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third year of publication

a bi-monthly of arts and ideas

edited by: **NISSIM EZEKIEL**

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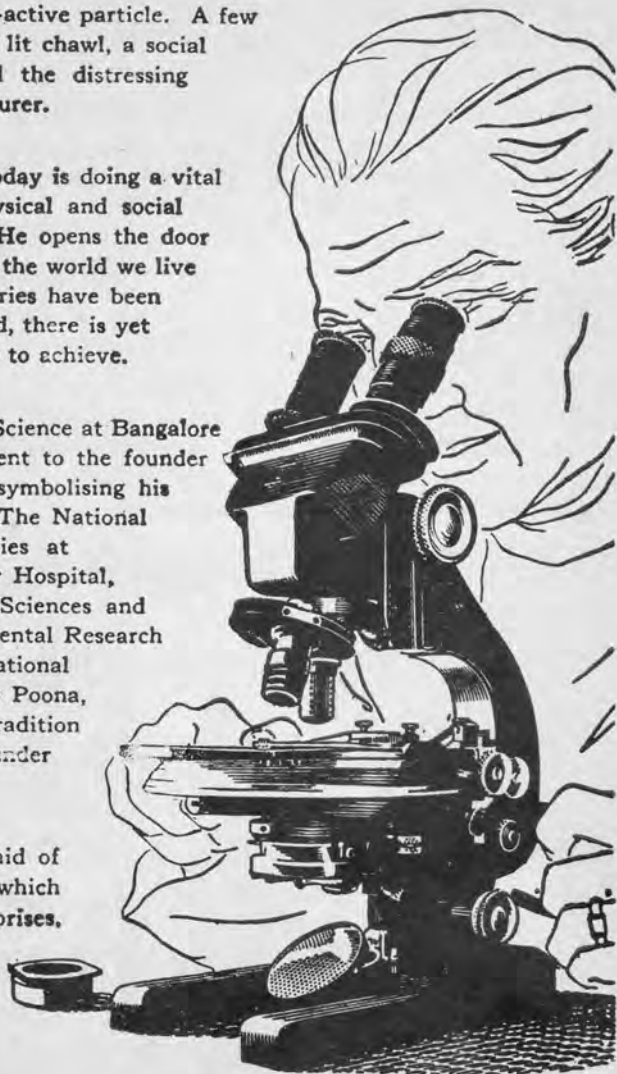
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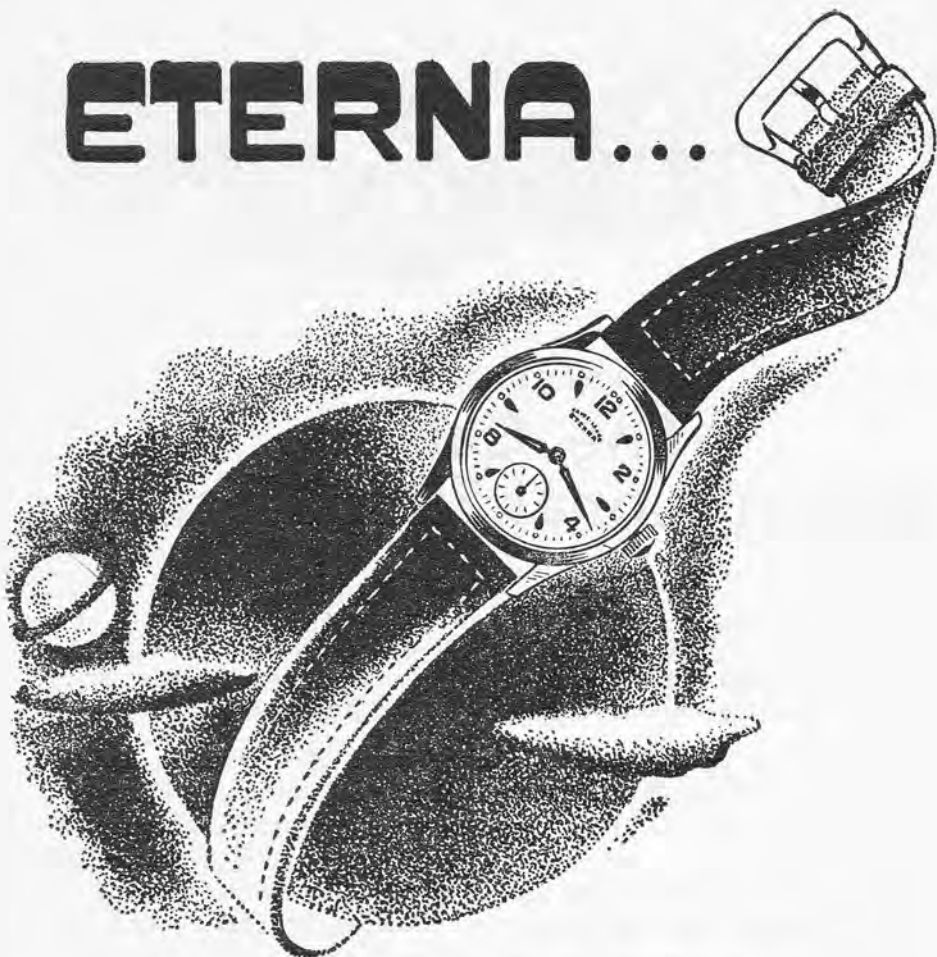
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QUEST

a bi-monthly of arts and ideas

EDITOR: NISSIM EZEKIEL

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D. G. NADKARNI

contents

ARTICLES

C. R. M. RAO	Nationalisation of Culture	23
ELIEZER LIVNEH	"Imperialist" Philanthropy	29
KA NAA SUBRAMANYAM	The Tamil Novel	33
R. B. JOSHI	A Day in Bithur	38

SHORT STORIES

S. J. JOSHI	The Devil	11
M. S. KALYANASUNDARAM	The Message	18

POEMS

A. K. RAMANUJAN	Two Poems	28
-----------------	-----------	----

THEATRE etc.

P. C.	Stagnation in the Bengali Theatre	43
NISSIM EZEKIEL	Tilak—A film biography	45
D. G. NADKARNI	The Soviet Othello	47

BOOKS

S. NATARAJAN	The Transfer of Power in India <i>by V. P. Menon</i>	51
H. SOMJEE	The Ninth Year of Freedom	53
N. L. K.	India, Democracy and Education <i>by Josselyn Hennessy</i>	54
SANTOSH SEN GUPTA	Approaches to God <i>by Jacques Maritain</i>	55
A. D. GORWALA	Work and its Discontents <i>by Daniel Bell</i>	57
P. C.	Atomic Weapons and East-West Relations <i>by P.M.S. Blackett</i>	58
IQBAL LUKMANI	The Sound of the Waves <i>by Yukio Mishima</i>	59
A. A.	The Story Bag <i>by Kim So-Un</i>	60
M. K. HALDAR	Stories from Chukotka <i>by Ritkheyu</i>	61
B. A. OLKAR	In the Shadow of the Kremlin <i>by Satya Dev Sharma</i>	62

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EXCERPTS FROM

Milovan Djilas' Book on Communism

Following are excerpts from Milovan Djilas' book "The New Class," which is to be published on Aug. 12 by Frederick A. Praeger:

Although the Communist revolution may start with the most idealistic concepts, calling for wonderful heroism and gigantic effort, it sows the greatest and the most permanent illusions.

The Communist revolution cannot attain a single one of the ideals named as its motivating force. However, Communist revolution has brought about a measure of industrial civilization to vast areas of Europe and Asia. In this way, material bases have actually been created for a future freer society. Thus, while bringing about the most complete despotism, the Communist revolution has also created the basis for the abolition of despotism.

But even if Communist aims *per se* were unreal, the Communists, as distinct from earlier revolutionaries, were fully realistic in creating those things that were possible. They carried it out in the only way possible—by imposing their absolute totalitarian authority. Theirs was the first revolution in history in which the revolutionaries not only remained on the political scene after victory but, in the most practical sense, built social relationships completely contrary to those in which they believed and which they promised.

Marx' concrete forecasts proved inaccurate. To an even greater degree, the same can be said for Lenin's expectations that a free or classless society would be created with the aid of the dictatorship.

Ownership is nothing other than the right of profit and control. If one defines class benefits by this right, the Communist states have seen, in the final analysis, the origin of a new form of ownership or of a new ruling and exploiting class.

In contrast to earlier revolutions, the Communist revolution, conducted in the name of doing away with classes, has resulted in the most complete authority of any single new class. Everything else is sham and an illusion.

The roots of the new class were implanted in a special party of the Boshevik type.

Trotsky noted that in pre-revolutionary professional revolutionaries was the origin of the future Stalinist bureaucrat. What he did not detect was the beginning of a new class of owners and exploiters.

The new class may be said to be made up of those who have special privileges and economic preference because of the administrative monopoly they hold.

After Lenin and Stalin came what had to come, namely, mediocrity in the form of collective leadership. And also there came the apparently sincere, kind-hearted, non-intellectual "man of the people"—Nikita Khrushchev.

The new class itself is tired of dogmatic purges and training sessions. It would like to live quietly. It must protect itself even from its own authorized leader now that it has been adequately strengthened.

The heroic era of communism is past. The epoch of its great leaders has ended. The epoch of practical men has set in. The new class has been created. It is at the height of its power and wealth, but it is without new ideas. It has nothing more to tell the people.

The use, enjoyment and distribution of property is the privilege of the (Communist) party and the party's top men.

Party members feel that authority, that control over property, brings with it the privileges of this world. Consequently, unscrupulous ambition, duplicity, toadyism and jealousy inevitably must increase. Careerism and an ever expanding bureaucracy are the incurable diseases of communism.

Just as under Stalin, the new (Khrushchev) regime, in executing its so-called liberalization policy, is extending the "Socialist" ownership of the new class. Decentralization in the economy does not mean a change in ownership, but only gives greater rights to the lower strata of the bureaucracy or of the new class.

The new class instinctively feels that national goods are in fact its property and that even the terms "Socialist," "social," and "state" property denote a general legal fiction. The new class also thinks that any breach of its totalitarian authority might imperil its ownership.

Every real demand for freedom in communism, the kind of demand that hits at the substance of communism, boils down to a demand for bringing material and property relations into accord with what the law provides.

The type of ownership and exploitation which the new class creates by using its authority and its administrative privileges is such that even the class itself must deny it.

This makes the legal position of the new class uncertain and is also the source of the new class' biggest internal difficulties. The contradiction discloses the disharmony between words and actions.

While promising to abolish social differences (the new class) must always increase them by acquiring the products of the nations' workshops and granting privileges to its adherents. It must proclaim loudly its dogma that it is fulfilling its historical mission of 'final' liberation of mankind from every misery and calamity while it acts in exactly the opposite way.

This is a class whose power over men is the most complete known to history. For this reason it is a class with very limited views, views which are false and unsafe. Closely ingrown and in complete authority, the new class must unrealistically evaluate its own role and that of the people around it.

While the new class accomplished one of its greatest successes in the revolution, its methods of control is one of the most shameful pages in human history. Men will marvel at the grandiose ventures it accomplished, and will be ashamed of the means it used to accomplish them.

SHORT STORY COMPETITION FOR INDIAN WRITERS

The Verdict

Ninety stories were received in response to the announcement of the competition, translated from nine languages. The largest number of entries were translations from the Marathi with substantial entries from Hindi, Tamil and Kannada. The two prize-winning stories are published in this issue.

A number of stories have been retained for regular publication in QUEST at a later date. Some of these will also appear in *The Times of India Annual 1957* with the permission of the authors.

The judges were unanimous in awarding the first prize to Mr. S. J. Joshi for *The Devil*. Two of the judges were agreed that the second prize should go to Mr. M. S. Kalyanasundaram for *The Message*, and the third judge who was in favour of awarding the prize-money outright, was willing to concur. One of the judges felt that the prize should be divided among three entrants, but as this would have meant a considerable reduction in the share of each competitor, it was decided not to support this decision.

The judges felt that the reservations they had about the stories of Mr. Joshi and Mr. Kalyanasundaram were outweighed by the fact that their narrative styles were straightforward, their characters convincing and their situations, though not original or profound, free from false or facile pathos. On the whole the majority of the stories received did not have these merits. There is no doubt that in the English renderings the stories lost much of the effectiveness they probably have in the original. Shrewdness on the part of the translators in selecting stories with a clear and strong narrative interest therefore played an important part in influencing the judges' opinions of the entries. Stories which may be poetic in conception and treatment fared poorly in translation and did not succeed in coming up for final consideration.

FIRST PRIZE

the devil

by S. J. Joshi

(Translated from the Marathi by Mangesh Padki)

'It has been an unhappy day at the office', I said to my wife while taking off my coat.

'Why? What happened?' She appeared concerned.

'It's about Ram. Poor chap! He has lost his job; got a month's notice today,' I replied moodily.

'Notice? Good heavens! What's to happen now?'

I had no answer to that. I felt beaten. In the kitchen the tea-kettle steamed on the stove, the steel blue flames trying vainly to devour the burner.

'It is bad, very bad indeed!' I exclaimed. 'But it could have been worse...'

'I don't see how—?'

'For the last two or three months there has been a rumour that the firm was wanting to retrench. One of us had to quit. It's Ram's bad luck that he was chosen to take the rap. I think I am safe. I need not worry any more now...'

'How can you? I am really surprised you can be so narrow-minded...'

'I know; it's a selfish thought. But... but it is a fact all the same...; it's true. I shudder to imagine myself in Ram's plight'.

The next hour or two ticked away listlessly. My wife busied herself in cooking and I took my favourite place on my cot in the living room. I could see the chawl

opposite. I liked to watch the families caged in dingy, crowded, two-room tenements, the men and women striving to squeeze bits of rest, bits of pleasure out of life. I sat watching aimlessly.

Dinner was early. My wife appeared to be in an unusual hurry. She asked the neighbours to baby-sit for us and began to dress.

'Get up! Let's pay a visit to Ram'.

'Don't you know it's past nine now?' I asked. 'It's rather late. We better not!'

'It's all right. I feel we ought to visit him. He must be feeling miserable'.

'Well... I don't see how it's going to help him', I muttered vaguely. 'Let us go'.

We climbed down the creaking stairs of our chawl and moved along. I had nothing to say. My wife was silent. My heart was heavy and I could sense that she was depressed too.

'Really, it must be very trying', she said after a while.

I was silent. People react differently to painful situations. Some speak out while some have nothing to say. Behind the apparent calm, the latter experience a deep agony.

My wife, however, continued to talk. 'What will Ram do now?' she asked.

'Look out for a fresh job, I think!'

'And if none comes along...?'

'He will have to keep trying.'

'Do you think it is that easy?'

'What is so difficult about it?'

'Please! How can you? One has to live, isn't it? You know he has a wife and a child. Something has to be done for them. There are family expenses, groceries, milk! These things cannot wait till he gets a job, can they?'

'I don't know! I think they will have to pull on somehow.'

'How easily said! Life has no patience. It doesn't stop for anybody'. She lingered a little abstractedly and then moved on. 'I have a feeling...' she hesitated.

'Eh?'

'I think life is like the very devil... eternally hungry...!'

'Yes!' I felt a little amused in spite of myself. 'Yes! It is the devil all right;... like the mythical demon who snatched cartloads of food from the people of the town, at the cost of their lives'.

'Quite so', my wife went on. 'You have to keep on feeding it...with money. If you can't, it gets you with a will!'

We had reached Ram's chawl now. I paused a little on the stairs and said, 'I don't know if Ram should worry. He has been careful...might have saved something'.

'How much do you think?'

'Around two hundred, I think,' I said.

'Two hundred!' She thought aloud. 'Why, it's just about a month's ration for the devil! What about the next month?'

We were outside Ram's apartment by now. The door was opened promptly.

In the room, he was perched on his bedstead. His wife Nirmala was standing by gloomily. Scattered around were all those little necessities of life in cupboards, on built-in shelves and in tin boxes. They had acquired everything with infinite labour, bit by bit. They had loved it intensely.

We sat down feeling helpless and incapable of speech. The atmosphere was heavy

as lead. When it became unbearable, I spoke. 'Well, what are you going to do about it?' I asked in a low voice.

Ram pulled his legs up to his stomach and crouched on his bare feet. 'No ideal! The only possible thing is to search for another job, I guess'.

'Jobs are pretty scarce now. You will have to wait', I said, looking in the direction of Nirmala. Silence fell again. Ram and his wife exchanged blank looks and I stared at the bright brass tins on the wooden shelves. Their bright gold glitter appeared offensive and incongruent. I knew the passion with which Nirmala had acquired them. I knew her hunger for collecting all those tins and vessels.

'Something will have to be done', I broke the silence again. 'If I may make a suggestion...'

'Well!' muttered Nirmala with a faint gleam of hope.

'It would be better if you leave this apartment as soon as you can and stay a while at your father's, I told her. 'At least, it might cut down expenses for the time being.'

'I wonder if it would work', thought Ram. 'Her father has retired from service already. Her brothers aren't well-placed either. I am afraid it would be a drag on them. They may even resent it.'

'I know! I know!' I said. 'They would feel that way, even if they had good jobs. Every household strikes a delicate balance, with well-defined limits. It is disturbed by the slightest jerk. Even so, I feel it's the only way out. It will help Ram to concentrate on getting a job.'

'Really!', my wife burst out enthusiastically. 'It's a gem of an idea. Ram can stay with us till he finds a job'.

At this Ram's eyes met mine. A deep unease stirred within us. We were quiet for a while. 'There need be no worry regarding Ram's lodging,' I said. 'But you must leave

this place as soon as possible. I think we should start packing tomorrow.'

I looked around. There were a hundred little things with life throbbing in them unnoticeably. A strange feeling came over me; a feeling that we were trying to shut the devil in tin boxes, to tie him up in rolled mattresses. I wondered if we could send the ever-hungry demon away.

During the next week or two, I waited for Ram. He had taken his wife, his child and all his possessions to his father-in-law.

I found him sitting on the cot in our living room one day. His trunk was pushed under the cot with the rolled-up mattress alongside. During tea, I talked freely in an attempt to clear the mist of gloom that enveloped Ram. I tried telling amusing anecdotes to cheer him. He, however, refused to be drawn out. I knew him to be a man with a fine sense of humour, one who would set the party convulsed with laughter by his jokes and gags. He now seemed to have been drained of all his cheer. It was replaced by a choking reticence and I felt a gradual distance opening between us.

That night he slept on the cot in our living room, at my wife's insistence. He was a guest after all, an invited guest. We slept in the less spacious, crowded kitchen. It was unpleasant, with the smell of the cooking vessels and the sink.

'Ram doesn't look his usual self, I remarked casually to my wife. 'He seems to have changed a lot'.

'Naturally! He must be thinking about his wife and child'.

'I don't think so. He was with them only the other day.'

'Then, may be, he is feeling uncomfortable because he had to force himself on us'.

'Why should he? Wasn't he staying with us before?'

'It was different then,' my wife said, stifling a yawn. 'He is jobless now. It's

natural that he feels strange', she said in a sleepy voice.

Ram began his own routine from the next day. He would get up early and finish his morning chores and bath before tea. After a silent cup of tea with us, he would go through the morning papers carefully and walk out. In my absence in the afternoon, he would gulp down his lunch in awkward silence and would go out again. Every evening, he gave a detailed account of his attempts to get a job, after my return from office. He had met somebody; had tried to get a note of acquaintance from some one else; had applied for a typist's job in some firm. I cheered him up usually and painted bright dreams for him.

After a time, a gradual despair set in. With growing hopelessness we realised the impossibility of getting a job. We spoke less frequently. He crouched on his feet on the cot and I engaged myself in the small kitchen with my wife. I would smile vaguely in his direction and would avoid any talk.

He got into the habit of perching on the cot like a vulture and pouring through a stale paper purposelessly. His posture, his inactivity and his utterly hopeless silence strained our nerves. I began to get infuriated without reason and ignored him in his patient position. His spectral presence began to terrorise us.

