

QUEST

a bi-monthly of arts and ideas

edited by: **NISSIM EZEKIEL**

Marathi Literature
SPECIAL ISSUE

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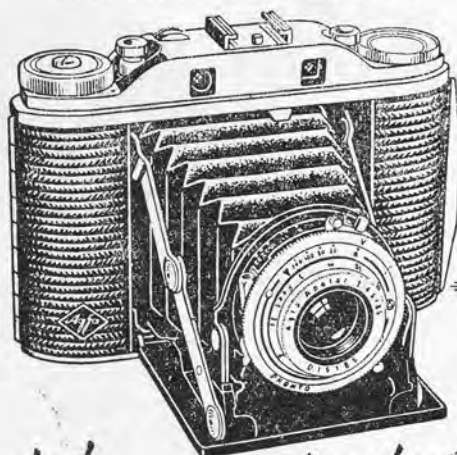
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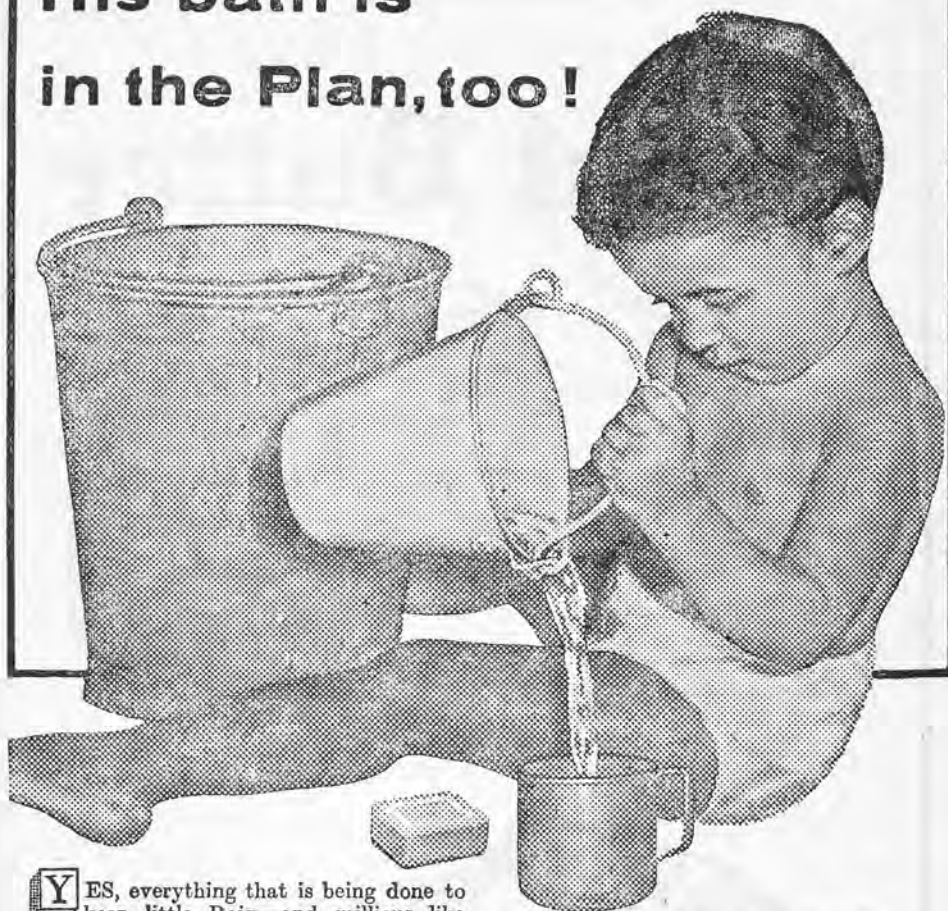
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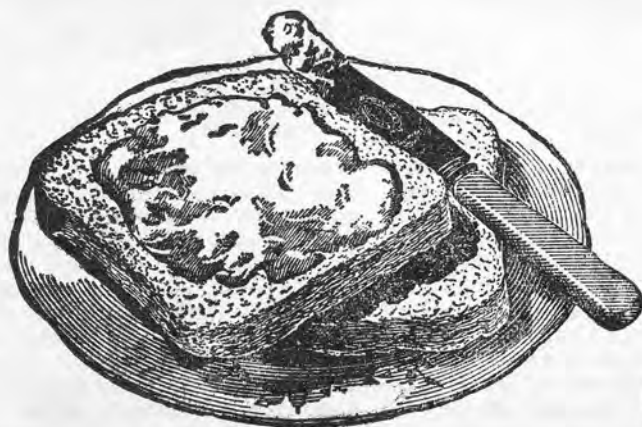
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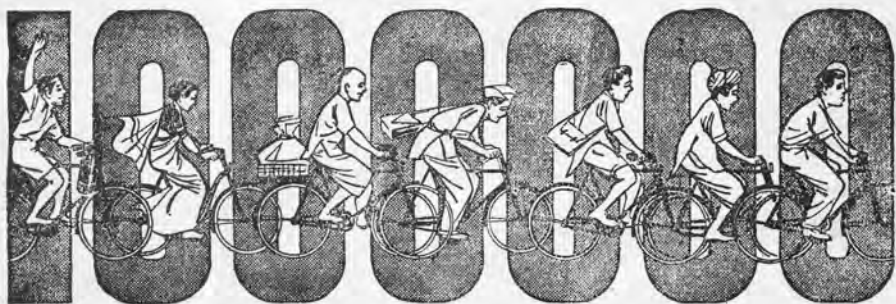
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QUEST

a bi-monthly of arts and ideas
EDITOR: NISSIM EZEKIEL
April - May 57 Vol. II No. 5

MARATHI LITERATURE SPECIAL ISSUE

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editorial

AT the recent Asian Writers' Conference, delegates representing the various Indian languages gave glowing reports of literary achievement in those languages. It is true that we have no means to verify the claims made by them, simply because we are not even meagrely acquainted with more than one of these indigenous languages. An average reader of the literature of his own mother tongue is invariably more conversant with developments in European or American writing than with literary activity in most of the regional languages of our country. His acquaintance with the latter, made necessarily through English translations, is limited. Except for Bengali, Tamil and Telugu, very few Indian literatures are rendered into English with any frequency. Thus we experience the paradox of being Indians and at the same time not knowing Indian literature.

Mama Warerkar, the veteran Marathi playwright, had once suggested that the best writing in our languages should be translated into Hindi, the national language, to form a common pool from which all the remaining languages may, in turn, draw. He felt that the resultant accumulation of literature would surpass the literary contribution of any other country both in quality and in quantity. The second point, at least, may be accepted uncontested. But to decide the truth of the first, it is necessary to find a common medium of representing our indigenous literatures to the world. The Sahitya Akademi, our state-sponsored Academy of Literature, has recently brought out a collection of the best poetry in all our major languages with translations in Hindi. There is also an unofficial movement, called the *Aantar Bharati*, which is restricted to polite but indiscriminate reciprocal translations in the languages. Though all these efforts lead to the centralisation of Indian literature in their own way, the problem of simultaneously putting our literature on the world map has yet to be tackled by our intellectuals with integrity and virtuosity.

This is no movement for literary colonisation. In fact, it suggests a delicate question: is much of our literature worth translating into a world language like English with its own indomitable heritage? An attempt at answering this question often leads to a defence of the limitations of our vernacular literature, based on the patently orthodox social situation which checks the variety of themes and styles normally approachable by our writers. Our patriotic critics forget that the integrity and quality of art is unaffected by the social confines of experience. Standards of literary greatness, of craftsmanship and of sincerity are common to all languages. This may sound like a truism; but much of our current criticism has conveniently bypassed it to boost the prestige of mediocre but ambitious efforts in the languages. Consequently, translating into Hindi will not be enough. It is only when our literature is translated into English that it will discover criteria difficult to corrupt, standards transcending the so-called national peculiarities of idiom and approach. Snobbish as this may sound, it is the only way to achieve an urgent rationalisation of our literary values.

Indian literature has, up till now, been represented abroad mainly by Indo-Anglian writing. There is a growing feeling among our writers that Indo-Anglian literature, especially fiction, continues to achieve a *succes d'estime* which hides

its inevitable sophistication of the reality of Indian life. What is wrong with these overestimated novelists is not that they do not know the craft—in fact, they know more of it than do their vernacular counterparts—but that they receive experience on the surface, with the romantic expectation of turning it into a commodity acceptable to Western readers hungry for an exotic revelation of the East. The Marathi or the Bengali writer has no such pre-conceptions. Hence follow his strengths as well as weaknesses. The former lie in the depth of his experience, his artlessness; the latter in his sentimental outbursts, his lack of formal discipline.

In this issue is presented a selection of Marathi literature spanning the last ten years or so. In translation, one may feel that the original loses some of its colour, perhaps some of its abandon. Actually the retention of quality is a test of the artistic integrity of the original. One cannot help the partial transmutation of shades of meaning, of sounds of individual words, affected as this is by the difference in the cultures that nourish the two languages. All one can do is to keep away from an academic rendering and protect the vitality and the rhythm of the original. This, in fact, is what distinguishes the efforts of an Arthur Waley or an Ezra Pound. But it need not be forgotten that they had the advantage of translating into their own mother tongue.

While the problems of translation have yet to find a standard solution, we hope that this effort, which speaks for itself, will encourage in a small way the Indianization of our literatures resulting in a genuine representation abroad.

a time for transition

EVERYTHING new-blown has to negotiate a whirlwind of controversy before it begins to flower and to bear fruit. Then comes a comprehensive decadence declining into a nauseating monotony. This has been true of new writing in England, of neo-realism in Italian films, of new trends in Indian painting. It is a cycle, which one feels, modern Marathi writing cannot escape.

'New' Marathi writing was not born in the wake of a manifesto. It began with a concurrent realisation, primarily among poets and short story writers, of the inexcusable immaturity of the literature produced during the years between the wars. The last war did not affect Indian intellectuals as it did their western counterparts. Even the freedom movement barely shaped their sensibility in the way the French Resistance did Malraux's or Sartre's. The awakening of an artistic consciousness was a process with a different pattern for each individual. Newness in modern writing is, therefore, not related to any political or philosophical convictions, but an organic change, like the shedding of a skin, that came over the Marathi body literary.

Outwardly, this revolution was a matter of innovations in technique. Both Mardhekar and Rege, inimitable in themselves, and the poets that came after, made metre consistent with content and diction precisely evocative. Gadgil enlarged the areas of experience treated by the short story and continued to experiment with forms of expression and narrative styles. Madgulkar brought a new vigour and sincerity to bear upon the story or the sketch with a rural

background. In the most representative work of all these modern writers there is evident a detachment and a craftsmanship which their predecessors seemed to hold in contempt.

Development in the field of drama and fiction was, however, somewhat erratic. But for Pendsay, with his intense portrayal of the men and women of the Konkan, there was not a novelist in sight. Playwrights concentrated on translations from English which failed to revive a Marathi stage smothered by old-fashioned, song-studded mythologicals. The light essay was a dying form.

On the other hand, criticism, both applied and theoretical, became more objective and independent of outmoded Sanskrit dogma. Mardhekar's ruling interpretations of the aesthetic norm were not contested till after his death, last year. It was heartening to see writers practising various forms of literature challenging the pet ideas of established idols through impassioned criticism.

During the last few years, a whole generation of young writers and poets has been trying to establish itself. For a while it could not cross the fringe of the shadow cast by the reputation of the elders. Any perceptive short story writer found himself unconsciously imitating the four pioneers of the new short story. A poet who employed unusual imagery found that he was unwittingly walking in the footsteps of a revolutionary predecessor.

At the present moment, however, signs of decay seem to haunt the old guard. The Diwali bumper issues that many Marathi magazines bring out provide a field day to our leading writers. They produce stories by the dozen, thus vitiating the vitality of their achievement. Moreover, except for Gadgil and Madgulkar, none of the pioneers has cared to branch out into new directions. This indicates a lack of that self-criticism which is the essence of one's creative approach.

The poets, on the other hand, have been successfully working in prose forms. Muktibodh's novel *Kshipra* or Sareeta Padki's play *Badha*, for example, show a vision and a maturity that these forms badly needed. It is expected that both the novel and the drama will receive a new spurt in the coming years.

Meanwhile the two forms that laid the foundations of new writing in Marathi are approaching stagnation. Cliches of imagery, tricks of style and an all-pervading nympholepsy and self-consciousness are wrecking the short story and poetry. Criticism has as yet failed to examine the extent of this literary erosion.

In the background, the negative reaction to the post-war disintegration of social cohesion and moral normalcy which nurtured the new short story needs to be replaced by a positive approach to a changing world. The writers are in a dilemma because experience portrayed in literature seems to be one step ahead of the static situation around them. How are they then to cross the limitations of their material and experiment in an apparently secluded ivory tower?

These are broadly some of the problems that fester in the fastidious Marathi mind. This issue represents a period that is actually closing. The transition that will recoup the lost strength of new writing is yet to come. It will have to be prodded on by frank, objective criticism and uninhibited experimentation. We only suggest that, both logically and naturally, the time is ripe for it.

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IN INDIA'S LIFE
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under the yoke

by Vyankatesh Madgulkar

(A chapter from the Marathi novel BANGARWADI, translated by S. D. Deshmukh)

THE school had no regular calendar. Everywhere else summer was the vacation time; here the school closed for the harvest. The boys came to school whenever they felt like it. The school-master's lot was not unlike that of a bus-driver in the country—he could not do a thing until a sufficient number turned up. Half the time he had little work to do and it was impossible for him to confine his sphere of operations to the four walls of the school. The most important of my subsidiary roles was, of course, to act as a scribe, to write letters, petitions and applications for the village. My week-end visits to the home-town were invariably embarked upon with my pockets stuffed with letters which I had undertaken to post. When it was discovered that I did these time-honoured jobs without a murmur, every conceivable problem and grievance began coming my way and I became an adviser and counsellor to all and sundry. Whenever a sheep was lost, or wife quarrelled with husband, the school-master was consulted—in the belief that school-masters are as well versed in law and commonsense as they are educated and wise.

This kept me busy even when there was no teaching to be done. Whenever the authorities complained about the poor enrolment I found myself making excuses: the school is at an experimental stage—this is the sowing season... and so on; but I kept the school going. As the school building was a court, village-hall, police station and municipal office in addition to being a school, the teacher's role was varied. He was a judge, policeman, revenue official and even stamp-vendor! However, this much could be said for the arrangement: it was unusual for disputes to cross the boundary

of the village. Most of them were resolved at a 'panchayat' meeting—that is before a council or assembly of about ten people. The dispensers of justice included the school-master and such venerable villagers as the old Karbhari, Rama's Kakuba, Shekuba and others. As a rule the judgment of these ten was accepted as final by the offender and he would pay the fine decided by them. If the 'panchayat' failed to give satisfaction, he was at liberty to go in appeal. The appellate authority was a supernatural one, the oracle of a deity recognised by every shepherd; the goddess was consulted before a large gathering of shepherds from all over the district. This step was taken but rarely, for a communal banquet had to be given before the Supreme Being could be invoked and a banquet of the required size might cost as much as seven or eight hundred rupees.

Weddings were similarly solemnised on a communal basis on an auspicious day so that no one was ever required to feed the whole village single-handed. There might possibly be ten or twenty weddings in a year and each family was required to feed more or less an equal number of persons. If financial difficulties threatened to postpone a scheduled wedding, the village often helped to tide over the situation. All pitched in to share the burden so that the wedding might take place on the appointed day.

Far from allowing myself to be discouraged by Dadu's threats, I had thrown myself wholeheartedly into the life of the village. A stage had come when it could not do without me.

The number of farmers in the place was small, fewer than the fingers of one's hands

—but the village was not devoid of them. 'Mriga' rains had left the fields overgrown with thick, hardy grass; before sowing could commence, the farmers had to clear their fields of this unwanted weed. Another rainy fortnight and the soil became softly pliant. But there was too much mud in the fields as yet—too much water. The excess water must be absorbed, the surface must become firm enough for men and bullocks to 'walk on. So the farmers had to wait until a spell of dry weather had made the soil flakey on top while moisture remained underneath. Then the sowing commenced, bajra, gram, . . . other pulses. Every morning the farmers were seen taking off for the fields with their teams and ploughs and their bags of seed.

One day, while the sowing operation was at its height, Sheku came to see me. He was not often seen in the village. He had two or three acres of land outside the village and its cultivation was his only interest in life. It was early morning and the man had covered himself with a dhoti—as if it were a blanket. All I could see of him were his scraggy face and dusty feet—they looked leathery from constant trekking; the toes had coarse ungainly nails on them. His hands were hidden from view. Ayubu and I were by ourselves when Sheku came.

'Teacher', he said, without bothering to sit down, 'Do find me a bullock from somewhere. It's sowing time you know!'

It was pointless to say that as a school-master I was not likely to own a bullock. He said, 'You can easily borrow one for me. I have one. The other died. I can sow if I get another. Otherwise it means starving—the whole year through.'

'Let me know first who has a bullock to lend. Then I can ask him.'

'Those that own bullocks have their own sowing to do. Who would put up with a delay in his own sowing? I have tried everywhere.'

'Whom do you want me to ask in that case?'

'Do what you like but help me in my need. The whole village says: "the school-master is always helpful, always there in times of difficulty!" Why do you treat me different?'

Ayubu, who had listened to all this without a word, now intervened. He turned his face towards Sheku and said:

'Are you crazy, Sheku? Where would the teacher get a bullock? Is he a farmer? Is he a cattle dealer? Have you no sense that you come and beg for whatever stupid thing enters your head? Go away!'

Sheku was obviously shaken—perhaps it was wrong of him to have asked.

'I—I am on my way, to be sure. But do try and do something for me if possible!', he said in a wheedling tone.

Ayubu got to his feet resolutely. Seizing the man by his elbows he propelled him down the steps and on to the road. He said,

'You are a fool, Sheku! As if the school-master carries bullocks under his arms or in his clothes!'

Utterly crestfallen, Sheku went his way muttering something under his breath. Ayubu returned to his seat and said:

'You just ignore what he said, teacher, he is a simpleton . . .'

But I was unable to brush aside the feeling that it did not take the village people very far to teach them to read and write. Their needs were of a different sort altogether. Ayubu was without a family, Ananda needed bread, Sheku a bullock.

Two days later Sheku was still without his bullock although he had wandered far and wide, tried everywhere. He went home, and slumped exhausted to the floor.

'It was useless', he told his wife. Sheku's better half was a strapping woman, standing head and shoulders above all other women and half the men in the village. In the fields she did a man's work.

'Whom did you ask?' she inquired of her husband. He was sitting there motionless, face buried in the hands, utterly dejected.

'All over the village. No one is prepared to give a bullock.'

'What is to be done now?'

'We shall starve to death, that's all—kick up our heels and starve!'

The woman listened to her husband, saw the look in his eye—like that of a lamp which has nearly run out of oil.

'We start sowing tomorrow!' she said bravely.

'What about the bullock?'

'I shall get one.'

'Where from.'

'From wherever I please...'

'But—'

'What business is it of yours? I shall get the bullock. Just you go across to the field tomorrow morning. That's all.'

Sheku racked his brain; where was his wife going to find the bullock? In the morning he hoisted the plough on his shoulder and set off in the direction of his field, leading his solitary bullock with the free hand. Once there, he turned his face towards the village and sat down on the embankment to await the arrival of his wife.

After an hour or so he saw her—she was alone. Sheku's face fell: 'The woman took a wager, but she was not able to procure a bullock. There will be no sowing now. A bullock might become available after others have done their sowing. What good will that do? The crop will be poor in any case, not as usual, and if the crop does not yield enough grain for a full year we must starve; or roam from place to place in search of work...'. Sheku had made himself utterly miserable by this brooding when his strapping spouse reached his side.

'Couldn't you get the bullock?'

'Who says so? Get the plough ready.'

'But—where is the bullock?'

'It is all right. Yoke the bullock at one

end—I shall push at the other!' Sheku shuddered at the thought. He found his voice with great difficulty, 'No, no, can't be!' But the woman had made up her mind and she knew that she was strong enough for the job.

'This is no time for whys and hows—yoke the bullock.'

Seeing that her husband was incapable of movement, too dejected even to lift his head, she rose and herself put the bullock to the plough. Placing one end of the yoke across her own shoulder, she commanded: 'Now, rope me tight.'

So the frail man hardened his heart, got up and signalled the bullock to move. The animal moved, so did the woman. The ploughshare pierced the earth, began furrowing a path through the damp soil. Sheku released a handful of millet seed into the hopper—the grain coursed down the bamboo tube, then leaped to the ground. Sheku's wife continued to pull by the side of the bullock by sheer physical strength.

The sowing went on all morning. At mid-day Sheku and his wife, breathless from the exertion, sat down to a quiet lunch. Sheku was tongue-tied; the woman spoke of this and that. Together they went to work with a rake until the seed was evenly covered by the upturned soil.

By evening they had sown the two-acre plot; then the exhausted trio made their way home.

Next day the incredible tale was all over the village. There was admiration, some astonishment, occasionally even a feeling of scornful amusement.

That night, on my way back from the school, I stood in front of Sheku's house for a moment. Inside, the lamp-light revealed the prostrate form of Sheku's wife by the side of a wall. Sheku stood on her back kneading her body with his feet. Supporting himself by placing both his hands on the wall he was massaging his wife's aching back with a slow movement of each foot.

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WHEN TWO AUTHORS MEET

Linking hands with Pandit Nehru, backstage at the performance of a Sanskrit play in the capital, is Mama Warerkar, veteran Marathi playwright and novelist. A tribute to him appears in this issue.



B. S. MARDHEKAR
had a Hopkins-like influence on Marathi poetry, punctuated by his aesthetic and literary theories.



ANIL (A. R. DESHPANDE)
pioneered the use of free verse. His poetry has been shaped by a sound humanism.



KUSUMAGRAJ (V. V. SHIRWADKAR)
his poetry has the romantic tinge of political idealism. Also a playwright and novelist.



P. S. REGE
writes poetry full of sculptured cameos, wrought with symbolic precision.

poems

THE TRAIL

BY ANIL

I love the winding trail
Of cobra coils and jungle foils
On hither side of the river bank
I love the winding trail

I love the winding trail
Of slippery treads and sticky beds
Of sagging mud and lagging puddles
I love the winding trail

I love the winding trail
Of will-o'-the wisps and traps and risks
Of flourishing teak and bamboo groves
I love the winding trail

I love the winding trail
Of tight spots and ups and downs
Of mountain tops and far beyond
I love the winding trail

I love the winding trail
Of hither and thither and sometime whither
Down the horizon and further ahead
I love the winding trail

(Translated from the Marathi by the poet)

THEY ASKED ME

BY P. S. REGE

They asked me if my experience was significant.
I said, I did not know.
I only knew I had lived and died
And died and lived again,
That between two moments
There is a gap which a thousand thousand ages
cannot bridge
—And yet will always try to.

They asked me if my experience was real.
I said, I did not know.
I only knew how two eyes
Could light a world of unyielding desire
And confound a whole faculty of philosophers
And the pharisees of Beauty.

They asked me if my experience had a moral
For a jaded, fighting, disgruntled world.
I said, I did not know.
I only knew the hushed wind in the russet leaves,
The sun's gold playing hide and seek on the
ripening corn,
And the purple mole on her whiter white left
breast of snow.

(Translated from the Marathi by the poet)

FOOTPRINTS

BY KUSUMAGRAJ

One night I asked the stars:
'God is not', I keep saying to myself,
But you are travellers of the eternal universe,
Have you ever seen his feet?

No one knows whether he is or not,
Fancy is too flat-footed to reach him;
Through centuries with sails unfurl'd
The bark roams over the seas, without finding a
shore.

The stars smiled and said:
That Traveller keeps wandering freely.
Leaving his footprints on the darkness;
Why do you not ask them whether He is or not?

(Translated from the Marathi by D. G. NADKARNI)

A POEM

BY B. S. MARDHEKAR

Sinewed with seriate moments
Memory plucks out petals;
Unravelling the aquatic coils
The lake reveals a host of shadows.

The blindfold sees heavens blossom;
The fool sails a fearless boat
Wide-eyed the fish stares
At the endless riddles reflected.

Fetters inside the petals
Hold happiness in thrall;
The pliant world of reflections
Besieges each esquire.

(Translated from the Marathi by ARUN KOLATKAR)

'LISTEN TO ME'

BY INDIRA

Darkness besieged the house
 Cloudburst swooped on the roofs
 Loneliness billowed through every corner
 To ambush me...
 Alone, I lie still with my eyes closed.
 Through the darkness... tiptoes the door of the
 house
 Stands a little to the side...
 'Listen to me,
 I remember the tapping of those fingers;
 And beneath the rouge
 Stirs an impression
 Of past life, of those raindrops
 Spattering from the sky.'
 'Listen to me...'
 With a hand on the arm
 The easy chair whispers.
 'Do you still remember
 That twilight hour...
 You did not know—
 He was waiting for you, with eyes closed
 An unbearable load had gathered
 Black lightning was flaming.
 I still feel
 The midnight whirlwind
 In the thick jungle
 Possessing me.'
 'Listen to me'
 Down the roof
 A raindrop trickles on my lip...
 'Listen to me... I remember
 In the first hour of that midsummer night
 The torrents of rain locked him up
 By your side, unexpectedly.
 When he got up
 To close the open window
 The way he said...
 I heard his words myself
 "I fear this thievish lightning
 Will rob these eyes of yours."
 —I struggled, got up
 And started running
 Through those things, through that water...
 Through every corner
 My palms pressing my ears
 Keeping away those strange words...
 'Listen to me.'
 'Listen to me.'
 'Listen to me.'

