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of
Ideas

July — September 1958

IGNAZIO SILONE

Thomas Mann

ELLEN ROY

Democratic Socialism

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The Co-operative Way

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Unity and Isolation

ATTAR SINGH

Punjabi Literature

Editors: Abu Sayeed Ayyub, Amlan Datta

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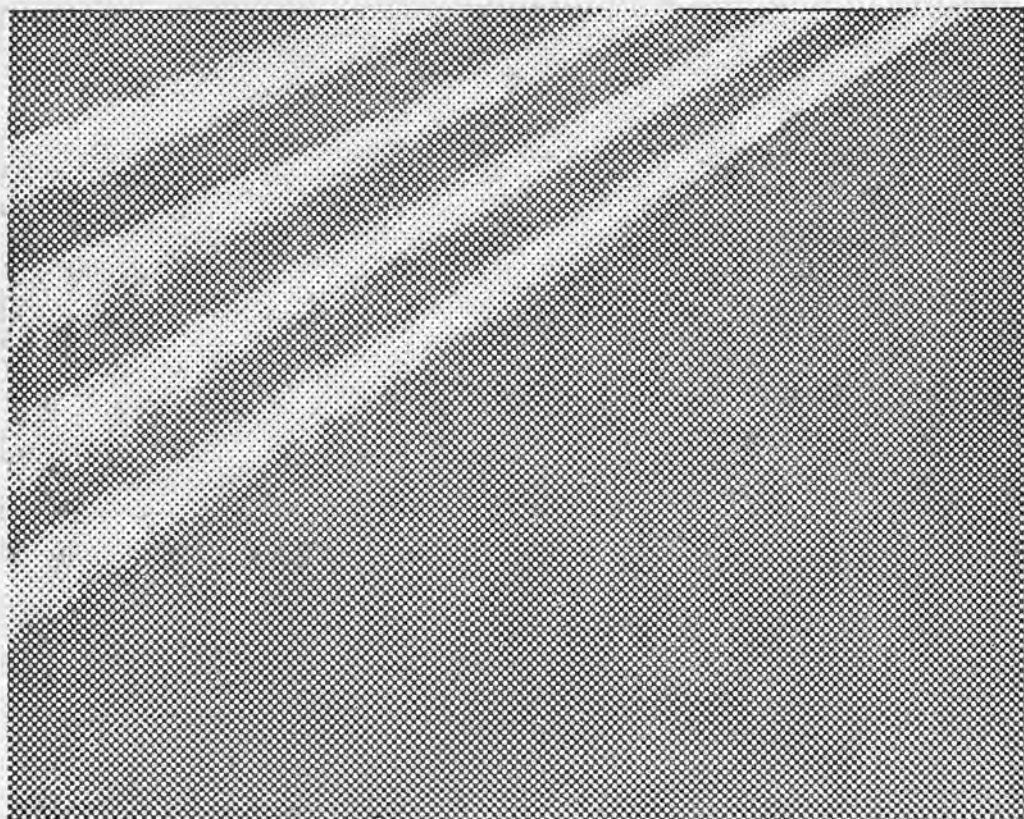
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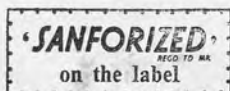
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Thomas Mann As Political Thinker

By IGNAZIO SILONE

MUCH has been written recently about the political thinking of Thomas Mann, but, as far as I am aware, the commentators have been men of letters who, though dealing with the subject elegantly, have not inquired into it very closely. My impression is that they have all been victims of a misapprehension, one which results from a confusion between the affirmation of moral and spiritual values and the knowledge of relevant political forms and forces. It is obvious that such a fundamental distinction is necessary in any evaluation of a political thinker. What is missing in these studies is a certain measuring-rod, a clear and lively notion of contemporary social reality and, consequently, a mode of analysis that would make it possible to extract from the writings of the great German artist his views on contemporary social problems and the modern state, and to verify their validity. So long as such an inventory is not undertaken, we shall never know to what extent Thomas Mann actually helped his contemporaries to become aware of the problems of their time and to act accordingly—and this, be it not forgotten, is the specific objective of political thinking.

With this in mind, one should re-read the historical and political writings of 1914-1920, which the author never repudiated. Let us overlook the extravagances of the anti-democratic argument. The question is: do these essays and books help us to understand the true causes of the First World War? As for his subsequent writings, do they shed any light on the real weaknesses of the Weimar Republic and on the causes of the widespread rebellion among the German masses against the party 'system'? Let us examine, from the same standpoint, the speeches and essays of his later years. They move us, they strengthen our faith in human values, but do we find in them an acceptable explanation of modern totalitarianism, the Second World War, and the ensuing 'Cold Peace'?

It may well be—I personally have witnessed such a reaction—that the mere raising of such questions about Mann's work will be regarded by uncritical admirers as a kind of profanation. Nevertheless, such questions are natural and inevitable if we wish to know whether he is to be considered as a political thinker or whether his political writings are to be judged from a different standpoint. I need hardly say that this inquiry has nothing to do

with the high literary quality of his writings or their immediate impact upon the emotions. But emotional power in itself does not always indicate originality of thought. In 1915, we, in Italy, had Gabriele D'Annunzio, who with his wild nationalistic harangues did much to drag a reluctant country into the war, and who in 1920 even conquered and, for a few months, governed the city of Fiume—for which he proclaimed, in the manner of Rienzi, an extravagant constitution, a kind of mosaic of archaeological fragments of the most miscellaneous origins. Nobody in his right mind, has ever regarded D'Annunzio as a political thinker. In short, with regard to any political statement that has influenced men's minds for good or evil, we must always ask whether it explains a given situation or is merely part of that situation and consequently requires explanation itself.

Furthermore, my reservations concern not only Mann's apologists, but also his detractors, who have attacked him for his conflicting attitudes and cast doubt on his morality, seriousness, and coherence without inquiring closely into his historical and political conceptions or pseudo-conceptions. From the moral stand-point, he is unassailable. He is head and shoulders above the other writers of his country, not only in the power and quality of his artistry, but in the integrity of his life. It seems to me, that the political uncertainties and hesitations with which he has been reproached were not moral but intellectual. Was he coherent? With regard to what theories or principles? Perhaps the moralizing character of his opponents' objections betrays, in their case as in his, the vagueness of their notions about the nature of the political struggle of our age.

A large part of Thomas Mann's political and historical writings is devoted to an exegesis of *Deutschtum*—in other words, to a definition, analysis, and glorification of what seemed to him the essence of the German tradition, and to an affirmation of the complete validity of its spiritual substance in the face of the corruption threatening it from within and without. All things considered, one can say that he never departed from this fundamental attitude—it remained unchanged from the days of his youth when he identified conservatism with Good and democracy with Evil—despite his later political conversion which happily led him to reverse the scale of values. His was a literary and bookish cast of mind, entirely turned to the past, neglecting, as if they had never existed, the new forces and problems that were to give rise, in Germany and elsewhere, to unparalleled crises and changes. Hence, although the historical analogies around which Mann liked to build his essays on contemporary events might have been felicitous from the literary point of view, they were unreal. It was no accident that his first, and im-

portant, political essay, written in December 1914 and published the following year at the same time as *Thoughts in Time of War* was devoted to Frederick and the Great Coalition. In it, he attempted to draw a parallel between Frederick the Second and the war effort of eighteenth-century Prussia and the struggle to the death of Wilhelm II's Germany against the Entente, even regarding one as a foreshadowing of, a prelude to, the other. (At the time, Thomas Mann very coolly justified even the German invasion of neutral Belgium. He went so far as to write that 'an aggression may be committed out of necessity; in that case, it is no longer an aggression but a necessity.' But let us overlook these aberrations and confine ourselves to his ideas). To his mind, the war had an eminently spiritual character; it was the assault of Western democratic ideas upon the Germanic spirit of order. Was this not precisely the idealistic and anti-German thesis of the heralds of the Entente? His devotion to the great figures of the past had quite estranged him from contact with the temper of his age. He thought he was serving his own country by presenting it as a bulwark against the spirit of freedom.

As for the small groups of Germans who were hoping to democratize Germany, he unhesitatingly called their efforts a surrender to the enemy. The democratic ideal was anti-German, from the philosophical as well as practical point of view. He was bitterly ironic about the 'Zivilisationsliterat' (scribbler, exegete of civilisation), of whom his brother Heinrich seemed to him the typical representative. He contrasted the 'moralizing pomposity of the world and life' with his own aesthetic detachment. He went so far as to identify democracy and politics *tout court*. As he saw it, the latter made one 'uncouth, plebeian and stupid', debased the supreme values of life, and stripped the State of its metaphysical dignity, reducing it to a kind of institute whose function was to look after the happiness and well-being of its citizens....

This fanciful point of view was inspired by his great masters of the preceding century. Thanks to the magic of his prodigious stylistic gifts, he succeeded in winning over the students, who accepted his notions as gospel truth. But in that same year of 1914, for reasons that Thomas Mann was unaware of or that he had neglected because he thought they were trivial, the social and institutional crisis that was about to rock the world was reaching a state of paroxysm. (As another liberal conservative, Benedetto Croce, whose sensitivity to historical reality was quite different, later declared, the First World War 'was the war of historical materialism,' in other words, a war which could be most cogently explained, even in the eyes of non-Marxists, by reference to Marx's thesis.)

What seems to me most serious is not the fact that Mann was a rabid nationalist, but that he was completely unaware of the nature and implications of the gathering crisis, with the result that even later, when he had changed his opinion about democracy, he still retained, in spite of everything, his peculiar cast of mind. Moreover, he himself was fully conscious of the profound continuity and coherence of his thinking, despite the conversion to democracy; this is the only legitimate justification of the fact that, even in his later years, he did not repudiate his early writings, neither *Thoughts in Time of War* nor the essay on Frederick, and even less *Reflections of a Non-political Man*. This unity, which the author himself very honestly recognized, makes it incumbent on critics to apply a single criterion of judgement to his writings about both the First and Second World Wars. And it need hardly be said that if this unity is to be respected, the criterion should be not political, but literary and psychological.

After the defeat of Germany in 1918, Thomas Mann honestly accepted the democratic republic as a *fait accompli*. The only valid and patriotic attitude towards the new situation, he wrote, seemed to him *amor fati*. Defying thus the wrath and insults of his former nationalist friends, he attempted to reconcile his people with its destiny. His support of the new regime was undoubtedly influential. But it is not so easy to define the character of his new political outlook. It is rather significant that the author to whom, by his own admission, he felt indebted for his conversion was not, for example, de Tocqueville, but Whitman. He stated in an open letter that it was the American poet who had helped him to discover the identity between mankind and democracy, and he did not hesitate to couple the name of Weimar with that of the roaring poet of Manhattan, yoking them with the romantics Novalis and Friedrich von Hardenberg. His feeling for human universality was enriched by this spiritual communion; I might even say that it was freed of its earlier rigidity, though perhaps the same cannot be said for his sense of political reality. In short, how did he see democracy? It would be pointless to quote passages from his speeches and essays of the period. Some of them are genuine masterpieces of eloquence, but their most original passages are, as always, the slightly forced historical analogies and the psychological analyses, whereas the more specifically political formulations never rise above the commonplace. The following passage is the one most frequently quoted by analysts of his work in an attempt to define his political conception; it was written with retrospective intention, in 1939, at which time his thinking must have reached its peak of maturity:

'My personal adherence to democracy is the result of an understanding that I had to acquire, for owing to my German bourgeois ancestry and

upbringing such an attitude had been alien to me. I had to perceive the fact that the political and social sphere is an integral part of the human order, of the totality of the human problem, that the mind must reckon with it, for if the political and social sphere is neglected, there is a dangerous incompleteness, the whole is threatened and imperilled' (*Culture and Politics* 1939).

It does not take great insight to perceive that this passage does not necessarily imply a democratic ideal, since—what with its quasi-anthropological generality—it embraces everything having to do with collective life. The idea, in this elementary sense, had been accepted for centuries; and if men have continued discussing it since Aristotle, or at least since Machiavelli, they have been doing so, not to affirm its existence (which would be like trying to re-invent the wheel), but to uphold one specific interpretation rather than another of the relationships between political and social matters on the one hand, and religion, ethics and economics on the other. It was not, of course, in the conventional terms of such philosophical categories that the terrible difficulties of the Weimar Republic could have found, not a solution (since one could not expect that of an artist), but at least a gleam of understanding.

It is even harder to know exactly what Mann meant when he called himself a socialist. Odd as it may seem, the meaning of the word socialism has never been very clear, particularly in the country of Karl Marx. Frederick William the First had earlier been called the 'ancestor of German socialism' because of the few measures he took against the Junkers. The word persisted and served to ground the legend of 'Prussian socialism.' The inflation of the word 'socialism' after the military defeat of 1918 can be compared only to that of the Deutschemark. Like the latter, it was worth less than the paper on which it was printed. Even Spengler wrote a book entitled *Prussianism and Socialism* (1919). To say nothing of Hitler.

As a human being, Thomas Mann was infinitely superior to the latter two. That is why, in attempting to explain the limitations of his analysis of contemporary society, we cannot even remotely allude to sectarianism or indifference to culture. In his *Listen, Europe!* it is quite apparent that he read Marx, and particularly Ortega, but he merely echoes them without incorporating their insights into his vision of reality. In fact, although he was the noblest and most high-minded opponent of National Socialism in the sphere of culture and tradition, his explanation of it was rather simplistic. To be sure, Nazism, even more than Italian Fascism, was compounded of violence and falsehood. But was that really all there was to it? If so, the

task of democrats would have been unexpectedly facilitated and their military victory would have sufficed to banish the spectre of totalitarianism that hovers above our age. The fact is, however, that if we look at the reality of totalitarianism (a certain way of conceiving of society and the state, a certain way of reacting to the crisis in the structure of the contemporary world), it seems to hang above man's head like the sword of Damocles, and it can assume, without being the more attractive thereby, the most varied colours, including that of democracy.

In *Doctor Faustus*, Mann does, to be sure, offer a more measured analysis of the difficulties of integrating Germany into the family of democratic nations than in the monthly speeches he sent from California to the B.B.C. during the war; but it is equally unconvincing. The basic relationship between Germanism and the world is defined there in abstract and mystical fashion. According to this analysis, music is its most expressive medium; in German life, the speculative element prevails over the social and political; the Germans embody the romantic counter-revolution, the revolt of music against literature, of mysticism against the light of reason. What importance is to be ascribed to this aesthetic racial thinking? If it were well founded, the German political problem would be insoluble for all eternity, and there would be no way of understanding how the German populations that, for one reason or another, live outside their original historical environment, for example in the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland, and America, are citizens like everyone else. Perhaps the diagnosis has only an autobiographical value; since *Doctor Faustus* is a specifically literary work, this is a likely interpretation.

But perhaps the decisive experience for Mann's political consciousness during the last years of his life was his relationship with the Communist world beyond the Iron Curtain. There is not the slightest doubt of the fact that he was not a Communist. The following protest is often quoted when any such unjust suspicion arises:

'My entire endeavour and all my activity, all my books and writings, my whole being, are proof that I have ceaselessly attempted to contribute, as far as has been in my power, to the great cultural heritage of the West, to spread a modicum of joy and knowledge and a gladness of spirit among my fellowmen... No one who has read a single one of my books could doubt that terror, the use of violence, falsehood and injustice, is an abomination to me' (*Die Neue Zeitung*, December 30, 1952).

It might therefore be supposed that his weaknesses and frequent hesitations regarding Communist regimes in no way involved his principles, and arose out of particular judgements on current problems, which, as we

know, he was hardly qualified to solve. However, on other occasions, when making an absurd distinction between the ideal and real nature of Communism, or when commenting on the special consideration given to writers and artists by the Communist regimes, he was prodigal of declarations that aggravated the very misunderstanding he meant to dissipate.

This was the cause of the great unpleasantness of the last years of his life. In the euphoria of the high honours lavished upon him in Eastern Germany, he suffered all the more from what he regarded as the failure of the Western press to understand. His replies to criticism were often excessive, as when he made the following affirmation in a dispute with Paul Oldberg, the Swedish journalist:

"In the Eastern zone I never received foul and filthy letters or read a stupid and offensive article, as I did in the West . . . Should I thank the menace of Buchenwald for that — or rather a more profound popular education than is offered in the West, one that is careful to respect a spiritual existence like mine? There are aspects of the authoritarian people's state that make one shudder, but inherent in it is a great boon; that stupidity and impertinence must shut their mouths" (August 27, 1949).

It is common knowledge that at times the Communists purely and simply invented messages from Thomas Mann, as, for example, in the case of the telegram to the Warsaw meeting of the World Committee of Peace Partisans, a telegramme which Mann declared he had never written. But in other cases his statements went beyond simple courtesy, as in his message to the Hungarian Writers' Union upon the publication of the Hungarian edition of *Doctor Faustus* in which he expressed his "admiration of the cultural flowering in the people's democracies and of the unlimited freedom of artistic creation under people's democratic regimes." (*Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, February 9, 1949). In another statement to the East Berlin *Tagliche Rundschau*, he had no fear of lowering himself so far as to draw a distinction peculiar to propagandists of dictatorship: 'It is my impression that in the German Democratic Republic the greatest respect prevails for all things of the mind, in so far as radical hostility to the regime is not involved' (November, 1952). Obviously, such naive and inept statements were widely exploited by the Communists and gave rise to long polemics. In the *Journal of Doctor Faustus* Mann observed in this connection: 'Attacks, perfidy and stupidity tire me like heavy work.'

Mann, it would seem, could not abstain from playing the self-assumed role of national prophet, a role that not everyone was ready to concede to him. Apart from other minor and different reasons, he was probably impelled to take part in public life by a much deeper need: the need to

flee, at least for a time, from his deep predilection for the elements of instability and disturbance in human life, for the forces he regarded as dangerous to spiritual balance, namely eroticism, music, disease and death. He had launched an 'Appeal to Reason' against the temptations of decadence: 'Yet there are moments in collective life when such a justification of art is inadequate, when the artist cannot pursue his meditation, for the thoughts born of the urgency of life repress aesthetic effort, and the fear of the crisis that threaten society so unsettle him that the playfully passionate absorption in the eternally human—which is the process of art—actually takes on for a time the appearance of luxury and idleness and becomes morally impossible for the soul to express in acts' (1930).

But his intention was not to be fulfilled. Despite the impression of assurance, force and even boldness that his style imparted to certain of his speeches, he remained a complex man, torn by inner conflict. In the essay *The Artist and Society* (1952), he admitted that he regarded the optimism of his earlier attitude—his confidence in democracy, humanitarianism and mankind—as dubious. Zealous activity on behalf of democracy and progress seemed to him vain on the part of such an artist as he, who had been brought up in the pessimistic school of Schopenhauer. (A more bitter cry of despair escaped him in his preface to the book in memory of his son Klaus, who had committed suicide: 'It would be the last straw to dare speak of ungratefulness for so ambiguous and culpable a gift as life.')

This permanent and painful inner conflict sheds a poignant light on his self-imposed efforts to perform what he deemed a civic duty, and that was why we felt close to him and loved him, even when we could not approve his views.

The reasons that prompt us to caution critics against overestimating Thomas Mann as a political thinker do not concern him alone. The historical ethos of nations has given way to mass civilization; and the characteristic features of a tradition, when they do survive, have ceased to be decisive forces. As a result, it is no longer possible in advanced countries for poets to play a nineteenth-century role. The very nature of the relationships between politics and literature has changed in these countries.

Our Conception of Democratic Socialism

By ELLEN ROY

HUNDRED years after its first comprehensive statement in the Communist Manifesto, in which it was said to be haunting the world like a dangerous ghost, Socialism has become respectable. It has ceased to be something new, dangerous, revolutionary and controversial. It has also ceased to be something distinct and clearly defined. That explains how groups and persons holding the most widely divergent views have called themselves socialist during the last several decades. German Fascists called themselves National-Socialists; a liberal left-of-centre party in France calls itself Radical Socialist; in India we have Praja Socialists and Congress Socialists; and the Communist State of Russia is called Soviet-Socialist in its Constitution and official denomination; German Socialists have called themselves Social-Democrats; and the Communist Party of India has just declared its aim to be the achievement of Democracy and Socialism by peaceful parliamentary means.

Thus, it is evidently no longer enough to declare that one is a Socialist without defining one's brand of Socialism. And even Democratic Socialism does not convey more than an intention, unless we analyse and define what we mean both by Socialism and by Democracy. When declared Fascists and Communists can use the name of Socialism, there must obviously be something wrong somewhere, either with the theory itself or its formulation, at least some defect in definition or interpretation. Because, it will not do to say that one's own Socialism is the only right kind of Socialism, and others calling themselves Socialists are not really Socialists at all; or that the Communists are simply dishonest in using the name of Socialism and Democracy. The founders of socialist theory made no difference between Communism and Socialism. And there is no essential contradiction between the ideals of the French Revolution, which ushered in the age of Democracy, and those of the Russian Revolution, which gave birth to the first Socialist State.

The founders of 'Scientific Socialism' were indeed inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution, and Socialism was to make Equality, Fraternity and Liberty effective, which the States created by the French Revolution had been unable to do. They held that the just principle of equality could not be practised as long as the then new, large-scale means of industrial

production were owned by a few private capitalists exploiting the mass of workers who performed socially necessary labour but were deprived of their share. Social labour in the machine age being performed collectively, only when ownership would also be collective—or socialised—could there be justice and equality for the toiling masses. It was anticipated that industries would become bigger and bigger and the industrial proletariat become the majority in all countries. Hence, while Socialism was conceived as the ideology of the working class, it was considered indispensable for social progress as a whole, and there was clearly an element of democracy in its original conception. Even the extremist socialist idea of a proletarian dictatorship would lose its totally undemocratic connotation when the working class would ever be the overwhelming majority of any people.