He continued to sit dumb and broken-hearted on the cot, making it difficult for us to move about in the living room. Once I lowered my voice and inquired of my wife in the kitchen, 'I am really surprised to see him not getting even a single job till now!'

'How could he get it? He doesn't stir out of the house at all, nowadays'.

'Do you mean to tell me,' I asked in a trembling voice, 'that he keeps indoors all day?'

'Well, almost! He goes out only in the mornings. But after lunch, he sits there,

smoking his time away or just sleeping it off. He squats there on the cot all the time, like the devil', she told me with a shudder.

All of a sudden I felt sorry for him. 'Well, what else can he do, poor chap!' My tone became sympathetic. 'What is the purpose of going out, if no job turns up? Where is he to go?'

'That doesn't justify his laziness. He sits there like a vulture, at all hours of the day. Is he a human being or . . . what?' She exploded with bitterness.

'He is human all right,' I said, trying to smile her irritation off. 'Doesn't he eat like me, twice a day?'

'Oh no!' She retorted promptly. 'He eats like the devil . . . twice as much as you.'

'Please! You should not talk that way about anybody's eating. You know, one feels more hungry when one has nothing to do, when one is confined by forced idleness. By the way, I eat my lunch in the office canteen, don't I?'

She appeared to press the discussion but I felt weary of it. I left her in the kitchen and went into the living room. He was there on the cot. He sat there in that peculiar posture, absorbing an old newspaper. He didn't stir or speak.

I wished to speak to him, to draw him out, but felt differently. The intimacy with which I had invited him to live with us somehow seemed to have wilted like blue smoke. He could not get a job. The likelihood of his getting one seemed remote. He drifted along hopelessly, helplessly. We lived on as usual in the kitchen, wrapped in with our joys and sorrows. We ate, went out for walks, talked in casual tones, while he perched on the inevitable cot all day like a man in a stupor.

He showed signs of life only at tea or meal-times. Sitting awkwardly with us, he gulped enormous quantities hurriedly, without speaking a word. Often, of a sudden, he appeared like a hungry animal, hastily trying to swallow as much as he

could. His peculiar mannerisms, the noise he made while eating and the way he licked his hands, sent a chill running through me. I would feel greatly disgusted, almost nauseated. I had never seen these ugly mannerisms before. There was actually no occasion to do so, as his visits usually meant a great deal of fun and laughter.

His presence became a trying experience for my wife in particular. The living room being occupied by him, she had to be in the crowded tiny kitchen all day long. It disturbed her to be under the continuous pressure of his spectral existence in the house. His mute presence engulfed her and broke her spirit. She talked about him all the time and about nothing else. Unconsciously she watched him during dinner and noted the quantities he ate. She refused to serve him a second cup of tea and would invite him into the kitchen only at my insistence. On such occasions, she would exhibit her disgust by sneering at him behind his back.

It became obvious that the tension was fast tiring us out. We felt moody and uncomfortable in our own house. His ghost seemed to follow us all the time and snatched away every little pleasure from our hands. We felt extremely helpless and did not know how to get rid of him.

On a Sunday, I had a few guests. I had invited them to lunch. They were from my office and knew Ram intimately. They made futile attempts to chat with him during the meal. He appeared strange and distant. Lunch over, he took his place on the cot and we felt relieved and free to chat comfortably in the kitchen. Somebody suggested a short stroll. We dressed quickly. Ram would not have accompanied us anyway. Nor did anybody invite him. As a matter of fact, we wanted to get away from his polluted presence.

Before leaving, I lowered my voice and asked her in the kitchen, 'What about some tea?'

'Not in the house. Let's have it outside today'.

'But how about him?' I asked, nodding in the direction of the cot in the living room.

'It is all right', she said. She seemed to disapprove of my suggestion. It is all right if he doesn't have tea some day. We aren't bound to give him tea every day, are we?'

'All right! All right!' I said hurriedly, trying to stop her. I went into the living room, putting my coat on.

My wife followed me. She peered into the mirror during her toilet and said in a loud voice, while adjusting a stray curl, 'Oh dear! It has been a heavy meal. I don't think I shall eat anything at night. How about you?'

'Oh no! Don't mention it. It's impossible for me' I replied.

'And you?' She asked Ram.

'Me? No, I won't be able to eat either'.

'Thanks,' she said, smiling at him condescendingly. 'It is really a big relief not to have to cook once in a while at least'.

We went out and sat on an adjacent playground. We felt relieved and light of heart, and tried to make conversation. Our attempts failed; somehow the life seemed to have vanished from the party. Finally, somebody referred to Ram and his strange attitude. It had disturbed everybody, and having once started, we chewed the subject over. We returned home at a late hour, after well past nine.

The door was bolted from inside. I was tired and tried to shout at Ram. There was no reply. My wife was also quite exhausted having had to carry the child. She also called him in vain, in an enraged voice. She felt disgusted and irritated. 'I don't understand what he is doing behind closed doors', she said angrily.

'May be he is asleep', I said with contempt.

'Heaven alone knows how people can

sleep so early in the evening. Perhaps it is not so difficult after all. He does that and nothing else'.

We heard the tap running and then being closed. After a time the door opened.

'What were you doing?' I shouted at him. I could not hide my anger.

'Nothing', he said weakly, crestfallen.

He resumed his place on the cot. I took off my coat and sat by his side. My wife went into the kitchen.

'Been out?' I asked, making an attempt at conversation.

'No'.

I felt violently choked with wrath. I could not sit there, nor look at him. I left him abruptly and went into the kitchen.

My wife was cleaning the stove. There were white milk-stains on it. 'What happened? Did the milk boil over?'

Without a word she grasped my arm and guided me towards the sink. There were plenty of tea leaves in it. 'Seems he had his tea, all right'.

'Obviously!' She said with clenched teeth. She jerked a tin of biscuits open under my nose. 'See for yourself!' The tin was half-empty.

'The devil!' I exclaimed, unable to contain my disgust. 'He has finished even baby's biscuits. But why? Why this secrecy? He could have asked for something to eat, couldn't he?'

'You wouldn't know! He had to have his afternoon tea. Well, he had it'.

She wanted to warm the milk and was looking around for the box of matches. 'Where is the match box? Have you seen it?' she asked.

'Please!' I told her, yawning. 'Please find it yourself. Don't bother me.'

'Where could it have gone? I always keep it on the spirit bottle'. She said. She raised her voice enough to be audible in the living room. 'I don't know, but somebody must have taken the box'.

'All right! Take out a new one'.

'But who took it?' she asked belligerently. She lighted the stove with a new box and said in a loud voice, 'What's to be done now? Apparently somebody has started even stealing!'

'All right, all right . . . please quiet down for heaven's sake,' I tried to sooth her. I was afraid Ram would hear her words.

I must have dozed off early that night, but my wife kept awake. She woke me up.

'What is it?' I asked sleepily, much distressed. She beckoned me to the narrow slit between the kitchen doors and whispered 'Just look . . . see what he is doing'.

Anxiously, I peeped through the door. The light had been switched on and Ram was rummaging through my coat-pockets. We held our breath and watched. He took out my purse, kerchief and clips and stood staring at them, undecided. He returned all the things and took out my cigarette packet. He smelt it fondly and paused a little before opening it. He shelled out a few cigarettes, returned the packet to the coat-pocket and switched the light off. I saw him crouching on the cot in his habitual posture and light the cigarette. The lighted tip glowed off and on in the dark and filled the room with an acrid odour. A terrifying sight, he appeared to be a medieval cyclops, a dangerous, hungry, one-eyed human beast, silently marking its time before pouncing.

'Didn't I tell you?' my wife whispered aloud. 'He stole the match-box. He took your cigarettes. I really don't see how people can behave so shamelessly'.

'Take it easy', I said good-humouredly. 'May be he isn't getting any sleep. A cigarette helps at such times. You must try to understand'.

'I know he can't sleep. He sleeps all day.'

'What else is he to do then? Just try to imagine yourself in his position. May be you'll realise it yourself.'

Suddenly I started. I felt that the light

in the living room was switched on and put out again immediately. I wondered if Ram stood outside the door. I was afraid he would hear us.

'Please! Can't you lower your voice? He may hear you. It may make him feel worse', I urged my wife.

But she would not be soothed. Apparently, she wished that he should hear her. 'He feels nothing of the kind,' she went on in a clear ringing voice. 'It is nice of you to be so good. It's easy. You are out all day and it is I, I who have to suffer him all the time. He weighs on my mind like a ghost sitting there and waiting for its feeding time. I don't think I can tolerate it any more'.

'Please, how can you speak like that? Don't you realise that we invited him to live with us, packed his family away to his father-in-law's place?'

'Exactly! We packed his trunks and tied up his luggage. Remember, you thought we were tying up the demon and sending him away. But—then . . .'

'Yes?' I interrupted her.

'But I don't think we tied up that demon at all. Only the luggage left and the demon returned and perched on that cot of ours, out there!'

'Please, please', I pleaded helplessly. 'Let him be. I tell you, the demon will turn into a loving human being overnight once he gets a job. He will again be liked by all'.

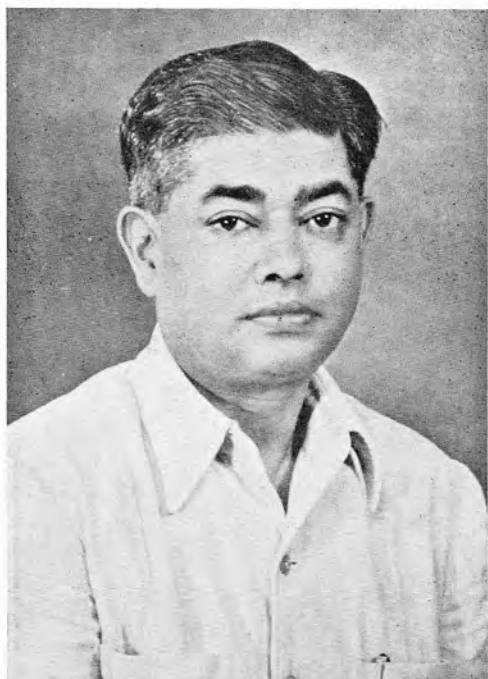
'May be. But I am afraid we'll have to wait for an eternity for that day a lifetime for him to leave that cot . . . ' she said in despair. She would have carried on in the same strain, but I finally silenced her.

I kept awake, however. I couldn't sleep at all. I watched Ram through the slit between the doors. He smoked incessantly and seemed to be in a violent argument with himself. He had left the cot and was pacing the room furiously.



S. J. JOSHI whose prize-winning story
The Devil appears on page 11.

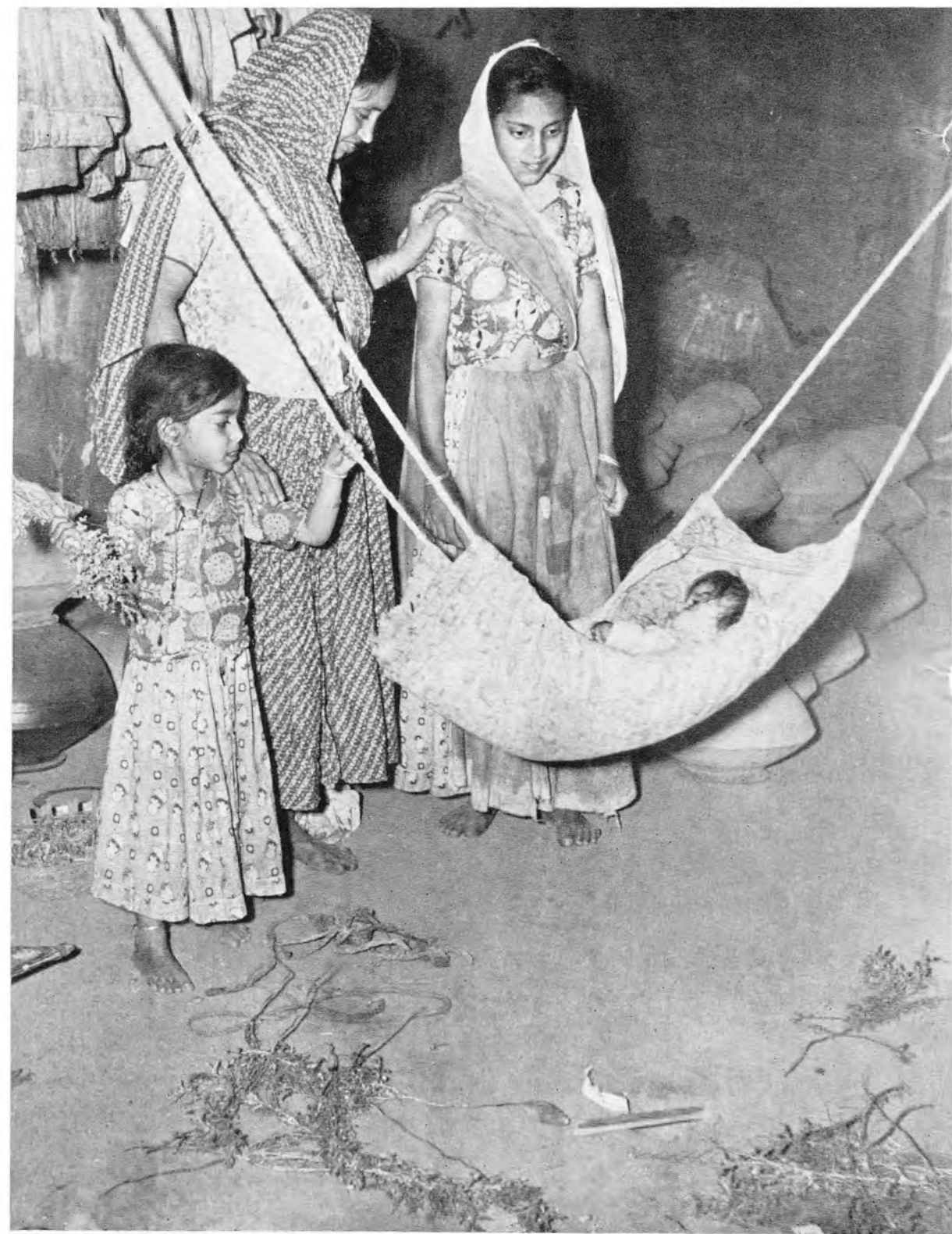
Winners of the short story competition for Indian Writers conducted by *Quest* and sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom.



M. S. KALYANASUNDARAM who was awarded the second prize. His story *The Message* translated by him from the original Tamil is published on page 18.



MANGESH PADKI, translator
of the prize-winning story.



THE CRADLE (Ahmedabad)

by R. J. CHINWALLA

I dozed off eventually without realising it. I dreamt of a huge demon with a wide open mouth and saw my wife and I feeding him with rolls of bread, rice and tea. He bore a strange resemblance to Ram.

I did not know when or how the dream ended. The day had already begun when I woke up. Suddenly I remembered what had happened at night, the dream and the rest of it. Uneasily, I stepped into the living room.

The room was empty. There was no trace of Ram or his tin box or his rolled-in bed.

I might have understood! I might have even secretly expected it. The fact how-

ever left me in infinite sadness. I called my wife, aloud.

'Why? Whatever happened?' she inquired as she came out.

'Nothing exceptional, dear', I said in a sad and distant voice. 'The devil has departed.... to become a human being'.

'Really? Well, of all the things....' she looked surprised and a little relieved. She would have continued to talk, but I was in the wrong mood. I moved away from her and took Ram's place on the cot and silently watched the chawl opposite. It is my custom, whenever I am depressed, to sit and observe the men and women cooped up in those crowded, two-room tenements.

contributors to this issue

S. J. Joshi was born in Poona and published his first story in 1939 in *Kirloskar* a leading Marathi monthly of Maharashtra. His first collection of ten short stories entitled *Pandharpeshanche Jag* (The White-collar World) indicated his interest in the lives of the lower middle class and was well received. During the World War he contributed a regular satirical feature to the Marathi daily *Kal* under the pseudonym *Kisan* suggesting leftist leanings at this stage of his literary career. Since 1950 he has contributed frequently to *Satyakatha*, a Marathi monthly of creative writing in which *The Devil* first appeared. Mr. Joshi's second collection of short stories will be published shortly.

M. S. Kalyanasundaram was born in Madura in 1901. Started writing in Tamil in 1928. Won a prize for his story *Abdul Qudir* which was published in the well-known Tamil weekly *Ananda Viketan*. *The Message* first appeared in the same journal in 1934 and later in Munshi Premchand's *Hans* in a Hindi translation by the author.

Mangesh Padki, translator of *The Devil* was born in 1923 in Karwar, lives in Poona.

C. R. M. Rao has been writing on a variety of subjects in Indian periodicals for the past ten years. He is at present in Delhi. Age 30

A. K. Ramanujan is a lecturer in English literature at Lingaraj College, Belgaum. Most of his literary work is in Kannada but he has had a poem accepted by *Poetry London-New York* and is now at work on a doctoral thesis on 'Myth and Symbol in W. B. Yeats.' Two of his articles have appeared in the *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, University of Florida, U.S.A. He is 28.

Eliezer Livneh has lived in Israel since 1920 and was a member of its Parliament from 1949 to 1955. His article *Sidelights on Israel* appeared in *Quest* Vol. II, No. 4 February/March 1957 issue.

Ka Naa Subramanyam is a distinguished Tamil novelist and critic. He is a keen student of modern English, European and American writing.

R. B. Joshi (Bombay) is a well-known Marathi travelogue writer. He has also published short stories. His article *Off the Road in Berar* appeared in the Marathi Literature Special issue of *Quest*.

SECOND PRIZE

the message

by M. S. Kalyanasundaram

(Translated from the Tamil by the Author)

FOR more than a week, Mr. Mohan Chetty, telegraphist on leave, had been making his grey hair greyer by a restless and fruitless look-out for his 'Orders'; so when, at last, he spied a long, buff envelope in the postman's hand, he mumbled the names of his tutelary gods and ran down to the street with a throbbing heart. His wife, Veda Valli, fresh from her bath and engaged in draping a crisp, old-fashioned, home-washed, eight-yard saree in the orthodox style around herself, had taken in the situation from an inner apartment. Hurriedly putting on her matronly forehead a provisional dab of auspicious *kum-kum*, she soon joined him with—'Looks like a Government letter.' That simple, affirmative statement actually signified that she was bursting with eagerness to learn the vital contents.

'Yes. Wonder what they have written.' So saying, he broke open the envelope in his systematic way, but with tremulous fingers, and pulled out a letter.

He was stunned on reading it. His puzzled eyes and sagging lower jaw clearly indicated bitter disappointment. Veda Valli

had to speak thrice in her own patient, caressing manner, before she could catch his attention.

'The cheats! The faithless rascals! Assured me that I could enjoy my leave in peace, and then went and rolled a boulder down on my trusting head! Crooks and *bad-mashes*! What sweet dreams we had been relishing!...'

'With reference to your request for a transfer, you are hereby posted to Bannu....' Quite right. Nothing wrong with it grammatically! ... Swine! ... What a fantastic, nightmarish joke! Transferred to Bannu! As if in this vast country there is not one more suitable—and more eager—to be sent to b—y Bannu! Mr. Chetty trembled and swore with impotent rage.

'Bannu? Whereabouts is it?' his wife asked softly, hoping that the position was not as bad as her husband's reaction suggested.

'Delhi—Lahore—Rawalpindi—beyond all these. In the North-west Frontier Province. 2,000 miles away. In the land of utter barbarians. Government officials are kidnapped in broad daylight and held out for fat ransom.' Considerately, he refrained from

telling her that South Indians, and vegetarians at that, could not live one day in the Tribal caves while awaiting release.

'Why have these cursed people done this to us?' she asked sympathetically. The transfer, no doubt, affected the whole family; but she sensed that he stood in need of specific consolation.

