babblers' indeed, said it was all very simple and a needless fuss had been made, for, said he, 'Error is what is not truth.' As simple as that.

Through all these unrestrained 'adventures of ideas' the Chairman, the true philosopher that he was, sat and smiled benignly, without interrupting even the most irrelevant speeches, for had he done so he would have offended the tender sensibilities of our seekers after Truth, some of whom were aged and revered souls. By the time they finished their speeches the clock showed a quarter past twelve, and the meeting had to be closed, without giving

even the Symposiasts a chance to ask one another any questions. Thus ended the Symposium. The Chairman, in his concluding remarks, expressed his joy at the peaceful manner in which the discussion had been carried out, without any heat having been generated. Could he really not have realised that there was no heat because there was no contact between the speeches and nobody joined issue, apart from one solitary exception? If heat is the necessary accompaniment of light, then let us have heat by all means—at least at a philosophical discussion.

These then are our philosophers and our teachers of Philosophy, these dear simple creatures, who fail even to see the point under discussion. And these are the very same persons who talk to us about the life divine and supra-mental existence, about spiritual experience and the over-soul, about all the mysteries of reincarnation and the law of Karma. It appears that for spiritual growth the price that has to be paid is muddle-headedness. When such exhibitions as one witnesses at the Indian Philosophical Congress demonstrate to our students that in the highest circles in Philosophy any rubbish can be uttered, is it any wonder that our philosophy classes are packed and even the dullest student feels sure of obtaining a Degree in Philosophy? Is it surprising that so many intelligent people regard Philosophy with suspicion or contempt? If the Congress represents Philosophy at present in India (as I believe it does), then Philosophy among us has become a menace and a mockery.

BINDO

BY ROOP KATHAK

THE first time I set my eyes on Bindo was in the Bazaar at Lakheri. She was getting something tattooed on her bosom, nonchalantly right in the centre of a crowd. I had just then been transferred to Lakheri, and was not yet used to this sort of thing. I let a furtive look steal through the barrier of onlookers. In a short while they made me blush with their equanimity, and I felt my mind buoy up in the calmness around.

Bindo was sitting still, as if she was alone, in the midst of that big crowd. Not an eyelid stirred while the needle worked. It was difficult to decide which was the greater, the skill of the tattoo-artist or the endurance of the woman. When the whole thing was finished, she slowly tied the knot of her *choli*, got up with a certain assurance and haughtily placed a four anna bit in the hand of the tattoo-artist. Before people could start talking, some of them made way for her.

'That was Bindo, wife of Monsi, the milkman,' one of them said.

'She gets herself tattooed every bazaar day,' said another.

'Hasn't she got a husband?' Somebody asked a question without expecting a reply.

'Every day she comes to sell milk near the factory,' another volunteered the information.

The crowd dispersed. The tattoo-artist still sat wiping his needle. He saw me standing, smiled and said, 'You are new to this place?'

'Yes,' I said.

'A smart girl, this Bindo!' He echoed my thoughts.

'First I tattooed a cobra on her arm. She wanted it exactly as in the picture. An hour it took me, but there wasn't a tear or sigh from her. Next there was the garland round her neck. Today she asked me to tattoo a peacock on her bosom. I said, 'A peacock might be too big. How about a nice little butterfly?' But she wouldn't listen.

'She a milkmaid?' I enquired.

'Right. She has her customers near your factory,' the tattoo-artist replied.

When I went home, I called Magya, my servant boy.

'The milk we get is no good. It's high time we changed'.

'I shall ask Bindo,' he said. 'All the sahibs here are her customers.'

'Well,' I muttered, 'tell her to see me in the morning.'

When Bindo arrived the next day, I was already dressed for going to work. 'The milk must be good,' I said. 'I don't want to complain later. How much a seer is it?'

She looked me straight in the eye and said, 'Four annas.'

'I shall pay eight. I should not have to complain,' I said without looking at her.

And then Bindo stripped off her *choli* with the same efficiency as on the previous day at the bazaar, and said, 'All this is Monsi's—Tell me frankly what you want.'

I was ashamed of myself. I could visualize the whole episode in the bazaar. Suddenly I felt a certain relief. I looked at her with a clear mind and said, 'Well then, you start tomorrow. Four annas let it be.'

'Why not take some milk now? There will be no charge for it,' she said. 'I have plenty today. A pair of cows calved the last bazaar day.'

Magya was not to be seen anywhere. So I myself had the milk poured.

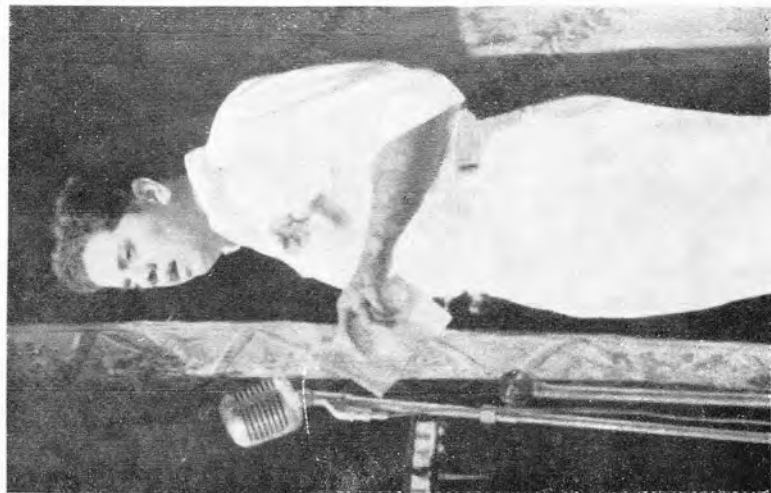
Thereafter Bindo came every day with the milk. Sometimes she even teased me with one thing or the other. She had made me forget all that had gone before.

Translated from the Marathi
by D. G. NADKARNI

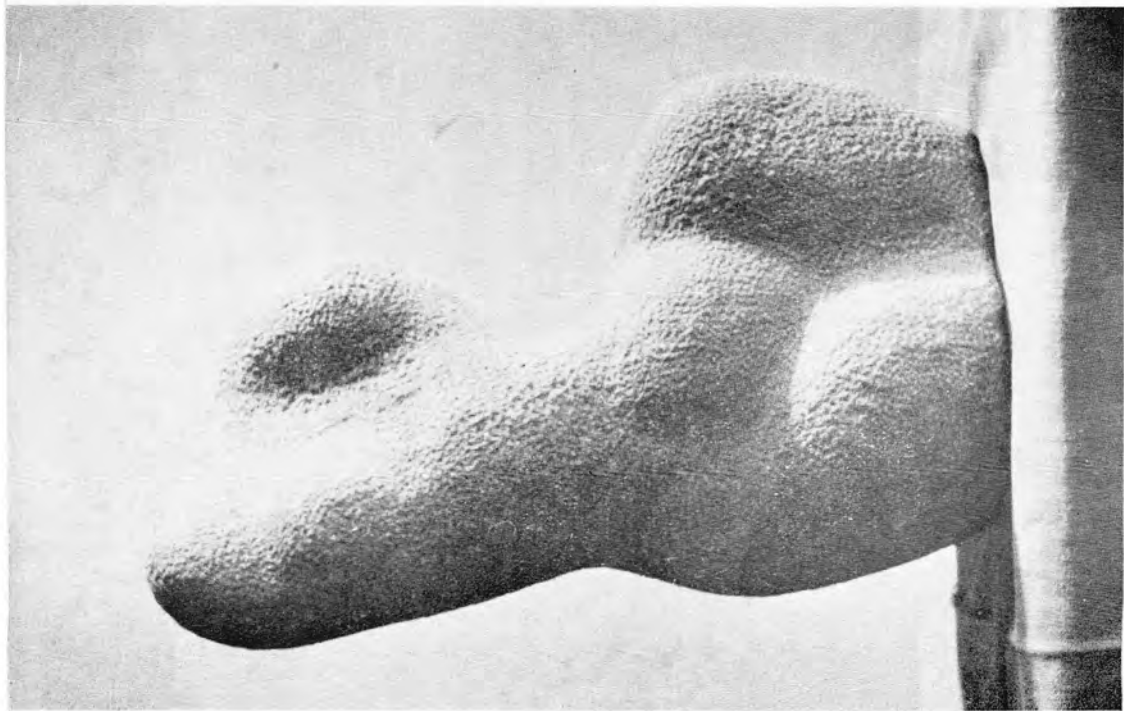


VENKATESH MADGULKAR, noted Marathi short story writer. He 'specialises' in a detached treatment of rural life.

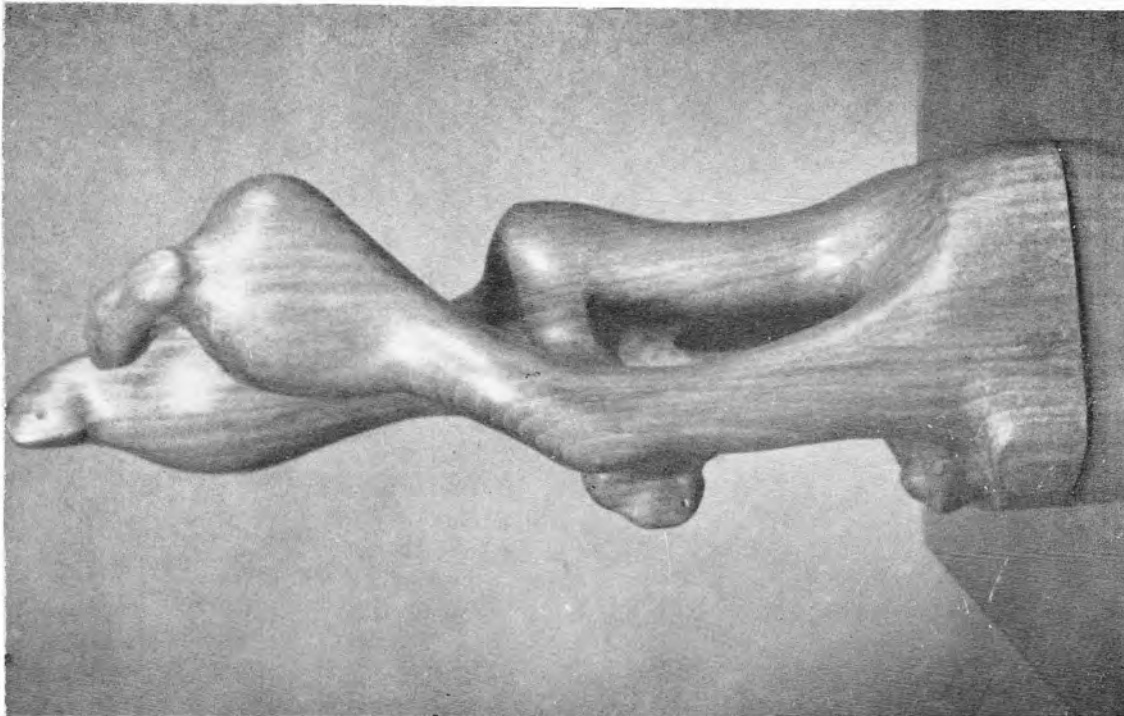
D. G. NADKARNI addressing the Marathi Literary Conference at Pandharpur. His report on it appears elsewhere in this issue.



GANGADHAR GADGIL, who presided over the discussion on the short story at the Conference.



Torso ht. 10". Pink Agra Sandstone. June '55



FINDING OF MOSES ht. 14". Indian Teak Wood. Feb. '55

BY A. M. DAVIERVALLA

RENE TAVERNIER

letter from France

politics, art, letters

THE last two months of 1955 were marked by three political events of varying importance: the disturbances in North Africa, the general elections and the agreements reached between trade unions and a number of large firms.

To the very end, the crisis in Morocco bewildered not only the general public but even the most perceptive observers. The return of the Sultan, which was made absolutely necessary by the spectacular about-face of the Pasha of Marrakesh was, in general, welcomed by Frenchmen. It seems, however, that the triumphal homecoming of Sidi Moulay Ben Yussef came as a surprise to both the Government and the Istiqlal (the Moroccan Independence Party, the most active of the parties). Paradoxically enough, the Sultan now appears to be France's chief hope, whereas the Istiqlal is divided into two clans (like the Neo-Destour in Tunisia), one favour-

able to the West and the other, which is more intransigent, looking to Cairo. It is obvious that the French, who wish to preserve their economic and natural interests in a country that they have, as it were, recreated, hope that the Sultan and the more open-minded Moroccans will make use of their independence to strengthen the bonds of interdependence with France. The French newspapers have been playing up this notion, though without being able to indicate its exact content. In any case, it is a revolutionary idea in public law.

One thing is clear, and that is that the French are bent on granting the widest concessions to Morocco—whose responsibilities are obviously going to become very heavy—just as they did in Tunisia.