But events took a different turn. While it is true that in the early stages of the industrial revolution a few capitalists could exploit the mass of workers, and even now the difference between rich and poor are certainly much too glaring, this is as true for socialist countries as for capitalist ones. While Socialism in practice has nowhere produced anything near a workers' paradise, Capitalism has learned more from Socialism than many Socialists. In the most advanced capitalist countries many socialist ideals have come true beyond expectation, and particularly the workers in those countries are much better off than in the most advanced socialist or communist countries. Nowhere in the world are the workers any longer the exploited mass helplessly at the mercy of callous exploiters. On the contrary, they are becoming increasingly articulate as they have to be ever better trained and educated to operate modern machines; this raises the dignity of labour as well as their social prestige and cultural standards, and their trade-unions rival in power and social influence the owners of the means of production themselves. These are no longer a few individual captains of industry, but far-flung concerns whose shares are owned by millions of citizens, including many workers and their trade-unions.

On the other hand, industrial progress did not proceed by absorbing larger and larger numbers of people into the industrial working class, pauperising and proletarianising the majority. Technology advanced in the direction of automation, allowing fewer and fewer people to produce more goods and wealth than was ever dreamt of in history. While there are still industrially backward and poor countries, even there the workers are no longer at the mercy of rapacious capitalists; there too the workers are organised in constitutionally recognised trade-unions through which they can make their voice heard and their influence felt. Although social justice leaves still much to be achieved, it is no longer true anywhere that the

workers have nothing to lose but their chains. Indeed, other sections of the people are to-day more helpless and exploited and impoverished than the workers, and if Socialism is to hold out any hope to them, it is not as the ideology of the working class.

India and other under-developed countries may not yet have reached the stage where this process becomes very obvious, but the trend is the same everywhere, and there are the lessons of Capitalism and Socialism in contemporary practice to learn from. They teach us that their example is to be applied with great discrimination, because neither of them is to-day what it was when socialist theory was first enunciated. Private ownership in the means of production is being abolished even in capitalist countries, whereas class distinctions in socialist countries are not abolished, in the sense that different sections of people differ widely in income, culture and education, dress, breeding and even opportunity. Ownership in the means of production is obviously not the only criterion of social progress. Social or State ownership does not, or not necessarily, seem to confer on the producers the privileges and benefits that Socialists claimed would flow from this revolutionary change in economic relations.

Thus, while the differences between Capitalism and Socialism tend to narrow down, the two systems as they are functioning to-day side by side in uneasy and involuntary co-existence, have developed many striking similarities, foremost among which is the tendency towards bigger and bigger production units, which has been called gigantism. And as these giant concerns tend to be owned by growing trusts or corporations or alternately by the State, this has led in both capitalist and socialist countries to the outstanding characteristic of all modern societies, this trend towards gigantism in economy with its consequence of increasing centralisation of power and the corollary of all-round regimentation or standardisation. Because, when everything is planned, decided, concentrated and operated centrally from one powerful State authority, it would be risky to leave initiative and responsibility at lower levels to find a natural balance and solution of frictions and difficulties at the places where they arise. Everything must function smoothly like ball-bearing machine parts, and all those engaged in the process must function like cogs in those giant machines.

This picture is much the same both in the advanced capitalist as well as socialist countries. And it is precisely this state of affairs which has led to the crisis of the modern world, the decline of the value and respect of the human individual and widespread demoralisation, frustration, disharmony and unhappiness, in spite of ever increasing and more equitably distributed wealth and amenities of civilised living. Because, as a cog even in

the biggest of wheels, human beings cannot be happy and content, cannot be creative nor moral. They may be equal, but they don't feel free. There may be even a semblance of blind justice, but there is no liberty. And hence there cannot also be fraternity, because all these qualities like creativity, moral sense, social conscience and the voluntary co-operation of a free human fraternity, are distinctive human potentialities, but which can unfold themselves only in highly developed human individuals. And neither modern Capitalism nor Socialism provides for the free unfoldment of these human potentialities, because of their tendency towards gigantism, centralisation, regimentation and standardisation, which do not unfold but stunt the individual human beings and tend to make them equal on the lowest common denominator of the mass.

This had not, and could not have been, foreseen when the ideals of Democracy and those of Socialism were first visualised by the pioneers of social progress in modern times. The ideals still hold good. But neither the democratic nor the socialist revolutions have been able to make them effective. Democracy with its formal equality before the law, which gives equal freedom to the rich and the poor to sleep under the bridges, may have succeeded in raising living standards so high that none is compelled to sleep under the bridges, although even that is not true everywhere. But in spite of its theoretical emphasis on Liberalism and Individualism, it has done so by dwarfing the human individual in the process and making them as ineffectual, mass-minded, regimented and frustrated as they are under Socialism with its frank relegation of the individual in the interest of State or society, as if these were anything more, or more important, than the individuals composing it.

Thus, part of the failure of Socialism is due to the fact that it took over some of the fallacies of its predecessor, even while endeavouring to set right some of its wrongs. It took over from bourgeois parliamentary Democracy all its undemocratic tendencies. Democracy had not succeeded in becoming government *of* the people and *by* the people (even dictators claim to be ruling *for* the people), precisely because mass men cannot have the qualities of intelligent initiative and individual responsibility which alone can make men fit to govern themselves at all levels of society. Socialism became totalitarian because it took over from Capitalism, and even further emphasised, the tendency to gigantism and centralisation both in economic and all other institutions. And its main error consisted in identifying socialisation with Statism. The State was not conceived as the political organisation of society as such coinciding with society at all stages, but as something sitting on top of society and running and ruling it from there

with all power and authority concentrated at the apex. Although the first socialist State came into being with the demand of 'All Power to the Soviets', which were its lowest local State organs, these were subsequently deprived of all power for the sake of the smooth functioning of the giant State machinery, until under Socialism the State became even more crushing, impersonal and impervious to democratic initiative than the bourgeois capitalist State.

Because, while Capitalism actually diffused ownership gradually through its own peculiar devices, and did not at least prohibit diffusion of political power to local bodies on lower levels of the social hierarchy, Socialism, after expropriating the previous individual owners of the means of production, did not hand over their enterprises to those who actually and concretely performed social labour in them. Instead, it bestowed an abstract ownership on to the totality of people, but vested it *de facto* and concretely in an even smaller number of hands through the dangerous device of declaring the State the sole owner of everything and repository of all power. To be sure, it did so in the name of the working class, but for all that, the workers, were no better off, but rather worse, under Socialism than in the more advanced non-socialist States. Because, the abstract ownership of the working class does not benefit the individual workers, whereas the concrete expression of the tremendously augmented State authority deprives them of what little freedom they had even under Capitalism.

Much has been made of the fact that the workers under Capitalism had no other freedom and right than to sell their labour in the market to the highest bidder. But under Socialism, they have not even that freedom. And assuming that they have greater security instead, which is open to doubt, they resent the loss of that freedom. For security they do not need Socialism. Modern capitalist and semi-capitalist Welfare States afford the highest degree of security, not only to workers but to all citizens, and with less strings attached to restrict the freedom of the beneficiaries than is the case in socialist States. Freedom is too high a price for any good, including security and the nominal ownership of the means of production. And that ownership becomes altogether illusory when it is exercised, allegedly for the class of producers, by an all-powerful State which under Socialism is as remote from them—that is, as undemocratic—as under any other non-socialist system.

If we want to achieve the ideals of Democracy and of Socialism, which are not fundamentally contradictory, we must differentiate these ideals from certain notions and self-defeating fallacies of the methods and institutions traditionally associated with Democracy and Socialism; and it is the latter

which do make the two systems apparently contradictory and mutually exclusive. For instance, if collectivisation, centralisation and standardisation—that is to say, Statism—was the only form in which Socialism can be practised, then there could be no such thing as Democratic Socialism. On the other hand, it may be a moot question worth considering whether Socialism minus State ownership, collectivisation, centralisation and standardisation is still Socialism. However, if we grant that Socialism will be something different in our time than hundred years ago and interpret it in the loosest and kindest sense as no more than aiming at social justice by abolishing exploitation of man by man; and if social ownership can express itself under Socialism as an effective function of co-operative living and responsibility exercised by those who co-operatively perform social labour in an enterprise, industrial or otherwise; and if we conceive the State as no more than the political organisation of society, not an organic superentity but coincident with society at all levels, (and at all levels as only one among other cooperative functions of the people in their localities)—then, and then only, the State ceases to be a Leviathan; Socialism ceases to be Statism; and in that case, but only in that case, can Socialism be democratic. That is our conception of democratic Socialism.

Discarding the conventional notion that profitability depends on the largest possible size of economic units, the individuals operating smaller units co-operatively will cease to be cogs in a gigantic wheel and can regain their sense of significance and dignity, the consciousness that society and its units depend on them as much as, or rather more than, they depend on society. Remembering the fact that man created society for his survival as a free and sovereign being, men will hold themselves responsible for improving society and its institutions, including government, instead of waiting for governments to do everything for them through State power exercised from the top. In such a changed atmosphere and with such changed men, Democracy is possible. Such people can govern themselves. And such men cannot be exploited nor would they want to be exploiters.

This is not a new Utopia, but quite a practical proposition. Modern production potential being almost unlimited, there can be enough to go round all and for social surplus and reserves without reducing the human beings creating all this wealth to cogs in wheels for the sake of greater profitability. The latest discoveries and inventions of human ingenuity allow such perfected techniques of productions that the size of economic units is no longer a decisive consideration for their social and economic usefulness. This means that industries do no longer have to be concentrated in a few vast and ugly centres reducing the producers to the sordid existence

of robots too often associated with such centres. They can be reduced in size and multiplied in number, decentralised and dispersed without actually becoming village industries, or village industries without being necessarily associated with primitive methods and output. Except for the construction of ships and locomotives, steel mills and some such enterprises, the optimum size of production units will be found to be much smaller than at present, and those large-scale enterprises which remain indispensable can be, as they are even now, divided up into workshops and smaller units in which the principle of co-operative functioning including even ownership, can still be practised.

Socialism having been conceived as the next step in conditions of advanced industrialisation, it has nowhere been successfully applied to agriculture. The idea of transforming the cultivation of the soil also into collectively performed social labour and the peasant into a proletarian has proved unworkable and, where attempted, an abysmal failure. But the ideals of Socialism, inasmuch as they are permanent human values, can be practised in agrarian relations as well. Indeed, democracy and co-operation in various forms are more easily understood and practised in rural communities, than in other sectors of society. And again, modern technique allows us to visualise rural communities without the stigma of boredom and backwardness. But the modernisation of the countryside should not be expected to change in the near future the nature of the peasant's attachment to the land, on which depends the intensity of cultivation, and on this depends India's ability to feed her people. Whether the attachment to the land is good or bad, capitalist or socialist or otherwise, it is a fact which can be ignored only at the cost of food production—a risk which we cannot afford to take. Informed by reason and guided with sympathy this attachment can be put to good use and gradually canalised into higher forms of co-operation, as his potential rationality unfolds itself in the peasant also, together with his appreciation of democratic and socialist values and ideas.

If this process is purposefully promoted by men and women already inspired by those ideas and values, the whole atmosphere in the country will gradually change. In such a changed atmosphere, men's ambitions need no longer be confined to *have more* and *be more* than others, but can aim at being better and doing better than others. Virtue will cease to be seen in bigness. The criterion of everything will shift from quantity to quality. Ownership will no longer be associated with personal gain, but merely become an aspect of co-operative living and social responsibility, exercised by co-operating people and groups of people for and on behalf of all members of society, which can then become truly a human fraternity. All producers

being also consumers, this superficial conflict of which too much has been made in the past, can also be dissolved. It cannot be dissolved by decree of an omniscient or all-powerful Party or State; but it can be dissolved by the reasoning faculty of responsible, self-respecting and self-reliant citizens in their local and regional political organisations in which consumers and producers will meet in their common capacity as co-operating citizens.

What these institutions will exactly be like, should not be laid down in a detailed blueprint. Because when something goes wrong with a blueprint and the builders cannot think for themselves, there will be again confusion and frustration. Once the ideals of Democracy and Socialism have become part of the life of people, the building or remaking of institutions can be safely left to them, and too much insistence should not be laid on uniformity, within a generally but liberally laid down pattern. As archetype of society, man will build or remake institutions in his own image. That is to say, it is in every man to create society. Society is what men make it, because of what is in man; it is not something given, to be wholly accepted as it is. Its values and its institutions change through the ages along with the notions and values of men. At one time, it was the highest ambition and honour for a man to display the largest number of enemy heads as trophies of valiant battle; at a later time it was display of riches and possessions which gave distinction and prestige to a man; at some not too distant future, notions and values may have changed in such a way that a man will be held up to ridicule for amassing wealth and taking pride in it. Social prestige may then attach to the free creative man for the harmony and sympathy which he spreads around him and for helping others to do the same. It is obvious that social institutions will be moulded, informed and changed along with and according to these changing notions of men and of what they consider worth striving and living for. That is to say, society and its institutions will be as democratic and as socialist, as good, as just and as free, as the men who make them are, or at least aspire to be.

Therefore, the first concern of those who cherish the ideals of Democracy and Socialism, in this country as anywhere else, must be with the men and women who are to put those ideals in practice. The idea that some who are 'more equal than others' will do it for them—which is one of the notions which also capitalists and socialists have in common—must be discarded first of all, being neither democratic nor socialistic. One of our special difficulties in this country is that India is still living in a stage of social evolution much earlier than that at which democratic and socialist ideas arose in the course of historical events elsewhere in the world. We can certainly take over their ideas and ideals, but the methods for their application will have

to be different, not only because conditions here are different but also because even there in the industrially advanced societies of the West, the traditional methods of Democracy as well as of Socialism have proved defective and self-defeating. But their ideas and ideals are permanent human values, belong to no special age or social system, and we might accept them as such, irrespective of the outer paraphernalia associated with Democracy and Socialism. For instance, we need not imitate either the giant economic enterprises or the formal parliamentarianism of delegated popular sovereignty as is automatically done by leaders, theoreticians and policy-makers. They are not the essence of Democracy or Socialism.

Similarly, not having the kind of working class which could at this stage be the vanguard of progress, as was assumed to be the case in the West, we do not have to accept Socialism as the ideology of the working class. If Socialism is good and necessary in the first place for the working class, it is no good for India at all because our population does not in the first place belong to the working class, and it is most unlikely and undesirable that this should ever be so. We want an ideology which is suitable and acceptable to the largest number of human beings inhabiting this country, whatever the class to which they belong. Even in the West, the proletarian emphasis was a passing phase; intellectuals are being rediscovered and the peasants freed from the stigma of contemptible petit-bourgeois. Socialism as an ideology of the working class will be of no use, because it tends to restrict the validity of its inherent and permanent human values. We must think out and discover new methods of social change and new institutional forms to combine the best of both Democracy and Socialism—that is, we want planned and ordered development without centralisation and regimentation; organised democracy plus individual freedom; an equality which looks on men as individual beings with human kindness instead of turning the impartial but impersonal eye of the law on an amorphous mass of robots; and we want justice plus liberty, without having to be blind.

Our main difficulty lies in the mental state of the people. Their superstitions and prejudices, their traditionalism, communalism and caste-consciousness militate against all democratic and socialist values. As long as they believe in caste, nobody can enforce equality and justice; as long as their whole consciousness centres around communal and tribal affinities, there can be no fraternity; as long as they are rent and ridden by religious fanaticism and fatalism, and their heads bowed in submission to unknown and unknowable super-human and super-natural forces — there can be no freedom. Also, when divine faith is extolled above the distinctive human faculties of reason and intelligence, there can be no moral society. It is in man to be

moral because of his rational faculty, and reason will always be a stronger sanction for moral behaviour than the fear of punishment or retribution, be it by a secular or spiritual authority. Man will freely choose to be moral when he will understand that it is reasonable to be moral. And only then can we have a moral society. But it also means that there *can* be a moral society.

We cannot make the world, not even our country, democratic and socialist overnight. We have seen the revolutionary fallacy of staking everything on The Day when power will be captured and we can introduce a new order from on high. Ultimately, new institutions will emerge side by side with, and out of the old, as and to the extent that the outlook of the people changes. All really great ideals can be achieved only by approximation. And we can work from to-day for an ever closer approximation to the ideals of Democracy and of Socialism by educating the people (including ourselves) to appreciate and value those ideas and ideals and applying them in our own lives before we preach them to others.

That is not an academic proposition. The education of citizens in the permanent human values contained in Democracy and Socialism can be more effectively acquired and imparted in practical social work and deeds than by words, better by example than by precept. It is through the active social work in existing institutions that these institutions will be changed in proportion as those values and ideas come to be shared by the people living and working in those institutions. But there are also unprecedented opportunities in this country for creating new types of institutions, because things have begun to change and society is in flux. Experiments in social engineering are less suspect here than elsewhere in the world, and there is ample scope for individual initiative in all fields. There is Gramdan land to be cultivated to which none is yet attached; whole villages can be taught the advantages and beauty of co-operative living. The Community Development Projects could produce wonders if the people could be made to believe that they can perform the wonders themselves.

But all cannot go to the villages, where most of the work has to be done. Those who live and work in the centres of education and modern civilisation have greater chances to be inspired by Democracy and Socialism, and yet they may not be able to get away from the towns to spread that inspiration. But although India still lives overwhelmingly in the villages, new ideas almost invariably spread from the towns to the countryside. And whether a man is in government service or member of a political party or a cultural movement or institution, or even as a single individual — every human being can contribute to this truly and only revolutionary work of

spreading the ideas and ideals, the permanent human values contained in Democracy and Socialism by practising them in his own way of life. And if this appeals to others, as it is bound to do, the example will spread and gradually place its imprint on society as a whole.

Nothing more spectacular should be expected to happen. Government will go on, and as it can be only benefited by the change in atmosphere which is bound to come about through this kind of work, it may even help the process. Political parties will continue to exist and fight to win or lose elections; but they are bound to lose the predominant role of sole moving force in society which they now occupy in public life; they will lose that place in proportion as the individual citizens grow in stature and claim their democratic and human right to think and govern for themselves.

The result may be different from the forms in which conventional Democracy and Socialism have functioned and become known in other parts of the world — different to a point where the use of the same names may be out of place. But what is in a name when the result is good? Men are Democrats and Socialists not for the sake of Democracy or Socialism, but for the sake of the human beings whose world they are to change for the better. Whatever name you may give it, it is in this way that the essentially human values of Democracy and of Socialism can spread to become effective and increase the amount of happiness, well-being and freedom in this world of ours.

The Co-operative Way & Industrial Transition

By AMLAN DATTA

AFTER a long period of uncertain development India seems at last to be in the throes of her industrial revolution. Naturally one looks at such times to the corresponding phase of economic development of the industrially advanced countries and tries to draw guidance from their experience. But apart from the fact that no two countries have exactly the same problems, there is one rather fundamental difference between our case and that of any major industrial country from which we may try to learn. We have started with certain ideas and institutions which in other countries became a force to reckon with only at a comparatively advanced stage of industrial development. By the time adult franchise was established in Britain, the basis of industrialisation had been securely laid in that country. Our political revolution has taken place, to the extent that this is possible, in advance of our industrial revolution. This poses for us some special problems.

Let us consider the problems of industrialisation in this special background. These problems are, indeed, varied. But the essential point that one has to make can be brought out even if one centres one's attention exclusively on the problem of capital formation and then again, on one special aspect of that problem. There can be no economic development without growth of productive capacity. But this means that resources have to be directed to producing means of production. In most of the industrially backward countries of the world net investment from one year to another claims only about five per cent of the national income, whereas it is quite usual for an industrially advanced country to invest (net) twelve, fifteen or even twenty per cent of the national income. The most serious problems of economic development appear during this period of transition from a five per cent to, let us say, fifteen per cent rate of investment. Once a stable fifteen per cent rate, or something thereabout, has been established, the difficult period of transition can be said to be over. But in the transitional period consumption rises less than proportionately to income. Indeed, in the early period of rapid industrial development per capita consumption may rise very little, if at all. In the meantime, industrial development creates new tastes, and whets the appetite for new commodities and a

higher standard of living. Here, then, is a difficult problem: how to restrain immediate consumption in the early period of growth and raise the share of the income that goes into investment? This problem, obviously, is not peculiar to a capitalist economy; it is peculiar rather to a period of transition from a low savings-and-investment to a high savings-and-investment economy. But solutions to the problem which are admissible in the absence of democracy may be quite incompatible with its presence.

In England the industrial revolution is dated from the closing decades of the eighteenth century. The trade union movement was illegal during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Even when it was allowed to function more freely, the movement remained very weak till about the closing decades of the century, by which time industrialisation had already been established in England as a set pattern. In Japan the trade union movement did not acquire any appreciable strength till after World War II. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, the movement was subordinated to the Party and the State after the Bolsheviks came into power. Thus in all these countries, while the crucial transition to a high-investment economy was being effected, the working class was left without any means of organising its discontent in a powerful way and the discrepancy between the newly aroused desire for a higher standard of living and the harsh restrictions on current real wages could not seriously disrupt social solidarity. In a country like India, on the other hand, a free trade union movement exists even in this early phase of industrial development. And although the movement is not as strong as some of us would like to see it, it is stronger than what similar movements had been in the corresponding stage of industrial development of most other countries.

Nor is the contrast less striking with regard to the position of the peasantry. In the Soviet Union, once collectivisation had been established, the peasantry lost all effective power to resist the harsh levies imposed on it in the interest of quick industrialisation. In Japan, the situation was somewhat exceptional. The new ruling classes, which assumed leadership in the technological modernisation of Japan after 1868, had sprung from a section of the traditional aristocracy. It had not been swept into power on the crest of a social and philosophical revolution or a movement of democratic demands, and, although it introduced measures to replace the old feudal system by a more centralised national system, much of the old feudal tradition continued. The peasantry, which had been content to surrender a sizeable portion of the produce to the feudal lords in older times, allowed itself to be taxed by the new government at a comparable rate thus providing the larger proportion of the revenue in the early

decades of economic development of Japan. In India it is unlikely that the peasants will submit as readily to a comparable levy, and thanks to universal suffrage and free elections, they can make their displeasure felt. Methods of massive coercion such as the Soviets adopted against the peasantry can have no place in a democratic country. Thus, we come back to the original question: how to preserve social solidarity in a period of industrial transition, with its attendant strains and stresses, in a society in which free democratic institutions are part of the accepted order of things?