(Translated from the Marathi by ARUN KOLATKAR)

PERHAPS

BY N. G. DESHPANDE

When wantonly she wanders,
 Forgetting all meditation,
 She will not remember even me
 In her pleasures of license.
 When she lingers under the *champak*,
 Instantly its flowers will bloom;
 But she will not remember
 My deep love for her.
 When she lingers under the *champak*,
 The dew drops will shower;
 But she will not remember
 My ceaseless flood of tears.
 She will watch the face of the rainbow,
 Listen to the sweet call of the cuckoo;
 But she will not remember
 That bygone melody of mine.
 With eyes wide and surprised,
 She will see the spread of the sky;
 But she will not remember
 My vast hopes of the past.
 She will be lost in the dark,
 Wandering waywardly in the woods,
 But she will not remember
 The time we spent together.
 While she stands watching in the dark
 Among the branches of trees,
 Perhaps the sighing breeze
 Will remind her of me.

(Translated from the Marathi by D. G. NADKARNI)

THE KNOT

BY SANJEEVANI

Dark night should be on the earth
 Dark worry should be in the heart
 But on the dark bank
 Should your honied voice live.
 In the gloomy air
 Should gleam your streak of silver
 In the roaring cloudburst
 Should be your tender cry.
 The walk of dead night
 Should take the eastern road,
 My trickling memories
 Should be knotted with your mark.

(Translated from the Marathi by D. G. NADKARNI)

NOW AND THEN

BY SHARATCHANDRA MUKTIBODH

If you can, now and then, will you remember me?
 In the distant sunset
 When beyond the rich foliage of the banyan
 The hues of evening ending
 You watch with great absorption....
 Will you pluck
 Along with my memory a tender red banyan leaf?
 Life will be smooth and not worth
 complaining about,
 There won't be a line on your face;
 But will you send word to me once in a while?
 I know that this restless hurry doesn't become me,
 Though the eyes be red—
 The attitude of getting up as soon as it is light!
 How can I tell you?
 My mind knows no peace!
 I cannot relax! In my very youth
 There is a hungry, feverish speed in my bones:
 The conjurer makes us dance according to his will!
 Our faces are distorted—yet something drags,
 The heat of the soul does not calm down.
 Forgive me! Your love is quite inadequate
 To drowse this slowly burning fire.
 To this victim of speed won't you send something
 at least?
 If nothing is left, send your indifference!
 This dry heat has cracked the eyes
 Let the tears roll freely in this way!

(Translated from the Marathi by D. G. NADKARNI)

THE PATH

BY PADMA

On the rim of the horizon
 Steals a touch of mascara,
 In the dark red gloom
 Dim shows a path.
 Silent the trees and creepers
 In shadows stand entwin'd,
 The love that had flown afar
 Is back in the nest.
 There should be a longing
 For home, but there's none—
 The parched path lingers
 Through tear-stained eyes.
 One should pine for another
 One fails to know why not,
 Stinging the feet hard
 The path just wriggles along!

(Translated from the Marathi by D. G. NADKARNI)

SHIP

BY SADANAND REGE

Here on the seaside sands
 For ages have I been sitting
 Carving with the drooping feathers of loneliness
 The marble birds
 Of bronze-brown dreams...
 And far away
 On the radius of the rainbow
 I see a lobe of fire
 Shaping out of midsummer heat...
 Its swagger says to me
 That insolent ship is yours
 That haunted blot of light
 On its sail
 Says the same thing
 The same thing
 The chorus of colours
 Dancing and singing round the *peepul* tree of
 the West
 Says the same thing
 The deep, dark sorrow of the sky
 Embracing the horizon
 Says the same thing
 These hills of glass...
 These caravans of clouds...
 These arches of rocks
 These skeletal palms
 I know what they are saying to me
 And I also know
 That you are a witch
 Sailing this ship of quicksilver
 ...In a moment now
 When through your painted fingers
 Skips a wave of darkness
 And on its giant track
 Are milled these bronzed, marble birds
 Of my dreams
 Then
 This ship of yours
 Will set
 In the sun!

(Translated from the Marathi by ARUN KOLATEKAR)

THEN GO AT ONCE

BY VASANT BAPAT

You *will* go? Then go at once.
Do not, lingering like the sweet night, pluck at
my heart

And when you come again
Forget your tiny watch, forget the moments' cage.

Forget your deft touch at making up
Your urban code of neat crease and tidiness forget

Forget the string of flowers in your braided hair
Forget exquisite silken lace, forget the tinkling
bracelet

Forget, dear, your speech of speed,
Forget, forget, the words of urging time—quick,
swift, in haste, at once.

Forget the dusk and lamps lighting,
Come like the polar night's sweet mystic covering
wing.

Like a calm wave of the sea,
Come tremulous, eager, heart unspoken,
soft-intoxicate, with gentle pace.

(Translated from the Marathi by R. P. SIKKAR)

TO YOU IT WAS A NATIVE ART

BY VINDA KARANDIKAR

How to sway souls to your tune —
To you it was a native art,
How bring each to spread eagerly, and
How in a moment turn it all to dust.

How to speak double-edged words;
How draw on strangeness like a cloak;
How look—how, not looking,
Swing hammer-strokes with a gentle hand.

How to carry your head in pride;
How to press a hurt with soothing hand;
How with summoned softness in the eyes
Stir a hive of hopes.

How to pass coquetting through the clouds,
With stars entwined in your hair!
How in a moment give with both hands
And in a moment take all away.

To you it was a native art—
Native to me simpleness;
In your art you have content;
Except—my life is empty.

(Translated from the Marathi by R. P. SIKKAR)

TOWARDS THE HORIZON

BY B. B. BORKAR

On the plain somewhat round, somewhat wet
The quivering wool was crawling, sprawling

In the bluish horizon was this picture reflected
The dawn was cuddling the twosome in her hands.

Ecstatic, I chanced to see a poor little umbrella
of a tree

Hugging all the gloom to its own desolate heart

On its trunk I saw Christ nailed
His mother was grazing the sheep on the grass.

With a wounded heart I advanced smiling
Through the pain towards the wide horizon of
compassion.

(Translated from the Marathi by D. G. NADKARNI)

SINKING DEEP IN YOUR EYES PROFOUND

BY MANGESH PADGAONKAR

Sinking deep in your eyes profound
My self to me seemed strangely new;
And words at my lips...
Suddenly turned to drops of dew!

...Far in the deep woods of forgetfulness:
Into the secret rows of reeds
Flew away, a blue bird, the mind's cherishings,
And like new bride's bashful eager dream
Trembled the wind's soft flute...!

...Awareness still sank
In the calm deep pool of that experience:
Where in immovable meditation the water was
stilled,

The wind held his peace,
Nor stirred the leaves,
And stillness upon the water
Gently spread like a poignant lid.
Sinking deep in your eyes profound
I had suddenly a secret found
Deeper than did ever mind sound.
As a deep winter's mystic dawn
Finds the sea utterly sunk in a mist,
So were lost
Those moments in their own mystery!

Sinking deep in your eyes profound
One instant my self seemed strangely new,
And words at my lips —
Suddenly turned to drops of dew.

(Translated from the Marathi by R. P. SIKKAR)

some thoughts on present-day Marathi poetry

by Kusumavati Deshpande

I SPENT an evening reading some slim volumes of present-day Marathi poetry. This was one of the many evenings I spend in this manner, and I could not escape the thought that usually comes to me. Is it not different—different from anything one has read before...? I suppose all good poetry is different from anything written before. It is different not for the sake of being so. That is faked poetry. But it is different because it is true to individual feeling. The same old sorrow springs with the same old words, with images from the same old world. But the mind that seeks expression is an individual one and the truth of its individuality gives a shape and a tone to the same old words as never before. This is what happens when Indira Sant says:

Night stands a-tip-toe
on horizon's brink
step arrested
frozen in her throat
harmonies untold —
with words held back
poise arrested
she stands conjured
there spreads o'er me
the deep dye of that hypnotic trance...

An image like nothing experienced before, stands before the mind—complete, homogeneous with an atmosphere all its own, with a finger on the lips. The hypnotic trance grows, until there is only Night (or is it Indira Sant?) and you and eternity. Here is a feeling still more abstract—image-

less, in the last resort, with only the sense of forlornness as the residue...

After you...
dreamy smile
flits to flowers
and colours them
Trembling tears
rest with bees
turned to honey
Birds pick up
warbling words
Trills of laughter
merge into
aerial blue
Blood's dark lightning
deep into the cavern-water
...All of yours
flung away—after you
After you
where am I..
who is this..left behind
after you..?

This is just pecking at the poems at random. They need no selection, no classification. Each has a magic touch of its own. Each creates a mood of its own in no time. In a moment, it communicates the experience and for a moment, also brings all experience to a standstill.

Is all present-day Marathi poetry like this? It is not a study in monochrome. Indira Sant gathers together all things on earth and sky, all dreams and memories in the one crucible of sorrow. But the feeling for nature and the skill of portraying it in a word or a line and also the magic of making it convey a mood is shared by many

today. It is a very happy achievement—and one which has not been achieved by many before to this extent and with this delicacy. Padgaonkar sings a hymn to Earthliness, deploring the self-deception of asceticism which speaks of 'Brahma Satyam, jagat mithya'. The dance of flowers, of blades of grass, the rippling music of streams and showers sing to the glory of earthliness. Its prestige resounds with the rumbling of water-falls. It engirdles the sickle and the plough. It streams like mercy, with the ever-flowing Ganga and Yamuna. Earthly beauty is the mainspring of the muse of Padgaonkar. With the wander-lust of a gypsy, his mind ranges over hill and dale, relaxes on a rock in the sun...

Waves at rest
swinging slowly
foot-prints all
erased from o'er the sand.
Silken shore
in a soft and moist repose
in lustre luscious
of downy, smiling sun.
Ripples rise
slow and soft
and there reposes
drying
its smoothen'd back
the rock..

If he can sing with a philosophical sweep of conviction about earthly beauty, he can also create a delicate etching, pulsating with the peace and vitality of natural life. Bapat's vein varies from sharp satire to shy sentiment. It rises to a patriotic strain and then again tries to flit about on the beauties of nature.

But, then, how about that common contention that present-day Marathi poetry is a wail of frustration? Is there no basis for it? A sense of frustration, a consciousness of the inequities in life, of its decadence and awry values is certainly there. Neither do we deny that. So they are in life. The present-day poet would not be worth the paper he writes on, if he were totally un-

aware of these. In the poems of Karandikar, the awareness assumes a keenness—sometimes a haranguing keenness, sometimes a poignant one. In one of his poems, he says:

This life
of an image old
whose broken hand
makes me think
had cement fingers new
This life
making the burden
of one's own thoughts
heavy...too heavy
where the past sings an endless elegy
and the future directs a cabaret
This life
where enmities make no sense
and love's ache
dries up within...
leaving a bitter taste..

But both the harangue and the poignancy of Karandikar are infused with a faith in man. There is also an edge of intellectuality and a philosophical urge in his major poems. There is a remarkable vigour about his writing. It often assumes a full-blooded—sometimes gross—sensuousness in his love-poems and an impatient revolutionarism in others. The combination of intellectuality and impatience often leads to an obscurity in expression.

The same intellectuality, with a greater inwardness of attitude is felt in the poems of Muktibodh. The lights and shadows of the outer world, its dynamism and its stagnation, its death-mindedness and the spark of immortality deep within it, are all seen by Muktibodh in the mirror of his own being. All these trends in reality wind themselves around it and grow into it. His diction and imagery have texture and a complexion of their own.

This poetry represents a great change in poetic content and expression, but its links with the generation preceding it are very clear. It has its roots in the poetry of Anil and Mardhekar, of Borkar and Kusumagraj. The intellectuality, the analytical approach,

the intense subjectivity and the social consciousness—these are all there in the poetry of these earlier poets. For instance, here is a characteristic lyric by Anil, with a delicate harmony of atmosphere and mood, a deep inwardness and total world-effacement.

This mind withdrawn
so strangely sad
with relish none
in crowds and herds
Darkling clouds
cover the sky
a deeper darkness
envelops all
Pouring rain
shower after shower
haze and water-mist
everywhere
Such an hour
filled with thoughts of you
your image
standing bold and clear
In a peopled world
repelled by people
recalling ever
your love alone

The artistic affinity of Indira Sant's lyricism with such work cannot be missed. There is also a strong strain of pride in earthliness and zest in life, a vital interest in artistic and philosophical traditions expressed mainly in Anil's longer poems. A specimen of this may be found even in a short poem like 'Darshan.'

The work of Mardhekar opened up a different world and provided new tools for the poetry of today. It discovered undreamt of forces within the mind; lent a new sharpness to diction and imagery for the expression of experience untapped before. It did all this within the compass of simple metres. His diction is also drawn from very simple, typically Marathi words, which somehow become as pliant and sharp as steel, tempered in his agony of frustration.

Mardhekar, whose work proved the

most controversial, is no more. But the work of the others continues today in as vital if not as profuse a manner as that of the younger poets. N. G. Deshpande, who is again midway between even these two generations, has contributed richly to the delicate lyricism and portrayal of Nature. Rege's miniature etchings with their compressed sensuousness and eroticism have a place of their own. Some of his recent poems show the tendency of spreading out on to a larger canvas and also strike a newer note.

Each of these modern poets has established a way of his or her own. One cannot say that they have reached their zenith—one hopes they have not and that they have it within them to go much higher. The malady of a repetitive pattern already seems to threaten many of them. But already a new generation of younger poets is coming up. Verbiage and imitation apart, the best of their work reveals a facility of expression, the skill of chiselling out an image in a word or two, an ambition to struggle with the frontiers of the mind and rise with the sweep of new thought. Often one misses the stamp of individuality. When we take up a poem we feel that it could have been written by any of the six or ten of the poets—Pednekar, Patil, Prabha Jumde, Dileep Chitre and others. There is also another group of Vidarbha poets—Shevalkar and M. M. Deshpande, Kaje and Keche or Baba Mohod. They share the facility of expression and the feeling for nature; but the world they seem to live in seems to be less urbanised, less sophisticated. Perhaps this is only a subjective feeling, but this is what I feel when I read their poems with their imagery drawn from the dark black soil, the dust and the heat, the banks of rivers, the call of spring. For me it creates the expansive skies of Vidarbha, the silence of its spaces, the fragrance of its fields.

Some of our contributors

B. B. Borkar has left his mark on the poetry of a whole generation.

N. G. Deshpande has charted an independent course in the realm of lyric poetry.

D. B. Mokashi has been writing short stories for over a decade. His apparent artlessness hides a delicate melancholy and directness of approach.

Vyankatesh Madgulkar is a pioneer of the new short story, specialising in rural sketches.

R. P. Sirkar is an active member of the P.E.N.

Arun Kolatkar is a versatile illustrator who also writes poems and stories in both Marathi and English. Some of his poems have been published in *QUEST*.

Mangesh Padki is a leading short story writer of the younger generation.

M. P. Rege has recently come out with a candid critique of the late B. S. Mardhekar's aesthetic theories.

S. D. Deshmukh has translated *Bangarwadi*, Vyankatesh Madgulkar's novel about a schoolmaster's experience of a shepherd community.

Somnath Samel has contributed some of the distinctive portraits of authors published in this issue.

Gangadhar Gadgil, short story writer, critic and novelist, has been awarded a Rockefeller Foundation travelling fellowship. His story, *The Cage*, was published in *QUEST* (Oct./Nov. '56).

Anant Kanekar has been elected President of the Marathi Sahitya Sammelan to be held at Aurangabad in the last week of April.

M. V. Rajadhyaksha is a prominent critic and humorist.

Ravindra Pingre writes pen-portraits and radio-plays.

The results of the Short Story Competition will be announced in the next issue of *QUEST*.



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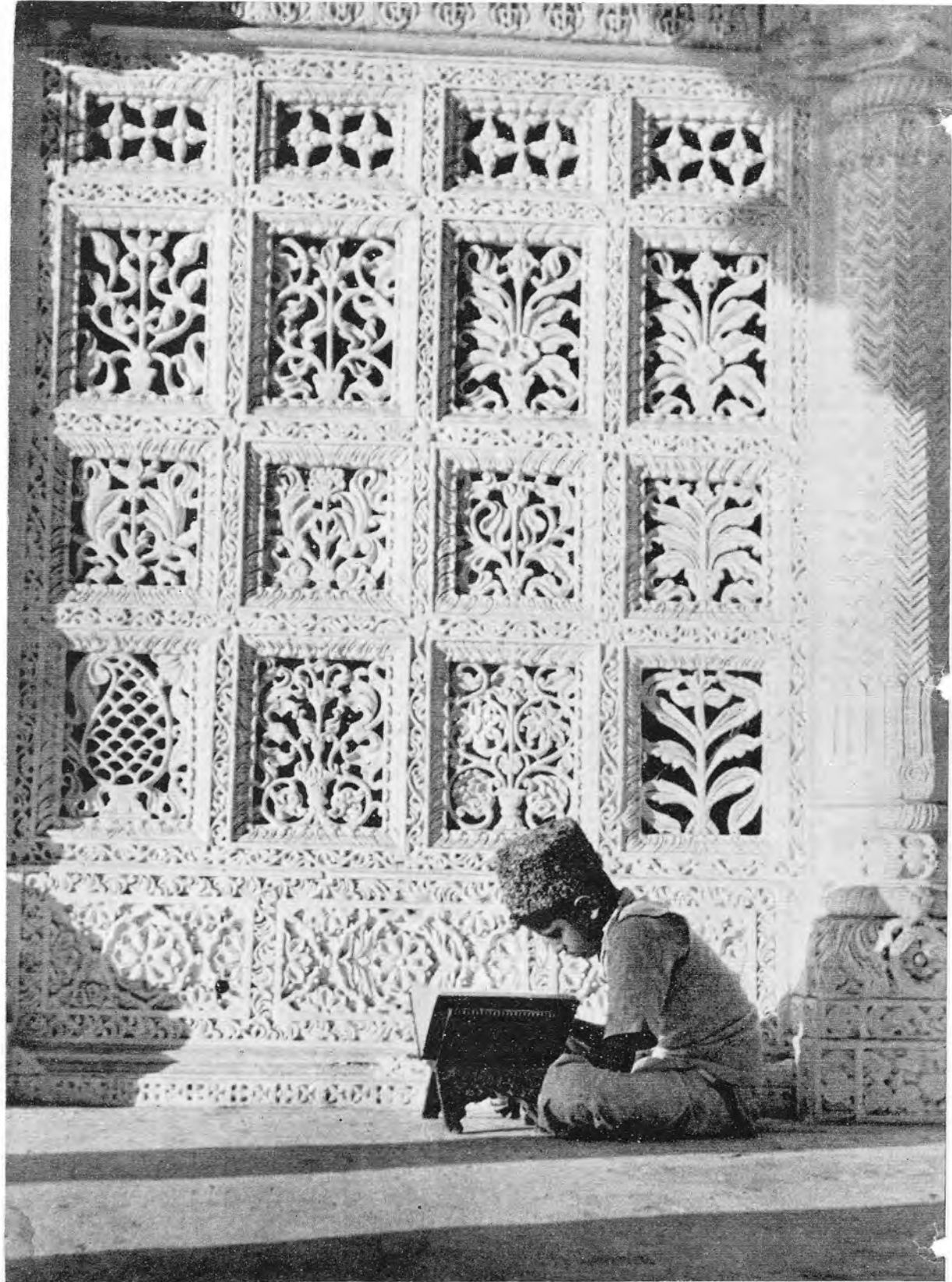
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A schooling in the kitchen

Photo: R. A. BACHA



"LITTLE LEARNED"

Photograph on Agfa film

evolution of the new short story in Marathi

by W. L. Kulkarni

(Translated from the Marathi)

IN or about 1942 the confines within which the Marathi short story had placed itself were broken down. This was also true of all the other forms of writing. The Marathi mind, like other minds all over the world, was shaken by the second world war. The world was getting smaller. Values were being re-examined. There was a keener consciousness of the machine age which was already flourishing in India. The pattern of life was changing; its tempo increased. Even the common man was aware of this change, this restlessness and insecurity.

Independence did not bring peace of mind. Writers and artists all over the world made more intimate contacts with one another. A natural atmosphere for the reinvigoration of the arts and of literature was created. Unsound values bred by over-estimated theories such as those of aestheticism, realism, idealism and progress were now in disrepute. The critical writings of Waman Malhar Joshi and Mardhekar's ideas attracted a whole generation of literary aspirants. This new batch of writers was moulded by the changed social and literary atmosphere. It concentrated all its attention on the new ideas which influenced its sensibility. It looked at life more seriously than its predecessors. It considered literature not as a mere craft or pastime but a lifetime's activity, motivated by 'high seriousness'. The new short story of

the post-war years was born out of this attitude.

There was a thorough change in the form of the Marathi short story. It was no longer occupied with a craftily constructed plot and a denouement. It was not obsessed with theories about a beginning, a middle and an end. The experience it depicted appeared self-expressive, it found its own form. Every significant experience has a shape of its own. It need not be decked in euphuistic artificiality. It is worth expressing in its inherent form. This expression preserves only the propriety of art. It has no need to follow extraneous rules. The new short story as it had developed by 1945 made this clear. Those who caused the revolutionary development include Gangadhar Gadgil, Vyankatesh Madgulkar, Arvind Gokhale and P. B. Bhavé. Actually, writers like D. B. Mokashi, Sadanand Rege, Shashikant Punarvasu and Prabhakar Padhye had already been writing individualistic short stories. But they had little total effect.

In the group which consisted of Gadgil, Gokhale, Madgulkar and Bhavé each has a distinctive genius. And each is responsible for the growth of the Marathi short story during the last decade or so. Though the limitations of some of these are recognisable today, in the period 1945 to 1947 their voluminous writing had a tremendous vitality. With every fresh experiment of

theirs the short story's hitherto subdued power of portraying life was constantly showing through. The short story was conquering fresh fields and new pastures of expression and experience. It was growing and extending simultaneously. It was gaining depth and variety in every feature from the theme to the narration. There was a comprehensive change in the meanings of former critical terms covering plot, atmosphere and language. These words began to attain a more real meaning.

Gadgil's short story was, and fortunately still is, a demonstration of the multiple forms the short story can assume. It is mischievous, serious, poetic, sarcastic, gentle, vitriolic, eccentric, mysterious or even utterly simple. Its form depends on the experience it tries to express, the moods that produce the experience and feed on it. Its language is not Gadgil's but the language of the experience it expresses each time. Therefore its manner changes smoothly, like the fleeting colours of water. Gadgil's method of receiving and projecting experience is all his own. Sometimes his short story floats placidly on the surface of experience, sometimes it dips its torso and keeps its head above water, sometimes it swims slowly just below the surface, sometimes it moves up and down in the water, sometimes it appears to dive deep and study the bottom.

PSYCHOLOGY is no longer a mere technique in Gadgil's short story. He is truly immersed in the portrayal of life, and psychological analysis is now an indivisible part of it. This experience of life necessitates by its very temper a lighting-up of nascent and overt streams of consciousness. The short story as handled by him is for the first time three-dimensional. The style which his experiences shape into words lends a solidity to them. One is conscious that they are expressed more comprehensively and in their proper perspective.

According to Gadgil every experience is intricate and not homogeneous. And so he tries to recognise this mixed and heterogeneous character of whatever experience he touches artistically. This is not possible without psychological analysis, and the revelation of mental processes is done in such a way that the experience derives its natural form from it. Life, and the human mind which experiences and recreates it are in a way inseparable. Gadgil is wise enough to understand that a portrayal of life means a portrayal of colourful, exotic, conscious or half-conscious, clean or unclean minds which create and experience it. Gadgil's stories make one realise what an immense power the short story has for depicting the many-sided individuality of an experience.

In this attempt, Gadgil's language achieves a distinct character. It does not try merely to record the stream of consciousness as one of Mardhekar's novels does. It expresses the heterogeneous nature of any experience. Naturally, it works through symbols: even its verbs suggest significant images. Simultaneously, this language tries to depict all the dimensions of a single experience.

Madgulkar's stories consist primarily of pen-portraits and anecdotal sketches of the people of Mandesh. Before Madgulkar, writers like Kumar Raghuvir had worked in these forms, but their portraits were restricted to social types and were sentimentally treated. There was a vagueness of ideas in them along with an attempt to provoke the sympathy or the distaste of the reader. Their atmosphere was consciously made 'effective'. Madgulkar's sketches have not only human understanding but also a naked reality. There is deep sympathy without excess of sentiment. There is often mischievous or serious objectivity. The writer's sense guides but does not dictate. Madgulkar catches the gleams of reality on a particular level. But how significant and

intense is the consequent view of reality. His writing has no veneer of 'effect'. His sketches have roots in the soil of Mandesh, with the smell of its earth and life. Madgulkar's way of receiving and projecting experience, though different from Gadgil's, is equally honest. Both of them detest decoration and artifice. Both are governed by the need of experience to find its own form. Hence, though of different temperaments, they cleared the cliché-ridden claustrophobic atmosphere of the Marathi short story.