'Sheer knavery! What else? Are such things based on any reason or decency? Faithless rascals!' he raved, and added more calmly, 'But let it be, dear, Don't distress yourself.' His wife knew that these were just words, and meant nothing. What could the poor man do, in a hurry, to modify the Orders—except perhaps, to 'report sick', which, however, was not in his interests?

Chettiar—to use the politer form of the honorific caste name—started as a Government telegraphist in Madras. At that time, he was in 'Station Service', that is, he was not liable to vexatious transfers all over India and Burma. Naturally, the scale of pay was low. Later, he elected for 'General Service' in spite of its inconveniences, so that he could draw a better salary and finally a bigger pension. (In those days, General Service was the preserve, mostly, of Anglo-Indian members of the staff. But, as the pay of the 'globe-trotters', even taking all the discomforts into consideration, was disproportionately more than that of the 'frogs-in-the well', and as the disparity of pension in the two scales was heart-breaking, there naturally arose an agitation on the part of the Indian members of the Service, and the agitation bore fruit. Many Indians rushed into General Service, of whom our Chetty was one).

He was shifted from 'this wretched rat-hole of a Madras' soon to be remembered fondly and longingly as 'dear old Madras'—as soon as he opted for G. S. And he was mercilessly knocked about like a shuttlecock in an International Tournament. Calcutta, Mandalay, Lucknow, Poona—what were merely tiresome names in his

geography lesson in the distant past began to assume painfully personal significance for him. In most of those places, there were no Tamil schools. So he had to live by himself, leaving his family in Madras. His food habits and social links were, by nature, not catholic; and he felt vacant and lost without his children to scold and cajole by turns. It is needless to say that the mode of life forced on him was not to his taste. Life became mechanical and insipid.

Thus he spent seven or eight long years, broken by a few dream-weeks of home life while on leave. He heartily and elaborately cursed his Department every day and wondered if Station Service would not, after all, be better even at a loss of seventy or eighty rupees per month. At last, when he felt that he was breaking down, he applied for four months' leave. He also wrote a long, tearful letter, studded with high-sounding phrases and idioms—which showed out like almonds on slabs of *bombay-halwa*—and begged for transfer to Tamilnad. He further supplemented it by going to Headquarters and 'seeing' the concerned Sahibs and Babus.

Three cheerful months glided by on greased rails. As the fourth began palpitatingly, the husband and wife started their speculations and wishful thinking. Chetty mused aloud—'Bangalore is a fine city; and education there is good. Trichy is not bad; but if I could get Madura, we could not ask for more. I have two—or is it three?—uncles there... oh, no, not that I would go and stay with them... what I mean is, it would be pleasant to meet them on festive days...' And in the midst of all that fell this bolt—'Off to Bannu'!

The next morning, Veda Valli found her husband, haggard, unshaven and unkempt, busy writing something and tearing up the unsatisfying attempts, and asked, trembling, 'Are you appealing against this order of transfer?' She did not like to speak out her real suspicion.

He confirmed her unspoken thought with, 'I am not appealing. I am resigning from General Service. We shall manage to live within the Station Service salary. So many do.' (This is an expurgated paraphrase in English and not a verbatim report. Actually, his speech—an odd mixture of Tamil and English and grunts—was bristling with D's and B's and H's and so on, which he had picked up, voraciously and impartially, from all the latitudes and longitudes of India and Burma.)

Watching her husband's devastating rage, poor Veda Valli trembled still more with apprehension; but, in the long term interests of the family, it was definitely her duty to withhold the irrational, hysterical and ruinous letter somehow. A direct and immediate approach would have stiffened him in a contrary mood; and she was too old-fashioned to talk back; but Time was the guiding factor. Praying to her gods and goddesses, sweetly and softly, she said, 'The family astrologer has promised to call to-night with some advice. Can this wait till tomorrow please?... Living in a truly dangerous country two thousand miles away, do you think you alone would be unhappy? Have I and the children no share in that? But still, can we run away from our immediate duty? If you get so distressed, how can I be calm and patient and keep fit for my daily chores and trials? As it is, I pass many tear-stained nights, care gnawing at my bowels. You write of a cold; and I am weighed down with fantastic thoughts till you send the "Right report" as you call it. When the boys read of Hindu-Muslim riots in the papers, a dark world begins to whirl around me. But what can we do? Household problems get more and more involved. Expenses have mounted up two-fold, nay, three-fold. And we are considering cutting down income drastically! If you can manage to pass five or six years more, somehow, by that time our eldest son would have started earning. And then, after that,

if you take that long leave you have often mentioned, and come home, we can be happy and contented.... There is much suffering among our relatives, but God has kindly shown us the way. Will it be proper to flout Him and go against His plans?... Not that you have not considered all these things, but as Saint Avvaiyar has said....'

Chetty left for Bannu. There were, among others, three youngsters in the compartment, who had secured 'jobs' in Delhi. They were chattering like magpies and frolicsome as puppies. For them, friends existed to be ragged, and words were made to be punned on. Their ignorance of Hindi led to many *contretemps* (like ordering for a plate of *gosht-roti* to find what the 'ghost of a loaf of bread' would look like—not knowing that *gosht* meant meat, which was taboo for them); and they enjoyed their mis-adventures to the last drop. Life, to them, was a stout volume of bright hopes and sparkling cartoons. Chettiyar mentally disapproved of them with, 'What *katcha bewaqaofs!* Gushing and guffawing at nothing! No seriousness whatsoever. What are boys coming to now-a-days? I should hate my sons to be like these.' After some time, he melted, started to like them just a bit (against his will), and smiled a little. Finally, he gave them full, silent permission 'to play and to joke at least till household cares weighed them down, till their rosy dreams changed to dark nightmares'. The boys whispered, 'Perhaps he has got over his dyspepsia.'

Bannu was worse than he had figured it out. The office was inside a mud-walled fortification. The houses were not good-looking or comfortable. Clean, fresh groceries were not available. Milk, curds, ghee, vegetables—everything was third-rate and extremely insanitary. He soon found that to complain of spitting and dirt and swearing was to talk in an unknown tongue. Days passed in dull and mechanical routine,

Getting up from bed, breakfast, eight hours of office-life, return home, tea, glance at the day's paper or some fly-blown magazine or book, supper, back to bed—this was the pattern which the neighbours observed day after day. Let us get nearer and observe better. . . . He left bed every day in increasing discontent—at mealtimes, thoughts of his native *sambhar* and *rasam* came back to him with wicked persistence and made his mouth water and brought tears to his eyes—while at office, in spite of endless bother with irresponsible and easy-going colleagues, he got some respite from home-thoughts, but it was hardly a virtue—reading, what there was of it, was only a pretence and an excuse—going to bed did not mean falling asleep; how he cursed that harsh and pitiless gong in the Police Station! Again and again he repeated to himself a verse from Goethe which he had come across in Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* in the following form:

'Who never ate his bread in sorrow,
Who never spent his midnight hours
Weeping and waiting for the morrow,
Knows Ye not, Ye Heavenly Powers!'
What an existence!

One day, he got up more bitter than ever before from a nerve-shattering dream. By the time he reached his office, he had made up his mind to apply for Station Service, however much it might upset his wife.

Just as he was stepping into the office, full of troubled thoughts, his attention was arrested by the respectful *salaam* of a poor, heavily robed, louse-infested Pathan woman. In a submissive, yet firm voice, she requested, 'Sa'bji, please do me a favour and write out a telegram for me. I shall be very grateful'.

Chetty pointed to the gate and growled, 'Why, is the letter-writer dead?'

'That's not it, Sir; common things he somehow manages to put into English. But this is something out of the way. It has to

be composed with care. There must be no room for misunderstanding. It is a final command, but couched as a request. It must seem polite—not harsh and stern. Begging in appearance, but firm in purpose. He must remember the flavour long after the meat is forgotten. Mine is that sort of message. It needs a man with understanding and learning to draft it. I hear that Madrasis are very clever in English. . . Please!' she said, politely and persuasively. What a lawyer she would have made!

'Very well. Be quick about it. I have a lot of work to do. What is the message?' asked the official, won over, but seemingly brusque.

'Your letter was received. Do not do anything in haste. Is the bitterness of separation yours only and not mine? Is it proper to hate that country and give up your profession and run back home just when our responsibilities and expenses are increasing? Unemployment is growing here day by day. Don't lakhs of people live in the villages and towns there, with their own joys and sorrows? For whom, after all, are we putting up with all the present discomforts—for the dear, "little bits of our heart" or for some remote strangers? Is it proper to check and strangle the little improvement that is just dawning, by the grace of Allah, the merciful? Are they, too, fated to go through all that we have suffered? How much can one woman earn by selling vegetables and fruits, and how far will that money help to feed the children, clothe the children, educate the children? When Hamid finishes his apprenticeship at the tailor's and Rahman passes his Matric (he stands high up and gets a scholarship and his masters speak well of him—as so and so's son), things will be better. Please do not feel annoyed. I am not writing this with ink, but with the bitter tears of laborious days and long-drawn nights. Be brave, and help me to be brave.'

Chetty was lost to the world for some time. He was spirited away through vast tracts of Space and Time and varied Circumstance. When he came back to normal, his heart was illumined and light and calm. He felt cleansed and cool and restful even as Mother Earth feels after a night of devastating gales and terrific thunderstorms. He asked the good woman if it was to be a letter or a telegram.

His voice was so gentle and sympathetic now that she looked up with pleasant surprise. 'Wire', she said crisply.

'It will be very expensive', he remarked with solicitude. To an educated man, he would have said that it was like sending a press message at full rates.

'What to do, Sa'b? When Allah orders Spend!, we have to spend' she answered without vacillation.

'Won't a letter do? Is it so urgent?' he persisted, needlessly.

'What can I say, Sir? You know everything. The wire, it commands; but the *dak* mumbles and mutters,' she explained with a shy, winning smile in her eyes which the peep-holes in the *burqa* could not conceal.

Mohan Chetty, proud of his English, made a lengthy draft, corrected it, compressed it, read it many times over as if in different moods of the recipient (comically slanting his head this way and that to suit, as it were, different points of view), and satisfied himself that there was no scope for wrong interpretation. Then he booked it (heavy at heart as he took out many high-priced stamps), signalled it to Pindi, and made a personal request of the telegraphist there to pass it on quickly and without errors.

The light stayed in Chettiar's buoyant heart. He exchanged greetings with his neighbours and enquired about their welfare. He encouraged children to drop into his room, gave them sweets and fruits and allowed them to see the pictures in his books and papers and question him about

them. The wasp-hives dangling dangerously from the ceiling and the mud-tunnels of the all-consuming white-ants on the walls no longer irritated him. 'What hard-working creatures! How they strive to keep their race going! They admit no defeat while alive and they die without a mutter,' he observed, deeply moved.

The neighbours, observing this new-born cheerfulness and friendliness, remarked, 'Has Chetty Sahib won the Derby?'

His next letter home ran somewhat as follows:

'...The parcel of pickles, sweets and other things received. They are very tasty and helpful. I find that you worry yourself too much about me. To some extent, it is but natural; all the same, we must not overdo things. It is true that in the beginning I did not like the local customs and manners, and life was dull and bitter. But now I have become quite used to the conditions here. Has not Saint Avvaiyar taught us to brave the tumultuous oceans to earn for the upkeep of one's family? As for personal discomfort, am I not much better off than people who go on Polar or Himalayan expeditions, out of necessity or voluntarily? I have quite a few sincere friends too. If we view it without prejudice, there is very little real difference between men of the North and the South. Habits of food, clothing etc. are of the surface, merely cloaks to be seen and forgotten. What you find deep inside is the same the world over—the real thing.... The birds in the nests and the bees in the hives—how they strive hard for their family and their race, setting at nought their personal discomforts, nay, not giving a thought to them. The more you think of it, the greater is the wonder....'

And Veda Valli, flooded with tears, wondered too. She was lost in thought for some time. When she came to, she found herself walking to the *pooja*-room, falling down before the family gods and saying her prayers with self-effacing gratitude.

C. R. M. RAO

nationalisation of culture

the Indian intellectual vacuum

IN less than a century the liberal doctrine that 'that government is the best which governs the least' has come to be replaced by an entirely different one—that a good government must encompass all aspects of social life. The Welfare State is the reigning ideal now. Welfare being apparently a limitless and an all-inclusive concept, the Welfare State takes on itself more and more responsibilities in addition to the primary one of maintaining law and order. And the irony is that this view is regarded as democratic.

It seems to be the special distinction of political idealism in our country to regard the Welfare State as the very consummation of the ideal of democracy when this view has been largely corrected by experience even in the West where it has had its sway. Perhaps it will be pointed out that what India is now heading for is not a Welfare State but a Socialistic Pattern of Society or, its more recent variation, Socialist Co-operative Commonwealth. That might be technically true, and there may also have been some shift from a purely mixed to a more socialistic type of economy, but the political philosophy underlying both remains much the same in

essentials. The basic assumption still is that it is the State alone which is to bring about a particular social order for the all-round welfare of the people.

It has often been observed by most thoughtful people that of all Asian countries it is only in India that modern liberal and democratic values have the brightest chance of survival because she has been the most deeply influenced by Western culture and civilization. That, however, would appear to be less than a half-truth. For, if trends in this country today are to be regarded as the result in any way of that Western influence, then India may be said to have developed a special genius for absorbing particularly those uncomplimentary features of Western culture and civilization which the West itself has mostly eschewed. The most abidingly beneficial results of that influence would still seem to be confined to the Railway and Postal systems which the British gave us.

Thus it is that even culture, which is least amenable to planned reform, has now come to be largely the business of the State in India. By implication it has also become the handmaid of politics. But before we come to assess the real nature of this 'nationali-

sation of culture,' as we may describe it, let us scan the present cultural scene awhile.

The most conspicuous result of active State promotion of culture is that there has been a bewildering glut of cultural activity all over the country. Production of literature and books is reported to have been considerably increased in recent years. There have been more *Mushairas* and *Kavisammelans* and conferences of writers, more exhibitions of paintings and sculpture and more music and dance recitals in the past few years of Independence than there have probably been in fifty years before that event. Popular interest in our classical music and dance forms has been largely revived, it is claimed. Drama and theatre too are forging ahead. Despite the alleged cheapening of public taste by the cinema, a live theatre movement is said to be currently growing in the country. Even the much despised cinema has now gained a respectable place in our cultural scheme of things with the official recognition accorded to it as an important medium of information and mass education and with the institution of State Awards for films.

Cultural data however is not to be found only in the fields of literature, art, music, dance and drama. The culture of a people is also reflected in its efforts in the spheres of religion, philosophy and science, among other things. And here too we find that there has been a sudden outburst of religious enthusiasm and activity in the country since Independence, and despite the enshrinement of secularism in our Constitution there have been few occasions when one dignitary of the State or the other has not enthusiastically participated in one religious ceremony or other and extolled the virtues of a religious way of life and outlook. And that suffices almost entirely for our philosophical effort also, because to us religion is the highest form of philosophy and philosophy is nothing apart from religion. To draw an unnatural distinction

between the two is a Western aberration which is entirely meaningless for us. In the field of science too, it is no mean achievement for us to have built a string of National Laboratories throughout the country in such a short space of time. And as the first Asian country to build an Atomic Reactor we have the distinction of ushering in the Nuclear Age in Asia.

SINCE India took her long denied place in the international comity our culture has added to its scope another important field—that of international diplomacy. Or perhaps it is diplomacy which has embraced culture. Whichever way it is viewed, it is important grist to our cultural mill that exchanges of official cultural missions and non-descript delegations with other, mainly Asian and communist countries, have been quite a regular feature of our public life, though we have really no way of knowing what degree of genuine mutual cultural understanding and appreciation has been reached with our international partners in Panch Shila.

All in all, therefore, if sheer quantity of clamorous activity and interminable talk of culture were our only criteria, then India is certainly passing through her greatest cultural renaissance in all her history. But such a comforting thought is not possible for us unless we are given to self-deception. To those who have a critical and sensitive awareness, the intellectual reawakening and mental reorientation, in short, the cultural rebirth of a people, which is what renaissance really means in every sense, does not result from a mere effusion of cultural activity. It results from the intrinsic quality and creative significance of our cultural output and what is indeed more important, from the new values churned up in the process.

It is needless once again to go over the whole gamut of our cultural activities to

show that the increase of output in each field has not necessarily or automatically resulted in the improvement of its quality. Our writers are perhaps less poor and insecure today, since most writers of distinction in any language are provided with jobs in one Government ramification or other. But are they more creative? What is the new literature that appears on the literary horizon? And what percentage does it rate in the increased book production which includes the vast amount of Government publications and propaganda for the Five Year Plans? The Government Akadamis are there no doubt to protect the arts from further neglect and have also found work for some artists. But what of the arts themselves? Has State patronage and subsidy enabled them to develop an inner motion or dynamism of their own which will eventually lift them out of their long state of languishment? An increasing number of dramas and plays are staged in the major towns of India. But how many good plays, original playwrights and imaginative producers are there in the country? The handful of front rank scientists this country can boast of are now almost all of them Government functionaries. But have their researches brought forth anything more worth mentioning than the Sun Cooker? And lastly, for all this noisy cultural talk and activity in the country, can we honestly say or believe that we are a whit more cultured today than we were nine or ten or twenty years ago? Or that we are rising to a new height of culture and civilization? Has it in any way enriched the quality and tone, as distinct from the material standard, of our living?

QUITE apart from all these, the question of quality and creative significance of our artistic and intellectual effort is basically inseparable from the larger and more fundamental question of values and social

ideals we pursue. For, when we come to judge the quality or significance of a thing we really proceed to do so from a basic conception of what is good and bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly. And it is while choosing the good, the right and the beautiful, and rejecting the bad, the wrong and the ugly that we create our ideals as well as pursue our values.

But the whole tragedy of our public and intellectual life appears to lie precisely in the realm of our social aims and ideals where the greatest confusion still prevails. We have an unbounded zeal and fascination for ever new ideals, expressed as catchy slogans, and we have a rare penchant for constantly changing and multiplying them, little though we achieve in practice. There is no dearth of exciting ideals and impressive plans. Only actual progress does not keep pace. The whole confusion arises from this amazing proliferation of ideals. To mention just a few which we are constantly called upon by our national leaders to pursue at one and the same time are as at variance with each other as democracy and the Welfare State, individual freedom and the Socialist Pattern, religious revivalism and cultural renaissance, faith in non-violence and pride in our armed strength, national interest and international outlook, large-scale centralised planning and decentralised village self-sufficiency, development of heavy industries and the fetish of Ambar Charkha.

Those who have the temerity to doubt the basic compatibility of these ideals and stress the need for resolving them before they lead the country to an unintended goal, are branded as cynics or irresponsible critics standing in the way of organised national progress. Our traditional genius for synthesis, as our venerable culturists are wont to put it, enables us to resolve these contradictions by simply dismissing them as being more apparent than real or by regarding them as just the kind of

diversity which makes for the richness of our intellectual life. One shudders to imagine the full consequences of this wilful cultivation of self-deception on a national scale.

Ultimately, we are told, it is the type of education that is imparted from the elementary to the highest stages that determines the actual results of any and every national endeavour. Yet what is the state of our education? The record of educational activities under official guidance and control may not be altogether unimpressive. But reformist zeal and impatience with the old system of education has led to much tinkering with basic ideas, principles and techniques of education. Linguistic vacillation, starving teachers, double standards of education (Basic for the majority of children and Western type for the children of the very preachers of the Basic system) and above all the view that the 'role of education is to foster civilization and culture based on a spiritual conception of life' are some of the factors which still prevent the coming into being of a truly liberal system of education for the whole country which would make the individual the inheritor, not of his own national heritage, however great and glorious that might be, but of the entire wisdom and experience of all ages and all peoples.