To some extent the strains and stresses of a period of transition can be softened by supplementing domestic savings with foreign aid in the most strenuous years of transition. That such aid is not without benefit to the foreigner should not be an argument against accepting it: the point to consider is whether it is of benefit to the receiving country as well. Those in this country who plead for rapid development and, at the same time, try to create feelings against foreign capital are, in effect, asking this country so to define its economic objectives as to make their attainment by democratic methods particularly difficult. On the other hand, reliance on foreign aid can hardly be of more than marginal significance. The strains and stresses of a period of transition, and the need for discipline and austerity, cannot be wholly avoided.

The approach to the problem that is commended here is the co-operative approach, but "co-operative" in a larger than the usual meaning of the word. Given this approach, policy would emanate from and its implementation be secured through the closest co-operation between the government, or whatever the authority concerned, and the various independent organisations of the people. Trade unions, for example, should be freely associated with policy-making at whatever levels this is practicable. Similarly for other democratic organisations. Even between the government and the political parties in opposition, the scope of mutual consultation and co-operation should be deliberately widened. It is not to be expected that the government and the other democratic organisations would agree on all questions. Some disagreement is inevitable, and to suppress such disagreement is to suppress democracy. Yet in a difficult period of transition, if the extremes of chaos and forced solidarity are to be avoided, democratic institutions should be so adjusted and so function as to discover the largest common measure of agreement, particularly on basic policies relating to the material life of the community.

One is not unaware of a certain amount of scepticism with which this approach to the problem will be regarded by some. But before one deals with the grounds of this scepticism a brief digression is perhaps in order.

There is some relation between the material life of a community and its cultural and spiritual life. Yet this relation is not as close as it is sometimes made to appear. For purposes of material production, it is an absolute necessity to fit people into definite forms of organisation. On basic economic policies broad agreement is useful, perhaps even necessary, if these policies are to be given effect to by democratic means. But a comparable degree of organisation and concerted action is unnecessary and undesirable in the cultural sphere. The more one moves from the economic life of a community to its spiritual life, the more does one pass from the sphere of organised social action to that of the sovereignty of individual speculation. The anti-libertarian implication of a strictly materialist sociology lies in this that in deriving the cultural and spiritual life of a community from its material life, this theory predisposes its exponents when they come to change society, which is their avowed preoccupation, to apply to the former a degree of regimentation that may only be proper to the latter. In sharp relief, the Hindu tradition has standardised conduct while leaving speculation very largely unfettered. This is certainly much better than standardising both conduct and thought. While pleading for the co-operative way one must still insist that there are spheres in which cooperative decisions are not of much value.

Leading our thoughts back to the economic sphere, we are up against the old question as to whether it is at all possible to persuade people by democratic means to adopt the minimum codes of conduct necessary for industrial development. Is it possible to inculcate in them habits of thrift, discipline, punctuality and hard work without setting aside democratic organisations? These habits are, in any case, necessary to economic development. Religion, law and the despotic powers of the "captains of industry" combined in earlier times to get these habits established in the older capitalist countries. Some amount of compulsion is perhaps unavoidable in the early stages of the formation of new habits. Yet there is a world of difference between getting a man to conform to a code of conduct because he must, and inducing him to accept it on the basis of an understanding of the purposes that it serves, using compulsion only to add sanction to what is already morally accepted. What matters most is the basic approach that one adopts in such matters. Education is the basis of the libertarian approach. In matters that concern large masses of adults, the democratic organisations of the people, such as, trade unions and co-operatives, should be the most important vehicles of education.

This will entail a change in the character of some of these organisations. It is desirable, for example, that trade unions in a development-seeking and

democratically minded community modify their conception of the role that properly belongs to them. If discipline and austerity are necessary in special measure in a period of accelerated industrial growth, co-operative self-restraint is the alternative to authoritarian controls tyrannically administered. In the Soviet Union in the thirties, while the strangle-hold of the industrial bureaucracy tightened, the trade-unions instead of fighting the bureaucracy became an instrument in its hands for helping raise labour productivity. One may justly deplore this development; but one should also realise that this development was not entirely accidental, that it represented a response, a totalitarian response, to certain needs of an industrially growing economy. What a country like India requires to evolve in such matters is the democratic equivalent of the Soviet response. Trade-unions, here should develop a dual function, if the co-operative approach, involving workers' participation in management, is to be developed to any extent: they must defend the interests of their members against managerial indifference and high-handedness, and strive to secure for them better living and working conditions and the recognition of their human dignity; but equally they should work to improve the productive capacities of the workers, by securing for their rank and file educational and training facilities, and by developing in them a proper attitude towards work and discipline, based on an awareness of their participation in a great co-operative endeavour to lift this country out of poverty.

But a sense of co-operative endeavour cannot be created unless people feel that there is some rough equity in the manner in which the burden of industrial development is distributed among different sections of the community. Some inequality is inevitable; but surely the existing range of inequality in this country is much wider than anything that can be even nearly justified. This country has set its heart on a programme of industrialisation at a time when the urge for equality is one of the dominant urges of this epoch. It is difficult to persuade one section of the people to practise austerity or moderate its claims to higher wages while there is ostentatious living among another section of the community. This is what makes a steeply graduated expenditure tax, such as proposed by Prof. Kaldor, highly apt. It announces, as few other taxes could, the need for an equitably shared austerity accepted by the whole community as a means to economic development. Indeed, if development is the goal, there is a case for raising further the present rates of our expenditure tax, while lowering those of the income tax. There was a time when even the income tax used to be thought administratively unfeasible. Those who argue similarly against the expenditure tax to-day may or may not be equally in error. But if they are

not, other ways, even more drastic, will perhaps have to be found to enforce austerity at the higher levels; or else the frustrated egalitarian impulse of this epoch may claim democracy itself as its victim.

Opposition to the co-operative approach may come from two opposite directions.

Exponents of 'free enterprise' may feel that the approach suggested here is utopian, that a liberal, capitalist approach would be more realistic and make for more rapid economic growth. This criticism assumes too much. A period of growth such as ours can hardly fail to be a period of high taxation and/or strong inflationary pressure. If trade unions, already grown strong, play their role in the spirit of an unrelenting opposition, a "class" opposition, within industry, if political parties not in power decide that the cardinal principle of the opposition is to oppose and to get into power at any cost, then chaos may ensue followed perhaps by dictatorship. There may be some difference of opinion as to the extent to which the co-operative approach ought to be pushed; but the need for some such approach seems to be beyond doubt if chaos and dictatorship are to be avoided. With present conceptions of democracy the co-operative approach has to be carried rather far if it is not to be spurned by the people as a sham. It seems highly likely that in the Western countries too some such approach will have to be adopted, sooner or later. Indeed, a movement in this direction has already set in. The co-operative approach or some form of "co-determination" seems logical in any country with developed workers' organisations and a sustained inflationary pressure resulting from the urge for quick progress.

Exponents of class war will assail the co-operative approach from a different angle. If one pushed the analysis far enough one could point out that it is not merely class interests but individual interests that conflict: one individual can always gain at the expense of another. Yet for purposes of social existence the more important fact is that individuals can co-operate to mutual advantage. In a sense the conflict between classes is, indeed, more fundamental than the conflict between individuals in so far as class conflicts are rooted in legal and other institutions. But it is possible even here to arrive at terms of co-operation which prove to be of mutual advantage. Moreover, these terms, and the codes and institutions in which they are embodied, can and ought to be changed overtime. Co-operation among free men is necessarily conditional: it can be withdrawn if one of the parties is dissatisfied with the underlying terms. Progress, however, is likely to be more secure when the emphasis is on the common interests of society and when the co-operating parties retain sufficient realism and

flexibility to explore new conditions of co-operation in order more effectively to achieve these common interests under changing circumstances. In the West stability and progress have combined best in those countries where the philosophy of class struggle has been to a large extent counter-balanced by other philosophies centering round democracy, nationalism and Christianity, which have stressed fundamental qualities of social cohesion. In some cases, when ideas of class struggle have grown particularly strong, balance has rudely been restored through the growth of a malignant type of militant nationalism, or a tendency towards disintegration has set in. It is the prevalence of a generally democratic and co-operative attitude which has best secured the health of society. Such an approach is sometimes condemned as 'reformist'. It assuredly is so. But in a period of transition such as ours, one-sided emphasis on conflict is likely to lead to social disintegration; and it is far from 'scientific' to believe that the new society which takes shape out of such precipitate disintegration of the old embodies terms of human co-operation closer to the ideal than those that can be achieved by means of steady reforms.

The approach suggested in these pages is not altogether novel. On the contrary, it is notable how democrats in this country, with diverse backgrounds, and quite independently, have been all the time feeling their way towards some such approach. There is some controversy on nomenclature. Most people here use the word 'socialism' to convey what they stand for. If the intention is to put the stress on the idea of equality, there are other words that express that idea more directly. Perhaps in our context a more fundamental justification for the use of the word 'socialism' would be that it serves additionally to emphasise the need for social solidarity in a period when the forces of disintegration are gaining strength from the strains and stresses of early industrialisation. But one-sided emphasis on solidarity may lead to totalitarianism. We want social solidarity to be an expression of the voluntary co-operation of free individuals. That is the ideal, the abstract norm, so to say. The actual is to be judged by its closeness to this norm. Co-operative socialism, if one is allowed to use that expression, is distinguishable from all totalitarian brands of socialism in that these latter start with the concept of some totality, the 'nation', as in the case of 'national socialism', or the 'class'. In the end, the state is identified with the nation or the class, and the individual sacrificed to the State in the name of a glorified national or class totality. The co-operative approach, on the other hand, starts with the individual as the ultimate centre of all experience and, therefore, of the experience of the good life, and maintains that the basic principles of the good society are none other

than those by which free men form their own associations in pursuit of those common objectives which make social living meaningful. It may seem academic to talk of these abstract principles. But to ignore them is to be left without any basic guidance in the practical work of a democrat. Democracy cannot be defended in these difficult transitional times unless those who cherish it are as conscious of their principles as their opponents are conscious of their own.

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National Unity Versus Group Isolation

By HUMAYUN KABIR

THE presence of groups and communities is not peculiar to India, for the world has perhaps never had a State with a people who are completely homogeneous. Small States which at first sight seem to present an appearance of homogeneity are found on closer inspection to consist of various units with distinct identities of their own. Religion, language, race and economic and social disparities as well as regional differences combine in differing degrees to give them their distinctive characteristics. In fact, one may go so far as to say that even the smallest group or community can be broken up into still smaller sub-units. One may perhaps use a physical analogy to make this point more vivid. From an aeroplane flying high, the earth below seems completely flat but as one descends one finds that what appeared as a plane surface is in fact broken with a thousand undulations of various sizes and types.

No State however small is completely homogeneous, but some States are heterogeneous in a marked degree. Generally this is true of the larger States like India, U.S.S.R. or U.S.A., but diversity is not confined to large States alone. Switzerland and Yugoslavia consist of communities which speak different languages and profess different faiths, but in spite of this diversity, the people are proud of their national unity. In fact, many discerning Western scholars have, after careful analysis, come to the conclusion that nationhood does not depend on race or language or religion or geography, singly or collectively, though they all help, but on the feeling of belonging to one nation. Such a definition may be questioned as circular, but no better definition has been offered till now.

There is no denying that from one point of view India presents a remarkable variety of peoples who differ from one another in almost all the elements which are usually considered necessary to constitute a nation. India has never had one language spoken throughout the length and breadth of her territories. Never have all the Indian people followed any one religion. Nor has the entire territory of geographical India ever been ruled from one centre. There are also marked differences in what are called racial characteristics, traditional food habits and customs and institutions in different parts of the country. In spite of these marked divergences, there

is equally little doubt that for 2000 years or more, there has been a general feeling of Indian-ness which has transcended all these distinctions and made the many Indian communities one Indian people.

The territorial compactness of the Indian sub-continent is perhaps one of the factors responsible for this sense of Indian unity, but by itself it could not have given it the strength which has resisted political, linguistic and religious divisions. The enduring strength of the idea of Indian unity is derived from what may be called in modern political parlance the principle of federalism. It has been recognised from the earliest times that Indian civilisation and culture is characterised by unity in diversity. Hindu social system is in itself a remarkable example of this principle. It has enabled people with the most contrary beliefs to belong to the same social group. Hindu society has rejected neither atheists nor believers in one God or many, so long as certain social proprieties have been observed. It has thus given the greatest latitude to intellectual difference, while enforcing general adherence to a certain pattern of social behaviour. Even in behaviour, the greatest diversity has been permitted as between castes, communities and regions.

This principle of federalism in Indian society was easier to work in the past as the different units lived comparatively isolated lives. Within each area there was a comparatively homogeneous group and differences were distributed regionally. The differences which existed within an area were tolerated because of the unquestioned acceptance of hierarchical society. The institution of caste not only enabled the different groups within the Hindu community to live at peace with one another but what is historically even more important, it enabled Hindu society to establish a *modus vivendi* with various outside groups which came to India from time to time. In some cases, the groups were absorbed in Hindu society at a fairly high level, as in the case of the Rajputs. In other cases, as in the days of Muslim or British domination, the superior position enjoyed by members of the ruling community did not provoke much opposition because of the inequalities in status and functions within the Hindu social system itself.

Thus there has always been a remarkable diversity of thought, action and outlook among the Indian people, but this diversity has been organised within a generally recognizable Indian pattern. When Megasthenes or Fahien came to India, they found many clans and sects following different ways of life but could nevertheless group all of them together as the people of India. In later days, Babar explicitly recognized this Indian character and called it the Hindustani way of life to distinguish it from the way of life elsewhere in the world. He felt that Indian Muslims were in some subtle way

different from Muslims elsewhere and he attributed this difference to their affiliation with their Hindu countrymen.

Some degree of emotional national integration has therefore always been in evidence in India, but this feeling of unity has not always been able to withstand the challenge of group loyalties. This again is not peculiar to India, for the existence of different groups always carries with it the risk of fragmentation, at first on an emotional and later on an institutional level. It is also a fact that the smaller the group, the more intense the loyalty it generally evokes. Small communities demand and generally secure a greater degree of adherence from its members. Concentration of emotions on the constituent units may thus weaken the hold of the total community and lead to the emergence of institutional forms which make the cleavage complete.

This risk of fragmentation is greater where there is no intellectual basis for the cohesion among the different groups. A sense of unity based on emotion alone cannot stand the test of time, as emotions are on the whole less stable than intellectual attitudes. This has been proved in Indian history both positively and negatively. The cohesion of Hindu society in spite of the innumerable sub-groups into which it has always been divided was possible because the philosophical basis of such cohesion had been worked out. One may or may not accept the doctrine of *Samsara* and re-birth, but there is little doubt that this doctrine, reinforced by belief in *karma*, has given coherence and unity to Hindu community life. Perhaps the greatest triumph of the Aryan synthesis was the intellectual integration of different ways and outlooks.

The importance of working out an intellectual basis for practical co-operation is seen negatively in the various fissiparous tendencies which have disturbed Indian social life in recent times. Throughout the middle ages, there was a remarkable rapprochement between Hindus and Muslims of India. Geographical contiguity compelled them to come to terms with one another and quite early in the middle ages they established points of contact at many levels. The synthesis so achieved was however largely based on practical considerations or emotional urges. In the courts and in the cities, patterns of common behaviour grew out of the desire for worldly advancement. In the villages, common beliefs and customs developed through the teaching of the reformers, religious teachers and poets. This attempt at reconciliation did not however prove enduring, as it was not supported by the intellectual integration of the philosophies of these two great communities.

In one sense, the essence of the Hindu outlook is the yearning for the liberation of the individual from the bonds of *karma*. From the point of

view of Hindu thought, history becomes illusory and the individual is exalted above the community. Marxism goes to the other extreme in exalting the community above the individual and making history the ultimate test of the real. Islam stands midway between these two extreme positions and recognises the validity of history while at the same time acknowledging the ultimate value of the individual. There is thus no contradiction between the fundamental philosophic tenets of Islam and Hinduism as there is between those of Hinduism and Marxism, but the points of divergence have been neither articulated nor consciously reconciled in a philosophical synthesis. In the absence of such intellectual articulation, accommodation on the level of practice, emotion and even intuition has not been able to withstand the challenge of contrary forces. One evidence of this is found in the failure of these major communities to come to terms with their history. Indian Muslims have not accepted the pre-Muslim traditions and heroes as part of their heritage to the same extent as in countries like Iran or even Indonesia. Similarly, there are strong elements among Hindus who would like to forget or at least ignore the developments of the middle ages. With minor modifications, the same story is reported in the case of the Christian community of India. The advent of the British on the Indian scene led to an emphasis on the differences between the different communities and we know the sequel of this process in the unfortunate division of the country.

A critical study of Indian history indicates the lines on which national and emotional integration can be achieved in spite of the diversity of beliefs and practices among Indian groups. One fact we must recognise at the very outset. There are differences among Indians in faith and belief and thought and action which have been further strengthened by differences in language, religion and custom. Any attempt to deny or suppress these differences is not only bound to fail but is bound to lead to an exaggeration of the differences and an aggravation of bitterness. Whether it be religion or custom or language or tradition, it is too late in the day to think of achieving absolute uniformity throughout India. Such an attempt would be against the very process of history. Throughout the ages, human society has on the one hand been organised into larger and larger units and on the other exhibited increasingly greater differences in individual and communal life. Custom is king in primitive society but in any society which has passed beyond the primitive stage, differences in individual and group behaviour are already in evidence and continually increase. The Aryan synthesis in ancient India was so successful, precisely because it recognised and accommodated large-scale differences among the different social groups. Whenever on the other hand an attempt has been made to impose

a dead uniformity, the result has been the encouragement of fissiparous and divisive forces.

If we accept without any mental reservation the fact that India is and will remain diverse, one of the main obstacles to the national and emotional integration of the people will be removed. Religious, linguistic or regional groups at times seem to oppose such integration but if we carefully analyse their attitudes, we will find that what they oppose is not integration but the loss of their identity. Minorities are generally more sensitive about the retention of their separate character. Majorities do not generally insist on such retention, because they know that greater uniformity is likely to lead to the acceptance of their way of life by the minority rather than vice versa. This is one of the main reasons why religious minorities are so anxious to preserve their special traditions and characteristic culture even at the cost of estranging the majority. The same fear is behind the passion exhibited in recent times over the question of the languages of India.

It is easy for the majority to press its own point of view under the guise of national interest and dismiss the fears of the minority groups as parochial. One may certainly argue that the larger national interest should always prevail over the interest of a section or group. Unfortunately, however, the majority has often a tendency of identifying the national interest with its own interest. There need not be any dishonesty or hypocrisy in such identification, for it is a common human failing—in India and elsewhere—to regard one's own point of view as the only correct and right point of view. Why should one adopt a view unless one regards it as right? As against this, we have to remember that some of the greatest values of life have been preserved or created only because a minority stood out against the dictates of the majority. If we hold that the interest of the larger group should always prevail, we must also hold that Maharana Pratap Singh of Mewar, Robert Bruce of Scotland or William Tell of Switzerland deserve to be blamed rather than honoured for the attitude they took in championing the cause of a smaller group against the claims of a large empire.

Separatism based on race or religion is no longer a live issue in India. Even the adherents of caste are on the defensive and support their claims only surreptitiously. Group loyalties based on languages are however still unabashed and frank. We may therefore examine more carefully the issues involved in the present linguistic controversies in India. This is complicated by economic issues as well but even apart from economic considerations, language has a function in human life which can be ignored only at our peril. Language is in fact an even stronger principle of unification, and

therefore by implication also of division, than religion. One may change one's faith or political beliefs or social habits but it is almost impossible to change the language in which one has been brought up. It is through language that a man receives impressions from outside and expresses his inner thoughts. All traditions come to him through the linguistic medium. All present experience finds a tangible embodiment in language. It is again through language that individual and communal aspirations are formulated and stabilised. How close language is to personality can be proved by a very simple test. Even the most intelligent individual feels a sense of bafflement and develops a feeling of inferiority if placed among a group whose language he can not fully understand. Complete ignorance does not have quite the same effect for in such cases, there is no participation and therefore no sense of defeat or failure. Partial understanding intrigues and challenges him but at the same time also tends to freeze his mental faculties and tires him out intellectually and emotionally.

The linguistic rivalry of different Indian groups has been further strengthened by the fact of economic rivalry. Public employment has acquired a special significance in the peculiar context of the Indian situation. It not only gives economic security but also brings social prestige. Indian agriculture is under-developed and employs a vast number of people who are only partially employed. Indian industry and commerce are perhaps still less developed and cannot absorb more than a fraction of the people. Except for a microscopic minority, neither agriculture nor industry and commerce can offer material comfort or mental satisfaction. Economic well-being and social prestige have thus combined to give added importance to public services in India. It is natural that in such a context there should be strong competition for such services. For the same reasons, there is increasing competition for representation in legislatures and local bodies. In fact, the struggle for a share in public services and in representative institutions was one of the major causes for the partition of India.

The controversy over the linguistic issue today is also largely due to the same desire for sharing the good things of life. The struggle over the choice of the official language of India has become charged with the hopes of the majority and the fears of the minority language groups. It may not be explicitly formulated and may not even reach the level of conscious thought, but there is little doubt that at least a part of the insistence of the Hindi-speaking people to make Hindi the official language of the Union is based on their expectation that this would place them in a position of advantage in public life and public services vis-a-vis the other language groups of India. It is equally certain that fear on this account—not always

explicitly stated and perhaps not even consciously realised—is one of the major reasons for the opposition from people speaking other languages.

