

T S E U Q

a bi-monthly of arts and ideas

edited by: **NISSIM EZEKIEL**

april - may 56 vol. I no. 5

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QUEST

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EDITOR: NISSIM EZEKIEL

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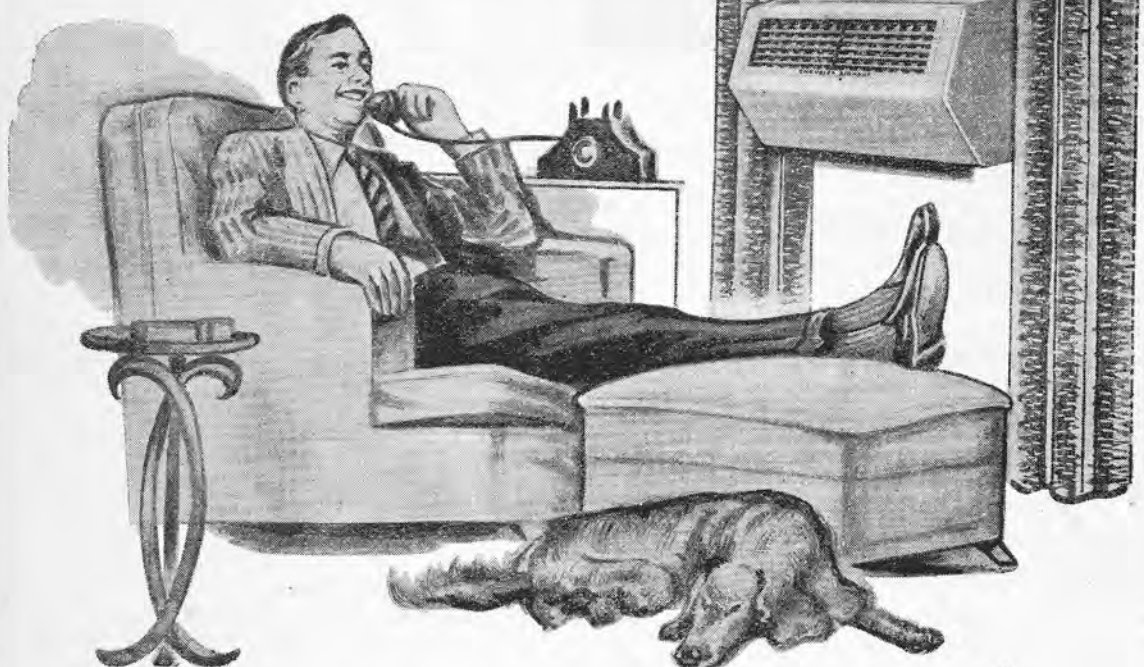
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editorial

WHAT exactly do we mean when we call a society free? In facing this question it is necessary to remember that many thousands of people all over the world from among the 'intelligentsia' accept the communist society as being 'truly free'. The argument with them has been going on for the past fifty years or more. Even in an atmosphere made foggy with slogans of co-existence and panch shila, that argument must continue. It is not merely a political, but an ethical and a philosophical argument. It concerns the nature of man and his destiny. It concerns every individual concretely and with an overwhelming immediacy, touching the thoughts he thinks, the books he reads, the things he buys, the clothes he wears, and the way in which he spends his time. China today is proof that the Russian experiment can be repeated in every country and that the totalitarian society is indeed total—every individual without exception must think and do as every other individual. There is no loophole, no escape.

Still, the question raised at the outset cannot be answered merely by asserting that the communist society is the perfect antithesis of the free society. The argument against those who believe that the most highly organised form of tyranny is pure undiluted freedom will not satisfy critics of the free society. It is not only with some real evil that they compare their environment, to find it tolerable; they assess it by the demands of some ideal of freedom. This is the internal argument, with a common frame of reference, and it reveals differences as deep and extensive as the other. Not all the liberalism and tolerance of a common democratic tradition, and a shared distaste for communism, can bring together protagonists of different ideals of freedom.

Whatever the consequences, this internal argument, as I call it, must go on, as much as the argument against the supporters of communism. A non-communist society such as the Indian, does not automatically qualify for the label free. In fact, while noting the extent to which we in India actually enjoy freedom, there is a constant need to explore the conditions in which it exists. We must probe, doubt, question, question, question. As soon as freedom is taken for granted it is already diminished. Before freedom is destroyed a state of mind must be popular to which freedom does not matter. Some other value is more important—the welfare of all, security, a national emergency, socialistic pattern, majority rule, the people's will, larger interests of the country, etc. Consider the implications of the following news item from *The Times of India*: 'New Delhi March 22: Members alleged in the Lok Sabha today that letters were being heavily censored by the postal authorities ... Mr. C. N. Malaviya (Con.-Bhopal) did not object to censorship, but regretted the way in which it was being done. Mr. Raj Bahadur, Minister in the Ministry of Communications, admitted that there was censorship in the Postal Department. He, however, justified the same in the interests of the security of the country. U.P.I.'

There we have the insidious, barely noticeable canker, the mentality which 'did not object to censorship but regretted the way in which it was being done' and the glib justification by authority, followed by silence.

There may be more censorship in India during the years to come and it will not be an accident. When the censorious attitude is widely prevalent,

censorship is a logical consequence. It is not merely imposed from above, it is a natural expression of the social temper. As for the strident voices against censorship they are rarely moved by the principle of the thing. What they are against is the 'way it is done'. In practice this means that they would censor in a different way, discriminating against other objects or persons, but censor they would.

Freedom, like health, is not adequately valued until it is lost. In the very act of exercising it, through the written or spoken word, people deny its reality. While criticising openly and freely, many wonder if open and free criticism is of the slightest use in modern society. Behind the facade of democratic procedures they see the real forces of wealth, power and privilege at work. The slightest imperfection in the working of democratic institutions becomes the cause of an extreme cynicism in those who fail to get their way. This cynicism is reinforced by the fact that political groups with the largest support are always willing to put aside some vital democratic procedure if it militates against a desired goal.

Asserting his own individuality every hour of his waking existence, the ideologically intoxicated individual claims to believe that 'society is more important than the individual'. In effect, this means that if the right of some individual is at stake, suppressing him is justified. The practice of preventive detention without trial, to which free India has liberally had recourse, is one consequence of this belief. It is futile to excuse it, consciously or sub-consciously, because preventive detention has been directed mainly against communists. A healthy society should find a more honourable and *legal* way of dealing with its enemies.

Faith in the values of democracy and freedom cannot be created overnight. Its existence cannot be assumed, as we tend to do. India is a relatively free functioning democracy, but its resources of faith in freedom and democracy are limited. Only when it can be demonstrated that the open society can actually deliver the goods, materially and spiritually, will it be able to defend itself against internal and external threats.

India is today out to deliver the goods materially and this task is indispensable. Apart from the communist challenge, there are the growing demands for 'a higher standard of life', as part of the modern ideal of the good life. However flawed that ideal may be, it cannot be by-passed without creating extreme frustration in large sections of the population. Sneers at 'materialism' will not do. The saintly advice that 'Man does not live by Bread alone' will not do. The fever for 'the good things of life' will worsen unless the paraphernalia of industrial civilization is widely and easily available to all. Having availed of it, one may find it *ultimately* empty and unsatisfying. But even the circus is a human need. The only valid objection to the circus is when it is offered as a substitute for the dignity and self-respect of individuals in a politically and ethically balanced society.

These observations do not answer the question with which we started: what do we mean when we call a society free? They merely indicate the sort of issues which arise if the question is considered in a sharply Indian and contemporary context. To explore that context is the purpose of asking such questions. That is also the purpose for which QUEST exists.

S. NATARAJAN

a matter of loyalties

the linguistic question

SINCE 1921, the model of linguistic states has been held up to the Indian public. Prime Minister Nehru in his presidential address to the Congress in 1936 commended the Congress Party's reorganisation under Gandhiji's leadership as a wise move towards making it a popular party. The structural change effected was the forming of linguistic units linked in an all-India organisation. Today linguistic units are considered detrimental to national unity and the Congress is busy whipping up enthusiasm for composite units. The territories of British provinces and Indian states are to be re-formed and, if we can believe the professions of political leaders, the basis of the reorganisation is to be larger units with heterogeneous populations. It will not be long before we realise that these are quack prescriptions, and that the final solution lies in strengthening the centre, the illusion that by altering the

units we shall counter fissiparous tendencies, being discarded.

There was a reason why the national movement should have sponsored the cause of linguistic states. If Hindi was to be accepted voluntarily as the language of all-India communication, there was need for some effective assurance that other Indian languages would not be crushed out of existence. The best guarantee of this was the promise that each linguistic group would have the power to promote the study and development of its language. This was publicly declared, and Gandhiji even said that the 'present distribution of provinces is a factor which has done injury to the cause of Indian languages.'

The politician, however, does not explain to his public all the reasons that make him commend a particular policy. At times, it also happens that he is not able to do so. The linguistic principle first gained

serious attention in 1921 when the British started on their programme of giving constitutional reform in the provinces, while resisting any devolution of power at the Centre. Whether the synchronisation was by accident or design, the result is not in doubt. The report of the States Reorganisation Commission testifies to the success of the Congress policy in a striking passage. It writes:

'There was never any noticeable Madras sentiment when the State was a composite one. On the other hand, such loyalties as did develop within the area were based on languages. The same holds true of Bombay and Madhya Pradesh. Marathi and Gujarati feeling grew up side by side, practically to the exclusion of any particular loyalty to the province or State of Bombay. In Madhya Pradesh, the Maha Vidarbha sentiment based on the Marathi language has been vocal for many decades.'

With misleading modesty, the Commission does not ascribe this result to the counteracting move of Indian nationalism. It is rather inclined to attribute it to what is described as the fortuitous and accidental division of India into provinces during the British period. It had, says the Commission, no basis in Indian history.

THERE is an obvious fallacy in dismissing the British period as a historical irrelevance, which is the more surprising in that the two centuries of British influence have seen more change in India than many longer stretches of time. Even as regards the states, if one considers the process as one of extending the authority of Delhi, it should not be difficult to see the integration of the Indian States as the continuation and completion of the annexation policy which the British abandoned a hundred years ago. It is not too much to say that the Government of India after 1947 shows far more continuity with the British regime

than any other successor regime does with its predecessor in Indian history. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, speaking as the last Governor-General, astonished the public and embarrassed his colleagues by his appreciative references to his distinguished 'predecessors' in the office.

However, the Congress has followed up the tentative feeler put out by Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru for an intermediate zonal set-up between the States and the Centre, and commended composite units as the current political fashion. There are many who, going a step further, ask themselves whether it would not be wiser even at this stage to decide on continuing the existing states which after all do have a tradition to draw upon. Mr. Nehru who has repeatedly denounced waste and all diversion from the objective of national progress, must have sound reasons for deciding that the thirty-five years' agitation and propaganda for linguistic states should be written off. The Chief Ministers of Bengal and Bihar have given the lead by announcing their agreement to merge their two states, and their zeal for national unity has been widely cheered. But the plan is facing difficulties in both states, and all Mr. Nehru's persuasions have failed to induce other states to follow their example. As things stand, it is more than likely that the Bengal-Bihar merger will be effected. But, if the example is not followed up by other regions, the people of these two states will have serious second thoughts on the merger.

I concede that the composite unit promises a better citizen of the country than the uni-lingual unit does. I accept too that a reversal of policy is possible, provided one is prepared to pay the price for it. At the same time, it has to be admitted that, if linguistic states are irresistible, then wisdom demands that they be established as quickly as possible while yet there is scope for securing national unity and of keeping the units under control. Evasions and

obstacles deliberately raised will only serve to irritate the public and to accentuate differences.

That the Congress Party stands deeply committed to linguistic states is amply demonstrated by the tortuous paths along which the way out is followed. It is a matter for serious consideration among Congressmen whether the price for composite units may not prove to be an appreciable loss of power for the Congress Party, and a long period of political instability for the country. Even if a diminution of the present overwhelming majorities of the Congress in the legislatures and its absolute supremacy in political India is desirable for the health of democratic institutions, it is undesirable that the challenge should come from regional oppositions. It would be preferable that the Congress swallows the poison of regionalism now that it has grown to such enormous dimensions and saves the nation, than that it allows regionalism to consume both the Congress and the nation in a vain effort to run away from it.

Actually, the majority of the existing units of the Republic are linguistically homogeneous, about five being multi-lingual States. After the States Commission's proposals, Bombay alone will continue to be a composite unit; and the Report makes it very clear that this exception is solely because of the problem of Bombay city, a problem caused mainly by its wealth and prosperity. It does seem disproportionate to reverse a policy just because of one city, even if it is the commercial centre. The City's contiguity to the Maharashtrian region, the large proportion of Maharashtrians to the total population—43.5 per cent—and the fact that Marathi is the most commonly spoken language in the city should leave no room for doubt on Bombay's place in Maharashtra.

Since we are interested less in pleading any special cause than in considering what would be an equitable solution, it may be

mentioned that the Maharashtrians have not in the past looked upon Bombay City as their own. Apart from the fact that the Congress recognition of the City and its environs as a separate unit in its organisation was acquiesced in by the Maharashtrians, there is their insistence on Poona being recognised as a second capital of Bombay Province and State, which amounts to a virtual rejection of Bombay. Nor can we quite ignore the very complex problems which the multi-lingual population of the City presents to the administrator and with which even the present Government of Bombay has not been able to deal satisfactorily—e.g., the medium of instruction in educational institutions.

THERE is no point in contesting these realities. On the other hand, there is no need to assume that they foreshadow a period of neglect of Bombay's interests if the City passes under Maharashtrian administration, or look forward to an era of prosperity if it is kept separate from the State of Maharashtra. In the narrower realm of the fears of the business community, it is well to remember that Business has had more reason to fear the policies initiated by the Centre than anything effected by the State administration.

Since it is difficult to consider the larger issue of redistributing the territories of States apart from the questions concerning law and order raised by the Bombay disturbances, it is necessary to discuss the four-day riots of mid-January at some length. It is easy to be wise after the event. It is necessary to bear in mind that the men charged with the responsibility of maintaining law and order have to take decisions on the spur of the moment. It is desirable to presume that in what they do, they are inspired by the best intentions—otherwise public life would become a contemptible thing. The controversy that has

sprung up over questions of mob excesses and police excesses, is undignified and unhelpful. There are, however, certain contradictions that have emerged in the statements and cross-statements, which betray a sad lack of leadership in Bombay's public life.

The disturbances were not unexpected. In fact, when on August 15 angry demonstrators held up business in Bombay in sympathy with the movement for freeing Goa from Portuguese control, Prime Minister Nehru observed to the astonishment of most people in Bombay that it was a foretaste of what was to be expected when the States Reorganisation Commission's Report was released to the public. Mr. Morarji Desai, Bombay's Chief Minister, has mentioned in the State Legislature that the January disturbances were the result of a conspiracy to capture the administration. It is a fact that the Bombay Government had rounded up Communists and trade union leaders on the morning of the first day of trouble. Yet Mr. Desai was away in Bulsar when the disturbances broke out and he had planned to proceed to Delhi!

IN the exchanges in the press between Speaker Kunte of the Bombay Legislative Assembly and the Chief Minister, it came out that Mr. Morarji Desai who is also the Home Minister of the State only informed his colleagues in the Cabinet after peace had been restored in the city. He mentioned this in the course of enunciating his conception of joint ministerial responsibility. Every Minister, he contended, acted independently in his department but every Minister was responsible as a member of the Government for what was done. A conspiracy against the administration, one would have thought, was sufficiently serious to warrant prior consultation in the Cabinet. If for any reason it was felt that the maintaining of law and order would

be impeded by a full cabinet meeting, the correct procedure was to proclaim an emergency and allow governor's rule to function in the State.

Where the Chief Minister is also the Home Minister, the precaution is all the more necessary to hold joint consultations or otherwise, as in Bombay, the entire burden of responsibility falls on one individual. In the position in which he is placed, the possibility of errors of judgment becomes very much greater. For if individual action is speedier in putting down trouble, collective action offers better chances of averting trouble. That the point has not been made indicates how people's vision is blurred by the picture of mass violence. Prevention is always less spectacular than cure, and the advantage in restoring normalcy lies in the taste it gives the average citizen of worse horrors from which he has been saved.

I have shown how the disturbances cannot be regarded as sudden and creating an emergency. Mr. Morarji Desai's description of the riots as an attempt to capture the administration appears unjustified; but it can be said that they were meant to paralyse the Government and disrupt civic life. Obviously, the Maharashtrians who are politically conscious to a higher degree than many other groups in India, could not have launched the rioting. It is a poor way to convince one's neighbours of one's fitness to control their destinies to indulge in violence. And in Bombay City no section that hopes for political influence can hope to do it without the cooperation of others—not even the 43.5 per cent that forms the Maharashtrian group. The organised rioting, therefore, must be attributed to the leftist, undemocratic elements which were frustrated by their lack of popular support and exasperated by the embarrassing compliments showered on the Congress Government by the Soviet press and publicists from the time of the Andhra

elections to the visit of Messrs. Bulganin and Krushchev to India. Far from being directed towards capturing the administration, it was, so far as direction goes, aimed at making government impossible.

The opportunity was created by the call for demonstrations and strikes, the bringing out of people from work with no specific agitational focus and with no leadership to control the conduct of the crowds. When on the third day of trouble, the Maharashtrian Congress leaders and Socialists addressed themselves to visiting the disturbed areas and appealing to the people, the response was marked. Not all of the subsidence was due to the shoot-at-sight order of the Bombay Government; certainly the removal of black flags and effigies can only be ascribed to the moderating effect of the leaders' appeal.

That the agitation was guided into a course which involved embarrassment to the Government, appears clear if one considers the three occasions in the past six months when Bombay's civic life was thrown out of gear. In August, the agitation that began as a demonstration against the Portuguese Government for its Goa policy, developed into an expression of resentment. In November, the demonstration against the all-India Congress for forcing an unacceptable decision about Bombay City, became an agitation against the Bombay Government and a clash with the Police. In January, the movement moved along the line of least resistance and grew into molestation of petty shop-keepers and middle-class citizens with damage to public property thrown in.

Similar manifestations outside Bombay are understandable as manoeuvres to impress on the negligible minorities residing there the necessity of supporting Maharashtrian claims to the City of Bombay. In the City itself, the violent disturbances started at a time when Maharashtrian Congress leaders were negotiating for a

settlement, and were certainly not intended to advance the cause of peaceful negotiations. The enthusiastic reception accorded to the Soviet guests by itself could not have created the opportunity that the Communists were awaiting, though it indicated an officially-encouraged attitude of friendliness to Communism and Communists. But the dissatisfaction caused by the vacillating policy of the Congress Party Executive on States Reorganisation provided the appreciable section of disgruntled political opinion on which the Communists could work.

THE many proposals put forward by the Congress to 'solve' the Bombay problem had all one common characteristic: They were willing to consider the merging of the City in a larger unit of the Republic only if it was secured that the Maharashtrians would be a minority in it. In effect, this amounted to relegating that language group to an inferior position, however the bitter pill might be disguised in appeals to national unity and the interests of planned progress. Nothing could be more calculated to create antagonism in the Maharashtrian mind.

If the proposals put forward by the Congress were ill-conceived, the manner in which the subject of States reorganisation was handled, also left much to be desired. The Congress Working Committee in its first consideration of the Commission's Report decided to invite modifications to the recommendations from its provincial branches. The inevitable consequence was that linguistic claims assumed greater proportions and the influence of disinterested national opinion was shut out. For instance, the rest of India which could be expected to take a detached view of the problems of Western India, was virtually excluded from consideration of these problems; while the various provincial

committees in this region settled down to brooding over their respective claims, their grievances and what they could hope to secure through negotiation.

It is difficult to think of the Government as different from the Congress leadership, but Parliament is certainly very different from the All-India Congress Committee. The States Reorganisation Commission's recommendations have never been given a fair chance of consideration by Parliament. What is now put before it is the modification effected by the Congress Party, where the A.I.C.C. endorses the conclusions of the Working Committee and the presence of Prime Minister Nehru dominates all discussion.

The Congress itself, surprisingly enough, has paid little attention to the States Reorganisation Commission's recommendations regarding Bombay City. The Report rejected the City State plan on the ground that Bombay City was too small to be a unit of the Republic; it dismissed the proposal to have it centrally administered because its population was too advanced politically to be placed in this category. It proposed the acceptance of Bombay as the capital of a bilingual State where the Maharashtrians would constitute 48 per cent of the population and the Gujarat districts be all brought in. The Maharashtra Congress pleaded for the merging of Vidarbha in this State as a measure of having all Maharashtrians under one administration. The Congress Working Committee set aside the Maharashtra modification and proceeded to consider the rejected plans of the Commission. First, it supported the City State idea, and later it tentatively adopted the plan to administer Bombay centrally. There has been no explanation either of the one preference or the other.