The nature and extent of Government's concern for the education of our people is perhaps nowhere so frankly stated as in the Second Five Year Plan. The very opening sentence of the Plan's Chapter on Education reads: 'The system of education has a determining influence on the rate at which economic progress is achieved and the benefits which can be derived from it'. So our reformed pattern of education will be utilitarian in an even more thoroughgoing manner than the old system devised by the British for their own ends. To cap it all, there is the nationalisation of text books in many States with the attendant

risk of dead uniformity or patriotic conformism in the form and content of knowledge to be imparted to our young pupils.

ALMOST the only positive contribution of all this baffling multiplicity of social, economic, educational and other ideals is that even our fundamental values of life are utterly in the doldrums. If in the midst of all this embarrassing wealth of aims and ideals, which float all around us as so many baits and snares, we are certain of anything it is indeed of the utter uncertainty, even futility, of values. We create the impression of spiritually being aliens in the modern world when we search for values in our glorious past with which we have no living link. We yearn like lost souls to recapture those glories when we cannot even reconstruct mentally a fairly true picture of that obscure past.

We never tire talking of our great cultural heritage, forgetting that its whole basis was the Hindu view of life which cannot serve as the secular basis for our socio-economic reconstruction in the present. Then we speak of the virtues of a spiritual outlook and hold up the ascetic ideal of plain living and high thinking for emulation by our people which will, if anything, only smother our will to progress and to improve our standard of living and thus remove one of the basic conditions for the success of our impending industrial revolution.

Our intellectuals especially seem to be perpetually living in moral ambivalence which enables them to distrust and also imitate the West with equal ease. Our nationalism, which for long derived its sustenance from the hatred of British rule, now manifests itself in such irrational delights as the demand for the removal of the English language or the wholesale chauvinistic derision of Western culture and ways of life. This is only tempered to some extent

by our painful awareness of the West's superiority in scientific techniques and our urgent need of it for our own progress. Finally, we talk of individual freedom and assert faith in democratic values, while the State in its own way shows its distrust of the individual and dwarfs the human personality by assuming an all-powerful role in society either in the name of general welfare or of the Socialist Pattern.

It is this persisting uncertainty of fundamental values and confusion of social ideals against the background of centuries of slumber and stagnation which makes our cultural situation what it is today—a vacuum. And our ubiquitous Welfare State naturally abhors this vacuum and tries to fill it as best it can.

THAT more or less being the objective cultural situation in the country today, it is time to sit up and ask ourselves: What are we really in for? What are the real implications of this sprawling 'public sector' even in a sphere like culture? Is it intended to create a cultural climate in the country where the human mind will be free and fearless to think, feel and create? Or will the individual in the new dispensation be a mere cell in the political organism performing a number of useful functions for the State from cradle to grave?

If it were possible to regard culture as an insignificant area of human endeavour concerned with things which only remotely impinge on the realities of life, then the incursion of an otherwise liberally inspired State into this area could be lightly regarded as an isolated instance or a minor misadventure by the State normally corrigible by public opinion against it. But contrary to this common notion, made fashionable by leftists everywhere, culture covers a vast and vital field, not merely concerned with the esoteric problems of literature and arts but also with the social customs, habits and norms of behaviour of a people and the

nature of their political and economic institutions. So when we find that in the present-day India, State incursion into culture takes place not in isolation but in the context of growing concentration of economic and political power in the hands of the State, the picture becomes entirely different. And, further, when the only political party which gets voted into power everytime, through an unfortunate combination of circumstances, identifies itself more and more with the State and professes concern for the promotion of culture and through culture national unity, it becomes all the more difficult to regard it as an isolated instance, or not to regard it as part of an over-all diabolical design. The design is obviously that of the party in power which seeks to fortify its own political future by bringing more and more aspects of social life under State control, which means its own control. The vast democratic paraphernalia becomes of little use in this situation.

That then is the situation which has been developed in the country for quite some time and it calls for our most urgent and anxious thought. These trends can be resisted and even reversed in time only by the independent and co-operative efforts of the people themselves to build up genuinely democratic institutions in all spheres. 'Opposition' is the new slogan which rends the air. But it is seldom realised that opposition to the ruling party is needed not only on the political but also on the cultural plane and it must mean giving democracy cultural roots in this country. The sooner the lovers of democracy realise this the better for democracy. Otherwise, we need have no illusions about the coming social order. Even as things are, what we seem to be in for is neither a Welfare State nor a Socialist Pattern but a Total State and perpetuation of one party rule in this country for a long time to come. And then democracy may be wellnigh irredeemable.

TWO POEMS

NO DREAM, NO SYMBOL

Dostoevsky's student dreamt of hackneyed horses
 whipt to death; another walked
 through someone else's fear amid a row
 of redbrick buildings, craving
 for a familiar entrance;
 a little girl rose in a shower
 of shrieks, ridden by a nightmare,
 her father's head smiling in a ditch;
 Caesar's subjects bathed in Caesar's blood
 basinned in the purple pool of Calpurnia's dream;
 my sister slept in an ogre's thought
 and woke up on the hook of a cannibal finger.

And I, I dream of drowning softly
 like a needle in the flesh of the beating world,
 every pore an eye agog with seeing
 what I know is no dream, no symbol
 but truth the ultimate nightmare.

MADURA: *two movements*

In Madura I saw,
 enamelled in the corrosive paint
 of ailment
 the clench of a leper's crab-like claw.

It moved
 as nothing in life can move.

But behind him a statuette, a dancer
 roused in rock; her lips atremble on the margin
 of a smile; the anklet over the lyric foot a virgin
 bound in a world of sounds, a question bedded in a well-known
 answer.

Unmoving, she moves
 as nothing in life can move.

A. K. RAMANUJAN

ELIEZER LIVNEH

'imperialist' philanthropy

a balance sheet

NO man has yet summed up the aid which poured out of the U.S. (and a few other overseas countries) to Europe, Asia and Africa in the course of a dozen years beginning with the UNRRA activities up to the crisis of imperialist generosity in 1956. The assistance took many forms. Some were outright grants like the UNRRA benefits, Point Four, Surplus stocks and foods, and the US military and economic allocations. These were supplemented by political long-term loans, given with promises and hints (often fulfilled) that they would be exchanged by additional loans. Even though no summary has yet been made of all this munificence, it appears that the total comes close to 100 million dollars.

The influence of this flood of money from the New World into the Old was considerable and at certain times decisive. It helped many countries to rebuild the destruction left by the War. But curiously enough,

after the rehabilitation reached a certain stage, the assistance became instrumental in creating a new chaos perhaps more subtle but surely not without danger.

The hour has come to draw a tentative balance sheet of this endeavour, one of the most interesting and more pleasant experiments in the annals of international relations.

America's readiness to contribute, largely from her regular budget, year after year, billions of dollars to the needs of foreign nations—some of them very foreign indeed—is an encouraging phenomenon proving that some real moral progress is perhaps made in the chequered course of human history. Surely, the "foreign help" was prompted by the interests of American grand strategy. It required however a great measure of farsightedness to appreciate national interest and grand strategy in such terms. There may be no undue discretions

pancy between national farsightedness and progress in international morality. As far as it is possible to identify personalities with the audacious initiative of imperialist philanthropy both American parties are involved: two Democrats—President Truman and General Marshall—and one Republican, Harold Stassen. It appears that Dwight Eisenhower while still President of Columbia University had a hand in it.

On the part of the contributors this was a wise and generous undertaking. To the extent that the aim of assistance was to strengthen European and Asian countries against the spread of Communism or against complete anarchy the objective was attained. The anti-communist immunization would not have been secured without the American assistance, whether called Marshall plan or by any other name. The condition of Europe in 1947/48, before the U.S. help became appreciably felt, bears witness to it. Even the independence of Yugoslavia, outside the Russian orbit, would not have been possible had it not been for American aid.

Was the imperialist philanthropy (or should we call it philanthropic imperialism?) an unmixed blessing to the givers, including the education towards international vision which American citizens were privileged to receive through the public discussions on "foreign help?" Some of them reacted according to the prophet: "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" A much more complex question is, to what extent was the assistance a blessing for the receivers? Many countries were helped (at least thirty five), their conditions vary considerably (from Britain to Vietnam) and also the periods of assistance (from 1944 until today). We are forced therefore to confine ourselves here to general conclusions. However these may be the important ones.

IT is possible to note two stages of imperialist philanthropy: the rebuilding after the war and the padding of a more or less normal economy. The chronology of the two periods in the different countries is different. The first ended in Europe in 1950/51, but in Korea and Indo-China it is perhaps ending only today. The economic and social differences between the two are however clear enough.

The blessing of the American assistance during the first period is indubitable. Millions were saved from hunger and degeneration; communications were reconstructed and improved, industrial production was revived, mostly on a more progressive basis than before the War. With strident irony to which history treats us, the chief benefactors were former enemies: Japan, Germany and Italy. The reasons for this were various. Japan and Germany suffered more destruction from the war than other countries and their reestablishment could have been the most basic. The three countries mentioned adopted caution in the division of functions between the state and the public in the field of economic activity and did not exaggerate governmental interference. The Japanese and the Germans, whatever their other features, are dedicated to work and skill. Indeed in the years 1948/1956 they proved it again.

The standard of living rose in all the countries assisted, but with a difference. In some the standard of living rose at a faster tempo than the level of production, in others the national production increased ahead of the living standards. Britain is an example of the first category and it confronts economic and social difficulties which are likely to disturb her international standing if they are not solved in time. Germany is a pronounced sample of the second type, the standard of living of her population rising steadily on a firm economic basis.

Much more doubtful is the outcome of

American assistance when it began to flow or continued to flow to a more or less normal national economy which recovered from the destruction of war or was never harmed by it. The countries of Western Europe did not enjoy the vicissitudes of assistance of this type. To the degree that American help continued to come to them, it constituted such a small percentage of their general national income that it did not exert too much influence on their economic and social trends. In contrast to this there is a number of countries to which American funds have been flowing without interruption, principally for political and strategic reasons, and in their case the flow has become an organic part of the national economy. Among these nations two are noteworthy: Greece and Turkey. It is possible to learn a great deal from them.

In Greece and Turkey—earlier in Greece and later in Turkey—the constant flow of unrequited outside funds has evoked similar phenomena. The bureaucracy was inordinately swelled and with it went considerable waste. Patronage and economically unjustified subsidies became the order of the day. A drive to establish industrial and business ventures with little hope for their survival under competitive conditions gained force (the argument of "security" being offered to justify their existence). Latent unemployment threatened the whole economic structure. Despite comparatively cheap labour in both these countries, the cost of production swelled, particularly in new industries. In the end the increased expenditure without a corresponding rise in production caused progressive inflation (nourished from other sources as well).

Greece, the first to enjoy these financial injections, disclosed the signs of "illness from assistance" already six years ago. In 1950, Harold Stassen noted with worry: "Unless the aid to Greece is very carefully supervised for the benefit of the people of Greece I believe it will be largely wasted,

dissipated and diverted." The first to sicken from Imperialist generosity, Greece was also the first to overcome it. Comprehensive financial and economic reforms (chiefly in 1954), including retrenchment and stabilization of currency, tied her national economy anew to international markets and infused the healthy air of international competition. The atmosphere of self reliance and organic development returned to Greece.

The Turkish malady revealed itself to be of a more enduring nature, even though the Turkish economy is basically stronger and wealthier than the Greek and blessed by metals and minerals of international significance. But on the other hand, here imperialist philanthropy rode in all its glory and purity. Turkey has known no previous war calling for remedying destruction and dislocation. Her etatist regime made it possible to concentrate very considerable sums in the hands of governmental officialdom for industrial and other ventures of large dimensions. "Planing" was ripe. The results are unmistakable. Despite continuous American assistance—or should we say, because of it?—the country entered into a chronic crisis. Her foreign trade staggered handicapped by the shackles of all-round controls and bilateral agreements. Her competitive ability in international markets was harmed. The large investments have not borne adequate fruits, sometimes producing mainly mountains of papers and office labyrinths. Bribery and nepotism, checked during Ataturk's rule, has risen and flourishes again. A steady inflation is raging.

IT should be clear by now—if it ever needed a proof—that the prevalent attitude towards charitable foreign funds, whatever their description and designation, is entirely different from the attitude towards means which are the fruit of national endeavour or are received from abroad on a

strictly business basis. Philanthropic or political foreign grants on a considerable scale lend themselves to waste and misuse to a high degree and tend to increase the average national production costs. In the social sphere they encourage a rapid spread of unproductive clerical and bureaucratic classes.

The Americans often complain that the nations receiving their continuous assistance are woefully ungrateful. Their generous assistance does not give rise to love and sympathy towards the givers. There are different reasons for this seeming paradox. One of the reasons appears to be the perception of every healthy nation that constant assistance of this nature is basically unsound: it breaks up the robust economic tension and the drive for self-responsibility, it injects a refined sweet poison in the economic veins and increases rottenness in the leading classes.

Imperialist philanthropy has reached a double crisis. The local results are contradictory and perplexing, and there is a marked rise in criticism within the U.S. The improvement in the relations between "West" and "East" makes it politically less necessary. Imperialist philanthropy is confronted with a need for basic change.

This does not mean that long term foreign investments in "underdeveloped" countries will cease or be weakened. The opposite is nearer to the truth. The development of international trade, coming with the tempering of the Cold War, encourages the increase of international business, including investment and technical guidance. But the content and form of foreign investment will be different from that of the imperialist philanthropy, and probably more akin to the procedures of former times—with the governments advising, guiding and assisting at some distance.

International Exhibition of Asian Paintings

An International Exhibition of Asian Paintings is being organised in Tokyo by the Japan Cultural Forum in co-operation with the *Yomiuri* newspaper (the third largest newspaper in Japan. Amongst the countries to participate in the Exhibition are Japan, India, Burma, Thailand, Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Attractive prizes are being offered to the winners. The first prize will consist of a cash prize of about \$ 300 (US) and the expenses of the travel tour and 6 months' stay in Paris. In addition there will be 8 other prizes of the value of about \$ 280 (US).

The Exhibition will be held in the middle of October 1957 and the organisers want the Exhibits to reach Tokyo by the end of August. Artists below the age of 35 years are invited to participate in the Exhibition and the size of the paintings should not exceed 90 by 116 cm.

The Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom has sent a number of Exhibits to Tokyo. One of the organisers of the Exhibition, Mr. Uemera, is shortly visiting India to discuss with Indian artists the arrangement of the Exhibition.



MARIA TRIBAL FOLK OF BASTAR, MADHYA PRADESH

by SHYAM MANOHAR
(Courtesy, *The Tribal Research Institute*)



Stills from VISHRAM BEDEKAR's film biography of Lokamanya Tilak, reviewed on page 45.

Above: Tilak in the Central Jail, Mandalay, Burma.

Below: Street-scene in Poona during the plague of 1897.



KA NAA
SUBRAMANYAM

the tamil novel

symptoms of a stalemate

THE first novel in Tamil was written some eighty years ago by an Indian Christian, a retired District Munsiff, Vedanayakam Pillai. In addition to this novel, Vedanayakam Pillai wrote also some other works in Tamil, a series of musical compositions trying to reconcile the religious sentiments of a large section of the people, a book of poems on 'female uplift' and another on moral instruction. His novel *Prathapa Mudaliar*, is the autobiographical narrative of a gentleman of means and leisure taking a large and spacious view of life. It is a rambling picaresque tale, full of wise old sayings and modern instances, with an unshakable faith in the good surviving all the alarming machinations of evil by divine dispensation. A sense of humour and an odd personal manner of narration save the rather long tale from becoming monotonous and boring. In all these years, the tale cannot be said to have dated at all and it is still readable in the sense in which *Don Quixote* and *Tom Jones* are readable. It is a highly moral and instructive tale told with many asides and sermons in a conversational chatty style.

The second and the third novels in Tamil were a decade and a half in following and they came almost together, in the early years of the nineties of the last century. B. R. Rajam Iyer and A. Madhaviah were

obviously influenced by the English writers popular in their day. Rajam Iyer tells us that he took as his model Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar Of Wakefield*, but Rajam Iyer's novel *Kamalambal Charithram* is obviously more than an imitation of *The Vicar of Wakefield*. In his shrewd observation, in the artistic building up and delineation of realistic characters, in the decisive use of dialect in a few conversational parts of the novel and in the acute sense of the spiritual meaning of life, Rajam Iyer was very much the superior of Goldsmith and handled the theme with a high seriousness of purpose. Rajam Iyer tried to observe the human situation in a spiritual setting and I am inclined to think that *Kamalambal* is a novel which, in its own way, is as successful as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Turgenev's *Fathers And Sons*.

Madhaviah, obviously, was influenced by the novels of Charles Dickens, though I have not come across any reference of his to Dickens; he was interested in social protest and his first novel as well as his subsequent novels and stories were efficient vehicles of social reform. His *Padmavathy Charithram* discovers a talent as good as Rajam Iyer's at delineation of characters and at the unravelling of situations. Both Rajam Iyer and Madhaviah did not have the charm of the personal style of Vedana-

yakam Pillai and they tend to be pedantic and sometimes overheavy with the weight of their own reading. Rajam Iyer produced beside this novel another unfinished one written in English, entitled *Vasudeva Sastri* and the collection of essays entitled *Rambles in Vedanta* in English; he edited the Prabuddha Bharatha for some time and died young. A. Madhaviah wrote in addition to *Padmavathy* a number of novels and stories in Tamil and in English, lived till the third decade of the twentieth century and edited a 'little review' in Tamil called *Panchamritham* and was a government officer in the Excise Department. His best work was the first novel *Padmavathy* and among his English writings I prefer his novel *Thillai Govindan* introduced to the English reading public by no less a person than Frederic Harrison.

BY the turn of the century, it was evident that many novelists had appeared on the scene and most of them were concentrating on entertaining the by no means large public of Tamil readers. Natesa Sastri and Ponnusamy Pillai who wrote their first novels in the third and the fifth years of the new century respectively complain in their prefaces of a large number of meretricious cheap mediocre novels which are the favourites of this public but to my knowledge none of them have survived to this day. Judging from these prefaces, we have to conclude that they were adaptations from the English, badly done with sound knowledge of neither the English tongue nor the Tamil. Natesa Sastri himself later succumbed to the temptation to make adaptations and produced tolerably readable renderings of English favourites like *Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures* and *The Massacre of Glencoe* and many others, but his first novel *Deenadayalu* merits a place in the history of the Tamil novel. In stilted and pedantic prose, he made a slight but honest attempt

at presenting the disintegration of the joint family system under the new economic stresses to which the middle class was subjected.

PONNUSAMY PILLAI drew from no other author but he seems to have consciously modelled himself on that 'great Victorian novelist' G. W. M. Reynolds. The often important and climactic accidents that occur all too frequently in the novels of Ponnusamy Pillai occur only for the convenience of the author and are largely the influence of the Reynolds' ordering of events by a law of melodrama. With a moral bias, with some sort of religious and elementary spiritual roots, Ponnusamy Pillai drew from his observation and from a lifetime of experience a picture of life that conformed only to his own sentimental idealism. This was literature of sociology of a particular kind and the Tamils took to it very kindly from the first. Ponnusamy Pillai is the first of a long line of entertainers who used their talents for writing novels that were at their best melodramatic and at their worst a little tendentious. Ponnusamy Pillai nearly thirty years after his appearance was so suitable to the Tamil public that, in the early thirties, at least one rising reputation was built upon chapters of Ponnusamy Pillai's novels lifted out of their context and served as new stories.