This sense of conflict can be removed only if all the major languages of India are treated as equal. No doubt this has been formally accepted but the tension has not been resolved because of doubt about its translation into actual practice. There is at times an unconscious assumption by the majority that its language will have a superior position and the minorities react against such a possibility in no uncertain terms. National leaders have recognised the need of removing all doubts on this point, as is clear from the Prime Minister's unequivocal declaration that all the Indian languages are equally the national languages of India.

As mentioned earlier, the more intense loyalty to a smaller unit arises out of its fear of submergence in the larger group. It expresses itself in different ways in different countries and with different groups. Fundamentally, such fear may be regarded as an absence of confidence in social justice. When a group demands separate electorate or reservation of a percentage of posts, it has in the background of its mind the fear that without such support it may not receive its legitimate dues. The emphasis on caste or community or language or province is intended to buttress its claims against stronger rivals. It is interesting to note that each group uses a different plea in support of its own position. A highly educated minority may plead that academic and intellectual attainment alone be the criterion for entry into public services. An educationally and socially backward group will on the other hand advance linguistic or regional considerations in support of its position. Whatever be the plea that is advanced, it invariably arises out of the fact of lack of confidence. Nor are such fears altogether without justification. Caste and community bonds in India have been so strong in the past that even today highly-placed men are at times ready to give special treatment to the claim of persons belonging to their family, caste, community or State. This applies not to employment but also to various facilities in trade, industry and commerce that are now in the gift of the State. If all men and women, regardless of language, religion, community or States, could be sure of equal treatment, one of the major causes for group loyalty and the consequent fissiparous tendencies would disappear.

The concept of equality of all in the eye of the law is a comparatively new human phenomenon. It is certainly a completely radical departure from the past so far as India is concerned. In ancient India, there was one law for the Brahmin and another for the non-Brahmin. In mediaeval India Muslims enjoyed rights which were denied to non-Muslim citizens. Even among Muslims, the ruling clans claimed special privileges. During the

British days, there were special juries and special prisons for men and women of British origin. It is only with the adoption of the Republican Constitution of India in 1950 that complete equality of all in the eye of the law has been accepted as a basic principle of our national life. When this principle becomes operative in our every day administration, one of the major divisive factors in Indian life will have been removed. I am myself convinced that what is often described as linguism or casteism or communalism is basically the expression of the fear of a weaker group that it may not receive what is due to it. To concentrate on those different expressions is therefore to treat the symptoms without eradicating the cause. The cause can be removed only when justice becomes not only in theory but also in practice the guiding principle of society and the State.

It has to be recognized that loyalty to the nation or the State does not and need not mean the denial of feeling for one's own group or community. For one thing, all human beings are simultaneously members of many different groups. Before the attainment of Independence, it was sometimes asked whether a man was an Indian first or a Hindu, Muslim or Christian first. Such a question is not only foolish but devoid of all meaning. A man is an Indian in the context of his nationhood. He is, whatever may be his religion, such in the context of his relationship to God or the Absolute. To ask whether one is first an Indian or a member of a religious group is like asking the question whether a man is tall or hairy. Unless economic or political interests are mixed up with a man's faith, there is no reason why there should be a clash between his religious and his national loyalties. Wars—even when they have been given an ostensibly religious colour—have generally been waged for purely mundane reasons. In spite of contrary popular belief, the Muslims in India have fought one another on many more occasions than they have fought the Hindus or any other religious group.

The history of Islam also proves that religious or linguistic loyalties or even a combination of the two cannot stand up against the pull of economic and political interests. All Arabs speak the same language and almost all of them profess the same faith. The number of Christian or Jewish Arabs is negligible and they are equally proud both of the Arabic language and the Islamic heritage. Unanimity on the question of language and religion has not however prevented the Arabs from splitting into a number of States that have been either indifferent or openly hostile to one another. Where the combination of language and religion has failed to assure unity, it is not surprising that Muslims speaking different languages should, in spite of their common religious bonds, be widely divided in economic, political and other ways.

One may safely infer that group loyalties as such do not necessarily interfere with loyalty to the nation. Besides, group loyalties generally pull in diverse and sometimes contrary directions. Groups are formed not only on the basis of language, religion or community, but also on the basis of interests. Men of the same political faith adhere to one another with an intensity which often cuts across the barriers of language, religion and nationality. The way in which communists all over the world tend to cling to one another is evidence of the strength which political affiliation may bring. Similarly, Muslims have certain affinities towards one another regardless of their territorial or political loyalties. Artists and scientists also form a brotherhood of their own which cuts across groupings in other fields. The Marxist call for the unity of the workers of the world has been matched by the practice of unity among the world's capitalists. It is evident that many men simultaneously belong to a religious, a professional, an aesthetic, a linguistic and a political camp and there may be cases where a particular individual is the only member common to all those different groups.

Inaugural address at the Seminar on problems relating to National Unity Vs. Group Isolation, New Delhi, April 1958.

In all stages of civilisation the popular gods represent the more primitive brutalities of the tribal life. The progress of religion is defined by the denunciation of gods. The keynote of idolatry is contentment with the prevalent gods.

A. N. WHITEHEAD

Some New Trends in Punjabi Literature

By ATTAR SINGH

THE independence of India from British rule in 1947 meant much more for the Punjab and to a great extent for Bengal than it presumably did for the other states of India. These two states had to pass through a period of severe stress and strain due to untold suffering caused by bloody communal riots and a forced and unplanned exchange of population across the border. This great upheaval coupled with political independence marks a sort of break in historical continuity in the fields of human relationship, value-norms, and world-outlook in general. Consequently, when we study Punjabi literature, produced both before and after the partition *i.e.* August 1947, we find in the latter a marked deviation from the earlier trends. It is for this reason that we have, in an attempt to analyse and evaluate some new trends in Punjabi literature, chosen this as our date-line.

Before we proceed to examine these movements, it is appropriate to recall the material situation in the Punjab of the immediate post-partition era and to enquire how far it helped these new tendencies to rise and grow. First of all, there is the partition and its effects on the lives of the individuals and on society as a whole which call for a close study. The term 'partition', due to the peculiar happenings associated with it, has assumed connotations very different from its dictionary meanings. All the merciless massacre, loot, arson and rapine inflicted upon the weaker sections of society that preceded it and followed it on both sides of the border, all the human degeneration and debasement of character that came in its wake, have become associated with it. Punjabi literature could not but react to this stark situation, if for no other reason than for the fact that this shocking human tragedy was experienced or witnessed by all, including the writer. The human or shall we say the inhuman misery, on the one hand, and the callousness of the followers of one political or religious faith towards those of the others, on the other, assumed such colossal proportions that they simply could not be overlooked. The immediate reaction was, no doubt, one of grief and lamentation, and it was expressed in the fullest measure. However, this reaction soon gave way to attempts at reasoning it all out to oneself or to others. Invariably, the largest share of blame for this sorrowful state of affairs was apportioned to British imperialist diplomacy, and naturally so because with such a heavy weight of the consciousness of guilt on the conscience of the individual or of society, survival would have been

impossible. But for what Amrita Pritam feelingly said in her poetry about the pitiable misfortune of the woman who, as is usual in all such mass upheavals, became the target of the worst type of criminal excesses let loose by the removal of all social control, the Punjabi writers were found unequal to the stupendous task of reflecting this human drama in literature in an artistically satisfying and intellectually significant manner. There may be more than one reason for this failure, but the fact remains so.

Unlike other social upheavals, because of its purely negative character, this historical event was not capable of affording many opportunities for individual or social heroism. On the other hand, it helped to bring to the surface all the baser elements, both social and individual. They were further fed by the almost complete collapse of governmental control, a seemingly impossible problem of refugee rehabilitation, an acute shortage of the necessities of life and the consequent suffering of the common man which grew to dimensions beyond human endurance. If one keeps all these facts in view, then he is sure not to feel surprised or perturbed at the sudden preoccupation by almost all the Punjabi writers of those days with the idea of a vague social revolution, conceived as a panacea for all the social ills which appeared to defy attempts to solve them otherwise. Not that this social consciousness was something altogether new for Punjabi literature, for it had already caught the imagination of such well-known writer's as Sant Singh Sekhon, Mohan Singh and Pritam Singh Safeer even before 1947. But this could find roots only in the soil prepared by what happened in and after that year.

This bent of social consciousness, bordering at times on a clumsy sort of political declamation, constitutes one of the major trends in the new Punjabi literature. We do not at all mean to suggest that it has had its day when we say that the initial zeal and gusto with which it was introduced has comparatively cooled down by now, may be for the reason that the enterprising character of the average Punjabi has helped him get out of this crisis which never deepened to an extent beyond recovery. But all the same this aspect of contemporary Punjabi Literature does merit more than a passing notice.

A most significant aspect of this situation was that even authors like Kartar Singh Duggal, who were formerly avowedly averse to the assumption of social responsibility by literature or art, all at once gave up their previous stand and underwent a sort of ideological metamorphosis. One may suggest that they did so just out of fashion; but what we believe is that they were driven to it by the impact of hard reality. In addition there arose scores of new writers mostly in the fields of poetry and short story who were, if

anything, more vocal than their elders but who at times did not fully comprehend all the implications of what they talked, and who surely did not care how they talked.

Howsoever one may argue about the desirability or otherwise of literature assuming such social responsibility (either from political motives or out of the righteous indignation felt and experienced honestly by the authors at the sad plight of their fellow-beings), one cannot miss the fact that it encouraged a feeling of doubt and a propensity to question, and gave rise to a certain amount of disbelief in the traditional values of life and ways of thought. In an ever-increasing measure Punjabi authors began to adopt liberal and humanistic universalism as a creed to swear by. Consequently, there set in a process of intellectual liberation and emancipation from narrower racial or religious perspectives amongst them. This movement did not make its presence felt simply by adopting the passive attitude of avoiding controversies based on these differences, but also by positively asserting the dignity of the individual over the prejudiced sectarian view-point. The latest novels of Nanak Singh and Narinderpal Singh are a pointer to it, although other writers like Sant Singh Sekhon,¹ Mohan Singh and Amrita Pritam also contributed to this trend in no mean measure.

As if to counter-balance this liberating trend, this social consciousness at times sought to undermine the very basis of literature by turning the literary media into vehicles of political propaganda. Looked at from this angle, one may easily conclude that Punjabi literature has not made much headway since the times of Bhai Vir Singh. One can explain this by saying that it was a conscious effort to marshal literature into the service of one or other political end, or by asserting on the contrary that this attitude was political only by implication, having its real source in sound moral convictions. Whatever the explanation, this tendentious attitude threatened to reduce the fine art of literature to a mere instrument of propaganda. Jaswant Singh's *Raat Baki Hai* and Narinderpal Singh's *Ik Rah Ik Pra* suffer from the same malady, although from diametrically opposite considerations. Here we need not refer to hack writers who are ever ready to change colours as and when an old fashion fades out or a new one sets in.

As a natural corollary of the above, this new set of writers, inspired by the powerful currents in contemporary Urdu literature, sought to establish the supremacy of theme over form. In so far as it helped casting away the older traditional styles and modes for good and developing new ones either by re-conditioning the former to suit the new tasks or by giving birth to new patterns and styles, it may be credited to have served as useful purpose. But unfortunately this did not happen in all cases, and con-

sequently there set in a general carelessness for the formal beauty of the various modes of literature. The most regrettable aspect of all this was that this literary delinquency was condoned in the name of ideological correctness of the theme. Poetry suffered most although other literary forms too did not fare much better.

But due to the mere fact that social conditions coupled with the great impact of modern Western thought had encouraged a sense of inquiry and criticism, this state of affairs could not continue for an indefinite length of time. Judged by any standards, this was an extraordinary situation, which soon began to normalise. Increasing interest in regional languages and literatures that began to be evinced all over India after Independence led to a serious study of the nature and character of those literatures as also of the problems facing them. Obviously, Punjabi was no exception to it. This serious type of heartsearching, in the context of the situation referred to above in detail, led very soon to a softening of the hitherto bellicose tone and to the replacing of the earlier shallowness in art by a deeper and keener intellectual enquiry and finer craftsmanship. This today is the most powerful trend, pregnant with innumerable possibilities. It augurs well for the future of our literature.

This new trend has manifested itself in so many and such diversified ways that it would be a formidable task to deal with all of them here in detail. Nevertheless, we shall try to enumerate a few of them, although we must also hasten to caution against the tendency to take for granted that these trends are sufficiently strong today to stand the test of time, even though these are very well in keeping with the richest and healthiest traditions of the land.

First of all, there is the tendency to reflect more and more the complex nature of both the individual and his social environment, and to do away with the old feudal way of representing life in over-simplified isolation and abstraction. Not a few well-known writers till very recently were acclaimed and liked for painting life in the bold colours of black and white on religious, moral or political canvases. But now, thanks to the growing familiarity with the modern knowledge of human character and society, the present-day Punjabi author is conscious of finer shades too, shades which have hitherto been successfully eluding perception by the older generations of writers. These elder writers were too pre-occupied with the ideas they intended to preach implicitly or explicitly to care for the nuances of character and personality which are now being caught in contemporary Punjabi Literature. Consequently, the latest writings of such authors as Narinderpal Singh (*Aman de Rah*), Haribhajan Singh (*Lasan and Tar Tupka*) Amrit Singh

(*Parchhavian di pakkar*), and Jaswant Singh Neki (*Asle to ohle*) are more meaningful and realistic although less moralistic and of course less propagandist.

There has also developed a tendency to interpret the contemporary situation and the historical past of the Punjab in the light of the modern intellectual weltanschauung. One reason for this may be the ever-growing self-consciousness of Punjabi nationalism, which is still in its embryonic stage. Sant Singh Sekhon, the best suited person in the Punjab for the task, has taken a lead in this field with his dramas *Waris*, *Moian Sar Na Kai*, *Bera Band Na Sakio*, etc. Although these dramas do not strictly conform to the needs of the present day Punjabi theatre, they are really thought-provoking and impressive in the treatment of their subject matter. His *Narki* is a still higher achievement in so far as he has been able to portray in it the reality of the contemporary upper middle class which has degenerated to such lower depths.

A shift in the plane of the theme of literature is also very much in evidence. Such conventional subjects as love, social reform, heavenly devotion, and all didactic teaching have increasingly come in disfavour with the new writers, who are more interested in the reality of the outer circumstances of a man's life, as well as the urges, impulses, yearnings, illusions and disenchantments which are experienced and felt by the inner depths of consciousness. Not that these new writers are immoral or that their writings are bereft of any moral implications. That could not be the case because, as F. L. Lucas puts it in his book *Literature and Psychology*, if a writer moves men at all he moves them in some direction and, as such, moral implications of his writings, if worthwhile, are too obvious to call for any elaboration or comment. Only the new author is too conscious of his artistic accomplishments and intellectual honesty to burden the reader crudely with his extra-artistic judgements. Haribhajan Singh in his poetry, especially his monologues and his long dramatic verse *Tar Tupka*, has been able to depict the varying moods, hallucinations and mental stresses and strains of the modern man who is tossed between the great ideals and the grim tragedy of existence. Varying amounts of success have been achieved by other writers such as Jaswant Singh Neki, Narinderpal Singh, Tara Singh and Devinder Satyarthi in this respect, although those accustomed to seeing life only in black and white have not so far been able to appreciate their worth.

A matter of serious concern for Punjabi literature today is that the novel has not yet been able to play any leading role either in the field of ideas or in taste, which has so far been monopolised by poets and to a cer-

tain extent by short story writers. One may explain this by saying that poetry and short story being comparatively easier of accomplishment are so much more popular today. But we feel that this is due to the fact that the Punjabi intellect has still to develop that comprehensive attitude and outlook which is a pre-requisite for successful novel writing. At least in poetry and also perhaps in short story, our writers have been keeping pace with developments in the other contemporary Indian literatures. Kartar Singh Duggal and Sant Singh Sekhon in the field of short story and Mohan Singh, Amrita, Pritam Singh Safeer, Haribhajan Singh and Devinder Satyarthi in the sphere of poetry have shown much promise, and their achievements are not unworthy of emulation by writers in other Indian languages.

We are conscious of having alluded to a certain deterioration in literary standards arising out of the tendency to lay too much stress on the subject matter, and we do not intend at all to revise or even qualify that statement—except to say that some very healthy signs of recovery and growth are steadily being witnessed. The reason for this reluctance on our part is the unfortunate fact that still a very large number of writers in the Punjab is allergic to any idea of giving to form the attention it deserves. However, some new authors who are more skilled in literary craftsmanship have surely shown a way out. Haribhajan Singh with his well and closely knit although unfamiliar patterns, his subtle and poignant expression and fine symbolic imagery has set a new tone for Punjabi poetry; while Takhat Singh with his command over language and meter and his close acquaintance with the tradition of Urdu poetic imagery and style has added an altogether new dimension to it having both colour and grace. In short story writing Sekhon, Duggal and Kulwant Singh Virk have been very mindful of their technique. In prose-style not much development is in sight although in realistic prose Prof. Pritam Singh and Principal Gurbachan Singh Talib, and in imaginative and emotionally effective prose Gurbax Singh Preet Lari have been able to achieve a mastery of style which has high artistic quality and is yet noticeably free from the idiosyncracies of most other writers.

In conclusion, we feel tempted to say a few words about the future prospects of these new trends that we have endeavoured to analyse. We believe that social consciousness will tend to grow deeper, and the portrayal of the material and social reality more adequate. Further, speculative and meditative rather than declamatory aspects of this tendency will be more and more evident in future. The complex nature of life will, in an increasing measure, be reflected in literature, and the study of human character will acquire new dimensions and greater depth. Regarding artistic and aesthetic refinement, we simply choose to express a wish for its further growth. But, all said, the success of his great human effort depends, firstly, on the quality of human material available, and secondly, on our success in breaking through the barriers raised by the lack of knowledge and understanding between man and man and between our regional and national literatures and cultures—times for which are, fortunately, propitious.

The Ethical Basis of Blame & Punishment

By PRATIMA BOWES

IN any society there are legal and moral codes in accordance with which the members of the society are expected to live and for infringing which they are blamed and punished. This system of blame and punishment seems to be based on a belief that the individual concerned can with justice be held guilty since it was in his power to act otherwise than he did. One may of course believe in blaming and punishing a man without believing that he was free to choose to do otherwise than he did, for blame and punishment may be used to influence the future course of action of the individual concerned or of other members of the society. It may be that a man could not help doing what he did in the past, but blame and punishment may still be used as instruments for moulding him in the desired direction so that he may not repeat in future what he did in the past. Also he may be used as an example to threaten others off from following in his footsteps. Blame and punishment are then, according to this conception, directed towards controlling the future and are not thought of as having any reference to the past. Everything that happens is determined and what has already happened could not have been otherwise. Whatever is yet to happen will be determined by what is happening now. The purpose of blame and punishment is to influence the present so that the future may be determined in a desired direction.

Now, it is not that this opinion has no plausibility at all, but it seems to me that if we consider ordinary moral convictions we shall find that in the very idea of blame and punishment is implicit the idea of responsibility, and responsibility has no meaning unless the agent is free. It somehow violates our moral sense to believe that a man could be blamed or punished for doing anything which it was not in his power to choose not to do. If we believe in justice, which is the belief that no individual should be treated prejudicially or preferentially in relation to others, we cannot hold that anything can be dealt out to a man which he strictly does not deserve; and how can a man deserve blame or punishment unless he is free.

Those who do not believe in responsibility argue that a man's actions are determined by his character and his character is determined by forces like his genetic constitution, glandular secretions, social environment and the like, which are given to an individual and are not chosen by him. It is of course quite evident that the forces mentioned above do have a great

deal of say as to what sort of character a man will have, and these forces being operative from one's very infancy, an adult finds himself possessed of a certain sort of character. But it does not seem at all evident to me that it is this character, which one finds oneself possessed of, that determines all one's actions, although it does undoubtedly determine the vast majority of them. If it did determine every action then the feeling that we experience in connection with choice — the feeling that the choice is open and it is upto us to decide between the possible alternatives — as well as the feeling that we have after we have decided — the feeling that we could have decided otherwise than we did — will be illusory. And there does not seem to me to be any good reason why we should think that these feelings are illusory.

We do not talk about a man choosing anything if when faced with alternatives he decides upon one or the other automatically, i.e., by force of established habits rather than by any deliberate weighing of the comparative acceptability of possible alternatives. In the case of a choice which is an automatic outcome of one's past habits of choice or of one's desires most strongly felt we cannot, truly speaking, talk about alternatives, for one's mind is, we may say, already made up before one is faced with a situation of choice. Here there is no conflict and consequently no consciousness of actively exercising choice. We can talk meaningfully about choice only in cases where we feel that more than one possible alternatives have something to say for themselves by virtue of which they are claiming acceptance or at least attention. This creates conflict and an initial stage of indecision and vacillation and such a stage means that one is swayed in different directions, now identifying oneself with one course, now with another, each of which has its specific appeal in one respect or other. This shows, to my mind, irrespective of what one actually decides to choose, that as far as character that an individual already possesses is concerned it could lead him to choose either of the possible alternatives since they both had their appeal for him. At least this much is clear that none of the alternatives is foreign to his nature, for if it were he could not feel any attraction for it at all. It may of course be said that what one actually decides to choose is more in line with one's character than what one ultimately rejects. But this argument seems to me *a priori* rather than based on an analysis of actual facts. For the argument has plausibility only if one already believes that all one's actions are determined by one's character as hitherto existing. We are familiar with instances of choice which are made in the face of a pull and appeal exerted by the rejected alternative which are considerably greater than those of the accepted, and it is nonsense to

say in respect of such instances that the alternative accepted is more in line with one's character *as existing prior to the decision*. And if the argument is not *a priori* it is a tautology, for it gives the name character to what one actually chooses. And the tautology suggests that instead of its always being the case that one's character as hitherto existing determines all one's acts of choice, it may also be that one's act of choice determines a new direction for the character that one already has. It seems to me an undeniable fact that an individual can — although as a matter of fact comparatively few actually do so — decide to change his character in a certain direction which for some reason or other he accepts as preferable in the face of a strongly felt tendency to follow the line of least resistance that an established habit offers. To say that when a man chooses it is that which he chooses for which he feels the strongest tendency is to fly in the face of facts. There are cases of normal choice where the tussle is between a strongly felt tendency or desire and a sense of duty or an idea of what ought to be. This latter must have enough force in it for the agent to accept it. Yet it is hardly the case that one feels a strong tendency to act from a sense of duty. One decides to act thus even when one feels no tendency to do so or feels a tendency to do something quite different. To act from a sense of duty is a matter of effort rather than of tendency or desire.