Arwind Gokhale's strength lies in his extraordinary empathy. His stories depict the drama of temperament. The mentalities he portrays cover a wide area and he tries to widen it all the while. But it seems Gokhale does not quite believe in the inseparability of theme and expression. Hence, many of his attempts appear to be arbitrary. Gokhale is a skilled narrator; but he has more faith than it deserves in his art of narration. He leans on it heavily. Therefore, though he has contributed to the modern short story some moving narrative techniques and has demonstrated the heights accessible to empathy, he has not helped its growth as Gadgil and Madgulkar did who cleared it of dross and made it a powerful portrayal of life. That which stayed the progress of the short story in 1940 still sticks to Gokhale's efforts.

P. B. Bhavé's short story derives its strength from his uninhibited moods. His mind has an honest *joie de vivre* and sportiveness. He detests short measures and his words have a torrential force, with the mark of his own personality. This story brooks no interference; its force is so great that all kinds of restrictions are loosened by its onslaught. In its unchecked flow it sometimes depicts experiences which dazzle the reader. His complacency is shaken; his ideas of propriety are destroyed. But it is equally true that these stories often let down the reader for want of artistic res-

traint. Bhavé is ready to take all risks. He cares for his self more than anything else, and therefore his stories sometimes give with ease what others cannot yield.

A LONG with the 'quartet' discussed above, several writers have been trying to sustain the Marathi short story for more than a decade. As in poetry, however, in the province of the short story too, one witnesses a strange union of the old and the new. Phadke, Khandekar, Laxmanrao Sardesai and Y. G. Joshi from among the older generation are still writing stories in the traditional respectable way. Along with them, the generation which lingers on the borders of old and new, including popular writers like Mahadeoshastri Joshi, N. G. Goray, Vasundhara Patwardhan, Achyut Barve, etc., is still writing polished stories with great enthusiasm. Arwind Gokhale is not far from this group. Gadgil continues to write, constantly experimenting with new forms. Madgulkar is still sketching lively, vivid portraits of the people within his limited compass of experience. Bhavé is like a comet and has his own following. Ever since 1940, S. M. Mate's rich folk-tale-like short story has appeared from time to time, satisfying our eternal thirst for the genuinely Marathi story.

The Marathi short story today can claim that the younger generation has enjoyed mainly the post-1940 fiction which has developed its taste. Stories by this generation of writers are published in magazines like *Satyakatha*. Most of these writers have not yet published collections but their work has a distinctive new look. Though Madgulkar's writings have influenced the work of D. M. Mirasdar, Shankar Patil, Ranjit Desai and others, they are not inclined to ape him. Gadgil's short story, like Mardhekar's poetry, stands unapproached; but indirectly it has chastened and sharpened the taste of Marathi readers, creating a purer and more creative atmosphere. In

this atmosphere, the new generation of Marathi writers is working with real spontaneity.

The growing readership of these young short story writers has a specific taste. Their watchful eyes are already detecting the meaningless clichés that appear in the work of these writers. It is the pioneers of the new short story who have gained this discriminating class of readers for their successors.

A NEW class of critics developing alongside modern practitioners of the short story has done constructive work. Gangadhar Gadgil has been also responsible for placing his comrades in a proper perspective. Younger critics have followed. Among the younger writers there is a tendency to treat the story as an analysis

of an intense emotion. This has produced thinly spun chiaroscuros of pent-up emotions in a few short stories. Though it is partly proper for the short story to approach the lyric it should not result in an encroachment on the field of experience it depicts. Though the modern short story has developed out of the story and the tale it has not given them up; in fact, it can not do so. If it is remembered that all novelty is but grafted on to tried out tradition, the harmful attitude of considering an old narrative form out of-date will lose its hold. The short story must needs come into its own and widen its scope. Many of to-day's younger writers seem to be awkwardly conscious of practising a new form. Their writing is consequently self-conscious. This inartistic consciousness of newness must go.

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Lambretta

the house of cards

by P. B. Bhave

(Translated from the Marathi by D. G. Nadkarni)

THIS afternoon I was leaving town; so I had been packing up since early morning. When Betu saw my disordered clothes and stack of books he stopped his tricycle and with a troubled look on his face he asked me, 'Why have you taken out the books, uncle?'

'To read', I said.

'And why the clothes?'

'To put on'.

'And why the bag?'

'To keep the clothes in!'

I knew why Betu was disturbed. He likes to have the people he loves to be always around. I was getting ready to go away from him today, and he had noticed it. He dared not ask me straightaway. He felt it would be fine if he could know the unpleasant fact later. Therefore I tried to avoid telling him something he did not like. He was questioning me in a roundabout way. For a while Betu just stared at my disordered clothes and books, and then he asked me, 'Uncle, are you going away?'

Betu would now know that I was going away. He knew it already. It was no use hiding it from him any longer. So, without looking at him, I said, 'Yes Betu, I am going away today.'

'Have you got some work there?'

'Yes.'

'Really important work?'

When I heard words like 'important' from a three year-old I used to be amused. But now I was not. I held him close and said, 'A lot of work, Betu! Mustn't we work? Tell me, mustn't we?'

Betu knew that grown-ups had to work, at least they claimed they had to. With evident pain he nodded 'yes'.

'Are you leaving this afternoon?' he started collecting definite information about my departure.

'Yes', I nodded.

'Are you going by the express?'

'Yes'.

'Important work?' he uttered the word which he had just got by heart.

'Yes,' I said as I gathered my shaving things.

Betu was silent for a while, and then said, 'Will you build me a house of cards?' Actually I had no time to build a house of cards. I had to finish several things. But when Betu asks me to do a thing I find it difficult to refuse. People who brook nobody in the world soften up before the

women and children of the house. It is not so surprising that women can bend men the way they like. But even an ignorant lisping child can command its elders. Thus it was difficult for me to deny Betu anything. If you ask me, Betu is not an obstinate boy. He never commands you to do a particular thing at all costs. He asks in a polite language, 'Will you do it? Will you?' Therefore it is all the more difficult to shake him off. Now he was asking me to build a house of cards, and I thought it impossible to disappoint him.

'O.K. Bring the cards!' I said. Betu ran and brought the cards. I started building a house of cards. The packing was left to itself.

'How many storeys will there be?' Betu asked, standing on his knees.

'How many do you want?'

'Let it be five storeys', said Betu. I started building the first storey. Then I started on the second. Gradually children gathered round me. They started asking me different questions. 'How do they make cards?' 'Who is the dog on the card barking at?' 'Why does the king of spades grow such wild hair?' 'Where is the kingdom of the king of diamonds?' 'Why doesn't the queen of clubs have a child?' These were some of the perplexing questions they asked me. I was trying to answer them to the best of my ability. And simultaneously I was busy building the second storey. I had done this building job on several occasions. Building a house was easy for me. I was busy with the house now, proud as ever. I thought I would finish it in five minutes and get back to my packing. But for the first time today I was experiencing how difficult it is to build a house of cards. I built the first storey with no effort. But I could not somehow build the second. When one room was ready the other collapsed. And then quietly the first too. After four rooms were built the third came down. Then the second. And then the first one was also flat. It was such a job for me to build the house and the children continued pestering me with questions. They had no idea of my plight. When the cards tumbled down they screamed and clapped their hands. Their shouting and clapping did not appeal to me any more. I was feeling all the strain of building the house. I was losing my temper. My house toppled down again, and the children screamed

'Yaoooh, it is down—it is down!' My patience was at an end. I shouted brusquely, 'Shut up! Don't scream as if there is a fire!'

For a moment, all the children were quiet. I started building the second storey all over again. The children were silent for a few minutes. Then they started whispering stealthily. Then they whispered openly. And then they started shouting. And when my second storey came down the twenty-fifth time, they let out a big howl. Now I really lost my temper. I roared in a tone that would drown their noise, 'Didn't I tell you to shut up? Your shouting brings the house down.'

I was wondering whether the shouting indeed brought the house down. The shouting had not always produced that effect. But it was not impossible. The breath of children produces a breeze. Shouting produces waves of sound in the air. And that makes the house topple. I had realised that my peace of mind and my playfulness were not so indestructible as I supposed, and I was finding out a reason for my frayed temper. I knew that a man of my age should not lose heart and burst into a rage. The children knew that my anger had no meaning. Gently Betu dilated his eyes and, tilting his head, asked me, 'Does talking bring the house down?'

'Yes,' I said with a smile.

'How does it fall? Does talking produce a wind?'

'Yes!'

Betu blew hard and the very moment my storey came down. The only difference was that it was the third and not the second storey. The fifth one was far off yet.

'See, didn't the house fall?' I said, in a tone as soft as possible. I knew that it was no good to be irritated by little things. I knew especially that it was bad in the case of children. But now I was witnessing my third storey coming down for the seventh time. I had laboured harder than the cave-digger of Ellora while building a simple house of cards. I was finding it difficult to keep my temper in check. Just as I remembered the industry of the spider immortalised in children's literature and started re-building the third storey, little Kishi started wondering. She asked, 'How can talking bring down the house, uncle?'

She could not see any tangible connection between words and cards. I did not know either how to make it explicit to this six year-old girl. I was not in the mood. With a view to making my task easy, Baby said, 'My dear, doesn't the earthquake destroy big cities? So the house is razed to the ground.'

Baby was ten years old. She was the leader of all the children. When referring to words like

'cities' and 'destroy' she was mouthing the language of her text-books. But I no longer appreciated her language. Her explanation had not clarified the matter. Kishi dug up a new question and asked, 'What is an earthquake, Baby?'

'Earth is the earth. Quake means shaking or shivering. An earthquake means.....' Baby drew breath through her teeth and said haughtily, 'the shaking of the earth.'

Betu's face was lined with thought. He thought the whole idea of the earth shaking was crazy. 'The earth shakes?' he asked, looking at Baby.

'It does, my man... it really does!' Baby said in the decisive tone of an experienced person. 'Ask uncle if you like!'

'Really, uncle?' Betu turned to me and asked, 'The earth shakes?'

At that very moment my fourth storey started coming down. I just watched. First the fourth storey came down. Then gradually the third storey toppled. The second storey followed suit. I had actually progressed to the roof of the fourth storey. Success was in sight. One more storey and I would be free to do my packing. But how could that happen! Again I was back at the first storey. The children clapped and danced. I was fuming. I looked at the first storey, and striking it, shouted, 'Get out, get out from here! Are you kids or devils?'

Frightened, the children went away. Betu went to the door and stood there. I never used to shout at him. Even now I had not shouted particularly at him, but my tone had scared Betu. I called him and said, 'Come, Betu! Let us build a house!' I tried to say it as softly as I could. But I did not quite manage it. I had not calmed down completely. Betu came forward, looking at me, and stopped. Now he was not asking any questions. I was relieved. I started arranging the cards again. It was still a failure. I had still to dress, to collect the books. I had to go to the post-office and send a telegram intimating my arrival. All these jobs were important. There was little time, and the wretched house continued to tumble. I lost my temper and flung aside the cards with a stroke of my hand. Now I was really tired. Betu was pale when he saw my unfamiliar mood, and said, 'Uncle, I don't want a house.'

'Really?' I asked.

'Yes, really,' Betu said. I knew that he wanted the house built. I was going away. Who would build a house for him? He wanted me to build the house on this last day and was suppressing that desire now. I knew it all. But what was the way out? I had still to finish several jobs. Besides it was not wise to satisfy every childish wish of a

boy. It was not possible. Therefore, what I was doing was the right thing.

I got up without a word and squatted in front of my bag. I lost my head when I saw those heaps of clothes, those books and those letters. More than a week's letters had accumulated. Where was the time to dispose them off? I had an idea. I bravely glanced through those few dozen letters and tore off most of them. A breeze came in and the scraps of those letters jumped around me. As soon as I saw the embossed words on one of the letters I realised that I should not have torn it off. That letter was important. I was all the more angry and dumped a folded coat into the bag. This rough handling made a plastic cigarette case jump on to the floor.

Betu was still standing by the door. Slowly he approached me again and said, 'Uncle, can I have this case?'

The case was a fine one. I loved it. I had other nice cases with me. But I had no time now to look for them. I was taking this case with me on my journey, and Betu was asking for the very one.

'You want this case?' I asked.

'Yes,' Betu nodded his head.

'I want to take it along. I'll give you another some other time, eh?' I tried to speak in as easy a tone as possible. But he must have thought both my tone and my attitude relentless. He just said, 'O.K.' and went and stood near the door again. I managed to fill my leather bag and started tying its strap. But the strap would not fit. I pulled it hard, and alas, it broke asunder. I threw the strap away, and spread my portmanteau. I tied the portmanteau somehow. When Betu saw the tied up portmanteau, he came forward again and said, 'You ready?'

'Yes, I am,' I said.

'Then will you carry me on your shoulder?' he asked. I wondered. To carry Betu on the shoulder was a ritual. First you had to walk about with him on your shoulder. Then you had to take him to the third floor. There through a window one could see the hill. Through another one could see the creek. Through a third, one could see the big chimneys of the powerhouse. Through the fourth, one could see the train. I had to stand at every window with Betu on my shoulder. If the train was not in sight I had to wait till it was. Half an hour passed easily in this ritual. I used to enjoy every bit of it. I had myself accustomed him to being carried on the shoulder. But now I had no time for it. I had to go to the post office. I had to buy my ticket. I had to have a bath, and Betu was asking me to carry him on my shoulder. I told him as sweetly as I could, 'Not now, Betu.

When I return from my journey, I'll do it!' Betu nodded 'yes'. But he was almost in tears. Children can understand the subtlest shades in the tones of grown-ups. I had tried in my own way to affect a sweet tone. But I could not manage it. In the same dry tone I had denied him everything. He felt it. This had not happened before. Betu might not have wanted to sit on my shoulder. He was full of understanding, but he had a soft heart. He wanted me to accept at least one of his proposals. Even if my tone had changed, he would have been satisfied. He wanted a guarantee that I was not angry. But he was disappointed. I saw that Betu was about to cry and called to Baby, 'Take him downstairs for a game, will you?'

Betu went away, casting a look or two at me. This time it was no use catering to him. I had no time. Not that I felt bad, but I was really in a hurry. I bathed in a haste and ran to the post-office. I posted a letter and sent a telegram. Now I had calmed down. I brought back some lemon drops for Betu. As soon as I entered the yard, I looked for him. Betu was sitting under a berry tree. Baby had a row with a boy and was gesticulating wildly. Half a dozen kids had gathered around. When Baby saw me, she ran towards me and said, 'Uncle, give a good hiding to Sadya!'

Baby is an amazon. She has great faith in the institution of 'hiding'. Whenever somebody insults her, she beats him or thinks of ways to beat him. Now she was worried about beating Sadya. I did not know Sadya. So I looked at the group of children and asked, 'Which Sadya is this?'

'The Joags' Sadya. The one who stays up there. See, he is running away from you.'

A boy in his early teens was running hard, with his head turned back. When I noted the boy's height and age I knew why Baby had not dealt with him. But I knew that Baby's warmongering was often baseless, and so asked, 'But why beat Sadya?'

'See—' Baby opened her fist in front of me. 'what he had thrown in this yard. Suppose somebody's foot had been cut?'

In Baby's open palm were a dozen blades. I was shocked to see the sharp-edged blades. 'Why had he thrown these blades here?'

'To cut our feet. We had a row with Sadya. Do beat him up, uncle!'

'All right!' I said, 'You go on play. But take care!' I took custody of those blades. This idea of strewing the yard with blades was really terrible. Suppose a blade had touched the foot of a child like Betu!

Betu sat under the tree, digging a well with a

nail. I called him and said, 'Here, I've brought some drops for you!'

'Why did you bring them? I have a lot of them,' said Betu.

'Take them!' I said emptying the drops into his pocket, 'Go, go and play.'

Betu lingered for a moment and ran off. I went in and finished my meal. Then I started dressing. It was time for my train.

I had to hurry a little, but all my jobs were done.

When I started to leave, Taai called Betu and said, 'Betu, uncle is going!' Betu came upstairs and he bowed low to me with folded hands. 'Come back soon,' he said.

'I will,' I said. Then Betu put his hand in his pocket and, giving me four lemon drops, he said, 'Take these!'

'Why, my boy?'

'Eat them in the train.'

I pocketed Betu's lemon drops and came to the staircase. Children were sliding down the banisters. If somebody would fall he would break his neck. I had repeatedly warned the children not to slide down the banisters. I warned them now and started down the stairs. While climbing down I noticed another thing. The banisters had loosened in one place. They stood in their place. But a gentle nudge could fell them. The children used to stand there. They used to bend down from the spot. Now too a row of children stood on the stairs to wish me goodbye. Baby was standing near the loosened banisters. I said to her—'Baby, don't stand there!'

'Why, uncle?'

'The banisters are loose. You'll fall.'

'It's impossible.' Baby lifted the banisters and demonstrated how it was impossible that she should fall through them. A child of Baby's age and height would not have fallen from there. But a small child would surely have; and if it had, there would have been an accident. The spot was very high. I called Taai and said, 'Do you see, Taai? These banisters are loose!'

'Where?'

'Here. Get them repaired immediately. Otherwise someone is sure to fall from here.'

'No, no. I'll have them repaired today.'

'Take care!'

'Yes, I'll!'

I followed my luggage out. Betu was standing under a tree. He cried from the place, 'Come soon, uncle.' It was a whimper.

'I'll, my child,' I cried, waving my hand. In the shadow of the tree, Betu, too, was waving his tiny hand. For a while, I looked at his face and

then turned my head away. I felt queer for a moment.

In the compartment I sat reading a book. The book was quite entertaining. But my mind often wandered and I felt that something was amiss. I tried hard to find out what was wrong. Not much was wrong that way. I was going to get a job that I liked. The job would bring me fame, and money. My health was fine. My people were all good. Nothing was missing. But as I thought of all this I saw the tumbling cards. Gillette blades glistened in front of my eyes. The loose banisters gaped in front of me. This was all a result of my fastidiousness. It will be impossible to live if one loses peace over every insignificant thing. Under this running train are the rails. Suppose somebody has removed the fishplates under the rails? Suppose, there are typhoid germs in the wafers I am eating now? But can you go on thus skinning off the possible?

My logic was infallible. I was even convinced of it. And yet I saw the house of cards, the Gillette blades and the staircase again. I would be away for a couple of months at least, and yet I had not fulfilled a single wish of Betu's. I had not carried him on my shoulder. I had not been able to give him an ordinary plastic case. I could not even build a house of cards for him.

The train was running through green woods. It was not proper for me to be so disturbed over such a simple thing. I had many times carried him on my shoulder in the past, and would do so again. I had presented him with several kinds of cases by the dozen, and I had built for him more houses than stand in Nagpur today. I would build for him in the future. This reasoning was without a loophole. And yet my mind was distracted. All the while I saw the face of Betu standing tensely under the tree, and again and again I tried to go on with the book.

Gradually I must have got engrossed in the book. For I did not notice anything happening on the seat in front of me. I was not even aware that the train had stopped at a station and started again. How else could anyone enter an empty compartment? There were people in the compartment, and they were busy talking. All this while I had been thinking that the talking was going on in an adjacent compartment. But the people must be in my own compartment. One of them had come near me and was leaning against my knee. I continued reading as I took that person's hand in mine. The touch of that hand made me wince. It was such a tiny and soft hand. I looked up. A bonny child stood with its hand on my knees, showing its wee little teeth as it laughed. One

rarely sees such chubby, healthy-looking children in our country. The child reminded you of an English counterpart. Its young parents were looking at it with evident admiration. 'Tagya-Tagya, come here,' they called him.

But Tagya would not listen to his parents. In fact, he shook his head to say a blunt 'no'. He stroked my knee with his palms and laughed.

'Let him read, child. Don't disturb him,' said Tagya's mother.

'It's nothing,' I said and held my hands in front of Tagya. He jumped at them with glee.

'He doesn't get familiar with everyone—' said Tagya's mother, 'But he likes some people as soon as he meets them. He makes friends with them with a will. It doesn't matter if he doesn't know them.'

'It's all right for children,' I said and searched my pocket. The lemon drops that Betu had given me were still there. I gave them to Tagya. For a long time the child played with me, scratching my face and reaching for the window. His father got up and closed the window. Tagya did not like the window being closed at all. He started howling loudly. He wanted the window to be open. 'Why did you close the window?' I asked, 'I am holding Tagya tight.'

'That is true—' said Tagya's father, 'But I am scared of open windows. This child is so restless. The son of a friend of mine had a really tragic end this way.'

'What was it?' I asked.

'This friend of mine was standing on the terrace with his year-old baby in his arms. He was chatting with a friend standing on the road below, while the gentleman admired the little child. While he was busy talking, the father failed to attend to the child. Suddenly it leaped from his hold. The next moment it was down in the dust, and dead. From that day my friend has lost his reason and stares constantly at his hand. After that thing I have always been anxious about these children.'

There were tears in the eyes of Tagya's mother as she listened to this story. She held her dozing child to her bosom. I was also sad after listening to that story. The unfortunate father staring continuously at his palms stood before my eyes. The day he stood talking to his friend must have been like any other day to him. But what a terrible day it actually was. His own child was going to die at his own hands that day. When this child was born had he any idea of this horrible fate? What hopes must his parents have had about him, how they must have loved him! Loved him and ...loved him and...on several occasions they

must have disappointed the child, must have possibly beaten him!

My imagination was running wild. The train stopped at a station and Tagya's father said to me as he picked up his things, 'Good-bye! Do remember us!'

I said goodbye to the couple. Bonny Tagya was asleep with his head on his mother's slender shoulder. One of his hands lay on his mother's shoulder and the other was hanging limp. In his fist he held tight the lemon drops I had given him. Tagya's mother shook him and said, 'Tagya, get up, come—say bye-bye to uncle.' But Tagya was asleep, he did not get up. I said, 'Why wake him up? Let him sleep,' and I touched Tagya's dangling hand gently.

As the train started I could see Tagya's frail mother with her back to me. I could see his head covered with golden hair and his swinging hand.

For a long time Tagya's hand continued to swing before my eyes. I could see his wee little teeth. I could hear his laughter.

And then through Tagya's laughter I heard Betu's voice. I remembered his hands. I saw his face. Betu was standing under the tree with a preoccupied face and was waving his hands. I had just met a child who had endeared itself to me. Why should I come across it again? And the other child was standing under the tree and waving its tiny hands. I had deserted it. The train was running like mad, and every moment I was going farther from him.

In the compartment I was once more alone. I could not bear that solitude. I remembered Tagya. I saw houses of cards tumbling down, Shining Gillette blades were flying through the air. The jaw of the banisters was wide open, and the wretch of a father was screaming near the window.

The train screeched harshly. There were drops of sweat on my brow. I could not bear that loneliness, nor the speed. The locomotive was crying out again and again. I tried childishly to pull the train back with my hand on the window. But the train was running ahead. It would never stop. Never.

And then I saw the distant flag standing erect by the railside, saw the nearby flag and the impossible really happened. The train stopped gasping by the side of a platform.

I jumped down and asked a man in a white uniform, 'Where does that train on the opposite platform go?'

'Where your train came from,' he said.

I ran impulsively towards that train, and it gathered speed. My mind was still disturbed. It was getting distracted with every passing moment.

Houses of cards were toppling down. Gillette blades were shining. A hole was keeping its jaws open and a tiny hand was waving.

Out of breath I entered the yard of the house. Instantly a shout of joy and surprise reached me from under the tree, 'Uncle! And a hand waved. Betu was running like wind towards me. Baby was dancing and shouting, 'Uncle is back! Uncle is back! Uncle is back, Taai!'

the squirrel

by Shantaram

(Translated from the Marathi by D. G. Nadkarni)

I FELT something was hurting somewhere. I was fairly conscious that something was wrong with me, but could not say what. It was almost like suffocating in sleep when you had gone to bed with your hand on the heart. My job, family atmosphere, financial situation—everything was faring well, and yet I knew no peace. I was ill in some way—it was an illness which none else would notice. One is aware of it oneself, but can't speak of it to others. One feels like expressing the pain, but one can't.

I didn't know what to do. It was evening, so I thought of going for a walk. I was not at all anxious to go for a walk. But I couldn't bide my time at home, so I left and took the road like other people; but I could not mix with them. People were perhaps going for a walk as usual. They must be having a fixed place where they went and had a seat. Probably they felt that an evening walk cheers you up. Whatever they might be feeling, I didn't feel as they did. I felt like being part of the wind. I felt like being part of the soil. I wanted to be hazy dusk like hazy dusk. I didn't know myself; but I felt something. Something gross, something subtle; something perceptible, something imperceptible; something prosaic, something poetic... that was what I was feeling.

I crossed a few roads and reached the outskirts of the town. Some people outmarched me; some trailed behind. A few vehicles sped past me. A couple of clouds glided gently over my head. I trampled the shades of a few trees. The light was worn out and weak, and yet I kept on walking. Birds perched on trees singly, in twos or in flocks and disappeared. I continued walking.

