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a bi-monthly of arts and ideas

edited by: **NISSIM EZEKIEL**

june — july '57 vol. II no. 6



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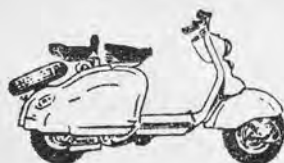
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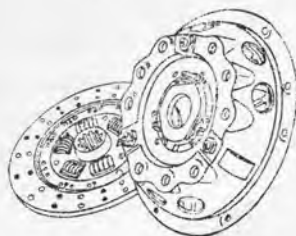
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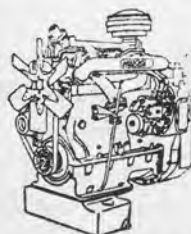
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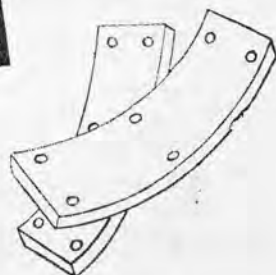
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QUEST

editorial

THE problem of State patronage of the arts and literature is as old as any arising out of the relationship between the individual and the ruling power. However altruistic may be its principles, the State, as it manifests itself today, is bound by the limitations of an ideology. It works through individuals who implicitly believe in the rightness of this ideology. It is the Government's natural duty to propagate this ideology. Even the artist and the writer who considers himself a free agent, responsible only to himself, has a particular view of life which may mature into loyalty to an ideology, however vague. When the State begins to patronise the creative artist it is bound to see whether its own ideology clashes with the other's. Moreover, in patronising the artist and the writer it tries to neutralise the force of conviction behind their ideas and their attitude towards particular socio-political patterns. Direct patronage by the Government creates a feeling of obligation in the artist's or writer's mind which may affect his integrity in a subtle way.

Apart from the principle of State patronage being questionable, the way it is employed in India demands critical examination. It is true that the Government has sponsored academics devoted to literature, art and drama, and placed handsome funds at their disposal. There is no doubt that, though the composition of these bodies is not entirely democratic, they are doing some good work in limited fields. Both the Central and the State Governments give annual awards to books and to dramatic performances, apart from subsidising cultural organisations and giving pensions to destitute artists and writers. And yet the way these honours are bestowed shows all the pitfalls of an un-compromising, bureaucratic set-up. Government officials, and, worst still, their wives dominate the committees that have a say in the matter. Authorities in the field and representatives of democratic bodies have no voice in the formulation of criteria of judgment. Besides, a lot of outdated moral provisos are laid down by the Government before a work of art is adjudged to be good enough for a prize.

The policy of employing authors, poets and musicians in All India Radio, even if it is for the sake of prestige, will be questioned so long as broadcasting is entirely State-controlled. That criticism is unwelcome to the Government is obvious from the way only those with the safest political credentials are appointed to responsible posts in A.I.R. The employee's freedom is so limited that he is not allowed to attend writer's seminars as a delegate and express his legitimate views. A seminar organised by the U. S. I. S. in Bombay received specifically this narrow-minded treatment. Thus, one who associates with the Government in one way or another, loses his freedom of association, of discussion and of expression. Through him, the Government can improve standards of culture only to suit itself.

A larger danger looms beyond the compromising of intellectual integrity through State interference. The Government is out to reform the morals of the people. Hence the desperate enforcement of prohibition and the ridiculously rigid

and erratic working of the Film Censor Board. Here, too, the Government attempts to set the pattern of social and cultural life, to which writers and artists are naturally supposed to conform. Intellectuals as leaders of the community are on the way to be replaced by officials who hold the strings. And gradually, though we may not have an Orwellian State, we will have an orthodox oligarchy, ideologically if not numerically.

Two articles in this issue touch this problem and, in a way, point the way it needs to be faced by all those who are dissatisfied with Government's handling of cultural projects and want to re-establish the freedom of self-expression. The sooner the relationship between patron and protégé is clarified, the better it will be for those who are primarily interested in their work and not its rewards.

The Short Story Competition For Indian Writers

NEARLY ninety stories were received from all over India for this competition, conducted for the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Paris, by QUEST. A panel of judges comprising Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Sudhin Datta and Nissim Ezekiel came to the decision that no single story deserved the prize of approximately Rs. 1,350 offered by the organisers. Hence the prize has been divided between:

S. J. Joshi for his short story, *The Devil*

and

M. S. Kalyanasundaram for his short story,
The Message

in a 3 : 2 ratio. Mr. Joshi's story is translated from the Marathi by **Mangesh Padki**. Mr. Kalyanasundaram has translated his own story from the Tamil. The judges' verdict, the stories and biographical notes about the authors will be published in the next issue.

Mr. R. K. Narayan could not join the panel of judges, being away from this country.

NIRAD C.
CHAUDHURI

India's Kulturkampf

a diagnosis of State-sponsored culture

FOR some time past the political capital of India has been rather assertive in claiming to be the country's cultural capital as well. In New Delhi one hears a good deal about a marvellous efflorescence of culture which is supposed to have made the city wholly different from what it was in British times, and even given it a lead over Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. Some would go further and assert that the emergence of New Delhi as the epicentre of cultural tremors is a phenomenon of all-India significance, the precursor of a renaissance of Indian civilization.

The substance of the claim will be considered presently. For the moment it has to be noted that the simple fact that it is being made is a portent, because it is the product of a number of new forces which have begun to play on the cultural life of India since independence. They are creat-

ing a very interesting situation, and indeed they have already brought into being the initial phases of a *Kulturkampf*, a struggle for civilization in the literal sense of the word, though not in the specialized connotation given to it in Bismarckian Germany.

To enunciate it briefly and formally, what is coming is an antithesis to all that has happened in India in the field of culture till now, a conflict without any possibility of a synthesis between the old and the new. This must sound a mouthful, besides smacking of jargon, but there was no other way of drawing attention to a potentially dangerous situation. Most people who are interested in cultural activities seem to be unaware of the threat because they are being unconsciously acclimatized to the new situation. The danger lies not so much in the possibility of a conflict, which would have done good by bringing

the issues out into the open, as in an insidious marshalling of those who are engaged in cultural activities within a regimented camp, which if I were not afraid of being unfair to the noble animals I would have compared to the driving of elephants into the keddah.

BEFORE developing this idea it is necessary, however, to look into the basis of New Delhi's cultural claim. It is made *prima facie* on the strength of a number of events which were not common in the capital, and are hardly continuous in the other big cities. These are art exhibitions, concerts of Indian and European music, dance displays, amateur dramatic performances, literary or cultural conferences, congregational recitation of poetry (a very north Indian speciality), lectures by distinguished Indians and foreigners, and the presence of three Academies under the uncouth disguise of Akademis or Akadamis.* If this is supposed to be an Indianization of the word of Greek origin, I do not see why music and philosophy should not be called 'mausiki' and 'falsafa' respectively. In order to Indianize a Western institution was it really necessary to go to Islam's borrowings from Graeco-Roman culture? But perhaps the 'Akadami' is a complement to the sherwani and pajama, the verbal symbol of 'pajama-culture'.

However that might be, the things just mentioned virtually complete the list of cultural activities in New Delhi. All told, they do not amount to much, quantitatively or qualitatively. In no great city of the West would they be taken as the signs of a

cultural renaissance, or even considered sufficient as the normal volume of civilized entertainment which has to be made available to the citizens and visitors as a matter of course. In cultural matters, New Delhi, if it had any proper pride or self-respect, should judge itself with reference to, say, London, Paris, New York and Moscow, and since very few people will consider that fair, this alone is proof that the standards are not high.

This reservation is legitimate, but it need not come in the way of recognizing the relative improvement in comparison with the past. Some attempt is being made to restore or maintain a regular though feeble pulsation in cultural life. The nature of these activities has, however, to be analysed carefully. There is about some of these a good deal that is forced or artificial, and this aspect will be considered in its proper place. To begin with, the most important thing to note is that many of the cultural activities of the capital are not native to it, but come for a definite purpose from different parts of the country. They arrive like migratory birds, sojourn awhile, and then depart to their breeding grounds.

To put it plainly, New Delhi is more a market for culture than its cradle. It has become a sort of cultural fair for contemporary India, where the culture makers can exhibit samples and sometimes even put through transactions. Cultural activities have acquired a sudden added salability in the capital, which is drawing to it not only a large number of traditional artists and musicians, but also a new class of adventurers in the field of culture. This is seen in the presence in the capital of a striking though small group of persons with a pronounced artistic or literary look, but no suggestion whatever of Bohemian goings-on. They do not moon about, but move purposefully, resolutely and shrewdly, like commercial travellers or carpet-baggers, as if even in their maddest ventures they were

*Even the sponsors of the institutions do not seem to know what the spelling should be in the Roman alphabet. It is only in New Delhi that three barbarisms like 'Sahitya Akadami', 'Lalit-Kala Akadami' and 'Sangeet-Natak Akadami', combining Sanskrit with Arabized Greek, could have been tolerated. —N.C.C.

taking nothing more than calculated risks. All this is, of course, natural in men who are weakly armed and are yet after dangerous big game, but somehow their behaviour is not natural in the sphere of culture, where one expects, or at all events hopes for, less concentration on the main chance.

THE simple fact is that New Delhi is now a very important centre of cultural patronage. Both reputation and money can be made here, and the two are connected. There is some purchase of cultural wares by private persons, mostly foreigners, but the really substantial patronage is that of the Government of India, or semi-public bodies controlled by it. The most important kinds of patronage are the following: (1) Salaried employment in the propaganda, publicity and educational departments of the Government; (2) the same kind of employment on the semi-public bodies; (3) grants to artistic or cultural societies; (4) contracts in All-India Radio; (5) commissions for literary or artistic work, sometimes carrying large remunerations; (6) purchase of literary works in bulk and of artistic works singly; (7) financing of *ad hoc* cultural projects; (8) literary and artistic prizes; (9) deputations to foreign countries; (10) occasionally, seats in parliament for cultural achievement or reputation. To these purely monetary rewards might be added the titles and distinctions awarded for cultural record.

The distribution of this patronage is partly political, but very largely dependent on personal influence and connexions, and naturally there is a gradation of status among the recipients. There is a small, perhaps very small, class of men with recognized achievements in the field of culture, who are rewarded with position and money on the strength of these alone, and the only requirement they are expected to fulfil is

that they should not be openly critical of anything done by the ruling party, and be passively if not actively friendly to it. But even the most eminent have no chance of being patronized if they are definitely rated as unfriendly or for that matter as too independent.

Secondly, there is another small class of men who had acquired a reputation in the field of literature, science, scholarship or art and were at the same time on a friendly footing with influential nationalist politicians before independence, who received patronage without too bare-faced canvassing. These also can maintain an air of equality with the politicians or officials.

But for the greater majority it is a question of enlisting the support of a small number of men either among the politicians or high officials, who hold a key position in regard to the disposal of the patronage. The greater majority of the politicians and a sizable portion of the officials have no cultural interests or even pretensions. Therefore when anyone among these two classes shows some ambition or discernment or dilettantism he acquires a disproportionate voice in the disposal of the cultural patronage. He can easily help a friend or a protégé. A fair amount of the Government's patronage of culture passes through the hands of such men.

The existence of this patronage is the most important, even if not the sole, factor behind the recent cultural liveliness of New Delhi. Of course, in a State which is upper middle-class by the class criterion, this class is getting most out the public revenues in various bureaucratic, managerial, and technical positions, without any strict insistence on commensurate return for money. Compared with their remuneration, what the 'culture-wallahs' are getting hardly amounts to more than alms. But even this they had never got formerly, and it is no wonder that the inducement is proving effective.

But State patronage cannot be accepted without risks, and the greatest of these risks is the modern State's conception of the place of culture within the preserve of the Leviathan. In India, in some respects, the effect of State patronage is becoming even more harmful than it is, or could be, elsewhere. To begin with, this can be illustrated even by the character of much of the cultural activity in New Delhi. For instance, not a negligible part of it is due to the diplomats and other foreigners resident in the city. This is encouraged by the Government as a means of maintaining the prestige of the capital as a civilized city in the eyes of these foreigners. It is more than probable that the largest contribution to the box-office receipts from these cultural events is made by the resident foreigners.

There is besides a more palpable and direct political motivation. Most diplomatic missions in India have as part of the machinery of political and economic projection of their countries active cultural adjuncts. Indeed, to judge by some of the goings-on, with many countries cultural exchanges appear to be only an euphemism for political alignment. Thus political wooing is assuming the guise of cultural activity, and a fair number of cultural events in the capital are organized by the new cells of diplomacy.

This is making the Government of India put out its own counter-projection, and its quota of politically inspired cultural events forms a substantial element in the so-called cultural renaissance of the capital. Besides, even on its own initiative the Government of India is showing a very strong inclination to exploit cultural activities for non-cultural ends.

At this point I should like to make it clear that I see nothing morally wrong if a writer, artist or intellectual serves the State or even carries on State propaganda, provided he can do so without sacrificing his convictions and creative vocation, that is to say, if in

return for an assured economic support from the State he performs an honest social role, which all men must, whatever their special vocation. All over the world a very large number of writers, artists and intellectuals do so without straining their conscience.

But what is happening in India is not quite that but something very much more drastic and fundamental. In the absence of strong, vital, and independent cultural movements in the country the State is trying to subordinate whatever cultural activity exists to pure *raison d'état*. Speaking of the State in the eighteenth century, Albert Sorel said that it rested on the notion that the State carried within itself its proper purpose and, being sovereign, recognized no authority outside itself. Therefore it could deduce its principles of conduct only from its own omnipotence and its last reason in everything was *raison d'état*.

Now, this has become truer still of modern States, and particularly those modern States which have created patterns of culture in conformity with their recent political principles, and in which, therefore, the culture is coeval with the current form of the State. Curiously enough, in India, in spite of the existence of an ancient culture, the State's conception of culture is nearer to that of the new totalitarian than of the older liberal States, and it is even trying to lay its hands on the highest manifestations of the human spirit seen in this country in the interest of its policies.

Of this, the most striking example is the exploitation of the Buddha for promoting Asian solidarity and the use of the moral doctrine of Buddhism to give an odour of sanctity to wholly secular aims. If any Christian State had thus used the name of Jesus or an Islamic one than of Muhammad they would have been accused of dragging religion into politics. But perhaps for a secular State no exploitation of religion can be called blasphemous.

THIS is only one out of the many examples that might be given to illustrate a consistent and comprehensive trend, which, even if it has not emerged as a policy pursued with full consciousness of its ends and means, is already far beyond an inchoate or embryonic stage. When I have stated what this trend is, some may think that I am attributing too Machiavellian a design to the Government. But it sometimes happens that in the actions of collective bodies there is greater strength and ingenuity when an urge is felt subconsciously but imperiously than when a policy is arrived at by means of conscious reasoning. Thus, leaving out minor and accidental aims, the whole motivation of the State's patronage of culture in India today may be set down to three major political aims, all dictated by *raison d'état*, the characteristic *raison d'état* of a newly independent country seeking to assert itself in the world:

I. To secure the economic and political support of the nations of the West, among whom I also include the Russians, not only by making the intellectuals represent India as a progressive country in the Western sense, a country of ancient culture carrying out a modern economic and political revolution, but also by enlisting on the side of the State the exponents of all those traditional Indian cultural activities to which Occidentals attach a special value or for which they have a romantic yearning, for instance, Vedanta philosophy or Kathakali dance, to give only two examples. This is a very subtle manoeuvre to satisfy at the same time two paradoxical expectations of the West from contemporary India; namely, that the country should be as much like the West in practical matters and as much unlike it in decorations.

II. To promote Asian solidarity by making intellectuals, writers and artists emphasize the elements of the cultures of Asia and their inter-relatedness.

III. To ensure popular support within

the country by showing that all those who count in the world of culture, thought, and imagination are on the side of the Government. To this end the Government is prepared to offer large rewards to conformists, and if the non-conformists had been numerous it would have crushed them with ruthless severity. For the moment, it is quite enough merely to ignore the latter.

It is hardly necessary to point out the danger to cultural freedom that is latent in this situation. There is no doubt that a very rigid form of *étatisme* in culture is crystallising in this country, which in certain circumstances might provoke a conflict which could be far more comprehensive and deep than the old conflict between the Church and the State in Europe. If this is not already upon us that is due to the very peculiar cultural situation existing in India today. Many of the older and distinctly Indian cultural manifestations are traditional and they have long lost their specific social and political implications. These can be, and are being, adopted by a regime with a wholly different political and social organization as mere archaistic adjuncts. Others, more recent, made their appearance during British rule, and were nationalistic. These are, therefore, easily assimilable into the present policies. If, however, in the future, a really independent cultural movement were to arise and if it were to challenge the established order in any way, there was bound to be a conflict. Although the likelihood of such a movement at this moment is remote, its theoretical possibility has to be recognized.

In the meanwhile, however, certain other undesirable consequences of the subordination of the cultural life of the country to the State—even so far as it has gone—appears to be more serious. These are harmful alike to the product and producer of cultural manifestations, and I should like to set them down briefly.

First, cultural creativeness is seriously

threatened by the patronage of the State. On the one hand, it is an observed fact that as soon as Indian intellectuals, artists or writers find security in State employment they sink into inactivity and become almost completely unproductive. On the other, the State which employs them ostensibly on the strength of their cultural achievement and for cultural functions suppresses their creative and independent cultural activity with uncompromising ruthlessness. Any work outside the routine official work assigned to them is discouraged and at times penalized.

Secondly, so far as creative cultural activity exists or is permitted, it is becoming more and more subject to the dictation and judgment of those who exercise authority over culture on behalf of the State. These men are not embarrassed by modesty or even an intelligent appraisal of their own qualifications. They not only judge a work of scholarship, literature, or art from the point of view of State policy, but also pronounce on their intrinsic worth, and do not hesitate to prescribe how a book should be written or a picture painted.

As a complement to the extension of State jurisdiction to cultural matters, there is growing up a general habit of assessing the value or soundness of a work of scholarship, art, or literary imagination by the position of its creator in the political or administrative hierarchy. Ever greater numbers of people are becoming prone to think that as between a book written by a mere author and another written by a high official or politician the latter must necessarily be better. This habit of mind has established itself in the Indian Press, which always allocates space to pronouncements on subjects connected with culture in proportion to the political or official importance of the speakers, almost wholly ignoring the intrinsic worth and interest of what is being said. I would have called this a new form of Mandarinism, if I did not know

that the Mandarin was a formidable scholar and a most cultured person. The position in India is too Mandarinistic by half.

Thirdly, and from the standpoint of human relations and dignity of thought most deplorably of all, State patronage as practised here is reducing the men who are engaged in creating or propagating culture to the status of personal and social inferiors of those who possess public authority. The intellectual, artist, or writer, is being compelled to acquiesce in his own degradation. At best he can hope to be a client or protégé of a very exceptional official or politician. In general, he is either ignored, or if he tries to assert himself as an equal snubbed quite openly.

A very interesting example of this can be given. Although the officials and university professors come from the same social class in India, there is no social intercourse between the professors of Delhi University and the high officials in New Delhi. Some of the former do indeed meet the officials, but they do so either as courtiers or subordinates. Normally, the university teacher is shunned even more assiduously than the proverbial poor relation.

IMPERSONAL social forces are certainly playing their part in bringing about this state of affairs. But its more alarming developments are attributable almost wholly to certain personal characteristics which distinguish the men in authority in India on the one side, and the intellectual and artist on the other. These have become recognizable class characteristics by being sorted out into types, and both the sides are contributing to the degradation of culture, the men in authority by this arrogance and assertiveness, and the "culture-wallahs" by their weakness and over-anxiety for worldly security.

Curiously enough, the wielders of authority who are inflicting humiliations on the "culture-wallahs" are not the politicians. Leaving out certain very exceptional figures, the politicians in India do not interest themselves in culture. As a class, the Indian politicians possess a very stable culture in the anthropologist's sense of the word, but almost none at all in the sense understood by the historian of civilization. In this sense the only persons in authority to be reckoned with by those who are concerned with culture are the officials, the bureaucracy.

The aggressiveness of the bureaucracy is a legacy of British rule as well as a result of its withdrawal. In order to maintain its authority and power, the British Government not only offered handsome monetary rewards to its administrators, but also did everything in its power to raise the prestige of the officials, who were encouraged to regard themselves as a class apart and as an élite. All this naturally attracted the most ambitious, most capable, and best educated individuals in the Indian middle-class. Independence, instead of reducing the powers and prestige of the Indian bureaucracy, has enhanced both still further. For one thing, the upper middle-class India has been the largest beneficiary of the British withdrawal, and the official class is, so to say, the core of the middle-class. Next, the political leaders of India, mainly under the influence of the ideas of the same middle-class, the most powerful pressure group in the country, have accepted the policy of trying to bring into existence a socialistic State, which in structure can only be a bureaucratic State. Thus the powers and the prestige of the bureaucracy have reached a higher level, and it is naturally trying to dominate the whole field of State activity and to extend it as well.

It would seem that the pretensions and ambitions of the bureaucracy have already created a certain amount of resentment

among the technicians, who are chafing under them, like those who are concerned with culture. But the technician, who exercises specialized skill, is in a much stronger position than the intellectual or artist or literary man, and can offer resistance. The "culture-wallah" is in a hopelessly weak position vis-a-vis the civil servant.