The Algerian problem is more complex, owing to the large number of Frenchmen (about a million) who have settled in the country and, in many cases, whose families

have been there for several generations. For the time being, the eastern part of Algeria is living in fear of attacks by the rebels and the military operations of the French forces. Algerian public opinion is calling for sweeping and rapid reforms. The French public is divided between the conviction that Algeria is necessary to the home country and the growing feeling that changes must take place. What will these changes be? It is difficult to foresee. What is sure is the fact that neither Morocco, Algeria nor France wishes to repeat the experience in Indo-China or that of the armistice which followed. (The Diem government appears indeed to be a more dangerous enemy than Ho Chi Minh.)

IT can be said, at the beginning of 1956, that the French wish to continue to play a role in North Africa, that they are determined to grant wider freedom, and even independence, but that they feel that the accusation of being a colonialist nation is absurd. A vast plot against France and European nations in general is being woven by the Arab League—perhaps with the active complicity of Moscow. Such is the opinion of many people.

The events in Africa, which have weighed heavily on French political life, finally led Prime Minister Edgar Faure to dissolve an Assembly that had become ungovernable. It is impossible to describe briefly the intricate struggles between the partners and opponents of the Ministry. The dismissal of the deputies put an end to them, and this unexpected act was, by and large, approved by the voters.

The elections of January 2nd were a battle among four groups, each of which includes several parties. It is this peculiar grouping that makes it so hard for foreigners to understand French political life. At the extreme left are the Communists and their 'progressive allies'; at the right is the 'Republican Front,' which has been crea-

ted by M. Mendès-France and which brings together the Socialists, Radicals and former Gaullists; at the centre is the governmental bloc of M. Edgar Faure and M. Antoine Pinay (moderates and Christians of the People's Republican Movement); and at the extreme right are the few proponents of fascism and the die-hards of the Vichy regime, who have been joined by an extremely dynamic movement launched by M. Pierre Poujade. The Poujade Movement, which represents many shopkeepers who are opposed to an allegedly excessive taxation, waged a tumultuous campaign in a quasi-fascist spirit and constituted the unknown element in the election before the results were out.

The prime necessity—which is felt by the general public though not much mentioned by election candidates and their parties—is a reform of the Constitution that would make possible a stable government. Only such a government could successfully tackle the African and the even more serious European problem. It is therefore likely that the next Assembly and the new government will have ups and downs similar to those of the past ten years. For the time being, the public is much excited about the election results. The unquestionable merit of Pierre Mendès-France, who is supported by the great Catholic writer François Mauriac, is to have quickened the average Frenchman's civic sense.

The French now find themselves in a relatively satisfactory economic situation, and it is this fact that led M. Faure to place the issue before the voters. In addition, some extremely important changes for the better have just taken place in the social situation. A number of firms have signed agreements with non-communist trade unions. These agreements recall those which were accepted in America by General Motors at the instigation of Walter Reuther. They provide for a progressive increase in salaries over a long period (two

years) and a concurrent increase in production. Moreover, they include a mutual pledge not to resort to strikes or lock-outs without first exhausting all possible means of conciliation.

The agreements constitute a serious blow to the propaganda of the C.G.T. (a Communist trade-union confederation), which tried at a late date to have a hand in them. There is every reason to believe that the movement launched by the National Administration of the Renault Factories (the chief motor-car manufacturer in France, with 52,000 workers), a movement that has already spread to other private and nationalized industries (with a total of 450,000 workers), will continue to develop.

THE end of 1955 has brought with it the annual awarding of literary prizes, the number of which has multiplied in recent years. The only ones that have any importance from the point of view of notoriety (short-lived notoriety, be it added) and of sales are still the Goncourt Prize, which is the oldest of all, the Fémina Prize, which is awarded by a jury of women writers, and the Renaudot Prize, which is given by the literary critics of the major newspapers.

Publishers obviously attach great importance to these distinctions. Since the end of the last war, publicity techniques have been playing an ever greater role, with the result that all too often the activity surrounding the awarding of the prizes, which are frantically sought after, is somewhat like a campaign to launch a new brand of toothpaste or soapflakes, or rather like an electoral campaign, and involves as many back-stage manoeuvres as does the voting at the National Assembly. Obviously, literature suffers as a result of this kind of thing. . . . And all too often the prize-winners are neither the best nor the most significant of the contestants. This

year has not broken with what is becoming more and more a disagreeable habit. By preferring Roger Ikor's *Mingled Waters* to Louis Pauwel's *The Monster Love*, the Goncourt Academy has chosen to honour traditional and even outmoded forms of art.

The novel of Louis Pauwels describes the love of a man and woman, a passionate love that is transformed into hatred. The people of the Middle Ages, the period in which the story is set, regard such love as monstrous, for they see in it a proof of intervention by the devil: are the lovers possessed, is all love a state of possession? These are the questions that confront the reader when he lays down this feverish, smouldering and bitter book.

Roger Ikor has attempted to depict the life, adventures and conflicts of a Jewish family that settles in France after being driven from home by the Russian pogroms of the late nineteenth century. The story of the family's efforts to strike roots and adapt itself to a new life is cleverly and sympathetically told, but in the last analysis it is rather trivial. Roger Ikor's tale is in the line of the naturalistic novel of the last century.

The other prize-winning books, André Dhôtel's *The Faraway Land*, which received the *Fémina*, and Georges Govy's *The Harvester of Thorns*, which won the Renaudot, are no more daring than that of Ikor.

Anyone looking for literature that is really alive will find it in Bernard Franck's *The Comic Illusion*, the journal of a young man who thinks himself cynical and who carries on his love affairs with a great casualness and, so he thinks, lucidity, to such a point that he deceives himself completely. When he realizes that he has been caught in his own trap, all he can do is shrug his shoulders and jeer at his suffering, just as he jeered at that of others. Bernard Franck's Voltairian tone offers a respite

from the pretentious compilations that all too often go by the name of novels.

However, in order to discover what is best in French writing at the present time, one would do well to turn from the novel and look elsewhere.

Paléologue, who was a French ambassador and who played an important role between 1900 and 1920, left us, after his death, an exciting *Journal of the Dreyfus Affair* which reveals the innocence of the famous captain.

Jacques Kayser, a journalist and political figure, is concerned with more timely problems in his *Death of a Freedom*, the sub-title of which is 'News Technique and News Policy.' These titles indicate the nature of his study, which was written after the author had concluded an investigation of world news problems which he had undertaken for UNESCO. With a factual knowledge balanced by insight and independent judgment, Jacques Kayser focuses upon the serious dangers that threaten the freedom to express and disseminate information.

Georges Blond is concerned not with men but with animals. His recent book, *The Great Adventure of the Migrators*, deals with birds, eels and salmon and their prodigious journeys. The exactness of the information it contains does not prevent it from being more captivating than any novel.

IN the field of poetry, mention should be made of a posthumous volume of major importance, *Testament*, by Roger-Gilbert Lecomte, a young writer who was greatly influenced by surrealism and who died in 1943. Despite its fragmentary nature, *Testament* contains perhaps the loveliest strains of poetry that we have heard since the death of Apollinaire.

As for the cinema, the only film worthy of mention is René Clair's *Army Manoeuvres*, with Gérard Philippe and Michèle Morgan which was also presented in Moscow with great success. It is an unpretentious film, light and witty, and as frothy as a glass of champagne.

The theatre has come up with two interesting works, Jean Anouilh's *Ornifle* and Marcel Aymé's *Moon-birds*, a kind of whimsical vaudeville in which the assistant headmaster of a school transforms his enemies into birds.

Music has lost two important composers in the death of the aged Guy Ropartz and particularly in that of Arthur Honegger, a deeply religious and mighty spirit, a man of broad and profound genius, who wrote a magnificent score for Paul Claudel's *Joan of Arc* just as he had earlier hymned the force and dynamism of the twentieth-century idol, the Machine.

Honegger belonged to the group known as 'the Six,' which includes Francis Poulenc and Georges Auric and with which Jean Cocteau has also been associated. The death of Honegger has brought to a close an age that began after World War I and that reacted against Stravinsky as well as against Claude Debussy. At present, French music means Olivier Messiaen, an immensely learned composer, a man of tumultuous inspiration who is much preoccupied with mystical traditions and particularly with ancient Hindu civilization.

But Messiaen is already being outstripped by Pierre Boulez, chief figure of the 'abstract' school (an offspring of Weber and Schönberg), and by the leader of the 'concrete' school, Pierre Schaeffer, whose very curious endeavours lie in the sphere of experimentation rather than of composition, in the strict sense of the word.

variety

theatre

cinema

dance

Bharat Natyam And Kathak

RECENT dance performances in Bombay by Shanta Rao and Gopi Kishen have highlighted the contrasting features of Bharat Natyam and Kathak. Apart from the obvious differences what struck me most was the contrast in themes. Bharat Natyam is a masculine dance but is usually performed by women. Kathak on the other hand is a feminine dance but is usually performed by men.

Traditionally, Bharat Natyam derives from the dance of the 'Dev Dasis' of the South Indian temples. Its most prominent theme is Shiva and his worship. The dance is characterized by clean, jerky, angular movements forming traditional sculptural poses.

Shanta Rao's performance is characterized by great exuberance and excellent footwork. She excels in vigour. It excites and invigorates. Rhythm is perfect. There is zest, energy, force, and a strong vibrant effect. Her dance is, therefore, able to produce that emotional catharsis which is the foremost prerequisite of all art and especially of dance.

She has, however, her drawbacks. Chief among them is 'abhinaya'. The excessive vigour, moreover, tends to become harshness. The accompanying singer is shrill and his voice cracks in modulations. There is too much thumping, too much sound. The expression on the face is stern and a smile, when it appears, is forced and artificial.

The themes chosen are too classical and abstruse. The dance items are much too long and a delightful piece becomes tiresome because there is no pause.

There are some remarks to be made generally in criticism of Bharat Natyam. The accompanying song is always in a South Indian dialect. This is very unfortunate as it steals much of the charm, and the North Indian audience fails to appreciate the theme or its subtleties. Why cannot some enterprising vocalists venture to sing in Hindustani? Apart from a step towards cultural sympathy it would be a bold gesture in linguistic fraternization.

Performances by great artists like Shanta Rao should be made use of in

popularizing the art, and it is essential that the artist should explain something of the art to the audience. This would heighten interest and make better understanding possible. A few words about the history of the particular dance, or an anecdote connected with the theme, or the meaning of the *mudras* or the subtlety of the foot-work. The layman misses so many fine points which he would learn to notice if helped. As things are, even the name of the dance is not announced and the amateur is left very much to his own resources of imagination and aesthetics.

Coming now to Kathak which is a North Indian dance form, we find that the prominent theme is Radha and Krishna but more so Radha and her emotional phases portrayed by the great art of 'Abhinaya' or facial expression. Kathak is characterised by femininity, coquetry, mischief.

Here then we have a study in contrast. In Bharat Natyam the glory of man is portrayed through woman; in Kathak the vagaries of woman through man. Parvati after all is the benign manifestation of Shiva; Radha's heart a-flutter the expression of Krishna's soul. So while one exalts the dignity of woman, the other glorifies the place of man. This is manifest in the social order also, and highlights the fundamental difference between North and South Indian attitudes towards morals, art and sex.

Bharat Natyam which was becoming corrupt in the temples has been redeemed in the household and is practised by almost all South Indian girls. Woman takes the pride of place and even Shiva, the all pervading, is manifest through her. Sociologically this is observed in the matriarchal system of family. The woman inherits property and her name passes in the female line of descent. There is no stigma attached to women who may go bareheaded and

sing and dance for the entertainment of guests in the family.

The keynote of Kathak on the other hand is coquetry, guise and mischief so frequently described in the song: *panghat ke par milna*. Action is clothed in hush hush. No approach is devoid of guilt, no movement bereft of sensuality. The historical factor points to this characteristic. The revival of Kathak during the time of the Mughals did both much good and much harm. It revived the dance form, but at what cost! The art was injected with the sensuality of other Muslim cultural forms like *kawali*, *ghazal* and *mushaira*. This degradation eventually made it impossible for women to perform, and as a substitute man was forced to take up the femininity of Radha, the secret passion of her soul, the slant of her eyes, the softness of her tender wrist, the slenderness of her waist. In the social order woman was not permitted to inherit property, there was no redress for the wrongs inflicted on her, she was to keep her head covered, hide when guests came and only under pain of complete social ostracism could she dream of singing and dancing.

Thus if the South exalts woman, the North better understands her vagaries. If Shiva in his 'tandav' is the full and fearful potency of man, Radha ecstatic in Krishna's flute is the picture of utter feminine submission. If Bharat Natyam is the frank and open manifestation of woman worshipping masculine vigour, Kathak is the sweet pain of secret longing in the maiden's heart. If the one exalts, the other rejoices; if the one bestows, the other heartens; if Shiva inspires awe and respect, Radha sorrow and love. If the South is confident in the strength of her inner resources, the North is demonstrative in the conflicting claims of her passion.