But the really important point crops up here. Granted that an individual can change his character by conscious endeavour, can he still not be determined when he makes this endeavour? And it may be said that it is a man's genetic constitution and his early upbringing which determine whether he shall make this endeavour or not. Now, let us call this power that an individual may have of deciding to change his character or of consciously regulating its direction by forming new habits "Will Power". If this Will Power is determined, we could always predict on the basis of our knowledge of a man's genetic constitution and social environment whether he is going to exercise it in a particular case or not. But our predictions in such matters are as likely to come true as false. Admittedly there is a certain relation between a man's genetic constitution and his achievement. That is to say, given a certain genetic constitution we could perhaps say (supposing that our knowledge in this regard were to become sufficiently precise, which is doubtful) that there are certain things which are beyond the power of the man concerned, while others are not. But our knowledge of a man's constitution does not enable us to say how exactly a man is going to choose in a particular situation — except for a few restricted cases. For instance, if a man is constitutionally so weak that he cannot learn to swim, we shall not think that he will choose to jump into a river to rescue a drowning man.

But moral choice is usually exercised over such issues (the issue is of this type: 'shall I or shall I not break this promise', or 'this man is a foreigner and he does not know the price of this article; shall I or shall I not charge him more') that no particular type of genetic constitution is presupposed in order that a choice may be exercised at all; and it is perfectly imaginable that a man with a certain genetic constitution may choose one of the alternatives on a certain occasion and a different one on another. Of course it may be said that his choice will depend on the habit that he has formed of choosing in a certain manner on past occasions — a habit formed in the context of certain environmental influences; and this is quite true. Yet it is also true that habits need not necessarily be permanently fixed, and there are people who can break through old habits and form new ones. Of course, it may be that only people who are somewhat exceptional can do so. Further, a man must possess a certain degree of intelligence, a somewhat analytical bent of mind and perhaps also a certain type of temperament — characteristics which are innate or constitutional — in order to be able to find that an old habit is undesirable and ought to be replaced by a new one. Certain constitutional factors are therefore involved in moral choice of the kind we are talking about. Nonetheless, a man could possess constitutional characteristics of the favourable kind and yet not choose to change his character. These characteristics are then only certain initial conditions for the exercise of choice; they do not determine choice in the sense that we could predict the exercise of choice in a particular case on their evidence. The actual exercise of this choice depends on the decision that the agent takes to exercise it, and it is in this power of taking this decision that the freedom of the moral agent lies. As I have already remarked, this power is not entirely unconnected with our innate constitution, yet it is not entirely determined by that either. The freedom of the agent or his will power is a thing which slips through our grasp, as it were, and its presence or absence cannot be put down to anything definite that we may know about a man. This is why it is impossible for us always to predict successfully how a man would actually act in a crucial situation, however comprehensive our knowledge of his personality may be. It may of course be said that this is because our knowledge is not comprehensive enough. But this only expresses our faith in determinism in the face of contrary evidence of the unpredictability of some moral choices. I think it is because a moral agent is potentially free that our knowledge of a man who is potentially capable of being an agent cannot ever be complete. Our predictions as to how a man would actually choose in a certain situation may often come true, particularly if we keep the predictions to ourselves. But the possibility that

a man will give us a surprise remains, specially if we make the prediction public. For instance, if we know a man to be stingy we could, between ourselves, predict and predict successfully that the man will not give anything in a charity for which he is being approached. But if the man is told of our prediction he may accept it as a challenge and surprise us by contributing something to the fund inspite of his habitual stinginess. All that we could possibly know about this man and his past could not lead us to expect that he will accept the prediction as a challenge, or to calculate when he will do so. For he may accept it as a challenge on one occasion and not on another.

Now let us accept theoretically that there is such a thing as freedom of the will, i.e., freedom to act other than as one's established habits or dominant tendencies that have hitherto been existing are impelling one to act. Shall we say then every man is a free agent in every possible situation? I do not think so. For what is called Will Power, i.e., the power which makes a man free, in a particular situation, of everything other than his own decision to act in a certain way is not a distinct entity, a certain something which is present in all in a fixed quantity, available whenever there is a situation of choice. Will Power is a name which we give to that characteristic functioning of one's intelligence and personality in connection with practical deliberations, decisions and the actual execution of such decisions which cannot be deduced from our knowledge of one's constitution and environment or established character—in cases where there is reason to think that the course of action prescribed by one's established character is not adequate to the demands of the moral situation. The term 'Will Power' then signifies the possibility of a man's functioning in a certain way in certain situations rather than any actual power which is always there like the power to lift a load of a certain weight; and this power is there or not, even in respect of the same man, depending on the relation between one's intellectual and temperamental characteristics, which within very wide limits influence the possibilities of a man's going against established habits and strongly-felt urges, and the demand that is made on the agent by the actual circumstances present. This means that a man may be free in a certain situation and not in another, and in the same situation one man may be free and not another. The same man may then be free in some respects and determined in others, and the respects in which one may be free or determined may vary from one person to another. If this is accepted it follows that where one man can be blamed another cannot, or at least in the same degree, and also that a man may be held responsible for an action done in a certain situation and not in another.

The same holds true of punishment. For instance, we may blame an ordinary man but not an idiot for failing in filial obligations, and while we may punish a man for deliberate murder we cannot do so for killing in self-defence. A society cannot help framing general laws, moral and legal, which all its citizens are expected to follow, but if we want to do justice to individuals we ought to think out every case of failure on its own merits, i.e., consider individual possibilities and the peculiarities of actual circumstances present before we blame and punish or decide on their degree. Of course it is true that moral injunctions like 'do not tell a lie' or laws against killing are such that it is not beyond the power of ordinary people (i.e. people possessed of normal intelligence and nervous and glandular structure) to follow them. Yet a number of people may be brought up in an environment which has taught them the habit of disregarding legal and moral injunctions, and of these only some will be potentially capable of breaking through this habit through personal understanding and effort, or again they will only sometimes be required to act in situations in which such effort may be initiated or may meet with success. This is why it is so important that children should be helped to form the right kind of habits from their early infancy.

Now it seems to me that reformatory and deterrent theories of punishment arise out of a genuine understanding that we sometimes blame or punish people for actions for which they cannot strictly be held responsible in so far as the actions were determined for them, and the cases are such that the people concerned, being what they are as individual persons, could not be expected to decide to do otherwise. Comparatively few people can rise above habits that are firmly established or above circumstances that violently contradict tendencies felt very urgently. The free-will theorists are apt to close their eyes to the peculiarities of individual cases and to insist on equally blaming and punishing all irrespective, because they believe that everyone is a free moral agent in every possible situation. I do not think this is true, although I am saying that there is, in principle, such a thing as freedom of the will. But the reformatory and deterrent theorists go to the opposite extreme in advocating that no man is ever a free agent, in the sense in which the term 'free' is being used here. But since there is no society in which there does not prevail a system of blame and punishment these theorists justify them not on the basis of responsibility or desert, but on other considerations. The reformatory theorists say that although nothing can be done about the past, the future is still in our hands and the function of blame and punishment is to reform a man or determine his future activities in a desirable direction. There are again

people who believe that we should do away with the whole concept of guilt and that the cases of moral and legal deviation should be looked upon as pathological and the people concerned psychologically approached, understood and treated rather than blamed or punished. I do not think that these reformatory theorists, however well-intentioned, take enough notice of the dignity of ordinary adult individuals which lies in their capacity to become agents in some respects and in some degrees. To treat them as so many instruments in our hands to be manipulated as we think fit is to give them no better status than machines or at best immature children, even when our ostensible purpose in so doing is their own good. Not that I am against reform when reform is needed. What I am against is the theory which advocates reform because it believes that no man should ever be looked upon as guilty, since he never was possessed of the power to become a free agent voluntarily.

The deterrent theorist, believing as he does that all human actions are determined, justifies blame and punishment on the ground that these serve to deter others from committing the same or similar offence. Here an individual is made an example of for the benefit of others. But if we believe that every man is an end in himself we should not use him as an instrument of doing good to others; for if we do so we refuse to recognise his status as an individual in his own right.

The only justification of blame and punishment then lies in responsibility and desert. We do not violate the dignity of an individual or his status as an end if we treat him in a certain way on the belief that he deserves to be treated in that way in his capacity as a responsible free agent. And a man deserves blame or punishment only when he could have decided to act other than he did in spite of his having the sort of character that he has at the moment of decision. But I am not advocating a retributive theory in the old sense, or for that matter any theory at all. For the retributive theorist is apt to show excessive zeal in blaming and punishing people out of a belief that every man who commits a moral or legal offence could have avoided it only if he wanted to, and the fact that he did not want to shows that he is suffering from a corrupt will. I am only saying that if and when a man is to be blamed or punished he can in justice be blamed or punished only on considerations of responsibility and desert. It is up to us to decide if and when a man is to be blamed or punished and in what degree, and we ought to decide on it after due consideration of the individual peculiarities of a case, if there be any. It is one thing to believe in principle that a man can be a free agent, another to say that every man is a free agent in every respect.

Freedom & Responsibility of Writers

By R. L. NIGAM

FREEDOM is the central issue of our times. The ultimate upshot is by no means certain. The most subtle danger to freedom is that, in all too well meaning a fashion, the substance of freedom may be sacrificed to a shadowy idealism or to a false altruism. Thus, in the great debate that rages these days on the issue of writers' freedom, the accent is frequently placed on the responsibility of writers. There is a school of thought that holds with dangerous plausibility that howsoever much we may extend the freedom of writers in principle, the actual, exercised freedom must remain, and ought to remain, considerably circumscribed—circumscribed by the needs of society. The unstated implication is that writers can discharge their responsibility only by sacrificing a certain amount of their freedom. That way much contemporary madness lies.

Writers can be responsible if they are free; they cannot be responsible if they are not free. Without freedom there can be no moral responsibility. Therefore, to the question 'how free a writer is or may be?' there is but one proper answer: 'in the fullest possible measure.' Freedom is either inviolable and inviolate, or there is no freedom.

However, the doctrine of inviolability of freedom need cause no tremors, for it does not mean, as is usually feared, anarchy and irresponsibility. Rightly construed, freedom itself is the supreme responsibility. By being free and by preserving one's freedom one discharges not merely a personal but also a truly social responsibility. That way one promotes freedom, and freedom is the condition of human fulfilment and of human happiness which comes from that fulfilment. For, as we have learnt from Aristotle, 'happiness lies in the active exercise of man's vital powers along the lines of excellence, in a life affording full scope for their development. In other words happiness consists in the highest possible development of man's personality.'

In the same way the freedom of the writer, in so far as it can be thought of as a thing apart, is the condition of the fulfilment of the writer as writer. And the freedom of the writer means his being free both subjectively and objectively from all such pressures and influences as prohibit or inhibit his fullest possible unfoldment as a writer. It means also the crea-

tion and availability of conditions and opportunities which facilitate his development as a writer; it means all that air and sunshine which is essential for the burgeoning forth of his manifold potentialities.

That being the case, a proposal to limit the freedom of a writer is a proposal to repress his 'noble urge', to dam his inspiration. It is to forbid expression and to put the muse in chains, as it were. Rationed or planned freedom must sooner or later lead to delivering the conscience of the writer to some sort of bondage. Honest and uncompromised pursuit of his vocation is a virtue that to the author is its own reward, and to society a service in the highest sense.

A writer's responsibility to his society is a matter of his own response and of his own conscience. His conscience is not made more lively, nor is his sense of responsibility made more vivid by neutralising his *responsableness* or by conditioning his responses. A writer, naturally more sensitive than other men, is bound to respond to the social situation in which he operates. An unfettered expression of such responses is sure to do good to society in the long run. But a writer's response to the social situation of his day may not be what the protagonists of social responsibility would like it to be. A writer's response to his social situation may be in the wider human context. A writer's critical and emotional reactions to life may, usually they do, transcend the national, political or social context in which they arise. He belongs to the earth and the earth belongs to him. Galsworthy's plays, for instance, have often been regarded as remarkable studies of social and economic conditions, but they were not conceived by their creator in that way. Referring to some of his plays which have an obvious sociological content he says, '... though each of these plays incarnates a main idea, they have their inception in observation of human nature in contact with life.' Of his play *Strife* in this group, he says, '... the play was not conceived as a study of industrial conditions, but as a conflict between head-strong natures and the usual tragedy and the waste thereof.' Ramon Sender's *Seven Red Sundays*, a work of such pronounced political reputation, is not the unfolding of political intention. The author disavows political intention. He tells the readers in his preface that he means to take them through a new emotional experience and adds further: 'your sensibility for the deepest truths must be felt rather than understood or analysed.' But by such circuitous ways social responsibility as ordinarily understood cannot be discharged. That kind of responsibility can be discharged only with the fullest possible involvement of the writer in a concrete particularity as seen through a particular spectacle. But by such involvement literature may lose some of its distinctive features.

Disinterestedness, though an old-fashioned virtue now-a-days, is still a virtue, and literature will preserve much of its *literariness*, or its essential identity by respecting that old-fashioned value. Disinterestedness, if truly realised in literature, far from breeding indifference will awaken readers to 'the eternal reciprocity of tears' and to the persistence of 'human comedy'. And thus by refining and enlarging their sensibility and by broadening their sympathy such literature might even produce a valuable social dynamism in its readers.

Works of literature may produce, they often do produce, political or socio-political consequences. But such consequences are not their *raison d'être*. Thus literature among other things may also have its social function. That is one thing. It is quite another to demand that it should do such and such a thing in such and such a way. Here is a sample of this variety: 'it was the function of the writer to work for the promotion of peace and goodwill in the world by creating better neighbourliness among the people of different nations.' It seems a reasonable and unexceptionable proposition. But is it? Why is it particularly the *function of writers*? Why not, on the one hand, of the leaders and statesmen who have the real power to make war or peace? Why not, on the other hand, of every decent human being? And then, what will be the function of writers in a society which has learnt to live in peace and brotherliness?

The thinking behind such formulations of the writer's function is of an extremely practical brand. The realisation that literature can be applied to practical ends promotes an eagerness to enlist the services of writers to the fulfilment of tasks which properly belong to others such as, statesmen, politicians, social reformers, religious preachers and the like. There need not always be a sinister intention behind such proposals, but its consequences are more likely than not to be sinister. At any rate assigning of extraneous functions to writers is fraught with danger.

The function of writers is to write. Now there seems to be a belief that a writer may as well write one thing as another, and in one way as in another. Why not then may a writer write a play to popularise an unpopular budget, compose an ode to a Five-Year-Plan, or a sonnet to a newly constructed bridge? Why not? By all means let him do it, but on one condition: that he does it on his own; that it is his own vision that he is trying to communicate. A writer is not simply a purveyor of ideas so that instead of one he might sell the other idea and no difference to him. What Mallarme said of poetry may be said of literature itself, that it 'is not written with ideas but with words'. With words a writer composes his images, with words he creates his cadences, with words he imparts colours and suggests

movement making these all coalesce into an organic whole. By this treatment an idea turns into an image or a vision. And just as a word is not the thing itself, so the image or vision is not the idea itself. What is, for instance, the idea of Shakespeare's *King Lear*? It is hardly possible to tell. The bare story told in basic English would be the silliest thing imaginable. Tolstoy who took it piece-meal thought of this play as a very silly thing. And yet the whole, through a succession of responses critical and emotional, turns into a veritable mine of meaning. Then, again, sometimes the vision becomes so much the thing and so all-absorbing that the writer himself is scarcely conscious of the idea. 'They come and ask me what idea I mean to embody in my *Faust*; as if I knew myself and could inform them.' (Goethe)

Thus what literature says cannot be said in any other way without considerable violence to what is being said, nor can a writer express a meaning other than his own, in a way other than his own. By a conceivable caprice a chariot may be used by some one as a muck-rake, but it would be absurd to argue therefore that it was the function, or even one of the functions, of the chariot to rake muck. It is only proper, therefore, to see the social responsibility of the writer in the light of his natural function as a writer rather than to see his function in the light of the needs of society.

The responsibility of the writer as writer is in itself a very serious one, and by discharging it successfully he would almost completely discharge his responsibility to society. That responsibility is to preserve his freedom, freedom to be continually developing as a writer, freedom to choose his themes, to experiment with forms and with ways of expression, undeflected by temptation, undaunted by threat. 'By responsibility I mean the refusal to abandon the basic conception of humanness for any extraneous object whatsoever—victory, democracy, the nation, the party, the Civil List or the libraries. It certainly does not consist in grandiloquent appeals to humanity. These are generally a symptom of the total involvement of the writer in the financial or political competitions of contemporary barbarism.' (Alex Comfort: *The Novel and our Time*)

However, it is important to bear in mind that we can talk of the freedom of writers as a thing apart only for the sake of convenience in directing and concentrating our attention on certain questions touching writers and their work. Freedom, otherwise, is indivisible. Freedom in one part of the world is bound sooner or later to repercuss on the enslaved part; slavery and serfdom in one part are bound to repercuss on the free part of the world. In the same way authors in any society cannot be free if there is no freedom for others in that society. The authors can be really free only in a free society. But a free and open society is not a gift of the gods. It is the creation

of free individuals. Nor does the freedom of the individuals itself drop from heaven. Freedom like charity begins and has to begin at home. The individual begins to be free in himself by beginning to establish an easy and meaningful control of reason over the compulsive pressures of his instincts and urges as springs of conduct and action. Freedom is in this way rooted in the appropriate ordering of the various biological forces in man's behaviour, and is the condition for the preservation of the human individual organism in the best and the happiest possible state. In the ultimate analysis, therefore, freedom is a biological proposition and as such a property of human individuals. Freedom is the property of the individuals who are (biological) *organisms in fact*; it is a property of society only derivatively because society is organism only in metaphor. There can be no free society without free individuals. In a free society created and sustained by free individuals many of the most intriguing problems of freedom would disappear.

It is the tragedy of our times that such a human society does not exist. It is therefore the task of our times to usher in such a society. Writers by asserting, maintaining and intensifying *their* freedom as writers can inaugurate a new humanism in literature and lead to the emergence of a new and free society, not overnight but in the fulness of time.

Though we may read literature merely for pleasure, of 'entertainment' or of 'aesthetic enjoyment', this reading never affects simply a sort of special sense: it affects us as entire human beings; it affects our moral and religious existence. And I say that while individual modern writers of eminence can be improving, contemporary literature as a whole tends to be degrading.

T. S. ELIOT

The Two Binus: A Dilemma

[An Extract from *A Writer's Progress*]

By ANNADA SANKAR RAY

IT became impossible for Binu to forgive those who value existence more than truth, who compromise with injustice, who shun struggle, after he had read *Jean Christophe*. Each and every man should be a hero, what though he be poor, what though he be deprived of education. Neither should physical weakness be made an excuse for cowardliness. The more excuses a person offers the greater a coward he is. To be manly is to engage in the struggle against injustice without worrying about winning.

Yet there was another Binu within him, a Binu who disliked conflict, who did not forget to laugh, a Binu who loved to play. Life was, to this Binu, not a problem but a lila, a game. He could be traced to the Vaishnavic influences of his childhood and also to the influence of Rabindranath, in a word to the Indian temperament.

Between these two Binus an unceasing war was waged. Both sought expression through the pen of the same person. Sometimes the heroic side dominated, sometimes the sportive, sometimes tears and sometimes laughter, sometimes tragedy and sometimes comedy. The work of both Binus went under one name.

He would not have fallen into this dilemma if he had not been familiar with European literature. The desire to travel and to see countries had always possessed him. So many people travel; Binu too wished to travel. But his desire to make the life of Europe his own was not just a whim, and there was danger in it. Where is conflict in Indian life, domestic or personal? What one finds is fault-finding and deceit; these do not deserve to be called conflict. We go to schools and colleges and then take jobs or practice at the bar. Afterwards we marry in accordance with our parents' wishes. Next we educate our sons, find them jobs, arrange their marriages. And our daughters are either forbidden to read books or forced to read carefully selected ones before they are given away to sons-in-law. Where is there any clash of wills? Where is there material for tragedy? The gay and carefree Binu did not know what it was to be angry. He knew only love and dalliance.

Commitments

'It is love that I am up against,' runs a line in a Vaishnava poem, 'and I cannot stay.' In Binu's life there came a day when he was forced to admit that love had come to him and made writing obligatory. The questions why he should write, how he should write, for whom he should write and what he should write, pedantic questions which had held the centre of the stage up to that time, departed unnoticed when love appeared. Their place was taken by one imperative injunction—**WRITE!**

Binu found himself confronted by a shoreless expanse. It had to be crossed and there was neither boat nor boatman. No one would carry him over nor was it possible for anyone to do so, not Rabindranath, not Tolstoy not Rolland. His only hope was himself and his pen.

A person had written to him from afar. He had to cross over to her, to get close to her. It was to this that he was committed. And for this he had to write.