This accounts for the bureaucrat's desire to dominate the field of culture, but it does not wholly explain why he should want to suppress cultural freedom, make war on cultural creativeness, and reduce the worker in the field of culture to a position of social inferiority. For these additional reasons exist.

The senior members of the bureaucracy who entered the service of the Government in British days often sacrificed their nationalistic convictions in doing so. After that they worked for an authoritarian regime and not only came to lose their love of freedom, even the moral freedom of the individual, but also acquired a strong intolerance of freedom. Their spirit is animating the whole administration today, and as I have said elsewhere, there exist no greater enemies of intellectual freedom in India than the Indian officials. In the exercise of their official power they relentlessly and at times quite illegally suppress the freedom of their subordinates, and totally ignore the fundamental rights given by the constitution to all citizens, including civilian officials. This hostility naturally extends to all kinds of mental freedom, and covers the sphere of culture.

Their hostility to cultural creation, on the other hand, springs from a self-inflicted frustration. The Indian officials in the higher grades of the service belong by their social origins to the most cultured stratum of the middle-class, and through their early upbringing have acquired full consciousness of cultural values. The greater majority are not men of action or true administrators at all, but intellectuals,

des cérébraux, whose true vocation lay in cultural creation. But they sacrificed it for a handful of silver, so to say, and sought position, power and ease in the sterile preserves of the civil service. Still they retain too much intelligence and sensitiveness in many cases, or at all events they have too many vague memories of a different kind of existence as if they had gone through a metempsychosis in one life, not to feel a gnawing sense of hollowness and failure within themselves. So they do not like to have it fed by the example of cultural creativeness in others. Quite intelligibly, their strongest impulse would be to deal with this *malaise* by applying the most drastic remedy of all, the elimination of cultural creativeness altogether.

The bureaucracy's attempts to inflict social inferiority on those who are engaged in cultural activities are also connected with this sense of emptiness. Having sought significance for themselves in the scales of values created by the bureaucratic hierarchy they are intolerant of rival scales of value and prestige and air a brave contempt for them.

But there is an additional reason as well, which is to be found in the antecedents of the two groups of men. At school and university the officials were as a rule the more brilliant and successful students, compared with those who took to literature, art, or journalism. In later life, they added worldly success to their record by acquiring official status, and came to look upon the others as failures. Therefore when they meet the failures and watch their pretensions they are filled with impatience and even derision for the claims of these former duds, and treat them like jackdaws in borrowed plumes.

But it must be added that the Indian "culture-wallah" himself makes an equal contribution to his degradation through his moral, and surprising as it might sound even cultural, shortcomings. In the moral aspect, he shows an extreme and almost

indecorous readiness to sell himself, abandon his integrity and vocation, and cringe to officials and others in power. Perhaps the most unlovable trait of the "culture-wallah's" personality is revealed when he becomes an official himself. Then he behaves like a typical jack-in-office and treats his fellow "culture-wallahs" with even more egregious superciliousness than the career official.

On the cultural side, the "culture-wallah" displays certain peculiarities which are almost oddities: lack of concreteness, amounting almost to woolliness; remoteness from workaday affairs and ideas; overreadiness to pick up foreign fashions and jargon; indifference to Indian conditions and traditions; and a dilettantism equivalent to preciosity.

Thus it is not surprising that those in power should regard the "culture-wallah" not only as an adventurer, but even as a huckster in shoddy goods if not as a down-right sponger.

ALL that has been said so far is relevant to the freedom of culture in India, but there still remains to consider another aspect of the State patronage of culture and State intervention in cultural matters which bears on the vitality and genuineness of all cultural activities in the country. By its very nature the State, or, to be more accurate, the Central Government of India, cannot foster any cultural movement which has its roots in the soil, is spontaneous and organic, and truly appertains to the world of culture instead of being an instrument of policy.

A few words of explanation regarding the oecology of culture in India are necessary in order to make this assertion intelligible. In this country there are at this moment only two deposits of genuine culture, at different levels of sophistication

and development but still inter-connected. The first of these is the traditional Hindu culture largely hidden from the urban middle-class triflers in culture, in spite of being very deep-seated and stable. It is this culture which I have referred to as the culture in the anthropologist's sense of the word. It possesses a broad and generic unity all over India, but has long since become differentiated into a number of regional varieties.

The second deposit is of recent origin. It is constituted by the more developed culture which has been brought into existence by the impact of Western civilization on India, and has expressed itself not only in literature, art, music and such specific forms, but also in well-defined patterns of behaviour, sensibility, and ethos. (The traditional culture of the Muslims is ignored here.)

Both the forms of culture, the traditional and the new, are, however, regional phenomena, based on regional unities and expressed through regional languages. In other words, they rest on provincial consciousness and in so far as they are felt in the heart and command emotional loyalties they are wholly provincial entities. These are the only robust and genuine cultural forms in India, there being no such thing as an all-India culture.

It follows from this that the Central Government of India cannot support these cultures, if not for any other reason—there being many—than for the simple reason that to do so would be to weaken the unified political organization of the country, which has no cultural counterpart with any real life or strength in it. Therefore the Central Government is driven to support a very tenuous, artificial, and superficial cultural expression in the country, which in spite of having originated separately in the provinces can be combined to make an all-India culture of sorts. It is the cultural expression and life in the medium of the English language, which exists as a sha-

dowy double of the natural cultural life of all Indians who have received a Western education.

There is a concentration of this duality in the Central Government of India, which is animated and directed by persons who have two cultural lives, one affiliated to their provincial culture, the other to the Anglicized culture. A very few of the top-ranking Indians in politics are even affiliated only to the unreal shadowy culture and are not held by any living cultural moorings. Leaving these out, the greater majority of the men who form the Central Government fall back upon the culture of their provinces when they need any cultural support as individuals, but for all-India purposes they have only the resource of the other artificial culture.

I call it artificial because taken as a whole it has not acquired enough strength or naturalness to be a genuine cultural force moulding a distinct type of personality. It is, so to say, a stage role for many of men and women who have acquired it, and forms only a cultural penumbra. Perhaps it would have become a real force in India had its followers been capable of acquiring any significance through creative endeavour in the real world of Western culture. But this has not happened. Therefore, on the whole, this all-India culture resting on the medium of English and Western ways of living is a weak thing compared with the provincial cultures. But the support of the Central Government, which wields the highest political authority in the country, is giving it an artificial strength.

Thus, wherever the patronage of the Central Government is an influence on Indian culture, it is a force contributing to the unreality, insincerity and rootlessness of cultural activities. There is nothing within the country which supplies this all-India culture with any vitality or even standards and criteria. In their absence, the Central Government is allowing itself to be control-

led in its cultural role more and more by foreign opinion, especially Western opinion as conveyed through the writings of Western intellectuals dealing with Indian civilization or the preferences of resident foreigners. This trend is reinforced by the political motivation of the Government's cultural patronage, to which I have already referred. Since the cultural projection is meant to impress foreigners it has to accept the foreigners' conception or pre-conception of Indian culture, which is not a healthy influence on any cultural expression of the country.

The foreigner has no stake in Indian culture or in its vitality and genuineness. For him it is largely an object of romantic longing, even an exotic luxury or curiosity. Apart from this few foreigners possess the knowledge of any Indian language to be able to appreciate any genuine expression of Indian culture when embodied in words. Therefore, they give preference to purely visual expressions of our culture, and the Government of India, seeking to cater for these foreigners, have to accept their demands and meet their expectations in its cultural activities. As an inevitable consequence, the most superficial of all cultural expressions, dancing, is getting disproportionate recognition. To judge by the prevailing attitudes, it would seem that the highest manifestation of the culture of modern India is to be found in the contemporary forms of dancing, which, though based on traditional styles, have been inspired and revived in recent years by the European ballet, which is the real cause of their popularity.

There can be no escape from this shallowness so long as the Central Government of India continues to influence Indian culture in the absence of any real all-India civilization, and merely in the interest of its domestic and foreign policies. Cultural foreign exchange and even the unity of India may have to be bought at a price too

exorbitant to pay if only the future of Indian civilization is considered.

YET the power and prestige of the Central political authority in India is so great at this moment—I do not say it will necessarily continue—that its influence has to be rated as a decisive force in the field of culture, and hardly any rival force has the strength to offer it a direct or frontal opposition. How then does the possibility of a *Kulturkampf*, a conflict for culture, arise? This is a legitimate question and I shall try to answer it briefly by way of concluding this discussion.

At first sight it would seem that in India the most serious challenge to the present regime's bid to dominate cultural life is likely to come from the Communists, whose intellectual prestige stands high among all those who are mentally alive in this country. As a matter of fact, the only ideological resistance which is being offered to the present regime is coming from the Communists. But there is no need to postulate a victory for them, and even on the assumption of a victory, the fact would remain without significance for culture, because the Communists are even less tolerant of freedom of culture than their rivals. For any social, economic and cultural transformation in India it is idle to set up an antithesis between the Indian Communists and the Indian Social-Democrats who profess loyalty to parliamentary government. The pressure group behind both is the same, the Westernized upper middle-class without land or capital, which is seeking to create a managerial bureaucratic system in which this class will have the best of it. Its ideological complexion might be anything, Communistic, Socialistic, or even Liberal, without making the slightest difference to the power of the oligarchy and its totalitarianism.

Thus, in speaking of a cultural conflict in India, one must put aside the over-advertised rivalry between the Indian parliamentarians and the Indian Communists, who are birds of the same genus if not species, and look elsewhere. It is to be anticipated from the opposition that exists in India between traditional Hinduism, regionalism, and the centrifugal force in Indian politics on the one hand, and Westernization, pan-Indianism, and the centripetal force on the other. At this moment the second group of forces seems to be dominant, not because there is any real vitality behind it, but on account of the passive character of the other group of forces, which operates more as a pull of gravitation than as a positive driving power. But the strength of the first group need not be underestimated on account of this. To my thinking, it will win in the end, and the

latent rather than open *Kulturkampf* of which I have been speaking will be terminated by the exhaustion of the centralizing power which has brought it into being.

But this will take time, and in the meanwhile State control might put an end to whatever liberal, free, and humanistic forms of culture exist in India. And the ultimate triumph of traditionalism will not bring them back to life, for traditional Hinduism has its own brand of freedom. There are few culture complexes which permit the individual to be so free to behave as he likes and believe what he likes; at the same time there is no system which makes him so disinclined to be original and creative. It is for this reason that the absence of courage, faith, and fighting spirit in those who possess a liberal and humanistic culture in India today is to be deeply regretted.

'OTRANTO BLUE'

In the Advertising Section,
 Propping his elbows on the table,
 Homer hawked, swallowed, ('No Spitting,
 Please'),
 And said: "For this model,
 Bearing in mind the nostalgia felt
 For place names, half known
 And half imagined, among
 A certain class of customer,
 Why not make a difficult sort
 Of colour, part green, part blue,
 And call it after, say, some
 Mediterranean sea-miracle,
 Some fantastic hue
 Around Otranto?" Why not,
 Indeed? They made it. And painted
 The car. Just as they planned,
 Reading the book of instructions
 Has flicked back my mind to Otranto
 And wonders of blueness, and greenness.

JOHN CLEMENT

the other woman

by Vyankatesh Madgulkar

[We reproduced a chapter from Madgulkar's novel, **Bangarwadi** in our Marathi Literature Special Issue. This is another chapter from the same novel, narrating another episode from the life of Sheku, one of its many heroes.—EDITOR]

One day, Sheku's towering spouse paid me an unexpected visit. It was early afternoon; I had finished my lunch and had settled down with a book. She entered and stood shyly by the side of the door. I sat up, looked inquiringly at her. She said, 'What is going on, teacher?'

I replied, 'Nothing at all—I've just had my meal and was reading. Do sit down.'

She did not seem to feel quite so shy then. She produced a quantity of ground-nut pods from the fold of her saree and poured it out in front of me.

'Try some of these. What else can we give?'

'There is no need to give anything at all, is there? Do take a seat.'

She ignored the suggestion. I guessed what her business might be.

At the time of his death the Karbhari had surrendered Anja to Sheku's care. Sheku had taken her to his own house where, as the rumour went, the girl had soon caught the middle-aged man in her spell. I had found it difficult to believe the story, being inclined to dismiss it as a canard circulated by someone. The thought crossed my mind that the scandal might have some connection with this visit but it seemed unlikely that anyone would want to confide such a thing to a stranger.

Sheku's wife neither sat down properly nor would she speak her mind. I was beginning to feel awkward, especially as I failed to find anything worthwhile to say to her. Ultimately I said,

'How is everything?'

That was the best I could think of.

Sheku's wife now felt encouraged to take

a seat. She sat a few paces from the threshold, her cheek resting against a fist, and said,

'What is to be done about my old man, teacher?'

I asked her to explain what she meant, deliberately feigning ignorance of what I knew well enough. . . . She might at least get the satisfaction of thinking that the rumour had not travelled very far.

'Honour,' she said, quoting from a proverb, 'is for other ears, disgrace for one's own.' She continued with downcast eyes,

'But my husband has lost his head altogether, see. Is it right—this behaviour?'

'Why, was there a quarrel?'

'There had to be. He says he wants to take a second wife!'

'Who, Sheku? What has got into him suddenly?'

'How suddenly? It had to come. The Karbhari died—poor fellow—he was a good soul. But he threw a burnnig coal into my house before he died.'

A lump came to her throat. Her eyes filled with tears; she dabbed at them with her saree, swallowed hard and continued in an undertone.

'He does not leave the girl's side. She too makes him dance with her—as if he were a young lad. How can I see all this and keep quiet? One might say she has no sense, no reason why she should not—she is old enough—but I say she has no shame. Why should he run after the girl? He ought to feel ashamed of himself if not afraid of others! What will such as you say? The old man asked him to look after the girl. He

should have found a good boy and got her off his hands, and got credit for himself. Instead of that he has gone and become crazy about her; he does not work; he buys sarees and cholis for her.... Tell me yourself now, is that nice?

'It must be true, since you yourself are saying these things. Otherwise I should not have believed Sheku capable of a thing like this. I have always thought of him as a cautious, careful man, who watched every step he took. But how can I question your word!'

'Why should I tell a lie! He is not the only one to lose face. Am I not in disgrace? Who would talk of such a thing until he is in it up to his neck?'

'This is foolishness on Sheku's part. He is about to ruin his whole reputation.'

Sheku's wife probably felt that my speech contained some defamatory implications for her husband. She hastened to correct the impression.

'He doesn't mean to get the girl in trouble or anything like that; he says he wants to marry her.'

'What manner of a marriage is this? And why does he feel the need for it now—why not before?'

'I have no child—he wants one!'

That left me without anything to say. I must have shown my surprise, for Sheku's sharp-witted wife made the rejoinder which should have occurred to me,

'It is true that there is no child—so what! There is no money or property being lost. And God may even now decide to bless us if we are fortunate enough! Isn't that so?'

I said, 'In that case he should look for a more suitable girl and marry her.'

'To what purpose? As if a big estate is being wasted! There is hardly enough for two! You know how it is with us, don't you? And who can tell whether that other one's womb will ripen? If God sets his heart on it even a dead tree will bear fruit!'

I let her talk, confining myself to an

occasional remark. The rugged woman with the large vermilion mark of matrimony on her forehead, went on talking. Field-work held no terrors for her—she was strong enough to pull a plough by the side of a bullock; but her husband's behaviour had reduced her to a state of helplessness. She could have pulled Anja by the hair and kicked her out of the house had she chosen to. Instead she had decided to give vent to her misery in front of a comparative stranger. Her eyes repeatedly filled with tears, her nostrils were quivering, lips trembling. The same thought might have crossed both our minds simulatenously: it was not Anja's fault. She was at an age when people cannot think or act wisely; it was equally natural for Sheku to be attracted to her. All this was so ticklish, so delicate and yet, at the same time so turbulent as to leave no room for any strong-arm methods. The woman must have sensed this too; otherwise she would not have come to consult me. I could not see a way out. Over and over again I said,

'Sheku has not behaved well. He should know better.'

At long last Sheku's wife said,

'Teacher, I came to you because you are the wisest person in the village. Everybody respects you, right up to the Chief of this State. Give my husband a scolding. If he listens to anyone at all it will be to you!'

'But this is a private affair, my good woman. Supposing I speak to him and he asks me to mind my own business? I won't have a leg to stand on in that case!'

Sheku's wife brushed the suggestion aside with a contemptuous shaking of her hands and said,

'Bah! he won't have the nerve! He will find his wrists in handcuffs the next minute! He is shrewd enough to know that all right'.

We were interrupted by the ringing of the school bell. Ayubu came to call me. Sheku's wife got up to go.

'Very well, I am going,' she said.

The heap of pods lay untouched. Pointing in that direction, Ayubu asked,

'Did Sheku's wife bring these, teacher?'

'Yes, why?'

'Nothing—I had never known her to do such things, that's all. Why this sudden generosity, I ask?'

That was all Ayubu said; but I knew what he had in mind. I saw him put the pods away, close the door after me. On the way to the school I began to wonder whether I had not read my own thoughts into his. Perhaps he had not heard anything!

During the days that followed I passed Sheku several times on the road. But he did not have his usual smile for me—or a polite 'What's the hurry, teacher?' The moment he saw me in the distance he would look elsewhere and scurry past me with averted eyes. Owing to the coldness of his behaviour I did not have the nerve to question him about Anja, although I had made up my mind to. The Anja-Sheku affair had become the talk of the whole village. They were said to be going together to tend sheep: Anja, it was said, openly flirted with Sheku. Someone had seen them in a thicket by the side of a distant brook. Another reported how they had gone to the temple of the Sacred Mother where Anja had sworn that she would remain faithful to Sheku and he to her. A third brought the news that Sheku had ordered a pair of silver anklets for Anja and sold some sheep for the purpose.... A host of such stories were in circulation. Sheku's love affair gave the young lads something amusing to talk and jest about. The older and more mature people looked upon it with distaste.

One day there was a terrific row between Sheku and his wife—no one knew exactly what it was about, because it was at midnight that they quarrelled, and behind locked doors. Sheku's wife left the house in

the morning and took her meagre belongings to a vacant cattle-shed nearby. Here she cooked and made a separate home for herself. She began to maintain herself by wage-work, having broken away from Sheku altogether.

Anja and Sheku lived together. Sheku was busy making preparations for the wedding. He sold some sheep and goats so as to obtain ready cash, built up stocks of grain and other foodstuffs.

Sheku's field was at some distance from the village. Beyond it was a patch of garden land which fell in the territory of a neighbouring village. As the owner wanted manure he had arranged for a flock of sheep to be grazed on his land. The sheep and the shepherds had been brought in from some distant village. The two or three men—all young and vigorous—had accordingly set up their camp in the field adjoining Sheku's. The shepherds used to build themselves a camp fire and sit around it, chatting or singing the whole night long. Anja found herself listening to the melodious strains every night from her own field.

One blazing afternoon one of the shepherds climbed up a *babul* tree growing on the embankment which separated Sheku's field from his neighbour's. Then he proceeded to lop off the younger branches and twigs, throwing them down to the sheep which had collected underneath. The animals were busy munching the leaves, expertly dodging the thorns, scouring the ground for the greenish white pods of the tree.

As soon as Anja saw this she leaped forward to accost the man. Standing underneath the tree, she snapped at the man overhead,

'Hey! Who is it cutting down that tree?'

From his perch in the *babul* the shepherd looked down at her and said,

'Why, lass? Are you going to object?'

Anja shivered at the masterful tone of his voice. There was a shower of yellow

flowers on her head, and the next instant the shepherd lad himself jumped to the ground. He was jet black in colour, his features were clear-cut, and he stood before her proudly, in the full vigour of his manhood. Anja was unable to meet his eye. Her heart beat fast. She was alone with this man. No one else was in sight. The sheep were feeding on the twigs in the shade of the tree. The well-built stranger was staring at her with the ghost of a smile on his face.

Then he said,

'You should not talk so sharply to a guest. Is this your field?'

Anja kept her eyes glued to the ground; but there was an edge to her voice,

'What do you think! Would I talk unless the field belonged to me?'

The shepherd said,

'She looked so fresh and bursting with youth—I mean the *babul*—I could not keep my hands off....' And boldly he took Anja's hand in his. Anja neither cried nor

screamed—she put up a slight struggle but she could not release her hand from the man's vice-like grip.

Then she met his eye, looked beseechingly at him and said,

'My bangle is broken. Let go of my hand now.'

'And if I don't what will you do?'

'Say—you are a bully! Let me go.'

Even then the man merely laughed.

A week later when they broke camp, the shepherd collected his share of the *jowar* which they received by way of payment for the manure, and drove his flock back to his village. He took Anja with him. She went willingly, without a word to Sheku. She broke her vow and deserted Sheku for another man.

A week or two later Sheku's wife came to see me. This time she brought a sackful of carrots for me. Her face was wreathed in smiles. She poured the carrots on to the ground and said,

'Teacher, the old silly has come back!'

(Translated from the Marathi by S. D. DESHMUKH)

THE VAGABOND

There were grey feathers
in the morning light
when lean and dirty,
the child sat cross-legged
on the lonely pavement.
Full of a fierce ease
his life of tactile pickings.

What spool of dreams unwound
to lift a mush of mellow thought
and warm the acres of his heart?