But all in all they are complementary and must unite. Bharat Natyam could endeavour to supplement its vigorous foot-

work with the expressive softness of 'Abhinaya' in which Kathak excels. Kathak could learn to respect poise and imbibe some of the variety and freshness of Bharat Natyam. For there lies the future of India where the twain shall meet and a new and forceful India emerge; where the internal resources of the South will mingle with the variety of the North; where the strength of the one will enforce the subtleties of the other; where worshippers viewing aghast Ganges rushing from Shiva's locks will break into a dance of ecstatic forgetfulness as the mellow note of the distant flute floats across the river gently to their ears.

KRISHAN SONDHI

Ottam-Thullal

HOW does a classic art form evolve? When does a living, growing art become a traditional one? Is it time, alone, that with a slow and heavy hand, hallows a form? Or is it the form itself, that, crystallised into a certain perfection, attains immutability. Or yet again, does the creative vision of genius bequeath so comprehensive and complete a revelation of beauty, recreated in a single entity, that to subtract is to destroy, and to embellish to mar?

No simple answer is possible. We call that classic art which, true to its time and space, has a universal appeal, beyond its time, beyond its space—based upon indelible principles of perfect balance; and pared down to essentials, beyond which no elimination is possible: completely comprehensive, yet utterly bare. It can be the work of one man, as is the *Natya Shastra* of Bharata, whose system of Dance was so precise, that in the very exercises it contains the same essence of spirit that is visible in the interpretation of complicated *shlokas* in the *varnam* and *padam*. Time

can perfect a form through the painstaking effort of many generations of men; the fusion of cultures; the impact of civilisations; as was the case with Kathakali, whose origins, shrouded in the dark mists of Dravidian religious tribal ritual, took colour, shape and content from Aryan contact, and emerged a highly stylised, yet earthy, vigorous dance-form.

There are, however, many art-forms that never attain this classic mould. They are nonetheless of significance and importance. They typify their time, particular needs, and even contain the germs of what could be through time, hard work and inspired talent, great possibilities. But we as a nation seem incapable of accepting this inescapable fact. We want every great man to be a Guru; every good idea to be the word of God. And in our need for idols and images, we are apt to worship at unworthy shrines. The germ has no time to germinate and grow in order to be judged. Acceptance must be immediate or not at all. A terrible infanticide of ideas results, so that the little form may be embalmed, enshrined and worshipped.

Indian culture is full of these beginnings that are denied growth, and have no end—of beginnings that, alas, are also ends. Indian literature, art, music all have their experiments that never matured; their forms empty of ideas; ideas embalmed within a too constricting form. Of such stunted adolescent stature is the traditional dance form of Kerala: Ottam-Thullal.

Thullal evolved from the amalgamation of the dramatic recitation of Chakkia-Koothu with the mime and mudras of Kathakali. It was the creation of one man: Koncham Nambiar. It is of recent history, not two hundred years old; its growth and development, the life-span of its creator. Nambiar was a drummer, but having been insulted in public by a Chakkia, he determined to break away from the accepted form of Koothu recitation,

Writing in pure Malayalam, the colloquial language of his people, he composed satiric verses on the contemporary scene, which he as a solo performer, then sang, acted and danced out. His performances electrified his audiences, and captured their imagination. He became a force to contend with, in the social and political scene of the time. Political injustice, social grievances or the follies of his fellow-men became the subject of several brilliant and satirical compositions. To allow himself greater scope and licence he employed allegory, transplanting his themes to the scene of the Court of Indra at Hastinapura.

With his death the creative aspect of Thullal died. His compositions have been faithfully preserved to this day, but the preservers are few, and the form frail. It stands in imminent danger of annihilation. Personally, I do not feel that the loss of those particular compositions would be great, for we have already lost the essence of the work. Apart from the fact that the very form of Thullal affords tremendous scope to the individual artist (for he needs must be singer, dancer and actor all in one). The main contribution of Thullal is that, firstly, it was in the spoken language of the people; secondly, it was, in subject matter, directly related to the particular place and time. Had the spirit, or the idea of Thullal been kept alive, its form would be a potent one indeed. Today it could be the starting point of a living and growing art, based on a traditional (and therefore easily understood and appreciated) form. Indeed, I believe that the Communists have occasionally employed it for political propaganda which is again, I feel, an abuse, and not a proper use, of art.

Still, I was grateful for the opportunity of seeing one of the few living exponents of Thullal perform in Bombay. The Keralaleeya Samaj, during their 'Cultural Festival' held in December, presented P. K. Poduwal in a programme of Ottam-Thul-

lal, the most highly developed form of Thullal dancing.

The 'festival' itself was a curious conglomeration of the culture of Kerala. Excellent Kathakali performances by such artists as Gopi Nath, Thankamani, and Kunju Nair, stood in uneasy juxtaposition to the acrobatics of various 'babies' from the locally famous Kamala Circus. Quaint sword and dagger fencing and ju-jitsu that may have held the interest of drill (Kalari Payatu) or Games Masters at a school display, occupied almost a whole evening's programme. *Panchavadyam*, a folk orchestra of horns, *madallam*, *chenda* and *thimilla* drums held one spell-bound with their primitive rhythms, their pulsating force, and made one wonder why, with all this wealth of material for background and 'effect' music (for these drums can whisper and drone as soft as humming bees, reverberate as loud as a mountain thunder storm), our film-makers still prefer to pilfer stray bars of Bach's Cantata Augne or pound upon 'Congo Drums' in feeble imitation of Mr. Cugat.

One dreads to think that our weakness of considering things 'traditional' and therefore sacred, might very soon apply to the manner of presentation. It has become almost an accepted thing for the sporadic efforts at what is called our 'cultural revival' to be in reality a *tamasha*, where artists are used as a means, or an excuse, to parade important political guests to the seat of honour or to help establish social and business contacts.

Unfortunately, the Keralaleeya Samaj festival was no exception. While the huge Pandal, to seat over two thousand spectators, was well constructed, and all the expensive seats were very comfortable, the stage was a miserable platform five feet high, of uneven planks, far too small to balance dancers, singers and musicians. The curtains were drab, gloomy blue-black, with no attempt made to provide a

touch of beauty with even a single folk-tapestry, or a palm frond. No one cared to group the musicians in balance with the dancers; while the singers came on in modern shirts with stud-collar and cuff-links, and bawled into microphones immediately behind 'Nala and the Golden Swan' or 'Arjun and Guru Vyas'! Behind scenes, shabbiness descended to shoddiness. Not even the bare minimum comforts were provided for the artistes. A single bench was all I saw for their use. Along what cul-de-sac have we lost our sensitivity to beauty? For no loud words in praise of our glorious heritage can drown the clamour of ugliness that shrieks at us from the *Pandals* we construct to revive and house our cultural past.

UMA ANAND

The Frankfurt Book Fair 1955

THE Federation of Publishers and Booksellers Associations in India decided to take part in the Book Fair held every year at Frankfurt, and entrusted me with the task of organising the Indian Stall. I say 'task' as the time at our disposal was very short. We managed to select 400 books published from different parts of the country inspite of the fact that only one month was available to make the collection.

Thanks to the amazing industriousness of the people of Germany the country has made tremendous progress since the close of the War. This progress is discernible even to a casual visitor and is seen in every walk of their life. In particular, the book trade in West Germany has risen to a position of international eminence and developed into a prosperous industry. Both its exports and imports have risen year by year. This inspite of the very much increased costs of paper and machinery, an apathetic reading public in the neighbouring countries and in the centre of literary activity, Leipzig, in East

Germany. The achievements of this trade are outstanding specially if we remember that they had to start from scratch after the war.

The city of Frankfurt is proud to have the headquarters of the German book trade in the city. Borsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandeln E. V. which arranges the Fair every year has its building *on land gifted to it by the Municipality of Frankfurt*.

Frankfurt has been the centre of literary activity in Europe since movable types were invented in Germany in the middle ages. However, Leipzig has been the centre of famous Book Fairs in recent times. Since Leipzig went behind the Iron Curtain after World War II, the West German Book Trade decided to organise a Book Fair at Frankfurt, the scene of several International Fairs for some eight centuries. The first Fair was held in 1949 with 205 German publishers showing 8,500 books. The next year 360 publishers from Germany were joined by 100 publishers from abroad showing a total of 26,000 books. This year there were 685 stands, 1149 publishers including 599 foreign publishers, exhibiting nearly 48,500 books. Out of these, some 12,000 had been published since last year's Fair. Publications from the following countries were exhibited in the Fair for the first time this year—India, Japan, Russia, Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

It is difficult to state exactly the number of visitors to the Fair. Though the estimate of some—that there were about 100,000 visitors on Sunday, one day alone—appears to be exaggerated, it would be safe to assume that there were between 50,000 to 60,000 visitors throughout the six days of the Fair. These included booksellers from Germany (*the organisers arranged special railway excursions to Frankfurt*), Belgium, Holland, the Scandinavian countries, France, Switzerland, Austria, plus

some from the U.S.A. British Booksellers were conspicuous by their absence, although the highest number of exhibits was from them.

No one can deny that this vast collection of books was a real literary market place. Here you could not only see some of the best produced books from all parts of the world, but also get an opportunity to meet the people who produced them. There were booksellers, authors, publishers, librarians and professors; there was even the common reader from whom the publishers and the booksellers could learn many things. One got here an idea of the progress made by different countries in the technique of book design, typography, printing, binding, etc., besides learning a lot about the needs of the readers of different countries that would lead to finding fresh markets or improve already established connections.

As stated, this was the first time that an Indian stall was on view. Judging by the visitors that crowded our stand we could be proud of our success in creating wider interest in our books. The main purposes of our stall was of course to arouse in booksellers and publishers sufficient interest to make them buy books and translation rights. Besides, we tried to show the type of subjects popular in India, the progress made in the different branches of arts and sciences, and in the production of books.

We were able to achieve three objects. Firstly, we were able to make use of the Fair for publicising our books and assessing the interest that foreigners show in particular subjects. As a first step towards this, we had prepared a complete list of publications exhibited, which was distributed amongst the visitors. Secondly, we were able to arouse enthusiasm amongst distributors and publishers of Germany and neighbouring countries in some of our books, for distribution in the respective countries or for translations. For this

purpose we will have to compile a comprehensive catalogue or rather lists on various subjects mentioning all the books that we feel can find foreign markets. The third result of the display was in showing to the world the progress made by our country in its production standards.

We could not prove that every book produced in India got the care and attention that books in other countries received. In this respect the German books scored over all others. Though they were expensive compared to continental or British books, every German book exhibited was a specimen of perfect production. Jacket design, typography, illustrations, binding—in fact, every branch of production seemed to have received such care that it could serve as a model for printers and publishers. However, some of the books displayed by us were certainly of a very high standard and there were not a few who expressed admiration for these. A printing expert familiar with the quality of Indian printing done a decade ago, expressed the view that some of the books could be compared very favourably with the best anywhere in the world.

If we are to win foreign markets for our books, and make any real impact, we must plan a serious and sustained campaign. In this great task every person who is connected with the production of books or dissemination of knowledge in general should play his part and help the cause of spreading knowledge about our country. Our embassies abroad, the Central Government through its Educational, Publicity and Exhibition Departments, should patronise this great industry of books and journals, and help trade organisations to sponsor exhibitions in all parts of the world. Non-official groups should give their full support and co-operation to these ventures. In fact, this work should later on be managed by a separate semi-official organisation like the Sahitya

Akademi. The time, money and energies of the readers of the world are, after all, limited. There is keen competition amongst publishers to exploit these. And we have to work hard if we hope to get our share in the pool.

Interest was largely shown in the following types of books. First came the illustrated books. Good illustrated books on any subject can find a ready international market. Subjects that attract the special attention of a foreign reader are art, architecture, social customs and manners, factual data of the progress made by the country, picture books of places of importance in the country, Vedanta and Yoga (not much mysticism and spiritualism), music, and dance and allied subjects. Books (particularly those profusely illustrated) on Indian Music, Dancing, Festivals, Customs and Manners with short captions in English, German, French and Italian should find a good market. Keen interest was also shown by German publishers in getting novels, short stories, and poems (in collections or individually) translated. There is also a demand for books in English for sale in the United Kingdom, the U.S.A., and to some extent on the Continent, and for this purpose too an organisation that can take the help of representatives, travellers, trade papers, publicity agencies, the booksellers, the librarians, etc. is needed. As the first step, we should prepare a list of exporters in India and publicise it widely and they in turn should prepare and send lists of books that are exportable. Ultimately, an organisation of exporters must be set up.

The Frankfurt Fair has taught us many lessons. Indian publishing houses need to study modern techniques and the economics of production, especially those of German and British publishers, which will greatly help them to produce and sell well. However, we have enough material to approach foreign publishers and book-

sellers and through them the general readers abroad. We have to break through national frontiers and step into the wider world market boldly with tact and vigour. The immense opportunities that exist have got to be taken advantage of, the cultural contacts that are so important and vital to our country now have to be developed.

SADANAND G. BHATKAL

Pather Panchali

SATYAJEET Roy's interpretation of the widely-read novel, Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyaya's *Pather Panchali*, is perhaps the first consistently cinematic treatment of Indian feature film. Although the film remains in touch with the sentimental tradition in Indian dramatic narrative, it turns sentiment to technical advantage by control. It emerges in the film as an amalgam of human charm within an overall poetic conception.