THE general feeling, shared by Maharashtrais and others, is that the Congress solicitude for the City springs from concern for the business community which since Gandhiji's leadership of the party has been intimately associated with it. This is difficult to credit in the light of the economic policy of the Government of India which has been anything but favourable to business, big or small. Mr. Nehru has realistically recognised that the large Maharashtra population must have an influence on Bombay no matter what status is accorded to it. It need hardly be said that from the business point of view a contented Maharashtra community is preferable to a disgruntled one. The strength of Maharashtra sentiment was startlingly demonstrated when Mr. C. D. Deshmukh, the Union Finance Minister, tendered his resignation on the ground that the detachment of Bombay City from Maharashtra State would be a serious loss to his Kolaba constituency. The fact that it was altogether unexpected for most non-Maharashtrians, indicates the gulf that separates one section from another.

Even the solution for Bombay City that has been adopted, is not set out as a final solution. Nothing more is said than that it will be a centrally administered area, with the details left to be worked out with the consent of the peoples concerned. Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru has said in repeated speeches that the proposal can be modified, and, if this gives a dim hope to Maharashtrais, it adds to the uncertainties of all sections of the city's population. Apparently, the Congress expects much to grow out of the new composite State move started in Bengal and Bihar and believes that it will resolve all the present confusions. The age of miracles is not yet over, but it is unwise for politicians to base their calculations on the hope of a miracle.

URMILA CHOWDHURY &
J. K. CHOWDHURY

chandigarh

the birth of a city

CHANDIGARH—the mere mention of the name can start an animated conversation in New York or Bombay, in Zurich or Amritsar. In the Punjab, the infant city has been the subject of controversy since its inception. For a number of unconnected reasons, its protagonists have generally been outnumbered by its critics.

The historical background of the city was in itself controversial. When Lahore went to Pakistan in 1947, the East Punjab was left without a Capital. Simla was selected as the temporary seat of the State Government. The existing towns of Ambala, Jullundur, Amritsar and Simla put forward their rival claims to be considered as the new capital. Partly to resolve their conflicting claims, partly because it is easier to provide modern amenities such as water, sanitation, a modern system of roads, educational, medical and cultural buildings in a new town than in the existing ones

(which do not have these facilities) it was finally decided to build a new city from scratch. It will be remembered that in Australia both Sydney and Melbourne vied for the honour of being the national capital and here again the solution chosen was a new city—Canberra.

It is only natural that this decision stirred up resentment in the inhabitants of the existing cities each of which had been looking forward to a boosting up in local business as well as in prestige. This resentment took the form of bitter criticism rarely founded on fact—the grapes were sour. 'There is no water'—'The locality is unhealthy' they said, statements which have since been proved false.

In fact, the selection of the site had been made with care. It is situated at the base of the Himalayan foothills and slopes gradually towards the south, thus providing natural drainage. The Shivalik range

forms a beautiful and everchanging background to the city to the north, varying in colour and depth with the season and the intensity of light. The city is defined on the north side by the mountains and on the east and west by river beds which are dry except during the monsoon.

The plan precludes suburbs that are the bane of so many modern cities. They stretch out interminable fingers into the countryside and overload the amenities of the city. But here there will be the town and then the country with the intermediate suburbs made impossible by means of a protected green-belt. There is an abundant underground water supply which is pumped up by means of tubewells. The climate is equable for the greater part of the year. Because of its proximity to the Himalayas it is never as hot in summer as it is in the other cities of Northern India. In winter there is a pleasant nip in the air. Strong winds blow all the year round and give an invigorating force. The immediate effect is visible on the ruddy faces of the strong healthy children. In fact, in some ways one may say the climate is *too* good, as most people have put on weight after a few months in Chandigarh.

THE criticism regarding the site died down fairly early and was replaced by other criticism from the inhabitants themselves. These sprang largely from having to live in a city under construction. Most of us admire pioneers from a distance but few of us have the stamina to be pioneers ourselves. In 1953, two years after construction had begun, the Punjab Government shifted its headquarters to Chandigarh. The new residents were not so much concerned with the 'ideally planned city' springing up around them as with the day to day discomforts of a city under construction—power black-outs, water stoppages, dust stirred up inevitably during

construction and the lack of amenities such as schools, shops, cinemas etc. Even today I think very few of the residents understand the revolutionary road and sector system of the Master Plan of Chandigarh.

The Punjab Government decided that as it was building a new city it would be as well to have the best type of design planned by the world's finest architects and planners. They selected as Chief Architect Le Corbusier who has had more influence than any other man on the development of modern architecture the world over. He was commissioned to prepare the Master Plan and design the principal administrative buildings of the State—the Secretariat, the Assembly building, the High Court and the Governor's residence. In Chandigarh, he has implemented the ideas of a lifetime of research on the problems of circulation, habitation, work and leisure of the modern city.

The major roads form a rectangular grid enclosing units of habitation called sectors, approximately half a mile wide and three quarters of a mile long. A rectangular grid of roads is not revolutionary in itself. One can see it in almost any city in the world. What is new here is that these roads are intended only for high speed traffic and do not give access to any buildings which are approached from within the sector. The main roads or highways will ultimately be physically separated from the sectors by high walls in some cases and ditches in others, so that the motorist will not have to fear pedestrian traffic and will be able to drive for half to three quarters of a mile at a fairly high speed without interruption. In the first stage, there will be roundabouts at major intersections but as the traffic grows these will be replaced by two level crossings.

The sectors form complete units in themselves. They have their own shopping centres where all the daily needs can be met, as well as nursery schools, secondary

schools, cinemas, health centres, community centres, swimming pools and other amenities. The main roads give access to the sector at one point only along each side.

The road system of the capital has been categorised into seven types ranging from main highways through distributory sector roads to bicycle tracks and foot-paths. Each sector is split lengthwise by a curving shopping street running east and west which forms a salient feature of the plan. The curve automatically slows down traffic. These shopping streets form bands across the city as they join the shopping streets of contiguous sectors. The width of each sector is also split, this time by a park or green belt and these green belts also run the length of the city as they meet the green belts of adjacent sectors.

Schools, nurseries, health centres, places of worship and community centres are situated in these green belts which form the lungs of the city giving fresh air and open space to its inhabitants. A path for pedestrians will run through the park so that it will be possible to walk the length of the city from north to south without being disturbed by cars. Similarly it will be possible to traverse the city widthwise along the shopping streets either by foot or by car. There will be no pedestrians on the highways as not only will this be physically impossible, but there will be no incentive as there will be neither footpaths nor parks as attractions. Thus there will be an almost complete separation between cross town vehicular traffic and the pedestrian. The car will be able to go at the speed for which it was designed of 40 to 50 m.p.h. and the pedestrian will be able to walk without the inconvenience of crossing major traffic lanes. As each sector will have a nursery school, young children will be sent to school without the hazard of their traversing major traffic roads.

The city will expand towards the south

repeating this pattern of road grid and sector, each new sector having the same amenities as the original sectors.

The civic buildings of the city will be located with the major commercial buildings, such as insurance companies, banks, department stores etc., in a sector in the heart of the city. At the centre of these buildings will be a vast square or piazza which will be for pedestrians only—somewhat reminiscent of the squares in old Indian cities or the Italian piazza such as the Piazza San Marco in Venice. Parking for cars will be provided at the periphery.

To the west of the city is the zone for tertiary educational institutions, such as the Engineering College (already built), the University (under construction), the Medical College and other colleges. A cultural zone comprising art schools, a museum, a library and a stadium set in a park runs east and west across the city. A large 100-bed hospital is on one side, away from noise. *Chandigarh will thus probably be the first city in the world to have all the amenities of a modern city, scientifically planned from the start in relation to its present and future needs.* Existing cities have to manage with what there is at the cost of considerable inconvenience to the citizens. A hospital may be located in the noisiest areas of the city and a college may be miles away, but here in Chandigarh all the buildings are sited for maximum convenience.

THE crowning glory of Chandigarh situated at the North or head of the city is the Capital group of buildings designed by Le Corbusier. This group recalls the Acropolis at Athens and the Fora Romana. Here again there is the subtle asymmetrical balance of buildings grouped to set each other off to maximum effect. The mountains form the stage set and the buildings are the actors. The props, also designed by Le

Corbusier, take the form of sculptures, pools and small artificial hillocks planted with clumps of bushes and flowers. To the east of the Capital a river is being dammed up to form a lake. A 75-ft. promenade is being built on one bank and there will also be restaurants and a boat club. Thus in addition to the sector shopping streets and the sector parks, there will be the lake, the city centre and the cultural park for the citizens to visit in their leisure time.

Not much of this pattern is apparent to the uninitiated visitor or even the resident. To give stimulus to private plot owners (who make up the bulk of the population of Chandigarh) a number of sectors have been developed at one time. Only two or three sectors are complete. The general impression is of a vast plain dotted here and there with buildings against a picturesque mountain background. The highways dedicated to high speed traffic are used by bullock carts and donkeys carrying building materials, more than by cars. The lake, which will probably be one of the loveliest features of Chandigarh is now a dam under construction, contributing dust and noise. Many other buildings are under construction and they too add to the dust and noise. The future parks are arid and dusty. It is useless to point out to the citizens that New Delhi took twenty years to build, that some discomfort is inevitable in a new city and that the hardships are decreasing every day.

It had at one time become a fashion to complain. At any party or gathering, Chandigarh was a good conversational gambit and complete strangers or even dire enemies, could be brought together by exchanging witticisms at its expense. Now as the city is taking shape and one or two sectors are complete and functioning according to the plan, the complaints are gradually turning to reluctant appreciation. No longer can the socialite be sure of raising a laugh by referring to the brick *jalis*

of Chandigarh as pigeon holes. As like as not he or she may be talking to a private house owner *who has copied the jalis for his own house*.

To form any accurate idea of the controversy over Chandigarh it is necessary to know something about the background or more accurately the backgrounds. Some of these we have described already such as the selection of the site and the discomforts of living in a city under construction. Others we shall discuss now giving arguments of both sides. The criticisms have arisen from such diverse factors as the S.R.C. report, sun breakers, the joint family system, aesthetic expression, etc. Some of these factors overlap.

Except for the Capital buildings, all the public buildings and the residential buildings for Government officials have been designed by Pierre Jeanneret (cousin of Le Corbusier), E. Maxwell Fry the British Architect, and his wife Jane Drew, aided by a team of highly trained Indian architects and planners.

BEFORE designing any building the architects made a thorough study of the local living conditions and habits, local materials, climate and all the other factors influencing the design of a building. They were not interested in taking over the architectural heritage left by the British as not only was this very poor aesthetically but it was too extravagant for present day conditions. Economy was not a primary consideration during British rule. Prestige was expressed by means of Graeco-Roman columns and cornices. Houses and offices had spacious verandahs all round to protect them from heat—even on the north side where they are hardly necessary. Ceilings were extremely high. Many of the houses built for officials in the Punjab have a large number of huge rooms but have no sanitation and sometimes are even without water and electricity.

In Chandigarh, the aim was to give all the amenities of modern living including water borne sewage. As these amenities cost as much as 30% of the total cost of a house and as the total cost was rigidly fixed, being scaled according to the rent payable by the tenant, the ubiquitous verandah and the luxurious rooms had to go. Scientifically designed plans were prepared in which buildings were protected only on the hottest sides (the south-east and the south-west) by bathrooms, stores and verandahs. To reduce cost, ceilings were cut down to the minimum compatible with comfort and rooms were planned to have cross ventilation.

As people are naturally more concerned with the places where they live, the design of the houses has been the most controversial issue. The public buildings, especially the schools, have been generally liked. It is impossible to discuss this question without going into details.

Officials coming from districts found themselves in 16'×12' bedrooms with 10' ceilings when they were accustomed to rooms 22'×16' with 18' ceilings. They did not think of the water having to be brought bucket by bucket from the well or smelly commodes or the army of servants required to run their former houses. At first all they could think of was that the rooms were too small and the ceilings too low. The house was not surrounded by a spacious garden such as they had been used to. It was little use explaining that in a modern city it is not possible to give plots, as the cost of services (roads and sewage etc.,) goes up and that a compact efficient city cannot afford to be too spread out. Their retort was that they had large compounds in Jullundur, Lahore or Ludhiana, so why should they suffer here. Now after three years they have come to realise the convenience of living in a house where two servants are more than enough, and

one hears complaints from those who are shifted back to the districts.

The people who complained about the size of the houses and gardens were the senior and the junior gazetted officers. The lower grades of Government servants such as clerks and peons were satisfied with the accommodation given to them. The aim in Chandigarh was to raise the standard of the low income groups even to the extent of subsidising the lower categories of housing. Government housing has been divided into thirteen categories from type XIII for peons to type I for the Chief Minister. When the peons' houses were being designed, they were asked what accommodation they wanted. They all said they would like a two room house even if the rooms were small, instead of the usual single room house given to them all over India. They have been given two rooms, a kitchen, a verandah, a bath and W.C. with water-borne sewage and they are satisfied beyond their expectations—so much so that they have begun to take a pride in their quarters and to keep them neat and clean.

GENERALLY speaking the higher (from the point of view of cost) the category of the house the greater have been the complaints. There are three reasons for this. The low income groups have better accommodation than formerly; hence they are satisfied, whereas the higher officials now have smaller houses and gardens. Secondly the higher officials' remarks make news where the subordinates' do not. If a pipe leaks in a high official's house the whole of Chandigarh hears about it whereas the clerk's complaints are rarely circulated. Thirdly the greater sophistication of the higher income groups makes them easily prone to setting themselves up as critics and mentors and to judge without appraising or understanding.

We Indians pride ourselves on our tolerance but unfortunately this quality has been conspicuous by its absence in Chandigarh. Though I have heard this remark scores of times, I still feel ashamed of my country-men everytime I hear them say, 'The defects of Chandigarh are all due to the foreigners. If the building had been done by an Indian architect, these mistakes would not have occurred. They cannot understand Indian conditions.'

The 'defects' repay analysis. They mainly concern housing. As there is one type of house for each category the same design has to suit families of different sizes and living habits unlike an individual house which is designed to suit the client. Therefore, a type house cannot meet the exact needs of every family.

You will be told the house is not big enough by an official earning between Rs.500/- to Rs.1000/- per month—a house which has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a living room with dining alcove, kitchen, garage and servants' quarters. (The higher category of officials have in addition a study and another servants' quarter). You tell him that by European standards, and even by Indian ones prevailing in Bombay, Delhi or Calcutta, he is lucky to have such a big house. His reply is 'You do not understand. Those are big cities. Where can I put my family?' You tell him that the house can easily accommodate a family consisting of parents and four children. He will say, 'My old father and mother live with me. In addition, I have two younger brothers and my wife's sister—where are they to sleep? We cannot put more than three beds in these rooms'. From his point of view he is right. But the rent he pays (10% of his income) is not sufficient to provide the ten room house he would like. He prefers the huge houses of the districts even though they are without modern conveniences.

A curious sidelight on this complaint is

that this same man, when he builds his own house, will put up a tiny two room structure and live in it without a murmur. Only then does he realise that every additional square foot means extra cost. Because the Government is providing accommodation, it is easy, like *Oliver Twist*, to ask for more. Tomorrow the joint family system may disappear and in any case families will tend to be smaller. For the present the architects have to keep within the costs.

Another odd sidelight is that in Delhi only 150 miles away, officials in the same and even higher pay groups are given three-room flats with about half the area of Chandigarh houses and one hears no complaints. This may be due to the fact that Delhi citizens are more metropolitan minded and realise the implications of living in a large city which does not permit big houses for individuals, but it is largely due to a rolling snowball effect. The core is partly the initial controversy regarding the new site, partly the discomforts of living in a city under construction and partly resentment at a new and creative aesthetic approach—the kind of resentment that was aroused by Rembrandt, by the early Picasso and by Stravinsky. To this core are added for good measure all kinds of relevant and irrelevant criticism.

IF the size of the family is suited to the size of the house, you may be told with indignation that the sweeper has to pass through the living rooms. Our Constitution has abolished untouchability legally but not as yet in fact and it is surprising to find that those who theoretically are all for raising the status of the Harijan still think it is terrible to have him sweep the living rooms. There was perhaps some justification for segregating the man who cleaned the latrines when there was no water-borne sewage system but today the bathroom can be as clean as the other rooms.

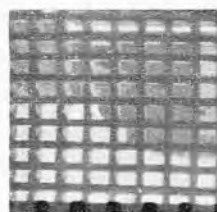


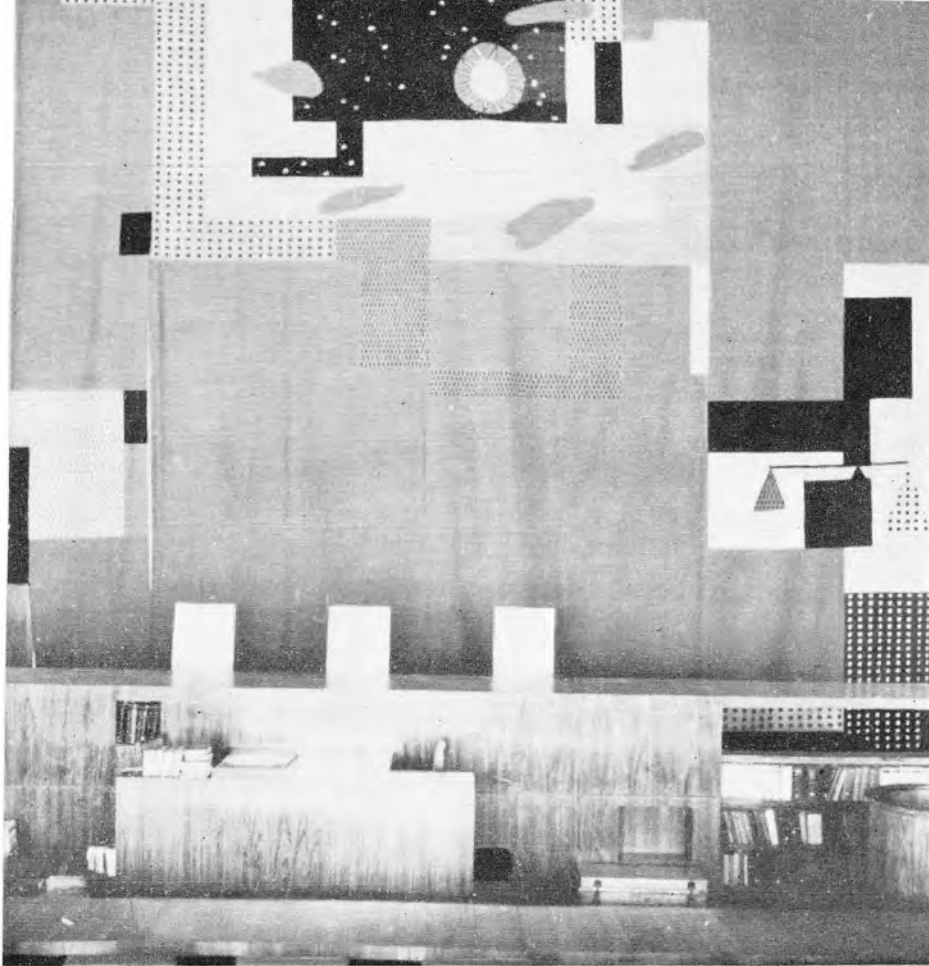
Above. Architect: MAXWELL FRY. Houses for Superintendents.

Right. Architect: JANE DREW. Flats above a row of shops.

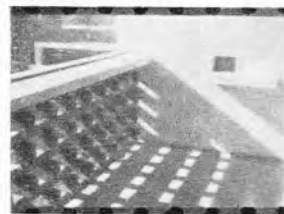


Below. Architect: P. JEANNERET. Another row of houses for Superintendents.

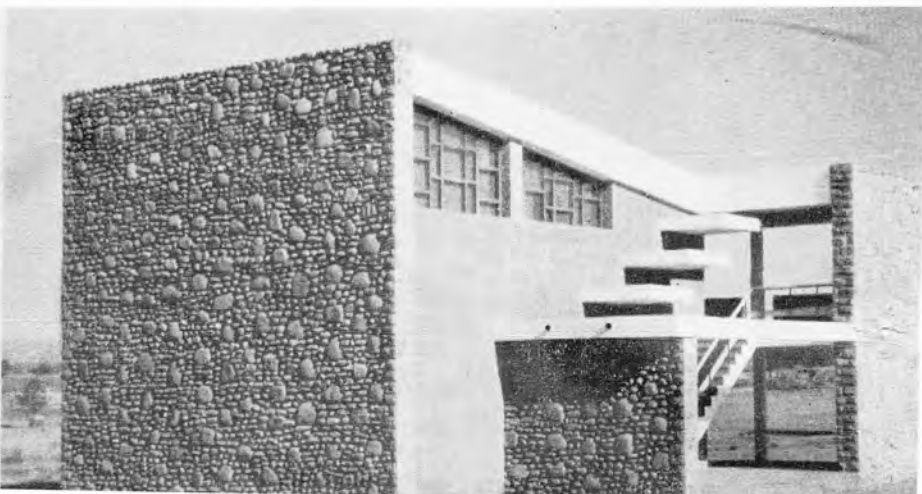




Above. Architect: LE CORBUSIER, Judge's dais in the High Court. The woollen tapestry on the back wall improves the accoustics.