Mrs. Henry Wood, G. W. M. Reynolds and a host of such authors were exploited ably by quite a number of writers in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Sherlock Holmes and his compeers in the West made their due appearance in some form or other and were immensely popular. Chief among these adapters should be mentioned Arni Kuppusamy Mudaliar. He took no trouble about making an English story read like a Tamil one. The names were Tamil, the settings were more or less Tamilised; and all the incidents

and situations in the original story were kept entire. In the midst of a drinking scene or a scene which describes marital or other infidelity, the author would pause, add a paragraph or two descanting on the evils of Western society (the members of which had Tamil names!) and apostrophise the reader to some good purpose and then proceed with the story as the original writer had written it. Vaduvor Duraisamy Iyengar who succeeded to the master adapter's *gadi* after Arni Kuppusamy Mudaliar, had more of a sense of the appropriate and was rather thorough in making the style completely Tamil. It is often difficult with Vaduvor Duraisamy Iyengar to find out where he has borrowed and where the work is his own. He was a rare enough prose stylist and he had a sense of form. His adaptations of *Mary Queen Of Scots* and *The Mysteries Of The Court Of London* (both by the pen of Reynolds) are still eminently readable. He roamed further afield and gave the Tamils their first versions of *Les Miserables* and the Greek legend of *Eros and Psyche*. He is not interested in the novel as an art form; he is interested in the novel only as entertainment, but he introduced some refinement into the making of adaptations.

R. Krishnamurthy (Kalki) was born heir to the legacy of Vaduvor Duraisamy Iyengar. Instead of the moral bias of an earlier age, his novels take the tone of the Congress and the fight for freedom in much the same terms. On this background, Kalki's novels from his *Tyagabhoomi* to his last and most ambitious novel *Alai Osai*, are drawn out with ever-widening perspective and for ever-increasing audiences. The greatest journalist of this age, Kalki wrote his novels week after week to entertain the largest audience that any writer has yet found in Tamil. His ideas of entertainment and humour suited an easygoing people and his handling of themes, historical and current and political, set the tone for most of

the writing done in the twenty years between 1935 and 1955. What was made to the Kalki standards succeeded in a large measure with the Tamil public. When Kalki wrote a historical novel, a host of writers took up historical themes on much the same large canvas. Kalki inclined, like Ponnusamy Pillai of an earlier age, to the melodramatic ordering of things, to the mysterious someone who appears in the first chapter and remains mysterious till almost the last chapter, and to the standards of an acceptable morality that would please the largest number of readers of a given magazine at a time.

KALKI'S men and women behaved true to a stereotyped magazine heroine-hero type with a sophisticated 'humorousness' and he carried the story through a series of cleverly but not often convincingly ordered sequence of incidents and events. Kalki was also perhaps the best prose writer that Tamil has known so far, not excepting Vaduvor Duraisamy Iyengar. His sense and feeling for the topical and the temporarily important were great. In Kalki's hands, the Tamil novel turned for its inspiration to such writers as Dumas père and Lord Lytton and such less well-known practitioners as Leonard Merrick.

Kalki initiated a movement which has had a host of imitators and followers. The novel as melodrama is practised ably by quite a number of the younger writers who for the most part are not aware of the masterpieces of the novel of any other language and even if aware, prefer the Tamil way. The rapidity with which incident succeeds incident, the cleverness with which a number of seemingly strange happenings can, at the end and only at the end, be brought together into a seeming unity, the skill with which circumstances and characters are bent towards an acceptable climax and the often tear-jerking qualities of the writing with as

many exclamation marks as possible are all admired by the younger generation of writers and applauded by the readers trained and fed on Kalki. The art of the novel has come to be identified with the artifices of melodrama, mainly thanks to the successful work of Vaduvor Duraisamy Iyengar and Kalki. A host of writers among whom are 'Ellarvi', 'Lakshmi' 'Arvi,' 'Sandilyan', 'Akhilan', 'Mayavi' 'Thumilan', 'Devan', 'S.A.P.' and latest among them to join their ranks judging from the serial novel running currently in *Ananda Viketan* is 'Kalaimani'. These are par excellence the serial writers of Tamilnad and these are certainly the better known of the novel writers of the day.

THE serious novel initiated by Rajam Iyer and Madhaviah in the last decade of the nineteenth century has found but few votaries but the light has not been completely put out. It burns in a feeble but inextinguishable manner. 'Shanker Ram' published the Tamil translation *Mannasai* of his English novel *The Love Of Dust* in the last years of the thirties and it was followed by slight but very honest novels of regional life in the Coimbatore district written by R. Shanmugasundaram. My own novels, *Poithevu* and *Oru Nal* belong to the forties and most readers and writers of Tamil find them rather difficult. N. Chidambarasubramaniam published his first, and so far only novel, an episodic but intense story in the early fifties. In the middle fifties was serialised the novel of Janakiraman *Moha Mul* which has not yet been (at the time of writing) published in book form but from what I have seen of it bids fair to be one of the best and most serious novels of Tamil. The novels of S. V. V. written in the thirties and forties lack form but are enlivened by great and human observation and a point of view which came naturally to a shrewd man of the older

generation who set himself to write of the modern age. Though a confessed humorist, S.V.V.'s novels should be considered a major contribution to the serious novel in Tamil.

A number of writers like P. M. Kannan, 'Anuthama' and Gowri Ammal find inspiration in the domestic scene. Their novels lack depth but have a form that is often rounded and enviably Tamil. The work of another elder novelist of no mean talents should also be mentioned here. Srimathy Vai Mu Kothainayaki Ammal began writing her novels of sentimental Indian domestic life somewhere in the early twenties and has in these years produced as many as a hundred and twenty novels. Apart from the volume of her work, her novels have a quality of their own and are popular. Mostly domestic, often sociological, and sentimental exaggerated presentations of life, these novels of Vai Mu Kothainayaki Ammal are easy reading and have held their own against the newcomers and the melodramatists. The domestic novel as handled by Kannan and Anuthama are not different but they owe a lot to the pioneering work of this prolific novelist.

There is yet another school of writing in Tamil, a school which for want of a better name I shall call the 'purposive' school. The best of the writers of this purposive school is Mu Varadarajanar who writes a staid respectable pundit's prose and novels of life extolling in rather mild terms the lives of the Tamils. There is a communal and often a communist idealist tinge to most of his novels; one or two of them are expressly written to exemplify some Tamil text like *Tirukkural* in the modern context. While he pays his tribute to the melodramatic taste prevailing in a mild sort of way, he manages to write his veiled purposive fictional stories with gusto and a maximum

of ease which makes his readers multiply with every novel of his. Among the novelists in Tamil he should be considered the one who is the easiest to read and to follow. Quite a number of writers follow Mu Varadarajanar's lead, chief among whom might be named Ku Rajavelu. Openly communal and propagandist are the work of many others who have, out of social reform of an extremist type, distilled some sort of fictional narrative. There are also the progressives, the writers with a communistic purpose, chief among whom should be named 'Vindhan' and Chidambara Raghunathan.

AS early as 1910 attempts were made to translate into Tamil novels and other fictional narrative from Bengali especially the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. But in the thirties full scale translations were undertaken and complete sets of Bankim, Sarat Chandra, Rabindranath Tagore and Prem Chand are available in more or less readable Tamil translation. Among other Indian novels translated into Tamil mention should be made of the Western masters who have been slowly coming in but they do not enjoy a great vogue. Beginning with Scott's *Ivanhoe* there have been many translations of English and American novelists, including Hawthorne, George Eliot, Stevenson, Dickens and others. Of European writers Romain Rolland, Tolstoy, Knut Hamsun, Gustave Flaubert, Victor Hugo, Emil Zola, and others have appeared, but they have had very little influence on the Tamil writers themselves.

It is in keeping with the rising tide of journalism in Tamil that serious writing of all kinds, especially the serious novel, is at a discount. The readers prefer an easygoing instalmental incident-packed stirring serial novel to a serious novel and the magazines that dictate the taste of Tamilnad supply this demand. The serious writer does some-

times get a hearing from the large circulation papers and for these small mercies he has to be thankful. There are a handful of writers who are seriously interested in the novel as an art form and are labouring at it earnestly and occasionally scoring an impressive success with some novel. As against this small group there is the large number of novelists following the path charted out for them by writers like Vaduvor Duraisamy Iyengar and Kalki. The next largest group consists of those who take advantage of the communal differences extant in Tamilnad and trying to blow it up into the material of literature. There is the much smaller group of writers dealing with domestic problems of the new middle classes and exploiting these problems partly seriously, partly melodramatically but always with realism and a shrewd native artistic understanding. As against all these large contending groups the serious writers should be thankful that they are sometimes heard at all. A few of the writers who start as serious fictionists have succumbed in the course of these years to the demands of large circulating and well-paying magazines for melodrama. As can well be understood from the history of literary prizes all over the world schemes of literary prizes for the novel like the bi-annual prize awarded by the Academy for the growth of Tamil and the annual Narayanasamy Iyer Prize for a novel awarded by Kalaimagal, and the recently advertised Ananda Viketan Competition for a novel are hardly schemes able to help the serious writer. Planning to help the serious writer can be done in the way of special live trusts for writers, by awarding funds for novelists at work or by the springing up of *Little Reviews* (which can be helped to spring up) or by publishers interested in good but often unprofitable novels. All these three ways seem far away at present and it will be the lot of the serious novelist in Tamil to flounder as best he can for some more time.

a day in Bithur

by R. B. Joshi

THIS is the 11th of May, 1957, and I am on a bus bound for Bithur. I should have gone there yesterday, because yesterday it was the centenary of the 1857 'mutiny' and they unveiled a bust there to the memory of Peshwa Nanasaheb. The bus starts at eleven. It is a few minutes to eleven. And it is very hot. The sides of the bus are hot to the touch, so are the seats. The roof is so low you feel the heat pouring through it. And the bus is packed. In one of the back-seats, a child cries incessantly. The mother tries coaxing, coercing, cursing and beating. The child goes on. The mother is angry with the bus-driver for not getting started. She says if this had happened in Bombay the man would have been beaten with a *chappal*. Such delays were not known in Bombay, she said. She said many other things too, but the editor would not print them, even if I were able to translate them.

A passenger sitting next to me asks me where I am going and I tell him. He makes a very wry face as if feeling some heart-wrenching pain, and in a doleful voice says, 'Of course, you must know that they have raised a statue of Nanasaheb at Bithur. Ah, but what a statue! You will weep to see it. Now Nanasaheb was a powerfully built man and his moustaches were turned up like this,' and here my neighbour twirled the tip of one of his moustaches. 'Can't you do something about it? Tell Pandit Nehru, for instance?' I tell him I do not know Pandit Nehru, but he says it can't be true. I cannot be an ordinary man. I must do something about the moustaches, he says. 'Nanasaheb looks like a parcel, Babu; you must do something.' When at last he sees that I shall not be able to do anything in the matter he loses interest in me and turns elsewhere.

At ten minutes past eleven the driver arrives; the assistant gives a vigorous turn to the handle-bar and the bus roars, jerks and starts. On the outskirts of Kanpur it stops at a petrol station and takes in some petrol. By this time it is half past eleven. I think we are at last on our way to Bithur. But not yet. We leave Kanpur a little way behind and again come to a halt. We take in a party of sixteen persons, adults and children. The conductor and the driver manage to pack these somehow in the already packed bus. I am squeezed in, but do not complain.

A few jerks, and the bus starts again. We are now six miles from Kanpur, perhaps eight. We make another halt. There is a police station at some distance from the road. They say the Darogha Saheb will be travelling in this bus. Others say some dacoits have been arrested and they are being transported in the bus. We halt for about half an hour. Two men, tied hand to hand by a single piece of rope, walk in the direction of the bus. The other end of this rope is in the hands of a police constable. There are two other constables in the party. I do not know where room can be found for them in the bus. But it is found for them—on the roof of this bus, and they climb up, constables and culprits. The sun is beating fiercely from above; there is heavy luggage around, trunks and tins and bundles and bags, all in the sun. They all find place there among these.

The Darogha Saheb is yet to come. 'He is having his meals,' says someone. 'He has just had his bath and is saying his prayers. It will be at least an hour before he finishes his meals and other things and comes,' says another. Every one has some-

thing to say about the Darogha Saheb. But finally he comes. He is a Darogha Saheb to his finger-tips, which are very thick, in keeping with his full paunch and puffy body. There is not an inch of room anywhere on the bus, and the Darogha Saheb will need several inches of it, and he must be found the inches he needs. At least some of them. So he goes and sits to the right of the driver. In that part of the bus where the driver sits, there are now five people, not counting a child thrust into the lap of a none-too-hospitable passenger.

I thought the bus would refuse to move. It does not. It growls and groans and grumbles, but at last it moves. We don't stop now on the way, not very often, except to send a passenger or two on to the top of the bus.

Two or three miles from Bithur the bus stops and the party of sixteen gets down. There are no more passengers coming in. The bus feels lighter. As we enter Bithur the dacoits, the constables and the Darogha Saheb also get down. The bus feels lighter still, and rushes on whistling until it reaches the *ghat* on the Ganga which is the terminus.

I want to meet someone who can tell me something about Nanasaheb. So I ask a priestly looking young man if he could take me to a Maharashtrian Brahmin's house. He says 'yes' and begins to go down a narrow street. I follow him. I follow him for many minutes and feel I have been doing so for hours. We do not meet a soul on the way. The houses on both sides are vacant apartments of mere crumbling walls. I begin to smell a rat. My guide says we shall soon reach the spot. Now we are going down a slope. We come to the river, walk some fifty paces up the bank, then turn our back to the river and begin to climb up a narrow lane. The walls on the sides are not only in ruins, they smell of decay and death. We walk under the

remnants of an arch which looks like a toothless mouth, and climb up a flight of broken steps, and emerge on to a small courtyard.

'Guruji, here is someone come to meet you,' says the guide to somebody inside the small living room.

Before the word of welcome is heard, I go in. There is a very old man lying on a tattered mat on the floor. A few feet away from him is sitting another man, old too, but somewhat younger than the one lying down. He is reading from a holy book.

As he sees me he asks me to sit down, and I do so. I ask him if he is a Maharashtrian Brahmin. He says he is. I say, 'I would like to see whatever is left of the Peshwa's palace.' He says not a brick of the Peshwa's palace is left standing, that the palace occupied fifty-two *bighas* of land, and that if I am interested I could see this land. There is a well left there. I can see it if I want to, and also the bust of Nanasaheb in the palace grounds.

I ask if Taty Topé's house is nearby. He says it is, but it is in Bithur Lashkar which is at least a mile away from here.

I look at the sky. The sun is no less fierce than it had been an hour ago. I say I shall walk the mile and more, and see all the places, and could some one go with me? He says the man who has brought me to him could go with me or I could find someone in the village. He himself cannot go with me because he has still to finish his reading of the holy book, which he is doing for the cure of his ailing father who is more than eighty years old!

He gives me a lump of sugar and a drink of cool, fresh water. I accept it with thanks. Casually I ask him how long his family has been in Bithur. He tells me this is the sixth generation. He does not know which place in Maharashtra they are from except that it is somewhere in the Ratnagiri District.

I feel rested enough and am ready to

go out again. I look around. The only part of the house left worth living in is the single room we are occupying at the time. There is a courtyard at the back and one in the front, with remains of walls all around.

AGAIN I follow my guide down the steps. After we have gone some way he points to a mosque standing on a mound at some distance and tells me that it was built by Aurangzeb on the spot where Lakshman had brought and left Sita at the behest of Rama. From there she later went to Valmiki's *ashram* which is a mile or so lower down on the bank of the river.

My guide takes me to the grounds of the Peshwa's palace and shows me a well. There is nothing very special about it, but probably this is the well from which the British took away more than a million pounds worth of gold and silver in coin and plate after the Peshwa Nana-saheb had left Bithur. I ask my guide about this but he knows nothing. He then takes me through the narrow and deserted lanes of the town and brings me to a place where a sign-board shows me the way to the memorial to 'Nanasaheb Dhu Dhu Pant.' I am shocked at the spelling. Nanasaheb's alias was 'Dhondo Pant.' No Maharashtrian would accept 'Dhu Dhu Pant' for a name or for an alias. It means nothing to him. But perhaps to the monument-makers neither means anything, so it does not matter in the least to them whether it is 'Dhu Dhu Pant' or 'Dhondo Pant.'

I go along the way indicated and find a big bust in a semi-circular setting. It shows Nanasaheb as a prosperous and respectable gentleman. He is not at all like the fine-bearded, sleek and smooth epicure I was used to seeing in a contemporary painting. This bust is made after another portrait of his in which he is shown holding a *hookah* in his hand. There is no place for the *hookah* in this bust.

This bust stands on the grounds where once the palace stood. In that palace Nana-saheb used to entertain his European guests on a lavish scale and it is said they used to enjoy it thoroughly. It was a richly decorated and furnished palace. The walls of that palace must have echoed the merry laughter of the feast-makers and the tripping footsteps of pretty dancing girls. They must also have been witness to the intrigues and secret talks that preceded the 'mutiny.' It was within those walls that young Manu Tambe, who was later to become the Rani of Jhansi, played about and was doted on by everybody. The walls are no more there. There is not a brick standing upon another. There is no place left here even for the ghosts of these memories to dwell. The British saw to it that none was left.

All I see now is a vast plain strewn over with debris and rubble. At some distance there are ruined walls of dilapidated houses which probably once belonged to the dependants or 'courtiers' of the Peshwa. No one lives there, unless it be hyenas and owls. All about the memorial it is sun above and sun around. There is not a tree standing to give you shade. But perhaps the authorities will plant trees and in the course of time the place will be less inhospitable than it is today.

THE man who has accompanied me so far is tired and hungry. So he is not ready to proceed with me to Bithur Lashkar. He wants to go home and have his lunch. So he asks for his *baksheesh*.

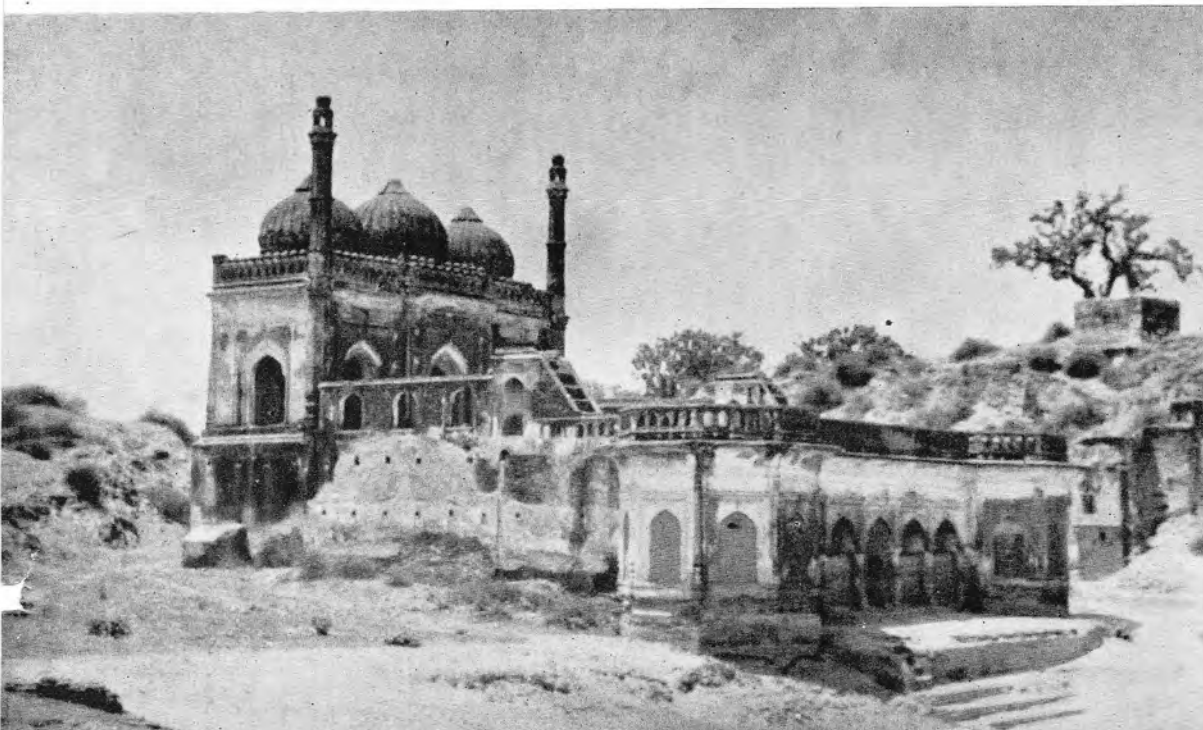
I too have had no lunch and must find some. I don't see a shop where I can get a decent thing to eat. Then I ask questions of some people and find another Maharashtrian Brahmin, who feeds me and tells me a lot of stories about the Peshwas.