The juxtaposition of 'poetic' with 'sentimental tradition' might be misleading; that *Pather Panchali* is in no danger of its perjorative implications is obvious from the director's attitude to his audience: one of conscious appeal to visual intelligence. His selection of images skirts the merely picturesque by a refusal to ignore the bitter significance of meaning where it is necessary beside an appearance of beauty. In its affirmation of life's imperfect complexity, this places the idiom of the film within the scope of poetic truth which says successfully, 'I feel this a universally beautiful seen from this angle.'

It is natural that the film should show considerable concern for vehicles of growth, particularly the child's world of physical perception. This is suggested visually both by physical and symbolic proximities—Durga's (Uma Dasgupta) relation to her grandmother (Chunibala) or to her brother Apu (Subir Banerjee). An

abstraction in words cannot express the multiple impact of these interrelations in a simple poverty-struck family ultimately faced with the pressures of a world beyond its village. They are worked out in perfectly conceived sequences, the more impressive because of the film's rich texture. There is an interplay of themes with symbolic extensions, each forming part of and served by selection and manipulation of visual images. These images are associated with an 'everyday' soundtrack, a subtle use of music (music director, R. Shankar), a haunting musical motif repeated perhaps twice too often, such filmic evocations as that of the monsoon, and the exploitation of silence in the soundtrack being notable.

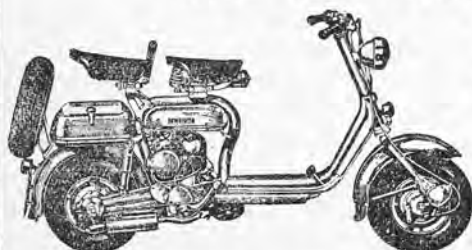
It will already have been gathered that *Pather Panchali* moves on several complementary levels based on the essentials of an unassuming plot. It treats the problems of poverty in a family, the emotional growth of two children and their first contacts with wider realities through their grandmother's death and for the boy Apu later through his sister's death, the departure of their father, a clerk, to town in search of better prospects, and the even-

tual shift from the village which circumstances force the family to make. The film's distinction lies in the director's obviously disciplined sensitivity to his medium and to those aspects of provincial life, reduced to basic human terms, which his preoccupation invests with universal dignity.

Confined strictly to the plot this would be impossible; instead, Satyajit Roy extracts the maximum significance from his material with completeness and economy, exploiting one's senses to clarify one's participation. Associated groups of audio-visual images which combine as motifs are included not for their intrinsic photographic value: excellent camerawork locates its justification in the meanings which are seen to accrue gradually round each motif. The development of the film is essentially expressed in this progression of expanding symbols rather than in that of the plot. This makes for a maturity far in advance of contemporary usage in most artistic media in India, and for a film to be seen rather than read about, the more creditable for being its director's first feature project.

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book reviews

ASIA & WESTERN DOMINANCE

By K. M. Panikkar

THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

By A. R. Wadia

TO WHOM SHE WILL

By R. Prawer Jhabvala

MAN OF EVEREST

The Autobiography of Tenzing

THIS CIVILIZATION

By P. R. Kaikini

THE KING AND THE CORPSE

By Heinrich Zimmer

THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES

By Joseph Campbell

THE LITTLE BLACK BOX

By Shakuntala Shrinagesh

A HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA

By K. A. Nilakanta Sastri

GAUTAMA

By Shakuntala Masani

ASIA & WESTERN DOMINANCE by K. M. Panikkar.

SO much has been said of the Asian point of view and so little to define it that the phrase is in danger of becoming a particularly unpleasant variety of cliché. Unpleasant because the phrase, if used often enough by the politician, is nevertheless of special relevance to our times. There is generally an awareness of changing values in the conscious effort to use the phrase East Asia in preference to Far East. It is a slight but significant indication of the revolutionary change in Asian political thinking since the end of the last world war—a revolution which if almost wholly misunderstood by the West is only vaguely apprehended by the East itself.

Mr. Panikkar's *Asia and Western Domi-*

nance with its undoubted evidence of scholarship and intellectual agility is a pioneering work in this field, all the more unique because of the general inability to translate the Asian point of view into reality. How many of us are still the victims of an alien assortment of values which—with all its implications—impels us to regard Japan as the Far East and not as East Asia? The difference of approach involves something more fundamental than a mere matter of connotation. By enabling us to see Asia in terms of Western dominance, Mr. Panikkar enables us to see Asia in terms of a liberation from that European supremacy. Without any ideological partisanship we become capable of understanding that the significance of the revolution in China is not that the Chinese have been converted to Communism but that they have been

united. So much that has puzzled the West in India's foreign policy may be less unacceptable if the affairs of a renascent Asia are interpreted in relation to this fact.

In the main, Mr. Panikkar's story is a familiar one available to all in a wide variety of publications and documents—with this difference that it has now for the first time been presented as an Asian would have known it if he had never heard of the Far East and had invariably thought of China and Japan as the eastern part of Asia.

As a result we have a comprehensive and satisfying picture of the political and social relations between Asia and the West from the days of Vasco da Gama in 1498 to 1945. There is nothing of the cheap variety of denigration in which some over-zealous Asian nationalists indulge when referring to relations with the West. On the question of Macao, for instance, about which there is an only too obvious temptation to see the facts as we would like to see them, Mr. Panikkar adheres strictly to historical fact and dispels the generally prevalent idea that Macao was taken by the Portuguese and held against the might of China.

He is equally impatient with the other idea that the early conquest of Asia by the West was either 'civilization on the march' or a diabolical plot by cunning merchants. The motive force sprang from less conscious sources—the urge to break away from the prison of the Mediterranean to which European energies were confined. This urge took the more particular form of an attempt to get round the overwhelming land power of Islam in the Middle East. From these beginnings the conquest of Asia, in its military, commercial and missionary phases, developed into the conscious and deliberate imperialism to which Asian nationalism has reacted so vigorously.

Perhaps the most provocative and therefore fascinating portions of Mr. Panikkar's

work are those devoted to an assessment of the mental and cultural consequences of European supremacy. His thesis that the impact of western scientific ideas and technology has caused a qualitative break with the past is questionable or rather would be more acceptable with certain qualifications. Such concepts as that of the state to which Asia owes its sense of nationalism, new patterns of administration based on such facilities as posts and telegraphs, and modern legal systems are some of the main items in the debt which Asia owes to the West since the days when the Jesuits in Peking acquired a special prestige through their ability to cast cannon, and the Dutch at the Deshima awakened the respect and curiosity of the Japanese by dispensing biological and technical information. Thereafter in political and military organisation, in the techniques of administration and transport, there was uninhibited reception of western learning. But these did not necessarily add to the qualitative break of Mr. Panikkar's conception.

It is possible that he underestimates the strength and persistence of the counteracting forces which Europeanisation invariably provokes. In Japan the collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate was not, as is commonly supposed, entirely due to the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1853. Anti-Shogunate feeling based on the indigenous philosophy of Shinto and advocating reverence for the throne had been developing for some time before the sudden appearance of the Western barbarians. The so-called Meiji restoration was a restoration of what had never been lost and in that sense was therefore not, as Mr. Panikkar suggests, a clean break with the past. This continuity of traditional values might be difficult to trace through the many confusions of western adoption and assimilation. Yet it is in Japan and only slightly less noticeably in other Asian countries that

there persists a sense of tradition as vigorous as ever and on which the great Asian religions have continued to survive. Mr. Panikkar concedes this in his references to the cultural and intellectual revival of which the well-known Japanese artist, Okakura Kakuzo, with his doctrine of cultural Asianism, was a distinguished exponent.

Despite extensive modernisation which need not necessarily involve westernisation and despite the consequences of defeat by the most aggressively western of the western powers, Japan clings as never before to certain basic concepts of patriotism, family loyalties and traditional values which severely restrict any possibility of a qualitative break with the past. In acknowledging the superiority of western knowledge and of the European social and economic systems no renunciation of the past need be involved. There is no necessary continuity in knowledge but there is a certain persistence in the values that have been proclaimed from time to time by such outstanding Asians as Okakura, Noguchi and Tagore. This is not to deny that values have not an inherent capacity to survive whatever the influences to which they are exposed. The very tendency to underestimate their strength seems to reflect an unconscious desire to mould Asia in the image of the Europe which we affect to despise and reject.

There is an unfortunate generalisation in Mr. Panikkar's view that in every one of the countries of Asia the leadership which ultimately displaced European supremacy was trained by the West. In Indonesia, Indo-China, Burma, Ceylon, China and India it is in varying degrees true that the much despised 'wogs' provided the necessary leadership and—as Mr. Panikkar seems to suggest—placed the Asian countries on the road to intellectual progress. This is most emphatically not correct in the case of Japan and need not have been the case

in the other countries of Asia. No single Japanese leader responsible for modernising his country was ever Western educated in the sense which Mr. Panikkar means and bore not the slightest resemblance to 'wogs' many, though by no means all, of whom were denationalised Asians incapable of adequate leadership. All the differences between Japanese nationalism and other manifestations of Asian nationalism may be explained in terms of this fact.

In enabling us to restore the proper perspective in Asian relations with the West Mr. Panikkar stops short of expressing some preference in regard to the new Asian synthesis. This restraint exposes him to the suspicion that he favours the emergence of vigorously independent Asian States with all the equipment of the West, uninhibitedly modern and sterilized of all lingering values from the past. This is perhaps unjust but Mr. Panikkar does not say enough on this matter to allow us to give him the benefit of the doubt.

N.J.N.

THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH IN INDIA by Prof. A. R. Wadia, Asia Publishing House, Rs. 7/8.

NEXT to the linguistic states problem, the language problem is the thorniest that confronts India. Intrinsically, as Prof. Wadia points out, the problem is not hard to solve but it has been made needlessly difficult by pseudo-patriotism and parochialism. Here, as in the linguistic states problem, the cardinal principle that must be borne in mind is to maintain the unity of India, which perhaps was the greatest blessing conferred on India by British rule. Curiously enough, Prof. Wadia points out at another place, British Machiavellism tried to destroy this same unintentionally brought about unity by encouraging provincialism. It is this ghost of provincialism and sectarian thinking, exercised by the

British during their last days on this sub-continent, that haunts the minds of petty politicians and pinchbeck Caesars, and prevents a solution to an otherwise simple problem.

Prof Wadia accepts Hindi as the natural successor to English, but cautions against undue haste in its promulgation. The problem is not so much of replacement of English, as much as the displacement of English. In this he pleads for discarding all 'wooly thinking' in a matter so vital to the nation. His own scheme, is summarised as follows:—

(1) At the primary stage, the medium of instruction must be the regional language, which would also be the mother-tongue of the vast majority in the region concerned. Hindi may also be begun in the last two years of the primary stage.

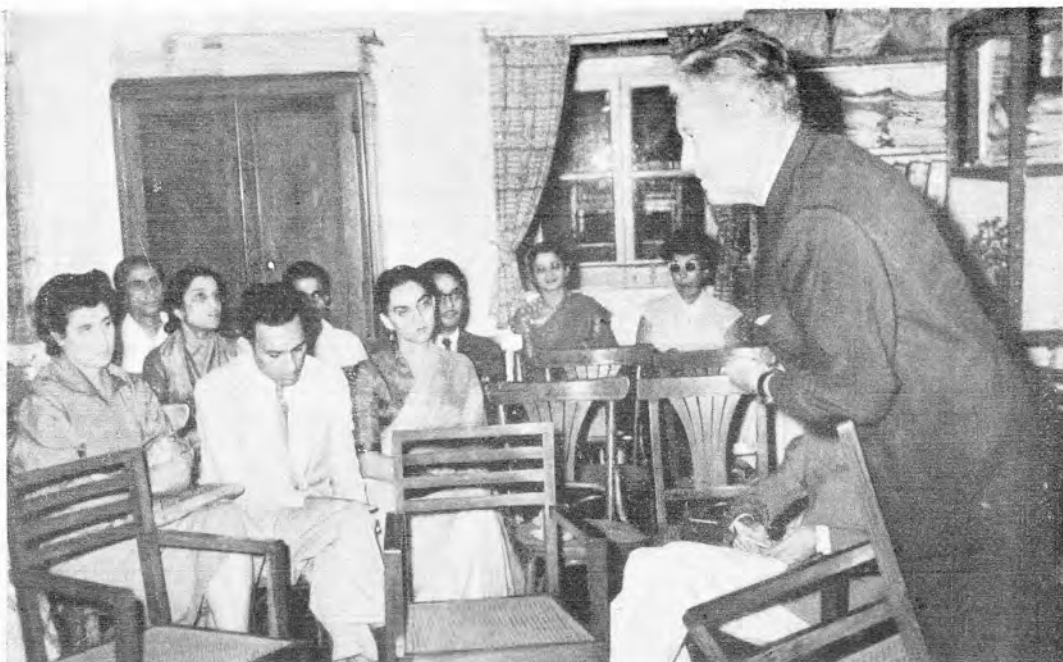
(2) At the secondary stage, the regional language will be the medium of instruction. The study of Hindi will have to be continued, but the study of English must also begin, compulsorily for those who aspire to university education.