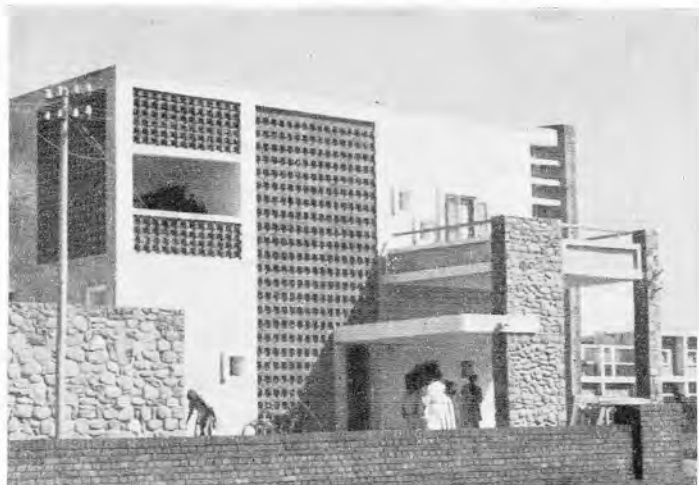
Below. Architect: J. K. CHOWDHURY. A squash-court.



*Right. Architect: P. JEANNERET
A row of houses for peons.*



*Above: Portion of wall showing
protruding bricks for keeping the
wall cool.*



Architect: P. JEANNERET. An officer's house



Architect: P. JEANNERET. A Nursery School.



Seminar on MARTHA GRAHAM. Display of photographs and books at the QUEST office on Feb. 15-22.

In other countries, it is quite common for the lady of the house to clean the bathroom, and it is not regarded as contaminating work. In our society even where there is water-borne sewage, the sweeper is still regarded in many families as contaminated and is sedulously segregated. In conventional two storey houses separate stairs have to be provided and in one storey houses separate doors to bathrooms. This separate access system is costly and the architects considered that the money could be better utilized by giving more space in the house as they felt that the custom of segregating the sweeper would gradually die out. But to the man living in the house this was merely an instance of the 'foreign' architects not understanding Indian conditions. Some said the bucket of hot water would have to be carried through the bedrooms, to which the architects replied that modern houses have electric water heaters in the bathrooms. Unfortunately, the Government could not provide these because of insufficient funds. The residents have now installed their own as electrical current at low rates is now available from Bhakra Nangal.

Some people who were used to one storey houses did not like two storey houses. Two storey houses are more economical to construct and take up less land, a very important point in any city. Now Delhi, a garden city of one storey houses is most uneconomical from the point of view of services and land use, and gradually more and more multi-storey buildings are replacing the former single storey structures. In Bombay and Calcutta, it was realised a long time ago that land in the city is too valuable to be used for one storey buildings.

The architects felt that the greatest climatic problem was to shield the house from the hot sun of the summer months and to provide for good circulation of air. The verandah gives excellent protection from the sun and it serves as a useful area

for living and sleeping but it costs almost as much per square foot as a room. The Architects looked for other less expensive ways of achieving sun protection. Sun breakers were calculated with the angle of the sun and many other different systems were also evolved. Some consist of brick fins and concrete overhands. The cheapest consists of projecting bricks giving 50% to 100% shade to the wall behind. Most of the sun breakers are so designed as to permit the low winter sun to penetrate the building.

BRICK is the cheapest material in Chandigarh. Concrete and stone come next. Steel is expensive and it is important to keep its use to a minimum. Glazing and wood work are relatively costly. A square foot of glazing costs about five or six times more than brick work. As economy is the most important consideration windows and doors have to be kept to a minimum and placed where they will be most effective. In many buildings the architects have used vertical windows along the end walls of rooms. This treatment has a number of advantages. A window in the centre of a room cuts out light from the corners of the window wall and thus produces glare by the contrast of a bright area in a dark wall. A window against a lateral wall on the other hand, throws light on to that wall which is in turn reflected into the room, thus eliminating glare. These vertical corner windows also give maximum privacy to the room. A saving in cost is effected by the reduced lintel spans.

For bathrooms and service areas, Pierre Jeanneret has evolved a small window 'scattered' on the wall to create a pleasing harmony. In none of the buildings have the windows been put haphazardly. They have always been carefully studied and integrated with the elevations.

To provide circulation of air, brick *jalis*

have been used in verandahs. Now *jalis* are a traditional feature of Indian architecture. They were evolved to respond to climatic conditions. They give shade and privacy and still permit air to flow. In the Taj, they are made of elaborately carved marble. Here in Chandigarh they are of cheap and humble brick. The public was unused to seeing *jalis* in the houses left by the British and resented them as an innovation. They were the subject of many jibes—'Pigeon holes', 'Wasps nests', 'dust catchers' and so on—though no one had made these remarks about the *jalis* in the Red Fort in Delhi or the Taj Mahal. Though it is theoretically possible for wasps or pigeons to make nests in these *jalis*, the same thing is possible in a house without *jalis* in the caves' rafters or above beams. In actual fact a house that is lived in is rarely troubled by this nuisance.

In some houses, the architects provided brick *jalis* for the stair-case hall constructed so as to cut out the rain and view but allow air to pass. These raised a hue and cry. People did not mind the *jalis* in the verandahs so much, as the verandah door could be closed. But a *jali* in the hall would permit dust, flies, mosquitoes etc., to enter the house. To some extent the argument was valid but on the other hand, it can be argued that once the building work is complete and the parks planted there will be no dust. Flies and mosquitoes can be eliminated. Be that as it may, the controversial hall *jalis* have been blocked up. I was surprised to hear from a former resident who had been transferred elsewhere that he liked the hall *jalis* very much and that they should not have been blocked up—which goes to prove that people who are dissatisfied with a particular thing are much more vocal than those who are pleased with it. For each individual who has expressed to me his appreciation for the built-in furniture there have been a dozen who have complained of the brick

jali. The dozen also like the built-in furniture but unless you ask them they will not tell you so. Human nature being what it is, they prefer to talk about the things they don't like. Probably the majority of people do understand the relevance of brick *jalis* and appreciate them but appreciation does not make for biting conversation.

Brick as material is ideally suited for small projecting shelves and niches. The architects, with the idea of making the most of their material, designed many different types of niches—book niches, vase niches, light niches and soap niches in showers. The criticism against these niches was that they make for too many horizontal dust-collecting surfaces. The fact that the floor, table-tops, beds, cupboards, and other furniture in a house all have horizontal dust collecting surfaces which require cleaning daily did not invalidate the argument from their standpoint.

Another criticism was that there were no communicating doors between bedrooms so that parents could not supervise young children without going through the hall. This also was to some extent valid. On the other hand, traditional houses in India have far too many doors which break up the usable area in the room. In fact, as in other countries it is perfectly possible to supervise children by going through the hall.

THE construction of Chandigarh has been carried out at tremendous speed so as to give an early incentive to private builders. Over two thousand houses were built in one year alone. This speed combined with the rigid price limit necessary in Government buildings resulted in some cases in faulty workmanship and the use of poor materials which in their turn caused leaking roofs, leaking windows and even leaking walls. In Chandigarh because

of the strong wind the rain falls at an angle with great force and doors and windows are particularly vulnerable points. A major crisis was caused when there was not sufficient money to provide insect screen windows, in the first stage. Complaints were even sent to the Union Government. Now screen doors and windows have been provided.

It must be said to the credit of the citizens of Chandigarh that though they were pioneers through no choice of their own they have adapted themselves fairly quickly to a city and to buildings which are ahead of their time. In a few years (or decades) from now people will realise the value of compact, efficient easy-to-run houses and an efficiently planned city but at present they are accustomed to lavish space, many servants and uncontrolled city development.

Though on the practical side there have been all these difficulties, on the aesthetic side the architects have perhaps been more fortunate.

The British left a legacy of badly designed, extravagantly planned administrative and residential buildings. There was practically no architectural intervention (except in New Delhi) and no creative impulse. The buildings, like Topsy just grew. Even the practical requirements were side-stepped by taking the easiest and not the most economical solution—the verandahs and high ceilings are cases in point.

The architecture of the buildings left from the pre-British period was not suited to modern conditions. A dome and minarets add to the grandeur of the Taj Mahal but they are silly and extravagant for a school or hospital. As in all feudal societies the stress had been on palaces, places of worship, monuments and mausoleums and not as at present on educational, medical and administrative buildings or housing.

Our social structure and our way of thinking is different from that of our ances-

tors and it follows that we build for different purposes.

Lutyens and lesser architects had tried to make the best of both worlds by taking motifs from old buildings and adding them to their new ones. Usually this approach resulted in a hotch-potch that was neither flesh, fish, nor fowl and was reminiscent of the follies of the Revivalists. Though Lutyens with his consummate mastery of proportion and detail was more successful than the others, his interiors and planning generally are far from efficient. Any one who has trodden the dark gloomy corridors of the New Delhi Secretariat, will realise the way the plan has been made to fit a formal layout and elevational treatment which bear little relationship to actual requirements.

Just as they did not take over the existing practices in planning but tried to evolve something to correspond to present day economics and needs, so in the field of aesthetic expression the architects tried to create an architecture that would integrate with their plans.

IT has been said that the 'truly great architecture of every period has always gone beyond the basic integration of utility and structure to emerge in a convincing and beautiful expressive form,' and:

'Above all the modern architect wishes to transmute the practical into the beautiful. In this he does not greatly differ from the builders of the past. But today our practical demands have changed and our ideas of beauty have changed with time, as they always do. A living architecture will embody our new attitudes towards the world we live in.'

One of the main features of the contemporary architect's credo is that materials must be truthfully and frankly expressed. He does not make use of extraneous ornament but uses instead materials in their

natural state to give richness to his building. These materials are used in juxtaposition to bring out contrasts in their texture and colour. In Chandigarh, one finds this play of local materials everywhere—red brick, white plaster, grey river boulders and off white rough concrete. To give added interest these materials are often introduced in the interiors for certain areas. A fireplace may be of brick or one wall may be entirely of rubble stone, the roughness of these textures contrasting with the smooth finish of the other plastered walls.

Structural forms developed originally for practical purposes may be exploited to create a dramatic effect.

Any building that provides for different types of activity automatically requires areas of differing sizes and shapes. For instance, a school requires classrooms, laboratories, a gymnasium, an assembly hall and workshops each having different requirements. To squeeze all these rooms willy-nilly into a symmetrical building is a tour-de-force. The contemporary architect will take these different elements and try to create an assymetrically balanced building. This assymetrical balance is more subtle and therefore more satisfying than pure symmetry. In Japan where the visual arts are highly cultivated, symmetry has always been considered crude, obvious and to be eschewed, as can be seen from their gardens, flower arrangements and interiors.

Assymetrical composition requires a great deal of sensitive study in the second and third dimensions. Though modern buildings are severe compared to traditional ornamented ones, they have freshness and vitality.

ARTISTS in every field have felt the impact of the great advances made by science. The widening of our horizons during the past fifty years has profoundly influenced the artist. He has tried to find

means of expressing the new concepts with which he has been confronted. He has become pre-occupied with the fourth dimension. In the works of many painters, we find simultaneous representation or an attempt to synthesise time and space. The architect who is also an artist is not divorced from these trends. In his work he too has tried to express the infinite through continuity and rhythm. His work does not have the finite expression of earlier periods where the building was vertically composed of a base, a middle and a crown (or cornice) and horizontally was terminated either by projecting wings or some other special treatment. Buildings of today deliberately look as if they are chunks cut off from an infinitely long piece. This can also be illustrated in another way. A carpet with a heavy border looks just that and no more—a finite plane. A plain carpet with no pattern whatever seems to belong to a much larger infinite plane of which it is only a part. This feeling of continuity besides being valuable in itself makes the room look much larger. Rhythm created by the repetition of units also gives a feeling of continuity besides giving a necessary accent or beat (to borrow a musical expression).

The architect no longer looks upon a building as a box with holes for windows. He creates planes from his materials and fashions them into a piece of abstract sculpture. The 'valeur' of a plane is fully realised only when it is undisturbed and uniform.

Abstract forms, either of precise geometrical shape or free flowing are frequently introduced to set off a simple regular pattern.

Proportion and scale are as important to the contemporary architect as to the traditional one.

Corbusier has evolved a scale of proportional measurements based on the 'Golden Mean.' This ratio was known to the ancients

and was probably first used in Egypt. Corbusier has fitted it to the requirements of modern architecture. All the important buildings of the city will have a certain unity as they are proportioned to this scale.

Some Indians and many foreigners have complained that the architecture of Chandigarh is not Indian but foreign. It seems un-Indian to them because they do not see familiar architectural forms and motifs. Nonetheless it is not foreign. One cannot see this architecture in any other part of the world. The reason is simple. These buildings respond to this climate, this economy, these social needs, this site, these local building materials and all the other environmental factors that have produced them. As these conditions do not exist in other countries, this architecture also cannot be seen anywhere else. Because it is new and fresh, people assume it is foreign. When in fact it is as indigenous as the bricks and mortar of which it is made. True, certain patterns, certain ways of planning are common to other countries. A cinema is a cinema no matter where it is and it has the same requirements and a similar, if not the same, solution—just as a car or, plane have the same characteristics everywhere.

One sometimes hears the old cliché, 'I do not know much about modern architecture but I know what I like.' In Chandigarh this has had some rather unfortunate con-

sequences. When you know what you like, you think you can design your own house as you like, and in Chandigarh you do. To encourage private builders regulations are not as strict as in other cities so that in the private buildings we see a haphazard borrowing of modern and traditional motifs on an equally haphazard plan resulting in an architectural mess. (The owners of course would not agree. They are as proud of their gems as any parents of their children).

In spite of the controversy that has raged around Chandigarh the number of people wanting to be allotted plots has always exceeded the number of plots available. They have been attracted by the beautiful site, excellent climate, many amenities and the practical planning which make Chandigarh a city unique in the world.

Visitors from abroad have started pouring in and Chandigarh is fast becoming one of Punjab's major tourist attractions, with Bhakra-Nangal.

Many come from distant cities in India to study, to praise or to deride. As they leave one often hears them say, 'If I build, this is the place for me.'

Chandigarh has now come through its birth pangs and the faith of its creators is being reinforced by the faith of those who have invested the savings of a lifetime to build their dream house in this dream city.

Chandigarh is a symbol, a phoenix rising from the ashes, new and beautiful, shaking off the dust of the centuries.

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J. N. CHUBB

truth and misrepresentation

The Indian Philosophical Congress

MR. OOKERJEE'S criticism of the Nagpur Session of the Indian Philosophical Congress in the February-March issue of *Quest* contains a few pertinent points and suggestions which that organization would do well to consider. I myself do not feel that all is well with the Congress methods of procedure or that we can be complacent about the standard of the papers read and the level of the discussions that followed. But whatever salutary effect Mr. Ookerjee's article might have had has been nullified by its offensive tone and its disregard for truth, clarity of thought and good taste, which make it read like a virulent piece of yellow journalism.

Mr. Ookerjee is, I think, on good grounds when he complains (1) that papers are accepted till the last minute (this I consider undesirable mainly because it leaves very little time for the discussion of papers accepted for publication), and (2) that the symposiasts were not given an opportunity to join issue and discuss each other's points of view. His statement that the Addresses of the Sectional Presidents need not have been read is, however, debatable, and

though one might be inclined to agree with it (it would mean an hour a day saved for discussions) I do not think that the practice of reading out these Addresses could be made a ground for any serious complaint.

These remarks of Mr. Ookerjee could be described as sensible and fair criticism. The same, however, cannot honestly be said of the rest of the article. Mr. Ookerjee may feel very superior and say and believe anything he wishes, but I do not think he should be allowed to deceive others as well and create in their minds a very wrong impression of the Indian Philosophical Congress. Nor should those unsuspecting readers who might have assumed that Mr. Ookerjee at least must be a clear-headed thinker with a passion for truth and intellectual integrity be allowed to dwell any longer in that error. Let the facts, as Mr. Ookerjee would say, speak for themselves.

Mr. Ookerjee begins with an attack on Dr. Mahadevan, the President of the Nagpur Session. The charges he brings against Dr. Mahadevan are (1) that in his presidential address he 'prejudged the issue between Western and Indian Philosophy'

even before the deliberations had started; (2) that he warned his audience that no good was to come out of Western ways of speculation; (3) that he put forward his views dogmatically, believing that to doubt was to be lost and that it was a sufficient proof of his views to point out that our sages have said the same things; (4) that Dr. Mahadevan suggested that the ensuing discussions should be carried on with 'half closed minds.' The absurdities alleged in (3) with heavy irony are not directly attributed to Dr. Mahadevan, but it is clearly implied by the context of the passage.

The first charge assumes that the President of a Session must behave like a Judge or the President of a debate. He may suggest lines of discussion, but must express no opinions of his own on any problems. This assumption is just silly. In every Conference the President is expected to give his considered views on some important problem or question arising in that field. Mr. Ookerjee is either inexcusably ignorant of this fact or he is indulging in sophistry. As regards the other charges mentioned above I say emphatically that they are a series of unabashed misrepresentations. The Address is printed in the Proceedings of the Congress and is there for all to see. Throughout Dr. Mahadevan's Address there is not only no mention, but not even the remotest suggestion of the views, statements or attitudes attributed to him. It is unworthy of any one and unphilosophical to make such reckless allegations and have them wholly unsupported by failing to quote from the relevant portions of Dr. Mahadevan's Address.

Dr. Mahadevan enjoys a great and well deserved reputation both in India and abroad as an eminent scholar and thinker, and his Presidential Address, full of dignity and wisdom, added to his already considerable stature as a philosopher. It is a great pity that Mr. Ookerjee should have written in such bad taste and should have demean-

ed himself to the extent of ridiculing, by deliberate misrepresentation, a person everywhere respected and admired.

If Mr. Ookerjee is capable of such behaviour, what remains of his credentials to report on the rest of the proceedings in a balanced and truthful manner? Mr. Ookerjee has pressed into service the well-worn technique of *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi* to discredit and ridicule Indian professors of philosophy. He appears to have an Indian Philosophy complex in his system and Western Philosophy on the brain. Many of us can testify that there was a good deal of profitable discussion in the Sectional meetings and that there was no common tendency to talk long and irrelevantly.

MR. Ookerjee refers to the Symposium in which he took part as evidence for the fact that his preceding critical remarks were free of exaggeration. Facts do not always speak for themselves, but sometimes one's choice of facts, as well as omission of facts, and the subtle innuendos which one weaves round the selected facts may speak very poorly of one's intellectual integrity, particularly if the 'facts' are innocuous or questionable as some of Mr. Ookerjee's facts certainly are. I question Mr. Ookerjee's 'fact' that a large number of our philosophers, including a symposiast, thought that they were expected to furnish a list of errors. There was indeed someone who I believe talked irrelevantly about Death, but he was an outsider and *not* a 'teacher of philosophy', as Mr. Ookerjee states. (Another 'fact' which does not speak well of Mr. Ookerjee's respect for facts!).

Among Mr. Ookerjee's other 'facts' are: (a) Some speakers instructed the symposiasts as to the angle from which the subject ought to have been tackled. This may be a fact, but what is objectionable about it? That Mr. Ookerjee objects to it only shows that he is intolerant of criticism. (b)

Some speakers pointed out how error was to be overcome through a spiritual experience. Now what again is this fact supposed to tell us? That is the Vedantic standpoint. Are no views to be expressed which are in conflict with Mr. Ookerjee's brand of Western Philosophy? Mr. Ookerjee adds that these speakers did not analyse the nature of error. This is another false statement. A careful analysis was made (within the time limit) to show that error is not partial truth but has its source in the primal Nescience which cannot be removed by thinking, but only by a process of regeneration.

Mr. Ookerjee mentions four other facts of which one (i.e., the statement about being ready to die for one's beliefs) is a statement torn out of its context and, further, misquoted. About the remaining I cannot say anything as I had left the Hall for a short while, apparently when these three alleged facts occurred. In any case what are they supposed to prove? As I have said, the main charge against Mr. Ookerjee is not that he exaggerates (he does that too), but that he indulges freely in statements which are verifiably false. I may mention in passing that Mr. Ookerjee's own article in the symposium contains an elementary mistake in logic which was pointed out to him, but which it took him some time to realize!*

In the last para Mr. Ookerjee's attack reaches the height of unreasoned animosity. I would have ignored it (for it contains no argument) but for the fact that there is in it a statement which gives additional evidence of confused thinking into which Mr. Ookerjee can be betrayed as a result of a strong passion getting the better of his reason. Mr. Ookerjee says that students in India choose Philosophy because they feel sure of obtaining a degree in spite of their dull intelligence, and further that they are encouraged in this conviction by witnessing the exhibitions of muddle-headedness at the Congress Sessions and finding that

any rubbish can be uttered there. This is a very confused statement. It would mean, first, that examiners in Philosophy in Indian Universities declare students to be worthy of a degree even when they write rubbish. Secondly, students who believe they can write rubbish and get away with it should immediately discover their mistake if they have the temerity to enter Mr. Ookerjee's classes in Philosophy.