One by one Binu opened up all the compartments of his heart, not in the course of a single day but through a thousand and one days. A whole book was written unwittingly, a book that had only one reader. Yet how strenuous was the effort the writer made for the sake of that reader? What he wrote did not satisfy him. He tore it to shreds. He rewrote. Often when it seemed passable to him his reader misunderstood and was hurt. Then to make her understand rightly, to win her back, he was constrained to sit down once more with pen and paper and think night into day. He had no respite until his writing was perfect, until his meaning was clear, until his emotion flowed freely into his expression. His heart's blood turned into water and burst the banks of his eyes. His weary, exhausted and aching body would slump and go numb. Day after day, for three years at a stretch, this happened, not just occasionally for an hour or two or a morning. At that time he did not know how much a caterpillar must suffer before it is reborn as a butterfly. Those three years were death and rebirth for him, what biologists call metamorphosis.

The Flute

He who died was the journalist; he who was born was the writer. As with the man so with the instrument, his pen. The pen he laid aside was a gong, and the pen he took up was a flute. The hour of the departure of the one and the arrival of the other cannot be told by the clock. It was unmarked.

The purpose of the flute is not so much to make music as to make a heart known. Music is created in the process. It is born as the emotions that

have accumulated in the heart find release in the sound of the flute. Binu's pen was his flute. Through it he made known his innermost heart and in the act literature was created, sometimes without knowing it and sometimes deliberately.

Even then his future was not clear to him. He still dreamt of a journalistic career though the idea no longer thrilled him. He had no distinct conception of the literary profession. He had heard of writers who supported themselves by contributing to magazines and publishing occasional books but he himself lacked the confidence to sit at home and write for his living. If he had had some capital he would have published a weekly or monthly of his own; he would not have worked for anybody but himself. But since he did not have the capital he felt obliged to take a job in a newspaper office or in the office of some periodical, until he got it. This was called journalism. Was a literary career incompatible with it? Was Charu Bandyopadhyay not a writer as well as a journalist? Was Ramananda Chatterjee only a journalist and not a writer? Binu thought of taking a job at first like Charu Bandyopadhyay and of making himself independent like Ramananda Chatterjee later.

Yet something inside him objected to his pen being made the source of his livelihood. The idea infuriated the hero. Whatever you may do for a livelihood, don't write, don't write, don't write, he said. His reader also said the same thing. Go and become a soldier, a doctor, a social worker, she said. To write for one's bread? Disgraceful! The pen is a flute. You can make love with a flute, but money? Disgraceful! The man of feeling who was awakening in Binu was disgusted and revolted at the thought. Then who had made the proposal? The caterpillar. Who objected to it? The butterfly.

Ethics

Is it wrong to earn money by writing? Few maintain that it is now-a-days. In the past many thought so. No one belonging to the family into which Binu was born had ever sold his virility, that is to say, no one had ever taken a dowry. To take a job was, for them, like selling one's soul. Binu's father had been the first in the family to bow to necessity and accept employment. He loaded himself with endless reproaches. At that time the sale of learning was still generally disapproved. Was it surprising that the sale of one's writings should be regarded as abasing? Binu felt no hesitation about his means of livelihood until he began to think of his pen as a flute. Waves of doubt assailed him as he developed from a journalist into a creative writer.

If the letters that Binu wrote are ever published they may find a place in literature. They may even become a source of income if readers of both sexes are interested enough to buy them. Should Binu not be ashamed to touch the money? Would he ever have written what he did if he had known that he was writing for money; that sooner or later he would be paid for it? Disgraceful! Binu would rather die than allow what he wrote out of love for one beloved reader to be published or to publish it himself for the purpose of making money.

What is the difference between one beloved reader and a lakh of them? Though the poet writes in the first instance for one reader, ultimately he writes for all. Though in the first instance he writes for one country in the long run he writes for all countries. What he writes in the first instance for his own times is written also for all time. Writing is the largesse of love, a thing of the heart. He who writes knows that there is no joy and no satisfaction in writing unless impelled to do so by love. Writing inspired by anything else has no status. For this reason there is nothing to be proud of in writing in order to earn money. Binu was ashamed of not being able to give what he wrote for nothing. What was to be done? He too had to think of food. Why should he accept money from those he loved for what he wrote if society relieved him of that necessity? He loved all his readers.

Vocation And Livelihood

The ethics of the caterpillar differ from the ethics of the butterfly. Those of the butterfly are on a higher plane. A journalist feels no diffidence about making his calling his livelihood but when a creative writer tries to do it he is apprehensive at every step. Any malicious person may start a report circulating that the pursuit of gold has deflected his pen from its goal and golden Bengal will be lost to him just as Sita's chastity, diverted by the pursuit of the golden deer, caused the loss of golden Lanka.

This has actually happened to some. A market like the marriage market has been set up for the buying and selling of writing. Writers and readers crowd there. When a person of talent visits this market he feels the temptation to profit. What he writes then is not a donation but an investment. 'Each of my books is a zamindari,' one lucky writer was heard to exclaim. 'Who can steal my estates!'

Binu was fortunate that in his time this traffic did not exist. If it had existed he would have been exposed to a grave danger. Fact might have substantiated the gossip of mischief-makers. No, each of *his* books was *not* a landed estate. They were garlands, made for the touch of the beloved.

Afterwards they would lie in the dust. Let them be trampled underfoot! Time would destroy them. If anything at all was due in exchange it was love in return for love, garland for garland. If more was offered he accepted it humbly for need exists. He was not above material necessity. But material necessity is not fulfilment.

Pen or flute, flute or ferry of love, the conveyor of one heart to another, the pen must be kept unsoiled in the exercise of its function. What it writes too will, in that case, be unsullied. The honour of the writer, like the chastity of Sita, triumphantly emerges from time's ordeal by fire after the return from Lanka.

Perplexity

Binu had more or less decided that on leaving college he would become first an associate editor, by degrees editor, later director and at last the owner of some magazine. But gradually it became clear to him that the journalistic career for which he had so assiduously prepared himself was not a calling but only a means of livelihood. And it also grew daily more and more evident that the pursuit of literature is a calling and not a means of livelihood. If for his livelihood he had to look outside literature was there any particular reason why he should choose journalism? What special charm does it have? Is there no other means of earning one's livelihood in the world today? Can one not become a schoolmaster, a professor or a lawyer and, if lucky, even rise to be a barrister?

No, not teaching, either in colleges or schools. To put other people's children into cages makes them unhappy. How could he, himself a bird of the wild, keep guard over birds in a cage? If he opened the cage doors and taught them to fly would their guardians spare him? Inevitably he himself would grow tame and become a cage bird once and for all. Songs of the forest would then no longer be sweet upon his lips, nor songs of youth on his pen, nor songs of love on his flute. He might devise ponderous theses, take doctorates, and grow stout, but he would not keep eternally young nor retain his suppleness and skill.

No, not a lawyer nor a barrister. Telling lies by the bushel blurs the distinction between truth and falsehood. Even when he told the truth it would have a false ring. In losing his direct and simple perception of reality he would turn into a realist, and in losing his sense of right and wrong he would turn into a materialist. Materialists alarmed him.

A certain person wanted him to become a soldier. That meant going to Sandhurst in those days. Who would pay his expenses? And even though

doctors are almost as romantic figures as soldiers in the eyes of modern women, Binu's idea of romance was not so effeminate. There remained the life of a worker. Yes, Binu was willing to be a worker. But what was the nature of the work to be done? Was he to mend shoes, read the *Chandi*, or do something in between? In reply he was told that he must be a political worker. But if he became a political worker he would not be able to support a dependent. Such work is not for those burdened with a family. From Tolstoy he had got the idea of farming. His best friend chose agriculture as a career. And Binu might really have become a farmer and his writing might have been replete with life in consequence, even great, but. . . .

The Inner Stream

Within Binu flowed another stream and it drew him steadily toward Europe, just as deep tides pull at the ocean. His journey to America had not materialised; America was replaced in his imagination by Europe. Seeing no other way to get there he now and then thought of competing for the Indian Civil Service. The idea ran counter to two of his fundamental prejudices. One was his distaste for service in general and the other was aversion to governmental service in particular. To enter the Indian Civil Service meant taking a job and a job that was connected with the government. A double disgrace!

Binu was not inclined to expose himself to such mortification. Neither did the certain other person want him to. But the worry of making provision belongs to the person who takes upon himself the responsibility for another's maintenance. Domestic need drove Ratnakar to become a robber. Ratnakar later became the muni, Valmiki. So fierce did the fires of his repentance burn that they consumed entirely the ill-repute of his former profession. It could be the same with Binu. Then why did he hesitate?

His prejudice against service in general was the first to give way, melted by the heat of his anxiety. It had begun to soften sometime earlier and it did not take long for it to dissolve completely. The second prejudice followed. Why not a government job if a job was taken at all? Why should he strain at a gnat after swallowing a camel? But it was the era of Non-cooperation. Binu was influenced by it. To him the acceptance of a governmental job seemed almost a betrayal of his country. He had felt guilty about studying in college also.

If Europe had not held a hidden attraction for Binu it would not have been possible for him to make up his mind. The inner stream which had washed away the self-reproach he felt at going to college promised also to

wash the reproach of taking a government job. The call of Europe tugged at his feet. It whispered consolingly that his bondage would not last long. Remember the life of Valmiki, it said. When he came back from across the seas he too could forswear his means of livelihood.

Binu believed it. His was the age when one believed easily. How little he knew of the ways of the world! Those who knew remarked that people who, like Abhimanyu, enter rashly upon a course of action, cannot retrace their steps. So well-guarded is the fortress! Binu was annoyed. He was opposed to and unmoved by worldly considerations. What walls were high enough to imprison him!

How little he really needed! The other person would one day be self-supporting. She would be able to look after herself. Then?

Livelihood

Life on this earth imposes upon us the necessity of a livelihood. This is as true for men as it is for insects and animals and birds. There is, of course, a class of men who live off the labour of others. They do not have to take thought for the wherewithal to live; their forbears have done the thinking for them. Some acquired their estates by dacoity, others obtained them by assisting the passage of robber barons into the other world and still others have become the *yakshas* of millions by causing famine or selling foodstuffs at seven times their price during periods of scarcity. Others have dedicated property to the gods and set up idols to be worshipped by their descendents with the bribes which have filled their hands with booty. Their descendents do not engage in back-breaking labour to earn their living, but they do work to break the backs of others. Law-suits, complaints, interest and rental, accounts and accounting, keep them so busy that to see them one might think that they too work all their lives for a living.

How much remains of life, apart from one's livelihood? The little there is left over is priceless, not negligible. But Binu was not content with so little. He wanted more, more, more life. More youth. More play. More leisure. More *sadhana*. More pain. More creation. More of the immortalising wine of the gods. In a word livelihood's share of our existence is only a fourth; it is not ninety-nine per cent. To life should be given, not a fraction of the time allotted to us, but three-fourths. He did not want to dispense with livelihood altogether. Indeed there is no way to do so. The law which binds all alike, insects and animals and other living creatures, is the law of the world, the world's interest. Whatever sort of society a man may happen to be born into, he must sacrifice a part of his life for food, clothing and shelter.

Binu had to acknowledge this law. But he was ashamed for it. All men are ashamed. Perhaps all living things are. Our consolation is that nature has made ample provision for us. We suffer and cause suffering because we do not know. A day will come when we shall know. Then life's share will be greater and livelihood's less. Then the law of the world will not seem so hard.

Patterns

Social arrangements have changed from age to age and will change in the future. They should change. Otherwise life would be unendurable for the majority of us. Binu was always on the side of change. He opposed those who were opposed to change.

But Binu kept his gaze riveted on life and not on the shadow that eclipses it, livelihood. If new social arrangements are new only in their newness the novelty soon wears off. New arrangements are wanted, arrangements that are at the same time good arrangements. Binu thought a great deal about social patterns.

The degree of good in any particular pattern is assessed by the yardstick of life. Binu was in fundamental disagreement with those who claim that the yardstick must be livelihood. Yet he realised that livelihood does take up a large part of our existence. A large part of the surface of the moon is covered by an eclipse. Does that mean that the shadow should be worshipped instead of the luminary? The manner and means of livelihood require to be changed. Very well, will livelihood's share be less? Will life be allotted a larger portion of our time? The share of livelihood may be cut down but unless the esteem in which it is held diminishes proportionately, that by itself will avail nothing. Shall men continue to be known as peasants or industrial workers? To call a man a peasant or a worker is appropriate if he works sixteen hours a day and lives eight. When he works four hours and lives the remainder should his livelihood continue to label him? If it does the shadow succeeds in obliterating the moon.

There is one thing more. The time given to livelihood is itself not separate from life. The span of time allowed to us includes it. Even while we are working for our bread we should be able to feel that we are living happily. If we cannot, we miss the taste of life in its entirety. Its wholeness is destroyed by splitting it into two parts, no matter how small the part given to livelihood may be. Binu felt the force of this truth deep in his heart. Until livelihood is made a part of living, the life of men will not be whole.

Religion

Livelihood can be restored to life through religion. Religious faith consecrates livelihood. Without it men's hearts die for want of life in its entirety. Such a death is hell. So religion has appeared again and again in the history of the human race and is still appearing. During the last century Socialism found a religious acceptance in the lives of a great many people. Its sacred books supplanted the traditional scriptures.

Nationalism is also a brand of religion, particularly in a country that is fighting for its independence or striving to retain its independence. Hundreds and thousands of men would not take part in wars for its sake if this were not so; they would rebel. Even in Russia nationalism is still a strong force. Those who are socialists are nationalists as well. How men can believe in several religions at one and the same time is one of the unfathomable mysteries of human nature. I have seen a parallel synthesis between the worship of Siva and the worship of Vishnu in this country. I have also been told that she who is Shyama is Shyam. The sword and the flute are one. As a race we believe in synthesis. A day will certainly come when I shall be told that Krishna and Christ are one and the same, also the Bible and the Vedas.

In his heart Binu was neither a nationalist nor a socialist. He disagreed with partisans. But he too had his religious problems and still has. The function of religion is to give completeness to life. By a complete life are we to understand only the life of this world? Is there no life after death? If there is, only religion can hold the whole together. Religion binds the individual securely to this whole, to the All, the sumtotal of things, in a bondage, not of interest or convenience, but of undivided life, a bondage therefore not contrary to the laws of God. It closes the circle and each of us is made a part of it.

Call it religion or call it love, its essence is a sense of unity, a feeling of affinity between man and man, between the human and the plant and animal worlds, between the animate and the inanimate, between matter and force, force and being. Who knows where the chain ends! It is merely a phrase, this end; and the beginning is also nothing more than a figure of speech. There is no beginning and no end. Binu knew.

To Write Or To Live

Would this question ever have arisen if Binu had made writing his livelihood? It is difficult to say. But by choosing another means of livelihood

Binu got himself into trouble. If, after giving the largest share of his life to his livelihood, he gave the rest to writing, when would he live? If he gave it to life when would he write?

Whether to write or to live is a dilemma he has not yet solved. A page or two is no sooner written than he grows apprehensive. He has forgotten to live! He has not lived enough! On the other hand he felt unhappy if he could not write for a couple of days. By comparison with what he wanted to write what he had actually written seemed so little, so unsubstantial! How long would so little last! He had not been able to write!

At such a moment Binu felt that his life had been wasted and his pen grown impotent. He would wonder if, after all, he still had time to write. If he could live rightly he could write rightly. Living comes first.

But how was he to manage? Livelihood and life are inseparable. Religion does not help. What is the use of living without tasting life as a whole? Is such living right living? Will what comes out of it be right living?

Livelihood cannot be eliminated. It would have made very little difference if he had chosen some other means to obtain it. The only solution was to make writing his livelihood. Binu had thought of that many times. But Binu had never wanted to write as much as he would have to write if he had to earn his living. Most of what he wrote would be written unwilling. What is written unwilling is seldom good. If one spoils his touch by writing trash, good writing soon becomes impossible. It is nature's revenge.

So whatever you do for a livelihood, don't write, don't write, don't write! Binu felt it to be so despite the fact that our esteemed painter, Jamini Roy, says that art, in order to be good, must be the source of the artist's livelihood.

Translated from the Bengali by LILA RAY.

I, A STRANGER

He feared; so, alone we fear. He created Another, he feared; so we fear company.

I, a stranger wandering in this human jungle,
I speak face to face, but unshakable walls stand before my eyes.
An alien traveller, due to the primally ordained blunder
I've come to this Hall; a refugee, I cannot follow their language.

Into Nature's boudoir I, a barbarous stranger—
The barbarian does not know and offends at every step
And at each wrong step reptiles hiss up their heads.
Fear flung over earth and water shakes me without rest.

It has been always like this, the days ever unfulfilled
And nights without peace—my Trishanku heart ever hanging in mid-air.

BISHNU DEY

Translated by the author from his Bengali.

DROUGHT

This is the time of the rains
Past the time, but they have not yet come;
And old men gaze towards the west
With tired eyes shaded under hands
Gnarled with toil, and sadly shake their heads.
Children play naked in the dust
And women wait their patient turns
To draw a meagre draught from drying wells;
Whilst men still drive the hopeful plough
Through stricken fields; and cattle
Slowly wander through the streets
Like withered bovine ghosts
Gaunt, beribbed and sad
With eyes whose mute inquiry
Men cannot satisfy. But in the City halls
Speeches bravely flow with shrill eloquence
Promising this and that and more.
False pledges, as empty as the bellies
Of the old men in the villages
Gazing westward, and praying for rain.

C. L. PROUDFOOT

WHY?

This does not involve the fate of nations,
 Nor answer the daily headlined cry
 For food, justice, freedom. Wars and coronations
 Were not the work of Valmiki or Sappho. But then, why?

Is it rage and lust engaged in thwarted crime?
 Vanity's vengeance wreaked in fancy dress?
 Or a mere pretext to cheat whiplanded Time?
 ... Say, why! The question grows in pressingness.

None replies. Least, the poet's tongue.
 Bound to a shy, bewildered reticence,
 He has never questioned his obedience,

But, while the forward bells were being robustly rung,
 Consumed his tallow in an ancient flame
 That lighted him alone, without cause or name.

BUDDHADEVA BOSE

Adapted by the author from his Bengali

LISTEN....

The flesh sizzles in silence,
 The last bone burns away into cold
 amorphous ashes,
 And one by one, dreams march out
 of this tottering globe.

Sitting alone on the broken
 pavements of my heart
 I cough my sorrow out
 In slimy globules of phlegm,
 And spit at my own face
 For I know not whom to blame.

S. BALU RAO

KANYA-KUMARI

Like any school-girl
 With chintz blouse and red petticoat
 Her darkling brows gathered
 On the bright red spot
 With pigtail dangling on the straight back
 She stands at land's end where three seas meet
 Waiting, waiting, waiting.

Marco Polo avers
 And Indian legend tells again and again
 The tale of a bloodred nose-ring
 Or may be it was a diamond of flaming coal
 Which flashed across the wild waves
 And saved sea-mad mariners
 From shipwreck on splintering rocks.

She the maiden
 Stands unconscious
 Of the mariners and the men and the women
 Who offer her worship.
 She recognises none of the maidens
 Who come to her devoutly desiring
 Devoted Indian husbands.

If the mariners are saved
 Or the maidens married
 It is none of her doing.
 She disdains all human purpose
 To save or to marry or to drown.
 Her stone-heart is not troubled
 By such simple sanctifications.

Herself a miracle
 Her concerns are unending
 Black with age and oil and worship.
 Another Sakunthala having lost her ring in the waters
 She is perhaps waiting to be recognised
 By her Lord, a God not dead,
 A being not stone.

Dim with the dimming smoke
 Of ghee and incense and varied adulterations
 Afire with desires which only stone

Can generate she disclaims
 All miracles and would perhaps wish
 To companion a live Lord
 Behind closed doors.

She dreams perchance of
 Uncharted seas waiting
 For Marco Polos yet unborn.
 She desires perhaps to meet
 Maidens who do not desire
 Worthy husbands. Dreams she perhaps
 Of a sealess land with no rivers?

She waits perchance hardly
 Knowing what she should wait for.
 She waits perhaps for the three seas to dry
 And for her to let the flood in
 Or fan the orange flame
 Which will flower from the waters in time.
 She waits. She waits. She waits.

The seas are a miracle of dryness.
 The murmur of waves never-ending
 Is a miracle of silence.
 She stands as a miracle of impatience
 Secret in her soul. How can she,
 Having seen so many miracles
 How can she be so silent?

Mornings and evenings are flames
 Quenched in the waters
 Of day and night. Humble
 Her dwelling beyond the pale of time
 On the sands of the sea.
 A darkling smile and a lost nose-ring
 Are her only visibilities.

"ANDAL"

CINEMA

PROBLEMS OF IDENTIFICATION AND THE ART OF SATYAJIT RAY

by ASHIS BARMAN

TO state merely that *Pathar Panchali* took Indian cinema by surprise would be more than an understatement, which even an exasperating sense of form, probably, does not demand.

The consequences of the arrival of *Pathar Panchali* on our cinema scene were, metaphorically, similar to a storm. For the first few days there was hushed silence among our movie-kings; a sort of nodding at each other went on coupled with exchange of opinions. The ferment had however started stirring elsewhere, to begin with. The critics, even before they had time to write their reviews, were flushed and brimming with amazed enthusiasm; on the other hand, the public, who went initially to see the film not in a rush, but half playfully and half in deference to the novel it was adapted from, streamed out of the cinema house, in their turn, dazed.

Fortunately, of course, their overwhelmed senses soon began to come up to the surface and the fire got caught, so to say. There was excitement everywhere, in families, among friends, in close circles, clubs, schools, colleges, restaurants—wherever people thronged and talked. In course of time, very short time indeed, the undercurrents of ferment grew into a decisive clamour, hailing the achievement. And perhaps for the first time in the history of

Indian Cinema, the ordinary film fans and the intelligentsia as a whole concurred; the intelligentsia, even the section which, understandably, hitherto was not interested in cinema as a medium came forward with their animated appreciation for the art form and for the makers of *Pathar Panchali*. Cinema, in India too, thus was accepted as an art medium, thanks mainly to Satyajit Ray.