(3) At the university stage it is very desirable to maintain a common medium of instruction. It will have to be English for a few years to come but when it has to be displaced it should find in Hindi a natural successor. Even when English ceases to be the medium of instruction, its knowledge should be such as to enable a student to read English books with ease.

This scheme, however, seems to combine the worst features of every scheme. The effect on the student would be deleterious. He would have to learn at least three languages, and not one of them perfectly—a classic case of Jack of all languages but master of none. This is the place Prof. Wadia would assign to English in the future of India, but it is obvious as one passes from page to page that he is asking for something more than what his scheme

suggests. He admits the necessity of displacing English but one cannot help noticing the surreptitious nudging and elbowing of the reader as if he was reminding him, 'English is to be replaced. But look, Oh, look, what English *can* do'. It is a pious prayer, a fervent hope, which cold reality stifles not too effectively. Alas! the *zeitgeist* is against the Professor.

Is there indeed a battle of languages as the author contends? The battle was won long ago when Hindi was made the state language and declared as such in the Constitution. No one now thinks seriously of disputing the legitimate place of Hindi, but the question remains—how and when is it to be introduced? We no longer speak in terms of a battle of languages but of co-ordinating the rights of Hindi vis-a-vis the regional languages, or to put it from the political angle, to reconcile regional and provincial interests with national interests. Relevance is undoubtedly not Prof. Wadia's forte. One is frequently constrained to ask oneself how the matters on which the author digresses can have any relevance to the issue of English in India. In the chapter on 'Language in Administration', he finds it necessary to give a tedious account of the main features of the English legal system, not excluding 'the long-flowing gown, the black coat and the white fluttering bands' of the lawyer. In the chapter on 'Language In Commerce and Industries', he takes pains to point out the volume of India's foreign trade in statistics. He remarks on the steady rise of industrial development in India, wishes that India would still produce fabrics of yore, informs the reader that there were 475 cotton mills employing 764,500 workers in 1953 and they produced 1503 million pounds of yarn, and even plunges into a most uncalled for criticism of Gandhian economics—all to illustrate that industrialisation and commerce imply international contacts, which can only be obtained



Mr. NICOLAS NABAKOV, Secretary General of the World Congress for Cultural Freedom, addressing the Writers' Meeting organised by QUEST on Dec. 21, 1955.



The Indian Stall at the Frankfurt Book Fair (See page 41)



MARTHA GRAHAM, who toured India recently with her dance company. An assessment of her impact on Indian audiences will appear in the next issue of QUEST.

through the medium of a language like English!

Like Mr. Weller, one is tempted to ask oneself if it is worthwhile going through so much to learn so little. At other places, the author utters otiose statements, such as, 'It is this capacity to see the oddities in life and to enjoy them that has made life ever so much more enjoyable in Europe, in spite of its cold and cloudy skies'. Is the capacity to see the oddities of life in any way affected by cold and cloudy skies?

One is compelled to conclude that the cause for which Prof. Wadia writes is not much furthered by this book.

T. R. A.

TO WHOM SHE WILL by R. Prawer Jhabvala. George Allen & Unwin, 15s.

BERNARD SHAW used to say that his way of making a joke was 'to tell the truth. That is the funniest joke in the

world'. The novel under review is an excellent testimony to his dictum that the truth can make a very good joke. It is its humour—in other words, its truth—which makes this book unusual among Indian novels and its author unusual among our women writers.

During the last decade a number of books by Indian women have been published in English. They have, for the most part, been autobiographies and novels, the latter sometimes being used as a thin disguise for the former. The great interest these books have aroused has been due not always to their high literary qualities—although some were well written. It has been due partly to the fact that the author was an Indian woman, and partly to the fact that she presented an authentic picture of Indian domestic life, a picture which had hardly ever been glimpsed by foreigners. The temptation to colour and dramatize what the writer knew would, for

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most readers, be an exotic picture, was always hard to resist, and in most of the books I have in mind, it has, quite sensibly, not been resisted.

To Whom She Will is different from these other books in that there has been no attempt to colour or dramatize anything. We are shown a plain, unvarnished, and excruciatingly correct picture of westernised middle class Indians. Both the story and the characters are completely Indian, even if they are Indians of the type that speak English in their own homes. There is no attempt to describe any but the most everyday occurrences. The story is a gentle, leisurely account of what happens when a girl of the westernised middle class and a young man of the unwesternised lower class imagine that they are in love.

It is her own creatures that the author makes the butt of her indulgent laughter, and yet, we are all of us involved in it. The irrationalities of her characters are the

irrationalities and contradictions of the domestic and social habits of the class, the peculiar products, one likes to think, of our recent history. The new prejudices of the different social levels (We are broadminded and do not object to inter-caste marriages; but class is a different matter). The strangle-hold that the ties of the family have over us ('How can I leave Delhi? My whole family is here, my mother, my sisters, my brothers, how can I leave them?'). The confusion between a theoretical desire to be 'advanced' and an emotional clinging to tradition: 'I believe just as much as you do in women's freedom and the Hindu Code Bill and everything, but it is quite different when one thinks of one's own daughter.' The match-making tea-parties: 'It is all very well for Papaji to say he had not arranged his daughters' marriages, but Mataji had been there, and all the aunts, and they had seen to it that suitable husbands were found.' All these things are Indian and contemporary in a very real and unromantic way. If Mrs. Jhabvala had set out to write a treatise on the middle class in North India she could not have presented a more graphic or accurate account of her subject.

Her characters are people who could not belong to any other country except India. Without in any way being caricatures, they represent most faithfully the types of which we all know half a dozen examples. They are all exactly reproduced even unto the Indian English of their speech. There is, for instance, the grandfather, Pandit Ram Bahadur, a man who has been a judge and an important person in his time. He is now retired and, bereft of all the outward signs of authority and position, his 'facial and verbal expression were all that were left to him with which to impose his dignity on the world.' He also maintains his self-esteem by austere perusing his law books in his study from morning till evening. It seems to me that such a

character could, and does, occur only in India. In any other country, Pandit Ram Bahadur would have taken to some undignified hobby like gardening or stamp collecting. Then there is the heroine of this tale, Amrita, who considers herself a modern young woman and has a job at the A.I.R. Her attempts to assert herself are continuously being undermined by the centuries of modesty and submission which are in her blood. 'Everybody is always telling us to be emancipated, to be like European women, but when we try to be, they are shocked and say we are behaving badly.'

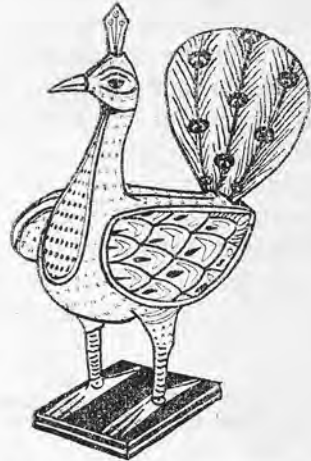
Hari is Amrita's unsuitable young man. He is an announcer and outwardly a modern, back-slapping boy. In point of fact his life is so governed by his female relations that he is spineless and incapable of making any decisions for himself. Even Krishna, the intelligent young professor who cannot re-adjust himself to India after five years in England, is typical. He starts by being revolted with the shyness and restraint of Indian girls, and ends by disliking them if they are not shy and restrained.

As for the legion of aunts, whether devoted to good works and their Committees or to clothes and food, there are dozens of each kind to be found in every town and city in India. The inevitable 'European friend' is also given his due share. Hear the words of wisdom which drop from the lips of Prof. Hoch who has spent 25 years studying Indian culture.

'A very talented boy, very talented. He left the Delhi Polytechnic School of Art last year and has just come from a painting tour of Kashmir. He showed me some very interesting canvases, and I myself advised him to hold an exhibition. He has distilled all the beauty and colour of the valley. His use of green for trees is specially remarkable.'

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unduly modest about its own publication: or is it possible that Allen and Unwin are unfamiliar with India and do not realize how right, and good this book is? Or, can it be that my enthusiasm is misplaced, that I have been carried away by my pleasure at finding a woman writer with a sense of proportion? Surely not. If I give that impression, then I have failed to convey something of the book's quality. It does not contain only documentary truth about middle class Indians. It does for us what Jane Austen did for eighteenth century England. It immortalizes our foibles.

LAEEQ FUTEHALLY

MAN OF EVEREST. The Autobiography of Tenzing. Told to James Ramsey Ullman. Harapp. 18s.

TO have been born in a remote Himalayan village, to have worked as a cowherd and labourer, to have been 'a mountain coolie, a bearer of loads'; and then one day to find your name in headlines in every newspaper and magazine in the world, to be received by kings and presidents, to have mammoth public functions in your honour, to become, in Tenzing's own words 'a wearer of a coat with rows of medals, who is carried about in planes and worries about income tax': how does it feel to go through such an experience?

But of course the transition was not so fantastic or sudden as is sometimes made out. Firstly, Tenzing was not just any Sherpa porter rocketed to world fame. He was an outstanding person in his own right, distinguished from the other Sherpas by his great climbing prowess and even more by his desire and determination to climb, and not just to 'bear loads'. Secondly, Tenzing's reputation had been building up for years before his final triumph, and the previous year with the Swiss had already brought him world-wide fame.

Everest had become an unrelenting passion for Tenzing, driven by the 'inner fire' which burned in him. This is how his companion, Edmund Hillary, describes Tenzing when, with those now famous 'few more whacks' of the ice axe, they stood on the summit, and Tenzing's life-long desire was fulfilled. 'I turned and looked at Tenzing', he writes in his book, *High Adventure*. 'Even beneath his oxygen mask and the icicles hanging from his hair, I could see his infectious grin of sheer delight. I held out my hand, and in silence we shook in good Anglo-Saxon fashion. But this was not enough for Tenzing, and impulsively he threw his arm around my shoulders and we thumped each other on the back in mutual congratulations.'

Tenzing's lovable personality and cheerful smile have long been familiar through the descriptions of others. They emerge even more clearly through his own book, an unvarnished and sincerely told tale. It seems right that Tenzing should now publish his autobiography and reveal himself in his own way. As he says, almost wistfully, 'Through all my climbing days I have been with men who have written books. I have appeared in many. My home is full of them. And since the climbing of Everest I have wanted more than anything else to have a book of my own.'

Tenzing recounts his travels with various expeditions in the Himalayas, first as a porter, then as a sirdar. He tells of his trips to Garhwal, Sikkim, Chitral, to Bandar Punch, the 'Doon School mountain', to Tibet with the lovable but eccentric Professor Giuseppe Tucci in search of rare manuscripts, his first summit with the Swiss in 1947, to Nanda Devi with the French. But naturally the major interest focuses on his relations with Everest, culminating in his seventh trip to that mountain with the successful British expedition in 1953.

It is significant that even though—despite vehement protestations—the climbing of Everest had become a matter of national prestige and competition, Tenzing, the hired sirdar, found a place as a full climbing member with both Swiss and British attempts. With the first Swiss attempt in the spring of 1952, it just happened. 'By this time (in the Western Cwm) I was working mostly with Lambert,' Tenzing writes. 'There was nothing official about it; no one had ordered it that way. It had just seemed to happen.' The team worked so well that René Dittert decided they should stay that way and Tenzing should have a chance at the summit. And so, on May 27, when it was decided that two men should stay in a bivouac camp IX on the South East ridge, it was taken as natural that Tenzing should stay with Lambert while Aubert and Flory returned to the South col. This was no ordinary honour and Tenzing was fully conscious of it. In the autumn, the Swiss invited Tenzing both as sirdar and as a full member of the climbing team. After that the Nepalese government stipulated that future Everest expeditions must give any Sherpas who were fit an equal chance to get to the summit.

A particularly deep attachment developed between Raymond Lambert and Tenzing and the latter's affection and admiration are apparent throughout his book. He frankly confesses that he would rather have climbed Everest with Lambert than with anyone else, and it is touching to read that he deliberately wore the scarf that Lambert had given to him on the day he went to the top.

Tenzing's special attachment to the Swiss seems to be fully reciprocated. Shortly after the Swiss autumn expedition of 1952, there was a showing of some of their photographs and colour slides in Geneva, accompanied by a commentary, shared if

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I remember rightly, by Dittert and Lambert. One slide was a portrait of the smiling Tenzing and before the commentator could say anything, the whole audience broke into spontaneous and prolonged applause.