To me, his cool dark eyes
seemed lovely with sudden sorrow,
but I could not borrow the peace
of this prince of dusty miles.

RANJANI RAO

SWAMI
AGEHANANDA

the changing face of Japan

some recent impressions

The Master of Zen says :
—*if I met the historical Buddha*
Sakkamuni, I would kill him.

AS I got through the customs at the Tokyo Airport, friends had a car ready to take me into town. Just as I was about to step out into it, there was a shock. An earthquake—rather strong, and that is as it should be in Japan, where it is feared as one of the four great calamities—the fire, the flood, and the father. I looked round, and I saw people going pale, and the pretty hostess began giggling with fear. Wasn't this an almost daily occurrence in Japan? No, they said, this was the strongest tremor in years. It was a Sunday morning—I took it as a good omen of welcome.

When I descended from the car in front of the International House of Japan (a Rockefeller sponsored institution), an old woman with what looked like a casket of iron strapped to her back, rammed into a cyclist, who somersaulted over the handle bar. He got up over his telescoped vehicle and I saw blood trickling down his pale cheeks; he approached the woman slowly, where she stood stunned; as he came close to her, she bowed low and uttered a magical word: *sumimasen*. The man bowed, too, picked up what was left of his bicycle, and trotted away.

The brochure 'This Week in Tokyo' (a monthly publication in English for the benefit of tourists from abroad) translates *sumimasen* as 'excuse me'. It is wrong.

Literally, it means—'there is no end', and I feel it bears with it, when used by the Japanese, the same mystery, or at least the same philosophical potential as it would if we were we to say, in English, 'there is no end....' whenever we wished to say 'excuse me'. There is no end—to what or of what? Well, so much could be interpolated—no end to my grief, to my fault, to your forgiveness, to the etiquette of this land of Nippon (pronounced Nihon, by the Japanese); but nothing is interpolated, and *sumimasen* stands alone and aloof, as the most perfect idiom in a language. There is no answer after *sumimasen*. Spill a pot of strong coffee on a customer's brand new trousers, run over a man in your car, commit adultery with a man's wife—there is no reply to *sumimasen*, it is an end to all argument.

I came to Japan, chiefly on the trail of *parampara*—tradition, and I felt it is Buddhism that lies at the back of it all. Not Buddhism as we know it in India or the Theravada countries; and not Buddhism, I think, of even the Tibetan and Chinese form, although the formulation of orthodox Japanese Buddhism is no doubt Chinese in the main. Almost all extant schools of Japanese Buddhism trace their origin to some Chinese master, and eventually they refer to that mysterious Brahmin Bodhidharma — a

bhikshu born or trained at Conjeeveram, who walked, and flew, and created himself afresh *en route*—through Tibet, China, perhaps Korea, and into Japan. Yet, Buddhism is an Indian creation only to those numerous, excellent Japanese Indologists and Sanskritists, who publish and edit prolifically in their language—greater in bulk I think than Indological publications in all the western languages put together—to them only is the Buddha Indian. The historical Gautama counts little or nothing except with the Nichiren sect—a small, but growing group, and one of the oldest in the country. The two *daibutsu* images (Great Buddhas), the huge beautiful statues at Nara and Kamakura, of the 7th and the 12th century respectively, are not of the Sakya-Prince. The former is the Buddha Vairochana, the latter the Amitabha: aspects of the universal Buddha or Bodhisattva principle, if you like, but un- and anti-historical.

There are lovely, simple, homogeneously built Zen temples, laboriously clean, all over the country, belonging to many schools of considerable doctrinary difference between themselves. Zen is the Japanese transphonement of the Pali *Jhana* and the Sanskrit *dhyana*, and here, too, it means meditation, but it works differently from India. True Bodhidharma is said to have gazed at a blank wall for seven years—that also is a possibility for the Japanese contemplative, but it has not been emphasized. The perfection to which the Indian *dhyana* leads—as *samadhi*, *kaivalya*, etc.—means a perfection which excludes discursive thought, objective cognizance forthwith. Not so the perfection of *zen*, which they call *satori*. There is undoubtedly an esthetical element in the word which would remind us of Indian terminology—*sato* also means sugar, but Japanese scholars are not at one about the correctness of this etymology. It appears that we can find the closest approximation in Tibetan Buddhism, with

its concept of *sampratishthita-nirvana*, and perhaps, in a less sophisticated manner, in the *sahaja*-state of certain bhakti-schools in medieval India, where re-fertilization through Mahayana ideas is not ruled out. This concept identifies *sansara* and *nirvana*, phenomenal and absolute existence—and so does *Zen*. The person who has achieved *satori* is not only fully aware of the external world, but has his share in it enthusiastically, and excels the worldly in its pursuits (I can hear indignant remonstrances that such is what the Geeta teaches as *nishkama-karma*, but I am not convinced; which is anyway beyond the scope of this article).

THE optical engineer who constructs the famous Canon lens which is said—by non-Japanese experts—to be an improvement on the Leica lense which it originally imitated, that man is known as an advanced zen-adept. This is in a line with the older, and more familiar pseudo-profane efflorescences of Zen—archery, flower-arrangement, painting and calligraphy—all of which are arts with an undefinable margin, and the lovely tea-ceremony with its nineteen schools. The old tea-master is often a zen-master, the geisha and meiko are his disciples, the guests are at once congregation, audience, and vicarious objects of worship.

I got down at Kyoto from the *Tsubami* (Swallow), the most elegant train through Japan with incredible comforts for the way—the first thing I saw as I alighted were three geishas, two of them meikos (i.e. geisha-trainees; they are virgins and have the higher and more complicated hairdo). The fine deference with which the busy crowd treated them was a real experience in tradition. A week later, I saw their *komo-gawa odori*, the autumn dance—a masterly treat in co-ordination and finesse, with over thirty geishas and meikos taking part in the performance. To call the geisha a harlot is even sillier than to call the Kalidasan

ganika a prostitute. The geisha, who I am sorry to say survives as an institution of cultured refinement only in Kansai, i.e. the area in and around Kobe, Osaka, and Kyoto, never had anything to do with the Yoshiwara or similar establishments—which latter are to be abolished in the course of this year, by parliamentary decision. The geisha was the *grande dame* of a Japan that could afford it, for her training and sustenance is extremely expensive. The wealthy citizen, who arranged for the training of a geisha from her early childhood, took a real responsibility upon himself; and when she came of age and was perfect in her arts, she was given to him in a fine ceremony which had the dignity of an aristocratic wedding. But all this is doomed with the dying yen.

'If you view it from the purely traditional angle,' a famous Japanese savant told me, 'the distance between India and this country is negligible.' That may be so; yet there is no doubt that traditional art is viewed in Japan today with far more scepticism—and some times in large and not unimportant circles, with open cynicism. There does not seem to be anything like the attempt at an artistic renaissance such as there is in India, with the remarkable shift of classical dance and classical music into social acceptability and commendation. For this lack, Japanese apologists blame the effects of the war, and they are probably right.

I mentioned the tea-ceremony, flower-arrangement, and the art of archery, of which the latter is dying out. The remaining two are viewed as activities of national elegance by their mediocre performers and their sponsors, and as part of the practice of Zen by active Buddhists. They are not taken seriously in the larger society of Japan today. University people (unless they belong to Buddhist universities) look down on these performances. About the tea-ceremony in particular, which I often attended with Japanese friends, I had the unpleasant feeling that they looked on it as a fossil, as

an outdated exhibition for tourists and other foreigners, who of course do command the continuation of these performances, in a way. The proprietor of the largest tea-house in Kyoto told me that of the tea-ceremonies conducted since the end of the war, over sixty per cent had been arranged for American officers and other military personnel, which is quite a bit of information.

WHAT remain fully intact of traditional arts are the *Kabuki* and *Noh* plays—which are the Japanese counterpart of the grand opera and the classical tragedy. There is also the tremendously sophisticated doll-play *Bumraku* in Kansai, where the strings, the technical attachments, and the operators are fully visible to the audience, with a facetious 'take it or leave it' from the performers to the public. The language of *Noh* and of *Bumraku* is difficult, archaic, esoteric, and provides many a topic for doctoral theses at American universities where Japanese literature is studied. The language of *Kabuki* is not so difficult and less obsolescent. The *Kabuki-za* in Tokyo (which city is the original home of *Kabuki*; *Noh* and *Bumraku* hail from Kansai) is a hall comparable in size and in importance to the Metropolitan in New York; yet, the audience is less general at the *Kabuki-za*; you do not see many young faces, less than you see in Hong-kong at the classical Chinese opera, where they are few enough. After having seen all the countries between India and Japan, I feel sure that India is the only one which has successfully deflected the Hollywood menace.

What is it, then, that the young and the modern-minded adult in Japan is attracted by? It is certainly not only Hollywood—far from that. We take a stroll along *Ginza*, Tokyo's Fifth Avenue (in fact there is a Fifth Avenue in Tokyo, running parallel to *Ginza*, and just slightly less fashionable). We turn into a charming café, 'West'. Along with a finely printed menu-card, we are

given a second card—a list of musical recordings we might like to order along with our snack. There is an expensive, exquisite high-fidelity amplifying set with loudspeakers all over the place, but neatly camouflaged, and there are Japanese guests sipping their coffee slowly, and they order along with it—not Chopin or Rachmaninoff who would be regarded as the *crème* by analogous circles in Calcutta or Bombay—they order Monteverde, Orlando di Lasso, Bach, Palestrina. No doubt, 'West' is a posh place, but there are hundreds of smaller places all over Tokyo and elsewhere. I particularly liked a beautiful little café in Kyoto, 'François', with the most elegant proprietress ruling over a host of charming girls, all of them 'Arbeiter'—students. *Arbeiter*—the German word for worker—has become a Japanese dictionary word, though with a more specific connotation—it means part-time work. There is the *Arbeito-cabaret*, where office-girls and housewives with properly endowed figures appear in dance and burlesque; and of course they appear in the increasingly popular strip-show, a postwar achievement. It is actually only an almost-strip-show, far less generous than at Bangkok or Saigon or Hongkong, and none but the prudish could object to the Japanese brand of it. Back to François, Kyoto—the furniture is rococo, red upholstery, warm atmosphere—real Vienna in real Japan, and there is no dissonance; the atmosphere of Kyoto is, for people like me, unique, finer, and more ingratiating than that of the metropolis.

WESTERN music is ubiquitous throughout Japan, and familiar to the people to an amazing extent. Western notation is used for Japanese music as well. All the children learn to read musical notation at school, and they can all sing from the score—an achievement not aimed at in Europe. I observed shopgirls in small, out of the way places in town, humming Schubert, Schumann, and

Brahms Lieder to themselves. There are symphony and philharmony orchestras in Tokyo, permanent opera ensembles, concert halls by the dozen; over and above it, famous and expensive soloists, orchestras, and conductors are constantly being invited. Recently, Hindemith with the Vienna Philharmonists played in Tokyo. The house had been sold out months ahead, and at exorbitant rates, and the people who went did not look as though they could truly afford it—there was enthusiasm and some sacrifice. Just after I arrived, Vittorio Gui and the Milan Stagione performed *Aida* and *The Marriage of Figaro* to a packed house in Tokyo, and both the performances were telecast throughout the country. At a little tea-shop in Shinjuku, the district which now contains the largest redlight area in Tokyo and which has absorbed much material from the decaying Yoshiwara, I demonstrated the beginning of the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth to some Japanese friends. The waitresses behind me—none of them older than twenty, I thought—intoned the choral refrain *Freude schoener Goetterfunken*, in correct German, with perfect time, and almost perfect pitch.

Of course, musical taste is not always quite so impeccable—a lot of abominable kitsch is fancied in a chequered taste pattern. I must have heard *Leise flehen meine Lieder* well over fifty times, in chorus, solo, on the piano, the violin, the saxophone, even on the classical Japanese *koto*, a string-instrument similar to the *dilruba*, and none ever seems to get tired of it. *The Blue Danube* resounded all over Kyoto station-square when I first emerged into it, as though in my honour. But then, there is an equal gusto for jazz—not just jazz, but its most selective disciplines: jitterbug, boogy-woogy, rock'n roll. These disparate musical predilections do not seem to cause conflict in the individual as they would in the West. This fact might create the feeling that for the modern Japanese, western

music is simply juxtaposed *en bloc*, with Japanese music *en bloc*. There is a lot of stereotyped modern Japanese music, sung and played in a light vein, with much schmaltz and little volume.

The students in Japan—high school and university alike, and they fill the scene everywhere at any time—wear black uniforms with many buttons on their coats, which look a bit like the shortest edition of a tight *achkan* and along with it goes a black rimmed cap of the taxi-driver shape. The whole thing does not look pleasant and reminds me of the Prussian students' uniforms of the last century, and though I could not find out for sure, it seems likely that the inspiration comes from there. It does come from Germany in many walks—the tiniest drugstore-keeper writes down his prescriptions in colloquial medical German. I got a sore throat and stomach one night, and asked a Japanese friend to translate my complaint to the drugstore-keeper for action; to my amazement, the good man wrote "*Gurgelmittel*" and "*Bauchwehmittel*" on his check. Girl students wear a black uniform too, but it looks quite charming.

AS a flying lecturer, my chief contacts were with the university folks and especially with people of the numerous Buddhist universities. Kyoto has two of them, Tokyo has over five. They are looked down upon—for no reason that I could see except their smaller output—by the bigger, secular universities, particularly the former Imperial schools of Tokyo and Kyoto, which are excellent acadmies on all counts indeed. Each of the Buddhist sects in Japan runs or endows one university or more, and there is no denominational discrimination about the enrolment of students. All subjects of the common university level are taught at these schools, but the emphasis naturally is on Buddhistic studies, and a great deal of Buddhist scholarship centres in these schools. Indian Buddhist texts that have never been

thought of in India are being published in Japan, mainly by these universities; so are Tibetan and Chinese texts on an ever larger scale. I do not think Japanese scholars exaggerate when they claim that Sinology can properly be studied only in Japan—many foreign scholars of repute endorse this claim. Buddhistic and even secular studies in literary tradition are possibly not encouraged too much on the Chinese mainland; or if they are, no one outside China knows about it. Hongkong and Formosa are too small and unimportant from any scholastic angle—and the fact remains that Japan is the world's Sinological centre now. The Library of the Institute of Humanistic Sciences, attached to the (Imperial) University of Kyoto has allegedly the finest Chinese manuscript collection in the world.

I attended an English oratorical contest as a judge, at the largest Buddhist university in Tokyo, the Komazawa Daigaku. Here I found pronounced, even aggressive Buddhism, striking an unusual note in Japan. It does not extend to the outside—for when you ask the educated Japanese about his religious creed, he is extremely reticent, non-committal, or overtly antagonistic. First, you gain the impression that he just does not want to say a direct no to such questions as Are you a Buddhist? Are you a Shintoist? A Christian? (though the reluctance seems least in the last case). More often than not, he will reply saying something like I am neither, or all of it, or a rationalist, or a nihilist (which idiom is very popular, though I am not quite in the know about the extension of the term for those Japanese who use it as a standing answer, but it may be significant, that of all contemporary western philosophies, existentialism is the most popular in the academies; Nishida, a Japanese Heidegger, died only a few years ago). Not infrequently among college people, the answer would be I am

a communist; and even as the latter is not really too pronounced, there is definitely a good deal of flirtation with the Big Left among college students and teachers, which manifests itself in their shows, petty art exhibitions, and essays. The only ones who radically oppose this style are the Buddhists. In the twenty-two entries at the contest (each speech lasted seven minutes) there were only two contestants who did not mention communism as a danger to Buddhism and, hence, to the good life. Communism really does not have the social respectability it has gained in India, and I wonder whether any future great visitors from the Kremlin or Peking could effect a change in Japan.

Strange also to say that the only passionate speech I heard in Japan was the speech of Buddhists in the process of talking Buddhism. Here for once, the rigid form of suave and polite speech, which has not been abandoned after the war, like so many other traditional forms, is broken through. Among the contestants there were two men and a young woman whose diction and tone strongly reminded me of red-hot sadhu preachers in India; one of these actually got the first prize in spite of several dissenting votes including mine.

I MET many Zen monks and nuns in Japan. But the demarcation between a monk and an active Buddhist layman is very very fluid except in the case where a person is, mostly by heredity, priest in some temple. Celibacy is not always incumbent on zen monks, many live with their wives and children on the temple precincts. I asked several people, where I was in doubt, if they were monks; they denied it; if they were laymen, then—this, too, they denied. I could not find a convincing reason—save that of the overworked cliché of Japanese opacity—for this particular response, but it seems to have an external counterpart in their dress. The black robe

and *obee*—remindful of the stole in the Roman Catholic mass—are not usually worn except for the office. Most monks would otherwise wear an ordinary western suit, black or brown, but would shave off like the South Asian bhikshu. The same holds for nuns—they frequently wear western frocks, or students' uniforms if they attend university or college which they often do—and they also shave their heads. Thus for several days during my Kyoto lectures I took one Miss Kono for a young monk using the masculine gender in addressing her—until she sent up a polite note which I have kept for its laconic charm: "I am, Sir, not Mr. Kono. I am a Miss Kono, because I am a nun. Miss Kono".

Around X'mas I used to take more frequent walks along Ginza. There were fantastic department stores displaying everything of their American prototypes. I saw a big board in the huge windows of Mitsukoshi, the biggest 'Departo' in Tokyo, which read "Try to find anything in America which you cannot find here?" The advertising manager had probably not said too much. Christian bucolica abounded in the shops along Ginza—Jesus in the creche, the holy family, the wise men from the Orient, the X'mas tree—they met one's eyes all the way. This did not mean that the proprietors were Christians. "Christmas", a young sophisticated woman accompanying me on one of these strolls said, "is becoming an increasingly popular festival here—a festival was needed for this season—there was no Japanese festival for this season; and we like jingle-bells."

I left Japan from Yokohama by boat. One of the passengers was a young American just separated from the forces, taking his charming little Japanese wife home. "Export sample", the second officer told me, "do very well in America. We have a proverb now—a man should have an American house, a Chinese cook and a Japanese wife."

Academic Freedom and Self-Government in Indian Universities

by D. D. Karve

RECENTLY one has heard and read quite a lot about the academic freedom of Universities in India and the interference in the administration of Universities by Government and other outside agencies. Most persons have deprecated this interference and pleaded for leaving the academic elements completely free to run the University administration. It is, I feel, necessary to consider this question dispassionately and rationally.

With minor differences, the general structure of the Universities in India is basically the same. There is usually a Senate or Court with a large membership which is in general control of the policy of the University. These bodies are generally composed of representatives of the graduates and of the affiliated colleges, the heads of University Departments, representatives of the local bodies like Municipalities and Local Boards, Labour, Chambers of Commerce and finally the nominees of the Chancellor (either the Governor of the State or some other office-holder in Government). The purely academic element is usually in a minority in them. The creation of new departments or senior teaching posts in the University, the election of the Vice-Chancellor, when he is not appointed by the Chancellor, the passing of resolutions and rules dealing with major decisions of policy are some of the functions of the Senate or Court. Then for the purely academic side, i.e., formulating courses of studies, fixing

arrangements for examinations, determining standards of passing, recommending examiners for various examinations etc., there is usually a body styled as the Academic Council, consisting almost exclusively of academic persons, i.e. teachers in the University or the affiliated colleges. Technically, some of the decisions of the Academic Council are subject to confirmation by the Executive authority, but on the whole it can be said that purely academic matters are dealt with by the teachers in the University and affiliated colleges without much outside interference. There is however one very important exception to this generalisation and that is the standard of admission to the courses of the University. Although this is a purely academic matter, it is usually the Court or the Senate, containing a large number of non-academic members, which decides this important question. Any attempt to raise the standard of admission is, as the writer knows from personal experience, stoutly resisted by the non-academic side and it can be stated as a fact that in all Indian Universities, every student who completes his secondary school course with the minimum necessary mark is deemed fit to study at the University.

The executive and administrative authority in all Universities is centred in the Syndicate or Executive Council, which is usually composed of representatives of the Academic Council and the general public

in about equal proportion, with perhaps a slight preponderance of the non-academic element. The appointments to teaching posts are usually made on the recommendation of special selection committees composed of experts in the particular subjects.

IN considering the academic freedom and self-government of Universities, some important points require to be taken into account. In most Universities the decisions of the University Authorities in several matters, including some purely academic questions, have to receive the sanction of the Government concerned, either directly or through the Chancellor, before they can be given effect to. Thus for example, the standards of admission to the University, i.e. the type of students completing their secondary school course who would be allowed to join the University, have, in most cases, to be sanctioned by the Government. As has been already mentioned above, this question is decided by a body with a large—often predominant—non-academic membership. But there is, in addition, this further check by the Government. It must also be borne in mind that the income of the University is exclusively made up of fees and Government grant-in-aid. The former are usually sufficient to meet the expenditure connected with the conduct of the examinations, so that the other activities of the University are supported only through the grant-in-aid from the Government. (For the past year or two, the University Grants Commission established by the Union Government is also giving grants to the Universities.) Thus the Government is in a position to exert indirect pressure on the Universities even in purely academic matters.