Suddenly on the fringe of the road I saw a squirrel. I stopped as soon as I saw her. I examined

I was climbing the stairs with Betu on my shoulder. I noticed immediately the changed aspect of the banisters. I asked Taai as she stood in the door, 'So you have had the staircase repaired?'

'By all means!' Taai said, 'But how do you happen to be back so soon?'

'To build a house for Betu,' I said, taking the pack of cards in my hand.

her in detail. The white, yellow, black lines on her back trembled with ease. Her eyes sparkled. Her tail fluttered. Her head turned back. I stared at her. I recognised her. A squirrel I knew and liked. She, too, recognised me. She jerked the lines on her back smartly, drew a circle in the air with her tail, turned her head gingerly towards me and winked at me. I thought the squirrel was demurely smiling at me. I stepped towards her and extended my hands to catch her. Immediately, she made for a nearby tree and climbed it. I went near the tree and told her, 'Don't run. I won't catch you. Don't be scared.'

Wagging her tail and hanging on to the tree trunk, she said to me, 'Why should I be scared? Even if you try you won't catch me.'

'As if one can't ever catch a squirrel.'

'If she is caught, she's no longer a squirrel.'

'If she's no longer a squirrel, what is she then?'

'How can I say? I don't have that experience. As for me, I am sure I won't let you catch me.'

'My dear, I didn't try to catch you; really I didn't.'

'You are lying. I saw your hands jumping to catch me.'

'Agreed.'

I was really cornered. Howsoever I might deny it, I had no doubt wanted to catch the squirrel. I couldn't even deny it to myself, couldn't hide my purpose. How and where could I hide it? The lamps had been lit and one of them was blazing by my very side. The street lamp brought to light three versions of mine—myself and my two shadows. One of the shadows was bigger than I while the other was terribly small. One thing stood clear in all these three images of mine: my two hands itching to catch the squirrel. How

should I hide them? Somehow, trying to hide them, I thrust these two hands of mine into my pockets and said to the squirrel, 'See now, I am holding both my hands in custody. I just want to talk to you. Just the company of words.'

'O. K. I agree to keep just the company of words—' she said and slid a little further up the tree.

'You are still scared of me?'

'Not scared, but it's good to keep a distance. The company of words needs a distance.'

'Well.'

'Why do you start with "well"?''

'Then should I start with "hell"?''

'Don't talk like a catechism.'

'Should I be categorical at least?'

'You like to prolong your talk with a prologue, it seems.'

'What should I say?'

'How can I tell you what you should say?'

'Tell me.'

'Huh! you are a poet and you have to be told what to say?'

'I am not a poet at this moment.'

'Not at this moment? Is this possible? A poet today and not tomorrow, is this likely? A poet is a poet. A poet is a poet—yesterday, today, tomorrow, day after tomorrow, day after day after tomorrow, and day after that.'

'Really, my dear, I have not composed a poem for many years.'

'What do you mean by "not composed" a poem? Are poems "composed"? I thought—'

'What did you think?'

'Nothing.'

'Come, come.'

'Really nothing.'

The squirrel winked her eyes and wagged her tail. Her whole body was tremulous. I didn't know what to say. I first looked at her. She sped up the tree and returned the next moment. She looked at me and said, 'Don't just look. Say something.'

'I don't know what to say. You, too, just keep looking like me.'

'A poet is to be looked at, is he?'

'So? Am-I not worth looking at?'

'You are, somewhat. But should you look at a poet or hear him?'

'Didn't I say I was no longer a poet?'

'Well, well. But these days why don't you (what should I say) "compose" poems?'

'Poems don't happen to me these days, dear.'

'Then what happens to you these days?'

'These days I happen to be ill.'

'In what way ill?'

'Totally ill.'

'That means you are not ill at all.'

'I am, my dear. I am ill in many ways. Sometimes my limbs ache, sometimes my stomach aches, sometimes my head, sometimes my heart, or sometimes something entirely different!'

'It's a pity!'

'You think it's all a joke, don't you?'

'Oh no! Why should it be a joke? I feel very bad about it. Well, let aside poems, what do you do these days any way?'

'Just a bread and butter job.'

'Hah! A bread and butter job indeed. Is there any need to say? Don't we have a belly?'

'So you, too, have a belly like us?'

'By all means'—she turned a little and showed me her tiny, smooth stomach. I was amused. She showed me just a bit of her stomach and hid it immediately. I thought she blushed a little. I laughed spontaneously. She noticed my laugh. From her face it appeared she was angry. She said to me haughtily, 'So? What is there to laugh at?'

'Nothing. I was thinking of our women. To display the stomach or not, if displayed to what extent, that settles the fashion for our women.'

'Really? I thought you laughed at my stomach.'

'No! In fact, I liked your stomach.'

'Er—will you do something for me?'

'What?'

'Show me your stomach, eh?'

I was embarrassed by her demand. I blushed heavily. She noticed my embarrassment, and said playfully, 'Never mind! I was joking. Why should I see your stomach? I have after all seen an elephant's stomach. Your stomach can be in no way bigger than an elephant's. Don't you think so?'

I didn't say a word. I didn't know what to say. I didn't feel like saying anything.

My hands which had so far been thrust into my pockets now itched to catch her. She kept talking—

'Sir, I have already seen your poem.'

She uttered that remark as if she wanted to make fun of me.

'My poem?' I asked impatiently.

'Yes, indeed. Your poem.'

'But I haven't written a poem for some time.'

'Now really. Don't go on saying the same old thing, sir. I saw your poem.'

After that she circled round the tree trunk, danced and frisked for a long time, all the while saying, 'I saw your poem.' Once she actually touched my feet. When she had settled on the trunk as before, I asked her, 'Where did you see my poem?'

'You know what happened, sir—one day I was sitting on a heap of waste paper.'

When I heard the words 'heap of waste paper'

I swallowed hard. As I was not satisfied with swallowing, I sighed visibly.

'What makes you sigh, sir? Listen.'

'That is what I am doing.' I said helplessly.

'As I was telling you, I saw my picture in that waste paper.'

'Your picture?'

'Yes sir, my picture. I didn't like it. What a way they have of drawing!'

'Why, was it so bad?'

'Terrible. I tore it up.'

'Oh!'

'Why are you sorry? They want to tease me, the rascals. On the back of the picture was your poem, sir.'

I remembered. I remembered the poem I had written many years ago. I quoted the first line of the poem—

'My words your looks—'

'That's the one.'

'What did you think of it?'

'I didn't understand it.'

'Didn't understand? My dear, I had written that poem on you.'

'Me? Not on me, sir. It was written on a piece of paper.'

'Don't be frivolous. Listen. You were the subject of the poem.'

'Then how didn't I recognise it?'

'It's this way—when touched by art, every object is transformed.'

'My my! What difficult things you say. Won't you speak in easier words?'

'You can't make difficult things easy.'

'Can you make easy things difficult then?'

'Not so, my dear. This kind of change is inevitable in a poem.'

'But don't change it so completely that it can't be recognised.'

'Besides you know what, time is all the while running, changing. Even art can't quite catch him.'

'Time runs? You don't say! Does it run faster than me?'

'Yes, faster than you.'

'It's a lie. It's a big lie.' She was cross with me.

'Don't be angry, dear. What I mean is we are all changing. I have changed. So have you. Everything has changed and will change.'

'Not at all. I haven't changed a bit. I am as I used to be. Exactly as I used to be. See if you like.' She came right near—so very near—and said proudly, 'See. Have a proper look.'

I had never seen her at such close range. What she said was quite correct. I wasn't completely

wrong either. I thought her down had greyed and said, 'Your hair are greying.'

'Silly! you don't understand a thing. My hair haven't greyed. They are shining. What a poet! You don't understand such a simple thing?—But you are no poet. If you had been a poet why would you have given up poems? You are not a poet at all.'

Her tone seemed to mock me, to tease me. I didn't like it. I clenched my hands and shouted, 'I am a poet, I am a poet. What do you think?'

'What should I think? That you are not a poet.'

'I tell you once for all that I am a poet.'

'Prove it.'

'Agreed.'

'Then compose a poem on me.'

'I'll do it in a jiffy.'

'Make it recognisable.'

'That is possible, my dear, but don't you change in the meanwhile.'

'I won't change—haven't. I promise.'

'No—what I mean is I shall be writing about your youth now and by the time the poem is completed it won't be youth any longer.'

'Didn't I promise it won't be that way? You can't write and you ask me not to change.'

'I can write—I can write, understand?'

'I understand. Come on then, write.'

'I'll write in a moment.'

'Not in a moment. Don't hurry unnecessarily. Everyone can't manage to hurry like me, it doesn't become everyone.'

'I know, I know. But if I compose a poem on you, what'll you give me?'

'What can I give?'

'You must give me something.'

'Does one write poems for give and take?'

'Not that, dear. But you must give me something.'

'Let me catch you once.'

'Nothing doing.'

'O. K. Let me just touch you.' She started thinking like a philosopher. For a moment she was still and motionless like a picture. The next moment she shook her whole body, and, straightening up again she said, 'Only a touch. All right. But the touch mustn't leave any mark.'

'What does that mean?'

'It means, that the great Lord Ramachandra himself once stroked my back, and, what do you think, his fingers left a permanent mark on my back. I don't want that. The touch must be such that only those concerned should be aware of it.'

'Granted.'

'Granted.' She said and disappeared before I

could bat an eyelid. I looked at the trunk, at the branches, at the top. She had vanished.

Suddenly my feet were possessed. I started running fast. I started running towards my home—with terrible speed, I ran like the wind. I ran dazed like wind-blown dust... But I gasped for breath as I reached home. I managed to find my notebook of poems and from my pen dropped the line:

'Mobile face, static expression—'

No sooner was my first line complete than my wife came to me from inside the house and said testily, 'What do you keep thinking anyway?'

I did not get her. I looked at her as if I was looking into infinity.

'Don't just look! I was saying, do you ever notice me?'

'I don't know what you mean. Whom should I notice if not you?'

'That is what I am asking. Where were you looking sometime back on the road?'

'When?'

'Didn't I say sometime back?'

'When was that?'

'My dear, I was getting the vegetables from the bazaar. You looked at me. I looked at you. I thought you would say something. But you turned your head.'

'Really?'

'Why should I lie?'

'Was it you?'

'Who else then?'

'No one.' I laughed to myself.

'Tell me who.'

'Really no one, darling', I said and drew her near. She embraced my neck and I felt suddenly light-hearted and pleasant. I thought all my illness had melted away. The wind that my body had caught while running home whipped through my limbs again. My wife's embrace could not contain me....

My wife noticed my notebook. Surprised, she asked me, 'What's this?'

'I have started writing a poem on you.'

'Do write one, dear. Why did you give up writing poems on me, dearie?'

'Didn't I give up writing poems of any kind, darling?'

'It won't do, dear. You must write. I'll make a nice cup of tea for you.' She went inside to make tea for me.

I started pressing my poem onward. But not a word came. I thought a lot. Tried scratching my head. My first line did not crawl forward. I tried to drag the poem onwards, but in vain. The line stuck to the piece of paper like an iguana. I could not push it forward. I thought, my head was aching, my hands were aching, my feet, my whole body was aching; but I couldn't know for certain where the pain was. Such a pain as exists, but is not seen. A pain that has to be borne but cannot be revealed....

'do write a story on me!'

by D. B. Mokashi

(Translated from the Marathi by Mangesh Padki)

AT the age of sixteen, I was widely known as an author. At least in our street, I was being talked about as such. In point of fact, not a single story of mine had appeared in print. But every respectable citizen of our street, young or old, made it a practice to peep into my window and inquire, 'Hullo author, working on an article?'

The fools did not even know the difference between a story and an article. Nevertheless I felt inflated by their references. If I was busy in accounting for the quickly vanishing allowance from my father, I would, on such occasions, strike a balance by putting the unaccountable five rupees under sundry expenses and being done with them. Obviously an author like me could not bother

himself with insignificant things like money or accounts.

Those were wonderful times. I felt like doing a thousand things at once, but could not finish any. I liked everybody but was unable to go steady with anyone. I was easily enamoured with a pig-tailed ten-year old, and at the same time craved for the company of a young woman.

As an inevitable consequence, I sharpened my pen when Ragini, my ten-year old neighbour once appealed to me between sobs, 'Nana, write a story on me just now, immediately!' I liked Ragini and she was crying. I felt greatly excited. Nothing could stop me from starting the story right away.

'Sure, sure,' I said with great emphasis. 'I shall write like this, "There was a sweet girl called Ragini"...' I began composing my story on the spot.

'Oh no!' Ragini interrupted me. 'My name should not be in the story.'

'Well... all right,' I agreed.

'Let the story be like this,' Ragini began dictating the course of the story to me, 'There was a girl named Radha in a certain city. She was just like me, of the same age, studying in the same class and living in a house like ours. Her mother was just like my mother. Do write nice things about my father. But make the mother a bad one. You see, Radha wanted a saree but she had a very bad mother. All her friends had sarees but Radha did not have one. Because her very very bad mother did not.....'

Ragini was choked with uncontrollable sobs and could not finish the story. She must have been reminded of everything, the sarees of her friends, her own yearning for one and her mother's refusal. I also felt a responsive sob rising in my throat.

'Don't! Don't cry Ragini! I shall begin the story right away. The story will be so powerful that it'll make your mother buy two sarees instead of one. I shall paint such a dark picture of your mother. I shall show her to be such a wicked, merciless, horrible old hag that she won't be able to show her face in the street,' I promised with feeling.

'Wonderfull! Make her that,' exclaimed Ragini, almost dancing with joy.

I began composing the story with all seriousness. I did not notice that Ragini soon got a new saree and was showing it off in the neighbourhood. I was that engrossed. I copied out descriptive material that fitted into our plot. In an inspired moment, I hit upon a great title: 'Poor Radha and Her Wicked Mother'—a title which according to me was a powerfully moving one. Within a month, I was ready with the story. I invited Ragini to my room and thrust the manuscript in her hands.

'Read it,' I said importantly.

'My! It's the story I asked you to write,' Ragini looked at the title and exclaimed in awe.

She began to read, while I watched her expression tensely. Her eyebrows wriggled; her lips twitched. I kept my eyes riveted on her face so as not to miss the slightest flicker of emotion. Was the story good? Would she like it?

At long last she finished reading and returned the manuscript to me.

'What a horrible story!' she said. 'Do you really believe that mother is so black, and evil and wicked?

Oh, no! No, my mother is very kind and loving though she appears to be a little strict at times. You know, she bought two—two, mind you—two sarees for me before I returned from school that very day. Look,' Ragini pointed to her saree admiringly. 'Look, isn't it beautiful?'

I was not in a mood to admire her saree. 'But...but you asked me to write the story, didn't you?' I spluttered out in annoyance.

'I did. But I was angry then, didn't you know? I even cried. But that does not mean you should call names to my mother,' said Ragini and left my room in a huff.

Five years passed after this incident. Ragini, now grown up, did not have any occasion to cry for sarees as they had become her daily wear. We saw or met each other less frequently. Some stray stories of mine had found their way into print and I had joined the fraternity of amateur writers.

A whispered rumour about Ragini got around in our street. According to it, Ragini apparently left her house for school every day, but went about with a young man instead. Further details of the young man also came through. He was a clerk in a printing press and occasionally gave recitals of light music. They had come to know each other on some such occasion.

Ragini entered my room one evening, with red-rimmed swollen eyes. She went to my table without looking at me and rested her head on my table and started crying. I did not find any words to comfort her and kept discreetly silent. After a while, she held up her head and asked in a small voice, 'Nana, is it a crime to love?'

'Of course not,' I said.

'You know more about love because you are a writer. Everybody is up against me and is tearing me to pieces like wild animals, all because I am in love with a boy. I tell you, I won't be able to live without love.'

I kept silent. Ragini continued in a shriller voice.

'He is poor. He does not belong to my caste. I don't see anything wrong in it. Why should the world interfere with our happiness? What is our crime anyway? Speak, Nana, doesn't your blood boil at such gross injustice? You are an author, why don't you write a story on these wicked people? Why don't you pull them up before society and show them to be social criminals who strangle the hopes of young men and women? You cannot imagine how I have suffered. My father imprisoned me in the house for four days. My mother took me to task and lost her temper. And the people roasted me alive with sharp red-hot looks;

as if I had committed a terrible crime, by falling in love!

She paused awhile for breath.

'My own father! He slapped me in the face, the face he had caressed all these years. He questioned me in an intimidating way when I returned home in the evening.

"Ragini, where had you been?"

I did not reply. He shouted again.

"Come on! Open your mouth and speak up."

I shook my head. He flew into a rage. "So, you had been to see him, isn't it? You met him again, didn't you? Speak up, will you? You did see him, didn't you? Speak! I say, speak....."

I did not utter a word, so he slapped me in my face twice. The fact that he slapped me was more painful than the physical pain. I cried the whole night. I was sorry that my father should care more for social taboos and conventions than for his own child, that he should rush to put all happiness out of our life like a villain. Have you written a story with the heroine's own father as the villain who stamps out all the joy in her life? Please, do it now for my sake, Nana! Do write a story on me, so that other girls may be spared all the misery at their parents' hands, even at the cost of my life. Please Nana, please do!

And I did resolve then and there to write the story. I decided to depict the whole of society as the villain instead of the father. My imagination began to run riot.

I studied the circumstances of the young lovers in order to add authenticity to the story. I visited the young man's place of work conscientiously. I collected the details of their first meeting. I persuaded Ragini to tell me about their correspondence, their talk of love and the places where they usually met.

I wrote with determination a very pathetic tale of broken love and got it published. The story created a storm of excitement in our town. None had to strain his imagination in order to recognise the pair of lovers, the man's office, Ragini's house and parents, the concert of music; it was all so strikingly clear. The rumour that was till then only whispered now became a matter for open gossip. There was no further need for Ragini's father to intern her in the house. She herself kept behind closed doors day and night.

I was, however, worried in a different way. I could not know whether Ragni had read the story or not. I was fast losing my patience when her brother brought a note from her unexpectedly.

'Nana,' the note read, 'I have read your story. I like it immensely. I have no doubt you are going to be a great writer. Your stories will even be

filmed. Everybody in town is talking about our affairs. We are being condemned. I hope we will be married soon by our parents, at least to put a stop to the gossip. Don't you think so?'

'I quite agree with you,' I wrote back a line in reply. As a matter of fact I was much more elated by her words of admiration for me than by the effect produced by the story.

But the same evening, Ragini's father called on me. He appeared to be worn out.

'I would like to know, Nana,' he began with a helpless gesture, 'What sort of pleasure you derive from all this. I would have taught you plenty were it not for my friendship with your father. Well, what is done is done. You are still young with a lot of foolishness in you. But you can still learn to behave with some discretion and try to foresee the effects of what you write. Think it over quietly. You are not yet aware of the irreparable damage you have done to a poor girl.'

He left my room in a dismal mood.

I was told later that he took Ragini away to a distant place in Berar where her aunt lived.

The days dragged on languidly. The entire affair cooled down like a casual stir on placid waters. Ragini, her lover, my story, everything deserted people's memory. New interests were born and the people talked about them with the same vigour. They had no thought for, nor was there a way to find out, the fate of the victims.

I thought differently somehow. I harnessed my imagination. My mind's eye harboured many different pictures of their fate, all of them soulful and moving.

A father had separated a young girl from her lover by force. Though physically separated, she remained with the man she loved for ever. The light in her eyes died, and she lost interest in life. Her heart turned into a heavy lump of clay, devoid of any feeling. Her movements became frozen; all her liveliness drained away. She lost the desire to talk even. Her life became barren and meaningless.

The father asked her ultimately whether she was prepared to marry. She agreed as there was nothing else to do. When the bridegroom came to see her, she sat through the ceremony like a clay figure. She did not raise her eyes even to look at him.

She was married, but her dead spirit did not revive. She pined away for her lover. She lost the taste of food. None could diagnose her ailment. It was later found that she had contracted tuberculosis. She departed from the world soon after.

The soul that had already disintegrated met with a physical end.

I scribbled down all the things created by my imagination. I identified myself with Ragini's miserable plight. I cried as I wrote and wrote between tears.

After I completed the story, I told the suffering Ragini of my mind, 'Ragini, I can understand your feelings even in your absence. I can identify myself with them. It was my duty to lay your sorrow before the world. I have done it. My words are immature, but I am sure you will be satisfied with their sentiment.'

The story, however, was published after about a year and a half. I liked it even more then. I received ample applause from my friends. It was the first story of mine that they liked.

I got news of Ragini's arrival in the town at about the same time. I was very anxious to meet her. I took out the magazine containing my story and kept it conspicuously on the table. Ragini, however, did not stir out for two days. On the

third morning somebody knocked on my door. I opened the door to find Ragini standing outside. I was surprised to see a bonny child accompanying her.

I rubbed my eyes and looked again. Ragini was bathed in the glorious light of the morning. She appeared to have improved much. There was a healthy tan on her face and her eyes gleamed.

'Hullo! Do you still sleep till midday?' She greeted me with a question and entered my room smiling all over.

I smiled back for no reason and could not think of any suitable words of greeting. She looked at the disorderliness of my room and said, 'Really now! you haven't come out of your shabbiness yet. It is really time that you were married.'

I forced out a smile because she laughed at her own words. I had different thoughts. The magazine with Ragini's story was lying on the table. I was waiting for an opportunity to show it to her.

Ragini took her son to my cot, sat on it and started playing with him. She pinched his cheeks and kissed him fondly. The child raised his hands and the tiny fingers got entwined in her hair. She let out a mock scream when her hair got pulled and slapped her son with light fingers.

'Nana, do you still write?' she inquired.

'Yes.'

'Your stories must be appearing in wellknown periodicals now?' she inquired further, while unhooking her child's fingers from her hair.

'Yes,' I said again.

She freed his hands from her hair and held them in her palm. She began patting them.

'Nana, can you write a story like this?' she said.

'Like what?' I asked in reply.

She bent over her child in a sudden gust of affection and kept kissing him. In between kisses she kept repeating 'Like this...like this...like this...like this....'

I wanted to say something but stopped suddenly. All at once I realised that she was not talking to me at all. All her questions, whether I still wrote stories or whether I could write a story 'like this', were meaningless. If I were not present in the room, she would have directed them at the little swallows or the table or the chair and would have kept kissing her child exactly 'like this'.

I did not say a word. The only thing I did was to remove without her knowledge and hide the magazine I was so eager to show her.

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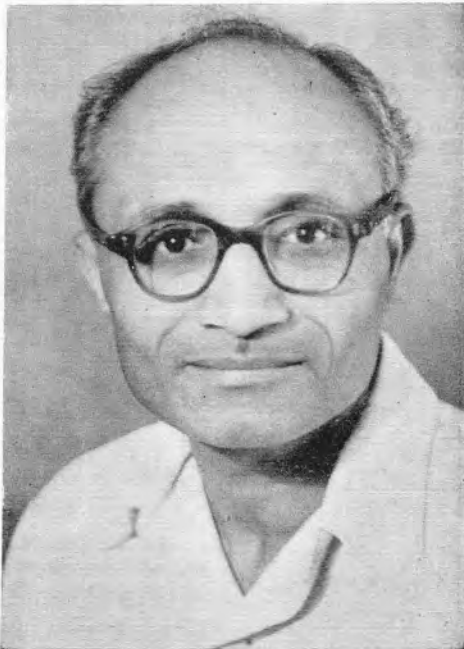
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the bigger cypher!

by Anant Kanekar

(Translated from the Marathi by Ravindra Pinge)

AT times we scratch our head long enough and still fail to recall a particular thing. Disgusted, we give it up and doze off. And surprisingly enough next morning we wake up with a solution and are overwhelmed with joy. Last evening Ganukaka happened to tell me a story, and I had almost the same feeling turning it over in my mind after he had left. A problem which had proved a hard nut to crack ever since I started learning sums in school two or three decades ago was solved yesterday, after all these years, in a jiffy.

Ganukaka was relating the story of a neighbour of his. This man used to scrape up barely fifty rupees a month by doing odd jobs in the Bombay iron market. He would be at the end of his tether making both ends meet for half a dozen kids and a wife. The poor chap was always sulking. When the war started there was a boom in the iron market. He launched an independent partnership and his dealings reached the bracket of half a million. The family had enough to eat, plenty of clothes. Taxes became indispensable to him; but his business was growing so fast that he had hardly time for a few hours' sleep. When one of his children was ill he didn't have the time to call a doctor in the hurry of leaving town. His wife called several doctors who recommended various medicines, but the child lost its life; and even at that time the man was not at home! When he returned his grief knew no bounds. Six months ago he contracted tuberculosis, and he had died recently.

'What I keep wondering about is this,' said Ganukaka, 'When his partner came to settling the accounts it was found that after dealings worth more than half a million he

had incurred a debt of an equal amount. The very house he had in the Konkan in his less adventurous days was now left to his wife and children after bigger dealings had reduced him.'

As I mused, after Ganukaka had gone, I remembered an anecdote which I had read recently. An Australian aviator, who had broken several records of high altitude flying, landed on a Tibetan plateau. There she learnt of a Lama who had been doing penance for ages in a cave. With great difficulty she managed to have an audience with him.