But Tenzing had his troubles in Switzerland too, when he came in the summer of last year with Major N. D. Jayal to undergo a climbing course. Tenzing slurs over these difficulties in his book—rightly so. But it is only fair to him to say that the criticism he was subjected to at the time was mostly based on misunderstanding and jealousy. People—those who know little of mountains or climbing—felt that the man who had climbed the world's highest peak, must be the world's best climber: when they found that this was not so, they criticised him. But climbing in the Alps is very different from climbing in the Himalayas. In the Himalayas a climb means working out the easiest route, establishing camps and organising supplies, fixing a route for laden men, pitting oneself against the altitude and the weather. In the Alps there is no question of camps: every climb is done from a hut; every peak has been climbed and from every possible angle and the routes are well known; on the more difficult rock climbs every handhold and foothold is known. This enables a degree of technical virtuosity which is unthinkable in the Himalayas.

These difficulties were minor compared to the difficulties Tenzing faced immediately after the Everest climb, when one controversy after another seemed to break over his unprepared head. Tenzing writes frankly and with dignity about these difficulties and those he had with the expedition. He stressed what was obvious to most reasonable people that the troubles caused after the expedition—like the stupid controversy about who reached the summit first of two men climbing on the

same rope—were mostly due to 'political' journalists and mischief makers. Incidentally, Ralph Izzard in his book, *The Innocent on Everest*, gives a good description of the atmosphere and circumstances in which much of this tendentious reporting was done.

The Himalayas are opening up fast and they are perhaps where the European Alps were a hundred years ago. It seems likely that there will be a similar development, though most Himalayan enthusiasts will shudder with horror at the thought of a Himalaya covered with mountain cabins, téléphériques, mountain railways, hotels, cafés, and scores of climbers almost falling over each other on the more popular routes.

That, let us hope, is a very distant prospect, and will surely never happen to the whole gigantic range. But it is encouraging to see that Indians are going to the Himalayas in increasing numbers and the names of some Indian climbers are already becoming familiar: the two Jayals and Gurdial Singh come immediately to mind. Tenzing's exploit has helped to make the adventure of mountaineering better known in the country. It has been directly responsible for the setting up of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, where he now works, a job in which, Tenzing hopes, he 'may help to give a knowledge and love of the high places to many young Indians.'

There is a lot more he could teach besides the love of high places, for he is much more than a good mountaineer. He is a remarkable man. He has had adulation and honour such as is given to few men and yet he can say—truthfully—that inside he is the same old Tenzing. The attention of the whole world has not been able to turn his head or distort his heart. Surely that is a greater achievement than climbing Everest.

AAMIR ALI

THIS CIVILIZATION by P. R. Kaikini.
New Book Co. Ltd. Re. 1/8.

MOST readers of poetry today agree that it is not necessary for poetry to be 'beautiful'—and Mr. Kaikini's poetry isn't; nor is it the function of poetry to give pleasure—and Mr. Kaikini's poetry doesn't; nor is it even necessary for it to have any 'form'—and Mr. Kaikini's poems are shapeless enough. Moreover the idea that poetry should be 'musical' is as dated as Tennyson—so Mr. Kaikini has carefully avoided this pitfall as well. And of course, as everyone knows, a poem with a 'meaning' or a 'message' loses most of its charm: Mr. Kaikini's poems seldom mean anything; and even when they do have a meaning, it is so puerile that one feels, 'Surely he couldn't have meant *this*. There must be something I have missed.' Thus, considered negatively, *This Civilization*... should satisfy the most exacting critic. On the other hand, judged *positively*, the book

fully justifies the publishers' claim that Mr. Kaikini's work 'belongs to the literature of revolt'—it revolts.

From the comments of kindly readers which are featured so prominently on the cover, one would suppose that here at long last one has stumbled on something rare and precious: poetry of a genuinely Indian character written at a time (the book was first published in 1937) when India was struggling to shake off the yoke of foreign domination—poetry that voiced the irrepressible freedom-cry of a nation awakening after centuries of slavery and slumber—a poetry of power and patriotism. And, indeed, readers who feel that Mr. Kaikini's patriotic fervour has spent itself in the act of dedicating the book to 'Bharat Ratna Jawaharlal Nehru', will be doing him a grave injustice... For Mr. Kaikini has, in his own way, contributed uniquely to the downfall of the British Empire: he has murdered the English language.

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TAMILAKAM, STERLING ROAD, MADRAS 31.

This Civilization... is not poetry: it is bad prose masquerading as poetry, and the greater part of the book consists of either bad verses like,

*"We read Shakespeare's love-themes
And lie in wait for a likely maiden
To jump upon and romance with."*

or simple meaningless ones like,

*"Bewitching beauty has
Strange charm and
Stranger power
To charm."*

For the rest, it is a terrible cocktail of Tagore and Lawrence (which has neither the delicacy of Tagore nor the fire of Lawrence) that is so popular among our undergraduate versifiers. So where, for instance, Lawrence would write:

*"You are the call and I am the answer,
You are the wish and I the fulfilment."*

Mr. Kaikini writes:

*"I am the wet clay
You are the potter.
I am the water
You the pots, ponds and seas..."*

I think it was the duty of the publishers to have printed in red on the cover page: 'Caution. Not to be taken on an empty stomach.'

IQBAL LUKMANI

THE KING AND THE CORPSE by Heinrich Zimmer. Edited by Joseph Campbell;

THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES by Joseph Campbell; \$4.00 Bollingen Series.

WE believe that, equipped with scientific knowledge, we have shaken ourselves out of the bondage of superstition, the dream-web of myth has fallen away, and 'dead are all the gods.' We believe in democracy, where all are equal, life is neatly mapped out, relatively secure and commonplace. The days of the heroes are over for, apart from war, there is little

occasion for the 'common man' to undertake the weird adventure and perform deeds of high valour. And yet, our age is not wanting in frustrated misfits, neurotics and shattered personalities. The psychoanalyst is much in demand. It appears that, in spite of all our advance, we are not far from our distant ancestors, who required the medicine-man to help the hero through trials and terrors, and the strange rituals of primitive tribes which conducted men across the various thresholds of life.

It is the principal theme of both the above books that there is the hero in each of us, and that the myths and practices which we dismiss as the products of a barbarous and ignorant age do really touch us vitally and could instruct us in the profoundest ways if only we listened. From the simplest fairy-tale to the most complicated and gruesome myth, there is always an extensive symbolism and a deep undercurrent of meaning. The meanings have to be constantly reread, understood afresh, says Dr. Zimmer, and this requires, not the systematist, but the reckless dilettante, for otherwise we deprive ourselves of the quickening contact, the demonic and inspiring assault that is their proper effect.

With a sensitive imagination and a knowledge surely not of an amateur, Dr. Zimmer lifts the veil from a large number of myths and fairy-tales of different peoples. Mr. Campbell, in Part I of his book, traces the stages of the heroic life, illustrating his points with several examples. Psychoanalysis has revealed to us the grammar of symbolism, and we find that the symbolism and rituals in the myths are natural to the human psyche at all times and places. Both authors believe that though our problems remain essentially the same as those of our 'ignorant' ancestors yet in our 'exorcism of all the demons and gods of the world', we are left 'helpless before the magic' of our own invisible psyche. Against its spells we have

no counter-spells, and the result is physical and spiritual suffering.

In the story 'The King and the Corpse', the king received every year a fruit from a beggar, but he accepted it without giving it any thought, until one day a pet monkey bit the fruit and disclosed a jewel in it. Thus does 'life itself, every morning, stand before us in ordinary workaday garb.... waiting upon us with the gifts of the day. We take things for granted, never caring to look deeper. But suddenly our humdrum existence gets a jolt; some playful touch, some little trick of chance, even some blunder may amount to the opening of a destiny. Our thoughtless past deeds have spun a web around us, and the time to break through is at hand. The 'Beast in the Jungle,' (to quote Henry James) has leapt from the least expected place, and at a stroke what formerly was meaningful may become strangely emptied of value. The king leaves everything and follows the beggar who was really a magician. The real lies hidden beneath the semblance, and because the king clung to the semblance too long, he was engulfed by the ghosts of his past omissions.

Sometimes the call is refused for some petty advantage. The greed of Minos retained the god-given bull for himself—with dire consequences, for his queen gave birth to the Minotaur. Sometimes fear causes us to run away from 'the Hound of Heaven' and then, like Daphne fleeing from Apollo, one may be rooted to the spot, and the charmed moment has gone. The psychoanalyst calls this fixation complex.

For those who answer the call the journey is hard and horrible. Like the dream of a patient, the road winds 'through slummy, muddy streets'. The frog in the story of the Princess, signifies that the dark, loathly or terrifying, judged evil by the world, is yet the gateway to the Fairy City, the Kingdom of God within us.

There is no short-cut to bliss. He who



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has led the sheltered life of 'cloistered virtue', blind to the 'powers of life in their unpacified, sheerly destructive aspects', must go deeper and face them. The innocent Conn-eda had to dive into the lake full of serpents. St. John Goldenmouth tried to turn his back on temptations by escaping into the forests, but even there he found a beautiful woman. He sinned, and to escape sinning further he killed her, but the result was that he inflicted upon himself a terrible punishment. Salvation cannot come from without, the hero must work it out himself. The king of *The King and the Corpse* had to solve many riddles

before he could extricate himself from his own past.

These tribulations are not tests set by an external divinity, they are the agony of self-completion through the mastery of one's own lower animal nature. The Buddha was victorious over the temptations of physical pleasure and the fear of Death. But if the lower impulses are courageously faced, given their due share, and the Queen goddess of the World is gently won, they in turn become the hero's faithful servants, like Conn-eda's horse and Owain's lion, the ghost which finally showed the king the way to victory, and Sir Gawain's hag of a wife who, when he boldly turned to embrace her, became a comely damsel. They are the unconscious, blind instincts, which must be mastered by man's conscious rational ego, but without which the latter would be helpless.

But the hero must not be afraid to take the plunge, and completely lose himself to be reborn. He must enter the belly of the whale. Dante had to visit Inferno, and Christ had to be entombed before he could rise.

It is however difficult to reconcile the insistence on overcoming temptation in stories like that of the Buddha, with Dr. Zimmer's idea that 'no one but the sinner can become a saint.' (p. 61) Thus he explains the sin of Goldenmouth. This seems like a philosopher's advice that a doctor should have himself had all the diseases!

The Four Episodes taken from Hindu Mythology show that it is not only man who is faced with temptations, while the gods reign in peace. The Universe is perpetually being created by 'surprises and abrupt reversals', and the Gods themselves are involved in the process. Even the ascetic Shiva succumbs to temptation, then loses his wife, and after many generations regains her in another form. Thus

everything 'jolts from crisis to crisis. In the Arthurian tale, the Mistress of the Castle of Life marries each successive killer of her last husband. And yet, says the Indian myth, there is no cause for pessimism, for there is some 'secret safety even in the disorderliness'.

In Part II of his book, Mr. Campbell shows how the Cosmogonic Cycles, the Creation and the relation of the One and the Many constantly figure in many myths and folktales. The idea that the Spirit is imprisoned in the body, from which it will finally fly back to its heavenly home, is an oft-recurring theme. These notions seem to come naturally to the human mind faced with the riddle of the universe, but Mr. Campbell finds them so 'profoundly suggestive' that he almost seems to advise us to substitute them for Science and Metaphysics! Finally, he hints at the relation between Myth, Society and Modern Life. The book has 24 interesting photographs and many other illustrations, but the lay reader would have been helped by fuller explanations of them. Both books are clearly and beautifully written, but Mr. Campbell's language is sometimes over lush, and he has a fondness for the purple patch.

Dr. Zimmer's style is more limpid, although the Arthurian Romances are a little too long-drawn-out. His most delightfully written story is that of Abu Kasem, who could not get rid of his old slippers, the symbols of his short-sighted covetousness. Let us end with a passage: 'These impish slippers are like dogs turned loose, who, after a lifetime of companionship with their master, return to him again. He thrusts them from him, but they become independent only to find their way back to him. And their very faithfulness develops into a kind of innocent maliciousness. Their spurned devotion takes its revenge for the treachery of Abu Kasem's attempt to divorce himself from

them, the faithful guardians of his ruling passion.'

S. OOKERJI

THE LITTLE BLACK BOX by Shakuntala Shrinagesh. Secker & Warburg, London. 12s.6d.

IF you are one of those superior, detached beings who subscribe to the opinion that another's bitterness is seldom fascinating, except rarely and regrettably, as a kink in a Colossus, you may find in this history of the gestation, life and death of a 'small' hate, that some tedium is implicit. If, on the other hand, with the greater part of mankind, you flatter yourself that you are a fairly good judge of character and most understanding of human nature, you will probably end up trying to psychoanalyse the heroine of this hauntingly shocking book. This urge in itself seems consummate proof that the characterisation is superb.

That Shakuntala Shrinagesh is a young writer of great promise there is no doubt. She has abandoned the mundane in theme and treatment and set herself a mighty undertaking. It is therefore not surprising that at times a wispy, fragile fabric of an imagination at once perceptive and sensitive, exquisite and provocative, should wear a little thin; one wishes sometimes for more wit and less nagging, and regrets that in conversations the lack of subtlety jars. I am also inclined to think that the diary-form in which the book is written does not permit of the detached, God's eye view of the subject necessary to fostering sympathy for the heroine who, in her remorse, solicits pity, love, and justification for her bitterness. Bald statements ending, 'I said pompously', or 'I said callously', made me feel that the pomposity and callousness might have been the more readily forgiven had they been implied and not confessed.