Another subject in which the final power remains in the hands of Government, at least in most States in India, is the affiliation of colleges. The procedure for the affiliation of new colleges usually involves

(i) a report by an inquiry committee appointed by the University, (ii) the opinions of the different University Authorities on it and (iii) the passing of final orders by Government about the affiliation or otherwise of the college and the conditions to be fulfilled by it, if any. It is not unusual for a college to be affiliated by orders of Government, though in the opinion of some or all of the University Authorities the college was either not well-planned or adequately staffed and equipped. This is, in some cases due to political pressure on Government by powerful persons or groups interested in that College and the result is that colleges with poor equipment and unqualified and inexperienced staff are brought into being.

Regarding the appointment of teachers to be employed by the Universities, the conditions are on the whole, satisfactory. In most Universities, there is a statutory provision that all such appointments should be made on the recommendation of selection committees consisting of experts in the subject concerned, a majority of whom are unconnected with the University. Similarly, the courses of studies, the prescription of which is a purely academic matter, are entirely in the jurisdiction of the academic bodies like the Boards of Studies, Faculties and Academic Councils.

The conduct of examinations, under which is included the appointment of examiners, is usually in charge of the executive body, though even here the academic bodies have a considerable voice. Although one cannot say that non-academic practices do not affect University examinations in India, they are due more to other factors, which are discussed below, than to the influence of Government or other outside agencies.

INOW come to one very important—perhaps the most important—aspect of the working of Universities in India. In what

has been discussed above, it has generally been assumed that teachers in the University and in the colleges affiliated to the University would be expected to put forward and support the 'academic' point of view. In other words, they would be expected to press for high standards for admission of students to the Colleges, high standards of achievement in the examinations, etc. Actually, however, this is not always true.

With the exception of a few unitary teaching Universities like Lucknow, Allahabad, Annamalai, Banaras etc., the large majority of Universities in India are of the affiliating type and the teachers from the affiliated colleges (including, of course, the heads of these colleges) have a predominant voice in the academic and administrative work of the Universities. Almost all of these affiliated colleges are in a very bad condition from the financial point of view. The help that they receive from Government is usually very inadequate and their policy is always to admit as many students as possible, irrespective of their resources in staff and equipment. Further their teaching staff receives very inadequate salaries and is always compelled to supplement its income by seeking appointment as examiners etc. The representatives of these colleges generally resist the raising of standards of admission for fear of a fall in their numbers and a consequent worsening of their financial position. These colleges can never be strict in the enforcement of study requirements and are susceptible to pressure from donors and other influential persons even in academic matters. Where promotion to the higher class is in the hands of the Principal, (e.g. at the end of the first and third years of the college course) the minimum standards of achievements are generally very poor. Thus apart from outside influence (Government and the lay public) in University matters, which may tend to lower academic stand-

ards in different ways, we have in India the peculiar phenomenon of the academic element itself not always insisting on higher standards.

IN the newer ("Red-Brick") British Universities, as also in the Australian Universities, the administrative and academic structure is not on the whole very different from that of the Indian Universities. But in both those countries, the unity and solidarity of the teachers, who always insist on the maintenance of a high standard in all academic matters, the non-academic influence is almost powerless to do any damage. Here in India on the other hand, the academic element itself, composed as it is of representatives of affiliated colleges, is never solidly and persistently on the side of high standards. The result is that a large number of undeserving students are not only admitted to Universities but are promoted from year to year until finally many of them pass out as Bachelors, Masters and even Doctors in various branches of study and in their turn become teachers in colleges and occasionally in Universities.

When we put forward a claim to have the Universities freed from the influence of the outside elements like the lay public and the Government, we must also simultaneously insist on adequate financial assistance to all colleges and Universities, so that the academicians who run the Universities will not be actuated by non-academic motives. No college should find it necessary to admit large numbers merely on account of financial reasons, and staff and equipment on a liberal scale should be available for those students who are admitted. The teachers in colleges must receive adequate salaries so that the best talents will be attracted to this vocation. It is only then that Universities, on being freed from outside influence, will be in a position to fulfil their proper function.

the fugitive

by Mahadeoshastri Joshi

(Translated from the Marathi by M. D. HATKANANGALEKAR.)

IT was getting towards evening of an August day. Suddenly, the sky was overcast, the sun became dim and the horizons seemed to contract. Peals of thunder were followed by a fast-driven rain which pounded on the earth below. Within half an hour the ripe paddy fields lay prostrate under its pitiless lashing. Soon the cattle with upraised tails began to return home from the fields. In the yard the ridge and snake gourd creepers sagged from their scaffold; outside, the thickly grown country flowers lay miserably flattened on the ground. From all directions gurgling, foaming streams of rainwater hurried down the slopes. It was not possible to go out, so I sat in the verandah, and slipped into a trance, looking at the steadily falling rain which came down now straight, now slanting.

'Do you hear me? Are you there? Please come to the backdoor, a girl is standing there against the wall.'

These words of my wife broke the trance. Turning round, I asked,

'A girl? What girl?'

'I don't know, looks like a Brahmin girl, please come and see for yourself.'

I followed her to the backdoor. Certainly a girl was standing there close to the wall. Rain steadily poured in front of her, on the moss-covered floor of the yard; it kept up a fast-paced dance with bursting bubbles.

We fixed our gaze on her and she tried to fathom us with her grey eyes. At first she was silent; we too were silent. Our surprise overflowed like the water outside. Her figure declared her age to be fourteen or fifteen. She had walked through the

downpour without any protection and was soaking wet. Her thin old garment clung to her dark body, from her hair water streamed on to her hips as it did from the roof, the locks on her forehead drenched her neck and cheeks. Water dripped from her neck, lingered for a moment at the hollow created by her firmly knotted *choli*, moved along her young glistening stomach and was lost in the folds of her saree at the front. The west wind which rushed in playful gusts through the quaking coconut trees, flung the streams that poured from the roof directly on her body. Again and again she shivered at these sudden gusts. We watched her intently but as she did not belong to any one from our village, neither my wife nor I could place her.

'Who are you? Where have you come from?' asked my wife. The girl immediately withdrew her eyes from us and fixed them on her toes. There was no other movement. She did not seem to be anxious to get shelter from the shivering cold. As my wife began to repeat the same question, I said to her,

'Can't you see that the girl is all cold and confused? Ask her to step in first!'

The girl quietly stepped in when so requested. The ground where she stood became wet and soon water flowed over it. My wife gave her an old saree to change into, and a *choli* from the peg. But unless she dried her hair there was no use changing the saree, so throwing her a dry towel from the wooden pole, my wife asked her to dry her hair. The girl did everything, maintaining a perfect silence and not uttering a word. Before she could put any more questions to the girl, I asked my wife to

prepare a little tea for her. I came back to the front verandah but couldn't stop thinking about the girl.

Now the rain stopped and the sky became clear. The ridge-gourd flowers raised up their diminished heads from the scaffold. I thought of walking up to the fields to see that nothing was wrong. It would be necessary to drain out water in case it had collected at any one spot. Just then I saw two persons making their way to the house. One of them was from our own village and the other one, whose name was Gaja Joshi, belonged to a neighbouring village. Not caring to take a seat, he asked,

'Has any girl come here, may be fourteen or fifteen years old, dark complexion, short nose, grey eyes and wearing an old saree?'

'Well, but where is the hurry? Why not take a seat? The girl is here, inside. She came soaking through the rain and stood against the wall near the backdoor. She refused to say a word, we asked her about her family and her name, but she would not answer!'

'Perhaps you know Shivaram Bhatkar of Nachanwadi?'

'Yes, I do. He came to me last month, wanting to know whether I had any paddy for sale.'

'The girl is his daughter, Chima is the name. That rascal has very little shame and his wife even less. They can neither feed nor look after the litter of children that are born to them!'

'But where was it that you found her?'

'Ah, that's a long story. It is nearly fifteen days that the girl has left her home. Since then she has been wandering from place to place, taking her afternoon meal in one house and spending the night in another. A grown up girl too, but little does her father care!'

'Quite surprising!' I said.

'Surprising you say, but the real surprise is yet to come. This morning, I was on my way back from Walpai. Getting down the

slope, I climbed the steep ascent near Wel-sai and, standing on the top, looked down. And what do you think I saw? You know that there is a small bridge on the stream there. Two young boys of twenty or so stood near the railings of the bridge and between them was a girl. They were laughing, sniggering and making fun of the girl; the girl on her part was encouraging them with her coy smiles.

I was so utterly surprised you could have knocked me down with a feather. Must be some sly affair, I thought. Those two were clearly trying to lure the girl with some fancy promises and the silly girl was about to yield. I covered the distance to the bridge in swift strides. They saw me coming and moved away a little from the girl. I demanded as I went near,

'Well, who is the girl?'

They were frightened at the sudden sharpness of my tone. One of them said, 'How do we know? We saw her walking alone on the road and just asked where she wanted to go. She said, to Walpai. Seeing that she was alone, we naturally offered to keep her company, that is all!'

'A pretty intimate way of keeping company, I think!' They felt ashamed and I ordered them off. They moved and the girl also began to follow them. I held her back. I had seen her once and I could guess her to be Shivaram Bhatkar's daughter. This I got confirmed from her. 'Where do you think you are going?' I shouted. No word from her. I had half a mind to chastise her but thought I had no right to treat another's daughter in that way.

I asked her to go with me. She hesitated, then I had to drag her by the wrist. She looked at my wide, glowering eyes and thought it wise not to offer any resistance. I took her home, fed her, but that was not enough. I had to hand her over to her father and so we set off. On the way, I peeped in at Gopal's as a message was to be delivered to him. He offered me tobacco

on his palm, I took it and came out into the yard. But where was the girl? She had escaped, I requested Gopal to accompany me and find the little devil. Just then it started pouring. We had to wait for the rain to slow down. On the way, a farm-woman told us that she had seen a girl running in the direction of your house. That is how you find us here.'

My curiosity about the girl was more than satisfied. I could see that the girl was wild and that if she was not curbed in good time, she might bring disgrace to her family and ruin her own life. I told Gopal Joshi as much.

'What is to be done now?'

'Call her out, I'll take her to her father. I want to give that father of hers a tidy piece of my mind.'

I got up and went inside. My wife was boiling the water for the tea and the girl was warming her hands and feet against the fire in the stove.

'Chima is your name, isn't it?' She nodded in affirmation.

'One Gopal Joshi is sitting outside. He wants to take you home before it is dark. Drink your tea and come outside.'

At this the girl turned her eyes from me and steadied them on my wife who was transferring sugar from a large pot into a small one.

'Look aunt, I am shivering with cold, I can hardly move my limbs. I want to stay the night with you, I'll go to-morrow. May I? can I stay with you, aunt? Please, I will go tomorrow.'

This was something different. The girl had appealed the feminine in my wife, addressed her as aunt, pleaded with her which was enough to melt her heart in pity. She now pleaded with me,

'You have known her family and have seen how miserable the poor child feels. Let her stay the night, you can take her tomorrow or, better still, send word to her father. He will come to fetch her.'

When my wife herself was so anxious about it, I had nothing to say. I came out and told Gopal Joshi that the girl had been drenched to the bones and was shivering with cold, that I would take her home the next day and he could leave. He said 'Very well' and left. Then I turned to work, went into the cattle shed, saw that nothing was amiss, pulled out some dry fodder from the loft and threw it before the animals; washed my hands and feet under the spout and plucked some flowers for the evening prayers. Dusk was falling, so flinging a dhoti across the shoulders, I sat before the gods for worship. Finishing their prayer in a single burst, the children ran inside. My wife obviously was busy cooking and Chima had not moved from her place in the kitchen. From where I was sitting, I could clearly hear their conversation.

'How many brothers and sisters have you?'

'Brothers and sisters? Well, they need to be counted, let me see. I am the eldest, then comes Prabhya, then Ganga, then Damu, two year old Sundri and last comes Godi who is six months old. They add up to how many?'

My wife and Chima both burst out laughing. Outside, I was about to swallow a little water from the palm but couldn't help joining them in their laughter.

'Your mother must be finding it pretty hard to manage all these children?'

'Ah, manage indeed! Why should she bother, aunt? What am I meant for? Nobody thinks of preserving me as a nice pickle! Chima, wash Damu's buttocks, Chima, take out Sundri for a while, Chima, hand some sugar to Godi. It's always Chima. And what do you think mother does? After meals she cannot walk a step even for washing her hands, which she does on the spot. Then she takes little Godi under the end of her saree, sprawls on the ground and soon is fast asleep. Everything remains as it is, the leftovers are there.'

Crows flap in and out of the backdoor, peck at the food and scatter it all over. You know what they call mother in the village, they call her a sow.'

'And your father, does he tolerate all this?'

'Ah, my father! He is different, being husband to such a woman!'

This fire-eating devil of a daughter had me knocked cold with her words. I folded my hands to her metaphorically in complete surrender. No love for mother, no respect for father, counting brothers and sisters on the fingers! A sharp hissing sound indicated that my wife had poured oil and spices from a ladle into the hot vessel. The flow of conversation which had stopped for a moment began again.

'Such a nice smell; preparing plantain stew, I guess!'

'Yes, don't you have it at home?'

'No, we cook some rotten roots. Plantains have died out in the garden and coconuts are following suit. It never strikes father to water them. He is never well, his body always aches. He expects us children to do the watering. How the hell should we do it? He does nothing, sits in the verandah and smokes *biri* after *biri*. You should see the heap before him. "The idle wretch has ruined a precious garden," that is what people say to his face.'

'Whatever people say, at least you shouldn't say it', my wife tried to teach her the rudiments of filial gratitude.

'I would not have said it, but he beats us frequently and hard. In fact, beating is the only thing in which he rises to some heights'.

'How do you get your food, if the garden gives you nothing?'

'We don't, aunt! For days on end we get nothing but the water on boiled rice. Hunger becomes so fierce we feel like cutting open our father and sinking ravenous teeth into our mother.'

'What horrible things you say!'

'Horrible? Let me tell you a secret. Rice is cooked in the house every four or eight days, but not for us. We are treated to coarse grain bread and a vessel of awful gruel which has only a handful of rice in it. Morning and evening we are fed on that. Rice is cooked when mother is sure that we are asleep. Both of them eat it late in the night. I observe the entire thing. Then they belch in satisfaction and sprawl side by side on the bed.'

'You shouldn't say such wicked things!'

'Why shouldn't I? I know everything. I am sick of it all. I work like a slave all day and what do I get? Curses from mother and thrashings from father. So one day I ran away from home. I have been wandering for the last fifteen days and looking the better for it. Whatever the food, fresh or stale, it is a good bellyful. But people envy me even that. Everyone is anxious to take me home and throw me back on that dunghill, as if they are afraid that they might become poorer if they fed me for a couple of days!'

'It's not that. People think that wandering about might do you harm. Only this morning you were found with some young boys, weren't you?'

'No, I wasn't. They came after me, said they would keep me company. I thought it fun to go with them. Everybody else had treated me badly. They took pity on me and spoke such nice words!'

'What a fool you are, Chima, and you teach me wisdom! If Gaja Joshi were not to meet you to-day, you would have earned such a good name that nobody would have thought of taking you for a wife!'

'What is it that you want me to do? Are you prepared to give me enough food twice a day? Why not? You seem to possess plenty of paddy and grains and vegetables. Just look at those lines of onions hanging in such big clusters from the pole! At home we are hard put to find a single onion, even

if one fainted and wanted it for smelling. Yes, you feed me and I promise to behave myself. Then I won't lift my eyes to anybody. You can cut my throat if I do.'

What answer could my wife give to this? Chima had no use for mere advice. Her question was hard and blunt. It was wrong to expect foresight in her. She was incapable of seeing ahead. She wanted instant deliverance from a plague that constantly tortured her. Gnawing hunger from within and persecution of parents from without. This double affliction was hard to bear. The sins of her idle father and foolish mother were being visited on her. She could see through the hypocrisy of both. Nobody had shown her affection, none had fed her a morsel. There were no ties of love and devotion to bind her. That is why this vivacious and restless girl had escaped from that crumbling home. Being with no protection, she had sought greater freedom without stint or shame. What she so bluntly stated was stark, cruel experience.

The girl is a flaming torch, she can stay here only for a night, I told myself. Next morning I sent my servant to her father. He soon came and sat in the verandah. Poverty was writ large on his face. His dhoti, his shirt and his meagre turban showed layers of indolent and irresponsible existence. In his eyes could be seen a curious blend of stupidity and vanity. High forehead, deep, sunken eyes, long neck, lean, shrunken frame and dark, red freckles on a fair complexion. The sight was unpleasant. The unpleasantness of the impression could perhaps be ascribed to the idea Chima had given of him the previous night.

That day, it so happened that we were to celebrate some festival and invite a Brahmin to dinner. Early in the morning, taking her bath, my wife had entered the kitchen. She had prepared stuffing of *mug pulse*. This was to be rolled into balls, dipped into a thin mixture of rice flour and fried. Chima intently watched these opera-

tions. Her mouth watered. In her imagination she was already pushing steaming hot 'Shakununde'—for such was the name of the dish—into her mouth. She was not ready to budge an inch from the kitchen. The preparation of a sweet dish in celebration of a festival was a stroke of rare good fortune for her.

Just then Chima heard her father clear his throat in the verandah. 'Here comes the devil!' she muttered. 'Who?' asked my wife. 'My father', was the reply. 'It's good that he's come', said my wife. 'The sooner you get rid of me the better it is for you, is it not?' Chima asked. 'That's right' my wife said in annoyance.

'Aunt, your dish is going to be real sweet. Please don't deprive me of it or my wish will remain unfulfilled!'

'All right, you can eat and then go.'

I heard this conversation from the middle room and stepped out into the verandah. I said to Shivaram Bhatkar, 'There is a celebration in the house to-day and I had to invite a Brahmin. Now that you are here, you may as well be that Brahmin. Have your dinner and then take away your daughter.'

He didn't hesitate as I had expected him to. He too must be hungry like Chima and the smell of frying had already excited him. In a way, Shivaram looked poor and innocent. But when he sat for dinner in the afternoon, he gave us an unmistakable glimpse of his real self. When Chima came out to serve drinking water to the row of diners, he fixed her with his aggressive eyes and said,

'Had enough of wandering I suppose! Wait till we get home then this matter will be settled between you and me!'

'I don't want a scene when we are taking our food,' I curbed him.

He kept quiet throughout the dinner. Normally, Chima should have sat in front of us along with the children but she arranged for her plate in the kitchen itself.

She ate everything with genuine relish and was a sight to be photographed as she did so. She polished off four or five *shakununde* in the very first round, rolling them well and truly in ghee. As my wife was about to place two more in her plate, Chima said,

'There are seven or eight in the tray, aunt, I want them all!'

'Surely, not all at a time. You finish these and I'll give you more. Eat as many as you want, I have prepared plenty.'

That day Chima fairly took our breath away with her eating. She behaved like a camel storing water in his stomach against a long period of drought. She was to enter a land of unending famine and was stuffing herself with food to last at least a couple of days. My wife felt nervous with the thought that Chima might get sick over her plate. She was full of revulsion and also pity. While pressing down her fingers on the ground near the plate to wipe them, Chima said, 'Aunt, to-day you have really satisfied me. I have eaten almost upto my neck. You must have thought me a terrible glutton, didn't you?' Tears suddenly gathered in her eyes. My wife had nothing to say. Chima had forestalled her.

Shivaram Bhatikar who sat by my side performed equally well. That day my wife saved the situation only because she had the habit of cooking food in generous quantities. After dinner it was not proper to start immediately, so Shivaram washed his hands and slept in comfort for two hours in the verandah. Then he got up. My wife held out one of her own *cholis* and a saree to Chima and said, 'I hope to-day at least you will go straight homel'

'Aunt, they have branded me a shameless runaway long ago. If I had wanted to escape, do you think you could have seen me here still? To-day I have to go back. I owe it to you and to the good food that you have given me. To-day I go home straight like an animal on the leash, have no fear.'

'What can one say to a girl like that!' muttered my wife as she took out a length of *choli* cloth from an old bundle and offered it to Chima.

'Don't, aunt! If you think I'll wear it you are wrong. Mother is bound to use it for herself.'

'It's all right, take it. You shouldn't try to be too wise, one should accept what is given,' said my wife, thrusting the triangular fold of cloth into her hands. Then she came outside and said to Shivaram, 'Your daughter is a little strange, she needs to be treated nicely. If possible, you should arrange for her marriage soon. It is no use beating her in season and out!'

'I know how to treat a girl like that, I'll surely put her straight. I know the kind of offerings which a cobbler's god appreciates!'

I looked at Chima. There was no fear in her eyes but a complete lack of any emotion. She walked behind her father and as they turned the bund of the field, she cast a glance at us. I was afraid, she might burst out weeping while taking leave of us; that would have flattered our self-esteem. But she left with the same lack of emotion with which she had come and stood under the eaves of our house.

That night, I had a dream; Chima was baring her body to show us the black and blue marks of beating across her back and on her legs, 'Look how brave my father has been, and you despise me for running away from home!'

Then the entire house was caught up in the harvesting of paddy. By the time it was threshed and brought home, the Festival of Lights had been left behind. Then came the harvesting of betel-nuts. Plucking them down, bringing them home, peeling them, boiling and drying them was two months' incessant labour. We had forgotten even ourselves, no wonder that we didn't remember Chima. But she remembered us.