'Well, what are you?' he asked her.

'I flew straight from Australia to India,' she said.

'Well?'

'One more flight and I shall be in Europe!'

'Well?'

'Then one more flight and I am back in Australia!'

'Well?'

'I have broken the twenty thousand feet world record and now I want to reach the thirty thousand mark.'

'Well?'

'Well what?' she said and left in a huff; and soon she crashed to her death while trying to break another record.

When the Lama kept repeating 'well?' I think he meant, after breaking every possible record she had to die in the end after all. Wasn't it better to squat for years in a place trying to attain Nirvana? But I suppose she could have turned the tables on the Lama, by asking, 'You've done penance for ten years; well? Knowledge of the self; well? Nirvana; well?' What could the Lama say? The lady died at the height

of physical achievement, and the same would be the inevitable fate of the Lama at the height of spiritual glory. Well, the whole thing boils down to a cypher!

Ganukaka's neighbour wasn't sure what the next day had in store for him when he was getting a pittance of forty or fifty rupees. When he dealt with thousands of rupees he wasn't any surer either. Worries kept pace with pleasures. People said that he was prospering. Business followed the same pattern. In place of an income and expenditure of fifty rupees, it was now an income and expenditure of fifty thousand!

Sometime back Ganukaka had taken up the cudgels against modern innovations. 'Progress indeed!' he said, 'In the good old days people were happy. There was no noise, no hurry. You speak of cars and planes, but these pleasures have multiplied accidents and a thousand other risks, haven't they?' Trying to demolish his reactionary approach, I said in an apparently progressive vein, 'The fellow who lingers at the foot of a mountain may well laugh at someone standing on the top,

enjoying Nature's riches, saying, "He is enjoying this beauty at the cost of climbing up all the way!" And to maintain this logic further, a stone is any day better than a man; it knows neither pain nor pleasure! Life is a struggle; Kaka, a great life means a great struggle. The scars of the struggle are as great as the final victory, and the joy of that great victory is also great.'

All this progressive philosophy was perfect. It had no loophole. The stone is free of pleasure or pain. The primitive man has less of happiness and also less of sorrow. The civilised man knows greater happiness but also greater sorrow. So it all amounts to a cypher. Then what is progress? Of course, a bigger cypher! While learning sums in my childhood I could not unravel the enigma of five minus five being zero and five thousand minus five thousand also being zero. I thought that the latter must be a bigger zero. And once I said as much to my teacher. But teacher said to me, 'You are an ass; get out!', and chucked me out. After nearly thirty years the riddle has been solved!

love in Marathi folk-lore

DURGA BHAGWAT

a tentative exploration

LOVE normally occupies a predominant position in folk literature, especially in the folk songs of a country. India is no exception to the rule. The treasure of love-songs and tales is rich beyond reckoning and many a love-tale is a model of beauty and grace. India has given the world the first document of an exquisite tragic love-story, the story of King Pururava and the nymph Urvashi. The epics and the mediaeval bardic poetry have handled love gracefully and liberally.

The contemporary folk literature of India also follows this tradition faithfully. Farmers and foresters, labourers and fishermen, cobblers and weavers, and even beggars of either sex sing amorous songs full-throatedly while they work and also when they relax. The pangs of separation and the joys of union are expressed in a delicate manner, but very often in the coarsest possible way. Usually the physical aspect

of love dominates the subtler emotional aspects which are deep-rooted only in a civilised mind. The Sajani songs of Malva and Uttar Pradesh, the Dadariya of Chhatisgarh, the Birha of the Ahirs in Northern India, many Ras or Garba songs of Gujarat, the rain-songs of Gujarat and Rajputana and the harvest festival songs in Karnatak and the rest of South India, bear testimony to the sensuous expression of love in our country. The Holi songs all over the country celebrate not only the carnal aspect of human passion but also exhibit the most licentious tendencies, in coarse, violent language and voluptuous rhythms.

Spring festivities range in India over a long space of time and through almost every nook and corner of the country. The gaiety as well as the exuberance of spirit is contagious and it affects the masses inordinately. Maharashtra also participates in these saturnalian festivities; there is a solemn

bonfire ritual, followed by mud-throwing, profuse abusive shouting and screaming. But this is not all. There are in the villages of the Konkan organised traditional dramatic skits, called Dashavatara, and also communal drum and stick dances, and mimicry of the cowherd dances of Krishna, called 'Khele'. On the ghats, the tradition of organised dancing by men is now largely broken. From all the features of these festivities as they are observed through Maharashtra, one thing struck me as different from the rest of the Indian provinces.

Even though these festivities afford the occasion for the composition of the forest type of love-song, the bulk of the Maharashtrian Holi songs, swollen with pornographic utterances of every kind, lacks the traditional love-theme. Hence the festival in this part is quite solemn on the one hand and utterly obscene on the other. There is no intermediate stage of pure love-songs, even the sensual ones as in many other parts, to strike a balance between these two extremes.

IN the festival of spring, the symbolic youth-celebration of Nature, a robust love-song is the most natural expression of a man's being attuned to the environment in which he lives. Excesses such as sexy gestures and utterances may be condoned if only the emotional element holds its own. But when a people leave out the most refined and vital of human energies and emphasise the physical zealously, it is a highly suggestive phenomenon. I have been pondering for some years over this and though my investigations are by no means complete, they provide some material which encourages me to attempt an explanation for this absence.

Looking to the contents of the vast store of Marathi folk literature, one has to admit that it differs neither in motifs nor in quality from the folk literature of other provinces, except in the absence of the love

motif. One is inclined to ask: if folk literature be the mirror of popular life, does this attitude towards love in Marathi folklore indicate a lack of love in the people or does something prevent its free expression? What is it that makes people evade a description of the richest of emotions which sustains all that is rich and beautiful in life?

The contents of the different genres of folklore, when carefully analysed, make either the lack of the love element clear or reveal a very special attitude which exists even when the profoundest feelings are being described. The idealisation of the emotions that resulted from 'the saint movement' in Maharashtra, beginning properly with Jnaneshvara in the thirteenth century is, to my mind, mostly responsible for the development of a very special attitude towards the mutual attraction of the sexes and the fidelity of the human couple. It has been translated into a very special type of fascinating myth, which I have been lucky enough to discover and which has helped me probe into the mysterious disappearance of the love element from Marathi folklore in general.

The most representative class of folk songs are the Ovi or the grindmill songs. Rich collections of these songs which are sung by the women folk of almost all castes and tribes are available. From the standard collections of them so far made in Marathi, ranging over a few thousands, I do not find a single piece which can be termed a real love-song. It is family life, and the affections of the family that are chiefly described. The mother's love for her children, especially the son, the sister's affection for her brother, the daughter's attachment to her parents, provide the themes. The songs describing the mutual love of a husband and a wife though not absent, are fewer, compared to those that are found in other provinces. They are few and far between, and even in these

the sentiment of love seems to lack free expression and spontaneity. A strained and artificial effort seems to have created and preserved them. The theme is usually the eulogistic remarks of a wife about her husband who is an ideal of manhood for her, who is the pet son of her mother-in-law, who gives her ornaments and dresses and is the lord of the Kumkum (VERMILION) on her forehead. Some times the wife is anxious if her farmer husband who makes the bullocks draw water from the well to the farm does not return at sundown and she prays the spirit of the well to keep him safe. Seldom do we come across an instance where a young girl in the field is described as making love to a youth whom she loves, though such things do happen in the lives of the farm-workers. Child-marriage can hardly be an excuse for the absence of the love element in these folk-songs. Because in other provinces also the custom was as rigid as it was here. But that did not prevent people from singing freely of love.

The Sohar songs of the North reveal the pangs of a childless young wife when the husband is away. She describes her loneliness to the crow and bribes him copiously with sweets, and promises to gild its beak with gold if it would carry her message to her husband and make him return to her. The Maharashtrian young wife also suffers from loneliness but she would not speak out in so many poetic words. She would very meekly ask the crow whether any 'guest' is coming to the house. If the desired guest comes she would of course put a golden ring on its toe. Beyond the modest suggestion of the absent husband by means of the word 'guest', the song says nothing more. And now as the song has become a nursery rhyme, it is believed that the young mother says it when she feeds her baby with milk and rice, and the guest is no one else but the baby's maternal uncle.

The most popular theme of the Panihari songs of the North is the romance of a thirsty traveller or passer-by with a young woman who is drawing water from the well. There are some Ovi-songs addressed to the passer-by in Marathi, but rarely do they turn into beautiful love-songs. Occasionally, in a fairy-tale, we find an exiled prince who begs a drink of water from the girl at the well, and makes love to her which she reciprocates.

THE swing festival in the month of Shrawan (July-August) abounds in love-songs of every kind in Northern India. In Maharashtra also women in villages have a swing festival on the Nagapanchami day, or the serpent festival, when village women dance and sing. Among those songs which are in print, and in my own collection, I do not find a single love song. On the Ghats, women dance round the mud effigy of Shiralshet and sing pornographic songs!

The harvest festival affords women all over the country a very good occasion for singing love-songs and in provinces other than Maharashtra love-songs are sung in abundance. I have not yet come across a love-song in this province sung at the harvest time. The Lavani song which has its origin in the trans-planting and harvest ritual might have been a love-song originally, as the later Lavani of the court poets as well as urban and rural bards tried perhaps to revive the old lost strain; such bardic songs, though available in plenty, especially during and after the Peshva regime, can hardly be termed folk songs. The Lavani was not only a revival but obviously an imitation of North Indian songs to amuse the soldier who suffered on account of his separation from his wife. The original Lavani specimens which I have collected from the Mahars are mixed prose and verse narratives, and contain fairy-tales in which adventure supercedes

love. The mystic rural Lavani which describes the vital force of Nature as the male or Purusha and the matter as female or Prakriti, has much amorous feeling which clothes the theological riddle and hence, here also, the theological problem forms the theme of the song and love only adds its own flavour to the song.

The aborigines also are known for their wealth of love-songs in India. But in Maharashtra even they have lost the best of the material. Judging from the collections so far available, the type of love-songs is only such as the following:

*Come, my wife's sister, let us run away,
Let us run away to yonder hills,
In these hills we shall build a hut,
We shall build a hut and live in it,
We shall live in it and cook rice,
We shall cook rice and eat it with mango
pickle.*

It is mostly the wife's younger sister with whom the brother-in-law is shown taking liberties. The love between a woman and her husband's younger brother which forms a theme of the love songs of Gujerat, Rajputana, Uttar Pradesh and the Punjab is absent here.

In the huge bulk of marriage-songs of different castes and tribes of this province, love has practically no place, though vulgarity, foul language and pornography have a free field. The only song that I found which may amount to a love-song is from the Agri farmers. It runs as follows:

*My bride is red and beautiful,
Like the betel-nut tree.
My wife, I shall not speak angrily to you.
I shall keep you in the turban of my head.*
(i.e. I shall cherish you and treat you tenderly).

Another love-tale in the form of a marriage-song is given by Otto Rothfield in his article on the Son-Kolis and Agris (*Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, Vol. IX 1910-12). It describes the impetuous love of a girl for a young asce-

tic who happens to visit her village on his way to a pilgrimage. She decides to go with him; but before leaving she informs her father of her intentions. The father says that ascetics are not reliable and hence she should not go away with her lover. He would marry her to a nice young man, give her expensive clothes, ornaments, cattle, slaves and wealth. The girl, however, remains obdurate. She has been praying for this charming holy man for over a decade and now that he has actually come to take her, go she must. No treasure would now separate her from her lover and so she goes away with him.

To me this seems to be a song in which a shade of Parvati's love for Shiva is either preserved or the reference to the holy man is deliberately made to convert a secular love-song into the eternal romance of Shiva and his consort. Many a song has thus been converted into divine romances, either of Shiva and Parvati or Radha and Krishna, etc. Original pastoral songs have thus found a suitable background in Krishna's life and 'the saint movement' in Maharashtra did give an impetus to this conversion of the secular to the sacred.

THE Son-Kolis seem to be a community which has preserved indigenous love-songs. There is a special type of song called the 'Chakva song'. The Kolis are both fishermen and navigators and come in contact with different people. Whether the adherence to love-songs is a foreign or an inherent trait which has continued to exist is still to be ascertained. The songs of Chakva are duets of lovers or at times simple love-rhymes. To me it seems that the name of the songs is derived from the famous Chakravaka birds or the Brahmani ducks, who stand for a symbol of conjugal fidelity. From the epic poetry onwards, the birds' love-calls, when they are separated at night, have been a popular motif in

fiction, ancient and mediaeval. In the contemporary folk-songs of North India, the songs describing the love of birds are distinct and large in number. In Marathi I have not yet come across a single reference to Chakravakas, much less the dedication of a full song to them, and hence the indirect use of the motif seems all the more significant to me. Many a time a sailor looks upon his boat as his lady-love and sings her love-songs. A delightful duet furnished by Otto Rothfield runs as follows:

*Where are you going my handsome man?
I am going to Bombay, my pretty lass.
Shall I come there with you my handsome man?*

*What will you buy me my handsome man?
I shall buy you a choli, my pretty lass.*

Rothfield says that the song is an equivalent of an English popular song. This remark is significant. The culture of the western coast of India has much in common with Mediterranean culture and that the sailor race of India should have still preserved elements common to it need not be a matter of surprise.

Like the love-song, the paucity of the love-story amidst the vast mass of Marathi folklore is also felt by the student. Although the routine fairy-tale depicts the stereotype romance of the hero with the heroine accurately, a real love-story is seldom encountered. The popular ballad poetry sings not of love but of the battlefield. The Telugu ballad poetry narrates the love of Papua and the romances of the village youths. A Kanarese ballad describes how a loving husband drowned himself along with his wife when she was offered as a victim to a tank by his parents. The ballad poetry of Bengal is particularly rich in love-tales. Sind sings of Sassi and Punnu, Malva of Rupmati and Bajbahadur, Kathiawar of Laka Phulani. In Gujerat, the ghost of a woman is said to be wandering in search of her lover in the precincts of the Girnar. No such love is immortalised in

Marathi popular ballads or even in the Lavanis.

THIS omission of love, however, does not mean that love has been for ever absent in Marathi popular literature. In old times it certainly was there, as certain relics of it, however meagre they be, testify. Recently I came across a reference to a narrative poem—Lavani—which described the myth of the Parijata flower. A Portuguese doctor, Gracia, heard it and recorded the gist of it in his treatise on the medicinal plants of India, in the seventeenth century. The story says that the sun-god once fell in love with the daughter of a rich merchant, and the girl responded. For some days she was exceedingly happy. The sun-god, however, found another girl who surpassed the former one in beauty and, preferring her, spurned the merchant's daughter. The girl was broken-hearted and burnt herself to death. From her ashes sprang forth the Parijata tree. The tree bears flowers which resemble tear drops and are exceedingly beautiful, fragrant and delicate. The tree blooms at night, as if remembering the sweet happiness of its past love and trembles and sheds flowers when the sun rises. During the day-time the tree stands in a melancholic mood. The local tale has now become extinct in Maharashtra, being replaced by the usual mythological Sanskrit tale of the jealousy of Satyabhama for Rukmini which made Krishna bring down the heavenly tree and plant it on the earth.

Similarly, the tragic local tale of the Tulsi plant has been replaced by the mythological story of the illicit love of the god Vishnu for Vrinda or Tulsi, the chaste wife of Jalandhara or Shankhachuda. The Marathi tale, obtained by me from a Kunbi girl of the Konkan, is a prototype of the Greek tale of Apollo and Daphne. Once upon a time there lived a poor Brahmin couple. They were so poor that whether the man begged in two houses or twenty he

got nothing but two handfuls of grain every day. In course of time a daughter of dark complexion was born to them. She was called Tulsi. From the day of her birth the father started getting one more handful as he begged. The father disliked her because she was dark and he would have no money to pay her dowry for her marriage. Besides, her horoscope said that she was destined to marry a non-Brahmin.

As the girl grew and played about, her appetite increased and she asked for more food. The mother started giving her half of her own share and being thus driven to starvation became emaciated. The Brahmin was disturbed by his wife's ill health and learning that the daughter deprived the mother of her full share of food, took Tulsi out in the woods and left her there to her own fate. The girl wandered from place to place but got no shelter. She then sat on a rock and started crying. The god Vithoba of Pandharpur heard the sobs and rushed to help her. Being moved with her pathetic story, he took her to a house nearby and stayed there with her. The two loved each other dearly and were very happy. On one occasion Vithoba had to leave her because of some urgent work at Pandharpur. Promising her a gift on his return, he went away.

At Pandharpur Rukmini was burning with jealousy of Tulsi. She would not allow Vithoba to go back to her even for a short visit to give the promised gift. She herself undertook the task of carrying the gift to Tulsi and started with the basket of fruits and flowers which Vithoba had kept ready. On the way Rukmini trampled the fruits and flowers under her feet and, filling the basket with poisonous snakes, went to Tulsi's house. The time of her arrival was midnight and so Tulsi would not open the door to her, even if she be the wife of Vithoba. Rukmini then let loose the snakes and went away.

In the morning when Tulsi went to pick

up Vithoba's gift the snakes rushed to bite her and she escaped death only because the neighbours were good enough to kill them. But the incident made Tulsi sad for ever. She had a feeling that her protector and lover had played the same trick on her as her father had once done. Soon after this Vithoba managed to make his escape from Rukmini, and came to Tulsi. But Tulsi had changed. She served him faithfully but was utterly silent. Not one syllable of either anger or love passed her lips. This hurt Vithoba, because in spite of his incessantly asking what made her refuse to speak to him, she would not talk. All his devices to make her speak and smile failed. At last when he begged of her to speak at least one word, she stood up, folded her hands and said 'O mother earth, please open up and take me inside you.'

No sooner were the words said than the earth opened and Tulsi sank into it. Vithoba hastened to pull her out by catching her hair, but what came into his hand were the blossoms of a plant. Tulsi was converted into a plant. Vithoba held the plant to his heart and sobbed. Rukmini too repented. Vithoba insisted on marrying the Tulsi plant. Since then the marriage is yearly performed and no human marriage takes place before this divine wedding.

ANOTHER story of the shepherds is equally tragic and describes the permanent separation of the god Vithoba from his wife. In Pandharpur the images of Vithoba and Rukmini are not together. His is in the main temple and hers on the banks of the Chandrabhaga river. The explanation of this living apart of the divine couple given by the priests is that Rukmini sulked when Vithoba brought Radha or Rahi to Pandharpur and stood on the river-bank. The myth which I heard from the Dhangars is far more eloquent and significant. It says that before coming to Pandharpur Vithoba, the king and the god, stayed at Malshiras.

His most cherished devotee, Mali Raya, the gardener, started from Khandesh for Malshiras to see his lord, with a band of five hundred attendants. On the way, he made a halt at the Panchaganga river and sent word ahead about his arrival.

Vithoba rejoiced at the coming visit and intended to give him a warm welcome. He called his Minister Soma and through him sent word to the Queen Padubai that she should get the palace swept clean and decorated. A liberal quantity of sumptuous food should be kept ready for the five hundred guests. Fragrant water should be filled in five hundred jars and also a good supply of drinks should be at hand. Padubai had just finished her household work and was relaxing on the door-step when Soma arrived. She became furious at the news of the arrival of new guests. She said that she herself and all the attendant women were tired of doing household chores, such as grinding, pounding, washing, filling water, cooking, serving food, cleaning and sweeping all the time. She would not do it now even if the guest Mali Raya were to drop down dead with his band.

Soma went away crestfallen. Mali Raya came to know about Padubai's attitude and went back without even seeing Vithoba. When Vithoba heard that his guest had returned because Padubai refused to feed him, he was overwhelmed with shame. His anger knew no bounds. Because of his wife's idleness he was unable to perform the duty of the householder. In excessive anger, he pronounced a curse—'you shall live no longer in my house' he said to Padubai, 'You shall become mad and wander from place to place. No one shall give you shelter. You shall wander forth to a forest and die a lonely and miserable death. No relative shall touch your body'.

The curse materialised and Padubai died in a forest. Vithoba tore her hair, he called wild birds and beasts and made

them feed on her body. Then finally he ordered the rain-cloud to wash away her bones into the sea. The gardener repented his own pride and sitting on the seashore prayed for twelve years to the sea-god to restore him the bones of Padubai. The sea gave back the bones. The gardener then threw them in the Chandrabhaga river and prayed her to bring back to life the dead queen.

Soon afterwards a pink lotus came out of the bones and stood majestically in the waters of the river. Vithoba had left Malshiras after the death of Padubai and lived at Pandharpur. He was fascinated by the flower. He plucked it and there to his great joy Padubai in flesh and blood stood before him. Vithoba took her hand lovingly and, though he owned her now as his wife and queen, the curse uttered at that fatal moment years ago had still its spell on them. As a king and god he was compelled to keep his word, and so he could not take his own wife in his house. She must remain on the bank where he picked her up and be satisfied with his occasional visits. And so Padubai or Rukmini has for ever to stay apart from her husband. The majestic beauty of the story and the terrible truth it conveys need hardly be explained.

In both stories eternal separation is shown to have sanctified a deep and great love. The peculiar adoration of permanent loneliness seems to be a trait found only in Maharashtrian folk ideology. For example, the plantain tree is the symbol of an ideally chaste woman who, without coming into physical contact with a male, conceives and after the first and only offspring, dies. Similarly the shepherd goddess Ganga Suravanti, the mother of the god Viroba, had taken a vow never to allow any man to touch her body. Yet she desired motherhood. By eating the divine corn which grew and ripened without rain water, she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. The purity of Suravanti is very much admired by the shepherd class.

Gottingen and Tasmania

..... are separated by a distance of some 10,000 miles. And yet they are closely united in the pursuit of independent scholarship and free enquiry which is the common heritage of the universities of the world. Both of them, also, have recently experienced threats to the independence of academic standards and academic self-government. The issues that arose in these two universities, and in many other instances, are discussed in "Science and Freedom", the bulletin of the international Committee on Science and Freedom.

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tribute to Mama Warerkar

by M. V. Rajadhyaksha

(Translated from the Marathi)

ONE should realise the importance of statistics, and use it for a beginning. Mama Warerkar has spent forty-five of his seventy years in writing. During this period he has written one hundred and forty-one books. Out of these 45 are plays, 29 original novels, 30 translations from Sharatchandra Chatterji's works, 5 collections of short stories, 2 volumes of autobiography entitled *My Life in the Theatre*, one collection of speeches (another is being printed), one collection of radio plays and 28 detective stories.

What is the *summum bonum* of all these figures? Some shrewd readers must have muttered: this is an example in addition and, even if not explicitly, affirmed that the figure 141 is not incorrect (or rather a lie). And some among these must have felt that the last number, 28, must be used for subtraction in literary arithmetic, that the possible error of converting the minus sign preceding it into plus is due to lachrymose sentiment for the old man. This is not untrue either. But actually, dull figures are unaware of literary criteria, etc.—a book consists of printed pages bound together: that is the way of mechanical and earthly calculation. Secondly if it is decided to pursue the intricacies of literary arithmetic, some clever expert may work hypnotic acrobatics with additions and subtractions and bring Mama's literary achievement to a little more or less than zero—probably less! So, at seventy-one Mama will be left with a blank slate in his hand and ordinary sums to reckon with!

This is not merely the obduracy of fancy. It is said that several pundits are harassed by the doubt that Mama may not have a lasting place in literature, though one or

two of his books may be 'fairly good'. A wellknown Professor of Marathi had to teach a book of Mama's prescribed by the University. 'A book by Warerkar! What is there to teach? No lectures,' he told his class. One of Mama's plays was hauled into a court of law, but none remembers a debate on any of his books taking place. The practised debaters thought other topics and other people respectable. But debate is gathering enthusiasm year by year over the extent of Mama's badness as a man: one need not affirm that only the good are engaged in it.

It would not be proper to say that the critics have done Mama an injustice, because they have never judged him. When Mama's latest book was received from the publisher for favour of review nobody considered it more important than calling for a bare, obligatory acknowledgment. In the course of seventy-five original plays and novels he has drawn at least two or three hundred prominent characters. Their humanity and their social background has still to be mapped; and the many-coloured, half-baked, clean or soiled thoughts that crowd these hundred and fifty books need to be scrutinised at close range, for howsoever untidy they may be, they are heartfelt, not culled from books. Borrowed wares are always well-presented.

From *Haach Mulacha Baap*, written in 1916 to the recent *Apoorva Bengal*, every play and novel bears testimony to Mama's social consciousness. He has dramatized many of the social and political problems that faced Maharashtra during all these years. Though several of these problems have lost their urgency, the drama is alive.

One cannot enjoy the detail, but the basic attitude has lost none of its integrity. The Khaddar saree presented by Vaikuntha to Nalini in *Satteche Gulam* may have worn out, but the portrait of the slaves of power in transition is still somewhat recognisable. When the learned critics point out that *Sonyacha Kalas* is weak, because of its romantic laxity and its inelegant, theatrical construction, they are quite right. Even if the mill-owner's son Vitthaladas disguises himself as Vithu Kishna and flirts with the labour girl Bijli, he has to wed his rich fiancée, Hansa. This philandering does not efface the suffering of the labourers. May be not — but which playwright has ever expressed the situation with such feeling?