Mr. Ookerjee, in his own estimation, is one of the very very few genuine philosophers in this country. And yet his own classes, I believe, continue to be 'packed'! What! does Mr. Ookerjee continue year after year to send up students who write rubbish, or is it that he cannot recognize rubbish when it is served up to him? Lastly Mr. Ookerjee's facts are, I regret to say, again false. University students rarely attend the Congress Sessions, and students at the intermediate level (to whom Mr. Ookerjee must refer) certainly do not. They therefore do not witness any alleged demonstrations in the Congress (in any case, being dull, how would they know what is rubbish and what is not?). Hence even if it is true that dull students take Philosophy, (they take other subjects also!), the reasons which Mr. Ookerjee gives are absurd.

In conclusion, it would appear, if we follow Mr. Ookerjee's lead, that the cause of Truth is best served by sophistry and misrepresentations and that muddleheadedness in others can be cured by being muddleheaded oneself. If 'adventures of ideas' as typified in Mr. Ookerjee's article, with its arrogant tone, are ever generally accepted as a sample of true Philosophy then indeed will Philosophy among us become 'a menace and a mockery.'

(Mr. Ookerjee's reply on page 63)

* Vide Proceedings of the Indian Philosophical Congress 1955 p. 60 Mr. Ookerjee says, "—if the data are not mistaken, then the invalid use of logical principles results in error!"

to our readers

We quote below a few more unsolicited opinions of QUEST. If you share them, send us the names and addresses of your acquaintances who may like to see the journal. We shall be glad to post free specimen copies to any part of the world, mentioning your name if required. This will be done without any obligation to you or to your friends.

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SWAMI AGEHANANDA

saffron robes & joie de vivre

a letter from Thailand

THE Domuang Airport, 13 miles from Bangkok, is easily the busiest of all airports in South East Asia; aircraft come in and take off at intervals of five minutes round the clock. Services from India arrive at night, so the gilded spires of Bangkok are not noticed by visitors until the next morning. Until about eight in the morning, the uniformly robed monks dominate the roads though not the byways; they are seen mainly on avenues that would correspond to Chowringhee, Queensway and Marine Drive. Their saffron is a deep, saturated colour, and they take their alms-going seriously. Alms are poured into their capacious bowls by the pious laity—I do not think there is any impious laity in Siam; there are none who would not give food to the monks, so long as there is any to give. All are devout Buddhists here, and all seem to like the monks. The Thai and the Chinese here have genuine feelings about

the *sangha* and about their religion, in spite of the fact that they have no God to enforce or recommend such a state of affairs.

The places whence these berobed squadrons emerge in the morning and whither they return after their daily round, are the '*wat*' and this is Siamese for the Buddhist cloister. There are over 400 at Bangkok, and about ten of them are very beautiful. And none is ugly. At worst, they are small or insignificant, or so perched between rows of houses that they are not perceived. They cannot be ugly, simply because the pattern of their construction does not allow for much modification. They are surrounded by fairly high walls; there is the *vihan* (Pali *Vihara*) and the *bot* within. Both are massive rectangular brick-structures, towered by the typical overlapping roofs, and the Siamese spires on and in between. The *vihan* is the prayer and instruction hall, the

bot the shrine, but huge Buddha statues are within both edifices, some of exquisite beauty and great age.

Much remains to be written about Siamese religious architecture and sculpture, and something also about painting. No first class account of them is available in any European language. Yet, it must be written some day. The first shock the bookworm, fresh from India, experiences, is that there is no book on Siamese art, and that is hard to bear when bookshops all over India display an ever increasing array of the loveliest folios of all sizes, from many countries with the highest standards of printing.

In those lovely *wats*, there is silence and discipline, and it seems to me, less boredom than in the much noisier Mathas and Ashramas of India. For this, the reason is not that Buddhism is gayer than Hinduism—it definitely is not, especially not the Hinayana tradition which is followed in Thailand—the reason is that the people are gayer.

So these are the monasteries. But Bangkok is a modern town, thoroughly, radically modern—so much so that nobody feels any contradiction between the *wat* and the dance-hall. But then there is probably none. The Indian trained mendicant has been spoiled into feeling certain associations which follow from no doctrine—unless you call bad habits a doctrine, as though by courtesy. In the pandals of India, wherever and whenever the religious preceptor and the religious layman meet in that country, invectives against the bad modern materialistic world abound: the cinema, lipstick, promiscuous mixing, co-education—these are the targets of pious indignation. Not so here; in-between a cinema-show and a jam-session, the young people would step into some *wat* on Sundays and hear the *dharmma* expounded by some monk. There, these charming, petite, well-clad and well-made-up women sit, and with them their young men, husbands, brothers or

friends, and it would never occur to a monk to take objection to such liberty. The monks' rules are far more stringent here than in India. They take food once before noon and never after that; they cannot see a film or hear music, and there is a rigid monastic etiquette for all they do. But their vows are not for a lifetime, and monks discard the robe freely, just as they take ordination freely. In fact, most young men spend a few months at some *wat*, fully robed. But back to the laity...

I THINK it is known the Siamese are fond of the good things of life. And it seems they have them. Not that they earn more than others; but they certainly spend more. Since the War, Bangkok has become one of the most expensive cities in Asia, and has the highest living standards. There are no beggars, and the roads are clean. The dress is western—the traditional *phanung*—i.e. a pyjama-like contraption for the trousers of the male, and a dhoti-like one for the women, can hardly be seen any more at Bangkok. Men dress in plain khaki, but women are easily among the most fashionable, not only in Asia, but in the world. On this, I can speak with some authority even after 7 weeks' sojourn. As a man with pastoral commitments toward the large Hindu community (of which later) comprising mainly of cloth-dealers, I am informed that the women of Bangkok, one and all, are excellent customers. They buy a lot of cloth, far more than they need, and they spend less on other things that might appear more vital to the austere. And they are not keen on buying durable things. They go in for fancy-material ('fancy' seems to be used as a technical term by Indian cloth-merchants here; it appears to mean the latest designs), and buy it for many a festive occasion throughout the year. Now though I had known that the majority of Bangkokian women wear west-

ern style clothes unlike the Burmese, I did not have the faintest idea of what I was to learn during the very first stroll through the lusciously lit city at night: that nine out of ten women, all between 15 and 65, are not only dressed in the modern style but supremely well dressed. The maid-servant-cum-cook (she has learnt to make *chappattis* and *dal*), who is pure Siamese, attached to the institute where I live, emerged in a dreamlike fashion when her work was over, looking as smart as anyone among the wealthy that frequent the elegant Chinese restaurants along Rajadamnoern Avenue and New Road. *Mutatis mutandis*, this holds for the men—the ‘samlor’ corresponds to the north Indian cycle-rikshaw, smaller but better built, and the driver—I really cannot call him coolie or samlor-walla—after he has done his day’s labour, gets himself into something simple and smart and is not distinguished from the perambulating middle-class citizen. There are airconditioned cinema-halls by the dozen, and really good restaurants by the hundred. There are also places of modern entertainment, and people walk in and out of them with gusto, apparently without any feeling of potential sin.

I have proceeded somewhat like the tourist bulletins issued by the Ministry of Culture, with the gay and light side of it brought in after some lofty words on the monastic life. For the benefit of my readers such general words are necessary by way of gentle hint: it is really a good place to be at for some time. However, there must now be some quest into the less obvious, though not less interesting. Who are the Siamese today, and where do or can they figure in the pattern that concerns *Quest*.

The pure Siamese—i.e. the people indigenous in and around Bangkok, have a south-Chinese ancestry, but that dates long back; ethnographically, they are related to another branch of their original stock which is now settled in certain parts of

Assam. At Bangkok, the Chinese form a considerable portion of the populace, and there is, naturally, a lot of intermarriage and inter-breeding. I think the peculiar charm attaching to all mongrels finds its most perfect manifestation in Siam, because you don’t have to look for it very hard. The sophisticated Indian is aware of and appreciates that charm, say, in those exciting specimens—few as yet even in this generation—of Punjabi cum Bengali or of Dravidian cum Marathi origin; imagine some such sentiment on the part of the connoisseur in matters of skilful blending when he comes to this country for the first time. It is ubiquitous here, but it takes time to extricate it from what is purer in blood, and probably not quite so exciting. In the first few weeks, one can hardly distinguish the indigenous Thai from the Chinese except for the different dress of the women, and that is misleading as many Chinese girls here have taken to western styles just like their Siamese sisters; then all of a sudden one grasps the difference and wonders how one could not apprehend it before. Eventually, one can tell the faces and frames of mixed parentage, and such recognitions provide ample aesthetic enjoyment on one’s constitutionals at dusk or dawn.

THIS is a country whose language one has to learn if one intends to go native, unlike India where English is as good for the purpose as any vernacular at least at present. In Siam, very few people know English and less know any other western language (proportionately, many more people know French in the neighbouring Cambodia—I made a one-day trip to the breath-taking Angkor Wat.) At the various academies, Siamese is the medium throughout, except for the teaching of English literature at the Chulalongkorn University here at Bangkok, where there is a sizeable

foreign staff for that subject. The Siamese language is one that gives me a bewildering sort of interest; I am being promised by friends that I shall master it within a year and shall even be able to teach in it.

Before the war, one Swami Satyananda Puri, a Bengali monk, was sent here by Rabindranath Tagore to effect a more conscious cultural liaison. Not only did that monk succeed in this mission, he was soon acclaimed as one of the foremost Thai scholars by the Thais themselves. The Indians here know how to speak fluently, but then most of them have spent the greater part of their lives here and their children are virtually Siamese by now. The language is, grammatically and phonetically, a sinoid one, i.e. analytic and monosyllabic like Chinese. In its origin, it is derived from ancient Fukiengese. But with Buddhism an entirely new vocabulary was foisted on the original tongue which, of course, must have been comparatively poor in it. The result is that some 70% of the Siamese vocabulary is Sanskrit-Pali, moulded, though, to fit into the mongolian phoneme, and this is the toughest part of it.

Far beyond the purely philological aspect of the language, there is some mystery, or at least a cultural romance in its effect on the people who speak it. I have long come to the conclusion that certain languages have an austerizing effect on the people that use them. Pali is perhaps the most typical case in point. The Thai people, however, in their psycho-physical constitution as well as in their social pattern (lay, not monastic, for the latter of course is a very pure copy of the ancient *sangha*) are East-Asian, of which you can have no doubt once you live here intelligently even for a few days. Their outlook resembles the Chinese in that it is positive, humorous, and not too mindful of the morrow. I would of course not extend these pleasant epithets to the present Chinese,

for the gruesome fact has become evident that what is in common parlance called the national character, or traits of a people can change overnight if the people's will is efficaciously rediscovered—a matter the Thai leaders are well aware of. Every child knows the tenets of the *dhamma*, and without any hesitation every Thai accepts the basic void of this worldly life. No one challenges the doctrinaire nothingness of the mundane—and none feels disturbed by it. Here is a *joie-de-vivre* the like of which I have not seen in India except perhaps in rare, sporadic glimpses when a set of people forgets the sombre call of the eternal and of course at Khajuraho in stone and in the Geetagovindam in print. Now the Pali and Sanskrit element in the language, though entirely prevailing, has lost its sting of austerity, because—so I surmise—it has been so completely absorbed into the sinoid phoneme that it is blunted and rounded off along with its tone. The sharply articulated consonant-ligatures of the original Sanskrit-Pali have been transformed into mild vowellous chimes mingling well with the evening bells from the *wat*. Yet, there is a certain earnestness in the most trivial doings, in the daily amours and strifes, an unfelt reference to a more sinister heritage, to the bequest of the Councils of Magadha.

THE Thai of today are lovers of dance and music. I have hinted at the jitter and the jive, but here I mean their traditional arts. It seems that in the years before the War there had been a slackening of the common man's interest in the fine arts, and shortly after it the general leaning was toward Hollywood and its by-products. Today, that trend is still there in the majority; people are getting attracted to their classical choreography, or rather, they are being officially drawn towards it. The enormously active Ministry of Culture

(whose Thai name is significantly '*wathanadham*', Skr. *vardhana-dharma*) is bringing this great Siamese art into the fore. I feel the Thai are very much at home in it. The ballet-cum-opera performance (or musical and dance drama, to avoid technical commitments) is called the *Lakon*, and it is the most popular. Within its performance, but also separately staged and the actual traditional core of it is the masked-dance, called the *Khon*. And here we are struck by familiar sights, though with a difference. The plots are almost entirely Indian; they are either scenes from the Ramayana (not the Valmiki-epic, but in all probability an adaptation to the Tamil version of Khamban—the links are definitely traceable to South India, either via Java and Indonesia, or directly from there, from the ancient harbour of Kaveripatnam) or from the Pali and Sanskrit Jatakas.

The most popular story providing material for the *Lakon* is one of the Kinnara (Siamese kinnon) princess Manohara, wedded to, then lost, then found again by a lovely Indian prince. In the *Khon*, the heroes are Ram, Lak (Lakshman), Phrot (Bharata), Sukrib (Sughriva), Hanuman, and Toshakanth (Ravana) with his demons. There is a long, painful training, individualised for the various characters, the royal-divine, the demoniac, and the simian rôles. The training is given free, under Royal patronage and through the Fine Arts Department of the Ministry of Culture, at the Shilpakorn (shilpakara) Theatre between the National Museum and the National Library (both of them worth seeing), and the performances are given in the lovely theatre-hall of the Ministry, right within the precincts—the chanceries.

The classical parts—i.e. the actual *Khon* with its musical accompaniment is what one has to enjoy and concentrate upon—it reminds one of *kathakali*, *ottam-thulal*, or *yaksha-gana*—but along with it, and ob-

viously unalterable, there is an inane kind of realistic admixture. Sweet Manohara, after some most ravishing circumambulations of the pyre which she is supposed to mount due to the purohit's wicked diatribes—etherial gyrations void of *kathakali* or even *bharata-natyam* rigour due to the petite figure of the danceuse—after all that, she is lifted up by a pulley, flying over the rightly amazed ensemble on the stage and partly over the even more amazed audience, to vanish en route to her native Himalayas. I now understood the advertisements of Thai Airways and C.P.A.—their aircraft are symbolized by the Kinnon Manohara! But apart from it, I was reminded of the Wagnerian Daughters of the Rhine and I almost waited for the Rhine-Motif. Thanks to providence, the Kinnon is not akin to, nor can she afford to own even a fragment of her Teutonic sisters' corpulence. In-between the classical pieces for which I had gone, there are some rather awkward items; a grotesquely modern ballet to demonstrate Thai-Burmese friendship, with Siamese Burmese girls in equal numbers, sometimes quick-stepping or tangoing hand in hand, sometimes prostrating themselves before the Shwedagon and the Wat Phra Keo (the Royal Temple with the Emerald Buddha at Bangkok) respectively, both of which are painted on the peripheral screen behind the stage.

A very pretty Siamese songstress, after doing a sweet Thai item in a pentatonic scale reminding us of *durga* or *hamsadhvani* raga, came out with, 'Were my song with wings provided' and *Il Bacio*, in English and Italian respectively. Both the Indian Ecafe delegate and I wished the optative of the first song had come true for these two items. However, the good items outnumbered the painful ones—there was the dance of the monkey warriors, the romance of Phra Wai (an indigenous plot) in *Lakon*, a solo on the *Ranard Ek*, the

Siamese xylophone—an item as breath-taking, less noisy, and more melodious than an *ustad's* tabla-lahiri—some folk-dances as beautiful as they are everywhere when genuine, and a duel 'pole versus forearm-stick', something not so very different from the *Kerala kalari-payattu*, and a ten-minute interval with really good iced-coffee and gossip.

Ecafe, Seato, Fao, Who etc. were all well represented in the audience, and many luscious sarees were seen. The Thai were of course far more in number, and all were spellbound. If ever a bharata-natyam or kathakali team came over here, it would be a hit. As yet, only Hima Kesarcodi, on her way to or from the U.S.A., has given a recital at Bangkok. Apart from it, the Siamese have never seen the prototype of their best art. The best dancers of the Khon, both male and female, are marvellous and second to none I have ever seen. Unbelievably nimble and elegant, precise in their steps and mudras, and beautiful to look at. There is something eerie in the music which is performed behind the stage, and that too has a bit of the Kathakali-vastness. Probably because I am such a tyro here, it seemed to me as though the dancers's movements were entirely independent of the accompaniment—of course they are not, as an expert told me. Let me stress, however, that dance and the *wat* are the most unequivocally beautiful items for the newcomer to Siam, especially when he is familiar with Hindu aesthetic lore.

IN spite of much discouragement, I have been doing some initial peeping into this country's present literary activity, fully aware of the insurmountable drawback of not knowing the language yet, and with virtually no critical literature available on Siamese writing in English. The Siam Society and the Ministry of Culture have been attempting to give the foreigner an

idea of what is going on. These intimations are of necessity vague, yet I have to rely on them for what I am going to say, and for the rest on first hand information from one or two of the best Siamese writers. Let it be said that a lot is being written, and a lot read in Siam, and obviously not only in the capital; the townships of the North, especially Chiangmai, seem to have a very keen literary life of their own. Quantitatively the output is as great as in India. So far as light novels go, I have 200 per year as an approximate figure from a Thai publisher, and he says this is a very cautious estimate. However, this popular literature is hardly ever reviewed here in the few English papers, magazines, and journals. What is reviewed in them is of a more serious type. Roughly I find three strata of present-day literary work on the level of *belles lettres*: they are religious literature, the historical novel with a natural stress on dynastic episode and tradition, and heroic-cum-fairy romance. The 200 and odd annual novels don't come into the picture, and they deal with either how-he-got-her or the crack-shot, as in all literary manufacture for the millions.

Religious literature which is very much read is either hagiographical with the expected emphasis on the Sakya-Prince and his followers and with a Siamese royal-cum-monastic personality, or simple and direct admonition and sermon, much like the stuff the Hindu Renaissance produces in India en masse, by way of inexpensive edification, and not too different from it in general tone and intention. The historical novel—(not so much the drama, strangely though) and the popular historical account, form by far the largest part of today's Siamese serious publications. The Thai are rightly fascinated by the chequered lives of their bygone royalty—whose fabulous interest arises from the fact that a prince spends a good part of his youth in the cloister, and the rest in such an environment

as kindles the fancy of those who live outside princely precincts. It is this quasi-enjoined contrast, unique in the world, which provides perpetual literary enchantment as a matter of course. King Mongkut, the already near-mythical founder of modern Siam, stupidly misrepresented in the famous book of a frustrated and probably vengeful governess and known to the larger world almost solely through her doubtful document, was a monk of very senior rank and of considerable scholastic merit before he ascended the throne, and his personality is most remarkable indeed, even to a student unbiassed by patriotic feelings.

The heroic romance, commingled with the deep-rooted love for myth and fable, seem to be an inexhaustible source of successful publication. It forms the exact literary counterpart to classical and popular choreography. The subjects are partly Indian, though in a local setting, partly indigenous or semi-indigenous. The Indonesian '*Dalan*', comparable in its literary importance perhaps only to the great Sanskrit epics, has found a firm hold here, and the present year has brought out a comprehensive and excellent Siamese publication of that bulky epic, which has a lot of critical merit as well according to the statement of an extremely learned reviewer.

Of the press, I cannot say much for the same reason—I have to confine myself to the little bit that comes out in English; there is a daily *Bangkok Post*, edited by a young American, which maintains a fairly good standard; another English daily, *Liberty*, edited by a Ceylonese and a Bengali, in which I recently found a reprint from *Thought* (Delhi) as a leader. These two papers are not really Siamese in their get-up. There is an independent Siamese weekly, *Siam Rath* (Rath: *rashtra*), very enjoyable to read, for it renders Thai editorial and journalistic style into agreeable English. In almost every issue, there is a lengthy account of some tragic love-affair or of some

more sinister erotic adventure, and the rather sweet thing about it is that the author always sides with Cupid against Juno. Along with the report, the climatic situation is frequently inserted as in a novel: there was a soft breeze and mild moonlight, when Thep Phonit etc. etc. Just for the sake of substantiation, I cannot forego citing a recent passage verbatim (*Siam Rath*, 19-1-56)—which runs:

'...for some unknown reason, while they were walking together hand in hand along the dark road, they (the report is about a wedded couple) suddenly felt such a strong passion for each other, or perhaps for some other reason (sic!) that they stopped by the roadside, embraced and made love to each other *unexpectedly* (italics mine). And as it was dark...they felt no shame at their strange behaviour....' Then another man walked by that spot, and mistaking the young woman for his daughter, attacked the couple thus pleasantly engaged, killed the husband and injured the wife seriously. The report ends with: '...there is no denying the fact that this husband and wife were *somewhat unfortunate* (italics mine) because even though they made love to each other passionately in a perfectly legal manner and what they had every right to do, their lovemaking was obstructed in a most tragical manner, resulting in the death of the husband....' And the concluding sentence refers to the inadvertent slayer, '...how very stupid of him!' As a report in a weekly paper this is certainly charming!