All of a sudden, in the first fortnight of December, she entered our house with the

early rays of the sun. I was in the verandah collecting the previous night's peelings of betel-nuts, and my wife was spraying water over the yard. Chima rushed to her, frightened. 'Aunt, please hide me somewhere,' she said. We were both surprised. Chima was out of breath and panting. Even on that cold morning, she was bathed in perspiration from top to toe; her short, quivering nose was red, so were her cheeks. She must have come running and staggering like mad. There was fear in her eyes and she turned and looked back again and again.

'So you have run away once again!' my wife remarked in a disapproving tone.

'Yes, I came because I was at the end of my tether. Hide quick, he will be here in a moment!'

'Who will be here?'

'Father.'

'Let him, he is not a tiger.'

'He is worse. He wants to sell me to a man of uncle's age. A man black as death, cataract in one eye, a widower with a brood of howling brats, some scoundrel from Banda-Savantwadi, came with a fat wad of notes; father sat counting in the night. We were to leave in the morning for his town, where the marriage was to be gone through. The whole night I couldn't sleep a wink, felt like pulling out the guts of the old fool sleeping out in the verandah, but how could I? Then I slipped out from the backdoor in the small hours of the morning and ran like hell over open ways and lanes and the countryside, straight here.'

'But why should you pester us? Why come here to put us in a fix?' my wife burst out peevishly.

'There, you are angry with me, aunt. I came here because I trusted you and I trusted nobody else. That day you gave me shelter from rain, gave me your saree, offered me tea. In other places they tried to dismiss me, and when they found that I

was not to be easily put off, they threw some food before me, thinking that I might poison their food with my greedy eyes. You were different. Your heavenly sweets are still in my soul. You gave me a piece of *choli* cloth when I left as if I were your married daughter. That is why I came here.'

'And a good thing you did! It was my mistake that I took you in that day!'

'You may say whatever you please, but I have decided to take shelter in your house, and if you betray me to my father, it is nothing less than a murder that you will be charged with!'

She rushed into the house, leaving us speechless with her bluntness, courage and an unfeminine aggression. But I couldn't blame her even if I wished to. She was in a terrible danger, that is why she had run to a place of trust and a safety and has placed her future at the mercy of our conscience.

'What is to be done?' I asked my wife.

'What else? Drag her by the arm when her father comes and tell him to do with her whatever he wants, let him sell her or push her in a well.'

'You mean, we betray her?'

'No other way. Do you intend to shoulder the burden of her for life? And such a shameless girl too! Suppose, to-morrow she runs away, none but us to blame!'

'What you say is true'.

'You can hide her for a while but not for good. Her father is sure to find out some time or the other. He might sue us for kidnapping his daughter.'

'Forget it. On the contrary he might think it a good riddance!'

'So, you want to wear out your shoes to find out a husband for her. Remember, we have our own children! Her father might even demand money, saying that, but for your intervention, he could have secured so much money by giving her away, but you intervened and now it was your responsi-

bility to give him that money. He would be quite happy with such an arrangement. I say, why invite this trouble?"

I was caught in two minds and could not decide. Both things were true. My heart told me not to abandon her, my common-sense warned that she, a perfect stranger, might cling to me permanently. For no reason, the girl had raised a storm in our minds. My wife's advice was sane; we had little time and less justification to meddle in others' affairs.

Just then Shivaram Bhatkar arrived with bloodshot eyes and flourishing a cane in his hand. He would have beaten the life out of Chima had he seen her there. He was possessed with the spirit of Shylock.

'Has Chima been here?' he demanded from a distance.

'Chima? Why no, Chima is not here!' I answered quickly.

'Why do you say no? She must be here! For the last two months she has been praising you to the skies!'

'Bhatkar, better watch your words! Do you forget that it was I who sent for you when she was here?'

That sobered him and he went away muttering something to himself. My wife who stood without uttering a word, asked,

'What have you done?'

'I haven't done anything. It just happened; instead of "yes" I just said "no".'

Chima came out. She had listened to our

conversation before the arrival of her father. Standing in front of my wife, she now asked, 'Have I become such a burden, aunt? Then why did you take me in your house? Why did you show me affection? You told me to behave properly and I had decided to do so, but that does not mean I should allow myself to be sold. I knew it, aunt, from the beginning. Even if I tried, people wouldn't permit me to behave properly. I have no intention of foisting myself on you. But now, you should not think ill of me if I flirted with any person or ran away with another!'

With these words, Chima flashed out of the house. She had not cared one bit for the contempt of the world but contempt from her aunt was something which she could not bear. We gaped in stupefaction at her receding figure. This was too much. The girl had endeared herself to me by her blunt fearlessness. 'Chima, come back!' I shouted.

She immediately turned her face which seemed to shoot out streaks of twisted fire. She stood rooted to the spot and said,

'No, not you. I want my aunt to call me back, or I won't!'

'Don't think of consequences, call her back!' I was about to tell my wife. However, it was not necessary. She herself cried,

'Come back, you devil! You really have humbled me!'

We regret that owing to the influenza epidemic in the city the publication of this issue of QUEST has been delayed.

Editor

the elections and after

by Ithuriel

THE Congress, observes a critic, has been reprieved; it has not been returned to power. As a comment on the general elections that ended in April, this is a clever observation which does not reflect the correct position. Political parties have to be considered together, not in isolation. Compared to other parties, the Congress has done markedly well. It has increased its majorities with the voters for Parliament and the State Assemblies as a whole; it has not been challenged at the Centre; and except in two States it holds a safe position. The communal parties, only one of whom, the Jan Sangh, received all-India recognition from the Election Commissioner, have fared badly. The Jan Sangh itself has been reduced to a regional status because it only did well when it adopted regional issues. The Praja Socialist Party suffered serious loss, both by the defection of some of its leaders and by the voting at the polls. The Communists who have done very well in increasing their votes, have done so more because the Congress sailed close to the Communist wind than because of any intrinsic appeal. The Communist success in Kerala, which has carried them to office, is no doubt important; but here again the Congress loss must be set down to regional difficulties which were too big for the Congress to manage.

Considering the fate of other parties in this region which came to office after political independence, the Congress might be regarded as having managed very well indeed. Having regard to the manner in which one section of opinion after another has been treated by the Congress leaders, there is reason for satisfaction, for Congressmen at any rate, at the result of

the elections. The frantic appeals of many Congress leaders for a better party organisation and for greater party loyalty suggest that the set-backs were not unexpected. At any rate, the prevailing mood is more promising than the old attitude that, if the people did not vote as Congress as they were expected to, the fault lay with them, not with the Congress. What is regrettable is the failure to appreciate that a new approach is required, specially because the voters of 1962 will be some twenty years removed from the revolutionary years of the Congress.

Kerala, it need hardly be said, was handed over to the Communists on a platter. The Congress approached the elections there in a defeatist spirit. Mr. S. K. Patil, who among Congressmen understands elections and election campaigns thoroughly, had observed that nothing would end the stalemate in Kerala. Nothing was to be gained by Congress personalities visiting the State and pleading for votes. But much could have been achieved by a judicious selection of candidates for the elections. Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon, who is an outstanding Kerala politician, was for some sentimental reason asked to stand from North Bombay. This did little more than confuse the ordinary voter in that constituency. Had he been asked to contest a seat in Kerala, he would have been an influence for the Congress which might well have won the few extra seats that party needed to hold office. As it went, there was no special inducement to the Kerala voter to vote for the Congress. A candidate for Parliament invariably influences voting in the State Assembly elections as well. For another thing, very

little was done to resolve the little differences between Cochin, Travancore and the Malabar districts which were added to the State under the States Reorganisation scheme.

The Congress, now functioning as the main opposition in Kerala, has a more difficult task in the next five years than it had before the elections. It is not, it might be said, a role for which the Congress is specially equipped with its record of popularity. And according to reports the lead is being taken by the Praja Socialist Party. It remains to be seen how the Congress develops. Meanwhile, the Kerala Communists are proceeding cautiously while pointing out at each stage that they are not like the Congress. Certainly, it is an unheard of thing in any other part of the world to see Communists drawing upon John Stuart Mill for support as the Kerala Ministry did in support of its action in releasing prisoners.

BUT in the last analysis it is not what happens in Kerala which will influence politics in the rest of India but what happens in the rest of India that will have its effect on Kerala. It seems that Congressmen are more affected by their defeat in that State than by their more significant reverses in Maharashtra, in parts of Gujerat, in Orissa and in the Bhakra-Nangal area. This last loss to the Communists is certainly surprising. Bhakra-Nangal is an area which has benefitted directly from the multi-purpose project. The families residing there, who are experiencing higher living standards than they had thought of before, might have been expected to vote for the Congress. A fair inference from the adverse vote is that a paternalistic government soon exhausts the sympathy and support of its people. Moreover, a certain minimum standard of life is necessary for people to want things. This does not mean that projects and other measures should be given up. But it cer-

tainly suggests that something which is necessary to instil a pride of achievement in the people most closely affected by such developments is lacking. The social work side of development schemes is not evidently conceived in a fruitful manner.

The linguistic fervour which cost the Congress many seats in Maharashtra and in the parts of Gujerat under Ahmedabad influence has its own lesson. The bilingual State for which the Congress decided in Bombay is in many ways a sound political arrangement. But by the manner in which the Congress went about it, the decision alienated both Maharashtrians and Gujeratis. It had all the appearance of a dictated solution, with no consideration for the sentiments of the peoples most affected. The procedure adopted was to isolate the problems of Western India and allow the emotions of the peoples most involved to boil over. By the time the final decision was known, the rest of India had lost interest. Parliament, when it reached the stage of considering the States Reorganisation Commission's Report, was confronted by a distorted picture which party discipline would not allow it to correct. As a consequence of all this, both the Maharashtrians and the Gujeratis felt that their point of view was being ignored, and when they took to demonstrations to drive their point home, they were confronted with Law and Order. It is a significant fact that the Congress suffered its worst reverses where it had had to resort to the police to maintain order. And the refusal to institute an inquiry later into police action aggravated feelings. When one considers that not more than twelve years ago the Congress itself was in agitational politics, this condition is far from satisfactory.

Much though one might prefer bilingual Bombay to any linguistic break-up, the Congress has allowed the regional agitation to go too far to persist in it. After three decades of agitation for linguistic states

and after conceding it to the greater part of India, to withhold it only so far as Maharashtrians and Gujeratis are concerned is to play with fire. Bombay City, it is true, cannot be regarded as a part of any one linguistic area. The Congress itself had recognized this when it made the provincial distribution of the party some twenty years back. Nevertheless, an agitation always goes much further than those who start it, mean it to go, and the Maharashtrian claim to Bombay has gone beyond any prospect of restraint. It would be wise to recognize this fact and make the necessary adjustments while yet there is time. After all, under a federation, it is more important that the different units blend harmoniously than that certain outward forms are imposed.

WHEN one talks in terms of a reprieve for the Congress, it is necessary to understand clearly what the alternative is. The communal parties might be passed over because they do not have the popular support they need. The Praja Socialists are in the unfortunate plight of being forsaken by their leaders. Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan has stated that he contemplates withdrawal from party politics, and his mind is working towards finding substitutes for the party system—regardless of the fact that one must be in a fairly effective political party before the system can even be considered for change. In the recent elections, it was a striking feature that the Praja Socialists drew on themselves much of the campaign fires of both Communists and Congressmen. They have done less well in these elections than they fared in 1952. But that is no reason why the process should continue as a steady decline. What the Praja Socialist Party requires is a rapid conversion into a party of action from a party of ideas.

The question which is in everyon's mind

today is: What about the Communists? They have in the past five years made a marked advance. In the States Assemblies, as a whole, they hold second place so far as the voting strength of the electorate goes. In some ways, the States Assemblies are an important index to the trend of public opinion, as the Lok Sabha is not. Nor should it be forgotten that the States Assemblies and the local bodies form the electorate for the Rajya Sabha. Nevertheless, it is easy to make too much of the Communist achievement—just as it is possible to minimise it. It would, for instance, be a fatal error if the Congress at the Centre and in the other States started outbidding the Kerala Ministry. It would be equally disastrous if the Congress adopted an over-lenient attitude to the little manoeuvres by which the Kerala Communists, in the tradition of totalitarian parties the world over, will seek very soon to overrule the Constitution. As a matter of fact, it is a grave defect of the existing situation that the Congress Government has itself set so many precedents for "amending" the Constitution and for using the instrument of ordinance to nullify judicial decisions.

The warning of the second elections is, to my mind, the reminder that, while professing adherence to democratic socialism and maintaining democratic forms and institutions, we have neglected the basic principles of Democracy. Even the freedoms that are guaranteed in the Constitution, amended as it is to restrict some of them, are not exercised. It is often said that we had more freedom under the British. This is manifestly incorrect and it need not be argued here. But it is true to say that we were more willing to exercise our rights then than we are now, and we were more vigilant. For this there are two simple explanations: In the first place, the Government has expanded its sphere of operations enormously. Secondly, that vague but powerful factor, the national

interest, has become an over-riding factor in the minds of most commentators on public issues; and too often 'national interest' seems to involve suppression of dissenting opinion, almost at the very source. This—the creation of an atmosphere of permanent crisis which needs wary walking—is not primarily the result of the Government's attitude. It is an inherent defect of a political system which combines adult suffrage with a low level of education. The Congress leadership has made use of this situation, just as any other political party would have done. Even now it is unable to see that the end of the road is a totalitarian State.

From the little we know of political movements, it would appear that ineffective democracies end in Fascism while ineffectual absolutism paves the way to Communism. Despite the trite sentiment that

politics is the pursuit of the possible, there is much to be said for the influence of ideas. Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan is right when he maintains that the solution is to be found outside the political parties. Where he appears to neglect realities is in holding that we can leave political parties out of our calculations.

Thus a heavy responsibility rests with the political classes and the educated generally, and the second elections have drawn pointed attention to this. It is not an accident that an attempt should be made to deride independents, men and women who owe allegiance to no political party. The attack comes just at a time when the uncommitted majority is beginning to show an interest in public affairs. It is a promising sign because it suggests that the weight of independent opinion is beginning to tell.

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variety

theatre

cinema

dance

Letter from Australia

THE most important cultural event of the Sydney Autumn has been the screening—curiously enough, at a hall normally employed for Protestant congresses—of Robert Bresson's austere version of Bernanos' *Journal d'un Cure de Campagne*. Imported to this country by an independent organization which calls itself 'Filmart Associates' the film's European *succes d'estime* has been repeated here, audiences once again responding to its spare but luminous beauty of conception and design. Concurrently with the showing of this masterpiece adaptations of two other great works of literature have been screened: Mark Donskoi's trilogy based upon the autobiography of Maxim Gorki and John Huston's version of *Moby Dick*. At the same time Lewis Milestone's unforgettable *All Quiet on the Western Front* has put in a brief re-appearance at a commercial cinema, followed by a threat on the part of its distributors that it may at any moment be destroyed.

The systematic removal by fire of many important film prints existing in Australia

is a continual source of concern to those who seek to preserve in this country copies of classics which, elsewhere in the world, are firmly placed in archives; in America the Museum of Modern Art, and in England the British Film Institute, exist in part to preserve by appropriate chemical treatment and storage the highly destructible material on which film is recorded. It has recently come home to film students in America just how urgent the need to preserve old film is, for the negative of Ernst Lubitsch's classic comedy *The Smiling Lieutenant* has actually disintegrated within recent months, thus leaving only a few copies in private collections, none of them at present accessible. Comparable in importance to Australian cinéastes is the knowledge that many very rare early Australian films—some of them of exceptional and neglected quality—are day by day mouldering in closed-down studio vaults, or being dispersed from private libraries at auction sale or on-the-spot purchase by people seeking the actual celluloid for melting down. After some years of fruitless discussion, it seems at last that the custodians of the Canberra Film Library are being stirred into provid-

ing the basis for a National Film Archive which will exist at first solely to rescue from oblivion those features based on Australian material which have previously only been known as names in textbooks. This will be a major step forward, and one hopes that it will lead to the formation of an Australian Film Institute which can act along the lines of its British equivalent, obtaining from distributing film companies copies of important films before they are withdrawn, and, at the same time, prints for preservation of significant contemporary films. At the moment, alas, all this is merely a proposal on paper, a hopeful dream.

Similarly hopeful and dreamlike is the vision of the Sydney National Opera House. Following on the world-wide competition for a design (the edifice to stand on the shores of Sydney's massive harbour and to blend with the city's maritime aspects and its low-lying situation relieved by the weight of tall commercial buildings) a prize was awarded to Mr. John Utzon, a Dane. Mr. Utzon conceives the structure as an integral part of the harbour scenery, the overlapping roofs reflecting, in a series of dramatic curves, the sweep of white yacht-sails across the immense movement of the foreshore, the entrances arranged to give arrivals the feeling of being part of the entire dramatic life of Port Jackson. The daring of the idea, and the startling appearance of the result (as one disgruntled commentator said 'like a circus tent adrift in a gale') caused, at first, a flurry of excitement; this has now subsided, and a note of sobriety is heard in which is pitched a somewhat apposite question: will the thing be built at all? It is said openly in certain quarters that the government will not agree to expend vast sums on such a project, partly at least because of Australia's truly appalling housing situation and the constant necessity of obtaining funds for less cultural but more functional public works. Certainly, the architect him-

self seems to have his doubts about his plans coming to fruition, for whereas upon receipt of his prize he openly declared his intentions of using part of it to pay his fare here, he has not so far booked a ticket, preferring to await the Australian Government's assurance on paper that it will make funds available to proceed. It is, of course, outrageous that the Government has not paid his air fare and the fares of his family, has not made a home available to him or indeed outlined its proposals in detail. After all the world-wide publicity, the payment of prize-money, the promises and the waving of a proud cultural flag, Australia cannot afford to lose this opportunity to further itself in its progress towards intellectual maturity.

IT is indeed fortunate that another recent opportunity—that of forming a satisfactory National Theatre—has been seized upon: the Elizabethan Theatre Trust has now entered upon the second year of its administration. Mr. Hugh Hunt's great achievement has been to build from almost nothing a satisfactory team of actors who can be called upon from radio and television to perform in the most demanding plays; for obvious reasons he has found it necessary to top his casts with well-known names—Paul Rogers is now appearing in *Hamlet*—but the teamwork in Mr. Hunt's productions is always exceptionally rewarding to watch. When it is realised that most Australians have gained their knowledge of theatre almost entirely from touring companies' provision of accepted classics or matinee successes, Mr. Hunt's achievement can be compared without facetiousness to that of his brother, who climbed to the top of Mount Everest.

The foremost achievement of the Elizabethan Trust was to place before the public the first important Australian play, *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, by Ray Lawlor. Intelligent and hard-hitting after

the manner of the socially-conscious American drama of the thirties (but, happily, devoid of any Group Theatre pretentiousness), the play strongly combines racy humour with the harshness of conflict with life's problems which besets the cane-cutters and their 'dolls.' Where Australian painting has been made internationally famous by Nolan and Dobell and the Australian novel in the shape of Patrick White's *The Tree of Man* has had its existence recognized, it is to be hoped that Mr. Lawlor's play will further assist critics of literature in England, America and elsewhere towards a closer study of this country's very considerable, though largely undeveloped, culture. When a civilization is beginning to shape itself, it is important that its augurs reveal nobility of purpose and confidence in the significance of the background against which they work. What Australian poets, novelists, painters must show the world is not that Australia looks exciting, but that it is a worthwhile place for a cultivated person to live in. This is a heavy task, but its challenge is being answered. Resourcefulness has always been a salient quality in the nature of this hard, forward-thrusting nation. The important thing is to ensure, by the preservation of film, the reprinting of important books, the purchase of important Australian paintings for Australia's own galleries, and the furthering of schemes such as that for the Opera House, some kind of foundation for the future, some settling of the shifting sands of a great but difficult past. At the very moment of writing this letter all these things lie in the balance. We can only keep our fingers crossed—and hope.

CHARLES HIGHAM

A Visit to Khajuraho

THE cult of Khajuraho is rapidly reaching its climax. The place which once drew thousands of religious devotees now

attracts devotees of the new god, culture. All foreign visitors, tourists, government officials, VIPs and people like us who are plain curious, feel that their cultural education cannot be complete without seeing these temples. The Circuit House is always, to use a cinema term, booked to capacity; and popular demand is so heavy that Government has felt compelled to promise to its patrons a new super-duper House with air-conditioning and all other amenities. The last lap of the road from Chatarpur is kept tarred and smooth so that VIPs might arrive at the place of cultural pilgrimage in a cheerful frame of mind.

The village of Khajuraho is the usual hamlet sunk in about one foot of dust. By no stretch could it be called a beauty spot. The whole area is flat and featureless, broken only by small half-hearted fields and stunted date palms from which, for lack of anything better, the village probably took its name. This site was chosen in the tenth century by the then ruling family to build a series of temples dedicated to the worship of Shiva.

The temples, then, are a mere thousand years old, and those that are standing at all are retained in a reasonably good state of preservation. The stone is not deeply pitted or chipped, the noses are intact. Of those temples which were completely destroyed, pieces of sculpture have been picked up and collected into an open air museum. These pieces confirm our conjecture that, since all the temples were built within a few years of each other, there was no radical difference between them.