The labourers rose in rebellion in Bombay, the resultant Meerut conspiracy shook the whole country; but, except for Mama, what did the theatre care about it? Not only the theatre, but even the learned toadies of its easygoing monopolists cared little! At this very time the aged inspiration of Natyacharya Khadilkar was busy dressing Natasamrat Balgandharva in the most costly costumes and loading his voice with the maximum number of songs set to newfangled tunes. The loyal entourage of that faded old dramatist was in tears over bygone days and saw unwanted political provocation in his new mythological plays. Shripad Krishna Kolhathar restricted his social consciousness to his humorous essays while turning out grossly unrealistic plays. Later, in the bad days of the theatre, Atre tried his best to pump up an adulterated semblance of Gadkari in *Gharabahr* and *Udyacha Sansar*; but he gave up the attempt, and, while cheering up society with his laughter, inundated and incapacitated the theatre itself. Rangnekar mildly desired professional success and has dragged his cart for over a decade. Besides, there were other 'Companies' forming, breaking up or closing down from time to time. But Mama continued to write plays;

he did not rot in the groove of success, but was for ever discovering new lands.

The history of Mama Warekar's plays during the last three or four decades is concurrent with the progress of the Marathi theatre. Experiments like that of Natyaman-wantar slowed down the pace a little; but Mama's pen maintained the link. In return, he got only insults, indifference and poverty. This loyalty is without compare in the history of our theatre. When the professional theatre was on its last legs there was an innocent, idealistic belief that the amateur stage would save it. But even after giving the amateur his due, Mama convinced others that the theatre could live only as a profession or not at all, and employed his pen in its service, without expecting any temporary gain.

Mama's pen drew its strength from the life of the people, and this life is not restricted to the middle classes. Girgaon is long used to complaining that Mama has *exploited* the chasm between Girgaon and Girangaon — the mill area in Bombay — because it firmly believes that Girgaon is the centre of literature and that Girangaon should live off it. Mama made 'bourgeois' a word of abuse — therefore the bourgeoisie treated him like an untouchable. Mama may be criticised because, to produce an effect, he makes a mountain out of a mole-hill, fosters prejudice with obstinacy and disturbs objectivity, but he has diagnosed the temper of society unerringly on several occasions. This was because, unlike most other writers of ours, he mixed with different strata of society. Hence it was that Mama detected the hypocrisy and weakness of the bourgeoisie and expressed it forthrightly. He exposed the insignificance of the middle classes. Actually, those classes lead us, our literature is written about them, for them and by them. What we call 'life' is theirs and so is 'art'. Their job is to edge into the upper classes and their pastime is

sympathising with the lower classes. Most of our 'rural' literature has sprung from this sympathy. Of course, Mama himself belongs to the selfsame class. So one must see how far his analysis of the bourgeoisie has been vitiated by his accumulation of class culture. Incomplete and half-hearted as this analysis may be, it is important to note the situation in and the pugnacity with which he made it.

In the Maharashtra of those times, normally, the highly educated and supposedly respectable community of lawyers, doctors and teachers boasted of reformism. Mama was barely educated; his profession was simply of a playwright. He was not one of those who wrote plays for pleasure, fame or money in their spare time; he was, in contemporary parlance, 'of the theatre'. And yet his reformism was broader and more vital than that of these monopolists—it was not merely the fashionable one of a coterie. It is said that he championed the cause of women with excessive gusto—he was, therefore, the butt of the men's anger and laughter. But his woman was a woman—she was neither the well-dressed, worshipable doll in a drawing room of fashionable fiction nor the object of love and pity of sentimental poets. She might be quarrelsome or a little childish even (freed from the coop, one is dazed by the blessed air!)—but she had a personality of her own. She had not heard of the word 'suffragette'. She was a real housewife; her strength lay not in education, but in being herself, a woman. Of course, like a lawyer, Mama stuck to a single obstinate point—hence his woman had only one side; she was neither subtle nor rounded—woe to her creator! One feels rather odd about the fact that in all Mama's writing one rarely finds a bad woman or a good man unless he is old, like himself. But his being the creator of this free woman is to his lasting credit.

Twenty years ago, the epithet 'progressive' suddenly became popular. Though

the word has a definite meaning we were infatuated with its novelty, used it and are still using it freely and loosely. The word 'reformist' had got discoloured through a couple of generations, so this new 'commodity' filled our eyes and everybody exhibited it. Every Tom, Dick and Harry called himself progressive. Many of these are known to brew the politics of Brahmin casteism in private assemblies; it is no wonder that age-old prejudices and jealousies about other religions and other provinces dog them permanently. Mama's pen is not poisoned by these considerations. In *Sanyashacha Sansar* (1919) he brought together characters from several provinces, and in *Apoorva Bengal* (1953) he dealt with the disaster in Noakhali with great sympathy. The man from another province usually had a comic role on our stage; the man of another religion, especially a Muslim, depicted a villain. In Mama's plays, they appear, like others, as human beings. Mama has a soft corner for the Konkan; but this is not distinguished by a hatred for others. And the soft corner too is for *all* 'Konkanis'—not only for the upper strata there! Mama welcomed the *bhandaris* and the *kulwaris* of the Konkan into his writing. They need not feel embarrassed. This true-blooded equality is Mama's most notable progressive feature.

Another valuable facet of this comradeship with society is Mama's language. Modern Marathi literature is affected by a terrible disease—that of phoney language. With a few great exceptions our writers have considered it a crime to write in a language intelligible to the people. This is because they do not write for the people; they dress up their language for the enjoyment of a superior class of readers. The decoration is not wholly indigenous. Sanskrit words and inflections weigh down the backbone of every sentence and gild it to their gullible satisfaction. What an opportunity for showing off your learning! This

means learning is more important than meaning! And this whole masquerade is for the learned! It is firmly believed that literature belongs to them, not to the masses for whom there are 'lesser' forms. The language of the people and the language of literature become two different kinds.

There was a gulf between literature and society. Now we contend that newspapers are for the masses. But if we casually glance at our papers, especially the Bombay ones, we find numerous examples of this phoney language. It will be wrong to call this language obscure; it is foggy—because it lacks meaning. The Marathi of the learned adherents of Sanskrit might be artificial; this Marathi is not Marathi at all—it is merely ridiculous.

Vishnushastri Chiplunkar is credited with giving weight, maturity and style to the Marathi language. It was also he who turned it away from the people. Chiplunkar is called the Shivaji of the Marathi language. He should properly be called the Peshwa of Marathi, for during this literary Peshwa-craze, the difference between superior and inferior was aggravated and society lost its homogeneity. Several prose-writers rightly or wrongly famous during this century belong to this Peshwa tradition. Among the few who were not marred by it stands Mama Warerkar. Through his stories and plays he displayed the tension and the vitality of the spoken language. One can honestly call Mama's language genuinely Marathi, but it did not borrow archaic words and phrases from old Marathi for its own sake. The stylists of 'Marhati' take recourse to this artifice. Mama's language is the living Marathi of today. It touches your heart when you read or hear it—but it is not theatrical. The strength and restraint of it can be seen in any of his recent

plays. It may not have that transcendental power to portray every emotion minutely; but it has certainly the skill to catch the meaning of a variety of experiences.

Current literary table-talk may consider that Mama has no 'style'; this itself is a tribute to his integrity and naturalness. Fortunately, during the last few years, more and more writers, especially short story writers, have broken away from the overgrowths of bookishness and 'style'. Albeit unconsciously, Mama's example is taking root. Free from its theatricality, only Atre's pen can produce genuine Marathi more expressive than Mama's.

In practice, Mama's achievement over nearly half a century has proved fruitless. To earn a living during the last two years he has translated detective stories, filling in a money-making quota of pages every day. Such luck is bound to affect one who lives on his writing in this way; besides, these translations may be no worse than the novels of prominent and prosperous writers who practise 'art for art's sake'. And yet Mama has not lost courage or inspiration. He still writes plays, one better than the other. He might write stories, too. Along with growing virtues, these will contain old, ingrained defects. His critics are looking for the defects instead of at the virtues. These are Mama's assets. Recently, when he turned seventy, the litterateurs relegated him enthusiastically to a corner, after a congratulatory meeting or two and inconsequential paragraphs in the papers. But even from that corner, Mama will continue to write and tease them. It is believed that he is inordinately fond of provoking people! Character knows no cure.

[Since this article was written four years ago Mama has continued to write plays as provocative as ever. He is now a member of the Sahitya Akademi and has also been nominated to the Rajya Sabha.—Editor.]

off the road in Berar

by R. B. Joshi

(Translated from the Marathi by the author)

WE were driving along the Akola-Akot road, but we were not going to Akot. We were going to a bigish village a few miles off this highway. They were March days, and March days are certainly not Summer days. In North India these days, even the old sinewy, leafless *peepul* tree feels the on-rush of the sap inside and then, unable to contain it any longer, brings it out suddenly in the form of young, glossy, copper-red leaves. Mustard, wheat and gram, laden with the produce of their lifetime, bend before the wind this way and that. Men and women, too, feel a certain mysterious restlessness deep in their bodies and minds and, breaking all bounds, it bursts forth during the Basant and Holi festivals. It is the stir of life.

But here, in Berar, it was all dry and dusty. The black-brown earth, having borne her lord the farmer the fruit of his labour, lay supine in the glaring sun, exhausted. She was resting between whiles. Her lord would, once again, drive the plough into her, and sow the seed; she will retain it, nurse it, multiply a thousandfold and throw it out for him to gather it again, and so the wheel of her life would take one more turn. Yes, she was now resting between whiles. Had it not been for spots of full-rounded, rich-green mango trees here and there, or for the pale-yellow ricks of jowar-stalks dotting the landscape, the wide stretch of the dusty land, with spiky stumps sticking out of it, would have been unbearable to the eye.

In some fields, cotton had been picked, but the plants were still standing. The pale greenish-yellow of their flowers only accentuated the emptiness of the surroundings.

The *neem* and *babul* trees planted by the road side to make shade for the travellers stood dutifully in their places, but the leaves that should have made the shade had disappeared and what was left was a criss-cross of branches and twigs, traced against the sky and shadowed on the road-surface. The fine trellis work of the *neem* tree branches was indeed beautiful and would not have been visible but for the absence of the leaves. But what was needed at the time was cool shade and not the beauty of branch-work. The *babul*, even when fully clad in green leaves and dotted with light, yellow fluffy balls of flowers,

is unable to conceal its long forks of silvergrey thorns. At this time it had nothing else to show.

Once in a mile or so there appeared a *babul* tree rich in green and gold and apologised for the nakedness of all the other *babuls* in the neighbourhood.

Somewhere between the fourteenth and fifteenth mile our car left the metalled road and turned to the right into a dirt track, a sort of fair-weather road. The running now was very different. Our car was jolted and pitched and tossed. The thorny bushes and creepers leaning over the tract scratched the sides of it. They did not like our intrusion into their seclusion. They seemed to say, 'You are town-bred people. Please don't come here. You will only laugh at us, at our want and poverty. And if you must come, well, come along, but don't say we did not warn you.'

Driving on between furrowed fields and dry pebbly beds of streams we passed village after village. (Dharel, Rel, Hingni, and we know not which others). When we approached a village, half a dozen dogs would rush at the car barking their lungs out. They would be followed by children and elderly men and sometimes by women a little behind. The car would slow down. The barking would subside into a growl. The men and children would edge the track looking at us. Then we left the village behind, the car gathered speed. Many bushes resumed scratching us and the car drove on between furrowed fields across dried up, petty beds of streams.

Most of the houses were built of mud, ash-grey. At times a solitary stone house showed itself up with pride, white washed or painted. On the top, a tree fluttered a tattered red or white flag, which meant that there was a temple under the tree. Except for such spots of colour the rest was all ashy-grey, grey-ashy. When the sun's rays fell across or aslant the sharp, dumb, shades, they perhaps broke the dull monotony of colour. But at present the rays fell right from above and the shadows had all gone under the walls.

The village (Dahihanda) where we were going was about two or three miles away. Something or other happened to our car and it appeared that we would not be able to move on for about half an hour at least. Luckily, the enforced halt was made

less intolerable by the fact that there was a village nearby and in a way I was glad.

No sooner had the car stopped than, as usual, dogs, children and men closed round the car in a ring and some women less forward perhaps, but no less curious, stood at some distance in a knot. I broke through the ring, looked round and saw, at some distance in a field, a few men and women busy winnowing wheat. Threshed wheat and chaff was falling in a cascade from a winnowing basket held on high by a man standing on a tripod. As it fell, the chaff was blown away by the wind the golden grain fell in a heap on the clean dung-plastered floor. A few women were busy filling sacks with the grain. I had not set my eyes on such fine full lustrous golden grain for a number of years. Under the rationing system we had been used to accepting as wheat anything that was called so. I was tempted to take a handful of the grain, put it in my pocket and run my fingers through it fondly. The farmer, I thought, would not have minded it. But my ration-conditioned conscience told me that even to possess a handful of this beautiful wheat would be extremely selfish and unfair to my fellow citizens who were being fed on Canadian or Australian wheat. So I dropped the idea and contented myself with just running my hand through the heap.

The winnowing was done in the same way as perhaps it was done thousands of years ago when Man for the first time ceased to be a nomadic cattle-breeder and settled down as a tiller of the soil. He had advanced a step further, but just one step. He was still there.

I crossed the road and turned to the village on the other side. Just in front of me on raised ground there was a small school building. It interested me, so I went up and climbed the steps leading on to a verandah. The school was one big hall. A score of young children, ranging from eight to ten years of age, were seated on small durries on a stone-paved floor. Some were busy writing, others reading different things from different books in a sing-song manner and at a high pitch. It brought my schooldays back to my mind. For I used to do the same thing when I went to school. To an outsider all this reading together is just so much noise. But to the readers themselves it is not. One is so absorbed doing one's own reading that one does not mind what the others are doing. In fact I think it serves the purpose of background music which helps you to concentrate.

The teacher came forward to meet me and with great effort persuaded the boys to be silent.

'How many students are there on the roll?' I asked him.

'About twenty.'

'What is the population of the village?'

'May be three hundred, may be more. It used to be about five hundred. But recently it has decreased.'

According to the population I thought there should have been about forty or fifty students attending the school. There were a few boys of school-going age playing in the school ground. Looking at them I asked the teacher if they were not his pupils.

By this time a few respectable looking villagers had come up and were standing by us. One of them volunteered to inform me.

'People here are not very eager to send their children to school. It was started about three years ago. In the beginning we gave the boys shirts and caps free. So there were many who attended so long the shirts and caps wore well. As soon as they were torn and unfit for wear they ceased coming.'

'So it was because...?'

'Their fathers want them to work in the fields or to take cattle to the jungle for grazing.'

The teacher intervened to say, 'There are a few Brahmin families in the village too. But they send their boys to school at Dahihanda, the village three miles from here.'

'What do they do in the rainy season?'

'In those months the road is unpassable, so they make some arrangements to keep them at Dahihanda.'

'Are you the only teacher here?'

'Yes, and I have three classes to manage.'

All the while the students had sat gaping at me and nudging each other. The school teacher went on to say, 'Ten out of the eighteen students sitting there belong to the scheduled castes.'

I looked at the class but could not tell the untouchables from the others.

As I took leave of the teacher my eyes rose to grand sayings like 'Long Live the U.N.O.', 'Respect the child', 'The Path to Glory lies through the Plane of Death', etc. hanging high up on the wall, as much beyond the reach of the children's eyes as beyond their understanding. Very likely they were meant not for the child but for visitors like me.

As I came out and looked round I saw a temple behind the school building. So I went up and wishing to have a close look at it I went in. The 'hall' was full of dust and dotted with dung heaps and strewn with bits of cattle fodder left half chewed. The repellant odour of cattle urine filled

the place. The barred door of the shrine was locked and the images inside carried remnants of worship performed days ago. As I came out wondering why a temple so near human habitation should be so neglected I met an old villager gazing at me wide-eyed.

'Well, brother, why is this temple turned into a cattle-shed? Is there no one to look after it?'

'What should I say? The temple carries an *Inam* with it, but the service which is a condition of it is not performed,' he said.

'But I see that the images have clothes put on them.'

'Yes you are right. They were offered by someone a few months ago.'

Most of the houses were built of mud and roofed with thatch or tiles. The walls of many houses had crumbled in parts, showing the interior. The thatch or tiles of some had come off and left gaping holes in the roof. Old wheels minus their iron rings and with many of the spokes missing were left leaning against tumbling walls. The sight of that symbol of man's progress lying there crippled brought on me a sense of depression. The whole place was monotonously grey, drab and depressing, and the sun shining from above made it worse. The few men I saw in the lanes did not lend colour to the scene or life to the atmosphere. Their listless expressions and languid movements only helped to underline the dullness. The only relief came from one or two stone brick houses, with upright whitewashed walls and painted doors. They probably belonged to some Marwari money lender or to some landlord and reminded me of a clean well-dressed office superintendent, a head clerk sitting in the midst of ill-paid, half-starved, dingy, dirtily-clad petty clerks.

After taking a round of the village I came back to the school building and sat there on a chair offered by the school teacher. By that time some of my fellow travellers in the car had also come there. It appeared from the talk of the people that small-pox was prevalent in the neighbourhood in epidemic form.

'Hasn't the vaccinator been here?' some one asked.

'Oh yes, he has, and he comes every four or eight days.'

'Do not people get themselves and their children vaccinated?'

'Well, some do and some don't.'

I had read in my school book that when Jenner had proved the efficacy of the vaccine beyond doubt, India was among the first countries to use it. That in the same India, after a hundred and

fifty years of Jenner's vaccine, there should still be some who do and some who don't get themselves vaccinated even when the vaccinator visits their very doorsteps, is stunning proof of people showing utter disregard for the passage of time. The life and work of Jenner means nothing to them.

From the verandah of the school building, I could see another temple at some distance. The walls of it had crumbled, exposing the emptiness of the interior. It was the old Hanuman Temple in the village and yet it was not looked after. There were two other temples in the village, I was told. One was dedicated to the goddess of small-pox and the other was the temple of the goddess of the village.

I was reminded of the *Inam* going with the temple I had seen earlier, and happened to mention it. At this, one of the villagers said, 'We are the hereditary minders of the temple. But the income from the *Inam* is too small even to support the family. We cannot spare anything for the upkeep of the temple.'

By now the car was repaired, so I took leave of the village with its dilapidated temples, half-dilapidated houses, a struggling school, a deep and difficult well, and a compost pit.

We resumed our journey and I was busy rearranging my impressions of the village we had just left when what looked like the dome of a *dargah* made its appearance at a distance, from amidst a clump of trees. We were told that we were approaching our destination. As we drove near I saw that it was a bigger village than any I had seen earlier that morning. In fact, historically, it had been the chief town of a region containing some hundred villages.

It was sometime past noon when we reached the place. Our car drove straight to the *dargah* and came to a halt in the shade of the trees. Later I learnt that what I had taken to be a *dargah* was in fact a temple of Shiva and that its Islamic appearance was due to the influence of Muslim rule over Berar. As soon as we halted, a ring of men and children formed itself round our car and after a few minutes it broke as quietly as it had formed. The peace of the place that was disturbed by our coming was re-established. Two or three cows and as many goats chewing their cud in the pale shade of a tree had opened their eyes and their ears on hearing the noise of the car. They again closed their eyes, let their ears fall back into place and resumed their ruminations. Further up in the narrow strip of shade thrown by the wall of a small shrine a mongrel dog had sat up on hearing us. Now it started up, raised

its head, gave a long loud howl, stretched itself backwards and forwards, shook its head and ears and lay down again, curled up as before. The rustle of stiff *peepul* leaves, the shrill whistle of a kite high up in the sky and the cawing of a solitary crow were the only sounds that occasionally disturbed the depth of the noontime quiet.

We proceeded on foot to the house of our host. Many of the houses lining the narrow, tortuous lanes were half dead, and presented the same dull drab appearance as did the other houses I had seen earlier in the day. Most of them occupied only a part of the land on which they were standing; the rest being covered with the ruins of some older structure. Here and there stood a lean-to against an old mud wall.

At one spot, as we were turning round a corner I saw a woman rising from behind the ruins of a wall and arranging the folds of her saree. She had been relieving herself. Thereafter I kept my eyes fixed on the road lest they should fall on something similar again.

Our host was very kind and hospitable to us. He was a man of some status in the village and his forefather had held some hereditary office in the old days. He was very apologetic about the food offered at mealtime.

'I am very sorry I could not give you any fresh vegetables,' he said, 'This part is good for cereal crops but not for growing fruit and vegetables. The soil here, for about two hundred square miles, is rather saltish. In the old days, they used to produce salt here and exchange it for rice. Fresh water is scarce'....

'Then it must be very hard for the people during the sunny months.'

'It is terrible, they have to go miles to get just one vessel of fresh water. They dig holes and pits in the sandy beds of streams, allow the water to percolate and settle during the night and collect it in the morning. They keep a watch over the pit during the night hours lest the water should be stolen. To make things doubly sure they throw a plank of wood across the mouth of the pit and sleep on it. And yet, sometimes thefts of water do occur. But it is no use complaining to the police for water is not "identifiable property".'

If this could be the state of affairs in the middle of the twentieth century in a civilized country, then there can be no doubt that battles must have been fought over the possession of watering places in the earlier phases of civilization.

It was very hot in the afternoon. We tried to sit down and rest for some time, but could not. It was so dry and hot. So I got up and went to

the window. I looked in all directions. The scene was the same I had been seeing since leaving the Akola-Akot road. The same black-brown earth stretched far and wide. There were the same patches here and there of yellow-grey, uncultivated land dotted with blobs of green and yellow, wild shrubs and strewn over with stones big and small. In many places the rains had washed away good fertile surface-soil, laboriously tended, manured and rendered fruitful by the farmer, and traces were left in places from where it was washed off. The river which flows by used to enter the village during the rains. So the village had put an embankment and diverted the course of the stream. But in the process they blocked the outlets through which the rain water streams flowed into the river. The waters of these streams finding their outlets into the river blocked, turn back to the village and to the fields and nibble at the mud walls of the houses and eat into the soil of the fields. As a result, on one side of the village the land in the neighbourhood appears as if it has been torn at by some wild beast of monstrous size in a fit of fury.

It is said of the soil of Berar that whatever you sow in it you always reap gold. Perhaps you do. But I did not see the lustre of this gold on any of the houses I had come across that day, barring of course a very few. I did not see it on the faces of the people, in their walk, their talk, or their general bearing. There is a cycle in the life of the earth. She produces in plenty in one season and is fallow in the other, there is an ebb and flow to her life. Is this so with the life of the sons of the soil? Is there an ebb and flow in the annual cycle of their life too? Is this dullness, this listlessness seasonal? Is it permanent?

We left the place late in the evening. Almost at dusk. The lights of our car were turned on. In the horizontal beams of their bright light the unevenness of the road, the pits and protrusions in it stood out in strangely sharp relief. The clods of earth in the ploughed fields looked like clots of cotton taken out of old beds and strewn about to air. The *babul* and other thorny wild bushes on the embankments of the fields again clawed at the sides of our car. We were again driving between furrowed fields across dry, pebbly beds of streams, and through stones and ruts. The sky had turned grey-black and in the darkness of the earthy night trees and shrubs looked darker still and took weird shapes. Where we had seen villages in the day we now saw pinpoints of saffron gold lights. But even these served to bring the day-time scenes back to my mind.

GANGADHAR
GADGIL

modern Marathi criticism

some recent trends

EXAMINATION of critical views and trends is both a difficult and a dangerous undertaking. Critics are sensitive and polemical beings and it is not always easy to keep track of their subtle reasoning and the nice differences in their viewpoints. Anybody who tries to deal with their work is, therefore, bound to be faced with the outcry that somebody has been misrepresented and, worse still, that somebody else has been ignored. Perhaps my only qualification for this task is that I have been more or less inured to their attacks by fairly long experience.

Having undertaken such a task, one can take an accountant's view of it and mention every name and put against it the carefully and impartially calculated sum of contributions to its credit. I propose to do nothing of that sort. For having taken the risk, it is futile to be cautious. Moreover apart from being unfair to the reader, it will not quite serve the purpose in view. I shall, therefore, be stating the broad trends and tenor of discussion, mentioning very few names and those too when I cannot help it. I shall try to be fair but certainly not impartial, for I believe that to be impossible.

The basis of theoretical criticism in Marathi has for long been the Rasa theory formulated in ancient times by Bharat and other Sanskrit scholars. According to this theory, the content of literature is Rasa. Rasa is emotion. It is, however, not emotion as we experience it in ordinary life.

It is emotion carried to a level where it can yield aesthetic enjoyment. The objects, characters, incidents, etc. portrayed in literature are the means of creating Rasa. Alankaras i.e. various figures of speech and rhetorical devices help in creating Rasa and also embellish a literary work. The Rasa theory has classified Rasas. Each primary emotion gives rise to a separate Rasa. The effort of Marathi has been to provide a correct statement of the Rasa theory, by no means an easy task in view of the variety of possible interpretations of classical Sanskrit texts. Moreover different Sanskrit scholars have contributed to the development of the theory. They have also propounded alternative and supplementary theories. To weave these into a coherent pattern is a formidable task. Somebody is therefore always getting up and telling somebody else that he has misunderstood Bharat or Bhamaha and that he meant something quite different.