I PROMISED a word about the Indians here and shall end my letter with it. Unfortunately, this is an entirely negative matter and gives me a sense of utter frustration. Mr. Nirad Chaudhuri would have an additional nightmare, no doubt, were he here among the Indian community, and I could feel with him, though personally I do not

experience his scruples, perhaps on account of my professional power of escapism. Indians in substantial numbers have been in this country for two generations, and their total strength is about 16,000 in all Siam, of whom 8000 live at Bangkok. There are only two or three communities represented: the wealthy Punjabi cloth-dealers, many of them Sikhs, among the latter the Namdhari sect being particularly strong; and the not so wealthy people from Gorakhpur, who tend to two jobs either separately or simultaneously—they are *darwans* at all banks and other such establishments, and they look after the milk-supply for the Indians,—the Thai and Chinese hardly drink any milk at all.

Then there are a few South Indians, mostly employees in foreign firms, and some wealthy Sindhis and Mohammedans. I do not include the Indians who serve on the various international and advisory units here, such as Who, Fao, Ecafe, etc.—for I am concerned only with those who have settled here—and there is hardly any social contact between the latter and the former. What strikes me and others who have been here for a short while only is the total and radical indifference among the Indian settlers towards anything that smacks of culture even distantly; and what seems to emerge on thorougher quest by and by, is a definite antagonism against the most rudimentary cultural efforts from among any of them. Culture and money are opposites and not easily compatible, where the former vests in particular and

unalterable trades bound up with closed social groups, and this fact is grasped by all the Indian merchants here.

I asked a young Indian who spoke English quite well and who has lived here all his 20 years with a few months only in India, to take me out for a ride on his Mercedes Benz, a dreamlike recent model. En route, I asked him to drop me at the University. With a blank gaze he asked me where it was located...I asked some Indians to show me the main sights of Bangkok among which is the Wat Po, with a 46 meter reclining Buddha. I was taken there, and told that my solvent escorts were seeing it with me for the first time in their lives. The pundit who solemnizes the Hindu marriages here among the Punjabi community took me to the classical dance performance mentioned above, in the theatre of the Ministry of Culture, and that was his first visit to classical dance in his 34 years' sojourn at Bangkok. Of course, the hall was full, as I said, of charming Ecafe, Who and Fao and Embassy Indians. The indigenous population does not like the Indian settlers much, and they often call them *khek*, a derisive term for an alien. In spite of their wealth, the Indian living standard is poor, and their aversion to spending any money is notorious here, in contradistinction to the Thai who spend at least all they earn. A sad end to a gay letter—for which I must crave your indulgence; yet the picture would not be complete without it.

variety

theatre

cinema

dance

Bharata Natyam and Kathak

'It is wrong from the beginning to the end'
said the Caterpillar decidedly.

—Alice in Wonderland.

MR. SONDHI'S comparison of Bharata Natyam and Kathak in the February-March issue of *Quest* is highly misleading. It can be roughly reduced to three mis-statements: first, that while Bharata Natyam excels in rhythm and footwork and is excitingly vigorous, it is perhaps somewhat weak in *abhinayam*; secondly, that it is inspired mainly by awe of Siva; and thirdly, that it is a glorification of masculine vigour whereas Kathak excels in depicting feminine traits such as coquettishness, mischief and the sweet pangs in a love-lorn maiden's breast. Mr. Sondhi seems to have based his generalisations on his experience of Bharata Natyam as practised by Shanta Rao, a distinguished dancer but not necessarily the most representative.

There are several schools of Bharata Natyam, represented by Balasaraswati, Shanta Rao and Rukmini Devi among others, each distinguished in its own way but different from the others. I am a great admirer of Shanta Rao's art, and I don't feel the need to glorify my praise by re-

ferring to 'harshness'. It must be remembered, however, that she is well-known for the exciting vigour of her dancing, and that she has chosen to emphasise an aspect of Bharata Natyam which is not always emphasised even in the South. Balasaraswati, the greatest living exponent of Bharata Natyam, is famous for her enchanting *abhinayam* and especially for her wonderful play of facial expression. To generalise about a whole tradition from what one has seen of one dancer, however distinguished, is unsound and misleading.

It is really an extraordinary thing to say that Bharata Natyam has anything to learn by way of *abhinayam*. *Abhinayam* is an integral part of Bharata Natyam and includes both play of facial expression and the language of *mudras*. How highly developed this language of *mudras* is, Mr. Sondhi can learn from a study of *The Mirror of Gesture*^{*}. It plays its part in *Sabdham* and *Varnam*, and it comes to the fore in the *padams*. And that brings us to the themes of these *padams*. Nataraja is the

^{*} *Abhinaya Darpana* — translated by Ananda Coomaraswamy and Duggirala.

presiding deity of Bharata Natyam but this should not lead to the facile generalization that the whole of Bharata Natyam is inspired by the spirit of *Tandava Nrtya*. The pranks and amours of Krishna are as common a theme of song in the South as in the North, and some of these songs are used as *padams* in dancing; there are also the songs taken from the popular *Ramanataka* of Arunachalakavi, some of which are put to a similar use.

One of the most popular of *padams* is *Krishna ni begame*; this is a speciality of Balasaraswati's, and while the first line is repeated over and over again she represents in exquisite *abhinaya* all the *leelas* of Krishna. However, the important thing is not whether the songs are about Krishna or Siva but what kind of songs they are. Even the songs devoted to Siva are not always anything so unsubtle as a frank and open manifestation of woman worshipping masculine vigour. Here is a stanza from a song in which Parvati is teased by her mother for having fallen in love with Siva—

'What did you see in him that you desire, my daughter? Darling, He is quite mad, this Gangadhara He dances with evil spirits. Was it his paunch? or his rags? or the bull that he rides? What was it that made you desire him?' and so on in the same vein of banter. The *padams* cover a wide range of feeling and emotion and are manifestations of many moods and tones of love; the vagaries of woman are fully understood and exploited in them. There is more coquetry and mischief in one fleeting glance of Balasaraswati's than one could have dreamt of. 'Exaltation of Woman!' 'Glorification of Man!' How naive and utterly unreal all this sounds when one recalls all the *padams* that one has seen rendered! Not only do they express widely varied moods of love; many of them are humorous, witty, colloquial, almost slangy. Though they are addressed to Siva and Rama and Krishna, they are only secular

love-poetry in disguise. Nor, I should imagine, is this peculiar to the South.

That such a complete misunderstanding of Bharata Natyam should have been taken as the basis for generalisations about Southern and Northern dance is bad enough; but when Mr. Sondhi goes on to explain 'the fundamental difference between North and South Indian attitudes towards morals, art and sex', one can only gasp with astonishment. He connects Bharata Natyam and the matriarchal system. Matriarchy, however, prevails not in the whole of the South but only in Kerala; and Kerala is the home not of Bharata Natyam but of Kathakali which is performed, (alas for Mr. Sondhi's generalizations!) by men.

There is certainly room for the free interpretation, the large, even sweeping, generalisation, for even if these are not always firmly based on fact, they are often illuminating. With Mr. Sondhi, however, it is not merely a question of an extravagance here or a wrong emphasis there. His facts are so completely wrong that his generalisations have no validity at all. Indeed, his remarks about Bharata Natyam are so inaccurate that I am reluctant to accept him as an accurate critic even of Kathak. Certainly, I should not readily suggest that Kathak can learn vigour and poise from Bharata Natyam—the little that I have seen of it did not seem to me to be lacking in these qualities. There isn't only one kind of vigour and one kind of grace. Nor is my hope for the future of India the same as Mr. Sondhi's. Bharata Natyam and Kathak, Karnatak Music and North Indian Music—these should certainly influence each other; but let us hope that the various art-forms of this country will flourish as distinct entities and not be mingled and reduced to the lowest common measure.

RAMASWAMY R. IYER

Rakat Karabi—Notes on a Play

THERE are no two opinions about Rabindranath Tagore's poetry. His plays, however, cannot claim a similar critical unanimity. As examples of dramaturgy they have sometimes been termed as vague in conception, loose in construction, and anaemic in their quality of expression. The social component in the plays has been dismissed as much ado about nothing, the usual unconvincing rhetoric about the socio-political revolt of the equally usual young woman who leads it and the despot who, in a flash of insight, repents and gives it his blessings. At the other end, of course, is the socially progressive critic. He is happy to look upon a play like *Rakat Karabi* (Red Oleanders) as an essay in Marxism, and hence presumably qualified for an opportunistic niche in the dialectical mystique of a political philosophy.

Actually, *Rakat Karabi* is about a town strangled by the megalomania and unthinking avarice of its rulers. Its population slaves in the gold mines. The King spends his days counting his gold. Occasionally, from behind the screen that sets him apart, he talks to Nandini about the world outside and about the absent Ranjan whom she loves and waits for. The real rulers of the town are the High Priest and the Sardar, who provide the historical combination of corrupt power. Nandini weaves wreaths of red oleanders and decks her hair, her arms and her breasts with them, because Ranjan's love for her is like the passionate red of the flowers. When the King unknowingly kills the rebellious Ranjan, the simmering discontent in the town flares into revolt against the system, led by Nandini and the repentant King himself.

Rakat Karabi is a reaffirmation of Tagore's faith in the human individual. In relation to the play, he says somewhere, 'I have a stronger faith in the simple persona-

lity of man than in the prolific brood of machinery that wants to crowd it out. This personality—the divine essence of the Infinite in the vessel of the finite—has its last treasure house in a woman's heart'. He was acutely aware of the 'grim apparition' of organised avarice walking upon the earth, exemplified especially in the mechanistic civilisation of the West. 'It is the principal hero today in the drama of human history', he said, 'and I trust I have the right to invoke it in my play, not in the spirit of a politician, but of a poet, possibly a lyrical poet.'

It is in this lyricism that Tagore's mystical transcendentalism finds expression. There is, as a consequence, an inevitable dichotomy in the technique of his plays, a deliberate lack as it were of naturalistic definition.

IN the theatre world of definitions, realism, whether of theme or of technique, has arrived at a mournful stage of oscillation between what has been described as the *I-am-a-camera* position of clinical reportage, preferably of sordid social aspects, and the time-soiled one of expressionistic writing. The former professes to eschew all subjective colouring on the part of the playwright. The playwright, in that view, merely sets himself up as the vehicle, as the medium one might say, through whom a generally a-spiritual world spews itself on to the stage. At its best the action in a drama of this type, of mime and posture, significant speech or pause, strives for the Calibanesque quality of a fatalistic dream. The governing motivation usually lies outside the conscious individual, in patterns of hereditary psychology or social and economic determinism. As a result, the external relationship of the situation, and of the characters, with the social background of the play, being within the immediate experience of the audience, has sharper out-

lines and is more easily comprehended. The individual is marked by a sense of irresponsibility within an essentially deterministic framework. The play is consequently better suited for depicting inevitable social tragedy of the Tennessee Williams, Clifford Odets and Jean-Paul Sartre variety. Where the technique is employed for social comedy, whether by Fry, Anouilh or Giraudoux, the camera is abandoned, and devices of language, construction or locale are employed to render the product safe for sophisticated audiences. This is not said in any denigration of these playwrights. They are cited merely as exemplars of a type of drama, the one most closely in conformity with the existing social and intellectual patterns.

The expressionistic school, from Shakespeare to Shaw, on the other hand, uses the camera merely to obtain so much social grist for their imaginative mills. The significance in their plays, whether in a social or individual context, is the product of an entirely personal imagination. The pattern is created, not reproduced. Or, rather, recreated from certain basic values of life which lie at the back of external and purely sensuous reality. To that extent, in their search for meaning and in its expression as they observe it, they would more truly be called realists than the others.

Tagore's position—when due allowance has been made for the fact that he was essentially a mystical poet—was somewhere to the left of the second category of playwrights. Tagore was well aware of the life of solid forms and their interaction on the stage. What he was simultaneously aware of was their significance as symbols. To him they served to make palpable a new dimension of thought, even emotion.

Symbolism in the arts is at best a tricky instrument to employ. As an attempt to distil reality, it has to be subjective. To that extent also it can become limited, or abstruse, or merely trite. The more so in the

theatre because it has to communicate emotion, and is valid only through the immediacy of that communication. It is not every play that may be seen thrice, or even twice. Symbols, therefore, are called upon to be more real than reality itself so that the play may not lose its ultimate meaning. They must have an emotional content which is real and which stems directly from the myth in which the play has roots. At the same time the external action must have a life which, while being active in itself, lends natural body to the symbolism. It is the inevitable relationship of the individual and the universal. The one must of necessity lead to the other and be a part of it.

Rakat Karabi is the microcosmic representation of a civilisation and certain consequences that naturally flow from its election by people. I say 'election' because the ultimate constraint in Tagore, as in Rousseau or other naturalist thinkers, is imposed from within. The area of maximum tension and conflict therefore resides in the individual. As a result, the external socio-political revolt, when it comes, can so easily be looked upon as a tin-pot commotion.

TAGORE was not by any means a sophisticated playwright. He remained a poet, and even his mysticism, derived to some extent from Maeterlinck, was conditioned and made more diffuse by his provincial milieu. Also, he had a different audience in mind. An audience to whom perhaps renunciation and an awareness of the extra-sensory would be easily comprehensible. The real conflict in *Rakat Karabi*, therefore, is not between two warring classes; it is conflict that arises from man's flight from reality. The tragedy is not the physical death, whether of Ranjan or the others. Real tragedy, and the sense of loss that it engenders, comes from man's fall from a state of natural grace. In Tagore's

thoughts, the return to that state is obtainable only through sacrifice which, consequently, becomes triumphant rather than tragic.

Apart from action, the mystical and symbolistic meaning of *Rakat Karabi* naturally determines the characterisation. It is here that the extra dimension which symbolism brings to the stage is most difficult to handle. The characters are essential types, not merely of men but of ideas. In order to bring the required verisimilitude to action on the stage, they naturally have to be human individuals, capable of feeling and of arousing joy and compassion. Without this essential qualification any such play would be dead as imitation arabesque. Plausibility is essential. The characters if they do not conform to more familiar patterns, flow from Tagore's idea of man. He was providential enough, and poet enough, not to be limited by the post-Darwin—and post-Marx—concept of man. In a way he stayed close to the older anthropocentric idea and would not trade the Infinite for bread alone. Which, of course, is another way of looking at the social state of man. The entire significance of social organisation to him was in its subservience to the needs of the individual, in the ultimate analysis the non-economic individual actively concerned with intimations of the eternal. That, and a passionate plea for justice, was about the measure of Tagore's social realism.

The characterisation in *Rakat Karabi* shows little awareness of what Keats termed as 'life's impossibilities'. The abstract and the concrete are resolved in an emotional and imaginative relationship. The social situation is used more as a foil to the characters' aspirations than to govern and limit its expression. The ultimate outcome is never in doubt. In that respect it is a modern religious drama in the Eliot tradition, without the melancholy counterpointing dogma of the latter. The main

interest in both lies in the unfolding of the allegory and its meaning. Only, in Tagore there is paganism, and no sense of guilt. Life, to him, never loses its wayward joyousness.

Bisu and Nandini are the twin attributes of freedom and joy. Nandini, as the cynical Professor says, 'midst the clamour of the market-place is like a lute in perfect tune.' Tagore meant her to be a woman 'soft as a petal and strong as steel. She is not an abstraction, but is pursued by an abstraction, like one tormented by a ghost.' She is a woman who lives in and through her love for Ranjan, a slim flame that leaps amid tyranny and loss of hope. Her utterance must have flight and tenderness; her laughter, love and irrelevant triumph. Her gesture, in the end, must only be an intimation. She is in the line of Zeus, the recurring spirit of disturbance of Gide's conception, except that Nandini is also human and herself involved. She plays upon the King, the self-imprisoned spirit of the town, awakening discontent and a desire for life and love, till he revolts against the constriction of his own devising.

'Nandini: What would you have me do?
King: To fight, against *me*, but with your hand in mine.'

In contrast to her, the Professor, by his presence, provides the ironic comment on meddling intellect. To him, love is merely the toad on the dissecting table. He enjoys talking to Nandini so that he can sharpen his wits on her sentiments. The final crisis finds him shaken, and ineffectual. Some of Tagore's most direct comment, however, is uttered through Bisu, the worker. Bisu has vast capacity for humour and the wayward song, and embodies the fun-loving gypsy in Tagore.

THE interpretative spirit of a play is in its overall style determined, in turn, by its theme, technique and, to a certain extent,

its social background. This style is a plastic quantity and may be used by the producer to underline one aspect of meaning against another. A play like *Rakat Karabi* could be presented in an elevated style. Nothing would more easily convert it into a mere recitative piece. It could also be played as straight 'social' drama with no metaphysical overtones. That is when it would very likely appear to be pedestrian, anaemic and unconvincing.

The third alternative is to present it as the *Bohurupee* group, of Calcutta, did in Delhi last year, and again in February this year. They used austere, highly suggestive sets which fell into an overall geometric pattern. The palace of the King, as symbolising the abode of the captive spirit of the town, suggested malignant strength. This effect was heightened by the use of two lights in the facade which glowed red to

herald the King's invisible entry on the stage. The incidental music and sound effects were successfully employed to build up the atmosphere. The lighting was experimental and was given a liquid life of its own which rose and sank with the mood of the lines. As a result, being outside the action, it sometimes tended to be intrusive. Its relationship with the sets was more organic and was used to create abstract silhouettes on the cyclorama. The overall effect was to enlarge the arena of action and of audience-participation into an extra semi-abstract dimension of shadows. To this was added a high level of sensitive, mobile acting. Here poetry and drama were fused in a harmony that lightly walked the thin dividing line between fantasy and reality, and squarely rendered every shade of anguish, constraint and flight in the play.

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THE KABUKI THEATRE OF JAPAN by A. C. Scott (George Allen & Unwin, 30s).

THERE is a traditional Japanese saying to the effect that 'art is the palm of the hand; the arts are the fingers'. This applies particularly to Kabuki which is not only a composite art fusing together disparate skills but is also—as no other Japanese art form is—a comprehensive and living embodiment of Japanese aesthetic values. Since these values have helped to mould every aspect of Japanese life, Kabuki is the key not merely to the culture but to the soul of an entire people. To the extent that Kabuki is esoteric it is a reflection of how these values have, in modern conditions, been deprived of their validity.

During the Tokugawa era Kabuki was no self-conscious art form. It was a drama of the people and the Kabuki actor with

the sumo wrestler and the fire-man (an important member of society in a country plagued by disastrous fires) was a public idol. Symbols, allusions, pantomime, colour associations, traditional conventions—of these the Kabuki audience of the 17th and 18th century had an intimate, almost unconscious knowledge, and Kabuki survives today only in the degree to which the Kabuki audiences are still capable of responding to their traditional aesthetic. Such a book as Mr. Scott's *The Kabuki Theatre Of Japan* is, therefore, something more than an account of the stage. Among other things it tells us how and to what the Japanese respond and why they do so which is the equivalent of providing clues to the Japanese psyche.

Kabuki music controls tempo, imparts a sense of movement even at times when

the dramatic moment is visually static and heightens emotions, complementing the human voice but never intruding on it. Dancing in all its various forms is the essence of Kabuki, from mime and posture to slow dignified movements accompanied by gestures that portray specific character types. As the story unfolds there are points of special dramatic effect when the actor assumes a certain pose, rigid and strong, facial expression and eyes and pose combining to impress on the audience the emotion and significance of the moment. The wood block artist Sharaku has immortalised such moments of climax that contain the full flavour of Kabuki.

Equally characteristic is the technique known as *ningyo no naru* (becoming a doll) when the actors on the stage remain motionless and expressionless until brought to life by the appropriate musical theme. The pictorial effect thus obtained has obvious affinities with *ukiyo-ye* and it may be said that turning over the leaves of an album containing *ukiyo-ye* Kabuki prints almost captures the spirit of the actual theatre. Gorgeous costume, no elaboration of which is unsanctioned by tradition and significance, stage properties of the finest craftsmanship, make-up and wigs and a wide variety of scenery—all these are the composite parts of the series of what might be called 'moments of truth.' Here Kabuki owes considerably to the puppet theatre, the main principles of which govern not only Kabuki technique but virtually all aspects of serious Japanese drama.