But what were the factors behind the extraordinary success, both artistic and box-office, of *Pathar Panchali*? Surely it was a picture that could only be measured by world standards, and not by our own woe-ful examples, and surely it deserved its success too. The point at issue is, however, elsewhere, in the poser how our film fans in general, used to years of inanity in films could overnight become mature film appreciators and thus pay their tribute to a fine piece of artwork?

Well, to my mind at any rate, the puzzle is simple. Our film fans, save a very few, were actually unable—and no wonder at that in the given state of our cinema—to consciously feel or discern the intrinsic difference of approach of Satyajit Ray towards his medium, as also his contribution to Indian film making, but were nevertheless moved by the film's impact.

Now, what were the sources of the impact? Decidedly the sources were quite a

few, working simultaneously, in a fused harmony as a whole.

To start with, one has to bear in mind the exceptional screenplay, which sharpened and gave focus and pattern to the rambling, formless, though delicately nostalgic novel. The screenplay lost thereby, of course, a part of the nostalgic and wistful quality of the original work but gained, conversely, compactness and an overpowering sense of tragedy.

What Satyajit Ray's creative faculty gained at the paperwork stage was further heightened during the actual shooting.

But how? And herein comes the question of the director's ability or otherwise to visualise the cinema as a whole, as a medium composed of different but interconnected components, such as, story, dialogue, acting, photography, music, incidental sounds, sets and the background in general. Satyajit Ray's artistic success is derived precisely out of the remarkable fusion of all these filmic components, which in its turn, made, in the case of *Pather Panchali*, the poverty-stricken simple tale of a family and its slow, subsequent disintegration almost unbearably poignant.

The sequel to *Pather Panchali*, namely, *Aparajita*, however, left the general run of the spectators, along with, significantly, the professional critics, rather cold. There was appreciation for *Aparajita* too, of course, but not the animated glow that springs from the moved soul. This slumped enthusiasm was genuine no doubt, but that only went to prove that we are not, as yet—due mainly to our dismal cinematic productions—discerning cinema goers; that our awareness of the medium's expressive subtleties and depth, even in the case of otherwise sensitive minds, is inadequate. For of course, Satyajit Ray gained in *Aparajita* as well, just as he had had before that in *Pather Panchali*, remarkable harmony of all the filmic components and thereby poetic

rhythm. As a matter of fact, the treatment of a number of sequences of *Aparajita*, to me in any case, appeared far more intricate, sure and interesting than the sequences of *Pather Panchali*.

For instance, the sequences where young Apu and his mother were physically near each other—not Apu's Calcutta period—with their partly alienated souls and the consequent uneasy awkwardness. They had, as far as their awareness went, an incomprehensible feeling of clumsy alienation—springing, as we know but perhaps they did not altogether, from Sarbajaya's inability to divine and hence sympathise with her son's new, growing aspirations and outlook on life. An outlook which resulted, primarily, out of Apu's fresh contacts with the city, with our urbanity, however distorted and unfinished it may be in the European sense of the word. It was, basically, a problem of the impact of our half provincial, muddled urbanity on a very sensitive Indian village-boy's sense of values, furthered by the very fact of the boy's imperceptible growth to manhood.

Besides these scenes almost the whole of the Banaras period portrayed, from the point of view of formal attitude, through the curious, dreamy, playful eyes of the child Apu, in startling economy of filmic language, with a dream-like flow of moods and images (moods and images which nearly all through this period underlined the theme) . . . distinguish *Aparajita* as an unique creation.

Not that there were no weak spots in *Aparajita*. The Calcutta phase of young Apu, to my mind, was the most disappointing void in the whole film. Whereas this phase of Apu's life, in organic relation to the theme, was frightfully important, since at this stage precisely the unformed, vague, though exciting glimmerings of Apu's early school period's aspirations started to take a definite shape and focus. The alienation

between the mother and son also, in consequence, became acute from this phase onward. But unfortunately, the treatment of this turning point of Apu's life came out to be scrappy and schematic, without the deep feeling, sense of significant, related detail and the imagination evident otherwise in *Aparajita*.

Thus in contrast to *Pather Panchali*, the sequel was uneven, considered as a whole. There were some tainted spots, so to say; spots that appeared glaring simply because the rest of the picture sparkled, cinematically, as a supremely conceived and delicately done film.

But these few weak sequences were not the cause, not the main cause surely, for the comparatively reserved reception that *Aparajita* got both from the film fans and professional critics. Actually, the primary factor, among others, for this reservation was the fact that the spectators and critics alike were not overwhelmed, as in *Pather Panchali*, by an intense sense of tragedy in *Aparajita*. They failed to feel the same sort of identification with the film's characters as they did and could feel in relation to the characters of *Pather Panchali*. Because the sense of identification with a given film's characters, not to speak of novels and plays, grows slowly, through the typical process of life, through the social mode of existence and psychology, through the understandable problems of beings in plausible situations—portrayed with imagination and deep feeling—and not on the basis of a foreign problem without deep roots in the soil; or, on the other hand, individual eccentricities.

Aparajita decidedly, did not pose any perverse or eccentric problem, but, to my mind, dealt with a sort of tragedy which is not yet rooted in, or widely generated by, our social circumstances. Since the tragedy in *Aparajita* was, basically, a tragedy in the realm of the sense of values, in the attempt

of Apu to be an individual, a 'man' in the post renaissance European connotation of the word, and the consequent chasm between the mother and son. Sarbajaya, with her old-world values, rooted in our survived feudal sense of man, could never fathom her son's attempt to be an individualised man, a person in his own right, giving up ancestral vocation and village. In short, the focus of the poignant tragedy of *Aparajita* was in this unwanted, painful, though inevitable alienation of the two deeply attached persons; and thus the tragedy was, essentially, in the realm of values.

But this realm of values, an outgrowth of the mercantile spirit of adventure and the subsequent bourgeois civilisation, is not a vibrating, all-embracing, keen social issue even in today's India. We are yet rooted, bereft of the mercantile adventure and bourgeois civilisation, in the joint family matrix, socially speaking, with its attendant psychological implications and sense of values. Owing to this frame of our existence, this pattern, we generally do not have the deep seated Western attitude, developed in course of a few centuries, towards individual growth of man; our sense of the individual being a part of the whole frame. Apu's fervent urge and striving towards an individualised personality, therefore, seemed partly strained and perhaps even a little egotistically cruel to most of our film fans as well as critics. They could not get identified, emotionally, with Apu's fervour; since his individualised attempt at manhood had, and in fact have, no fundamental urgency, immediately in the frame of their own mode of existence. Not that quite a large number of people did not intellectually comprehend the problem; they did, but they were not vitally touched.

The director's failure to make Apu's Calcutta phase more convincing, of course, had some influence on the audience reaction. If Satyajit Ray could have balanced

these few scenes with the design and flow of the whole film, *Aparajita* certainly would have turned out into a still more exquisite picture. Even so, I for one, do not feel that the reception would have been, as a whole, exciting. For the fundamental problem of identification would have nevertheless remained an obstacle. Besides, significantly, save a very few, our professional critics also missed the film's achieved stature as well.

Pather Panchali, on the other hand, was universally hailed. People were so moved with its tragic impact, its pictorial lyricism and unexpected freshness, that they could and did take to it without much discerning attitude towards film form. It was a case of almost an immediate identification with the mode of existence and characters of the film, without being able to judge, to appreciate what was precisely the difference between genuine film form and the rest of our attempted movies. Since the fundamental tragedy in *Pather Panchali* was not in the realm of values, in the complex and rather individualised problems of human relationship (in our context), but, on the contrary, devolved round the primary question of struggle for existence in its varied facades, and the final disintegration of a family—the problems and vicissitude of the given family became universal and its tragedy almost personal for the spectators.

Besides evoking this sense of tragedy, *Pather Panchali* had another advantage over *Aparajita* from the point of view of popular appeal, namely, its pictorial quality. The general background of *Pather Panchali*, in harmony with the content, was far more picturesque. Ray, with his sense

of cinema and perspective made this background picturesqueness enchanting, fusing the enchantment, in turn, with the organic structure of the content and thus elevated the pictorial element to humanised, emotionalised nature. Nature which turned out to be far more absorbing and lyrical, being related with the theme, than it is in life. The pictorial lyricism gained thereby had an engrossing spell over the spectators.

Aparajita, however, did not have the same sort of lyrical picturesqueness. Since to Ray, as to all great film directors, the pictorial background does not have any attraction by itself, unrelated to the theme and moods. And *Aparajita*, having a different background and psychological processes was much less directly pictorial, lyrical. *Aparajita's* rhythm and lyricism sprang mainly out of the related selections, both psychological and thematic, of shots; their formal juxtaposition. Hence, even the critically lauded pictorial phase of the film, namely, Banaras sequences, were only pictorial in their implications, moods and cinematic relatedness with each other; and not, essentially, in their direct picturesqueness, as is, for instance, an exquisite landscape.

But lyricism of a film, when basically derived, through the use of cinematic language without any widely valid, emotionalised issue as in *Aparajita*—is apt to be missed, to a considerable degree, by the uninitiated film fans. Hence, the appeal of the film is also decreased, and to my mind, *Aparajita* had to reckon with this fundamental obstacle in India, though the highly critical Venice Film Festival prized it with its top award.

BOOK REVIEWS

The State of our Civilization

DECLARATION is an important book in many ways. For the past two or three years we have been hearing a lot of talk about a few 'Angry Young Men' in England, who are attempting a sort of reassessment, and (supposedly) introducing a revolution, in the field of creative writing. They succeeded in provoking an unparalleled controversy amongst the intelligentsia; and they themselves have made the maximum profit possible (social, professional, material) out of this rush to laud them. These young men come from different fields and advocate different ideologies. But there is one thing common to them: they have all remained equally incomprehensible to the average reader. It is good now to see in print what they think they stand for.

On reading their confessions, one discovers with a shock that they practically stand for nothing. There are eight contributors to this volume: Doris Lessing, Colin Wilson, John Osborne, John Wain, Kenneth Tynan, Bill Hopkins, Lindsay Anderson and Stuart Holroyd. Excepting Kingsley Amis, they are practically all there. Most of these writers are in their late twenties or early thirties. They came into prominence after the Second World War. Their published work is a reaction against the apathy and pessimism of the post-war period, and is characterised by impatience at the lassitude which has crept into practically every sphere of life.

In *Declaration* they express their views on 'the state of our civilisation' and their

'role in society'. It appears rather presumptuous on their part — none of whom has a consistent creative record to his credit — to have taken upon themselves such an ambitious task, which even much elderly and experienced authors would have shirked. For, after all, creative writers (what each one of them professes and hopes to be) — novelists, dramatists, poets — are never known to hypothesize in the abstract on 'the state of our civilisation'. The smugness with which these contributors sat down to this task is indicative of the self-centred individualism for which they have been, by now, often reproached. The regret is that with all this loud, rather 'angry' talk, they have so little to offer in the form of suggestions for improvement.

It is true that they make some very shrewd observations. As Sir Herbert Read said in a letter to *The Times Literary Supplement* sometime back, these writers are serious persons, motivated by some 'faith' rather than misplaced enthusiasm. This is observable in all the essays continued in this volume. The book abounds in sleek, trim classifications of the ills of mankind. To summarise their diagnoses (borrowing their technique of numbering everything): (a) we are living in an age of disillusionment; (b) we have lost faith in 1. God, 2. Religion, and 3. the State; and lastly (c) we need a new religion, a rejuvenating force to keep humanity on its legs.

There is nothing remarkably new or revealing about this. None of us would be stupid enough to presume that we are passing through one of the great periods of civilisation. But this disillusionment is not

the last night's wonder. It started way back, after the First World War, when everything the West stood for was knocked to pieces by the brutality let loose by the Western powers. Authors like T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood have effectively registered this dehumanising process in their works. The Hydrogen Bomb and the tense international situation have only added to its gravity.

The major point which these young writers — particularly Doris Lessing and John Wain — make is that only human values, or what John Osborne in his essay refers to as 'symbols to live by', have changed and altered (for the worse); on top of it man has ceased to take any notice of this degradation. He has become petty, 'the small personal voice' in him is dead. Thus a vacuum is created in the emotional and intellectual life of society. The gravest danger at such a time is that men might substitute tin gods for the real ones; any clever trickster could fool them to follow him to the limits of absurdity. That is what precisely happened during and after the Second World War. As John Wain puts it in his piece entitled *Along the Tight-rope*: 'The war made genuinely constructive thought impossible, and at the same time created a demand for an acceptable substitute; as a result the forties were the heyday of charlatanism'. And he continues, "we are still plagued by some of the reputations that were made in those slap-happy days."

It is here, these authors feel, that the creative artist can come to the rescue of humanity. It is he alone who can demand, and through his work inculcate, a spirit of discrimination, a sense of awareness, a yardstick of criticism by which men should live and measure each other. We need a new religion, and the Messiah is not going to be some wandering, half-nude freak but the man of letters, the creative artist. Like

the ancient prophets he may have to encounter hostility, serious hostility, but he must go on boldly. To quote extensively from John Wain again:

"The present phase of history finds Western mankind in the position of an inexperienced tight rope walker, who has launched himself with a slithering rush, and now finds himself halted, with a sea of upturned faces below him, and the second half of his journey to go. *That* is why we cannot afford charlatanism; it is also why the young must continue to ignore their elders who jeer at them for being cautious, for dealing in half-measures, for not having 'passion' or being, 'committed'. Some of my generation have fallen for this claptrap and taken in their turn to advocating a blind rush along the rest of the tightrope. I believe we must have the nerve to go on step by step; and that means having the courage to say No to our fools, however influential and important they may be."

All this is extremely good theorising. But their cry of *jahad*, their pretentious, apocryphal utterances (which in the case of John Osborne border sharply on the abusive and vulgar), are completely foreign to the sober, refined attitude men of letters have displayed towards similar problems in the past. Our forefathers might not have lived under the shadow of nuclear weapons. But they certainly had to face situations which to them, in their times, must have looked equally grave. And, sure enough, they easily found, if not always excellent, at least workable solutions to them, and at the same time were able to pass on to us a rich heritage of classics saturated with profound wisdom. After all, this is not the first time in the three thousand-year-old Western culture that men with strange visions have suddenly taken birth (and all together!). Dickens and

Shaw are two good examples of how almost a complete revaluation in human values could be effected through good sense and good prose.

Moreover, it is doubtful if the chief pre-occupation of men of letters should not be with creative work rather than with bleak, abstract manifestos. Stuart Holroyd, in his contribution, aptly remarks that "the problem of consciousness and freedom are, of course, problems of philosophy". But in the next line he goes on to assert that no philosopher since Descartes had understood the practical problems of life (hence Stuart Holroyd must come forward to enlighten this miserable world). These are very bland generalisations. In fact, the major defect of this book is that it savours of immaturish, unbridled confidence. The authors included — who are all able, sharp-witted persons, apparently with wide reading and sound academic knowledge — would be doing a great disservice to literature if they were to go on frittering away their energy in producing amateurish essays on sociology and philosophy. A creative author could be usefully effective through his literary works alone. Tolstoy and D. H. Lawrence (to quote only two) who took to theorising about life failed miserably in their philosophical writings, and came 'alive' only in their great novels. The creative output of these young writers — excluding Doris Lessing — is lamentably poor. They have yet to produce a work which might hold the imagination of a few thousand readers for some years to come. It would be useful, therefore, if they were to withdraw themselves from public philosophical pronouncements henceforth and concentrate on their professed ambition to produce literary masterpieces.

In the present form, their 'declarations' have little constructive suggestions to offer. They revel in self-praise and the

journalistic trick of producing sticky phrases. Though they have often protested against the tendency to group them under a common label (like Angry Young Men, for instance), they take an immense delight in promoting new slogans and labels of their own. We have heard of Clin Wilson's *Outsider*; and now that he is tired of it, he goes about advocating 'Beyond the Outsider'. Most of the other essays included in *Declaration* have similar catchy election-campaign-like captions: 'They call it Creicket', 'Along the tight-rope', 'Ways without a precedent', 'Get out and push!', and the like. The authors look almost like a band of politicians turned crusaders. They only need a Dr. Frank Buchman to launch them on an international air-travelling publicity unit. C. L. NAHAL

FACE TO FACE by Ved Mehta. (Collins 1958, 16s.)

I HAVE read this book, the autobiography of a young Punjabi boy blind from childhood, with the greatest interest and sympathy. Throughout the book one is aware of a sensitive and courageous young person, unassuming and yet full of charm and humour, adopting a sane and practical approach to the problems confronting him. I felt like saying "What a normal attitude!" before I realised that unfortunately today such a tolerant acceptance of the limitations of human and social relationships is a rare thing. One wishes that it were not so unusual. At the same time, perhaps one can hope that it is a reflection of the attitude of many young Indians today, and therefore carries a hope for the future.

The book falls into three parts, *India and Home*, *Pakistan & Transition*, and *America & Liberations*, and each one has passages of compelling interest. It is written in a simple and clear style, though the printers must be blamed for several

misprints. Ved Mehta is one of a closely-knit family group; mother and father, four sisters and two brothers as well as all the ramifications of a typical Indian family. He speaks of his childhood with affection and yet with detachment. Apart from the amazement of the reader at the thought of the blind boy learning how to ride a bicycle, finding his way along the crowded Lahore streets and even jumping from roof to roof whilst flying kites, he is drawn to the descriptions of the family. The author gently depicts the struggle between his father — a doctor, travelled and trained in the West and his mother, whose kindly village background led her to rely on pandits and hakims and blame herself for the child's misfortune. Then there are the sisters, — each one's personality revealed through their conversations on a variety of subjects ranging from Gandhi and politics to love and marriage; the conservative elders of the family and their failure to assess the nature of the situation in 1947; his eccentric music teacher who laid the foundations for his appreciation of classical Indian music, and a charming account of the mingled grave and gay of a Hindu wedding.

The second part is naturally more serious and more poignant — the involved observer of the fatal months which divided the country in 1947 is this time a young boy living in the heart of Lahore. But here again one is grateful that there are no hysterics and hasty recriminations; and it is worthwhile to recollect how courageously Punjabi families created their lives anew the other side of the border.

So far, I have not referred to the main thread which runs throughout the story and that thread is the boy's determination to have a 'good' education and his father's vow that he should provide it whatever the cost. At first this ambition was pitched unrealistically high so that it led the family

to neglect what could have been done at home to give the child an educational foundation. India's special schools for the handicapped in proportion to the great need are lamentably few, and those which exist naturally tend to concentrate on teaching a craft rather than on providing a liberal education. Ved learnt all he could — the hard way — in the Dadar School, the Emerson Institute and St. Dunstan's Homes for the Blind in Dehra Dun; but it was very little and months of frustration followed while he tried to obtain admission in a Blind School in the United States. Eventually the Arkansas School (yes, at Little Rock) accepted him and he made the long journey alone to a new life. He speaks warmly of the generosity of America, not blaming his own country, however, for being unable to find a hole for one little square peg when there were so many greater problems to think about.

As he says, "I could not help feeling that the most precious thing I had acquired from the Arkansas was mobility". Ignorant of the degree of adjustment possible by the blind I am most impressed by the way in which nearly every kind of routine act can be independently and confidently carried out. Ved crosses crowded streets, travels by bus to do a vacation job in an ice-cream factory, eats in a cafeteria, does his own shopping and enjoys a swim at a Boys' Club.

Finishing as one of the best students of the Arkansas School he again managed, through the kindness of American patrons, to enter Pomona College in California. By this time it was clear that he was cut out for what we call 'higher education' and even though he had, and still has, doubts as to how he will use his training, he persisted at the difficult task of overcoming intellectual and social barriers at the same time, and passed out very well in his

Finals. While growing up and experiencing the pangs of loneliness and the solace of friendship, he earned the confidence of his fellow-students and the respect of his teachers. The book went to press while he was finishing his studies in Balliol, Oxford.

In a review, though much has to be left out, quite a bit can be squeezed in! I have written at some length, however, because I think this is a worthwhile book, a worthwhile person; because it throws into sharp perspective the inadequacies of our institutions for the handicapped and the callous and prejudiced attitude of society towards such of its members; and last but not least, because it reflects a normal and sensible point of view which is welcome after the cant and cowardice of much of the talking and writing about India that we come across these days. L. CHATTERJEE

THE RISE OF THE NOVEL: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding. By Ian Watt. (Chatto and Windus 1957, 25s.)

This is a work of what F. W. Bateson would call literary history. In his attempt to distinguish between the critic and the literary historian (see *A Critical Introduction to English Poetry*) Dr. Bateson was mainly concerned to bring certainty into the study of literature by dividing history, the realm of 'fact', from criticism, the realm of 'opinion'. F. R. Leavis denied this distinction, pointing out that an opinion is involved in the very choice of subjects worth studying. In a subsequent letter to *Scrutiny* Dr. Bateson reiterated his position: 'The historian has simply to present his reader with the evidence upon which he has himself based his conclusion.' His appeal is essentially for discipline, against the irresponsibility of so much that passes for literary criticism. The book under review is a model of enquiry in this sense. It presents just that 'sober evidence-weighing' 'together with 'curiosity, learning, patience and

accuracy' which for Dr. Bateson are the marks of true scholarship.

Professor Watt's literary history contains an equal measure of social history. This is typical of an increasing tendency to draw on the results of investigation in allied fields when assessing literature. The abuse of psychology in this connection is notorious. But Professor Watt uses his sociology entirely for gain, without allowing it to assume more importance than the literature for which it provides the background. His intention is to show how and why the 18th century produced the novel. He proceeds with caution and precision, discerning 'realism' as the distinctive feature of the novel form, then carefully defining this term as 'particularity of description', fidelity to the minutiae of experience, rather than objectivity (the generalised truth of the Augustans). This enables him directly to relate the interest in circumstantial detail for its own sake, so characteristic of the novel from Richardson to Joyce, with the rise of middle class individualism in the 18th century.