The heroine, (if, in her circumstances, she deserves the name) is an invalid despot, suffering not only from an incurable disease but also from an atrophy of regard for those once dearest, now merely nearest. She has become a bed-ridden masochist, incarcerated in her own despair, gloating over the little black box which she imagines holds in thrall those about her. Her captive in catastrophe, the nameless Woman, abused, part-caustic, part-lyrical, gorgon-like hag, is so unfortunately repellent as to antagonise all who come in contact with them both. Her devotion is discounted, her labours disregarded on account of her sheer physical ugliness, an attitude I do not find wholly credible.

Their empire, a shabby ward in a small, impecunious Indian hospital, is a retreat of

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loathing into which all the characters, after a prognosis of approaching death, are summoned in weakness and welcomed in arrogance. The hauteur with which they are received is an essay at once masterly and convincing in that pitiful insecurity of affection which is the germ of all antagonism. So the invalid rules her demesne for some little time, a dealer in unctuous sarcasm, a dictator of vituperative platitudes. When she is alone, which understandably enough, is quite often, she spends her time, as Dr. Joshua Loth Liebman has said, 'scrutinising the state of her soul and drawing up a balance sheet in terms of sin, both of commission and omission.' These reflections, conjured as a genie from a bottle, emerge from the pent-up loathings of a life-time and are accounted to her own bitter satisfaction and the abundant discomfort of others in rather wearisome sick bickering. This is not wholly irksome, as Miss Shrinagesh has, I should estimate, three-quarters of the art of relating the tedious without tedium.

The one bright spark in this sombre gathering is a forthright if slovenly aunt who gads about the book in her own way, involving herself in the affairs of the hospital and the village, indulging in binges of good-Samaritanism and wisely and diplomatically covering her ears from the blasphemies of the sickbed. Perhaps she, like me, found it rather difficult to commiserate with a woman quite so entirely callous, shrewish and vindictive, too selfish to love deeply; intelligent, yet too obsessed with herself to find the peace of mind she sought.

Casual clues to a more endearing side of the sick woman's nature are unravelled but dwindle to anticlimax at the hands of an irritatingly articulate schoolgirl niece, a veritable ray of sunshine, who must, I suppose, necessarily be artless in the manipulation of tragedy, and the little black box is finally opened, like Pandora's, to

loose its ills, and possibly its benefits, upon the world.

RANI SINHA

A HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA by K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, Oxford University Press, Rs. 12/-.

THE study of South Indian history has, on the whole, received rather scanty attention both from the historians and the teachers in our universities. This is truer of most of the North Indian Universities where, although South Indian history is included in the syllabus, it is not taken seriously. This is due to two reasons. One is the emphasis laid on the advent of the Aryans and their settlement in India, both by Indian as well as the western historians who normally begin the history of India with that event. As Vincent Smith puts it: 'Attention has been concentrated too long on the North, on Sanskrit books and on Indo-Aryan notions. It is time that due regard should be paid to the non-Aryan elements.' The second reason is the paucity of books on South Indian History which could give a detailed and connected account of the history of South India till her occupation by the British. There are, no doubt, books on South Indian history but almost all these have dealt only with certain periods of her history. It is this need for a connected account that has been fulfilled by Professor Nilakanta Sastri's book.

The author states that he 'has no thesis to maintain, and any lessons that the story may suggest, he is well content to let the reader draw for himself.' The book, therefore, has very little that is not known already. But in his task of presenting 'as simply and clearly as possible a connected narrative of ascertained facts' the author succeeds very well.

The book is divided into sixteen chapters. The first three deal with the sources of South Indian History, the geographical

features and their influence on history, and a survey of the people before the age of the Aryans. The fourth, fifth and the sixth chapters deal with the 'Aryanization' of South India, the age of the Mauryas and their influence in the South and the Satavahanas and their successors respectively. The chapter on the Aryanization of South India is particularly interesting. The author has drawn inferences from the epics and the Puranas. The two legends that he makes mention of in particular are the ones associated with *Agastya* and *Parasurama* (p. 60). The other six chapters deal with the political history of the important dynasties of the Cholas, the Cheras and the Pandyas and the rise and fall of the Bahmanis and the Vijayanagar empire. These chapters are full of intricate details of political events, dates, deaths and successions, wars and so on. Perhaps they could have been made more readable and less complicated by omitting some details of minor importance.

It is with great relief and delight that one passes on to the last four chapters of the book which give a detailed account of social and economic conditions, the development of literature, religion and philosophy, and achievements in art and architecture. The author has also devoted some space in each chapter for a brief survey of the socio-economic history of the people. In them there are some observations with which one may not agree wholly. For instance, while discussing the concept of the state and kingship in the 8th century the author observes that 'One of the fundamental characteristics in the Indian attitude to political organisation in ancient times was that they looked to the state for very little'. Now, it may be said that the states in ancient time were more or less police states in almost all parts of the world with the possible exception of Greece and Rome. All that the people expected from the State was security

against internal disorder and protection against external aggression. It may therefore be held that it was not in India alone that the people looked to the state for very little but that the very concept of the state all over the world was one of limited duties.

J. N. BHAT

GAUTAMA, the Story of Lord Buddha as told by Shakuntala Masani and illustrated by Nena von Leyden. Blackie & Son (4/8).

OUR publishers are slowly beginning to realise that children need, deserve, and have a right to good books. One has often felt that American publishers of children's books put far too much emphasis on the visual attractiveness of their publications at the expense of their literary qualities; while our publishers committed the contrary offence of being indifferent to the physical appearance of all books meant to impart knowledge to young minds.

Shakuntala Masani's newly published 'Gautama' the Story of Lord Buddha, is one of the first signs that a new era is at hand when books for children will be good looking as well as well written. The paper, the typography, the illustrations—most of all the thought and care lavished on its production, will, there is no doubt, enhance the value of its text and make its contents the more easily assimilated.

Mrs. Masani tells the story of Lord Buddha clearly and simply and in a manner which children will find easy to understand. Sometimes the line between fact and legend is not plainly marked, and one wonders whether it is not postulating an unwarranted degree of sophistication in young readers to expect them to distinguish between the two. However, children are always cleverer than one thinks and are probably quite capable of sifting the myth from the reality for themselves.

J. F.

CORRESPONDENCE

To The Editor, QUEST.

Sir,

I congratulate your paper on providing a forum for the frank discussion of a very knotty problem in the South which has seldom been discussed with such dignity and decorum in the past. Mr. Ramiah has referred to my article (Quest, Vol. I, No. 2) in generous terms and expressed substantial agreement with it. In the circumstances it would be churlish on my part to pursue the argument and I shall content myself with answering two or three specific questions which he has posed.

Let me at the outset admit that my reference to the Brahmin community's 'almost hostile attitude towards the status of its own mother tongue' was perhaps too sweeping a generalisation to be taken literally. I think I can best illustrate my meaning by taking for comparison the attitude of a child towards its step-mother (Sanskrit being the supposed mother in this instance and Tamil the step-mother). Step-children exhibit towards their step-mothers an attitude which may range from unconcealed hostility and jealousy to acceptance of the inevitable and even feigned affection, but rarely genuine love and regard.

Mr. Ramiah says that hostility to Tamil, if it exists, would be the effect and not the cause of a conflict between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins and asks: 'are we to imagine that the Brahmins first conceived a hostility to Tamil and then invented a race theory to justify it?' One is reminded here of the well known quiz about the hen and the egg—which of them came first? While in recent times the language issue has acted both as a cause and as an effect of the Brahmin Non-Brahmin differences, what happened in the distant past is anybody's guess, but there is nothing

inherently absurd in an assumption either way.

Mr. Ramiah says next: 'I am not concerned to dispute that it (hostility to Tamil) existed in the past but only to ask whether it exists today?' I cannot do better than quote a specific instance. Mr. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, a former Professor of History in the University of Madras, has just published a *History of South India* in which he says:

'The Aryanization of the South was doubtless a slow process spread over several centuries. Beginning probably about 1000 B.C. it had reached its completion before the time of Katyayana, the grammarian of the fourth century B.C. who mentions the names of the Tamil countries of the extreme South.... Sanskrit was the language of the higher culture throughout South India.... All these literatures (Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, and Malayalam) owed a great deal to Sanskrit, the magic wand of whose touch alone raised each of these languages from the level of patois to those of a literary idiom.' (Italics mine)

Can racial and linguistic fanaticism go further? Such tendentious history, unsupported by a single argument except the purely speculative theories propounded by the early European Indologists but long since discarded as unscientific, nevertheless passes muster as good history amongst race-conscious and ill-informed circles. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, the distinguished scholar from Calcutta, explains the correct position in the following words:

'It has been generally admitted, particularly after a study of both the bases of Dravidian and Aryan culture through institutions, that the Dravidians contributed a great many elements of paramount importance in the evolution of Hindu Civilization..... In Culture, speaking in the Indian way, one may say that over twelve annas in the Rupee is of non-Aryan

origin'. (*History and Culture of the Indian People*—Vol. I, Bombay, 1952)

Again, the late V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, who succeeded Mr. Sastri as Professor of History in the Madras University but who was apparently free from the racial and linguistic phobias to which his predecessor is still a prey, said:

'Dravidian influences are far reaching in character and must be held responsible for the transformation in its present form of the original Sanskrit language' (Prehistoric South India, University of Madras, 1951).

'The peoples who lived in Dravida speaking country developed a complex but homogenous culture which we broadly call today South Indian Culture, and in a restricted sense, *Tamil Culture*.... Its record down the ages is unbroken.... it civilized the ancient world by its arts and crafts, by its religion and language' (*Origin and Spread of the Tamils*, Adyar Library, 1947).

I would suggest that Mr. Ramiah take a poll amongst one hundred South Indians whom he meets next as to which of these views they are in sympathy or in agreement with and he will find the results interesting and instructive. While it is difficult to agree in toto with Mr. Ramiah's assertion that 'the devotion of the Tamil Brahmins of today to their mother tongue is in fact their one redeeming virtue', it is true that, amongst the younger generation particularly, a welcome change is noticeable, but the older generations can contribute materially to a rapid readjustment if they identify themselves more wholeheartedly with this process.

Mr. Ramiah in his turn charges the Brahmins with spiritual arrogance. If my personal experience is a good guide, this is no longer true at least in educated circles and I do not think non-Brahmins bother much about it; social arrogance perhaps to some extent, intellectual arrogance cer-

tainly to a greater extent, but not spiritual arrogance.

Mr. Ramiah regrets that I have not dealt with the 'pernicious nature of the D.K. and the D.M.K.' on the subject of separation of Tamil Nad from the Indian Union but, as I stated in the article itself, I deliberately decided 'not to deal with the political objectives of these parties' in deference to the declared policy of *Quest*. In any case, Tamil Nad today is a house divided against itself and unless domestic problems are tackled here and now, external problems will become more and more difficult of solution.

This correspondence has proved that differences which appear irreconcilable on the surface are capable of being resolved by a frank discussion such as Mr. Ramiah initiated, and I am sure Mr. Ramiah will join me in hoping that the Editor of *Quest* will continue to throw open his hospitable columns for a frank and uninhibited exchange of views on difficult issues, which divide the people and embitter their relationship.

Madras

A. SUBBIAH

(*This correspondence is now closed.* Editor)

To the Editor, *QUEST*.

Sir,

The issue raised by Prema Anand in *Dress and Decency* begs the question. In fact, she answers it herself in the last sentence: 'With sanity, and not sentiment, we should try to look for the forms that will best suit our figures, our climate, our needs'. The best test of sanity and suitability is the test of time which Indian dress has withstood. The 'turban' constitutes the most effective protection against sun-stroke and heat. The loose *sari* and *salwar kamiz* with their many folds and consequently many air gaps are scientifically better insulators of heat than the scantier clothing of the blouse and skirt which Miss

Anand advocates. This is substantiated by the fact that Arab dress intended to ward off heat is characterised not by scantiness but by the sari-like folds of the cloak. The Arab head dress too covers the neck against sunstroke and resembles the turban. Dress is no impediment to the mind of man. In their most characteristic poses Buddha and Gandhi are shown with but little clothing.

In the past few years India in spite of retaining her orthodox clothing has made much more progress than Afghanistan and Turkey who followed somewhat the line suggested by the author and completely discarded their national attire for western clothing.

Dress is not so unrelated to the genius of a country as it appears. It is the product of centuries of experience and a symbol of the nation's culture and outlook. India has cut out for herself her own path in world affairs and economic planning and there is no reason why she should not preserve the same qualities in her dress.

Bombay

S. S. SAHA

To The Editor, QUEST.

Sir,

I found Smt. Arati Mukerji's report of Miss Seton's stay in Bombay lacking in originality and altogether very message-conscious. That she calls the seven (or six?) lectures of Miss Seton incisive may be looked upon as the lapse of a hospitable judgment. But your reporter actually believes in Miss Seton's emphasis on 'the social and political implications of films of various countries.' 'A film', according to her, 'can not only tell a story, but carry a message, point a moral.' Smt. Mukerji's analysis of the extracts shown by Miss Seton is coloured by this view of the film's function, and must needs be contested.