The temples are of the traditional pattern. It is not the main outline or form which is meant to claim our admiration. The main block is just a shape, correct but no more. Even where a couple of balconies have been added by way of elaboration it retains its essential plainness. It is the incidentals—the decorations—by which the artist claims to be judged. And, as always in these

things, we are overwhelmed by the sumptuous lavishness of his art as much as by the beauty and technique. The sides of the temples are covered with perpendicular ribs which run from the top of the spire to within a few feet of the ground. Horizontal lines, less clearly indicated except at the base, run round the whole width. Thus each piece of carving, however free and flowing it is, has its own geometrical position. In some of the bigger temples every panel of figures is alternated with one of a *Sardula*, thus creating its own particular rhythm.

It has been said that the sculptures at Khajuraho depict every facet of life. Most facets of life, however, have been relegated to corners and the back row; and it is only one facet which enjoys the panoramic screen. For most of the sculptures depict an eroticism—a pre-occupation with sex—so extreme that it is difficult to describe them in words. There are sculptures of men and women copulating in every conceivable position; there are men embracing two women at once, etc. etc. No wonder it is difficult to find illustrations of *all* the sculptures of Khajuraho in any art book. For though the figures are life-size, they are considerably higher than eye-level on the temple wall; so that while—and this is also the ultimate praise of the sculptor—it is not embarrassing to look at them, it is embarrassing to look at photographs of them. Deprived of the distance and brought into sharp focus on black and white paper, the pictures attain a pornographic lewdness which certainly does not obtain in the stone figures. No, it is easy to see why it is not possible to publish many photographs of the sculptures at Khajuraho.

It is the women, as usual, whose bodies the sculptor has imbued with the greatest passion. It is the women who are the attackers, the chasers, the active, rather than passive, participants in every kind of debauchery and licentiousness.

What is it all meant to convey? The too literal worship of the phallic symbol? An illustrated *Kama-Sutra* for those who are illiterate and cannot read for themselves? Is it a lesson on how to achieve salvation through orgies of excesses? Or is it a depiction of the last phase of the *Kaliyuga* when women lose their modesty and the world is plunged into every kind of misery?

The *Kaliyuga* theory loses a little of its force because the naughty people in the sculptures are so obviously not miserable at all. They are having a very good time, according to their idea of a good time. Can the sculptors who worked on these figures have had any idea of arousing feelings of reverence or devoutness by their work? It is as a piece of secular art, surely, that the sculptures of Khajuraho are among the most magnificent in the world. The artist has enjoyed showing off the complete mastery he has over his art and his medium. Just as an *ustad* enjoys showing off his technical skill by repeating his *taans* again and again, so too the sculptor has enjoyed repeating his motifs again and again—the women and the tree, the girl looking into the mirror, the girl half-turned to pick a thorn from her foot. And at each repetition, we, the audience, are ready to applaud once more; knowing that he can do it, we are all praise and excitement because he *has* done it again.

The inner walls of the sanctum are copiously worked out, but the work is comparatively tame and conventional. The ceilings of the *ardhamandapas* is the only place where the decorative motif is not the human figures. There rises tier upon tier of lacy work which recalls those carved ivory balls, one within another which we can still find in curio shops.

The group of Jain temples, which are about a mile away, are altogether rather inferior to the others. The technique, the

general pattern and design are exactly the same. The figures have the same poses, the ubiquitous Sardula is still the recessed buffer between two panels; the woman under a tree, the woman with a mirror, the thorn, all the same motifs are used. But the fire is missing. The bodies are narrower and less lush, the faces are longer and more rigid, and sometimes the artist has fumbled. The body is twisted unnaturally, and the flow is lost, and what was a generous outpouring of treasures in the Shivaite temples becomes, here, an *embarras de richesses*.

It is a curious thing that, though the temple artist had absolute and complete mastery over the proportions of the human form, he did not know how to make a child. The very few (always curious, considering that these temples are dedicated to the force of life and procreation) children who are shown among the sculptures are utterly and hopelessly wrong. The suckling infants are no bigger than the palms of their mothers' hand; one little heir apparent, seated solemnly with his royal parents, is the size of his father's fist; while the boy who is helping a woman to fasten her anklet is a dwarf who fails to come up to her knee.

The Maharajas of Chatarpur have obviously taken a great deal of active interest in preserving these temples. Since nearly a hundred years they have been picking up pieces of broken statues and masonry and putting them back where they seemed to belong. They have not always been happy enough to find exactly the right place, one can often see that; but no doubt repairing ancient buildings was a more hit-and-miss affair then than it is now. Occasionally the patron has launched out himself and built a temple on his own among the others. There is a curious structure of three domes; a conventional temple spire, a dome of pyramidal shape which recalls Buddhist shrines, and the

round 'gumbad' which was introduced by the Muslims. As architecture it does not set anything on fire, but it is nevertheless a rather touching effort.

Some of the other efforts to conserve and extend the older things cannot be praised even negatively. Among the Jain temples, for instance, an enormous statue of Shantinath had lost its roof. Some kindly patron of the arts has taken it upon himself to give it a home of whitewashed walls and white and coloured bathroom tiles. The edifice distresses and embarrasses visitors in a way that not even the most abandoned sculptures can do. May Heaven forgive the man who provided the money and the workmen who did his bidding.

L. F.

Children's Art

Shankar's Weekly of New Delhi is, to repeat a cliché, the stormy petrel of political and illustrated journalism in India. Once a year it engages itself in a less controversial activity in the form of a Children's Art Exhibition. Paintings executed by children of all ages (except those in their second childhood) from all over the world crowd the editor's table and are later subjected to an unavoidable process of elimination prior to exhibition in the capital and publication in a special annual. This year, for the first time, this exhibition has come to Bombay.

As one enters the gallery, crammed with little pieces of water colour drawing, one receives an exhilarating impact of colour in profusion. The paintings come from tiny tots as well as early adolescents, and they are arranged with the age range clearly in view. The little ones seem to delight in the human figure, which they draw with a firmness of identification that is not understandable to the adult eye. The

eyes are big slots, the lips are full, the hands and legs stick out almost symmetrically, and the total effect is that of a puppet caught red-handed while trying to stretch itself.

The simplicity of the colouring is retained as the child artist grows into his school days, but the human face is from now on more meticulously painted. At first sight, one sees no difference between the styles of the four-year old and the eleven-year old. But the compass of themes grows wider; from the known individual the artist progresses to the mystery of social phenomena. The wedding ceremony, the town festival, the street fire—all these are treated with economy and precision. The paintings from Ireland are especially noticeable for their tendency to find a visual rhythm in the most commonplace subjects. The Indian boy and girl, by comparison, seem to be less curious and more conventional.

Gradually, the child artist is seen to assert himself. He discovers that colour can create mood; he takes an interest in composition; he has even his own mystic vision to convey. The black and white drawings of the American girl, Jenny Owings, for instance, show a tendency towards abstraction within reach of the child but too intellectual to be attempted by it.

The Soviet boys and girls, on the other hand, seem to be heavily influenced by the ineffectual realism of their elders. The discovery of new subjects from the life around becomes such a patent feature of paintings at this age that together they become an object lesson in Geography. The paintings from Egypt, Indonesia and Turkey, especially, chronicle the living present as effectively as a newspaper report.

One wonders how far these children will go when they grow up. Will they retain the freshness of conception and the mystery of execution when they become inhibited by consciousness of being parts of a particular society? Will they lose the abandon that is like life-blood to a creative artist? Most probably, without being unduly prophetic and pessimistic, one can say that the direct projection of immediate experience will become more and more difficult as they grow up. The wall of sex, security and selfishness will stand between them and the style natural to them. They will not only cease to be artists but begin to look down on their former efforts. But meanwhile let us respect them and enjoy their work while they are still unaware of their future.

K.G.P.



THE TEMPLE SCULPTURE OF KHAJURAHO

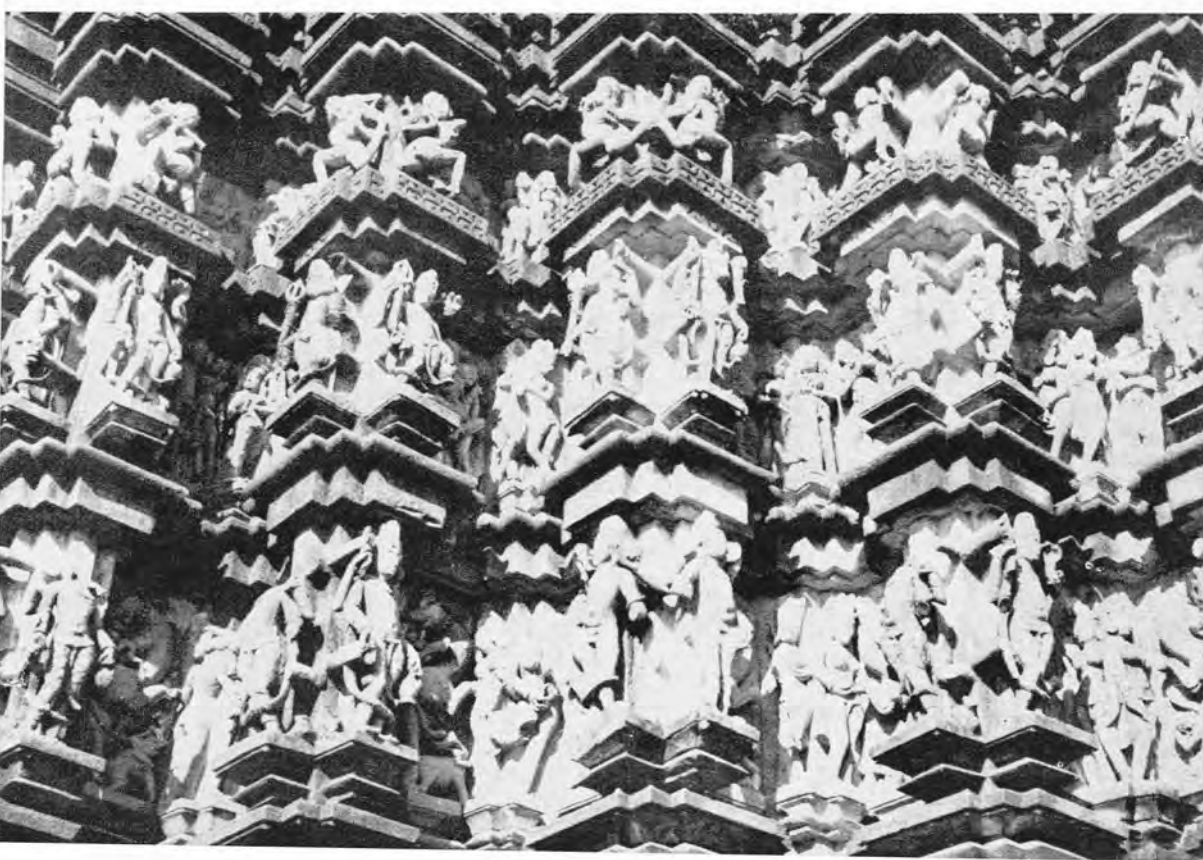
The erotic...



*...tempered by
an aesthetic faith*



Friezes celebrating the human ways of gods and goddesses





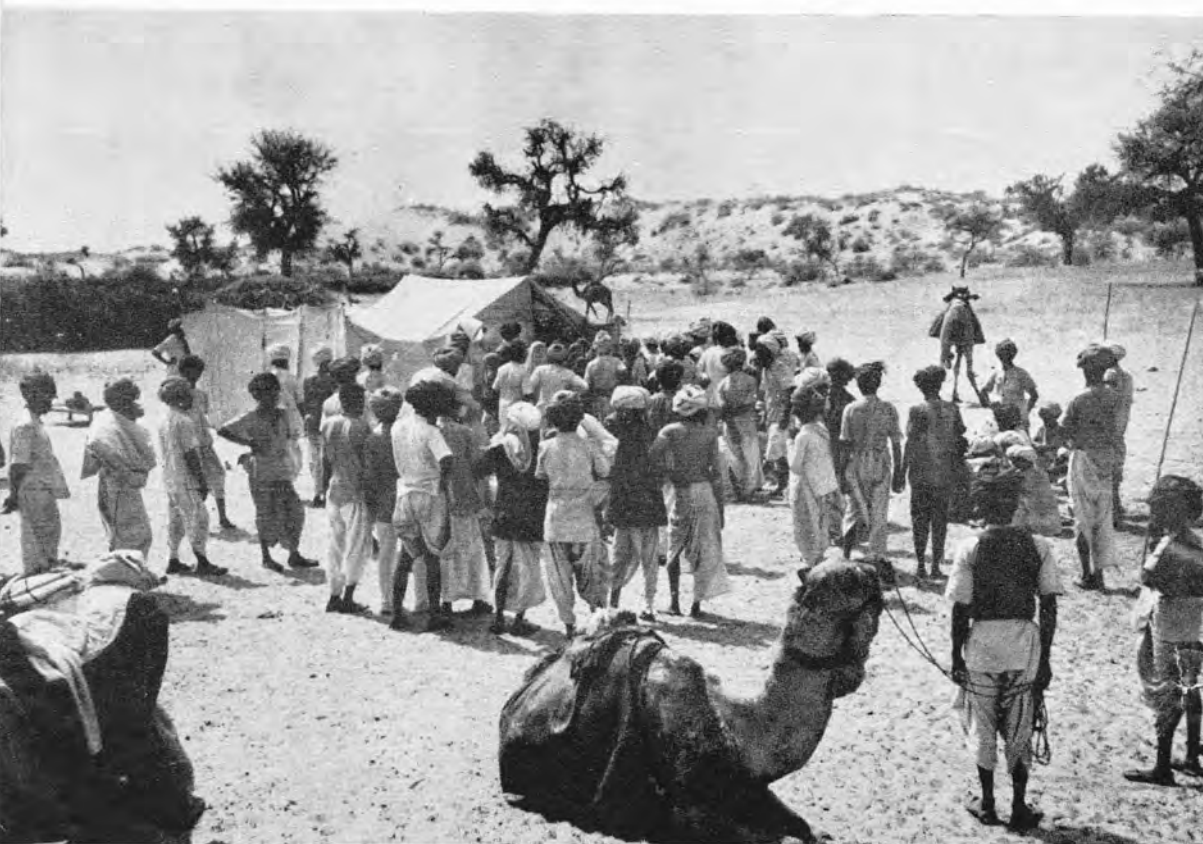
A tribal woman from Ranchi exercises her franchise

INDIA GOES TO THE POLLS

(ITHURIEL reviews the elections on page 43 of this issue.)

(Photos: Courtesy—Films Division)

Rajasthani men travel to a polling tent in the desert sands



TWO LITERARY CONFERENCES

the Writers' Seminar and Conference at Allahabad

THE Writers' Seminar and Conference convened by Parimal at Allahabad and held on 3rd, 4th, and 5th May must be considered significant in many ways.

Our Government at the centre and in the states have established agencies for fostering arts and letters and for rewarding and encouraging artists and writers. There are the various *akadamis* at the centre and in the states which appoint committees every year to select books for prizes, and hold drama competitions. Workshops are organised for writers to teach them how to write books for the new literates. Writers' and artists' and other cultural delegations are sent abroad and received in this country. Competitions are organized and prizes given for essays and dramas supporting certain of the Government's policies and programmes. Selections of representative prose and poetry are published by the *akadamis*. All these things show the Government's concern for art and letters and culture in general. It is also suggested in certain quarters that the centre should have a ministry of culture.

All this is to the good. But sufficient attention does not seem to have been paid by the writers to some of the dangers involved in state patronage in general and to the way in which this patronage is being bestowed in our country today.

For example the agencies through which the Governments act are all Government agencies. The *akadamis* are described as autonomous non-Government agencies, but in fact they are not so, at any rate not quite. The nominations to the *akadamis* are made by the Government. The members do not represent any literary or academic bodies. Fellows to these *akadamis* have yet to be elected. The Sahitya Akademi has its own language-wise advisory bodies, also nominated by the Government. The committees which scrutinise books for prizes are appointed by the Government. The members of the delegation sent abroad are nominated by the Government. This method leaves considerable room for partiality and favouritism and for misgivings in the minds of the public. It is often discovered that persons nominated to consider books for prizes are not competent to consider the books that come before them. In some states the Governments exempt only certain types of plays from the entertainment-tax and allow the use of Government-owned theatres only for the production of certain types of plays.

The disbursement of so much money and the bestowal of such favours are considered by some as a sign that the Government is awake to its responsibility to literature. But they do not seem to see the

arbitrariness and unfairness involved in the way in which this is done. What is more, they do not seem to see the control that is involved in the kind of Government patronage and the consequent restriction on the writer's freedom.

It is against this background that the conference at Allahabad should be viewed.

The conveners, a small body of young writers in Allahabad, had sent out a very carefully drafted and comprehensive questionnaire to about a hundred and fifty writers and others. It covered almost all the aspects of the relations between the writer and the State.

Between fifty and sixty people sent answers to the questionnaire. These answers were analysed by the conveners and the analysis was presented at the conference.

The conveners had invited writers from all over the country. Not all of those who were invited came but quite a few did. Tara Shankar Bandyopadhyaya, the well-known Bengali novelist; Sundaram, the Gujarati poet; Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Assamese poet and writer; K. Shivaram Karanth, Kannada novelist; Lakshmana Shastri Joshi, Marathi thinker; Prabhakar Padhye and R. B. Joshi, Marathi writers; Yashpal and Ilachandra Joshi, Hindi writers; S. H. Vatsyayan, Hindi poet and writer, were among those who had come from outside Allahabad. Among the local writers who took part in the conference were Dr. Dhirendrakumar Varma, Professor and Head of the Department of Hindi, University of Allahabad; Prof. S. C. Deb, Professor and Head of the Department of English, University of Allahabad; D. Ram Kumar Varma, Hindi critic and poet; Sumitranandan Pant, Hindi poet; Raghupatisahay 'Firaq', Urdu poet; Upendranath 'Ashk', novelist, and many other younger writers.

The opening and closing sessions of the conference were open to the invited public,

but the discussions were confined to the members of Parimal and the invited writers. Their number came to about sixty. This made the whole body compact and helped to keep the tone of the discussion serious and at a fairly high level.

The conference was inaugurated by 'Sundaram' and presided over by Tara Shankar Bandyopadhyaya. In his opening address Mr. Bandyopadhyaya said, 'There must be no surrender of conscience even to the highest human organization for any reward, recognition or consideration. We are the conscience of the society and what we may personally gain through the sacrifice of the conscience will be debited against the happiness of the future generations to come.'

What Mr. Bandyopadhyaya said in the beginning sums up, in a way, the conclusions reached by the conference.

After the inauguration on the evening of 3rd May there were held four commissions on the 4th and 5th, at which the following topics were discussed in detail:

- (1) *The Writer and State Patronage*
- (2) *The Writer and Planning*
- (3) *The Writer and State Publishing and*
- (4) *The Writer's Welfare.*

It was decided in the very beginning that no resolution or statement would be drafted and passed at any of the commissions or at the concluding session of the conference. This did away with unnecessary heat and made for free, frank and fair discussion. Although no resolution was passed, some general conclusions were reached as to what attitude it would be desirable for writers to take in relation to the various issues involved.

It was generally agreed, for instance, that the various akademis, committees, etc. should be reconstituted on a thoroughly democratic basis and made entirely independent of Government control and inter-

ference. Prizes, awards, etc. should be given by these akademis. No prize should be given to any book during the first five years of its publication. The selection of delegations should be left to these akademis. The restrictions on the writings of persons in Government service should be relaxed. The proposed Copyright Act should be revised and the rights of the writer should be better protected than they are. The planning of the Government does not imply any change in values and has not created any enthusiasm among writers, and in any case it would be wrong to expect the writers to write to the dictation of the Government or of the party in power. State publishing and wholesale State buying would lead to a kind of monopoly and also to some kind of favouritism, and, hence, it will be harmful to the freedom of the writers. If the State wants to publish, it may publish classics and translations of classics. It should encourage the publication of scientific and scholarly works, and of creative work of merit by giving financial aid to akademis, research institutions, universities, literary associations, etc. It was suggested that writers should try co-operative publishing. It was emphatically stated that the State should not publish text-books and contemporary creative work.

As regards writers' welfare it was felt that no criterion in terms of income could be laid down. But it was generally agreed that the State should create conditions favourable to the general welfare of the writers. It was suggested that this could be done by a reorientation of the general education policy, by raising the standard of education and of living, and by encouraging the establishment of libraries, etc. It was thought that the whole question was how to create a taste for good literature.

On the whole it was felt that it was the duty of the State to aid and encourage literature in every possible way but that it was

not proper for it to use the writer or his writing for its own ends. The writer can best serve society by being free to do his creative work in his own way.

The role of the writer in relation to the State was discussed and considered from many points of view. There were some among the speakers who, for instance, felt that the creative writer had a mission to fulfil, that he was an instrument of social revolution and that as the State, too, was an instrument of social revolution he should identify himself with the State. The opposite view that creative writing was not a means to something else, that it was an end in itself, that social or any kind of revolution was not the creative writer's function and that his creative activity should not be made subservient to any other activity was also put forth. This was the view that appeared to be generally acceptable to the majority of those who took part in the discussions.