The living actor cannot be anything else but a man in disguise. He cannot become the part he is playing to the point of extinguishing his manhood. The puppet, in contrast, lives to the extent that the arts of the dramatist and puppeteer enable it. It becomes alive with the story as it is narrated and the word or idea acts before us. This philosophy is the very negation of the cheap and perverted individualism with

which the modern theatre is burdened and is, in the opinion of the famous Japanese dramatist Chikamatsu Monzaemon, based on the principle that art lies somewhere 'in the shadowy frontiers between reality and illusion.' It is an attempt to suggest the perfect through the imperfect—the Japanese poem that seems so ludicrously bare and inadequate, the horror of Japanese artists for *ittakkiri* (all said) solely because the things worth saying cannot be said. These are qualities which in drama demand an extremely high level of audience participation. The audience must participate in a circuit of feeling and understanding.

When in a certain play the hero beheads eight people he suggests this by merely touching his sword. In a Noh drama *Aoi no Uye* the long-suffering wife of Prince Genji never appears on the stage though her jealousy is the motif of the piece. A long strip of folded brocade on the fore-front of the stage, suggesting a bed of sickness, is considered adequate. This principle of suggestion is paramount and Kabuki, in common with other Japanese arts, is a mass of hints for which there is a parallel of sorts in Indian classical dance forms such as Kathakali. Since Kabuki is artificial in the special sense of that word there is no attempt at a degrading realism which demands little or nothing from the audience and would be artistically a monstrosity.

In a different tradition few things could be more incongruous than the role of *onnagata* who in Kabuki are female impersonators. Something of the truth of their art may be explained by saying that they do not *imitate* women but suggest and symbolise feminine qualities as no woman can. Just as a puppet can convey truth as no actor can and just as the Kabuki actor, by calculated exaggeration and convention, aspires to puppet-hood, so *onnagata* subordinate themselves to the

point of embodying the essentially feminine.

This process of completing through the incomplete, of suggesting more by the less, the active by the static, results in something that is spare, clean, vigorous, which the Japanese call *shibui*. *Shibui* is the exercise of perfect taste and is enshrined in the tea ceremony, in Japanese architecture, painting and craftsmanship. A gold cup studded with jewels is not *shibui* but a clipped earthenware jar is. When at a 'moment of truth' an actor poses, tensioned with suppressed but controlled power, all the action of the past and the action of the future is drawn into this pictorial moment. It is *shibui* and to the Japanese contains the flavour of green tea, astringent but evocative. When truth and beauty are apprehended at this level there is no patience for irrelevant details of realism. Cloaked attendants assist action on the stage and remove properties and it is enough that they are supposed to be invisible. The audience must have the capacity to see only what is meant to be seen and, having this capacity, it despises any illusion of reality that seeks to represent the actions of real men within the four corners of a stage 'world.'

Like Kathakali, Kabuki had evolved into definitive forms by the end of the seventeenth century. With minor exceptions both dramas are the prerogative of men. Kathakali's true setting is the Malabar village, Kabuki began with performances on dried river beds. (Kabuki actors were known as *kawamono* — river things). As in Kabuki, Kathakali disdains superficial realism and attendants appear openly on the stage. As a popular drama its relation to classical Sanskrit works is akin to Kabuki's relation to Noh. Both dramas relate stories remote from daily life, both are a fusion of dance, music and drama, both have rejected masks but have retained make-up with highly developed colour symbolism. Drums

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in Kathakali control pace and provide symbolic effects for battles, journeys or storms. In Kabuki the music provides effects of wind, galloping horses, the sea and so on. Kathakali dumb show, animated by the words and music of the orchestra, shares many traits with the Japanese puppet theatre.

Unlike Kabuki which, except in the form known as *tate* with a large element of acrobatics is not specifically vigorous and masculine, Kathakali is mainly *tandava*, masculine, energetic, violent and acrobatic. Kathakali actors are mute while Kabuki actors command a wide variety of monologue and dialogue. As in Kabuki, Kathakali characters are role-types, distinguished by specific costumes and colours. Kabuki dancing is in a quieter deliberate mood, its plots are less evident as in Kathakali and subordinate to certain basic situations known as scenes of emphasis in which the Kabuki actor can show his strides. The

story in other words is not the thing whereas in Kathakali it is. Costuming in both dramas is elaborate to the extent of hindering free movement and are alike essential for atmosphere, though in Kabuki the variety is richer and greater.

The *Todayam* or the devotional dance with which a Kathakali performance starts is paralleled in Kabuki by *Samboso* a commemorative dance for world peace and the safety of the realm. These characteristics are strikingly similar and justify the assumption of common aesthetic objectives and an Asian tradition of drama, with variations of method and elaboration but with basic principles in common. Mr. Scott's *Kabuki Theatre Of Japan* is as comprehensive an introduction as could be hoped for to this fascinating world of Japanese drama. It is essential reading for those who wish to know why and in what fashion the Japanese spirit moves. For Kabuki, like other Japanese arts, is a key to the Japanese conception of infinity.

N. J. N.

THE LIVING THOUGHTS OF GOTAMA THE BUDDHA. Presented by A. Coomaraswamy & I. B. Horner (Cassell, 6s.).

THE name of Coomaraswamy is invitation enough to read a book, if it is only for some sharp, penetrating comments, no matter what the subject is. And I. B. Horner, one has heard, knows what she is talking about. So you approach the book with eagerness though the subject is as old as the Buddha.

The first thing that strikes you is the spelling Gotama instead of the usual Gautama. Why? The next is the provocative quotation from St. Bonaventura at the beginning of the life: 'Reduce to meekness the wild motions of the will, and make it thy care to tame the cruel beast. Thou art bound to the will; strive to unfasten the bond that cannot be broken. The will is thy Eve.' Another one is Hermes Tris-

megistus at the beginning of the chapter on the Buddhist Doctrine (p.12): 'Then only will you see it when you cannot speak of it: for the knowledge of it is deep silence, and suppression of all the senses.'

Though the Buddha preached to the first five of his followers the doctrine of the Middle Way, there is no escape from the hard fact that the elect had to renounce the world and go into exile. You are struck by the similarity in this and in other cases of the great religions of the world. Is there an older common source underlying James iii.6 'the tongue is a fire.... and setteth on fire the wheel of becoming', and the Buddha's Sermon on Fire where 'the tongue is a fire' and life is 'the wheel of becoming'. You feel a mysterious sense of expectation and release at the mere explanation of Nibbana (Desperation): the 'going out' of the fires of appetite, resentment, and delusion, which cease to 'draw' when their fuel is withheld.

The life and the doctrine of the Buddha are presented in 38 out of the 324 pages of the book, but they are pages full of the mark of deep learning and a delectable style. In fact I got more out of these pages than out of the rest of the book which contains extracts from Buddhist Doctrine, though some of these are profound utterances.

Of what did the Buddha die? Old age? Perhaps it is impertinent and irrelevant to ask this of authors who are inclined to the 'mythical interpretation.' In an edifyingly moving paragraph (p.10) you read of the end of the truth-finder. The detail, that he lay down to die assuming the lion's repose, is curious and delightful. You wonder why he should have thought it necessary to assume anything like that, when you are roused by his last words: 'Corruptible are all things composite; in sobriety work out your goal'.

Two outstanding impressions are: 'the weakness in and due to women,' and 'the

knowledge of it is deep silence'. This state of knowledge cannot be explained, it can only be felt. Also, faith is conducive to knowledge. All the same, it is not a counsel of laziness, of inaction; for, 'The Buddhas but tell the way, it is for you to swelter at the task'. 'Why has the Lord not explained?'

An interesting comment of the Buddha about the Eternal Law (Dhamma) was that it had been taught by his predecessors in ages past as it would be taught by his successors in ages to come—a strikingly similar remark to that of the Prophet of Islam.

Is the Buddhist doctrine pessimistic? No. 'Both now and heretofore I teach just this, ill and the end of ill'. Is there reincarnation of souls? I could not really find out though it is clearly stated on p. 14 that Buddhism knows of no 'reincarnation' in the popular and animistic sense of the word. If many are still 'under the delusion that Buddhism teaches the transmigration of souls they have my full sympathy, for the sayings are not very clear to a layman on this point. The layman is also likely to be amused and puzzled by the subtle distinction between self-love and Self-love. Which is merely another proof of the fact that most of our profoundest sayings are paradoxical.

'The Buddha, or any Arahant, is a "Nobody"; one cannot properly ask his name'. Did Odysseus realise the depth of his attainment when he chose to call himself Nobody, or was he merely being clever?

Did the Buddha deny God? Contrary to general belief we learn that the Buddha neither 'denied a God, denied a Soul, (nor) denied Eternity.'

Apart from the reflection on women, one is likely to shake a doubtful head at the acceptance of mendicancy as a part of the example set and preached by the Buddha. But inscrutable are the ways of the great: 'I don the garb of a mendicant' says Ghalib,

'to taste the generosity of the generous and the kindness of the kind of heart'.

The utterances of the Buddha ring very true even today and pulsate with life. There are questions and counter questions. Many may not mean much to you as they do not to me but they are woven cadences all the same. 'Honour and reverence Dharma and you need not bow down to any one else'. Compare again the teaching of Islam: 'Bow down to the one supreme God and you need not bow down to any one else'.

SARDAR MAHOMED

PAN by Knut Hamsun. Translated by James W. McFarlane (The Artemis Press, Rs. 6. Available from Rupa and Co. Calcutta).

IS there a revival of interest in Knut Hamsun's novels? The Artemis Press is preparing several for publication in English and if the format and translation are as effective as *Pan* they are sure of a favourable reception in this country. I remember the time when there was a boom in Hamsun's novels after the award of the Nobel Prize in 1920 and Scandinavian fiction first made a stir in our part of the world. I read then just two of his novels, *Growth of the Soil* and *Hunger*; and now a third after an interval of 35 years. In *Growth of the Soil* I recall an impression of a certain slowness of movement, a simplicity and a cumulative epic force which are not corroborated when I read *Pan*. I remember too a prose style, lucid and sometimes lyrical, and here there is a resemblance; for a limpid ease, an effortless mastery of narrative form and a poetry of spirit are everywhere apparent in *Pan*. Yet it is a tortured book, and tells an unhappy story with a veiled intensity of feeling.

Lieutenant Thomas Glahn recounts the happenings of two years ago, when he loved and suffered. He claims to have forgotten her but his story and the manner of his

*A good cigarette
gives you a lot of pleasure,
peace of mind and comfort.*



telling belie him. That is the main theme. A postscript by another hand tells of Glahn's death. Several readers will wish away the postscript for more than one reason. Hamsun does not succeed in creating the impression that it really is another man's writing; the manner is still Lt. Glahn's. Again, to be told of Glahn's death is unnecessary, for we had come to a point of rest when Glahn put down his pen. He'd made this curious admission: 'And the day passes, but time stands still.' To that he'd added a revealing foot-note: 'I have written this now just for my own pleasure and amused myself as best I could. No worries weigh on me, I merely long to go away, I know not where, but far away, perhaps to

Africa or to India; for I belong to the forest and the solitude.'

We know that Lt. Glahn's memories will not let him rest, that a desperate unhappiness will torture him all his days. We do not need a rather lurid and sensational end for him. The postscript is melodramatic and in no way helps a slight novel, whose lyric tempo, delight in nature and troubled love story are significant and complete in themselves.

To dwell first on Hamsun's intimate understanding of Nature. The hero, Glahn, lives in a hut that hangs between the forest-clad hills and a little fishing village, and is at one with Nature in all her moods. As spring advances strange things stir around him and within him. Later a kind of day-long, night-long ecstasy holds him during the Nordland summer's endless day. A kind of rapturous delight in the little things of nature grows more intense in the rapture of loving and being loved. The grass that lies flat at a certain time, the changing song of birds and the flowers that close up in the afternoon, are all marks of an intimate communion. He dreams that Iselin, the fay woman of beauty and wonder who has known many men, visits him. The real woman whom he loves is cruel and kind in turn. There is a clash of wills and temperaments, and it will all come to an unhappy end. The prose in which the many moods of his fevered spirit are expressed has a lyrical quality, even more when it speaks of nature than of love. It is astonishing how the lyric prose comes through in translation.

When we turn to the characters of this brief story there is a sense of disappointment. Lt. Glahn is cast in a mould familiar to Hamsun readers, an eccentric hero, who both attracts and repels, who behaves unaccountably, stands apart from society and is, in a measure the architect of his own ruin. Edvarda is a wayward girl, ice and fire by turns, who does not know her own mind;

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story can make us aware of ourselves, of our human being in its unguarded moments and in its secret aspirations which lie beyond speech. Indeed, were the story not slight, the same effect might not be produced. Something evanescent, intangible, regardless of the mundane world, was ours for a while and then it must pass, even as Glahn's swift brief ardent joy.

So it is that *Pan*, though slight in substance, can hold its place among the best known works of Hamsun. It stands at the opposite pole from the massive *Growth of the Soil*, yet the common authorship is revealed in the understanding of human nature and in the prose—a prose that rarely strives after effect, that lets its subject matter lead it to tasks, humble, grave or joyous. Therefore it is a matchless prose, the joy of the translator who deals with his material with like fidelity.

R. CHOKSI

motivation is a little weak. The other characters are slight and hardly call for comment. The Doctor and the Baron are also suitors to Edvarda: the former, firmly etched, is a self-appointed mentor and critic of the girl, the latter is very near being a figure of fun and becomes Edvarda's ultimate choice. Her father Herr Mack the trader is Glahn's rival for the favours of Eva, the blacksmith's wife, who is devoted to Glahn in some unaccountable fashion. Her death by accident simplifies problems. Glahn sails away and Edvarda of the divided mind is left to marry her Baron.

The plot then is slight and Hamsun would be the first to admit it. The conflict is a sex duel, in which both the principals are creatures of feeling and unreason. What philosophy can explain why human beings behave erratically and extravagantly? With subtle skill Hamsun creates an atmosphere and leaves us admiring the delicate artistry with which even irrelevances and a slight

SOME INNER FURY By Kamala Markandaya (Putnam, 15s.).

SOME INNER FURY is written with a sensitivity rare in Indians writing in English. Kamala Markandaya has gained in confidence. There are passages and incidents of moving power and beauty. Yet the novel is a painful disappointment.

The story is located in an unnamed town: in fact, in two unnamed towns. One of them has a Governor, so it must be the capital of a province. There are all the trappings of metropolitan society, English and Indian. But why is the town unnamed? To emphasise that it is the story which is important, not the setting? To concentrate on the feelings and lives of the protagonists, not on the social and political background? Laudable, but then why give the story a framework of the events of 1942? It is this unnecessary ambivalence that destroys verisimilitude.

Mira, the heroine and narrator, is in love

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 Bombay 1.**

with Richard, an Englishman, and a good friend of Mira's brother. She works for a journal of sorts and one day is asked to find out about a village scheme being promoted by the wife of the Governor. So she goes to Government House and meets Richard again after three years, for he is the Governor's A.D.C. How long has he been there? Why have they not met before if they are living in the same town, and he is the bosom friend of her brother with whom she is staying?

When they meet in the evenings in this unnamed town, they avoid the club and other places where they are well known. They go off into by-lanes and alleyways and eat in exotic Chinese and such-like restaurants. Delectable restaurants in small alleyways? The ability of an Englishman and an Indian girl to walk through such by-lanes without creating any interest or stir from the locals? Not in India.

Richard gets malaria and therefore six weeks' leave. He and Mira go off on a holiday with one change of clothes and one suitcase. They leave the car somewhere and

continue by foot and bullock cart, eating and living with hospitable villagers. And so they have a wonderful holiday. Probable? In India during the war? Hardly.

Later Mira just moves in with Richard—as simple as that. While he is still A.D.C. to the Governor and the heat and passion of the 1942 movement is at its height. Nor are we told the reaction to this step of her orthodox parents and conventional brother. Presumably they have none. How simple and straightforward life is!

Once an angry crowd bursts into Government House when a big ball is on. The only consequence seems to be that the protagonists drive away to the village in time to witness and take part in some melodramatic events.

And so on, throughout the book. All these slight improbabilities are together more than enough to make the whole story quite incredible and rob it of any capacity to carry us with it. Why does Kamala Markandaya seem to try almost deliberately to shatter our belief in her story at every step? Was it her intention to lift the story from the ordinary plane of reality into some more imaginative realm? If so, she has failed and the novel vacillates uncomfortably between two worlds.

It is not usual to question the purpose of an author in writing a novel. Yet Kamala Markandaya puts us in the position of having to ask ourselves—what is the purpose of this book? To present a picture of middle-class India? The picture is false and lop-sided. To tell a story? It is improbable and full of holes. To show the tension between Indians and Englishmen? If so, it was an eleventh hour decision—the first 250 pages make no mention of any such thing. Throughout the book the path of their love has not been troubled by the fact that they come of different races. Only in the last ten pages does Mira suddenly decide (to the bewilderment of the reader) that she must leave Richard because he is

English. The theme invites constant comparison with Han Suyin's book, much to the detriment of *Some Inner Fury*.

Hamdi Bey has put forward an interesting explanation of why the novel has not developed in India to the same extent as it has in the West. In India, he says, the hero is not his own master. His will is subordinated to that of his family, his community, and all the conventions. It is this inertness of the hero's will which robs the action of the novel of all movement and interest. *Some Inner Fury* seems to prove the corollary to this thesis; that when the hero or as in this case, the heroine, brandishes about her own will too freely, the story becomes implausible and unrealistic. If a high-born Indian woman decided to live openly with an Englishman then all the drama and excitement would be, not in their relationship with each other, but in their battles with her family and people.

AAMIR ALI

INQILAB by K. Ahmad Abbas (Jaico Publishing House, Rs. 3).

SOMEONE, writing about those illustrations of its heroes which adorn the fiction pages of women's magazines, said that it was not so much that they were really handsome, as that one could see that they were meant to be. In some similar way, it is not so much that Abbas' book is any good, as that one can see that it is meant to be. And no doubt a great many nice people who are not plagued with our cantankerous notions will accept the intention for the fact, and think that they are really reading the first great novel of the Indian Revolution.

This is not the place to discuss solemnly why there are so few good Indian novelists. What interests us now is why *Inqilab* remains such a bad novel in spite of the fact that its author so obviously meant it to be good. He has put in all the good ingredients he could think of—everything

that could be depended on to stir the memories and play on the heartstrings of patriotic Indians. There is Jallianwala Bagh, the crawling order, Gandhiji, the first Satyagraha, Bhagat Singh, Jawaharlal, the Lahore Congress, the Dandi march, picketing, the Gandhi-Irwin pact, Dr. Ansari, the Ali brothers and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, and many quotations from Ghalib. Is this not enough to make a good novel? Then put in a qawwali, child marriage, Hindu-Muslim unity, Hindu-Muslim disunity, Aligarh University, a lathi charge, the Independence Day pledge and the Taj by moonlight.

The poor hero is worn to a shadow in the rush of being at all the places and doing all the things that have to go into the book. He finds a little time off to have a small love affair in Aligarh, but it comes to nothing; and he is off again, busy being in the thick of things so that the background may be brought to the fore.

Upton Sinclair has, of course, succeeded to a certain extent in his Lanny Budd books where Abbas has failed completely. Can it be that this sort of thing is not impossible to manage provided one is a good craftsman? Lanny Budd is a personality in his own right, alive and interesting. Abbas' hero, Anwar, never becomes a human being. He remains a repository of proper feelings.

That is why when, on top of the plotless plot, the reader is made to share in a crisis in Anwar's life with these words:

Life! Life!! Life!!!

*He felt it, its rhythm and its tempo,
even in his tired limbs,*

then, indeed, one prefers the other aspect of the book, the journalistic descriptions of Congress sessions.

Here, too, though, exclamation marks are an important part of the text. One always thought that exclamation marks had been invented in order to enable writers to capture a certain amount of attention for

intended humour which might be in danger of being overlooked by the reader. Abbas uses these marks to indicate every kind of feeling, pathos, anger, excitement etc., which might be in danger of being overlooked. And sometimes he uses them to indicate no feeling at all as in

'The boy was so persistent!'

Is it unkind of me to make fun of this book? After all, I did manage to read it through, which is something. But the credit for that must go to its subject, not to the treatment. The background and characters were familiar and nostalgic. It was rather like reading a letter from home. And the truth is, however affectionately one feels towards a letter from home, one can rarely pretend it is literature; it is not even, generally, well-written.

The best parts of the book are the quotations from the Urdu poets. And if we wish to express our disappointment with the author, then we can do no less than express in the same language and in the words of his own illustrious forbear, the poet Hali:

Pé itna zabanon par hai sab ké jari

Keh haalat buri aaj kal hai hamari.

(For this much is on the lips of every one
That we have fallen very low these days)

LAAEQ FUTEHALLY

THE GENIUS AND THE GODDESS by
Aldous Huxley. Chatto & Windus, 7s.6d.