He tells me how on one occasion Shri-mant Baji Rao's annual pension was delivered when he was engaged in his daily



Memorial to Peshwa Nana Saheb at Bithur

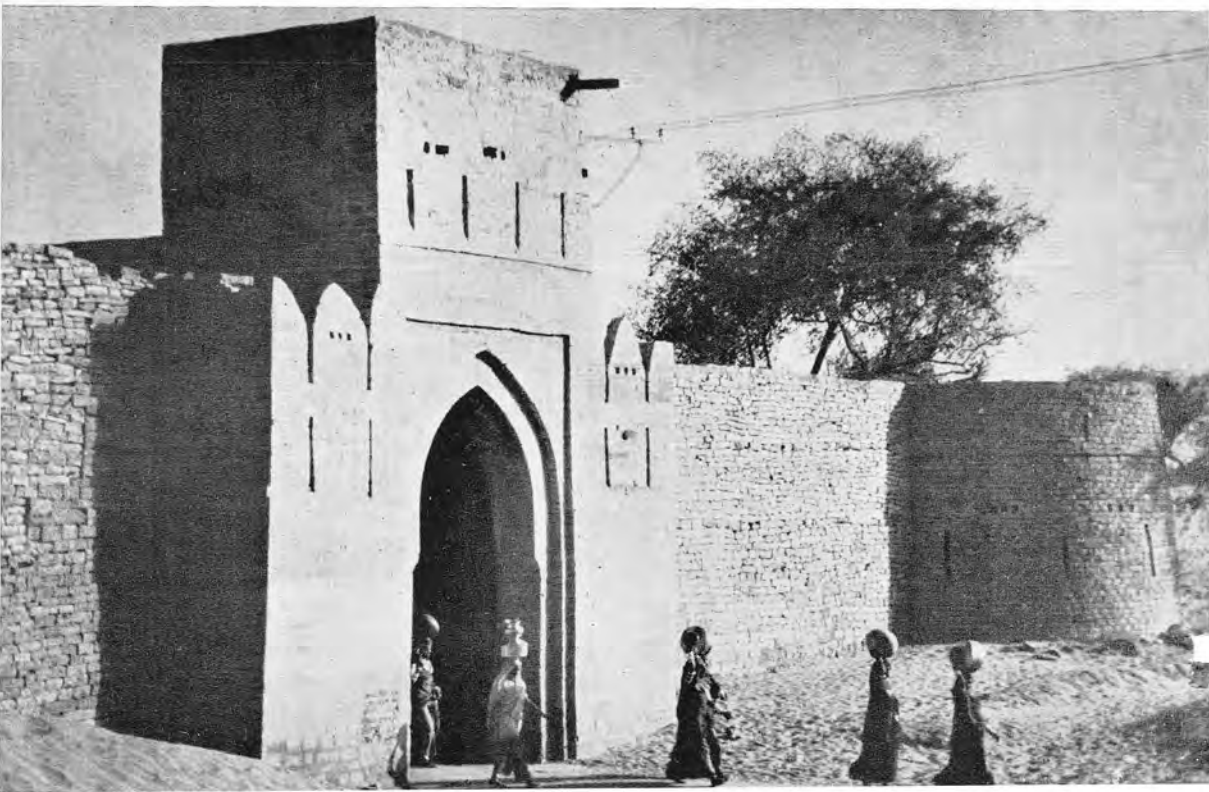
Aurangzeb's Mosque—Bithur





The fort of Jaisalmer in the Thar Desert, Rajputana. The city was founded by Jaisal, the Bhatti king, in 1156. Below: A city gate, with women going out to fetch water. The present population which has dwindled to a mere 8,000 at present, has no regular water supply.

Photographs by DHIRUVA N. CHAUDHURI



religious rites on the *ghat* of the Ganga. Shrimant would not be disturbed, so he ordered the whole sum of eight lakhs of rupees to be thrown into the running stream. The British government had to send the pension all over again. He says people still find some of the old coins in the sands of the river. I would like to get some. But one does not find them just because one wants to. They can be found only after the floods have come and gone, and then only if luck favours you.

A sweeper once found a golden image of Ganesh in the bed of the river. It weighed about five seers. The poor man was cheated out of it by a brassware dealer. Ultimately the image found its way to the house of a big banker in Kanpur, who realised that it must have belonged to some important person. He made a special place for it in his house and still keeps it there. I ask who this banker is, but he does not know.

About thirty years ago, he says, there were some three hundred families of Maharashtra Brahmins in Bithur. Now there are not thirty of them there. It must be true. The whole town looks deserted and desolate. Only one in ten houses appears to be standing.

HE takes me by a short cut to Bithur Lashkar. We pass some more dilapidated houses, some palatial, some humble; we walk under a railway bridge and stand before a biggish house. He says it once belonged to the Peshwa, but was later made over by the British to someone else.

A few hundred steps down the river is the house where the Topes live. It is not the house Tatya Tope lived in. But it stands on the spot where his house did, and thus has a haloed memory. Those who live there are his brother's descendants. They are of his family and that is enough to bring them

honour. The master of the house is not in, but we are admitted.

The house is like any other middle class home. In the main room there are a few old portraits in the original of Tatya Tope, Lakshmibai and some others. There is a miniature portrait of an old man, very fair, but with a wrinkled face. That, probably, is Baji Rao II in his old age. There is a small shrine at one end of the room where the family gods are kept. The lady who received us tells me they are the same as were worshipped by Tatya and were taken with him as he went from place to place.

On the way back to the town I am shown a *ghat* and a marble temple built by Baji Rao. They are pretty to look at and in good repair.

I am in time for the bus leaving for Kanpur. As we are leaving the town the two constables without the 'dacoits' jump into the bus. The Darogha Saheb has left earlier by a tonga. The driver of the bus tells the constables that he had not received any fare for the 'dacoits'. 'But they are the *mulzim*. How can you expect the *mulzim* to pay any fare?' This is enough to silence the driver.

I have seen Bithur. The last thing I see is a hillock at some distance from the road on the left, with some kind of a building on top of it. That is where Valmiki's *ashram* was, I am told.

Bithur is charged with a crowd of memories. I leave the place behind, but the memories insist on coming with me. I allow them to.

P.S. Bithur, also known as Brahmawarta, is about fourteen miles north of Kanpur on the bank of the Ganga. This is where Peshwa Baji Rao II retired after relinquishing the Maratha kingdom to the British in 1818. It is also the place from where Baji Rao's son Nanasaheb marched to Kanpur in revolt against the British in May, 1857. Brahma, the creator, is said to have emerged here out of the navel of Vishnu, and performed a horse sacrifice after his work of creation was completed. So the place is sacred to the Hindus.

—R.B.J.

WIDE AWAKE

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variety

theatre

cinema

dance

Stagnation In The Bengali Theatre

ONE of the many attractions which Calcutta has to offer is a live professional stage. Here alone in India can one expect to see theatre in an Indian language at least over the week-end, in air-conditioned halls equipped with revolving stages and all the latest technical aids. A play which is an average success runs for at least two hundred nights and Bengali producers evidently take considerable pains to ensure the box office. The days of the great character actors such as Sisir Bhaduri and Aubinda Chowdhury are at an end and what the directors rely on for success is an assortment of melodrama, cheap humour, songs and even dances which figure in the most unlikely fashion in pseudo-mystic and didactic plots.

One of the chief difficulties which producers appear to face these days is the lack of original plays. Three of the four plays which have been running in Calcutta during the past six months or so are adaptations of novels. Two of these *Arogya*

Niketan and *Kavi* were originally novels by Tara Shankar Banerji, who is rated by many as the most considerable Bengali novelist of today. Whatever its merit as a novel (it was judged the best Bengali novel in 1956), *Arogya Niketan* hardly makes a successful stage play judged by any respectable standards. The central character is a young doctor who sets up a practice in a village where his grandfather has gained fame as a sage who can tell from examining the pulse of a patient how long the latter has to live. The sage does not recognise his grandson since he had cast off the father of the young man for marrying a Christian. The clash of personalities and ideas of these two characters provides the framework of the drama into which is also woven a love-affair involving the young doctor, a hotch-potch of a dance representing the creation of man and some slapstick farce by the hospital compounder. What the writer intended to achieve in the climax it is difficult to make out. The grandfather learns the identity of the misguided, out-cast young doctor and embraces him; the

doctor agrees to be treated according to what he has always considered the quack prescriptions of the old sage and the grandmother is so hysterically delighted with her grandson and hithertofore untouchable Christian daughter-in-law that she dies of a heart-attack as the curtain falls. Most of the action of the play takes place off the stage, the actors seem frequently to address the audience rather than one another, the makeup and sets are unrealistic and there is hardly any acting to speak of.

I have dealt at some length with *Arogya Niketan* because it seems to me to typify what is happening on the Bengali professional stage today: a confusion of basic ideas and a failure to realise that concentration and economy are essential for the achievement of dramatic intensity. *Srikanto*, which is an adaptation of Sarat Chatterji's autobiographical novel, is a presentation of episodes with hardly any unifying theme and no dramatic content whatever. Tulsi Lahiri's *Shesh Logna*, a comedy, is better constructed. The central point of the play, however, turns on making a choice between a very worthy but plain girl, the heroine, and her vivacious, attractive friend. This point has to be glossed over since in practice it appears that Bengali stage-goers prefer good looks to moral character!

A review of the Bengali stage would be incomplete without some reference to the amateur group Bohurupee and its distinguished young director, Shambu Mitra. Bohurupee has been in existence for some nine years and consists of a band of young people who devote their spare time to drama. They came into prominence a few years ago when the group was awarded a prize at the Drama Festival in Delhi for their performance of Tagore's *Raktakarobi* (Red Oleanders). Two other plays which they have been presenting this year have been Tulsi Lahiri's *Chera Tar* (Broken String), a powerful tragic drama dealing

with Muslim peasant life in north Bengal, and Tagore's *Dak Ghar* (Post Office).

Bohurupee's productions are artistic achievements of the highest order. I had always considered Tagore's plays as semi-mystical pieces of poetry, lacking in drama, and in any case, impossible to stage. This idea has been completely dispelled by seeing *Raktakarobi* and *Dak Ghar*. Shambu Mitra has given a precise content to Tagore's symbolism, and the combination of realism and poetry has resulted in productions of great power. Meticulous care is devoted to every detail—the grouping of characters on the stage, lighting and effects and not least of all, the tempo. Apart from Shambu Mitra, his wife Tripti and his daughter, who are consummate artists, there are a number of other talented players in the group. In fact, it is the all-round finish and compactness of Bohurupee's productions which give them their unique value.

It is somewhat disheartening to see the general apathy with which Bengali intellectuals view the stage. Most of them find the professional stage boring. Shambu Mitra's productions they treat with reserve. His realism, and what they call his Leftist interpretation of Tagore's symbolism, they consider as somewhat heretical. What is perhaps forgotten is that when words and ideas are brought from the printed page to the theatre and put into a real setting, *some* interpretation, *some* translation into the concrete, is essential. This is a problem producers of Ibsen and Strindberg have to face no less than producers of Tagore. What we should ask of a producer is that his interpretation be plausible; to expect finality is surely a mistake.

From what I have gathered, Bohurupee too experience difficulty in finding suitable plays. But Shambu Mitra is a man of ideas, thoroughly aware of developments in the world of drama outside India. Perhaps a folk-tale adapted to present day conditions

presented *a la* Brecht is what we may look forward to in the not-distant future.

Whether anything significant can be expected from the professional theatre is doubtful. One reason for this is that it is dominated more or less by those who control the films. The values which predominate in the Bengali film-world, and these are not significantly different from those of the Hindi film, have thus invaded the professional theatre. The second flight of film stars are the top-notchers of the theatre, and directors who are no longer successful in getting film contracts content themselves with the less remunerative job of directing on the boards. Restricted budgets alone seem to save the Bengali theatre from the more foolish extravagances which characterise the Indian films.

P.C.

Tilak—A Film Biography

VISHRAM BEDEKAR'S forty-minute documentary on Tilak, produced for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and released through the Films Division, deserves close study for several reasons. The director has a splendid reputation in the Marathi film, which is notably saner and closer to reality than the Hindi and probably any other provincial film. The subject is timely. The resources available are likely to have been generous without imposing on the creator any of the limitations usually associated with the box-office. Most, if not all, of the conditions necessary to handle a great theme greatly were present.

The outcome is not surprising, a film more or less of the kind that one expects from the Films Division, if the downright frauds are excluded. In other words, it is an honest, simple and mediocre film. The honesty and the simplicity are responsible

for the mediocrity, and this is true of almost all cultural phenomena in India today, excluding again, by the very terms of our premise, the pretentious and the idiotic. On this level, where elementary critical categories may be tentatively applicable, the film biography of Tilak calls for comment. It is not incompetent, not meretricious, not vulgar. In the present state of affairs in India, this is already an achievement, but it would be wrong to go further from this conclusion and find excellence where there is only banality.

The banality of the film on Tilak is interesting because it is no travesty of the existing state of mind. It is a faithful reflection of the objective situation. Bedekar sees Tilak as all Indians see him—a virtuous man of courage, faith, determination and steadfastness in suffering. In the film as in our daily lives, the shibboleth is the epitome of political wisdom, and it will do. But the artist is supposed to see things differently, to have a point of view which adds trenchancy even to a familiar picture, to probe beneath the surface and reveal sympathetically in the unlovely contradictions which constitute the authentic human image.

Bedekar does not shirk this task for the sake of his sponsors. His awareness of it is too dim. It is a well-known axiom, he states in a press release, 'that biographies are difficult subjects for films. In the process of making them, the very definition of what history is appears to be constantly shifting. A recent and controversial figure like Tilak is apt to surprise one with different, contradictory or at least conflicting interpretations of the same episodes. For a film biographer, whose assignment is to satisfy conflicting public opinions without compromising on fundamentals the task becomes superhuman.'

Except for the final hyperbole, this is sensitive and intelligent, but its implications are not accepted. If there are conflict-

ing interpretations of episodes, a tepidly neutral stand by the film biographer would be fundamentally uncreative, particularly if he deals inadequately with the fact that these contradictory interpretations are based on substantial realities. They constitute the very stuff of drama. Instead, Bedekar resolves the issue by saying, 'But men like Tilak are an elemental force. Like Nature which reveals itself through fire and water, the solid earth, and the nebulous gases and the empty skies, such forces persist and shine through the apparent fog of contradictions and conflicts.'

Men cannot be portrayed as elemental forces, except in a purely metaphorical sense, and the attempt to do so is doomed to resemble 'nebulous gases and empty skies' rather than the force which shines through them. In fact, the director has taken refuge from his intellectual problems in a species of pathetically false poetry.

Quite apart from ideological considerations, Bedekar's film is totally lacking in style. And there is hardly a film director in India of whom the same remark might not be made if the same assignment had been tackled by him. The technique is minimal. Every scene, every event portrayed, is seen plainly by the eye of the camera, not by the creative eye which alone gives intensity to the commonplace, depth and meaning to the ordinary. The intellectual and emotional shallowness of such a film, and it is typical, is saved only by the genuine political content of the life which is its subject. From the film treatment of such a life, as from a clear statement in workaday prose, a residue of inspiring meaning would remain. But it is a long distance from cinematic success. The film does not have a single potent image visually dramatic enough to be memorable. The sole source of the strength of every image is the undoubted integrity of the subject—Tilak at work and in prison, the miscellanea of his letters and books, the portrait

of his wife, who died while he was in a distant Burmese prison, his fearless activity among the plague-stricken in Poona in 1897.

It is not the only fault of the film that the subject is depicted in one-dimensional terms. Even black-and-white drawings in silhouette are not necessarily inexpressive, though the scope offered for incisive communication may be too blandly accepted. The fundamental flaw goes deeper and is deadly. It is the literal translation on the screen of a well-known chronology of events with no help from the medium. An attempt is made, but without consistency, to depict a man without actually showing him on the screen. The absence of consistency in this attempt is hard to forgive. If an actor can be made to look sufficiently like Tilak to persuade the director to risk showing him sitting, writing, resting and walking, why denude the film in its most significant moments of his image? And if it had been decided to make the sacrifice in the interests of a plausible reverence for the subject, why obtrude an actor occasionally with inadequate artistic justification?

Worse still is the calculated congruence of verbal and visual expression in a painfully obvious way. 'The whole country was ablaze with discontent,' the commentator says, and the screen is indeed covered with flames from corner to corner. The anonymous assassin who murders a local tyrant curls his lips in resentment and hatred at the precise moment that the commentator conveys to us the hatred and resentment of the people at the tyranny imposed on them. This is the approach and the method. Crippled by it, the film moves at an even tempo, throwing away every opportunity to recreate the mighty political struggle in which Tilak was engaged. As an example of what can be done, remember the train-wrecking and the scenes of the satyagraha at the railway

station in the Hollywood trash, *Bhowani Junction*. Contrast these with the tameness and the emptiness of the film on Tilak in which boycott of foreign cloth is indicated by shots of a small pile of something burning furiously and ghostly hands adding their quota to the flames. The pulsating mass passions which culminate in such a deed are rightly considered too dangerous to touch, for no Indian film director has so far attempted successfully a crowd scene. That is the extent of our much avowed technical accomplishment.

The Films Division story of Tilak is a political fairy tale for the masses, and one cannot blame it much for being so. It is also unimaginative and visually dull, and it *can* be blamed for this, though not without adding that it is the best film on Tilak possible in the circumstances.

A final word of criticism must be reserved for the music of Vasant Desai which is in harmony with the film by being carefully conventional, except when it is odd, and rises intolerably to expected crescendoes.

NISSIM EZEKIEL

The Soviet Othello

TO transfer a stage play to the screen is to explore the limitations of the first and the possibilities of the second. The Shakespearian play, in particular, has been doubly confined by the corollaries of scholarship and the more or less static traditions of the theatre. The problem of the Shakespeare producer in the cinema is, therefore, one simply of externalizing the 'words, words, words' of the text. He has to *place* the play in a particular setting, which may be realistic or otherwise. He must introduce sufficient visual movement on the screen without making us feel that

the verse has logically lost its evocative function in a medium where only images speak. He can, at the most, produce a filmic reality based on Shakespeare's age-old work.

We have had the chance to see two versions of *Othello* in the last few years. The first was in black and white, directed by Orson Welles, who played the main part. The second is the Soviet production in colour directed by Sergei Youtkevich. These two attempts bear comparison upto a certain point. The two versions are in two altogether different styles, but based on a common attitude, which, in the case of Welles, seems to verge on a camera-eye complex. This attitude involves a sort of historical re-creation of the story. Whereas Welles films his piece in Venice and Morocco, Youtkevich discovers locales reminiscent of the play's 'scene.'

The settings, the costumes and the incidental pageantry try to make this chronologically defined setting artistically convincing. But the two films, taken as wholes, are as different as the personalities that produced them. Welles' is naturally erratic, with flashes of imaginative visualisation and his usual obtrusively unconventional symbols. Youtkevich's is straightforward, with integrated touches of conventional symbolism. One need not compare the acting styles here, because the much-mouthed question of 'interpretations' is a fantasy created, I believe, by actor-managers and pseudo-intellectuals. In Shakespearian acting, the verse is a stern guide; you cannot vary the classical style of broad gestures and studied movements, not much. And the creative film producer expects only competence from his players, not more.

Youtkevich, it is said, had been thinking about this film for the last twenty years. He seems ultimately to have decided to take the bull by the horns; he has gone in for grandeur and vastness in every foot of his film. Welles was more concerned with

the tricks of his weirdly expressionistic style, with the shadows on the walls, with the shocking perspectives. Youtkevich's camera is docile, but never lax. If the emotion needs it badly, he will introduce a close-up of Othello's demanding hands as they terrify the Desdemona who has lost her handkerchief. He will even be flamboyant enough to show pencils of light emerging from Othello's repentant eyes in the last, tragic finale. But on the whole, he shoots the film with vigorous, but unobtrusive, movements of the camera.