The Allahabad Conference was probably the first of its kind held in any part of India to consider the relation between the writer and the State and all that it implies. Although only a few writers from outside Allahabad attended the conference they came from such far off places as Gauhati, Pondicherry, Mangalore, Bombay and Wai, and all must have gone away satisfied that at least the problem was thoroughly discussed. The conference served to clarify the issue and to bring it to the forefront. It is very essential that writers be made conscious of their rights as well as their duties and responsibilities in the matter. More such conferences should be held within small regional units to enable a larger number of writers to consider the problem.

The Conference was given good publicity by most of the English and Indian language papers of U.P. and North India. Some even carried editorials dealing with some of the issues raised at the conference.

R. B. JOSHI

the Marathi Sahitya Sammelan

THIS year the general elections and the reorganisation of the states preoccupied even the minds of our writers. Consequently, the Marathi Sahitya Sammelan had to be postponed to the late summer. This year the Sammelan was of special interest on two counts: it moved to a non-Prohibition area for the first time after its ambitious New Delhi excursion, and it had as its President this year Prof. Anant Kanekar, a writer acceptable both to the old and the new. It was also the first time that writers from all over Maharashtra were meeting in the Marathwada, a part of Hyderabad only recently integrated with the new Bombay State. It was but natural that current politics should dominate the atmosphere of discussion. There are no such things as purely literary matters; and all those who had journeyed to Aurangabad for the Sammelan were expecting to find their political aspirations aired in one way or another.

For the sake of a pun, one may say that boos and booze enlivened the somewhat solemn proceedings of this session. The boos were reserved for those dignitaries who tried to justify the bilingual state or to counsel a temperate course of action for the achievement of Samyukta Maharashtra. The booze was not evident, fortunately, in the talk that went on, but the very guarantee of its availability was romantically reassuring.

Prof. Kanekar's presidential address was erudite beyond expectations. Full of quotations from authoritative sources, it maintained that language was an integral part of one's cultural consciousness. It was an indispensable instrument of civilized communication and the only rational basis on which politico-social organisation in a democratic state could be achieved. Kanekar ridiculed the erstwhile protagonists of cosmopolitanism, saying that it was an adulterated attempt designed to suppress the inviolability of linguistic demands. Kanekar spoke

with great gusto, almost relish, and turned an otherwise heavy speech into a timely expression of the sentiment that binds Maharashtrians together.

The resolution on Samyukta Maharashtra shrivelled up all the other resolutions. Kaka-saheb Gadgil made a tricky proposition about the ways and means to achieve the goal. His argument was torn to shreds by the historian, Datto Waman Potdar, in a speech blending felicity of wit with calculated reasoning. This bachelor's performance was one of the memorable highlights of the conference. The radical argument was supported eloquently by Prof. G. P. Pradhan of Poona and Narhar Kurundkar, a critic from Nanded in Marathwada. Followed the resolutions on the integration of literary bodies throughout Maharashtra and on the controversial Copyright Bill (which, at the moment of writing, has already become an Act)—resolutions which were passed without much ado.

The Sammelan was rather a tame affair, perhaps unavoidably so, in its other manifestations. For some time past, it has been a tradition to organise a subsidiary conference in the nature of a symposium or two. This year certain well-known and serious-minded critics discussed a couple of topics, viz. "Aesthetics is the only basis of literary criticism" and "Content and Expression". Because of the paucity of speakers the two subjects got irretrievably mixed up during two perfectly boring sessions. One only realised the completely diverse scopes of the written and the spoken word. Abstruse argument, un-accompanied by illustration, is bound to grow foggy. Such was the case with almost all the contributions to the two symposia. Prof. W. L. Kulkarni presided over these and could not unravel the confusion.

A 'Kavi Sammelan' (Meeting of the Poets) for the benefit of literary bobby-

soxers was also organised. The difference between attractive rhetoric and unassuming poetry was hardly caught by the audience. Eminent poets ground through the same old groove of long-appreciated products. The few good ones were so hopelessly sandwiched between insignificant poetasters that it was a miracle some genuine poetry came through at all. The pity of it was that the communist bard, Amar Shekh, as good as took the reigns in his hand and 'moved' the audience. Meanwhile one wondered at the verbal atrocities committed by insatiable enthusiasts squatting at the feet of the Muse.

An exhibition of photographs and manuscripts adjoining the venue of the conference was a sincerely organised effort. The Department of Archeology and the Deccan Institute of Research, Poona, were responsible for the objective arrangement of the

exhibits, which showed the glorious past of Marathwada in the form mainly of sculpture and literature. Many who had come for the Sammelan took the opportunity to pay a visit to the caves of Ajanta and Ellora, preferable in a way to highbrow confabulations.

Looking back, one thinks of the Sammelan as a great jamboree for adults, either exulting or repenting over the results of the elections (depending on the success or failure of Samyukta Maharashtra candidates) and having a peck at literary problems by the way. The Sahitya Parishad, which organises the Sammelan, will have to put in a year's hard work at such tasks as the compilation of History of Marathi Literature before it enjoys another picnic next year on the shores of the Konkan. With Prof. Kanekar at the helm, this responsibility will not be forgotten.

D. G. NADKARNI

SCENT OF LIGHT

Those who live in the sun have perfume,
And carry the scent of light.

Even weeds, those that have groping
tendrils,
holding small flowers
Filled with colour, yellow, blue,
have perfume for detection,
And carry the scent of light.

Then birds and dust, though seldom
 companions,
 recall their fleeting touch,
And carry the scent of light.

We who live in the grovelling darkness
of our hidden thoughts
Could perhaps with profit follow them,
and find that visible words also
Carry the scent of light.

MONIKA VARMA

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CONVERSATIONS WITH MR. NEHRU by Tibor Mende (Secker and Warburg, 10s 6d.)

THIS book is a record of four sittings of conversations with Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, somewhat in the fashion of that of Mr. Norman Cousins of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, who published his dialogues with Nehru several years ago. This book makes more interesting reading not because Nehru's views have undergone a metamorphosis or have taken on a more interesting colour, but because Mr. Mende is the more astute journalist and is much more acquainted with conditions in this part of the world. Mr. Nehru's views on world problems have remained more or less the same over a number of years and he has had the good fortune of having his views better publicised than most. Therefore, there is no air of novelty about them. But Mr. Nehru has the gift of felicity and his arresting personality lends a magic touch to whatever he says.

Let us start with the twice-expressed opinion that the Communist ideal and the the Socialist ideal do not differ very much (p. 61 and p. 97). This is Nehru's argument for having no ideological aversion to the Communist ideal of society. Now here, as elsewhere, Nehru repeatedly refers to the effect of Gandhi's personality and doctrines on him. He explains his foreign policy in terms of Gandhi's teachings. (His tribute to Gandhi is handsome and worthy of a noble pupil. It acquires an added significance in view of the opinion-campaign already started by his cronies that Nehru is a greater man than Gandhi.) Nehru says that he applied his scientific mind to the Gandhian doctrine of ends and means and came to the conclusion that every right action must have, to that extent, a right result, and that every wrong action must have a wrong result (p. 31). How does then Nehru expect the wrong methods of the communists (which he

abhors) to produce the communist ideal (which he admires)? Is he not aware of the monolithic nature of the communist action and ideology? Is it not sloppy thinking which refuses to distinguish between communist and socialist ideals?

This business of ends and means reveals the nature of Nehru's thinking on another important issue. When Mr. Mende observes that economic planning very often poses the problem of ends and means Nehru somewhat sharply asks: 'What do you mean by ends and means in economic planning?' and goes on to state: 'We are functioning in a democratic set-up. If something is acceptable to Parliament, well, it is the democratic way of doing.' (p. 37). And yet, after a while, he talks of the evils of the concentration of power. He seems to ignore the fact that concentration of power in the hands of the leadership or of the bureaucracy makes nonsense of the democratic set-up (especially in a big country like India). Mr. Tibor Mende, with a better conception of the implications of his question, explains how planning does raise moral issues. But this explanation is lost in the interesting irrelevancies which follow, and the Prime Minister is ready, later on, to say that 'communism does not come in in, say, engineering. If we have a dam, well it is a dam. It is not a communist dam'. But a dam built with slave-labour even if sanctioned by a democratic Parliament does not cease to be tainted by slave-labour.

The unfortunate fact is that the Prime Minister's tender attitude towards the communist ideal clouds his vision, and his entire relationship with the communist world has been compromised by these predilections. Of course, he quite bluntly states that he does not like dictatorships, that he does not like authoritarian regimes (p. 98). He also says that he is deeply convinced that the methods employed in certain communist societies, that is, too much coer-

cion and suffering, are not the right methods. (p. 32). But then he asks: 'Who am I to criticise the methods they have adopted?' (p. 98). Now, here he is perfectly right. But then why all the fraternising—especial fraternising—with countries which adopt these brutal methods? Why the enthusiastic exchange of cultural missions, predominantly with communist countries, as if culture thrived on these methods? And why all the red cultural shows, which are soaked in the blood of the Hungarian martyrs?

In this context, Tibor Mende's question about crusading ideologies and about their techniques of psychological penetration and long-distance mass-indoctrination acquires great importance; and Nehru's reply to it is also very significant. He said that the danger was real only if there was some kind of a vacuum in the people's mind. (p. 8). This is one of the more penetrating observations of Mr. Nehru. To fill the vacuum in the people's mind with democratic thinking is, in fact, the only real and reliable way of fighting totalitarian ideologies. The question is whether Nehru has the sort of ideology which would immunise the people's mind against indoctrination. The thinking done around the Second Five-Year Plan would be illustrative here. The statist approach to planning does not become a positive democratic ideology because a democratically elected Parliament rubber-stamps it—and it certainly has no power to resist the ideology of Soviet planning; in fact, it has the danger of becoming its accomplice.

There is something in Nehru's argument that the people would be prepared to put up with delay, if they realised that they were going in the direction of progress (p. 48)—but that surely is no substitute for a positive ideology. On the strength of the wonderful heritage of Gandhian ideology Nehru could have evolved a new democratic ideology (as Dr. Lohia and Jayapra-

kash have done, in their own different way, to a certain extent), and his failure to do so is his great failing. He seems to be unaware of this dangerous gap in his achievements, and his unconcern about the ideological impact of his communist fraternisation seems to flow from this. This lack of ideological achievement constitutes a great weakness in the education of the people. It is not an accident that the achievements of the Nehru Government in the field of education are the most meagre. Nehru has failed to inform the people with an ideology which would give their life a meaning and endow their endeavours with a purpose.

Indo-American relations form another section of the book which shows Nehru's indifferent thinking. In the first place, Tibor Mende lacks a correct appreciation of the American position. This self-confessed champion of 'a judicious mixture of force and persuasion' (p. 57) may not be able to adequately appreciate the position of a country which swears by individual enterprise. He proves this by omitting some very vital points while formulating American objections to Nehru's attitude. For instance, it would not be correct to say that responsible Americans say that India 'is not with us, so she is against us.' (p. 91). In fact, the complaint most often heard from the Americans is that India is neutral in Russia's favour, which means that she is really not neutral. It should also be understood that responsible Americans do not mind Nehru criticising America. What they resent is unjust criticism. And Nehru has now, by implication, confessed to this charge, because he has admitted that the U.S. policy is not as rigid as he thought it was.

Actually the events of the last few months have demonstrated that Nehru's foreign policy, in practice, was based on a number of misconceptions. Nobody need quarrel with his policy of non-involvement,

which, quite obviously, is suited to the history, temper and requirements of the Indian people. But is it quite correct to say that America takes only a military view of things? How would you then explain their large-scale aid-programme? Is it indicative of fair-mindedness to say, as Nehru does (p. 67), that the Americans give aid because 'they have developed an economy which demands throwing money about—just for their own sake.' Does Mr. Nehru stop to consider how little of the national income of America is involved in this aid-business? And is this not worse than not thanking the Americans for giving aid, as has repeatedly happened on the Indian side?

The implication of Nehru's charge that America takes only a military view of things is that America is the aggressive power and that Russia's actions have to be viewed in the light of its defence-needs against this aggression. Nehru's other charge against America was that she, indirectly at least, encouraged colonialism, whereas Soviet Russia opposed colonialism and thus appeared to be the liberating force. But what do recent events in Egypt and Hungary prove? Have they not belied these favourite assumptions of India's foreign policy? Tibor Mende, discreetly enough, did not ask Nehru about Soviet colonialism (as he did not ask him about Kashmir). Nehru has always argued that the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe is not colonialism in the accepted sense of the term. And about the Baltic states he has observed a total silence. But Nehru does not seem to have any objection to using the phrase 'new kind of colonialism' when it comes to the colonialism 'based on powerful military resources and calling itself self-government' (p. 133). Does he feel justified in calling this colonialism because it exists in Africa, where colonialism of Nehru's historical conception has long existed and, therefore, does no

violence to his fine sense of definitive propriety?

But such questions are not asked in this book. There is practically no cross-questioning here, firstly because of natural diffidence in the presence of a great man and secondly because Tibor Mende appears to share many of Nehru's opinions. This does not, of course, detract from the quality of the book. Mr. Mende has revealed himself as an accomplished and thoughtful questioner; and Nehru has the faculty of expressing his thoughts with clarity, felicity and feeling which render anything which he writes or says not only interesting but arresting.

PRABHAKAR PADHYE

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. A symposium. Edited by J. R. Chandran and M. M. Thomas. (Published by The Committee for Literature on Social Concerns, Bangalore.)

THOUGH the Indian Constitution has accepted the principle of religious freedom, very little is said about the subject. The Committee for Literature on Social Concerns has done well to publish this little book on the subject, in which the various contributors differ so much that an editorial warning has to be uttered that words used by one writer in one sense need not necessarily have the same meaning for another writer. It is not a discussion but an expression of views.

The common factor in five of the eight articles is a plea for the freedom to convert. Mr. P. Chenchiah, himself one of the finest types of Indian Christian, softens his plea by requiring a better approach to religions. But basically the contention of all these five writers is that if freedom to convert is denied, the secularism of the Indian State is in danger and what will take its place is Hindu dominance. If there was any doubt about the necessity for further discussion, these contributions will certainly remove it.

It is not possible to appreciate the secular

ideal without a serious effort at understanding the historical background. The articles of the Constitution relating to this issue of religious freedom have been only explained by Mr. P. M. Saprú from a legal angle. But whenever he departs from the strictly legal, Mr. Saprú is lost, like the others, in an ocean of pleasantries. He is impressed that the 'founding fathers' were scrupulously fair to all religions. He comes very near seeing that the Constitution is concerned more with the individual than with institutions but somehow the point eludes him. 'The secular state,' he writes, 'is not an unethical state.' What he fails to point out is that it is very much the ethical state. For the first time, the rights of religion are subordinated to public order, morality and health. Whatever may be the degree of intensity of one's beliefs, the demands of order, morality and health are not to be ignored. The 'founding fathers writ better than they knew.' In fact, had they fully understood it all, they might well have shrunk from this article. And if it were fully understood now, many things that are permitted would have to be frowned upon.

Secularism is not religious neutrality. It is the outcome of realizing that religious neutrality, even when benevolent, is inadequate. The practice of neutrality involved the support of organised religion even against the individual. Secularism should mean the protection of the individual against social tyranny. Sometimes, it might involve support to conversion; at other times, it might mean opposing conversion. I think Dr. Raghunath Paranjpye came near the secular conception when he advocated the registration of conversions. But his idea was far ahead of his times.

Except Mr. Chenchiah, there is no writer here who has bothered to explain what conversion means. It is certainly not merely a change of labels. And mass conversions have still to be justified as producing great change. You can mass-

produce Christians or Arya Samajists or Muslims but you do not convert people en masse into Christians or Arya Samajists or Muslims in any religiously satisfactory sense. What is often forgotten in the heat of controversy is that the right to convert must follow the religious experience which the converter must have before he can exercise the right. India, it should not be forgotten, is a welfare state as much as a secular state. For a welfare state to accept that conversion is for material gain is to confess failure. And to say that it is interested only in the material progress of its people is to pitch its ideal very low. I am surprised that this point has not attracted attention in the book itself. That it should be passed over elsewhere is not strange, as it suits many publicists to ignore it. For there is a great deal in our public life which will not stand the scrutiny of what Mr. Nissim Ezekiel calls 'secular humanists'.

S. NATARAJAN

DEVELOPMENT FOR FREE ASIA by Maurice Zinkin (Chatto & Windus, 21s)

THIS is an unfashionably written book on an extremely fashionable subject. Here are none of the models and propensities and the rest of the jargon by which the seeker after the secret of economic development is usually repelled. Models and propensities are not necessarily bad but they do make for unreadability and they do allow the author to get away with a great deal of pompous nonsense. This book is easy to read and abounds in both commonsense and wisdom. But the lack of one over-riding thesis, like the Marxist's or the economist's, and the multiplicity of ideas, make pleasant reading but very hard reviewing.

The book does not discuss, except in passing, the desirability of economic develop-

ment; it points out that this is in fact what the great majority of the people of free Asia desire. The author shows what the implications of this desire are, and what attitudes towards savings, investment and profits, and towards political and social problems such as education and equality, are necessary on the part of politicians, bureaucrats and the general public, if the desired growth in national income is to be achieved together with the maintenance of democracy. The author's great range of knowledge enables him to make observations relevant to the whole of Asia, but particular attention is paid to India where Mr. Zinkin has lived for nearly twenty years.

The best portions of the book are the social and historical observations which exhibit the width of the author's experience and reading, his habit of seeing several sides of a question, and his power to sum up without losing balance. The chapter on land reform, for instance, says nearly all that is important on the subject in four pages. Mr. Zinkin has a passion to understand and a profound unwillingness to condemn. His world has no villains (except perhaps for the landlord) and few fools, only people who desire conflicting objectives. This makes the book necessary reading for those intellectuals who see all their opponents as fools or rascals, even though the tone of sweet reasonableness that pervades the book is incongruous with the frenzy and harshness of some realities.

The least satisfactory portions of the book are those dealing with purely economic issues where the author's customary clarity sometimes gives way to over-simplification. The sections on profits and on hoarding, and on the criteria of development are instances of this. But there are many books on elementary economics or the principles of planning, and very few on the general aspects of economic development which are witty, sympathetic and stimulating.

D. K.

INDIAN VILLAGE by S. C. Dube (Cornell University Press.)

THIS study of the village Shamirpet in Telengana near Hyderabad is a new departure in books on the Indian rural community. Case-studies have been done before, but they do not give such a comprehensive picture of the many-sided life of the village. Perhaps, as is hinted in the foreword, it is only an Indian who can understand and interpret the cultural background to give us an authentic picture of all aspects of village life.

The book is also pioneering in that it is not the work of a single sociologist, but makes use of the contributions of research staff drawn from various academic disciplines. This technique, borrowed from the American universities, gives the book an authoritative touch and limits the possibility of prejudiced judgments and the airing of pet theories. It should serve as a starting-point not only for sociologists doing work in other parts of India, but also for the political theorist who wants to check theory with practice, the social worker who is interested in the whole community which he serves, and the administrator. One wishes that for the benefit of this wider audience, the author had defined the more or less technical terms he occasionally uses, such as 'folk society' and 'pluralistic society'—terms and concepts which should prove useful tools in the layman's thinking about village problems.

The earlier chapters of the book deal with the setting (a map would have been useful here): Social Structure, Economic Structure, Ritual Structure, and the web of Family Ties. This part of the book may be said to refer to the statics of the village structure, while the last three chapters deal with the dynamics of the situation. Of the last three chapters, the chapter on Levels of Living deals with the factors

making for prestige in the village and indicates how the new criteria of status, like wealth, interact with the older ones, like caste and ownership of land. We are then given an analysis of the family budget and the standards of living of people in different economic strata of society. The chapter on Living Together should interest the social worker and administrator, who are concerned with making people work together, particularly in these days of Community Projects.

The problem of factionalism impinges on many aspects of village life and administration. Two recent studies by the Programme Evaluation Organization of the Community Project Administration have sought to analyze this problem in detail with respect to specific villages. Fortunately in the village of Shamirpet, the cohesive force of the caste elders and the village council has kept away the evils of litigation and bitterly fought Panchayat meetings. But the disintegrating effect of city life is visible in many of the cases quoted by the author. It is for the social reformer to devise ways and means of keeping the cohesiveness of the village group alive while at the same time permitting change. It would have been useful if the author had mentioned the legal powers of the Panchayat and the extent of their use in this connection.

The last chapter is an evaluation of the factors making for change in the village both before and after Police Action, the turning-point in Hyderabad, after which the tempo and variety of change was greatly accelerated. The conclusion seems to be that there is a great deal of change in the habits of dress, food, tools, and medical treatment. There is a lesser change in respect of social cohesion, occupational structure, and the replacement of barter by cash, but this category of change is likely to increase in importance.

Being a social scientist, the author does

not wish to point out the disintegration of structure which this second category of change implies and the necessity for the replacement of older values by newer ones rather than by a vacuum. The author believes that, in spite of Communism, there is no basic change in the world-view of the villager, whose principal goal still remains 'peaceful adjustment and adaptation to the laws that control the universe.' He does not succeed in reconciling this theory of preoccupation with the world of the spirit with the evidence of the spread of materialism and newer secular goals which he has himself presented to us. However, the reader will be able, by the time he comes to the last chapter, to draw his own conclusions in the matter.