The novel took root in opposition to the dominant literary standards of the day. The Augustans had created a hermitic cultivated society, membership of which was restricted to those who by their education and high social standing were able to share the allusions and values of 'this refined age', the age of Dryden, Addison and Pope. But a new reading public was arising, a public of apprentices, chambermaids and leisured wives. The demand for an 'easier' form was quickly met by the new booksellers, whose influence grew as aristocratic patronage declined. The result was Grub Street: where Pope corrected to perfection, Defoe would not revise a page without an additional rate. A more striking instance of social and economic circumstances determining a literary form could scarcely be imagined. Nor can its impor-

tance be exaggerated: Grub Street has persisted, and expanded year by year to this day; Augustan standards died before the century was out. But economic circumstances could not determine, that alongside mediocrity the novel would provide a means of expression for genius.

Professor Watt is sparing of value judgements, though he commits himself to a preference, amply supported, for Richardson. His main concern, however is to relate the novelists to the conditions which produced them. The result is a revealing appraisal of Defoe and Richardson, followed by an under-estimation of Fielding, whose ironic method belongs to the Augustans (he was of genteel birth). It is significant that Professor Watt stresses the degree to which Defoe and Richardson were unironic; (much that a modern reader might attribute to irony in Defoe, is in fact blunt moral unawareness). This comparative assessment to the prejudice of Fielding indicates the inevitability with which an objective method, however 'fair', will come to value judgements which were already implicit in the method of approach chosen.

Broadly speaking, the work of Defoe and Richardson deals with two different aspects of the rise of individualism in the 18th century, under the influence of Protestantism and the beginnings of industrial capitalism. Defoe reflects the lust for economic independents: his *Robinson Crusoe* has long been a symbol of 'economic man' pitting his wits against nature. 'Moll Flanders' is what Mark Schorer, quoted by Professor Watt, called 'Our classic revelation of the mercantile mind'. Richardson on the other hand presents the world of private experience, which suddenly assumed exclusive importance with every soul equal before God, and each to be saved by personal effort. In the 18th century the middle classes finally achieved domestic privacy, symbols for which were the closet,

and of course the letter. The chapters which describe these movements, and relate them to the novels under study are the finest in the book and fascinating reading.

In his treatment of 'Pamela' for instance, Professor Watt traces the development of the idea of courtship from Mediaeval courtly love (itself transferred from a divine to a secular object), through the influence of social morality, to a strictly practical preparation for marriage. He shows how the breakdown of the patriarchal family and its replacement by the conjugal family, made the woman totally dependent on her husband, and how essential it therefore became that she should choose well. He associates the success of Richardson with the precarious position of women in the 18th century, and to the increasing number of women readers. He points out that 'Pamela' itself established a social pattern (for courtship and marriage), and emphasises the close dependence of its attitudes on current ways of feeling: the influence of Puritanism is revealed in the fascination for marriage detail combined with a horror of sexual advance before marriage. The basic materialism of 18th century society, behind its facade of Christian virtue, is acutely laid bare: the aims of *Moll* and *Pamela* are fundamentally the same—prosperity and gentility. This analytic and comparative method is extended over a wide variety of aspects. The novels are shrewdly and meticulously set in their age. Our appreciation can only benefit.

But with Fielding the method partially breaks down. An ironic writer does not express the conventional features of his age—precisely because he is in opposition to their conventional expression. In fact Fielding belongs to a different tradition passing through Restoration comedy and his own farces, closer to Swift and Pope than to Richardson, whom he parodied. Unable to

relate Fielding at all convincingly to his theme, except as a reaction against it, Professor Watt is led to give undue importance to Fielding's epic theory of the novel, which, far from determining the form, was adduced afterwards as a justification of it. Fielding, 'the last full embodiment of the Augustan spirit in life and literature', felt the need, which we no longer share, to make 'Joseph Andrews' fit a genre; so he proclaimed the prose epic. This, as a fact of documentation for the period, is interesting enough, but it is surely futile and irrelevant to try to assess how far Fielding is faithful to his new genre. Futile, because, as Professor Watt points out, when you eliminate the poetry, "it is surely impossible to consider any narrative whatever which does not in some way contain 'fable, action, characters, sentiments and diction'" (Aristotle's requisites). Irrelevant, because the issue is dead, of no vital bearing on the value of Fielding's work, nor on our appreciation of it. The use of mock heroic as a device of burlesque is fully understandable without being restricted to a particular genre: must Swift's *Battle of the Books* also be a prose epic? Professor Watt's admirable scholarship has here been side-tracked.

Nevertheless, he is fully alive to Fielding's qualities and pays them adequate tribute in his treatment of 'Tom Jones'. Even here, however, a protracted comparison with 'Clarissa' makes Fielding seem shallow, but in a wider context his rough wide sympathies may be preferable to Richardson's narrow sentiment.

Literature cannot be explained entirely in terms of 'race', 'moment' and 'milieu'—to borrow the formulae of Hippolyte Taine, that arch-determinist who set the pattern for so much French criticism. Clearly Professor Watt does not subscribe to such extremes: he is content to seek certain conditioning factors. But the problem of

literary value remains. Professor Watt has 'presented the evidence', but in the last analysis a work will stand or fall on its own integral qualities, which can only be assessed by a quite different method. It must be admitted that this book comes near to such intrinsic assessment in the excellent chapters on 'Moll Flanders' and 'Clarissa', where Defoe and Richardson are treated 'as novelists'.

In conclusion praise must be given to the 'Augustan' ease and assurance with which Professor Watt writes. Twenty years' research are lightly borne. His learning is as unobtrusive as it is wide, enabling him to appear casual and matter-of-fact, even where the most painstaking research has obviously been entailed. His style inspires respect and confidence:

'Svend Ranulf, in his *Moral Indignation and Middle Class Psychology*, has shown, mainly from Commonwealth pamphlets, how the Puritans were much more addicted to outbursts of moral indignation than were the Royalists. One of the strengths of Puritanism, he suggests, lay in its tendency to convert its demand for righteousness into a somewhat uncharitable aggressiveness against the sins of others: and this, of course, carried with it a complimentary tendency for the individual to be mercifully blind to his own faults. Moll Flanders frequently exemplifies this tendency.' (p. 124)

Contrast this studied carefulness with the loose cavalier attitudes of many modern critics, such as Kingsley Amis. The following, from a contemporary book on the modern novel, is typical: 'Firbank's neuter giggle... turns into a snigger in the Rock Pool of Connolly...' Professor Watt brings a serious and generous mind to his subject. It is a pleasure to recommend, somewhat belatedly, a book which is both profitable and a joy to read. DAVID MCCUTCHION

DISCUSSION

THE STATE AND THE INDIVIDUAL

(Extracts from a letter by Prof. H. H. Price, Oxford)

I HAVE enjoyed the book* greatly. It shows that Plato was substantially right when he said that philosophers should be kings (our modern kings are the Higher Civil servants). Indeed perhaps he was more right than he knew, for he could not foresee the truly terrifying power which the State has acquired in our day—which all States have whether they are 'democratic' or totalitarian. I think you yourself underestimate this. In the essay on 'Freedom, Authority and Imagination' pp 63 and 64 you say, 'The State has in the past sought and seeks even today to dominate the private life of its members.' *Even* today! Today more than ever before. And then you say on the next page, 'Such dictation is bound to fail.' Alas! I wish I could believe so. 'Man's thought is his own and not the most dictatorial of States can take it away from him.' (p 64). No, but when it controls all education and all the influences (newspapers, broadcasting etc.) which control public opinion, and all the sources of information, it can ensure, only too effectively, that the majority of men think the thoughts it wishes them to think—and do so moreover quite willingly, because it has been arranged that the very possibility of thinking otherwise shall not even occur to them. No tyrant in earlier times disposed of the means which all civilised modern States have for enslaving the *minds* of their citizens. Once this is done, there is no need to bother much about enslaving their bodies: though of course the modern State's power of physical coercion too, far exceeds the power which former tyrants had. This is of course one of the results of applied science; and the most alarming thing of all is that psychology and sociology are beginning to be applied sciences. We are coming closer and closer to Aldous Huxley's 'Brave New World' or (still worse) to George Orwell's 'Nineteen eighty four.' If 'all power corrupts' (which seems to me not far from the truth, even if over-

stated) what are we to think and what must we fear when the power is so great as this—and likely to grow greater in the future?

Can the machinery of democracy really guard us against dangers like this? If those who are in power can control public opinion—and public *wishes* as well—periodical elections are no safeguard. Economic equality, or the removal of excessive economic inequality, is no safeguard either; rather the contrary, for it itself can only be maintained so long as there is a powerful and efficient machinery of governmental control.

Such being the state of the world (and tending if anything to get worse instead of better) the old idealistic theory that 'Society is an organism' has become a danger to human well-being. People used to say that it would be splendid if human communities could be like bee-hives or ant-hills (which really are more or less like organisms). But now that we actually live in societies which approximate more and more closely to organisms, we can see how pernicious this analogy is. You yourself do say, to my regret, that 'The concept of society as an organism is our basic fact' on page 61. But in the first place, I don't see that this really follows from the contention that 'individual and society are inseparable though distinct elements in one organic fact' (p.60). (If society is only an element in this basic fact, it surely will not follow that society itself is an organism.) And secondly, having said that society is an organism, you proceed to add so many qualifications to this alarming statement that in the end it becomes innocuous! Still, I can't help being rather sorry that you said it at all. The 'basic fact' is surely self-conscious human individuals who are conscious of and interested in one another (and who, in an ideal society, *love* one another). It is also true, of course, that they *need* one another, as the different parts of an organism do. But the parts of an organism are neither self conscious, nor con-

scious of one another, nor capable of loving one another.

I was interested in the use you make of the Psychology of the Unconscious towards the end of this essay. But I am inclined to make the picture rather blacker than you have. It seems to me that the way we live now especially in the highly-industrialised countries of the West, is very productive of 'repressions' and unconscious frustrations—far more so than the mode of life in simpler societies. (Think of the man who spends all his working days in a mass-production factory—or, for that matter, of the life of a clerk or a shop assistant). Partly it is the emotional side of us which is repressed (hence the occasional explosions of violence which you mention) and here Art may be the remedy. But I think there is something more which Freud did not acknowledge, though Jung does. The 'spiritual' side of us is repressed too. Our whole way of life in our conscious and working hours is entirely 'this wordly,' soulless. Whatever one thinks of religion (I confess I think well of it myself!) I do not think men can be happy, or even wholly sane unless religion of some kind plays some part in their conscious life. In this conscious life of the majority now a days, at least in the West, it plays no part at all. I think this cannot go on for ever, and unless a change comes, there will be an explosion and our modern highly industrialised society will destroy itself—either by a third World War or in some other way. 'Man cannot live by bread alone.' At present he is trying hard to do something rather like that (in a large sense of the word 'bread!') but he will not be able to stand it for very long. The spiritual side of his nature, now repressed, will insist on having its due. Prediction is the most dangerous thing in the world, but I venture to bet that the 21st century will be very different from the 20th and the Age of Technology in which we have been living for the last three centuries will be succeeded by an Age of Faith—with an entirely different scale of values from ours. Or at least I venture to bet that this will happen in Western Europe and America. In the East, perhaps, you will have to pass through all the phases of the Age of Technology first. In the 21st century, perhaps *you* will have the materialistic civilisation and *we* will have the 'spiritual one! Stranger things than this

have happened. A Neo Platonist Roman or Greek of the third century A.D. would have been surprised indeed to hear that the Germans would one day be a nation of philosophers.

Extracts from the Reply by
Prof. Humayun Kabir

I WAS very grateful for your last letter in which you had offered some of your own observations on *Science, Democracy and Islam*. One point you had made there was that individual freedom has become even more precarious in the modern world than in old forms of tyranny or dictatorship. In fact, you had raised doubts whether personality can remain inviolate under modern conditions of indoctrination and mass propaganda.

I wanted to write to you immediately after the events in Poland and Hungary in October 1956. These events seem to offer uncontrovertible proof that there is in human beings a spark of individuality which can never be suppressed by State or society. The young boys and girls who took the lead in these national uprisings were in their teens. They knew of no other type of society than the one to which they were born. They had also been subject to the full blast of State propaganda in every sphere of life. They seem to justify a proverb which we have in India that a *prahlad* (devotee) is always born in the family of *daityas* (unbelievers).

Your letter, especially your comments on the changing outlooks in Europe and Asia, were so interesting that many friends who have seen it have suggested that I should publish it. May I have your permission to do so?

* Science, Democracy and Islam and other essays by Humayun Kabir (George, Allen and Unwin)

CORRIGENDUM

In Bishnu Dey's "A Note on Michael Madhusudan Datta", which was published in our last number (and which was a part of the draft of an essay for the Bepin Pal Centenary Volume to be published in November, 1958) the following misprints had crept in:

On page 15 — 'Antonie de Baa' for Antoine de Baif
On page 16 — 'Or think of () for
Or think of R()

CORRESPONDENCE

To The Editor, *Quest*
Sir,

Having gone through the Editorial (*Quest* 17, April-June 1958) and noting its appraisal of 'the value of cultural freedom itself, I find myself in hearty agreement with the editorial statement that 'the cultural tradition of India, though basically religious, has been on the whole unusually tolerant and receptive as compared to most other religious cultures' along with the consequential position that 'the medievalist-authoritarian trend in our culture makes us very susceptible to totalitarian influences.' Parallel to this is the growing menace of the authoritarian tradition or Revivalism in Indian philosophical studies, and the attendant obsession of 'repressed sympathies' (as the psycho-analyst would say) that accounts for much of the hyperbolic and hysterical utterances that have been in evidence during the last two decades in our country.

Here is, incidentally, a lesson for the misguided reverence of the Revivalist for his supposedly own culture-tradition. Reverence as Whitehead has enthroned in the heart of all education, originated from the perception that 'the present contains within itself the sum-total of existence, backwards and forwards.' Neither the traditionalist nor the Nihilist can possibly impart that educational guidance which the believer in reason alone can, provided he has a proper sense of the values of life. It is in this context that we can best appreciate in all its amplitude, the meaning of CULTURE which, according to the New Oxford Dictionary at least, is 'not merely the intellectual side of civilization and refinement produced through training and

education but a spiritual comprehension of a sense of value, manifested through Art, Morals and Religion, outrunning their manifestation in social institutions.' Thus is revealed in the soul of Culture, as I take it, the Promethean spark of an ideal-real element which the age-old Rig-Veda allegorically represents as the elixir (*madhu*) of life, to be attained only through onward movement and forward living (*charaiyeti*, *charaiyeti*)—and as I should like to add—attuned to the marching 'Song of the Open Road' as in Walt Whitman. From Rig-Veda of the old World to Whitman of the New, it is admittedly a far cry, but it is, for aught we know, not a cry in wilderness; and if it be taken as a 'cry', it is typical of the birth-pangs of the 'world's unborn soul'. Such is also the implication of the doctrine of 'Surplus' or 'Overplus' (*uchchishta*) in the Atharva-Veda which has been resurrected and given a new lease of life by Dr. Tagore in the conception of the 'Creative artist in Man'.

Before I close, I must confess in all sincerity that the articles reproduced in this issue at least are admirably in tune with the informing purpose of *Quest*—and if I may add, its Conquest that is evermore about to be. May I enlist myself as a wayfarer on the same path, as one amongst you pledged to the Adventure of Ideas—believing as I do with Whitehead that education in its essence is 'the guidance of the individual towards a comprehension of the art of life', every individual being 'nothing but an embodiment of this adventure'.

Yours etc.

SAROJ KUMAR DAS

(Head of the University Dept. of Philosophy and Member of the Senate and the Academic Council, Bihar University).

Contributors

Ignazio Silone was born in the Italian region of the Abruzzi and most of his fiction is centered in that area. His novels 'Fontamara', 'Bread and Wine', 'The Seed Beneath the Snow', and most recently, 'A Handful of Blackberries' have put him in the front rank of European men of letters. He once played an important role in the international Communist movement, as he has recorded in his essay in 'The God That Failed'. He lives in Rome, and in recent years has been editing one of Italy's leading monthly magazines, *Tempo Presente*.

Ellen Roy has played a leading role by the side of her illustrious husband M. N. Roy in the development of the theory and practice of Radical Humanism. Currently she is co-editor of the weekly organ of the movement; joint author of *In Man's Own Image*.

Amlan Datta teaches Economics at Calcutta University. Author of *For Democracy, An Essay on Soviet Economic Development, Essays on Economic Development, The way to Co-operative Socialism*.

Humayun Kabir, distinguished philosopher, litterateur and statesman, was a contributor to our previous number.

Attar Singh lectures on Punjabi Language and Literature at Mahendra College, Patiala, to its under-graduate as well as post-graduate classes. He has published several research papers on the development of Punjabi Literature.

Pratima Bowes, principal of a Calcutta college, did her doctorate at the University of London. Her thesis on 'The Concept of Morality' is shortly to be published in England.

R. L. Nigam teaches English Literature at D.A.V. College, Dehra Dun. He was a regular contributor to M. N. Roy's *The Humanist Way*.

Annada Sankar Ray, an eminent Bengali litterateur, retired from the Indian Civil Service to devote all his time to the service of literature. His

publications include two epic novels, many collections of short stories, two books of verse, and several volumes of personal essays.

Buddhadeva Bose, Head of the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, poet, novelist, short story writer, critic and essayist—is a major figure in Bengali letters. He has been editing the standard poetry quarterly in Bengali (*Kavita*) for the last twenty years.

Bishnu Dey, the leading Marxist poet of Bengal, was introduced in our previous issue.

"**Andal**" is the pseudonym of Mrs. S. Rajee. She is a well-known short story writer in Tamil, and is now at work on her second novel. A collection of her English poems is to be published shortly.

Major C. L. Proudfoot, poet, cartoonist, humorous essayist and short story writer, is an officer of the Indian Army ("and since this is a land of castes and subcastes you can consider me an Anglo-Indian", he writes). His first collection of poems *Grains of Sand* was published privately in 1952.

S. Balu Rao is Publication Assistant, Sahitya Akademi, Ex-Editor, *Lekhaka* (Bangalore).

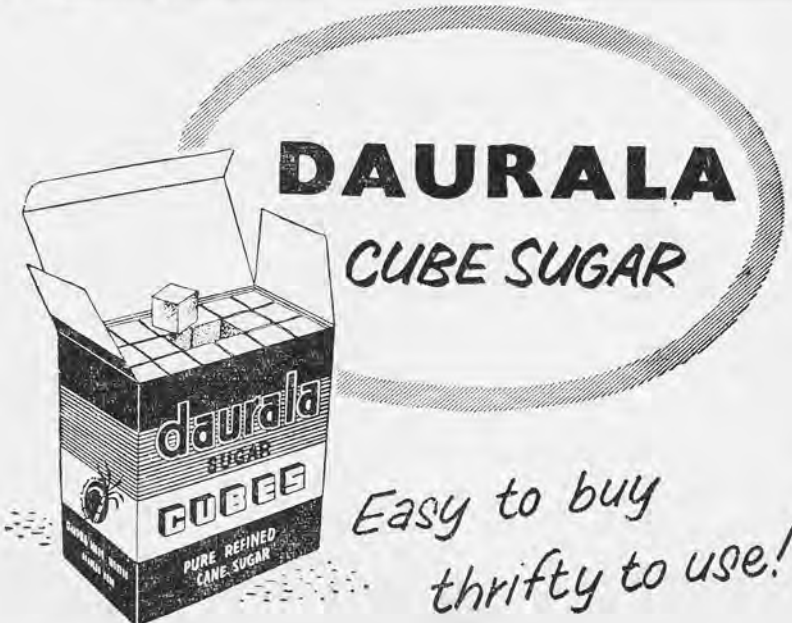
Ashis Barman, film critic and short story writer, has just published his first novel. He was one of the Assistant Directors in the film *Pathar Panchali*.

C. L. Nahal teaches English Literature in a New Delhi College and the University of Delhi.

David McCutcheon graduated with honours in Modern Languages from Cambridge and is at present teaching English Literature at Vishwa Bharati University, Santiniketan.

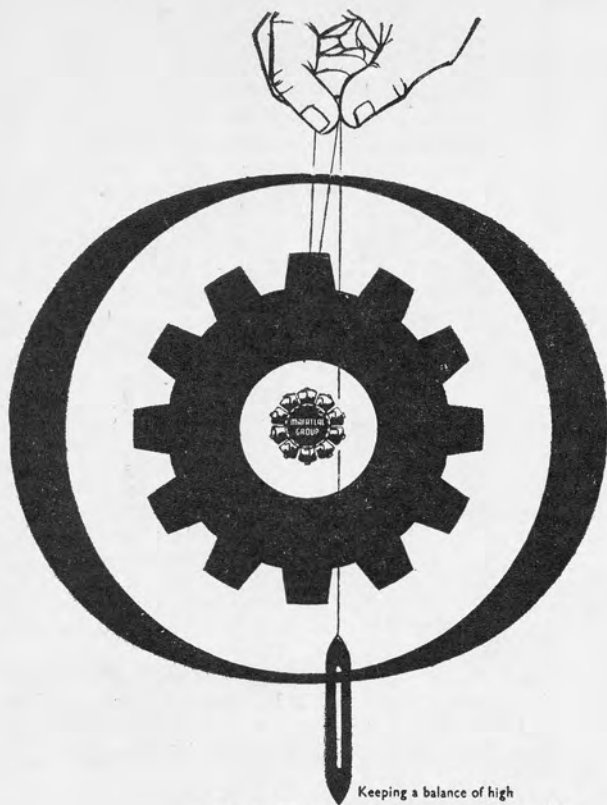
L. Chatterji is Lecturer in English Literature, Loretto College, Calcutta.

H. H. Price, Wykeham Professor of Logic in University of Oxford is one of England's leading philosophers today.



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