Youtkevich is primarily concerned with clarifying the story. He, therefore, starts with the early story of Othello's exploits as seen through Desdemona's eyes. This is a remarkable adaptation of the tale that Othello tells the senate. It *places* the two characters firmly in our mind; it is the neutral view of the protagonist of the tragedy. In the succeeding scenes we experience the invigorating freedom which the director brings to the setting. After the investigation of the Othello-Brabantio case, we see the parties going down a magnificent staircase into the open. Desdemona, close by Othello, chances to drop her handkerchief. Iago picks it up, and earns his first 'honest Iago' from Othello. This is certainly an intelligent way of re-inforcing the implications of the main plot, which even a stage producer may utilise. When the scene transfers to Cyprus, the sweep of the setting persists; it is made a little more curious by shots of the wide sea and the ample landscape. It is here that Desdemona takes form, and the temptations of Iago gather momentum.

Again we get a glimpse of the director's mind, when we are shown Iago on the ramparts of the castle, looking at the innocent intimacies of Cassio and Desdemona as reflected in the shining hilt of his sword. This Soviet Iago has a very practical look in direct contrast with the Wellesian Iago's inscrutable mask as portrayed by Micheal

Macliammoir. Though less subtle than many a stage Iago, he is more convincing, especially in the context of his worldly relations with Cassio and Roderigo. We get another very fine indication of Youtkevich's inventiveness, when we see Roderigo comically ringing the bell after the drunken uproar and two guards coming to pick him up. Thus, objects which are passingly referred to in the verse come significantly and wittily to life. Welles, on the other hand, is nothing if not solemn, though his Roderigo was portrayed by that pompous-looking British actor, Robert Coote.

This suggestive quality, though by no means unconventional, is never banal. Iago addresses one of his soliloquies to his reflection in a well. So does Othello, in an altogether different mood. Iago's poisoning of Othello's mind is visually set against an array of fishing nets, which are incidentally quite relevant to the setting. Youtkevich makes great use of ruined pillars, of stretches of greenery, of rocky surfaces to evoke a feeling of awe and an awareness of tragic dimensions in our consciousness. His Emilia is virile, almost sexy, in fine contrast to her mistress. She matches her husband in her inconsequential flutterings; she is, therefore, much more convincing than the role created by veteran Fay Compton in Welles' film.

At times, the visual variations have an out-of-this-world beauty of conception. During one of Othello's tormented moments, a little, white lamb steals into camera range and wanders off just before Desdemona's arrival. Othello's rhetorical denunciation of himself—'I had been happy if the general camp . . . had tasted her sweet body'—is literally placed before the camp at night. Othello walks in a frenzy towards the 'Pontic sea'. And as waves dash against a giant anchor rooted in the surf, Iago and his master swear loyalty to each other. It is this kind of abandon that places Youtkevich

at once in the creative category of Shakespeare producers.

The desire to find an appropriate setting leads him to the ship, from where Othello can watch Iago baiting Cassio on the pier. It is this very ship which will carry the bodies of Othello and Desdemona, with Iago tied to the wrack on board. Thus Youtkevich succeeds a great deal in *rounding up* the signs and symbols which he has scattered throughout the film. To accommodate Desdemona's willow song, which was unfortunately deleted by Welles, he even shows her singing in the distance, lying on a boat in the bay. This Desdemona is gentle, with a gleam of motherly tolerance in her eyes.

In the last scene, Bondarchuk, the Soviet actor, rises to great heights of tragic acting, justifying his own conception of Othello as not just another gulled husband, but a monument of nobility that cannot bear a scratch on the respectable surface. Youtkevich has delayed the self-assassination of Othello, by giving a more impressive setting to the scene. Othello carries his murdered wife to a rampart, and sits there gloomily watching her body before surprising his captors with the final stab. If you can excuse Olivier for allowing Hamlet's body to be carried to the ramparts, there is nothing wrong with this way of staging the last scene of a tragedy. What is important is that it fits into what has gone before. In fact, even if Youtkevich's inspiration may appear to be more Lamb than Shakespeare, the fluidity of his style and its consistency turn the tables on Welles, who is surely much more subjective than any Soviet director can claim to be.

The dialogue has been dubbed, possibly by some English repertory actors. Since this was no responsibility of the original director, it need not be commented upon. Even in Welles' film, the dialogue was post-recorded, and there it was hardly intelligible.

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book reviews

THE TRANSFER OF POWER IN INDIA

by V. P. Menon

THE NINTH YEAR OF FREEDOM, 1956

INDIA, DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION

by Josselyn Hennessy

APPROACHES TO GOD

by Jacques Maritain

WORK AND ITS DISCONTENTS

by Daniel Bell

ATOMIC WEAPONS AND EAST-WEST RELATIONS

by P. M. S. Blackett

THE SOUND OF THE WAVES

by Yukio Mishima

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STORIES FROM CHUKOTKA

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IN THE SHADOW OF THE KREMLIN

by Satya Dev Sharma

THE TRANSFER OF POWER IN INDIA.
by V. P. Menon (Orient Longmans,
Rs. 25)

HAVING given his public a photographic account of the integration of the Indian States, Mr. V. P. Menon goes back to cover the transfer of power from the British. Like his earlier publication, this volume is mainly a factual record. The intimate knowledge that the author has of the events of the last years before Independence, is somehow not communicated; and it suffers in other ways by comparison with Alan Campbell-Johnson's lively account of the Mountbatten interlude.

In a sense, the book departs from the usual practice of giving the reader all the relevant documents that are discussed in it and leaving him to judge for himself. For instance, Mr. Menon refers to the 'plan' which Lord Mountbatten sent back to the British Cabinet, in which the main feature was to leave the Provinces of British India

to decide on partition for themselves and to hand over power to their governments. He says that he was himself strongly opposed to it, as fatal to the unity of India. He mentions that the British Cabinet made drastic changes in it before giving it their approval and that Lord Mountbatten was perturbed by the changes to the extent of invoking Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru's assistance to defeat it. But the details of the Plan and of the British changes in it are not disclosed though we are told that, after it was abandoned, a scheme outlined by Mr. Menon himself took its place—the scheme which introduced both Dominion Status and Partition into the Indian scene.

In the light of recent developments in Pakistan, one might be excused for thinking that had the people of East Bengal been given an opportunity to consider the whole position, the present complications might well have been avoided. The autonomy of East Pakistan, at any rate, need not have

been a matter of bitter controversy between the two sections there. As for India itself, it is possible that the linguistic controversies of the present would have dissolved in the real autonomy of the States, which would have allowed some kind of State loyalty to develop.

Mr. Menon who throughout is more concerned with official adjustments than with public opinion and sentiment, fails in his review of the past to draw attention to the trend of Indian politics after the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms introduced provincial autonomy. Mr. Nehru in his autobiography mentions the fears he held in 1937 that the Congress Governments of autonomous provinces might develop a State-loyalty which would mar the national spirit. But long before that Gandhiji had raised the linguistic cry in the expectation both that it would make Hindi more acceptable as an all-India language and that it would check the attraction of the provinces.

We know now that this first hope was to a great extent frustrated while the negative second wish was tragically fulfilled. It is natural that the Congress politician, himself a victim of his own propaganda, found it difficult to turn his back on linguism. But there was no reason why one who was in the administrative service and had so thoroughly made himself a bureaucrat, should fail to see through the political confusion here. After all, Mr. Menon was able to wean the top Congress leadership from its equally passionate faith in India's severance of the Commonwealth ties and in India's unity and integrity.

The threat to the Centre was not from the autonomous provinces but from the linguistic demand. The administrative province was a multi-lingual State, even if only a few provinces were actually multi-lingual. Given political insight on the part of the leaders, the provinces could well have been used as strengthening forces for Indian national unity. For this reason, the

first Plan and the British Cabinet's changes are important. The public might at last be allowed to judge for itself in the historical perspective. And we are sufficiently removed in time—ten years of Free India are quite long, if one thinks of the changes that have taken place—to be able to bring a detached mind.

That a bare narration of facts, even if it is done in great detail, will not give a correct picture is shown by 'The Transfer of Power'. Mr. Menon appears to be overwhelmed by the trees. It is important for the present-day student—and more so for the practical politician—to recognize the curious pattern by which the Gandhian Congress moved to its goal. Right to the end, there was little to show what it actually intended to achieve; in few cases has the final achievement been so vastly different from the professed goals.

In terms of the various offers of constitutional reform, a strange kind of Dutch auction worked where the last accepted bid was the least favourable: The Simon Commission recommendations, the Round Table Conference schemes, the Cripps offer, the Cabinet Mission proposal and the Mountbatten arrangement present themselves in a descending order of merit, so far as the unity of India and the growth of a national spirit are concerned. Then, again, without desiring to revive old quarrels, it must be pointed out that Mr. Menon, in keeping with official policy, is disposed to extend an uncritical admiration to the British for the final settlement. Possibly that is because he himself was a strong supporter of partition. But the solution, characteristically a British act of despair, leaves all problems exactly as they were—whether in Palestine, in Ireland, or in India. The violence and bloodshed it was expected to avert have been suffered all the same. The pathetic belief entertained by political Indians and Indian administrators, that, by accepting the inability of people to live together, one

can promote understanding and good relations amongst them, was disproved. Mr. Menon quotes from an article written by him at the time of the worst disturbances to show the extent of the 'disillusionment'. He could well have written the article today, so far as Indo-Pakistan relations are concerned.

In an interesting paragraph, the author outlines the process by which on account of the Congress attitude towards the British, the British Government was virtually thrown into the arms of the Muslim League, and by later political errors the growth of the League was facilitated. It is not without a bearing on our foreign policy after Independence where the same mistakes are continued on a vaster scale, this time with the Americans playing Britain's role. If there is one inference to be drawn from this, it is that there is something basically wrong about our manner of differing—particularly when it comes to differing with the democracies. We have certainly shown a greater awareness of the sensitivity of the Communist nations. The touching belief that democracies can take unpleasant truths and what we think to be truths rudely propounded, combined by a supreme confidence in the rightness of our own attitudes, raises insuperable barriers in inter-national relations. Mr. Menon has shown where the germs of this approach lie, even if he has failed to interpret his selection of facts.

The book has defects. Nevertheless, as we have very few such studies in India, it is valuable merely because, along with the earlier volume, it tells the story of eventful years in our history. S. NATARAJAN

THE NINTH YEAR OF FREEDOM, 1956
Indian National Congress Publication,
Rs. 3).

THIS book is a catalogue of the achievements of this country, as they appear through the eyes of its ruling political party,

during the ninth year of freedom. The ninth year of freedom will remain an important year in the history of free India not because of what has been achieved during that period but because of certain major decisions which were taken and which might bring about an economic revolution in our society. During the course of the ninth year of our freedom we decided to invest a considerable portion of our revenue and foreign aid in basic and heavy industries, to introduce a progressive taxation structure which might help us to level down the extremes of riches and poverty, and cover our rural areas with community projects and National Extension Services. Against the background of our own past which is notorious for its otherworldliness these decisions appear as our determination to improve our lot on this earth.

The Ninth Year of Freedom, like the Congress publications of the previous years, is packed with information about the activities of the Union and State governments. It gives a fairly comprehensive account of the various projects undertaken by them. It also provides a few useful graphs on practically all the important aspects of our economic development.

The book, however, tends to make extremely dull reading. This is because the editorial board responsible for its production has concentrated far more on mere reporting rather than on the evaluation of what it reports. Consequently the book has become some sort of a reference book for students of Indian economics. And to that extent it will have very limited appeal for that section of the reading public which likes to keep itself well-posted on the many-sided developments in this country. Because of its utter indifference to analysis and evaluation, the chapters on Foreign Affairs, Education, States Reorganization, Planning etc. suffer considerably. Lest it should be argued that an attempt at evaluation would have introduced the

party bias, let me add that such a bias is never absent even in the fact of reporting.

The task of analysts and historians of the ruling political party such as the Congress is certainly far more complicated than is made out by the people who are engaged in the production of a volume on each year of our freedom. It is a task which goes much beyond the mere piecing together of the various publications and papers of the state to which they have an access. It is in fact a three-fold task. Firstly, it requires an analysis and intelligible statement of the objectives of the party. This in itself can be a fascinating piece of study, for few political parties in power have shown the kind of dynamism and receptiveness as the Congress. Exposition of the objectives of the party which requires a good deal of theoretical analysis ought not to be left to the overburdened Prime Minister and an equally preoccupied president of the party.

Secondly, in the light of these objectives the achievements of the party both at the Union and State levels should be assessed. The freedom to assess would however depend upon the degree of democracy which exists in the party's internal organization. And thirdly, the impact of the party's decisions and policies on the people, institutions and the rival political parties should be carefully analysed and stated. All this requires a good deal of thinking and research, of course from a party point of view, on the part of those who are engaged in the preparation of a book of this kind. And without adequate thinking and research a 'review' of the achievements of the party of which Mr. Shriman Narayan speaks in his preface to this volume is not worthwhile.

H. SOMJEE

INDIA, DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION
by Josselyn Hennessy (Orient Longmans
Rs.15)

THE questions are as old as time itself. Education for what purpose? For bread-winning, for democratic, authorita-

rian or anarchic, 'education for death,' or for spiritual freedom? Then again what is education? Literacy, technical proficiency or the learning which liberates the mind? Finally is it true that those who have received the benediction of education are tolerant, balanced and thinking persons? That it is by them that the urgencies of day to day living are guided and canalised rather than by those who are swayed by greed, prejudice and power?

In his foreword to the book, Dr. Radhakrishnan says that education is the essential means of bringing about a new society. The welfare state has not only to recognise that truth but also to give it concrete shape. That such education should try to inculcate tolerance for and interest in all forms of life is a corollary of this truth. If democracy meant a readiness to grant that it takes all sorts to make the world, and if education meant understanding and broad-mindedness, the work of the teacher would be easy. But it is not as simple as that. The complexity and stress of modern life have made it difficult for the teacher to be the ascetic who watches but does not interfere.

The ideal school is still one teacher, one pupil and one tree. The nearer a school approximates to this ideal the better it is. Briefly, these are the minimum needs: (1) the teacher-student ratio ought never to go beyond 1:20 (2) the school should be a community *i.e.* it should either be a boarding school or a day-boarding school, so that those whose business it is to teach and learn should spend at least 10 hours in the day together; (3) the school should have games fields, gymnasium, library, laboratory, workshop and hobbies' room (4) life in the community should afford plenty of scope for independent thought and work, healthy adventure, and social and co-operative responsibility. Nature, heredity and intuition will take care of the rest.

The chief value of this book is that it strikes a valiant blow for these essential

conditions of learning. Mr. Hennessy starts off with a quotation from Prof. Whitehead's 'Aims of Education'.

Now the natural mode by which living organisms are excited towards suitable self-development is enjoyment.

Thus to Oxford (or Cambridge or Yale) which is a microcosm that opens the door to every experience which can attract a young man or woman. The aim of such educational systems is 'to launch their young men and women joyously into the stream of life, in constructive, cheerful forward-looking mood.'

When one turns to India, the picture is not only gloomy, it is shocking. The testimony gathered from the newspapers and the University Education Commission of 1948-49 regarding student indiscipline and inadequate hostel accommodation is enough to make every thoughtful person want to seek an answer to the questions.

This urgent inquiry led the author and his wife to accept the invitation of the Birla Education Trust to go to Pilani to test their theory. In 1952, a total of 6,238 students had learnt in the Trust's Art, Science, Commerce and Engineering colleges, High School, Public School, Montessori, Primary and village schools. The recurring expenditure for that year was Rs. 1,647,018, 65 per cent of which was met by fees and 35 per cent from the Trust's funds. The saga of S. D. Pande and of the great principals at Pilani reflects a broad-minded readiness to support educational experiments.

The probe is earnest and shrewd enough to save the book from being an apology for the Trust. Yet one is surprised that the structure of the investigation was raised on the flimsy thesis (page 37) that democracy has worked reasonably well where the people have inherited the traditions of Christianity, particularly of Protestantism. (A few months ago this reviewer had come across an identical claim made for the Roman Catholic Church). According to the author,

these traditions and conceptions (of reason and consciousness of humanity?) are alien to India. This leads one to wonder if it is so difficult to see in philosophical perspective the growth of national socialism in Germany and the living institution of panchayat in India? As one reads the book, one also has the feeling that because of his failure to interpret tradition in its right context, the author has accepted occasionally (in spite of his alertness) the superficial as catholic and enthusiasm as inspiration.

N.L.K.

APPROACHES TO GOD by Jacques Maritain (Allen and Unwin, 8s. 6d.)

THIS book is one in the World Perspective series edited by R. N. Anshen. The aim of the series is outlined as follows. 'An important effort of the series is to re-examine the contradictory meanings and applications which are given to such terms as democracy, freedom, love, peace and God. The purpose of such enquiry is to clear the way for the formulation of a genuine world history not in terms of nation or culture or race but in terms of man in relation to God.' It is indeed appropriate that a profound and a religious thinker like Maritain should be chosen as one of the authors. The book, as is evident from the title, is primarily an enquiry into the ways of knowing God. The enquiry has also a metaphysical character, so far as it entails the question of the relation between the belief in God and reality. The history of religious thinking evinces two principal ways of knowing God, (1) the way of proof, (2) the way of experience (as understood by the mystics). Maritain's thesis is that a right approach to God requires a synthesis of both.

In the first chapter, Maritain expounds the view of what he calls natural or pre-philosophical knowledge of God. Knowledge of God is natural. A proof of the existence of God, in order to be valid must

be based on this knowledge. Natural knowledge is defined as awareness or experience of existence, which is inescapable and cannot be constructed away. The essence of the realistic approach to knowledge is in the affirmation of this existence-awareness. Existence, experience whereof is knowledge, is of one's self and things. In both cases the experience is one of encounter with the given or the *latum*. Experience of the two types of existence is one of contrast. To experience things is necessarily to be aware of solidity and inexorability; and to be aware of oneself is necessarily to experience fragility and nothingness. The self appears to be being-with-nothing. One cannot, however, be content with the state of being-with-nothing and needs to assume being-without-nothing for a support and the being-without-nothing (which can be the whole of which the self is a part,) is God. This natural or pre-philosophical knowledge of God is to be the basis of the proof of the existence of God.

Later, the author states the five arguments of St. Thomas for the existence of God. The arguments, it is claimed, are based on natural knowledge i.e. the act of experience of characteristics of nature. There is no doubt that the author presents the arguments well, defending them against possible objections. 'The nerve of the different arguments' is the emphasis on the need for admission of God as the First Cause or the Ground of the world. In addition to the five arguments the author adds what he considers to be the sixth way. And this argument, which seems to be original, deserves a brief statement.

The author, in consistency with his thesis, bases the argument on non-conceptual or natural knowledge. This knowledge is an act of two-fold awareness of existence. I am aware of the temporal, and, therefore, the destructible aspect of my existence. I was born, which implies that I had a beg-

inning in time, and shall have an end in time. But I am also simultaneously aware that I am not merely in time. I, as a thinking self, as revealed in a series of acts of thinking or contemplation, am not in time, as thought *qua* thought is indestructible and eternal. The thinking self must, therefore, be eternally existing and that, in a person or a self as thought implies a thinker. The self which eternally experiences the thinking of ourselves is God.