V. K. BAWA

THE MEANING OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS by A. Powell Davies. (New American Library, 35c.)

IN the year 1947 some Bedouins of the Ta'amire tribe accidentally found some Scrolls in the obscure Qumran caves near the Dead Sea. The value of these scrolls was not immediately recognised. There were the initial difficulties of reading the script, of dating them and of finding out who exactly were the authors of these scrolls. Mr. Davies has told us, in a fascinating manner, the story of the discovery of the Scrolls, and the controversy over their readings and datings.

The Dead Sea Scrolls show beyond any doubt that Christianity is not a religion invented by Jesus and spread abroad by his disciples. The Scrolls, which have been dated as pre-Christian, contain Christian ideas in large measures. ('Christ' is not the name of a person. It is the name of an office, the office of the 'Anointed'. Literally, any 'Anointed One' was a Christ.) Mr. Davies has discussed how, even before the discovery of the Scrolls, scholars knew from the evidence in their

hands that Christianity was not established through some unique event as the Church of God, founded by his Son who came to earth to found it; nor were its gospels and sacraments what the pious and orthodox Christian theologians thought they were. Though the scholars knew these facts from the internal evidence of the extant Biblical literature, the layman did not.

Who were the writers of the Scrolls? Why did they hide their scrolls in caves after putting them into big jars? Did Jesus know the people who wrote the Scrolls? To the second of these questions no definite answer can yet be given.

The Scrolls were written by the Essenic order—a section of Judaism. The Essenic order believed in the Messianic doctrines. The parallels between Essenic scriptures and the Christian scriptures are so marked and so numerous that it is necessary to conclude that they belong to the same system of Messianic development within Judaism which, in the one case, remained Judaically Essene and Christian, and, in the other, expanded into Gentile Christianity. 'If the Scrolls affect our view (which undoubtedly they do) of how the Christian Church arose, obliging us to recognise that it was evolved from a Jewish sect or sects with many of the same doctrines, similar sacraments and an almost identical organisation, then it is necessary to draw some inferences from these facts of history.' (p. 93) And the conclusion is: Christianity, instead of being a faith 'once for all delivered to the saints' in Judea of the first century, is a development of one branch of Judaism into a religion which presently, when it mingled with other religions in the gentile world, developed by a natural evolution into the religious system, widely divergent within itself, that we know to-day.' (p. 120.)

Mr. Davies has argued that Jesus not only knew the Essenic order but also, most probably, actually lived among them for

some time. Mr. Davies has supported the views of Dupont-Summer, the professor of Semitic languages and civilisations at the Sorbonne, which startled the learned world as he discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls the language and conceptions of Christian doctrine and a prefiguration of the role of Jesus.

Though the facts have proved that the Messianic religion and Christian tenets have pre-Jesus origins, orthodoxy and bigotry die hard. Some of the clergy feel that the new discovery must be met with hostility and contempt. Mr. Davies has raised a very pertinent question: whether it is imperative for a Christian to be blind to facts unearthed by researches and discoveries or not? He has asked whether the Church should always be on the defensive in the face of facts? The Church 'must, sometimes, recognise that God can work through natural events in a gradual social evolution just as well as in some other way. Indeed, this is the way that He does work. A religion is not one whit the less because it has no supernatural origin, no miracles and too much uniqueness.' (p. 131.)

This raises a fundamental question. Is dogma an essential part of religion? Mr. Davies's account of the hostility of the clergy towards the Dead Sea Scrolls shows that the protagonists of religion do not want to isolate their dogma from their religious faith.

There is no doubt that 'recognition of the noble and the good in all religions' is a desirable thing. But that (to use one of the clichés of modern Oxford) is a value judgment. Mr. Davies, as a student of science, should not have felt disturbed over the hostility of the clergy towards the Scrolls. A scientific analysis might have led Mr. Davies to the conclusion that religion entails orthodoxy and orthodoxy in its turn entails hostility to unpalatable facts. Mysticism and religion, as practised by myriads of people, are different. The

discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has been a blow to the orthodox Church and its dogmas. One wonders what will remain of the Church bereft of its dogmas. The Church, most probably, will dissolve itself into something which is not-Church. The question whether we shall call such a state of affairs 'religion' or not will still remain debatable.

M. K. HALDAR

THE OUTSIDER by Colin Wilson (Victor Gollancz, 21s.)

To criticize a book that is described as 'a blueprint of the soul of the mid-twentieth century', and as 'a challenge to every thinking person', is perhaps a little hazardous. It may even be presumptuous, since outstanding literary critics have already conceded the claim. For that very reason, however, it is necessary to register our note of dissent.

The young author—he is only twenty-four—of this brilliant, though onesided, study of the Outsider's problem has a rare psychological insight. Given a sociological orientation, it should place him in the forefront of those who believe that the proper study of mankind is man. The Outsider's tragedy lies in his ability to see 'too deep and too much'. His interpretation of human existence as trivial and meaningless makes him a self-divided man. He wants to be unified, not at the level of bourgeois compromise but at that of the artist's creative ecstasy. And he wants to remain at that level *all the time*.

After examining the solutions adopted by different Outsiders in literature, like the heroes of Barbusse, Albert Camus and Granville-Barker and in life by Van Gogh, T. E. Lawrence and Nijinsky, and pronouncing them failures, Mr. Wilson considers Kirkegaard, Nietzsche, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. He ends up with the solution of religious mystics like William Blake, George Fox and Ramkrishna Paramhansa. The point that emerges from Mr. Wilson's

fine analysis is that the Outsider's salvation 'lies in extremes', and that the idea of a way out often comes in 'visions'; that is, in moments of intensity, when reason is suspended and the 'will to life' asserts itself as the ultimate truth of all existence.

This sounds somewhat imposing, but then, the Outsider would contend, there is no justification for assuming that the method of discursive reason is applicable to statements of psychological truth. One either understands them through the gift of empathy, or one does not. The Outsider's problem has to be lived to be understood.

What strikes the reader as curious is the complete absence of any attempt to relate the problem of the Outsider to the larger cultural context in which he lives. It is true that the human mind has a considerable degree of autonomy, and that it would be wrong to theorise about individual psychology as a logical deduction from the social milieu. However, it would be equally wrong to consider the individual's problems in complete isolation from the society whose morals and mode of existence inevitably determine, to a very large extent, how he would react to specific situations in later life. Even the Outsider himself is not always unaffected by his fellow-men: 'Other people are the trouble'. And how can one explain the re-emergence of the Outsider problem on such a large scale in modern times, if not by a reference to the tremendous material and spiritual transformation through which mankind has been passing since the Renaissance?

It is interesting to note that none of the Outsiders considered in the book is a woman or a natural or social scientist. Being an Outsider seems to be the privilege of men who have a highly developed imaginative faculty, capable of experiencing things whose objective existence is doubtful in the extreme. It may be argued that that precisely is the difference

between the Outsider and—not only the bourgeois but also the man of reason. But the important fact is that to the Outsider all others are not merely lacking in his perceptive faculty; they are anathema to him, as woman was to Schopenhauer and Newton to Blake. This is probably so because woman and the creative scientist are a living refutation of the Outsider's stand in virtue both of their creativity and their demonstrated ability to achieve emotional harmony by directing their creative powers to the realization of an impersonal goal. The religious solution of the Outsider's problem, of which Mr. Wilson apparently approves, is a solution only in the sense that euthanasia could be a cure, shall we say, for cancer. A. B. SHAH

CONFESSIONS OF FELIX KRULL, CONFIDENCE MAN by Thomas Mann (Secker & Warburg, 18s.)

THE approach to a great writer should always be circumspect. To a novel by Thomas Mann one comes with great expectations, ready to admire, to treat with respectful attention—to surrender one's judgment, if need be, in the belief that one has been guilty of imperfect sympathies, of incomplete apprehension. In other words, *Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man* is disappointing to this reviewer, but he dares not say so without some kind of preamble! Disappointing not in its power of analysis nor in convincing characterisation so far as the hero goes, but in general structure and in substance.

The story is thin and episodic in form. Felix Krull's confessions fall into three parts: childhood and youth ending with the father's bankruptcy and death, a period as waiter in a hotel after skilful evasion of compulsory military service and, finally, adventures in Portugal while posing as a nobleman. Krull is a superbly handsome youth for whom the women fall; he seeks pleasure and self-advancement with com-

plete absorption and his unfinished confessions end abruptly at the point where a majestic matron of Portugal summons him to her embrace.

Krull himself is convincing but his adventures are a trifle phoney. The literary resources of a great writer can make of Krull an original creation, can invest him cunningly with our human weaknesses and our fears and desires, and can make of him a magnificently amoral creature with standards of his own. The light thrown on our human condition is widespread and constant. Yet a sense of incomplete satisfaction remains, the feeling that great powers have been employed in vain.

We are told that Professor Erich Heller in a broadcast talk declared: 'With *Felix Krull* the world receives from Thomas Mann the gift which German literature has almost proverbially withheld from it: the great comic novel'. This is high praise but we are not able to echo it. Here is too narrow a theme, and the other characters are but foils. The breadth and strength of the great comic novel, the fullness of its action, are missing.

Thomas Mann himself in an interview on his 80th birthday in 1955, the year of the novel's publication in English and of his death, is said to have remarked: 'After I published the first 'Krull' fragment, I carried the rest of the book around with me for forty years before sitting down to actually write it I kept pushing it aside. Perhaps my most crucial reason for tackling 'Krull' again is that as I'm getting on in age. I've become more and more impatient for opportunities to make people laugh—to make them laugh constructively if possible, that is, to seduce them into amused self-recognition.' While Mann succeeds in seducing us into self-recognition, as he does elsewhere, we are not amused but saddened. We recognize the truth about ourselves, we know the enormity of the self-deception that we practise ;

but Mann does not make our laughter ring, he is always nearer to 'the tears of things'. His essential vision was known to us from the days of *The Magic Mountain*, and the leopard cannot change his spots. Mann can no more write a great comic novel than, to take an extreme example, Dostoevsky.

To see and to reveal the comedy of our human situation, to touch upon the follies and foibles of human vanity and desire with ironic certainty, these things are in themselves not enough to make the great comic novel. The gusto and zest for life on the grand scale, a wealth of characters and of situations, and 'Laughter, holding both his sides'—these are necessary, if a novel is to have the proportions of the comic epic.

It is always unfair to criticize a novel for not being what it is not, but it was Professor Heller's remark about 'the great comic novel' and Thomas Mann's own expressed intention to make people laugh that set the reviewer on this track. Let us return to the novel and examine it in and for itself.

The pattern Mann has chosen, of casting his story into the form of frank revelations and reflections by a man who looks back without misgivings on his past, has certain advantages for a writer who dwells continually on human conduct and the motives and emotions that lie behind it. The pattern allows for digressions and for introspection, but apart from the principal figure the characters generally remain sketches, transient figures who come and go at different stages. So it is with Felix Krull's story. He remains superbly endowed with vitality, but the others have no roots, they do not live and grow: the father in Part One, two women in the next part, followed by a young Marquis and his fair lady, and in the last part the matron of Portugal and her daughter. They fade out, each playing a minor role in an episode. Since there are no links of connection, they are quickly forgotten. Only Krull remains,

a plausible bounder when stripped of his lendings, with his amorous adventures forming the main story. It is difficult to enthuse over the plot or the characters.

The saving grace is in the quality of mind revealed by the writer and his wide appreciation of all that makes up life. Two or three brief references will serve to illustrate this. As a boy of fourteen visiting the theatre with his father, Krull sees Muller-Rose, a well-loved singer of the day, in an operetta and is thrilled. 'Yes, that was it: Muller-Rose dispensed the joy of life—if that phrase can be used to describe the precious and painful feeling, compounded of envy, yearning, hope, and love, that the sight of beauty and light-hearted perfection kindles in the souls of men'. Later, Krull is reminded of the Latin poet Terence's memorable line: 'I am a man, and I regard nothing human as alien to me.' And again, when seeking to touch the heart of the Portuguese matron's daughter, he pleads for an ever fresh outlook upon the world: 'One should always try to see everything, even the most common-place, the most completely matter of fact, with new, astonished eyes as though for the first time. In this way it wins back its power to amaze, which has faded into matter-of-factness, and the world remains fresh. Otherwise, everything fades—life, joy, amazement.'

Writing in the spirit of these observations, Thomas Mann cannot fail—though falling well below the level of his best—to hold our attention, to disturb our complacency and to offer new avenues for the spirit's exploration. R. C.

BABY DOLL by Tennessee Williams (New Directions \$3.)

BABY DOLL is the script of a film written by Tennessee Williams at the instigation of film director Elia Kazan, and based on two one-act plays written much earlier. The texts of these two plays are

printed in this volume, and for students of the craft of play-writing, a comparison with the finished full-length script is quite interesting. The two plays are in themselves rather trivial, the first providing an amusing incident which loud-pedals the sex-angle whilst the second has value only insofar as it gives a character study of an old unwanted 'aunt', fragile with age and pathetic in her attempts at a display of independence.

'Baby Doll' itself (or herself) is much more robust. We are asked to accept the improbable situation of an unattractive and aging small-town cotton ginner married to a luscious, moronic virgin wife of twenty. The marriage contract stipulates that the marriage will not be consummated until Baby Doll is 'ready' which she says will be the case when she is twenty-one. The story opens two days before her twenty-first birthday. The husband, Archie Lee Meighan, is having business troubles as a new Cotton Gin Syndicate has recently been opened in the neighbourhood and is gradually pushing smaller businesses out of operation. This material fact means that Baby Doll has a real grouse against her husband and is the basis for the scorn and contempt with which she treats him.

Here is a situation ripe for exploitation. I give full weight to the sympathy with the acquisitive instinct, but even more am I aware of the extent to which the constant titivation of the sexual motive must delight the average film audience with its preoccupation with sensationalism as against true feeling. I feel that even if symbolism, subtlety, and suggestion can be horribly overdone, the lack of them results in work of a single dimension which cannot satisfy the demands of a discerning audience.

But to get on with the story. Archie Lee needs business and he needs it quickly. The new syndicate is burnt down, and its owner, Silva Vacarro, hands over a good chunk (27 wagon-loads, to be exact) of his contracts to Archie Lee. Vacarro realises

that Lee has been responsible for the fire but makes a wild effort at patching up his strained relations with local business by making an indestructible ally. It works out much better than he had anticipated. While Archie Lee spends the whole day trying to get through the ginning with his obsolete machinery, Vacarro gets to know Baby Doll, plays a fantastic game of hide-and-seek with her, extracts a confession of her husband's complicity in the fire and arouses in her, for the first time, a genuine sexual response. When Archie Lee returns, tired but expecting that his improved finances will make it possible to pour at his beloved's feet the largesse expected of the human male, he finds that it is too late. Nature has beaten him. The young female has chosen the younger and more appropriate man for her mate. Archie Lee grabs a gun and runs amok, for he is now in the pathetic and entirely hopeless position of a cornered animal.

Tennessee Williams is no amateur in the art of play-writing, and 'Baby Doll' is certainly not amateurish. The story is worked out very effectively. The old aunt appears as semi-comic relief, Aunt Rose Comfort who does atrocious cooking and acts as a sort of chaperone to her niece. The atmosphere of the small southern town is well captured—the dust and heat, the stolid conservatism of the local people and their antagonism to 'wogs' and 'niggers'. However, the characters lack dignity and cannot engage our sympathies. This tends to make us think of the film in abstract terms, as an illustration of a peculiarly American treatment of the 'survival of the fittest' theme. The impatience and selfishness of a new couple concerned with satisfying their basic desires seem to override the claims of all weaker members of society. This becomes an ironic comment on the 'Good Neighbour Policy' motto swapped by Archie Lee and Vacarro in the course of the play.

LOLA CHATTERJI

"Dons Know Best ..."

Not always, perhaps, but at any rate where the government of Universities is concerned.

This may seem an obvious principle but recent events in such widely separated places as Göttingen and Tasmania have shown that academic freedom is by no means secure, even in democratic countries.

The international Committee on Science and Freedom has been established to protect the integrity of academic life and to explore the principles of fruitful collaboration between the scholar and society.

Science and Freedom

the bulletin of the Committee, is obtainable free of charge from the Secretary at 818 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury, Manchester 20, England.

Note: *Dons Know Best* is the title of an editorial article in the Times Educational Supplement, dealing with the recent crisis in Tasmania University, as reported in issue No. 4 of *Science and Freedom*.

correspondence

Sir,

In his report on the Asian Writers' Conference, published in your issue of Feb-March 1957, Mr. V. Anant has observed: 'Mr. Prabhakar Padhye and Mr. S. H. Vatsyayan were absorbed in questioning the nature of regional and linguistic representation. They were not concerned with fundamentals.'

As a rule, I do not bother to correct mistakes in the reports of newspaper correspondants. It is so much more fun to allow them the privilege of enjoying the tales of their own fancy and imagination.

But in this case I wish to make an exception, because the report has appeared in *QUEST* and also because it is a case of self-imposed ignorance. I had invited Mr. Anant to get from me more details about the Conference than he was apparently acquainted with, and he had declined the invitation with a British shrug of disdain.

If he had cared to understand things more diligently he would have known that the first thing we concerned ourselves with, after our arrival on the scene, was the agenda of the Conference, which, anybody would understand, is a matter of fundamental importance. I went to the extent of submitting a Memorandum on the subject. In the meeting of the Asian Secretariat, held on December 4, our suggestions were turned down on the plea that the original agenda was already circulated in July and that now it was too late to reconsider it. We could not raise this question earlier because we were not there.

We were not concerned merely with regional and linguistic representation, I had also raised the question of Asian representation, but at that late stage the question had become meaningless. So we tried to invite distinguished Asian writers like Dr. Lin Yutang and Chien Mu. But our efforts

were frustrated. In the event we could only concern ourselves with the Indian representation.

Although thus circumscribed we still tried to raise fundamental issues, as could be seen by our efforts (along with those of Prof. G. G. Gadgil and Prof. Adya Rangachari) to emphasise the importance of aesthetic experience in the discussion on 'Freedom and the Writer.' I wonder, however, whether Mr. Anant would see the importance of this. From his report it would appear that his idea of fundamentals is very much of the type of the communists. This is quite clear from his remark that we played a useful role in keeping the Conference 'politically neutral.' We were not interested in keeping it neutral or otherwise but turning it into a real Writers' Conference.

New Delhi

PRABHAKAR PADHYE

We have received many letters in appreciation of our Marathi Literature Special Issue. We reproduce an extract from a letter sent by one of the contributors to this issue.—Ed.

Sir,

The Editor makes an observation to the effect that the contents of the issue represent a period that is actually closing. I feel that it becomes obligatory on the part of *QUEST* to bring out another Special Issue, representing the experimentation and the apparently disturbed emotional set-up of the period that is beginning and is reflected in the writings of some younger writers. I do hope *QUEST* will show keen interest in it also.

Poona 2

MANGESH PADKI

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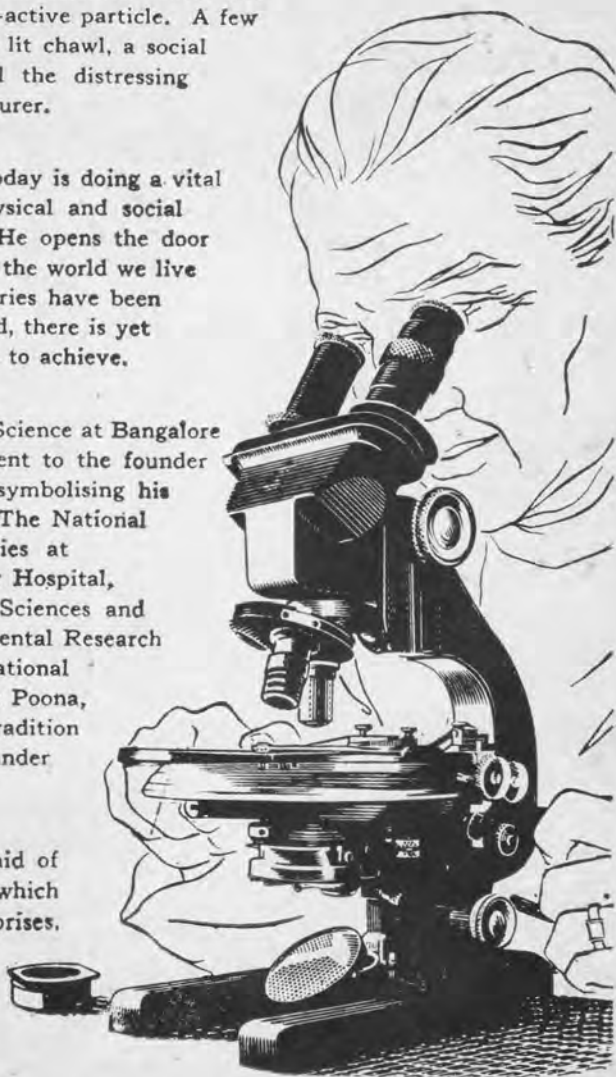
Enemy Sighted . . .

Here in a modern laboratory, a pathologist probes into the secret life of the enemy — a disease germ. There in a dark room, a nuclear scientist traces the rapid passage of a radio-active particle. A few streets away in a dimly lit chawl, a social worker tries to unravel the distressing problems of a day labourer.

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