IN this novel of married life, Henry Maartens, the 'genius' is an elderly physicist, living a life where all the middle colours of the spectrum have been left out. He either exists at the pure ether level of an intense intellectuality or at the other extreme of pure sensuality. Balance and humanity is restored by the 'goddess', his wife, Katy Maartens, who is beautiful, earthy, practical and intelligent. Henry lives 'off' her, a 'symbiotic relationship' where all the giving is on her side and all the taking on his. There are two children,

an adolescent daughter and her younger brother.

Into this unusual household comes a young research assistant, John Rivers, whose Puritan mother has brought him up incapable of appreciating the Maartens' pagan attitude to life. He soon falls in love with Katy, idealistically. An aging Huxley has now given us a many-sided approach to love—penetrating and humane—very unlike the acid, freezing tones with which he treated of love and sex in his early novels. Rivers gradually becomes one of the family. Katy is called away to her mother's sick-bed and Henry becomes ill through separation and deprivation. When she returns, physically and spiritually desolate with the long strain of death and illness, it is to Rivers she turns for the healing power of a physical relationship. Meanwhile, the young daughter, Ruth, going through the agonies and ecstasies of adolescence, fixes her new-found capacity for love on Rivers. He experiences the full gamut of remorse that a well-brought-up young man would feel at such an initiation into adulthood, sex and betrayal of a respected friend. Even though, having rejuvenated the goddess on whom Henry depends so vitally, he is indirectly responsible for his recovery. The novel ends in a tragedy and Rivers lives to tell the story in his old age.

The technique Huxley has used in telling this story is the Chinese box method—one box inside the other. John Rivers, now a widower and grandfather, tells the story to a novelist friend; the novelist tells a story about a novelist telling a story about his friend. It is autobiographical and in the present about the past. How does it work? In the sense that a novelist is the only one who can reduce the irrelevance of life to an art-form—quite well; but at the same time it gives an air of artificiality to the novel. There are endless layers of comment and interruption. We

are ceaselessly aware, as Rivers waves 'his square brown hand in the direction of his well-stocked bookshelves', that they are Huxley's books and his own restless, well-stocked mind is treating us to comment and exposition. We are familiar with that excessively intellectual conversation.

In one passage where Rivers takes Ruth for a walk and she is telling him Poe's story of *The House of Usher*, we get Huxley's perceptive treatment of adolescence. We also get his views on (a) the increase of sentimental songs in wartime and the reasons for it, (b) the vast gap between the quality of feeling and the quality of its expression, or in other words, the purity of impression versus the shoddiness of most artistic and intellectual techniques which would translate emotion into art or literature, (c) the intrinsic sincerity of immediate experience—the datum of religion, (d) the nature of physics in an age when one could be a physicist without having a bad conscience. And so on to Katy's early life and her marriage; flashback, insertions, point and counter-point provided by the all-pervading intellectuality of humanist, scientist, agnostic-Vedantist.

Writers like Huxley and T. S. Eliot presuppose far too great a conditioned response from their readers. In order to appreciate these authors one must have a more than nodding acquaintance with the sum total of man's intellectual achievements from the dawn of civilisation to its whimpering end. This is too much to expect. The majority of readers are alienated, with the result that the influence of our best and most mature minds is not felt where it is mainly directed.

LOLA CHATTERJI

CHINA PHOENIX by Peter Townsend.
(Jonathan Cape, London 25s.)

THIS book is introduced by Dr. Radhakrishnan as a vivid, able and sympa-

thetic presentation of the problems and developments of modern China which will help to make us understand the recent struggles and achievements of a large section of the human race. The author, Mr. Peter Townsend, served with the Friends Ambulance Unit in China and stayed on to work with the Co-operatives. He says that so far as is possible when describing a human upheaval of such magnitude and complexity, he has confined himself to recording such events as he witnessed himself or the authenticity of which he was able to corroborate with reasonable assurance. In the result we have one of the most sympathetic accounts of the Chinese Revolution ever written by a foreigner. His thesis is that conditions in China were such that Revolution was preferable to No Revolution.

The book warns its readers at the outset that it has no academic pretensions. It is touched-up journalism, a considerable portion of the material having appeared from time to time in the *Spectator* and the *New Statesman and Nation*. The author has also drawn on despatches sent by him to the B.B.C. whose Special Correspondent he was in Shanghai. While this makes the descriptions more graphic, it entails needless verbiage. Passages like: 'All night the phone rings. At two a.m. someone says, "Phone the *Ta Kung Pao* and find out what's happening. I can't make out who's going down Avenue Joffre, *them* or the Kuomintang." The *Ta Kung Pao* is a paper with a liberal reputation. "What d'you mean, news?" a voice answers guardedly. "We have no news," in which the book abounds may add colour, but in the long run only confuse the reader, who helplessly looks for the wood in the profusion of trees.

The pattern of presentation also does not make it any easier for the reader. After the preamble which is entitled 'Twilight of Some Gods', follow twelve Parts,

each with several Chapters. The tenth Part: *New Times—New Ways* contains as many as ten Chapters, while the last: 'The Tide of Chinese Power' is itself a single Chapter. In many of these Parts the chronology begins over again, which enhances the involvement.

These shortcomings are, however, only formal. There is a great deal of valuable factual information in the book. The sincerity of the author is evident between the lines, and the reader feels reassured that, despite the author's obvious sympathy with the revolutionaries, it is not all propaganda. In one of the earlier chapters we read: 'From the outset foreign observers interpreted this bloody struggle as one waged by the United States and Russia for the soul and body of China. To the ordinary, unsophisticated Chinese the issues were much simpler, the aims very just: for the peasant—land; for the intellectual—freedom of thought; for the businessman and industrial worker—profits and a living wage; and for all—peace and representation.'

The author's conclusion is tentative but hopeful. 'And if, at the end of the story, the reader finds the prospect unfolded too disturbing, he can deny it or find consolation in the thought that, while no tell-tale cracks have appeared on the surface, this is only the hightide of revolution. Since Mao Tse-tung himself has said that no one can claim to be a fortune-teller where social developments are concerned, who can say that this phoenix will not, like the crow in the fable, turn out to be a common bird decked in borrowed plumage?'

'But to friend and enemy alike the Chinese Revolution is both challenge and warning. Whatever its moods, it comes as a triumphant affirmation of life by the ragged, hungry, brutalized, illiterate, not of one generation alone but back through countless silent, unchampioned generations, leavened with those who, having knowledge, talent, position, were yet shorn of

pride and self-respect and independence. Out of their misery and hatred and yearning flowed revolution, white-hot and molten, that can sear the heart and wound the sensitive. Out of them also sprang the dreams of a people. And it is dangerous to trample upon the dreams of a people.'

These fairly long extracts have been necessary, as the tone and temper of the author cannot be presented except in his own words. As for the salient facts, they are well known: the others do not need and cannot stand summarizing. The author is most at home when in his own field, e.g., in the chapters on *Towards a Co-operative Economy and Mutual Aid*. He is convinced that, 'A great part of the working population was responding to voluntary organization.' He also thinks that Chinese Communism is not a mere copy of the Russian original. Above all, it refuses to be doctrinaire: Mao Tse-tung is quoted as saying: 'Dogma is no better than cow dung.'

The pen pictures of celebrities and others are lively and not out of perspective. The account of China's relations with foreigners is quite fair, as for example may be seen from the reasons given for the failure of Christian missionaries in China. Many aspects of life in the New China are presented in favourable colours, although the rationale of the ancient rite of brain washing as presented in the chapter with that title looks very much like an attempt at white-washing. All told, reading this book will go a long way to correct the impressions created by hostile propaganda.

K. GURU DUTT

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI by Dharendra Mohan Dutta, (University of Wisconsin Press, Rupa & Co. Calcutta, 10s.).

WE had once foregathered in a friend's room to meet a schoolmaster from England. As a conversational gambit, the

visitor asked, 'What is your philosophy of life?' Everyone drew in his horns at the question. Did one have a philosophy? One believed in tolerance, laughter, restraint, in doing one's job well, but was one a pragmatist, an existentialist, an empiricist or a meliorist? As a matter of fact one took one's philosophy mildly, and if there was a hinterland of consistent philosophical thought behind one's actions, one was not aware of it. In any case, one did not profess it, although today labels are easy to secure and easier to stick.

But with Gandhi it was different. He lived and grew with the philosophical thought (pieced together from the *Bhagvadgeeta*, the teachings of Mahavir, Buddha and Christ, and the writings of Ruskin and Tolstoy) which he adopted and made peculiarly his own for the purpose of changing the human heart. The utterance of this thought, its hourly practice and the constant vigilance which it enjoined were so vital to Gandhi that the philosophy had become the man. With a tenacity and a burning purpose which were at variance with his rather average home environment and intellectual equipment this barrister-at-law transformed himself, for the love of man, to the equivalent of *Daridranarayan*.

How can such a transformation be made understandable to the western reader (or for that matter, to an eastern mind) in a handbook which purports to explain, with neat chapter headings and sub-titles, the philosophy which inspired the man? Gandhi himself has said, 'Philosophy without life corresponding is a body without life': and again, 'There is no *ism* about it, and no literature or propaganda is needed about it.' Dr. Dharendra Mohan Dutta has tried, valiantly, to trace the roots of this thought which branched out into ever-widening action, but the task is beyond the scope of such a book. No perspective on

Gandhi's philosophy can be gained till the man's struggle, his asceticism (with all its inherent contradictions), his sense of humour, his sternness and gentleness and his great charm are recorded in detail and are left to speak for themselves.

The total effect of this book upon the reader is one of dissatisfaction, as though one had been offered the husk and not the grain. Yet it has a value, because it sets out in a compact form, though here and there it bears the impress of the classroom manner, the philosophy which has brought about the silent social revolution of this century. Today, eight years after Gandhi's death, the Gandhian way, Gandhian economics, Gandhian philosophy are words so glibly used in India that perhaps it is useful to have the basic thought put down in a concise form.

Gandhi called himself a practical idealist, and there was hardly a facet of life which he did not make his own concern. Politics, the Congress organisation and its accounts, social reform, the municipal system, education, the status of women, Harijans, decentralisation, relation between labour and capital—there wasn't a subject under the sky which was not harnessed to his effort. This effort was to be based on the five-fold Vedic structure of *ahimsa* (harmlessness), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (chastity), and *aparigraha* (non-possession).

The most striking feature of Gandhi's life and work is the oneness of his grain, the fusing of '*manasa, vachasa, kayen*'. Slowly, with ruthless discipline, he made himself all of a piece. 'My life is one indivisible whole.' He wanted the people to cultivate a 'moral enthusiasm', although he realised that it was a long-range plan. Gandhi himself wanted to live to the age of 120 years to realise his dream.

N. L. KHANOLKAR

ONE HUNDRED POEMS FROM THE JAPANESE by Kenneth Rexroth. New Directions, N.Y. Rupa and Co. Calcutta.

As a rule it is, I think, more difficult to *translate* a good poem than to *write* a good one: much more so when—as in this case—the difference between the idiom and the technique of thinking in the two languages are very great. But apart from the general difficulty, Japanese poetry has certain special characteristics which render it practically untranslatable. By skilful manipulation of the numerous homonyms and double-meaning words in the language, poets manage to compress into a few lines two or three sets of interdependent images, which must, naturally, *all* be conveyed before the reader can get anything like the full sense of the poem.

The whole beauty of a Japanese poem lies in its infinite power of suggestion: for just as a Japanese painter strives to suggest a world of beauty with a few strokes of the brush, so the poet tries to present in a few words, supercharged with suggestive ambiguity (one rarely finds a poem exceeding thirtyone syllables) the outline of a deep experience, the details of which are left for the reader to fill in himself according to his own sensibilities. One finds that at times the poet is concentrating more on the *unexpressed* part of the poem than on what he is actually writing.

Unlike Western poets, especially modern western poets, the Japanese have not aimed at originality or at striking effects: they have preferred to express what has been thought often but has never been so beautifully expressed before; and the poems are full of concealed references to past poetry written on the same subject, thus giving a new flavour to a thought which has already been familiar to readers in a particular way . . . and even the most serious truths are invariably linked to autumn leaves and the singing of the nightingales.

Obviously all this must suffer greatly

even at the hands of the most expert translator, and Mr. Rexroth cannot be blamed if sometimes in translation, all that he is able to give us is a sentimental platitude. For in spite of these handicaps, he *has* managed to capture some of the daintiness of the originals; and though some might complain of the complete absence of poetry of a non-emotional nature, the book will be a happy revelation to readers who believe that all oriental poetry is pompous and rhetorical. Indeed, some of the *haiku* are literally as pretty as a picture:—

No one spoke,
The host, the guest,
The white chrysanthemums.

or,

A blind child
Guided by his mother
Admires the cherry blossoms.

It is really fascinating to see the poignant simplicity with which the most commonplace experience is crystallized into poetry :

Someone passes,
And while I wonder
If it is he,
The midnight moon
Is covered with clouds.

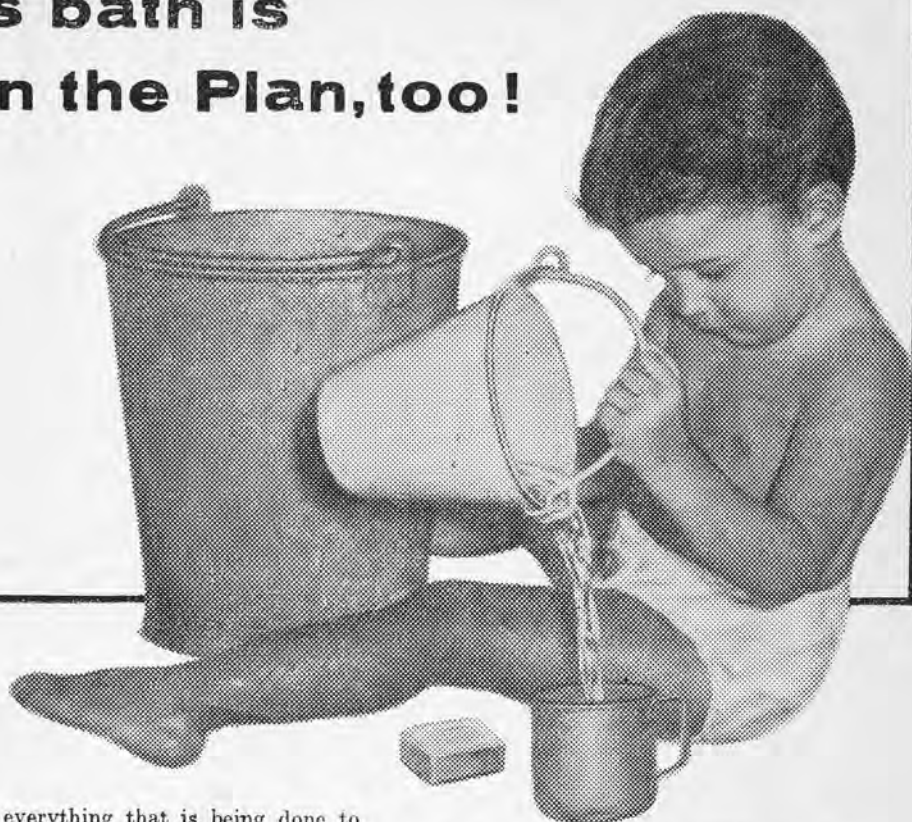
And,

Have you any idea
How long a night can last, spent
Lying alone and sobbing?

But apart from the text itself, in times when most publishers dream only of cutting down costs, and economy-printing invariably steals the thunder from the best of poetry—this little volume of *One Hundred Japanese Poems* (with a few more for good measure and good luck) is indeed a welcome surprise. To the last detail, everything in its get-up and styling has elegance and distinction. The cover, the printing, the poets' names wagging their tails in picturesque Japanese, nothing could have been better designed to create a poetic atmosphere.

IQBAL LUKMANI

His bath is in the Plan, too!



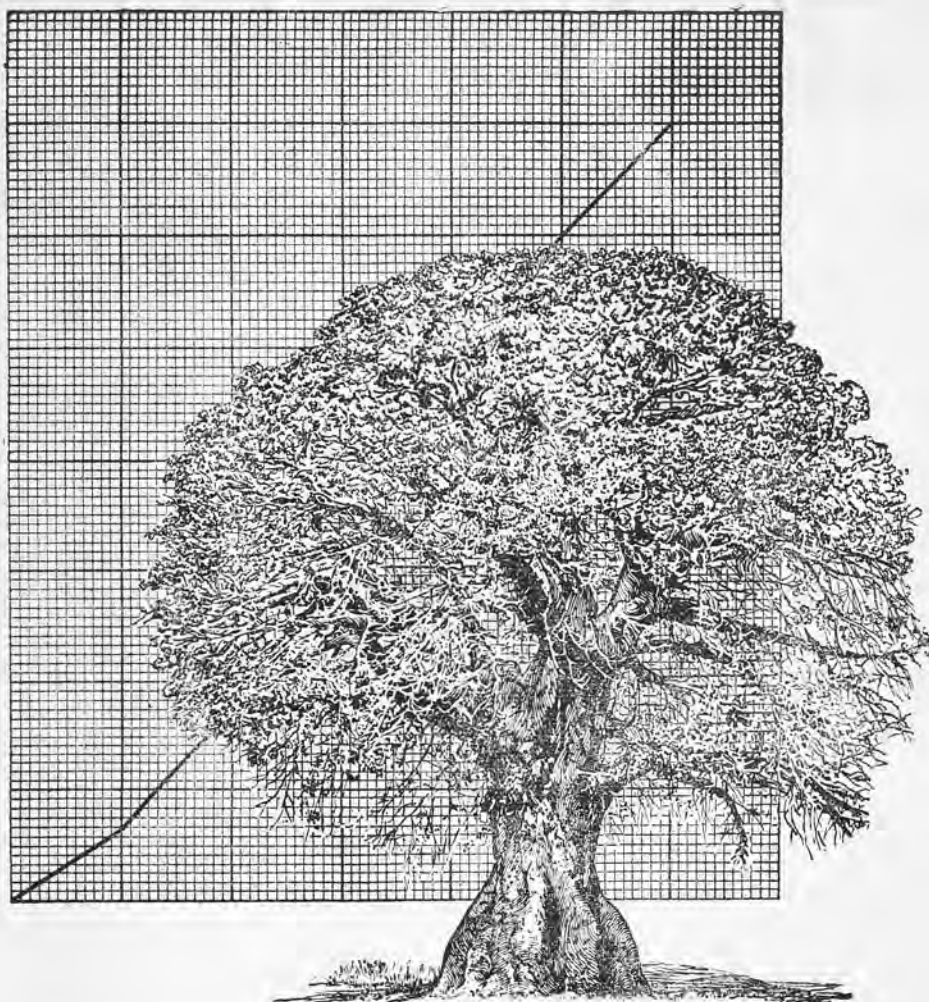
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CORRESPONDENCE

To The Editor, QUEST

Sir,

The one basic assumption of Mr. Ookerjee's *Appearance and Reality* seems to be that there is no such thing as Indian philosophy, and that even if there were such a thing, it is an appearance without any reality. It is this assumption that makes him attribute views to others which they do not hold, and set up fancied idols for the sheer fun of knocking them down. Starting with a deep-seated prejudice against Indian philosophy, he concludes, naturally, that the one aim of the Presidential Address was to show that 'no good was to come out of Western ways of speculation', to warn people not to fall a prey to 'perverse Western ways of demanding reasons'. What actually the Address does say is of no moment to him. Any one that makes any reference to any aspect of Indian philosophy with approval must be talking 'rubbish'. It is no wonder that to this clear-headed and open-minded votary of Western philosophy (which?), all Indian philosophers (with one solitary exception) should appear 'muddle-headed', with minds 'half-closed'.

Of course, we should not ask Mr. Ookerjee inconvenient questions. Is the way of 'demanding reasons' a Western prerogative? Are there not Indian philosophical schools which emphasize the method of rational investigation? Are there not philosophers in the West who are anti-intellectualists and anti-rationalists? Is it only in India that there is 'concentration on the Eternal and the Supra-rational'? Are all Western philosophers phenomenologists and epi-phenomenologists? Do not those systems in India which hold that the intellect is inadequate to comprehend the Real give reasons for their view? These are questions

which should not be asked. For, has not Mr. Ookerjee pronounced his final judgment upon 'our philosophers and our teachers of philosophy, these dear simple creatures who fail even to see the point under discussion'? How can such 'creatures' understand the mysterious logic of Mr. Ookerjee?

Madras

T. M. P. MAHADEVAN

To The Editor, QUEST

Sir,

In reply to Mr. Ookerjee's article on the Nagpur Session of the Congress in the February-March number, it may be worthwhile for the readers of *Quest* to know that the Indian Philosophical Congress is doing important work in the cause of Philosophy and higher culture. Its annual *Proceedings*, containing research papers, reach different parts of the world. Articles in it are listed in *Philosophy, East and West* (Hawaii), and reports of it appear in *Notas Y Filosofia* (Argentina), in *Filosofia* (Turin, Italy) and in other journals. The two expensive volumes of the Silver Jubilee Session of the Congress have been ordered by Libraries in Europe, Moscow, China, Japan, Latin America, South Africa and the English speaking countries. Its *Proceedings* are an essential part of libraries of our embassies abroad.