Marathi critics have had to face a number of issues in the context of the Rasa theory. One is 'What is it that makes a Rasa, and therefore literature, enjoyable?' Different explanations have been offered. One is that literature enables us to experience emotions without losing consciousness of the fact that they are not our emotions. Thus emotions are experienced with a certain degree of detachment, which makes them enjoyable. But what is it that drives us to experience other people's emotions?

What is the nature of the detachment with which we enjoy them? How does it make an emotional experience enjoyable? The explanation has left these questions unanswered. A particularly vexed problem has been that of enjoyment derived from a tragedy. The explanations offered by western writers have been considered and bandied about. Some attempts have been made to provide more adequate answers to the problem. The whole discussion has not been really very fruitful. One really does not know why this problem is separated from the general problem of enjoyment derived from literature.

Prof. N. S. Phadke has put forward the view that literature enables us to re-experience our past experiences. This yields aesthetic enjoyment. It is no doubt true that we experience something new in the context of our past experiences. But that does not mean that all that we do when we read literature is to re-experience our past experiences. A work of art, moreover, is not the only means of doing this and all past experiences are not enjoyable. In fact the explanation is so patently inadequate that we can pass it by. It only needs to be added that this view has not been put forward in the context of the Rasa theory.

Prof. K. N. Watve has made a painstaking effort to examine the psychological foundations of the Rasa theory. He has tried to relate the Rasa theory to the analysis and classification of emotions made by modern psychology. While one must give credit to Prof. Watve for his painstaking effort, one cannot help feeling his analysis does not help us in understanding the nature of aesthetic experience.

A problem that has been discussed *ad nauseam* is that of the number of Rasas. It is only the basic emotions that can become Rasas. Some have put the number at seven, while others, more generous by temperament, have raised it to ten. The

height of pedantry was reached when a poet prepared a statement in Sanskrit (so that it should carry more weight) propounding the view that in modern times a new Rasa called the 'Prakshobha Rasa' has come into existence. By Prakshobha Rasa is meant the revolutionary urge for social change. Every age has its new experiences which are embodied in its literature. It is a nice psychological issue whether that involves an addition to the number of primary emotions—an issue on which I am not competent to express an opinion. But I fail to understand the usefulness of adding to the number of Rasas in this manner. How does it help in the appreciation or evaluation of literature? In fact the whole process of classifying and determining the number of Rasas appears to me meaningless. For a literary work is a mixture of a large variety of emotional experiences that defy classification. Besides, the number and nature of Rasas contained in a literary work provide no criterion of its merit.

Of late, the Rasa theory has been severely criticized. It has been pointed out that the content of a work of art is not just emotions but experiences. An experience has a certain structure and 'meaning'—a point that is not taken into account by the Rasa theory. Objects, characters, incidents, etc. in a literary work are not just the means of rousing an emotion. They are integral parts of the experiences it contains. Similarly the role of imagery in literature is not just decorative. The Rasa theory, moreover, gives the impression that an author rouses emotions that are already there. The author is thus reduced to the position of a craftsman. The fact that he creates something new is ignored. An author, however, is above all a creator. What he creates is a pattern—an order. A literary work can be judged only in terms of the pattern it embodies. Because it does not take into account the existence of this pattern, this 'meaningful' order, the Rasa

theory fails to provide a criterion for evaluating a work of art. To my knowledge there has been no convincing refutation of this criticism of the *Rasa* theory.

Apart from the *Rasa* theory, there are basically two viewpoints about literature that are held by Marathi critics. Both these views have naturally a western origin, although our traditional attitudes towards literature and life have been blended with them. On the one hand there is the view that literature expresses moral and social 'truths'. Literature, according to this view, has a purpose. The purpose is to widen human sympathies and understanding, to raise the moral tone of society, to make possible social happiness and progress. This view fits in well with our traditional attitudes. Marathi literature has been for centuries devotional and humanitarian in character. Our great saint poets were moved to write poetry by a love for and devotion to God and sympathy and compassion for fellow human beings. Even in modern times, some of our great writers have derived their inspiration from nationalism and movements for social reform. Social and political issues have been almost the sole preoccupation of our intellectuals and our people for more than a century. Naturally everything is judged in terms of its usefulness to society. It is not surprising, therefore, that quite a large number of writers and critics have looked upon literature as a means of social reform and progress. Those who hold this view have arrived at it by many different roads, so that there are considerable differences of opinion among them. Among them are such different people as the sanatanists (i.e. orthodox Hindus), liberals and humanitarians, Gandhites and, of course, the Marxists.

AS opposed to these are the aesthetes—those who believe that art is an end in itself. This view has met with serious resis-

tance, it being foreign to our traditions and inconsistent with the main preoccupations of our society. It is, however, interesting to note that it is more consistent with the critical standpoint of Sanskrit scholars to which Marathi critical writing owes so much. In spite of this resistance, this view has taken root in Maharashtra and it has become particularly influential in the last few years. Many important writers and critics subscribe to it. Moreover it has been presented in the form of a rigorously worked out aesthetic theory, and its implications in the context of various literary problems have been carefully analysed. In my opinion, those who hold this view have made significant contributions in the field of applied criticism. This unfortunately cannot be said of the other point of view and of those who hold it.

It is difficult to say whether one can include Prof. Waman Malhar Joshi among those who hold the first point of view. He was the doubting Thomas of Marathi criticism and never committed himself to any particular point of view. At one place he has said that he would ordinarily subscribe to the view that art is for the sake of art. He would not, however, allow an artist to do moral damage to society. An artist ought to practise his art within the four corners of certain moral values. This statement of his itself implies that what an artist conveys through a work of art are certain moral principles. A literary work, therefore, is to be judged in terms of the quality of the truths which it presents. This really puts him in the first group of critics, although he himself would not have quite agreed to that. Prof. Joshi was not noted for any consistently and elaborately developed viewpoint. What he was noted for was his sober and valuable contribution to the discussion of the various issues that arose from time to time. Particularly notable is his contribution to the discussion of the *Rasa* theory and of the relation between social conditions

and artistic creation. He would always raise fundamental questions and carry the discussion of any issue to a high level.

According to the sanatanists the purpose of life is self-realization through devotion to God and one's duty. The value of anything is to be determined in terms of this purpose. Behind this point of view is an elaborate philosophical structure. An aesthetic of literature is, however, not a part of this structure.

The Gandhian view of art, in so far as there is any, is very similar to Leo Tolstoy's view. That is why Sane Guruji, an ardent Gandhite and a saint of modern Maharashtra, approvingly translated Tolstoy's book on art into Marathi. He once expressed the view that every age has its great man. The authors should make it the mission of their lives to express the philosophy of the great man of their age. Gandhiji being the great man of our times, authors should regard it as their mission to express his philosophy of life. In spite of the great respect that he and both Gandhiji commanded in Maharashtra, authors did not take this viewpoint seriously for obvious reasons.

PROF. M. V. Rajadhyaksha and Mrs.

Kusumavati Deshpande form a little group of their own. We shall call them humanitarians if for no better reason than because they often refer to the humanity of a writer and judge him in terms of that humanity. What they mean by this term 'humanity' is not quite clear. At times it appears to mean sympathy for and understanding of other human beings. At other times, it means the quality of being human, which is an excellent example of a circular definition. In one of her articles, Mrs. Deshpande says that it is because of our common humanity that a writer can write about other people's lives and a reader can enjoy a work of art. This, too, appears to be a case of being more specific without being less vague.

Both of them are keenly aware of the relation between social conditions and artistic creation. They appear to expect that an author should have a deep awareness of the social conditions and problems of his times. One finds traces of Marxist influence in their thought. Yet one would not call them Marxists.

Mrs. Deshpande has at one point attempted a definition of beauty. The basic human impulse, she says, is the urge to live. All human activity including that of artistic creation is the product of this urge. Human ideas of beauty are related to this urge. Beauty is that which gives, more than anything else, the joy of having lived fully. Realization of beauty is what can happen only to an individual. But he can realize it only in the context of his cultural heritage which is a social product. Realization of beauty, therefore, depends upon the relationship between objective reality, the individual and the society.

'The urge to live' and 'the joy of having lived fully' are spacious terms which can mean anything. Moreover if beauty is that which gives the joy of having lived fully, what is the distinction between a work of art and a game of tennis? One also wishes that Mrs. Deshpande had clarified the relationship between conceptions of beauty and social conditions. Prof. Rajadhyaksha's views appear to be similar to those of Mrs. Deshpande although he has not cared to elaborate them anywhere. It is unfair to judge both these critics in terms of their theoretical contribution. In that field they have little to offer. Both of them have written competently in the field of applied criticism and have a place of their own there.

THERE are many critics who have covert or overt sympathies with the Marxist standpoint. It is Prof. D. K. Bedekar alone, however, who has presented it elaborately and consistently and also applied it to the Marathi writing of the last ten years.

Prof. Bedekar draws a distinction between the form and content of literature. Beauty is the attribute of the form of literature and aesthetic standards can be applied only to that form. Literature has to be judged, however, on the basis of not only its form but also its content. The content of literature consists of the author's view of reality. The artist like the scientist is engaged in trying to understand reality. The only difference between them is that they perceive it in different ways. The reality which the artist perceives is the social reality. The basic social reality in a capitalist society is class conflict, exploitation and the suffering resulting therefrom. An author who perceives this social reality fully and in all its complexity is a greater artist than others. Such an author, while being bitterly aware of human suffering, is essentially an optimist. For he knows that the exploitation and suffering under capitalism are the result of its internal contradictions which will lead ultimately to its overthrow.

From this standpoint Prof. Bedekar has criticized the new writing in Marathi. He concedes that the new writing reflects with fidelity and intensity the tensions of our social system. Hence the harsh and brutal frankness. Hence the broken images and the obscurity. What he is critical of is the cynicism and the isolationist individualism which he finds in new writing. The new writers, he points out, are of middle class origin and the above-mentioned qualities are the product of middle class consciousness. The middle class origin of these writers comes in the way of their fully grasping the social reality. They have a faith in bourgeois values. They believe in an individuality which is torn out of its social context. They want a freedom which in the nature of things is not possible. They feel baffled and lost because of the social tensions that tear at them. They do not realize that a new social order that will be free from all these social tensions is just round

the corner. They do not realize that the fulfilment of an individual lies in being in harmony with social organization and processes.

This in brief is Prof. Bedekar's standpoint. There is nothing new about it. It is the standard Marxist theorizing with some modifications. As regards Prof. Bedekar's distinctive contribution it lies in the application of the Marxist theory to the Marathi literature of the last ten years.

The viewpoint of Prof. Bedekar has been vigorously criticized by the protagonists of new writing. The criticism runs along two lines. On the one hand, it tries to refute the view of reality on which it is based. On the other hand, it questions Prof. Bedekar's analysis of the nature of literature.

They have pointed out that the Marxist interpretation of history is not valid. History has not quite followed the course chalked out for it by Karl Marx. In the advanced capitalist countries, there is not more of exploitation but less of it. They are not suffering from severe unemployment and poverty as Marx predicted. The power of the state in these countries has on the whole not been used for furthering the interests of the capitalist class as against the labourers. The revolution has not taken place in the advanced capitalist countries but rather in backward countries with feudal economies. Moreover socialist societies have not really solved many of the basic social problems. In fact some of these have taken an aggravated form in the socialist societies. Once the Marxist view of social reality is denied, Prof. Bedekar's criticism of new writing in Marathi also collapses.

The second line of criticism involves the denial of the kind of the relationship between social reality and individual consciousness that is posited by Prof. Bedekar. It has been thus pointed out that Prof. Bedekar's conception of the structure of human consciousness is oversimplified and

inadequate. It is pointed out that there does not exist a dichotomy between form and content as is claimed by Prof. Bedekar. The form of a work of art is the principle of its organization. It determines the kind of order which an artist can create. The form of a work of art is not something superimposed on an order which is essentially logical in character. It is a different kind of order which has a different 'meaning'. This means that the contents of literature and science are not identical in character.

It is pointed out that there is only one dependable method of understanding reality and that is the scientific method. If therefore an artist is engaged in understanding reality in some other way, he is really wasting his time. For his results will never be dependable and will have to be checked up by the application of scientific method. This view thus reduces a writer to the position of an inferior scientist.

It moreover does not square with the facts of experience. We do not look upon the statements of a writer in the same way as we look upon those of a scientist. A reader often finds that he does not agree with the views expressed in a literary work and yet he feels that it is a great work of art. Calling it a work of art does not commit him to the views expressed in it. If on the other hand one accepts the work of a scientist as good or valid science, one is committed to accept its conclusions. This means that a literary work is not to be judged by the validity of views expressed in it. Some other criterion has to be applied when evaluating it.

If there is nothing basically new in Prof. Bedekar's critical standpoint, its criticism also runs along familiar lines. What is significant about this controversy is, however, not its contribution to thought but rather its relevance to the new literary trends in Marathi.

As against the view of the different critics

mentioned so far is the view of the aesthetes. Those who hold this view believe that art is an end in itself. It has no other purpose except that of giving aesthetic satisfaction.

To Prof. Phadke goes the credit of being the first critic and writer to express and propagate this view in Marathi. He has been expressing it in essays and speeches for more than thirty years. Yet it cannot be said that he has faced the fundamental problems that arise in the context of this view. An artist, according to him, creates beauty which gives aesthetic satisfaction. He has, however, never quite attempted a satisfactory answer to the question 'what is beauty?' Nor has he analysed the nature of aesthetic satisfaction or joy. If one were to judge by his writing, he has mixed up entertainment with aesthetic enjoyment. In his critical writings, his main preoccupation has been literary technique. Now if a work of art is a creation which emerges from the subconscious as an organic whole, technique in the usual sense can have no place in the process of creation. This, however, is an issue which Prof. Phadke has never faced.

Prof. R. S. Jog is another critic who belongs to the camp of the aesthetes. He also believes that what an artist creates is beauty which gives aesthetic joy. In his book *Soundaryashodha ani Anandabodha*, he has examined some of the attempts made by western critics to define beauty. He has also tried to analyse the nature of aesthetic joy. It is a serious and painstaking effort. His analyses of beauty and of aesthetic joy, however, do not quite hang together. His whole treatment also lacks a certain logical rigour.

Prof. W. L. Kulkarni is another critic who belongs to the same camp. According to him what an artist creates is a pattern, an order. The reader derives aesthetic joy when he perceives this pattern. The pattern

is an organization of experiences. This organization is created by transforming ordinary experiences into imaginative experiences. What a writer expresses through this organization of experiences are emotional truths which in some way are different from logical truths. A literary work is to be judged, therefore, on the basis of the success of the writer in lifting ordinary experiences to the plane of imagination. It is to be judged also by the quality of the patterns and emotional truths embodied in it.

Prof. Kulkarni has not attempted any systematic and elaborate exposition of his critical viewpoint. Nor has he faced the various basic issues that arise in the context of his viewpoint. He has not quite faced the problem whether beauty is subjective. Nor has he explained what he means by emotional truths. It would be also interesting to have from him a description of the process by which ordinary experiences are lifted to the plane of imagination. His chief concern is with literary criticism proper than with an aesthetic of literature. *Characterization, Romanticism and Classicism, Autobiography as an Art Form, Titles and New Writing, Temptations of a Novelist, About the Historical Novel, Literature for Children*: these are some of the titles of his critical essays. They indicate the kind of problems he is really interested in and also the wide range of his interests. The problems he is interested in are really those that face the writer engaged in the practice of his art and the discriminating reader who is enjoying a book. What is required for dealing with these problems is not a logical theory of literature, but rather a refined sensibility—a discriminating and catholic taste. These Prof. Kulkarni certainly has.

THE most outstanding among the aesthetes, and in fact among all Marathi critics, is Mr. B. S. Mardhekar. He died recently

leaving behind him distinguished work both in the field of poetry and criticism. He alone among the Marathi critics has constructed a complete theory of aesthetics. In constructing it he has displayed in full measure the analytical acumen, the insight and the logical rigour in thinking which is required for dealing with fundamental problems of art and criticism.

According to him an author creates beauty. Beauty is the attribute of a work of art. Anything is beautiful if it gives rise to an organization of sensations (in case of visual arts and music) or emotional experiences (in the case of literature) into a rhythmic pattern. The interrelations of the different elements in the pattern are those of harmony, contrast and balance. Sensations or emotional experiences are capable of a psychological, an aesthetic and a logical organization. It is possible that a group of sensations can be arranged into an order which is logical and aesthetic at the same time. Yet the two kinds of orders are basically distinct.

Perception of the aesthetic order or beauty gives rise to a specific aesthetic emotion. Emotions ordinarily experienced are purposive. They are means to certain biological ends. The specific aesthetic emotion on the other hand is an end in itself. Mardhekar has made out a very elaborate logical case to prove the existence of a specific aesthetic motion. This has been necessary because the specific aesthetic emotion is the very cornerstone of his theory. Moreover he is aware that critics like Richards have denied that any such thing exists. He has attempted a very cogent reply to Richards in an appendix to his book *Soundarya ani Sahitya*. I am not really competent to pronounce a verdict on these slippery psychological issues. But one feels convinced by his argument that critics of aestheticism are very far from proving that a specific aesthetic emotion does not exist.

The discussion of the medium of a work of art forms an important part of his theory. In this discussion, he draws a distinction between medium and material. According to him sensations (in case of visual arts and music) and emotional experiences (in the case of literature) are the media of art. Stone or paint or language, on the other hand, are just the materials of art. Much of the difficulty in defining beauty arises because the material of a work of art is mistaken to be its medium. This discussion of the media of art is regarded as one of Mardhekar's important contributions to aesthetics.

Mardhekar does not attach much importance to the problem of communication. He dismisses the problem with the cryptic statement that any discussion of art presupposes that communication has taken place.

In the light of his theoretical analysis, Mardhekar expresses the view that an art is pure if it is concerned with the organization of one kind of sensations (*e.g.* auditory or visual). Literature is an impure art because it organizes all kinds of sensations. This, according to him, involves a lateral distribution of mental energy which reduces vertical penetration. Literature is an impure art also because its sensory impact is not direct but through images, etc. Literature, he says, is tainted by the traffic of the world.

HIS theory leads him inevitably to examine the forms of literature. The usual classification of literary works into tragedies and comedies, prose and poetry, etc. does not appear to him aesthetically significant. In this context he draws a distinction between form of literature and form in literature. The above, he says, are forms of literature. Forms in literature are the kinds of organizations of emotional experiences created by literature. It is the latter that

are significant in appreciating and evaluating a work of art.

In the course of his discussion of form, Mardhekar refutes the Aristotelian conception of form. He points out that, if the Aristotelian conception is carried to its logical conclusion, biographies and histories will also have to be regarded as works of art. Moreover, form in the Aristotelian sense is possessed not only by a complete work of art but also by a part of a work of art.

From his theory, he derives a criterion of judging a literary work. The greatness of a literary work depends upon the depth of emotional experiences it contains and the quality and complexity of their aesthetic organization. The two are not really separate criteria. For the deeper the emotional experience, the greater are the possibilities of aesthetic organization.

This inadequate account of Mardhekar's theory may give the impression that he has not faced certain issues that arise out of his theory. But this really is not the case. A consciousness of the basic issues involved is, in fact, the distinguishing quality of his work.

Many disagree with Mardhekar's theory. At the moment some serious thinkers are questioning both his premises and his logic. The points of dispute will be obvious to anyone familiar with the controversies in the field of aesthetics. In any case, we shall not go into them here. But the main point is not that Mardhekar's theory has given rise to a lot of controversy. What really matters is that Mardhekar has for the first time made Marathi critics aware of the philosophical and psychological problems that have to be faced when formulating a theory of literature. He has set an example and a standard in the grasp of problems and the subtlety and logical rigour in reasoning. It is no longer possible for any serious critic to indulge in the poetic nonsense that some times passed for literary criticism in Marathi till very recently.

Apart from these main issues and viewpoints, there have been other subjects and issues that have interested Marathi critics from time to time. One of them has been the issue of realism. Realism came to be accepted as a literary value especially after the first world war. An author was expected to hold a mirror to life. His themes were expected to be probable and representative of contemporary life. The authors who wrote about the life of the labourers and the peasants were regarded as having a greater sense of reality. The acceptance of this value no doubt had a certain healthy effect on Marathi literature. It widened its scope. At the same time, it created shoddy ideas about literary excellence and let loose quite a flood of tears and pious indignation in the world of Marathi literature. Realism as a literary value is, however, now being questioned. Another issue of perennial interest has been 'obscenity in literature.' The obscurity of new writing is also a problem that has evoked considerable interest for

time. The attitudes to these issues are determined by the basic approaches of different critics to literature. As I have already dealt with these basic approaches, I shall not discuss here the different views on these and other subjects.

The reader must have noticed that literary criticism in Marathi owes much to critical writing in English. Many of the controversies may appear to be pale echoes of similar controversies in the west. This in fact is the case in all fields of intellectual activity. There is nothing inherently wrong in this. It is an inevitable stage in our cultural growth. What is important is not that we have borrowed from abroad but rather that we have assimilated foreign ideas and thoughts. They have struck root in our intellectual soil and have been adapted to our traditions and circumstances. We no doubt must strive to make our own contribution to culture and thought. But for this what is necessary is more and not less of this wholesome borrowing.

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B. S. MARDHEKAR

identification

an element in "largeness of soul" in literature

'Deep thinking is attainable only by a man of deep feeling.'

'For a thing at the moment is but the thing of the moment; it must be taken up into the mind, diffuse itself through the whole multitude of shapes and thoughts, not one of which it leaves untinged, between (not one of) which and it some new thought is not engendered.'

COLERIDGE

IN the second part of this essay, I have developed the view that if a writer is to produce good literature he must remain unflaggingly sincere to his original experiences. This two-fold sincerity, the nature of which I have tried to make clear, is the first condition of success in literature. It is, however, not the only condition of success. The second condition is that the writer must have 'identified' himself with the object of those original experiences of his to which he is trying to remain true. The value of the writer's work will vary with the extent to which he has identified himself with the object of his experience.

One of the reasons for the poor quality of much of contemporary Marathi literature is the evident inability of many writers and poets to achieve such complete identification. There is a very close connection between literary identification and sincerity—especially the sincerity presupposed in creative writing, and I am considering them separately merely for the convenience of exposition. I have already said that one of the main reasons why a

poet or a writer deserts sincerity is that he does not make a determined effort to clarify his original experience. The more the writer or the poet seeks to make his experiences clear and distinct the more inevitably will he be led to identify himself completely with the objects of his experience. Conversely, to put the same thing in a slightly different way, the larger the measure in which the ability for identification with the objects of experience is brought to bear in a particular case, the more clearly and distinctly will be revealed, in all probability, all the minute threads which compose the original experience. Thus though there is no necessary connection between literary identification and the sincerity presupposed in writing, the two are nevertheless interdependent, and where the capacity for such identification is present, the temptation to break faith with one's experience is generally absent.

Before I proceed to describe the nature of 'literary identification' I think it is necessary to put the reader on guard regarding one point. The identification relevant in this

discussion is the identification by the author (or inhering in the author) and not the identification by or inhering in the reader or the spectator. Failure to distinguish between the identification involved in appreciating a literary work and the identification involved in creating one has led to some confusion in the views of many critics. I shall not go into further details here, but it seems necessary to point out that while the writer's experience which is characterised by identification culminates in creative writing, the identification which the reader brings to bear results in his creating from a piece of writing such an experience (characterised by identification). While the writer stretches his hand from identification to literary experience, the reader starting from a given arrangement of words and phrases arrives at identification. The proper analysis of the nature of these two different acts of identification and their relation to each other is by itself an independent problem which must be taken notice of by any theory of literature which aspires to be complete.

THE second thing which one must bear in mind about identification is that it is not of the nature of inert or passive contemplation but is essentially dynamic, and in virtue of its dynamism is ceaselessly drawn towards the goal of literary embodiment. The identification which is destined to assume a literary form contains as an essential constituent of it an inherent tendency to express this experience in the medium of words so that in the absence of such a tendency it will cease to be what it is. The current ideas based on the view that the original intense experience which involved identification is different and removed from the poet's or the writer's mental state at the actual time of writing have their origin in Shelley's theory of poetry which was largely suggested by Plato's writings. They are, however, far from being

scientific and their criticism by the Italian philosopher Croce, though not complete, does point in the right direction.