In the next chapter Maritain considers a different way of approach to God, the way of the practical intellect or experience. The two ways of experience are the ways of artistic experience and of moral experience. Beauty and poetry, which are the principal spheres of artistic experience are 'mirrors of God'. The author does not offer a logical support of the belief in the spiritual basis of artistic experience. He merely states that this is so. He offers an argument to support the way of moral experience. The argument is that an act of choice of freedom, if the action be right, implies the existence of God. There is no doubt that we can and do choose the right action from the wrong one. This choice implies the objectivity of the right or the good and the correspondence, in the case of right action, of the good. This implies the being of the self-subsistent and the separate good, transcending the empirical order and this good is God. Therefore, to affirm the act of choice or freedom is to admit, at least in the unconscious, the existence of God. To deny the latter while affirming the former is pseudo-atheism. The authentic atheist is one who denies the very possibility of the moral choice and the objectivity of the good.

In the last chapter the author points out that man can know God as He is revealed through the effects, the world. The human way of knowing can evince God as the First Cause, which has meaning only in relation to Effect. God as Himself or in His essence

is inaccessible. But man cannot repress the desire to know God as He is in essence. The desire is natural, but it is not given to man to fulfil it. Is then agnosticism correct? To this Maritain's answer, which can be characterised as qualified agnosticism, is that man can know God as He is, not by operation of his faculties, but by an act of grace. Knowledge of God is a gift. It comes, how and to whom depends not on man but on God.

What seems to be wanting in this work is a logical determination of the nature of God, which is the basis of a rational approach to God. If we are to know whether God exists, we must first know what God is. An enquiry into the existence of God without a prior determination of the nature of God exposes religious thinking to ambiguity and error. I don't think that the approach to God as suggested by Maritain is wholly free from either. It, like other approaches, is based on unwarranted assumptions. The supposed awareness of the existence of God cannot be assimilated to the ordinary knowledge of one's self or of things. It does not evince the sense of certitude of the existence of God inherent in the latter. This sense of certitude is evident, if it is evident at all, only in mystical experience.

In spite of the possible objections to the author's view point, some of which have been stated, it is to be admitted that his book is an able exposition of metaphysical and religious thinking. I have no doubt that such expositions have a very useful function especially at a time when the narrowness and the irrationality of positivistic and anti-metaphysical thinking are evident.

SANTOSH SEN GUPTA

WORK AND ITS DISCONTENTS by Daniel Bell, (Beacon Press, Boston).

MR. BELL'S 56 clear, well-written pages are stimulating and alive. Both in matter and form, this small book is distin-

guished. Mr. Bell is to be congratulated on saying just what he wants to say, exactly as he wants to say it, and not letting himself be persuaded into producing for custom's sake the solemn tome to which the subject could so easily have lent itself. Agreeably, as in talking to intelligent friends, he gives information, puts out ideas, suggests questions, and starts trains of thought. Time as *duree* obviously means to him, as it must to all men of sensibility, much more than time as a function of space.

Joy taken out of work Mr. Bell finds the condition of the factory worker to-day. The worker himself ceasing to be necessary, he foresees to-morrow. What will man do, deprived of the central thing, however unsatisfactory, round which his life revolves? Mr. Bell gives no answer since he ends his book at this point. We may hope that man will then begin to lead the rational life for which he would seem to have been made. Work done in order to obtain the where-withal of living is after all the fulfilment of the primeval curse imposed upon the first of all men. That it should be lifted is a matter for rejoicing. Its going should bring back the natural joy in the use of his mind and his body, according to the dictates of his reason and will, that is man's true heritage. Because of it, the individual may be himself again, a personality, a being enjoying the earth and its fruitfulness in his own special way, under no compulsion to conform, not even the internal compulsion to be one of a herd inherent in the worker.

The future is indeed blessed for the sons of the bright West. Those who live in the underdeveloped lands of the darker East can, conditions being what they are, contemplate no such release. There is even less joy in work for many workers here than in the West but work must continue to be the rule, and the difference between the West and these lands to-day must continue to grow, for no short cut is visible that will enable catching up with the tremen-

dous advances the West makes from day to day.

There is however one point of difference that may make work more tolerable here. Religion still continues a vital living force. And religion combines with itself and preaches as a part of itself the duty of work. The saying of Luther Mr. Bell quotes, 'A housemaid who does her work well is no further away from God than the priest in his pulpit', is in complete accord with the spirit of Hinduism, which urges man besides finding full reward of right in doing right, to 'live in action, labour, make thy acts thy piety'.

Nor indeed is it essential that joy should be driven out of work. If giving of satisfaction to the worker means employment of not the most efficient, though a sufficiently efficient, method, intelligent managements in future may consider it worthwhile to bear the extra cost, even if the price to the consumer is higher or their profit less. And as more and more it becomes the practice for workers to participate in management, and workers begin to understand that there are other considerations important besides take-home pay, the giving of satisfaction to the worker in the actual doing of his work may become really significant. This is all the more relevant in countries like ours, which cannot, and in my view, even if they could, must not, be allowed to take refuge from mental stress in the consumer-goods, advertisement-ridden civilisation Mr. Bell sums up in the effective phrase 'candied carrot'.

All effort has its discontents; the athlete who wins a difficult race may still be discontented with the style in which he covered the last lap; the artist whose picture has achieved tremendous reputation, harrowed by the thought that what he wanted to express has just been missed. Which discontent is worst of all, who can tell? To distinguish between the quality of emotions, that is quite a task. But there can be no doubt

that one of the most painful, as also the most common, is that of the ordinary man compelled to do mechanical, monotonous work in prescribed fashion throughout his working day. Mr. Bell has indeed done well to draw pointed attention to it and so skillfully to analyse it. Management and Labour alike will profit by reading this book. Senior Government servants, social scientists and men interested in public affairs will find it absorbing.

A. D. GORWALA

ATOMIC WEAPONS AND EAST-WEST RELATIONS, by P. M. S. Blackett. (Cambridge University Press, 8s.6d.)

SUCCESSFUL theories and successful mechanisms have one important feature in common: they work. Prof. P. M. S. Blackett's theories on military science promise to be as eminently workable as that mechanism of his creation—the Counter-Controlled Expansion Chamber—which years ago made his name so respected in the select world of physics.

Cosmic rays are evanescent things. Recording the behaviour of these rays was a haphazard, rule-of-thumb matter until the Counter-Controlled Expansion Chamber rationalized it. *Atomic Weapons and East-West Relations* is an attempt to effect a similar improvement in the world's approach to that immediate and grizzly problem: armaments.

Prof. Blackett's arguments hinge on the assumption that the efficiency of means of attack and retaliation have today reached saturation-point. In consequence, the necessity for the Great Powers to run a technological race in armaments has ceased to exist. The need of the hour is not better weapons but better places to hide. And yet, although the hour is so late, the West plods along with only nominal defence measures which, in the context of all the declarations of massive retaliation by superweapons, are

as obsolete as the drawbridge. If there is, in this unpreparedness, anything for which the West's civilian population might be grateful, it is the fact that the West's pronouncements about employing massive weapons against relatively minor aggressions may be dismissed as 'declaratory policy' which would never be acted upon.

Now, it may well be true that the gulf between the West's announced and actual intentions regarding military policy will operate to the detriment of intelligent planning for the future. Nonetheless, when Prof. Blackett attributes to the West's declaratory armament policy the existence of the cold war, he makes one of his least convincing assertions. Prof. Blackett's argument here is that the recent relaxation in Russia's policies is related not coincidentally, but causally, to her achievement of parity in atomic weapons—to her ability, that is, of flouting the West's 'declaratory policy'. But surely, in politics, as in other things, intransigence is a direct, and not inverse, function of strength.

Be that as it may, Prof. Blackett quite rightly warns the West against devoting to superweapons—in pursuance of its declaratory policy—more than just the minimum skills and resources necessary for sustaining a strategic stalemate. The danger, as Prof. Blackett explains, is that the West might find itself economically helpless to respond to Asia's need for aid.

Thus, by degrees, we are shown why the West must develop and declare an 'action policy' of 'graduated deterrence'—viable both economically and politically—which would set up a tactical stalemate to supplement the strategic stalemate already induced by H-bomb carriers. Even where *Atomic Weapons and East-West Relations* does not inspire the measure of conviction on which action must be based, it outlines those aspirations at which action must be aimed.

P. C.

THE SOUND OF THE WAVES by Yukio Mishima. (Alfred A. Knof \$3.00)

IN an effort to achieve the *ultimate* simplicity, modern thought has got terribly involved in a maze of complex psychological and scientific phenomena, and the novel is no longer the faithful buggy that served writers of every description to carry out their conducted tours of the intellectual, emotional and aesthetic landscape. The *story* is no more the basic interest, and the modern reader is constantly faced with writers who are 'perceiving possibilities of greater intensity through the elimination of the meaning.' As a result, a sort of 'wall of incommunicability' has arisen 'twixt the writer and his audience - and today for a reader to *understand* what he reads may indeed be considered a triumph of the art of living! Nevertheless most highbrows have, by now, begun to enjoy the adventure of hanging on for dear life to the thin thread of narrative which (when the writer is obliging) vaguely links one cross-current of the sub-conscious to the other. Consequently while the 'novel' (for lack of any satisfactory alternative which would be generally acceptable) still persists, the *simple* novel at least is gone for ever, and no intellectual writer can today afford to write with nineteenth century straightforwardness.

Against this background it is easy to understand the popularity which Japanese translations have recently enjoyed. Because Japanese writers have been free from the impositions of modern techniques of expression, they have been able to bring to us a quality of simplicity which, coming after the intellectual entanglements of European writing, is at once refreshing and restful. Not being preoccupied with the subconscious scene, these translations are after the heart of the common reader who has been hankering for the straight-simple-but-well-written story in modern settings. And by using only *genuinely simple* charac-

ters, Japanese writers have cleverly avoided the problem of over-simplification, while at the same time adding an old-worldly charm to their writings.

Mr. Yukio Mishima's *The Sound of the Waves* is a good example in point. It is a simple love story set in a Japanese fishing village—the modern world is far away—but it reverberates throughout the book, and only its tremors, like that of some distant earthquake, reach the village. It is a device whereby the emotional complexities of modern civilization are done away with, while the story still maintains its contemporaneity.

The book reminds me very much of a short story by Mr. Somerset Maugham—'Salvatore'—where he begins by saying: 'I wonder if I can do it', and ends up with: 'I started by saying that I wondered if I could do it and now I must tell you what it is I have tried to do. I wanted to see whether I could hold your attention for a few pages while I drew for you the portrait of a man, just an ordinary fisherman who possessed nothing in the world except a quality which is the rarest, the most precious and the loveliest that anyone can have. Heaven only knows why he should so strangely and unexpectedly have possessed it. All I know is that it shone in him with a radiance that, if it had not been so unconscious and so humble, would have been to the common run of men hardly bearable. And in case you have not guessed what the quality was I will tell you. Goodness, just goodness.' This might well have been written of the *Sound of the Waves* too—except that Mr. Mishima holds our attention successfully for almost 200 pages. IQBAL LUKMANI

THE STORY BAG, A Collection of Korean Folktales. By Kim So-Un. Translated into English by Setsu Higashi. (Charles E. Tuttle Co. Tokyo. \$1.50)

FOLKTALES from any country have a charm of their own which age cannot affect. The fact that they are told to gene-

ration after generation ensures that only the worthwhile survive.

This collection of Korean folk stories is no exception. And it is well that they are being told, for the very first story in the book shows how dangerous it is to try and hide such stories and not recount them. A young boy loved stories and whenever he heard a new one he stuffed it into a small bag he had. The bag grew fuller and fuller and the stories more cramped and uncomfortable. As the boy grew up he forgot all about them and the years passed. The stories, cooped up and forgotten, grew spiteful and determined to get their own back on their collector, so they plotted and planned evil things. Thanks to a devoted servant, the young man survived these plots but he learnt—as we do—that 'when stories are heard they must never be stored away to become mean and spiteful, but must always be shared with other people.' So by all means let us share these stories.

Besides, folk stories are so educational! For instance, did you know that the earth has mountains, rivers and seas because the princess of Heaven dropped her ring on to the earth when it was just a stretch of mud, and her servant went about groping in the mud looking for it? Or that eclipses are caused by the loyal dog Fireball from the Land of Darkness who regularly tries to carry out his master's instructions to take the sun and the moon back to his king? Do you know why dogs and cats always fight? Do you know that the real spirit of a human being dwells in his fingers nails?

There is one story entitled 'The Magic Gem' which resembles the form of many Indian fairy tales. A fisherman saves the life of a fish who turns out to be the prince of the Dragon King. In reward, the Dragon King gives the fisherman a magic gem which enables the owner to have whatever he wishes. A wicked neighbour steals the gem by guile but it is recovered by the fisherman's loyal cat and dog. This story

follows closely a tale current in India and retold in 'Folk Tales of Kashmir' by the Rev. J. Hinton Knowles under the title of 'The Charmed Ring.' There is little doubt that this story travelled east from India. Variants and similar stories exist in most of the countries of South East Asia. In passing, it is interesting to note that this form of folk tale, so popular throughout East Asia, does not seem to exist in Japan. Apparently the Sea of Japan proved to be an insuperable barrier.

The English translation by Setsu Higashi is competent and the book is enlivened by charming illustrations by Kim Eui-hwan. The printing and the get-up of the book is such that one wishes Indian publishers would learn something from it.

A.A.

STORIES FROM CHUKOTKA by Ritkheyu. Lawrence & Wishart, 12s. 6d.)

CHUKOTKA is one of the remotest areas of the Soviet Union, lying within the Arctic Circle on the most northerly extremity of the East Siberian Region. Even forty years ago the Chukchi had no written script. The author is a Chukot writer and is now a student in the philological faculty at Leningrad University.

If the reader expects to find in these stories folklore and folkstories from Chukotka, he will be terribly disappointed. The author is resolved to write 'the truth' about his 'countrymen, however improbable it may seem at times.' (p.110) And the truth is 'The winter gales will return and the North Wind will come from the mountains to fight with the South wind but the sun of Lenin's truth will never set over us.' (p.260).

All the stories are about the Morning Collective Farm and the people who run it. How in the beginning people were apathetic and even hostile to the Soviets and how they were gradually won over by the *wise* Party members, form the theme of most of

the stories. The resistance of the people towards being *civilised* has been shown as pure idiocy. Soon they realised that 'The Russians brought us the light. They brought us wind generators and outboard motors and houses. They have done so much for Chukotka. They drove out the robber traders, showed us how to live without chieftains and kulaks and helped us to establish the collective farm system. And they brought us one light more, the light of literacy. They gave us books full of wisdom. There was no literacy in Chukotka before; we were in darkness for thousands of years. The little Chukchi people would never have escaped from this darkness, but Lenin sent scholars to us, saying: "Open the path to the light for the Chukchi." Stalin added: "Compile a grammar for the Chukchi, one that will enable them to read and write in their language. There is no other path to the light." The Russian scholars did just that. They studied our language and compiled a grammar for us. Throughout Chukotka they built schools for our children.' (p.127) After all this, one should not be surprised when one hears that 'where you find Stalin, things are on the right road. In some places they come right sooner, in some later, but they always do come right. That's indisputable.' (p.40) Probably a new edition of the book without Stalin's name will soon come out.

Even little anecdotes relating to the collective farm workers have been given the touch of the propagandist. Even individual and private love affairs are clouded by the glory of the Soviet land. And yet 'real poetry and romanticism are not to be found where I previously thought. They are far more complex and more down to earth.' (p.194)

The author has found the rockbottom of that earth in the Soviet system and the complex appears to him to be simple as he ceases to think for himself. He can rely on the party, which is never in the

wrong. He has nothing to do. All thinking is done for him by the Party. He is simply to receive what the party dictates to him as the good. But his book must be different from the party manifesto. After all he is a *story writer*. So he must toe the Party line by translating the party manifesto into the language of *stories* and thus perform his sacred duty to help in 'building a completely different civilisation, a non-capitalist one.' How easy the writer's job has become in Soviet Russia.

If this is called creative literature and not an account of the achievements of the party in Chukotka put under the grandiose name of 'Stories from Chukotka' I shall eat my hat.

M. K. HALDAR

IN THE SHADOW OF THE KREMLIN by Satya Dev Sharma. (Siddharta Publications Rs. 2|8|-.)

IN THE SHADOW OF THE KREMLIN is a routine description of a short visit to the U.S.S.R. The author is an energetic young man, one of our top-ranking student leaders, who has done excellent organizational work. What the author has presented, the life of the people under a totalitarian regime, is, by now, commonplace knowledge for even a casual newspaper reader.

As the publishers point out, the contents of the book were first published as a series of articles in *Thought* during 1955. Apparently, they have neither been revised nor even recast. To illustrate: a first paragraph of a chapter of the book continues to term it an article! And almost throughout, the reader is painfully conscious of a hurriedly and carelessly executed commission.

Language apart, frequently there is confusion of thought too. To cite an example, on page 86, a Russian student is quoted as saying that a student must carry an internal passport over police signatures because,

like all ordinary citizens a student must have a proper authorization, particularly when he has to travel from one place to another. This means that, in Russia, citizens require something like a pass-port for travel even inside Russia, and that *all* Russians do have such authorization. But on p.60 the author informs us: 'I was curious to know why the issuance of 'special books' should be confined to holders of internal pass-ports i.e., people regarded sufficiently safe to be allowed to travel from one part of the country to another,'—which, on its part, can only mean that inside Russia even travel by authorization is not possible for *all* Russians; that some, at any rate, are restricted and cannot at all travel. Obviously both these statements cannot be true!

Again, he asserts: 'The radio in my room could produce nothing better than harangues and loud local music from Radio Moscow.' This definitely amounts to saying that there is little but "harangues" on Radio Moscow - a statement which is factually not quite exact, as anyone who has cared to hear Radio Moscow will immediately testify.

The work is obviously written for the general reader. The author is anxious to address the man in the street and so, perhaps, has chosen a manner of writing which he thought proper for the purpose. But the result is a book which is neither a readable travelogue and reportage nor an acute analysis of what Russia stands for today. This is not a record that breaks on the reader with a shock of horror nor a searing revelation of present day Russia. The choice of incidents described is not effective. The writing borders on being dull - it does not even succeed in painting a mordant picture. What is even worse, it does not reflect any kind of deep insight at all. It is not even a promising book.

B. A. OLKAR

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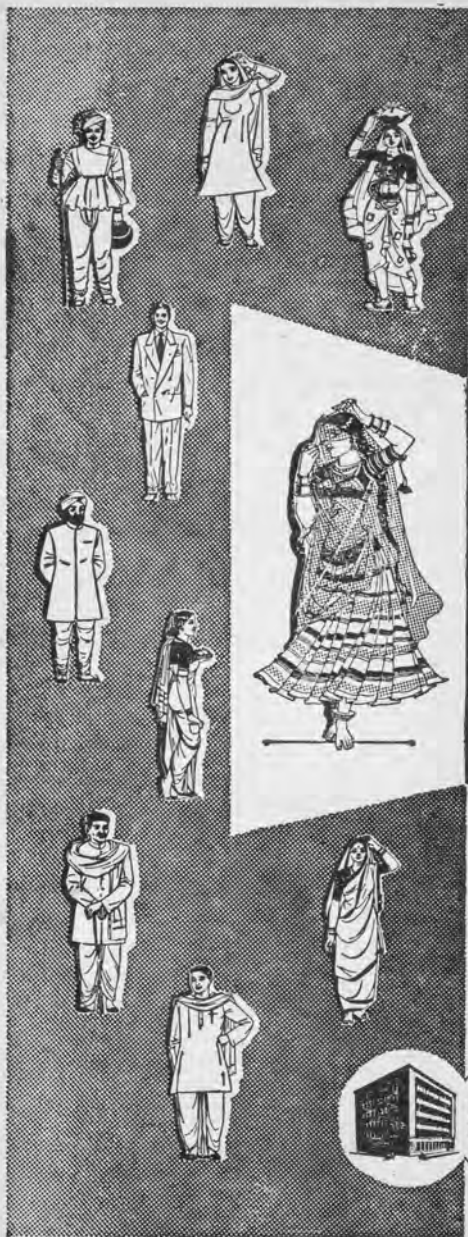
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