Unesco has found the Congress a very suitable Forum for organising and conducting symposia on the Philosophy of Education, and on Culture and Human Relations. With the co-operation of Unesco, the Congress conducted an all-India enquiry into the teaching of Philosophy. It has organised and conducted the following symposia: *The Place of the Philosopher in Modern Society, Human Relations and International Obligations*, and hopes to organise, with the co-operation of Unesco, an India-

Australasia Round Table discussion on *The Good Life in Eastern and Western Thought*, in 1957.

Its symposium on *The Concept of Asian Culture* in the Ceylon Session anticipated the spirit of Bandung and the published papers evoked the interest of Toynbee, the historian. The Congress hopes to bring together professional philosophers and active leaders of social thought in its next symposium on *The Philosophic Basis of Social Revolution*. The Indian Philosophical Congress is going to impose a Socratic self-examination on itself by discussing at its next session, *Does Indian Philosophy Need Reorientation?*

The Congress is a member of the international Federation of Philosophical Societies and is represented on its Executive Committee.

It works as the national centre for the Bibliography of Books on Philosophy, of the International Institute of Philosophy, Paris. The Congress is in active touch with philosophical organisations all over the world, and is engaged now in bringing about with the co-operation of the Ministry of Education, Government of India, and foreign embassies in India, intellectual co-operation between philosophers by getting foreign philosophers to visit Indian Universities. An Italian and French Philosopher are scheduled to visit India next year. As a result of its work, there is more systematic writing in philosophy in the country, and a growing exchange of ideas with philosophers in other countries.

As regards the symposium papers, they are generally circulated whenever this is possible, but the symposiast is requested to concentrate on making his own independent contribution to the problem. As it happens, philosophy teachers are kept busy and their papers do not always reach the secretary in time. It is awkward for me to point out that Mr. Ookerjee, as the leader of the symposium, sent his paper five or

six weeks later than the due date. Mr. Ookerjee cannot, surely, object to the 'length' of the Presidential Address (22 pages) when he has himself written the next longest paper (18 pages) exceeding the limit set!

It is idle to state the philosophical problem on a geographical or historical basis, 'Indian' and 'Western', and to say that Indian philosophy thinks 'the Western way of demanding reasons' as 'perverse'. The doctrine of the 'self-luminosity' of Truth in Indian Philosophy is not against 'demanding reasons': it is rather an instance of what Aristotle says: that the principles of demonstration cannot be, or do not require to be, demonstrated and he who insists on this is wanting in training in Logic. The issues confronting Western Philosophy are still puzzling Western Philosophers; the following quotation states, candidly, the predicament in contemporary western philosophy, in a debate on *The Foundations of Freedom* by Josef Pieper and Walter Weymann-Weyhe: 'Our Philosophy... regarded the act of understanding as being essentially an act of grasping something which is within human reason itself and is bounded by the limits of reason. Here we find the real tragedy of our spiritual history. The contemporary outlook has been driven to a philosophy which it did not want, and so it has lost its freedom'. (*Science and Freedom*, A Bulletin of the Committee on Science and Freedom. No. 4. December 1955. p. 27).

The Indian Philosophical Congress belongs to everybody. It is not a 'menace' to anybody and nobody can menace it. There is, of course, scope for improvement, but silence by members inside the Congress and satire outside it will not help.

Mysore

N. A. NIKAM

Secretary,

The Indian Philosophical Congress.

Editor, QUEST

Sir,

A perusal of the article *Appearance and Reality* by S. Ookerjee in *Quest* Vol. 1, No. 4, drove me to refer to the previous issue of this journal in which the Editor has quoted the words of Schweitzer to all faint-hearted critics. I may repeat those wise words for the benefit of Mr. Ookerjee: 'The highest honour one can show to a system of thought is to test it ruthlessly with a view to discovering how much truth it contains'. In his account of the Indian Philosophical Congress, 1955, the author has proved himself to be ignorant of Indian Spiritual Philosophy and committed himself to intolerant statements on Indian ways of philosophy.

I do not wish to argue with the author with the purpose of winning him over to the camp of Indian intuitive methods, but being an eye-witness to the activities of the Congress at Nagpur I cannot permit falsehoods about it to be publicised.

The main point of Mr. Ookerjee's article is: '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.' (P.31. *Quest* Vol. 1, No. 4).

The arguments leading to this conclusion are tainted by both mal-observation and non-observation. Moreover if at all the premises are accepted the conclusion does not follow—an example of non-sequitur. The author seems to discern a false lead in the statement of the Governor: 'Students wishing to study (Philosophy) need not go to the philosophies of other countries as India had lots of it.' All shades of thinking, heterodox as well as orthodox, found their home in India long before western philosophy became modern through Descartes. It is a verdict of history, ignorance of which leads the author to hug the delu-

sion that western philosophies are unknown in India. We admit that permutations and combinations of realism, idealism and pragmatism may appear in the western world in times to come, but the basic systems of western thought recently developed had already set their firm roots in Indian life. India does not boast of her variegated streams of philosophy in the past, but she claims her due share of honour in the welter of Western philosophies.

Mr. Ookerjee has unwarrantedly attributed to Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan a strain of thought in his Presidential address as follows: 'He concluded that no philosophy except the wisdom of our venerable ancients turns man's eye inward upon the inner sanctuary of his soul.' Dr. Mahadevan's address on *The Rediscovery of Man* was intended to expound his belief that, 'The mortal illness which afflicts the modern man is excessive outwardness.' (Proceedings of the 30th Indian Philosophical Congress, Nagpur, p. 22). According to him the functions professed to be performed by logical positivism 'are but manifestations of externalism in philosophy' (P.8. Ibid). He applauds the new current of existentialism: 'The importance of existentialism consists in its turning the attention of man on himself and in its realizing the need for inwardness.' (P. 15. Ibid). With due reverence for western scientific methods, he continues: 'I have discussed phylo-biology and para-psychology in order to show that the adoption of the inward approach in the study of man is in no way inimical to the spirit of Science'. (P. 20. Ibid). After a rigorous examination of the Western and Indian philosophies he ends his conscientious address, 'True happiness lies within. It can be attained only by him who is not misled by the outer look of things but succeeds in getting at their soul and rediscovers his true self'. (P. 22. Ibid). Now, I beseech the readers to see how arbitrarily

Mr. Ookerjee has drawn his conclusion, '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 God and man.'

When the President of the Indian Philosophical Congress has announced his manner of solving modern man's conflicts and complexes by a ruthless examination of Western and Indian techniques why should any member of the Congress get exasperated at it? Every member of the Congress is at full liberty to explore the universe for himself and the results of his quest need to be presented to the world at large for a final judgment. There are dogmatic thinkers in India who believe that the Indian technique can efficaciously handle the perennial problems of philosophy. But then there are fanatics in the West who champion only Logical Positivism or Existentialism.

Indian thinkers have always allowed their thought to be mercilessly analysed. Mr. Ookerjee, I feel, has not taken pains to survey the achievements of Indians in the realm of rational philosophy; he contemptuously speaks of the Indian notion that 'Truth is self-luminous'.

He has reiterated the same point in a paper, *Metaphysics and Mysticism* (*Proceedings of the Indian Philosophical Congress*, Baroda, 1953). 'Ultimately Truth must be known without a test, for, in its essence it is self-luminous' (P. 282. Ibid). Another defective statement he has uttered is, 'The aim of Indian Philosophy is not to destroy Metaphysics but to help it to find its lost soul by supplementing its shortcomings with Mysticism.' (P. 279. Ibid).

If Mr. Ookerjee cannot grapple with the term 'self-luminosity' why should he charge the Presidential Address with the repudiation of scientific methods. The self is luminous and as the self is in reality, Truth, Truth is said to be self-luminous. Truth by its nature shines and, in Kant's words, 'it is the only jewel that shines by its own light'. The inner self immortal is taken for granted to-day as luminous because seers have certified to it. If Mr. Ookerjee feels doubtful, let him abandon the fickle methods of intellect and try by discipline the sharper way of self-realization and Truth realization.

One complaint of Mr. Ookerjee is the irregular symposia that were arranged. In the symposium on *The Nature of Error* Mr. Ookerjee read a paper. He could deal only with the views of Moore, Russell and Ayer on the problems raised. Have not Indian thinkers analysed the nature of error and its place in Reality? He has written convincingly of 'the intellectual legerdemain used by Western Scientist—Philosophers, but, has he forgotten the relevance of error in life? Mr. Ookerjee is contemptuous of the thirteen speakers who rose up to utter something on error, apart from what is found in 'elementary text-books of Metaphysics'. The performance of the thirteen speakers was to show that the narrow analysis of the symposiasts was unsatisfactory. Mr. Ookerjee's paper on *Error* was no more than logic-chopping, and hence the audience could not keep silent. Let symposiasts in future remember that what the philosophers require is 'vision', 'the original approach', 'synchronisation of life and reality' and not a 'ballet of bloodless categories' as provided by the symposiasts on *Error*.

Perunna

G. SUKUMARAN NAIR

Travancore-Cochin State

A REPLY TO MY CRITICS

To The Editor, QUEST

Sir,

Truth hurts, and my critics have been hurt badly. I have done some plain speaking, and they don't like it and can't take it. I had no axe to grind; I spent many days in writing my paper, I was eager to have it discussed, I went to Nagpur in high hopes and I was disappointed. I see how foolish I was in my expectations. The savage reaction of my critics was to be expected. Our Truth seekers, believing that Truth dwells in a region beyond Reason, are so unused to seeing it face to face in cold print, that they cannot recognise it, and even call it 'lack of truth, clarity of thought and good taste'. They question my integrity; they charge me with 'unabashed misrepresentation' and 'yellow journalism' (a reflection on *Quest!*). One learned doctor (not of medicine) has diagnosed, no doubt 'through spiritual insight, that I have a most pernicious cerebral tumour—'western philosophy on the brain.' With such a malady, I pray that my readers will be patient with me.

Regarding the falsification of facts, my readers must decide, as best they can, between Dr. Chubb's word and mine, but I would refer them to the first two paragraphs of his article, and I also suggest they attend the next Congress. Certainly the assumption that the President 'must express no opinions' is 'just silly', but it is not *my* assumption. I cited Dr. Mahadevan's Address as well as the Governor's as illustrations of the all-pervasive anti-western anti-metaphysical trend at the Congress.

Let me quote the 'relevant portions' Dr. Chubb wants: after condemning the philosophies of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke (*Proceedings*, P.6), the Positivists (P. 7-9), and even the Existentialists (P.

9-15), as all being wrecked by the 'externalist' attitude', Dr. Mahadevan continues: 'But the philosopher—the seeker after wisdom—has to struggle against the current, and turn the eye within' (P. 16). We are explicitly told that 'inwardness does not mean introspection' (P.20) as understood by western psychologists, but 'it consists in piercing through the outer encrustations into the heart of things... from the gross to the subtle. Neither sense nor mere understanding can take us to the core of things. The path that leads to the Spirit is referred to as intuition...' (P.21) 'The culmination of inwardness is in *Advaita*-experience.... When the veil of ignorance is lifted, the absolute Spirit stands self-revealed.... One does not have this realization through mere theoretical reasoning. Tons of theory will not be capable of destroying the darkness of ignorance...' (P. 22)

Dr. Mahadevan's 'great reputation' puts him beyond criticism; Mahadevan *ipse dixit*, and anyone who dares to object has 'demeaned himself' and shown 'bad taste'. Western philosophers may not be fortunate enough to intuit God, but at least they do not turn philosophers into little gods. And as for bad taste, I do not think I should take my moral instruction from Dr. Chubb.

The 'good deal of profitable discussion' which Dr. Chubb found, must have been when I had 'left the Hall'. But I distinctly remember that after Mr. Iyer had argued with Prof. Mathrani, a voice very like Dr. Chubb's often repeated, 'Mr. Chairman, *this* is the sort of thing we *want*',—a statement which would be pointless, unless it implied that this (i.e. a good discussion) was what we were *not getting*. Since *this* fact could not have occurred when Dr. Chubb had 'left the Hall' I suppose he will deny that it ever happened.

Prof. Sarkar's paper is printed, and my readers can see it for themselves, but what has Dr. Chubb to say about the Swamiji who propounded his own tests of truth and

eliminated a number of beliefs as false, about the man who substituted a joke for an argument, about Mr. Diwanji's sermon? Were they all 'outsiders'? Or was I so bored that I fell asleep and had a nightmare?

To tell symposiasts how they should have treated their subject, is 'objectionable' because it is not to analyse what they have written. It would be different if the papers were irrelevant, but Dr. Chubb assures us that none of them were irrelevant. I grant that *some* errors might be overcome only by a 'spiritual experience', but is such experience really required to overcome the millions of everyday errors like 'That is Mr. C.' or 'Nagpur is in the South'? Should not a theory of Error embrace such cases? I confess that if my opinion of the Congress is an error, it can only be corrected by 'a process of regeneration' of which I do not consider myself capable. If one were asked about the *nature* of anything, and one told you how to *avoid* it, that, in ordinary language, would be an 'evasion' and not a 'solution'; and what we would commonly call a 'dogmatic statement' is known in Congress circles as a 'careful analysis'. That error arises from a 'primal Nescience' was announced somewhat in the manner of a special message to the Congress from the Almighty, to which, as Mr. Nair would say, 'the seers have certified'.

Dr. Chubb refers to an 'elementary mistake' in my paper. I have never claimed infallibility, and though it took me 'some time to realise' it (about 60 seconds), the important point is that it took me *no* time to admit my mistake—an unheard-of event in the Congress. It was characteristic of Dr. Chubb to pounce on an extremely minor point which leaves the main parts of my paper unaffected. Further, what seems 'elementary' when one takes stock examples from Intermediate text-books, is not so obviously an error when one considers, say, a scientific theory, where the bare result

unsupported by the reasons by which it was arrived at is worth little. I was unable to explain this to Dr. Chubb, since he opened the topic as we were posing for a picture. In any case, an error in a lengthy argument is one thing, a whole paper which misses the point completely is quite another. It took me two long letters to show Dr. Chubb that Prof. Sarkar's was such a paper, but as he has not yet admitted his mistake, I do not know if he has realised it.

Dr. Chubb says that my point about dull students taking Philosophy would mean 'that examiners in Indian universities declare students to be worthy of a degree even when they write rubbish'. That is exactly what I do mean, and I am glad that for once Dr. Chubb has understood me perfectly. I have elaborated the point in *All Play and No Work* in *Quest* No. 1. After having publicly called his own former colleague a 'metaphysical psychotic' who needed lessons in 'elementary metaphysics' (Mysore Congress, 1952) and after having written about an examiner, 'Heaven help those who take their lessons from him', I don't think Dr. Chubb himself has much respect for our teachers and examiners.

If ever Dr. Chubb should come to the Wilson College Examiners' Meeting, he would see what a strong case Mr. Ookerjee makes year after year for detaining underserving students, but not being either the Principal or the head of the Department, he is not finally responsible for sending up such students.

I hope I have answered all of Dr. Chubb's points; the rest is personal abuse, at which, I confess, I could not excel him.

Will Dr. Mahadevan please inform me where I have assumed that there is no such thing as Indian Philosophy? My complaint is that there is too much of it. The answers to the 'inconvenient questions' he asks me are to be found in my paper *Mysticism and Metaphysics* in the 1953 *Proceedings*.

When he can give unambiguous answers to the arguments he will find there, I shall be prepared to discuss further with him. Until then, his sarcasm leaves me impenitent.

Prof. Nikam will be surprised to find that his letter actually supports what I have said. I have never denied the external activities of the Congress, its connection with Unesco, its being in 'active touch' with other bodies, etc. I have referred to 'distinguished foreign visitors' and 'foreign universities'. I have only shown that the Nagpur session was a farce, and that, like a whitened sepulchre, it is imposing from the outside and rotten within. Prof. Nikam is unfair in pointing out that I sent my paper late, since I had asked for an extension and it had been granted. I had also offered to send copies of my paper to the other symposiasts, but I was told there was no need to do so. If my paper was longer than the set limit, at least I did not, unlike the President, read out the whole of it. The reference to Aristotle and the undemonstrability of principles of demonstration is amusing, since the claims of the superiority of Indian Philosophy which I found 'objectionable' were surely not principles of demonstration. It is a trifle odd to quote Aristotle in support of the anti-rational doctrine of 'self-luminosity'!

Mr. Sukumaran Nair's latest outburst conjures up vivid memories of his performance at Nagpur. I thank him for 'those wise words' of Schweitzer's but he need not have bothered, as that is precisely the sort of 'honour' I did the Congress, and have great pleasure to do to him. Will he please tell me where I have committed fallacies of 'mal-observation', 'non-observation' and 'non-sequitur'? He writes: 'There are dogmatic thinkers in India who believe that the Indian technique can efficaciously handle the perennial problems of philosophy!' Those are the very people I am talking about. They attend the Congress, and their

name is Legion. If Mr. Nair reads my paper on Error, he will find that I *have* 'grappled with' the notion of 'self-luminosity', and it is this very 'merciless analysis' which he calls 'no more than Logic-chopping'! Mr. Nair argues: 'The self is luminous and as the self is in reality, Truth, truth is said to be self-luminous.' This is very luminous indeed. How does this strike him: Mr. N. is a philosopher, he is in Nagpur, so Nagpur is a philosopher? He tells me to try 'the sharper way of Truth-realization', but my point is that even if I could, it would still not be philosophy, if by philosophy we mean 'a merciless analysis'. In my paper, Mr. Nair would also find instances which show I have *not* 'forgotten the relevance of error in life.' That, in fact, is my complaint against Dr. Chubb's view of overcoming error by spiritual experience. It is true that I have dealt with Moore, Russell and Ayer (and 5 others), all Western thinkers, but I have *criticised* them all—not very like a man with 'western philosophy on his brain'! I will ask Mr. Nair only one question: Are his utterances logical or illogical? If illogical, we may safely ignore them. If logical, then is *he* too one of the 'Logic-choppers' who use the 'fickle methods of intellect'?

Bombay

S. OOKERJEE

To The Editor, QUEST

Sir,

I have read two articles in QUEST (Vol. 1, No. 4) of particular interest to me and found them both provocative, in widely different senses.

The short piece by Krishan Sondhi on Bharat Natyam and Kathak provoked because it over-simplified so much and was therefore so inadequate and false in its conclusion. I expect a magazine of the calibre of *Quest* to contain more carefully researched and thought-through pieces.

My wife, who is studying Bharat Natyam intensely here, was saddened by the mis-statements and authoritative veneer of this inadequate piece.

On the other hand, Hamdi Bey's article, *Dilemma of the Indian Novelist*, was provocative in a creative sense. It presents a basic problem which I hope other Indian writers will consider, discuss and grapple with seriously. May I say that the 'free man' of Western fiction is not nearly as free as he seems; the contemporary fictional Western hero is generally *driven* and compulsive and does not really know why he acts as he does. But he *wants* to know why, and his authors and readers want to know why; the search for the internal and social pressures that move him is a fundamental

reason for the writing of fiction in the West today. Perhaps *this* is the major lesson for Indian novelists.

A sharp example of the avoidance of the search into motivation is contained in the slight short story, *Bindo*, in the same issue of *Quest*. The entire climax of the story is contained in the sentence, 'Suddenly I felt a certain relief.' This vague and rather mystical phenomenon is inadequate to provide the growth of the hero or to end the conflict and the story. There is nothing wrong with a 'mystical' experience as the climax of a story, but if there is no attempt to prepare for it, explain it or integrate it, it becomes highly indigestible and undramatic.

Madras

DAVID MARK

contributors to this issue

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AND
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THE TAJ, AGRA



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THE KAILAS, ELLORA CAVES



TOWER OF VICTORY, CHITORGARH



A FRESCO IN AJANTA CAVES

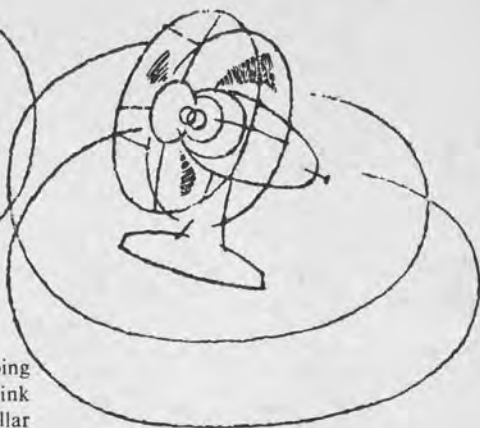
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Oil

in the day's work



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IN INDIA'S LIFE

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