We have to consider here the nature of such dynamic identification, i.e. an identification eager and striving to assume a literary form. Such an identification is a state of the poet's or the writer's mind which is of the nature of an organic whole. If, however, we look at it from the psychological point of view, we can distinguish mainly two aspects in it—cognitive identification and emotional identification. Let us take up the cognitive aspects first. If a writer is to write about the everchanging events and objects with which the universe surrounds him on all sides, he must first be aware of them. There are two stages involved in such intellectual awareness of the world. The first is the stage of sensations or sensuous acquaintance with objects, and the second consists of the thoughts which are associated with, and therefore stimulated by, these sensations. Thought, however abstract it may be, is ultimately rooted in sensuous knowledge. Though thought does not always carry a trace of that sensuous knowledge from which it has developed through study, modification or repetition, such sensuous knowledge is always implicitly contained in any thought. A writer must possess the capacity to be intensely aware of the impressions which the natural processes and actions and objects presented to him make on his mind by affecting his various sense organs like the eyes, the ears, the nose, the skin, etc. Now, as in the case of the other terms which form the technical apparatus of literary criticism, an exact and reliable definition of the term 'intense awareness' can be given only by a writer. Nevertheless, a critic may be able to give at least a broad outline of its nature and especially its characteristic mark. The proper consummation of the sensuous knowledge enjoyed by a writer does not lie in a perfect apprehension of the sensations which form it.

This is the ideal of other artists. The fulfilment of the intense awareness of the writer lies rather in the rich variety of thoughts stimulated by various sensations. It is characteristic of a great painter that the sight of the yellow colour of ripe leaves should make him wholly absorbed just in that particular yellow tint. But that the yellow colour should suggest to the mind the emotion of respect for 'ripeness,' and pity and frustration and misery and sublime contentment and a host of other thoughts which should fill the mind and overcome it with some ineffable and aching sense of fulness—it is in this that the intense awareness of a writer finds its fulfilment. In the case of other artists, the very basis of their craftsmanship lies in a clear and distinct apprehension of the most minute and subtle shades of quality revealed by those sensations which determine the respective fields of their arts, and to discover such variety is their goal. But it is otherwise with a poet or a writer. If he, like any other artist, is sensitive to the subtle qualities he receives it is all for the good. But the quality of his writing depends not on the variety of sensations revealed by it but on the variety of thoughts suggested or stimulated by these sensations. It follows from this that the true test of whether a writer has identified himself with the sensuous content of his experience or not will lie in the thoughts into which his sensuous experience has developed.

Now though the mental life of an individual embraces an immense variety of sensations, the same sensation does not generally recur, and probably cannot recur, in an exactly identical interval and external context. It can be said then that the greater the multiplicity and variety of thoughts which a sensation can stimulate in a writer, the greater is his ability to identify with the sensuous content. Secondly, a number of distinct sensations go together to form an integrated experience or incident which

assumes the form of a literary work. The same external incident will affect our different sense-organs and stimulate different kinds of sensation in our mind. From this point of view one can say that the greater the variety of such sensations which can get fused and converge into a single organic thought in the writer's mind, the greater again is his capacity for identification with the sensuous content. When we commend any word with such a sensuous content found in any piece of writing as 'alive' we imply that it possesses such a twofold suggestiveness or fecundity. Briefly speaking, the characteristic mark of sensuous identification can be formulated by the dictum: 'One thought in many sensations and many thoughts in one sensation.'

The second stage of cognitive identification is intellectual identification (identification with thoughts). Some of these thoughts, of course, are the fruit of sensuous identification described above. They are not only stimulated by the actually experienced sensations but are also inextricably woven with them. The other kinds of thoughts (involved in intellectual identification), on the other hand, are the flowering of the organised and systematised collective consciousness of generations of men traversing centuries. To change a metaphor, one can say that such thoughts, after freeing themselves from the moorings of actual sensations, voyage through the vast seas of human speculation, and discarding metaphor altogether, one can say that such thoughts are so abstract that they are altogether empty of all actual sensuous content and possess a sensuous content only in an implicit form. Intellectual identification includes both thoughts stimulated by sensuous identification as well as abstract thoughts.

In the above discussion, 'thought' has been used in a rather comprehensive sense which calls for some explanation. In the first place, I have included emotions in 'thought' and for this reason: Particular

emotions like love, hatred, joy, jealousy, envy, etc. which, either individually or collectively, from the subject matter of a literary work spring from the interaction between various events and also interaction between events and persons (which, of course, include poets and writers). But it is obvious that before such concrete particular emotions can attain the status of the subject matter of literature they must have been thought about—must have been made the object of thought by the writer. Now, it is extremely important to remember here that the emotion which accompanies the writer's or poet's mental state of identification is quite distinct from the complex of emotions which forms the object of the writer's identification. It is extremely desirable that there should be no confusion between the particular emotions which form the subject matter of a literary work and that other unique and indescribable emotion which is engendered in the writer's mind by an intense intellectual contemplation of the totality of these emotions. When a writer is describing the emotional attitudes of two persons to each other, he is not experiencing their emotions; he is rather experiencing the contrast or harmony or other interrelations which are revealed to the thoughts which spring from the contemplation of the many elements which together make up these emotions. In the same way I include in 'thought' what we generally refer to as the 'imaginary'. For however imaginary the theme of a plot may be, it assumes a literary form only when it is developed by thought.

NOW, what is the criterion of such intellectual identification? It is to some extent similar to the criterion for sensuous identification. If we find that the writing of a writer reveals not merely a grasp of the broad features of the thought but, going beyond it, develops a variety of the most

delicate shades of meaning implied in it then we can safely infer that the writer has identified himself with the thought. It is in the insight into the various relations of harmony and disharmony, interdependence and similarity and contrast which relate the plenitude of the subtle shades of meanings implied in a single thought or, briefly, in the appreciation of the total internal rhythm of the thought that the real test of the writer's intellectual identification lies. It is not so much in a grasp of the logical relations between various thoughts as in an insight into the harmonious intrinsic rhythm of a thought that the poetic power of a poet finds its fruition. But to carry intellectual identification to perfection a writer has to go even beyond this. When a thought not only reveals its own internal rhythm but, going beyond itself, brings in its trail a crowd of other relevant thoughts, harmonious or contrasting with itself, and when the writer's mind discovers in the organised whole of these thoughts its intrinsic rhythm and harmony—only then can one say that the state of literary identification has attained perfection. The more wide and comprehensive the circumference of the waves of thoughts which a stimulating thought provokes in the mind of a writer, the greater will be the depth of his writings. But a further discussion of this point will lead us to the problem of 'large-souledness' in literature.

So much then for the cognitive aspect of literary identification. About the emotional aspect of literary identification one need not add anything more. I have already described above the state of the writer's mind when it attains perfect literary identification. It is a characteristic mark of literary identification that the mind should be in a sort of passionate trance. Such a mental state does leave its peculiar impress on the writing which can be immediately recognised. For this emotion does not express itself mechanically in lifeless strings of

sweet words which can be stamped as 'poetic' nor does it resort to impassioned rhetoric. Its passion, its energy find their fulfilment in bending the poet's mastery over words to its own purpose.

It will be difficult to say how one can attain this sort of literary identification. Different writers follow different paths for attaining it, and the same writer may, on different occasions, succeed in attaining it by following different ways. Sometimes the spectacle of some event may affect the mind of a poet with such a severe impact that he becomes identified with it immediately and exclaims (like Valmiki) *'Manisada pratistham tvamagamah sascatih samah Yatrauncamunat ekam avadhih kamamohitam'*.

On other occasions he may be lost in thinking about the event for days before he succeeds in attaining such identification. If

we compare the thoughts and emotions of the writer to a huge rock which conceals within it the sacred stream of words, then it may be said that while sometimes it is a thunderbolt falling from the heavens which explodes this rock and gives instantaneously a vent to this concealed stream, at other times it is an incessant dripping of thoughts which develops a crack in this rock and liberates the stream within. But in any case just as one whose heart does not leap with joy at the sight of colours will be unable to attain the peculiar identification proper to a painter, anyone who has not the gift of an intense and passionate awareness of the sensations and thoughts and emotions which form the stuff of everyday life will always remain a stranger to literary identification.

(An extract from *Vangmayeen Mahatmata* translated by M. P. REGE)

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D. K. BEDEKAR

freedom and the writer

a declaration of faith

THE writer, as an artist, must be free both as a rational individual and as a person possessing a concrete personality. This I believe, as an artist, to be a faith which every artist must possess, and it also ought to be a goal which human society must strive to realise if art and human existence as a whole are to develop their full potentialities. I shall attempt to bring out the implications of this affirmation.

What is the basis of our faith in the freedom of the artist as an individual? Can we demand such freedom for artists qua artists? That would be, I think, both a presumptuous and an untenable claim. But, we can and must demand this freedom as *human individuals*, because all human beings ought to be free, that is free from arbitrary restraints.

This 'freedom from restraint' is vital for every human individual only in virtue of

his possession of *rationality*, because only our rationality makes us feel the restraints on our freedom. This freedom may not be fully attainable because the individual's own limitations act as restraints and also because other individuals put restraints on him. The history of human culture painfully shows that the individual has suffered restraints due to irrationality which afflicts his own mind; and also due to the irrationality of a social group of which he is a member. Nevertheless, we must affirm this *ideal* of 'freedom from restraint' for all human individuals, because they and they alone are rational beings.

Here, I may suggest a reference to the bees, who are not rational beings, but create for themselves a wonderful collective existence. We can admire the smooth working of the bee-hive but we cannot think of an individual bee desiring freedom. There is no feeling of restraint and no

aspiration for individual freedom in a bee, because it is not a rational being. The bees form a *collective* and not a *society* or *community* if we define the latter as a cooperative existence of rational beings.

Men, however, have evolved social forms of existence or community-life. To them this life is as natural and vital as freedom is. We may therefore say that freedom is vital for community existence, but both freedom and community life depend upon rationality and are concretely and simultaneously realisable only for human beings.

To return to the artist, his need for and right to freedom as an individual is in no way a special demand; unless of course, he chooses to ask for a specious and presumptuous privilege, which he thinks fit to deny to non-artists. But as I see it, no demand for freedom can be right which implies a denial of the same freedom to other human beings.

THERE is another aspect of freedom—the 'freedom of a *person*'. Can the artist rightly demand this special kind of freedom? When we think of human beings as individuals we do not concern ourselves with what is unique in each individual. But each individual is also a *person*, i.e. has a unique personality. And an artist is specially and keenly concerned with his own personality and also with the personality of others. This is something special that may differentiate the artists from the non-artists.

Now one can really say that the artist's work, being that of a creative person, involves his personality in a unique way. This is not the same thing as to say that the work of all non-artists does not entail involvement of their personalities in their respective functions. In fact, the work of a teacher, for instance, is vitally affected by his personality and this is true, in more or less degree, about all types of work in which human beings are engaged. All

work is, or at least ought to be, creative in some parts and routine in others. Even in artistic work, one may observe, there are only some moments when creative inspiration functions, and at others the artist executes, in drab routine, what he conceives in moments of inspiration.

It cannot be denied that the *degree* of involvement of personality in artistic work is greater than in almost all other types of work. And, therefore, 'freedom of person' is of great concern to the artist in his function as an artist.

What is then this personality of an artist? Here I may urge that the psychologist's concept of 'personality' may be useful in any discussion of the problem if we are to eschew vagueness and to avoid confusion between the diverse concepts of personality and individuality. The psychologists have explained how personality is a concrete product of an individual's maturing process. In this process the in-born uniqueness of an infant is integrated with his responses to his environment. The environment is mainly social. For instance, the acquisition of language and of trained aesthetic perception in the plastic arts is mainly a social process, realised in the family, the school, and other social institutions.

Artists and non-artists acquire their unique personalities in this process of maturation and socialization of their in-born equipment. It is this process which bestows upon every person his uniqueness as well as his capacity to assimilate particular experiences and to express himself in a social context. All self-expression or expression of one's own personality is, for the reasons given above, necessarily a social communication. Artistic creativity is such a self-expression and is therefore, in its very nature, a social communication.

In this context, the freedom of the artist as a person is the freedom not merely of non-restraint but of *power*. It is freedom

attained by acquisition of power through the maturation of the artist's personality. It is comparable to the freedom that comes to man through acquisition of control over natural phenomena due to scientific and technological progress. The artist's control over language, over media, materials and techniques, as well as the unique sweep of perceptions that he acquires through assimilation of his cultural heritage are all powers which bestow upon him this freedom.

This positive freedom has its inherent limitations. An Indian artist, for instance, who assimilates the heritage of his culture and acquires the freedom to express his personality through the Indian aesthetic traditions and techniques, suffers from the limitations of these very acquisitions. He is not free, one may say, to express himself in the Chinese or the European ways. Were he to aspire, however, to such a 'universal' freedom he would indeed be attempting to be untrue to his own concrete and unique personality. One may say, if he were to succeed in this attempt, he would necessarily fail as a true artist.

I shall conclude this note with an attempt to show that 'freedom from restraint of the artist as an *individual*' and 'freedom of expression of the artist as a *person*' are not two contradictory concepts of freedom. I submit that true freedom is

indivisible both as a concept and as a reality. This really follows from the fact that individuality and personality belong to the artist only as two aspects of his self-same being. The two aspects are not mutually antithetical and therefore the two 'freedoms' are really one Freedom.

It is of course true that, in the context of a particular cultural situation, one may have to lay more emphasis on the aspect of the individual's freedom from restraint or, alternately, on the other aspect of the functional freedom of a person with all its social concreteness and limitations. To combat the dangers of totalitarianism the former emphasis may be vitally necessary, while the latter would be necessary to meet a cultural crisis characterised by a false a-social adoration of the individual. Exclusive attention to either of these aspects of freedom is bound to breed dogmatism and partisanship and to divide the ranks of writers and critics.

This only means that the varying emphases can only be valid relative to varying social situations and to the consequent varying needs and objectives of literary criticism. But, in essence, the two aspects of freedom refer only to an indivisible freedom. Such a comprehensive concept of freedom alone can be of permanent value in any aesthetic theory, which claims to interpret the meaning of artistic creative activity to the artist and to the society of which the artist is a member.

PRABHAKAR PADHYE

Marathi journalism

its influence on literature

DURING the last ten or fifteen years the Marathi press has undergone a transformation which may be called revolutionary. It has commercialised journalism and produced a new class of readers. This has had tragic consequences for the moral tone of the Marathi press which was hitherto marked by a certain amount of idealism, and has affected the growth of Marathi literature which, in Maharashtra, was bound up with its press.

During the war, existing newspapers had a monopolistic kind of protection which enabled them to prosper beyond the expectations of even the optimistic. The War and the 'Quit India' movement provided both exciting news and avid readers. The war favoured conditions of monopoly and created a new kind of capitalistic class which dreamed of power. After independence some of the financial lords bought over papers sold by the departing British. They were not interested in the growth of journalism as such, but they prized the progress of their papers as instruments of commercial gain and political power. Journalism thus became a field of operation for big business which ruthlessly exploited it, regardless of the means used and the consequences. It adopted mass-

circulation techniques, opened crossword competitions and the like and created a new class of journalists which started believing that every person has his price.

This, of course, ensured efficiency and quantitative growth. Inefficient papers were either bought over or seen out of existence. More and varied news was published. News display improved strikingly. The papers had a full and flourishing look. And very soon the newspapers went beyond strictly news limits and started publishing magazine supplements. This had a disastrous effect on the weekly and monthly press, whose feeble foundations started caving in. They reduced the readers of the monthly and weekly press. They attracted them by offering a combination of news and magazine features and enlivening them by cartoons and illustrations which were beyond the capacity of the weekly press. They also cashed in on the habit of their readers to turn on the seventh day to the paper they had been reading for the other six days of the week.

The new commercialised papers had, of course, some notable achievements to their credit. They spread the habit of reading. They developed the political and social consciousness of the people. They

battered down some of the barriers between the urban and mofussil populations. They broadened the outlook of the people.

But they could not elevate the taste of the public. On the contrary, in their drive for mass circulation, they had to be 'popular', which inevitably meant depression of standards.

For the growth of Marathi literature and thought this has had terrible consequences. In Maharashtra the weekly and the monthly press had a glorious record. It did not merely contribute to literary growth; it aided the general national growth of the people. The Marathas lost their kingdom in 1818, but within fourteen years they had a scholar and a savant enlightening them through the columns of a Marathi weekly. Soon a number of other weeklies appeared. These incessantly debated the problems of political, social and religious growth of the people and afforded opportunities to the leaders of various schools of thought to come forth and argue their points of view, sometimes to the amusement but mostly to the enlightenment of the people. In fact the weekly, fortnightly and monthly press of the time became an inspiring instrument of a many-sided movement of growth and progress. Men like Bal Gangadharshastri Jambhekar, Bhau Mahajan, Lokahitawadi, Visnubuwa Brahmachari, Visnushastri Pandit, Krisnashashtri Chip-lunkar, Jyotiba Phule tended and nourished the press even as a warrior tends his sabre. This culminated in Visnushastri Chiplunkar's *Nibandhamala* which appeared as some kind of a phenomenon. In Visnushastri's hands modern Marathi attained a dignity, grace and power, the like of which was not seen before.

Visnushastri was immediately followed by a great line of literary and journalistic figures who simultaneously enriched the literature and journalism of Maharashtra. Chiplunkar, Agarkar, Tilak, Paranjpe, Kelkar, Khadilkar, A. B. Kolhatkar and

others were not only outstanding journalists but also great literary figures who, along with others, laid the foundations of modern Marathi literature. With the exception of A. B. Kolhatkar, they were all penmen of the weekly press. Their writings were not born of the haste and hustle of the daily. A. B. Kolhatkar had a genius for producing his best under stress, but his best, though enlivening and scintillating, was never of the order of the writings of the others.

Inspired by these savants the weekly and monthly journals of Maharashtra became virile organs of opinion and expression, stimulating not only the political thinking but also the literary activities of the province. They served to build a solid literary tradition, and this enabled a few journals devoted entirely to literature to come into existence and to survive.

LITERARY journals are nowhere (except perhaps in Japan), thriving affairs. Even in America they manage to exist with some difficulty. Conducting literary journals in Maharashtra has always been a precarious venture. But their contribution to the growth of literature and literary consciousness has been consistently notable. The appearance of every one of the more important of them had not only been a literary event but also produced its own band of writers who widened the frontiers of literature and became great literary figures in their own right. I will only mention *Ratnakar*, *Yeshwant*, *Pragati*, *Pratibha*, *Sameekshak* and *Abhiruchi*, to say nothing of Haribhau's *Karmanook* and Mitra's *Manoranjana*, which had the pioneering honour and excellence of a *Tatler*! *Ratnakar* presented N. S. Phadke, Anant Kane-kar, Kamalabai Tilak, Muktabai Dixit and others. *Yeshwant* will always be associated with the rise of Khandekar and Y. G. Joshi. *Pragati* projected the editor Shejwalkar

and Kshirsagar. *Pratibha* helped the genius of Vibhavari Shirurkar, Vishram Bedekar and Waman Chorghade to flourish. *Sameekshak* bristled with the critical talent of W. L. Kulkarni and the admirers of the humorist, P. L. Deshpande, will always remember *Abhiruchi*.

Today literary journals seem to have lost this power of creating new writers. There do exist journals like *Navbharat*, *Chhanda*, *Sahyadri* and *Satyakatha*, but they seem to be primarily preoccupied with the struggle for existence. Naturally they rely on established writers who have made their reputation elsewhere. Only *Satyakatha* looks like producing a new band of writers. A number of young writers such as Shankar Patil, Ranjit Desai, Kamal Desai, Vijaya Apte, Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni, Tara Wana-rase, A. N. Pednekar, D. M. Mirasdar and others regularly publish their work in *Satyakatha*—but hardly anyone of them has blazed a new trail. If *Satyakatha* has been able to approach the performance of the great journals of old it is more due to the devotion and perseverance of its editor, who also owns the press.

The daily press, with all its resources, has not been able to build a class of independent literary columnists who would contribute a leisurely essay once or twice a week. Mostly their weekly edition is manned and produced by the staff that works on the daily edition and however brilliant their calibre they cannot give to their weekly editions the level of an independent journal. For one thing their perspective is fashioned by the restrictive discipline of the daily press and secondly they do not have the leisure and time necessary. There is, for instance, the case of G. T. Madkholkar who contributed a regular column of criticism to the weekly *Maharashtra* and also wrote a series of novels but whose literary output suddenly dried up after he became the editor of the daily, *Tarun Bharat*.

AGAIN the post-war Marathi dailies have not tried to have a literary supplement of the type *Dnyanprakash* used to put out for years. The reason is, of course, the changed perspective in Maharashtra. The call is for mass circulation. The masses are not interested in fine debates and discussions of literary topics. This new need of mass circulation has progressively widened the gap between literature and journalism. It may have stimulated reading—but the reading is no more of literature or of serious articles. It is mainly of the newspaper—and where it goes beyond this it generally confines itself to detective tales and similar chaff.

Of course, the daily press can be said to have done one thing for the writers. In order to persuade good writers to contribute to their magazine section and to their occasional specials they offer comparatively good payment. This has served to raise the standard of remuneration—but it does not necessarily enrich the quality of the writing. On the contrary, it tends to depress the standard, since authors must write for popular consumption. A couple of monthlies had already been paying well, but they could not produce good writers. Nor did they care, because their anxiety was not to produce good writing but saleable writing. They were distinguished from the cheap pornographic journals only by the fact that they strove to be decent and conform to accepted norms.

Thus the advent of big business in Marathi journalism has been a curse rather than a blessing to Marathi literature. It has spread the habit of reading, offered better payment to writers and has definitely raised the journalist's standard of life. But it has not improved the quality of writing. It has killed the virility of the weekly press, which acted as a flowing fountain of literature. It has commercialised journalism, which tends to look upon the written word as a commodity of the order of cloth and oil.

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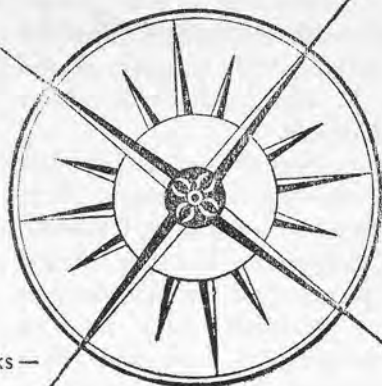
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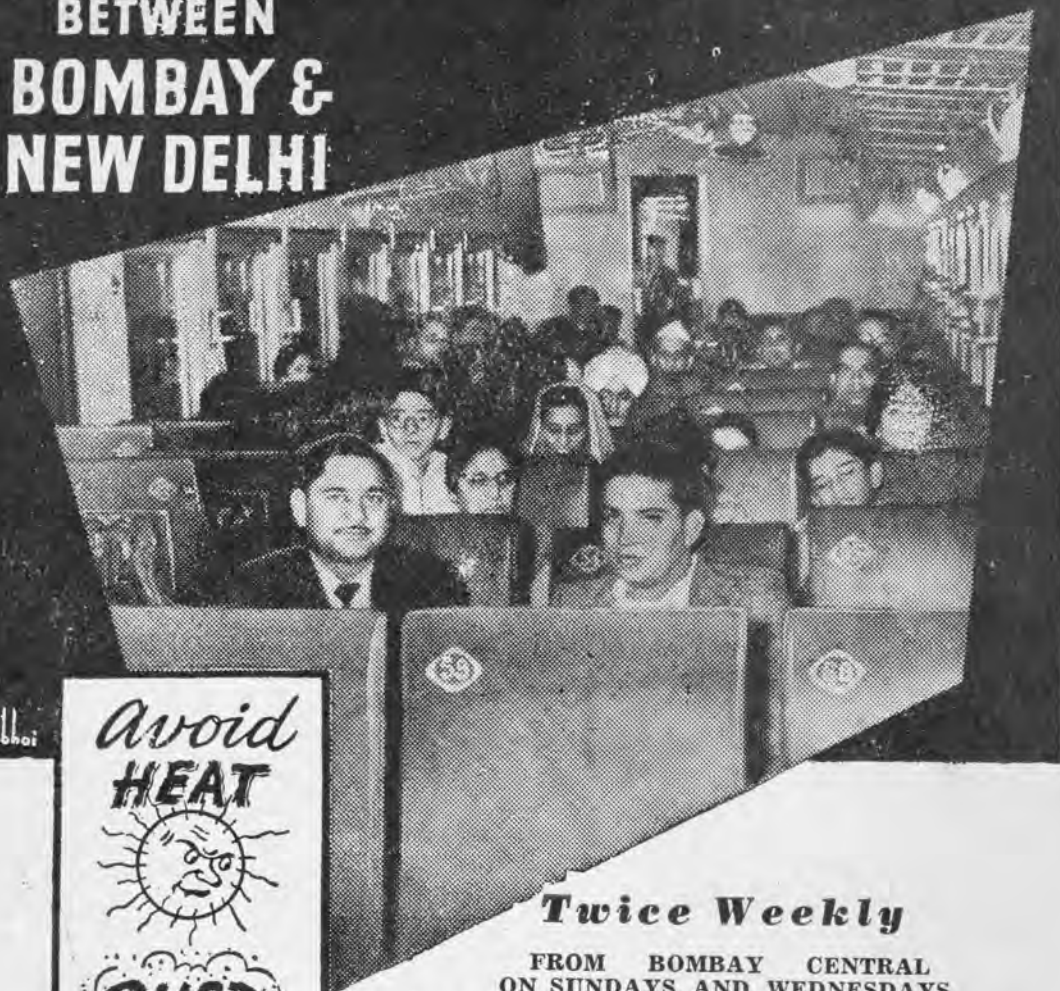
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