To start with, the greatness of a film has nothing to do with carrying a message or

pointing a moral. The so-called socially conscious directors of the world have produced incompetent films: Chaplin and his last venture *Limelight* for instance; while the technique-conscious cynics have produced films that move us, not with a moral, but with sheer, calculated, filmic brilliance: Cluzot and his *Wages of Fear* for instance. What Miss Seton forgets, and Smt. Mukerji ignores, is that the film is a completely mechanical medium, hardly guided by emotional or ideological considerations in its actual processes. Eisenstein and Pudovkin were primarily interested in the methods of projecting conventionally demagogic 'messages.' Their films survive because they embody results of permanent interest to the film technician. No wonder Miss Seton's loyal audience thought the Odessa Steps sequence from *Potemkin* rather ponderous, and rightly so!

Therefore, Chaplin's *The Refugee* has its appeal not in its political background, but in its pantomimic explorations. Pabst's *Kameradschaft*, most of which was filmed in a studio coal-mine, has nothing to teach 'linguistic fanatics in India', because its Christian appeal is irrelevant to the honestly amoebic aspirations of India's nationalities. It is a great film mainly because of its imaginative camera work which keeps the significant, but silent, image always to the fore. This, strangely enough, is exactly the stylistic element that makes *Children of Hiroshima* memorable. It is notable that its crucial scene of the atomic bombing is filmed not realistically, but in a tableau-like, sculpturesque sequence that is pointed by selective symbolism.

As for Smt. Mukerji's contention that the modern Japanese cinema 'has managed to keep Japanese films authentically Japanese,' I need only remind her that the Japanese critics rejected the recent *Gates of Hell*, an international success, as thoroughly un-Japanese in conception! The Daiei com-

pany, which gave us that poem of an intricate film, *Rashamon* was responsible for the vulgar tear-jerker *Forever My Love*, which was spurned even by an Indian audience. Films are great because they portray the life of their countries of origin honestly, when they do so with efficiency and integrity in terms of style and technique. And in the cinema, these two mysterious elements are collective in nature and patently cosmopolitan. The universality of appeal arises out of the universally understandable living, image, which has no basically national characteristics.

To prove my point, I shall cite a few so-called progressive Indian films. K. Ahmed Abbas's films *Children of the Earth* and *Rahi* are both bad in spite of being connected with an indigenous problem. The memorable sequence in the first, the exodus of hungry Bengalis, is so because of its first-rate outdoor photography. The rest, like, *Rahi*, is stagey in conception and inane in execution. V. Shantaram's biography of the Maharashtrian medical missionary, Dr. Kotnis, scripted by Abbas, is a pedestrian abortion of the possibilities of its theme. And Bimal Roy's *Parineeta*, an indoor studio film, is much better than his widely admired *Do Bigha Zamin*, because of the intensity of its acting—a legitimately filmic value, according to me—as against the journalistic treatment of the greater part of the latter. A film must be first judged as a piece of technical craftsmanship, and then as a national document. Mr. Norman MacLaren's crazy colour films are patronised by the National Film Board of Canada; what is so Canadian about his work? (What message does his *Fiddle-dee-dee* carry?)

A word about Miss Seton. Apart from her lectures, which were saved by the extracts she showed, she appeared to be extremely shiftily in her interviews. When in Bombay, she said that the Indian critics were too severe to appreciate

the realistic work of, say, Raj Kapur; now in Calcutta she has been saying that 'there has not been any severe standard of film criticism in India'. One need not chide her for her views on the Indian film, doled out in contradictory interviews during her itinerary. After all, she will make everything clear in her forthcoming book, *Indian Diary*. The way Smt. Mukerji sits at her feet, and swallows such opinions as that the Indian documentary is influenced by the British (since 'we hardly get a chance of seeing documentary or other films made in countries other than England and the United States'), as if our documentary-makers have not really had another chance, is typical of her naïve approach. Your reporter has finally sealed her heart-warming narrative with a message which 'Miss Seton kindly wrote.'

Surely QUEST is not a conduit for prophetic gas?

Bombay.

S. P. SETHNA

(The Editor is responsible for obtaining the 'message' through Smt. Arati Mukerji.)

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amongst ourselves

The Third Annual General Meeting of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom was held in Bombay on December 17 and 18, 1955. The inaugural session was held in the Jehangir Art Gallery, Mr. Asoka Mehta presiding. Mr. Nicolas Nabakov, Secretary General of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, delivered the inaugural address. The Session sent its greetings to the Conference on Sampattidan of the Sarva Seva Sangh which met the next day at Vijayawada. A resolution moved from the chair and unanimously adopted paid tribute to those who are dedicated to 'this unique movement which provides a new dynamic for social change

The Business Session of the Meeting took place the next day with Mr. Asoka Mehta in the chair and Mr. Nicolas Nabakov present. Resolutions were passed on economic planning and on the political exploitation of children. On economic planning, the resolution pointed out its risks when it is centralised, 'greatly increased when a totalitarian outlook is imported into the framing of the plan.' It called for increasing participation of

the people in every phase of the plan. The resolution on political exploitation of children referred to the 'undesirable tendencies... to glorify systems that are inimical to the free way of life.'

This Session also welcomed a move at the General Assembly of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Milan to recognise in some concrete way the solidarity of the intellectuals of the free world with writers and artists of underdeveloped regions. It called upon the Executive of the Indian Committee to put forward proposals in that direction to the International Secretariat. The following were unanimously elected as members of the new Executive Committee:

Mrs. Rukmini Devi Arundale, M.P., Mr. R. Benipuri, Mr. M. Bhaktavatsalam, Mr. Eric da Costa, Mr. Jaipal Singh, M.P., Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan, Tarkateerth Laxman Shastri Joshi, Mr. V. B. Karnik, Mr. Minoo Masani, Mr. Asoka Mehta, M.P. Mr. Ram Singh, Mr. Philip Spratt, Dr. Sampurnanand, Mr. Ka. Na. Subramaniam, Mr. J. B. H. Wadia.

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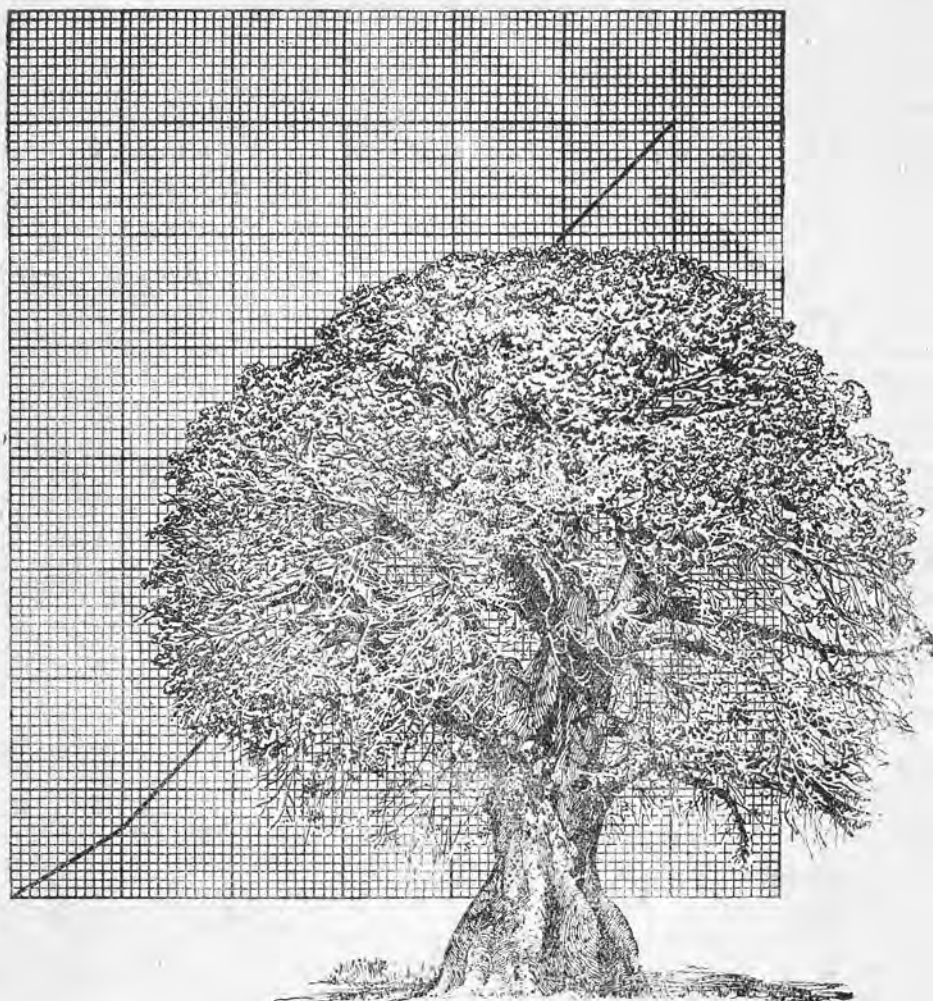
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Contributions are invited and will be paid for. A stamped addressed envelope must be enclosed for the return of unaccepted manuscripts.

The views expressed by QUEST'S contributors are their own and not necessarily those of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom. The Editor does not consciously exclude any point of view. He is hospitable to a variety of beliefs provided they meet his requirements of style and thought.



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 by the endeavours of her people, India's
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 has soared to encouraging heights within
 a short space of time. We take
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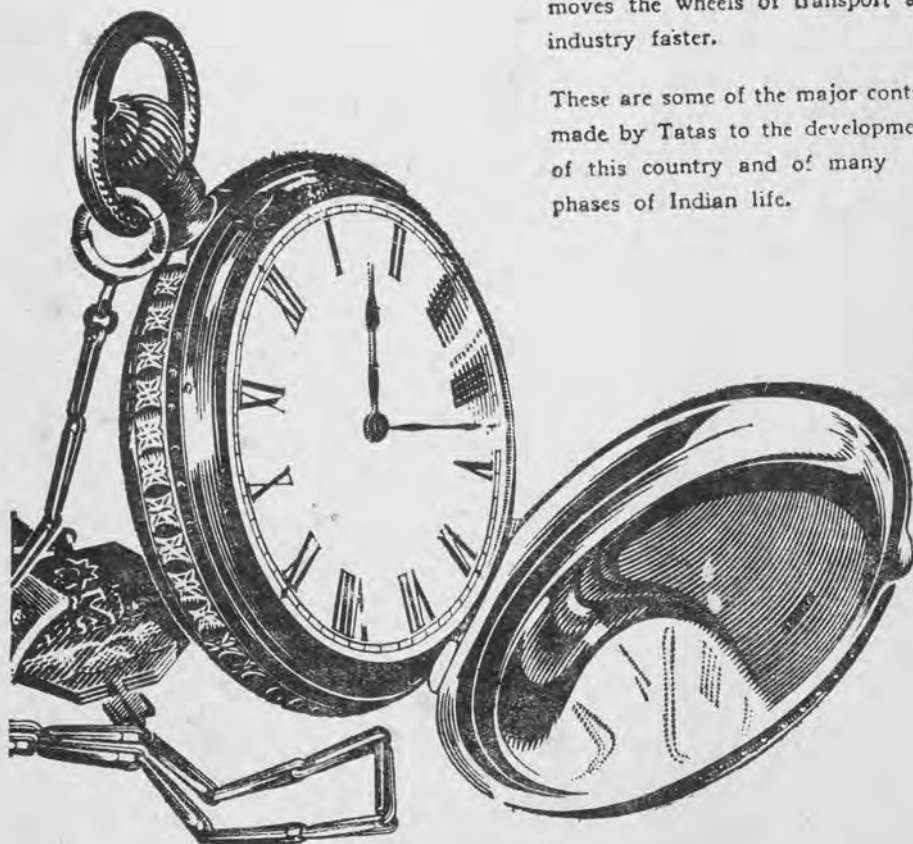
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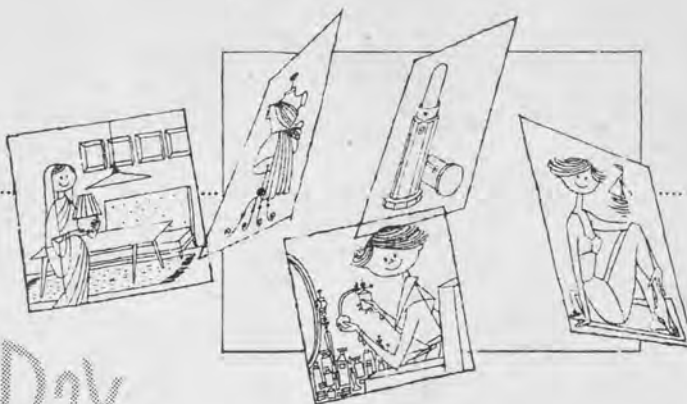


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