

# QUEST

*An  
Adventure  
of  
Ideas*

Editors: Abu Sayeed Ayyub, Amlan Datta

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

***Fearlessness and Civilization***

LEON EMERY

***Gandhi and Marx***

SIBNARAYAN RAY

***Decline of the Indian Intellectuals***

MICHAEL POLANYI

***The Impact of Science***

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***State Patronage of Artists***

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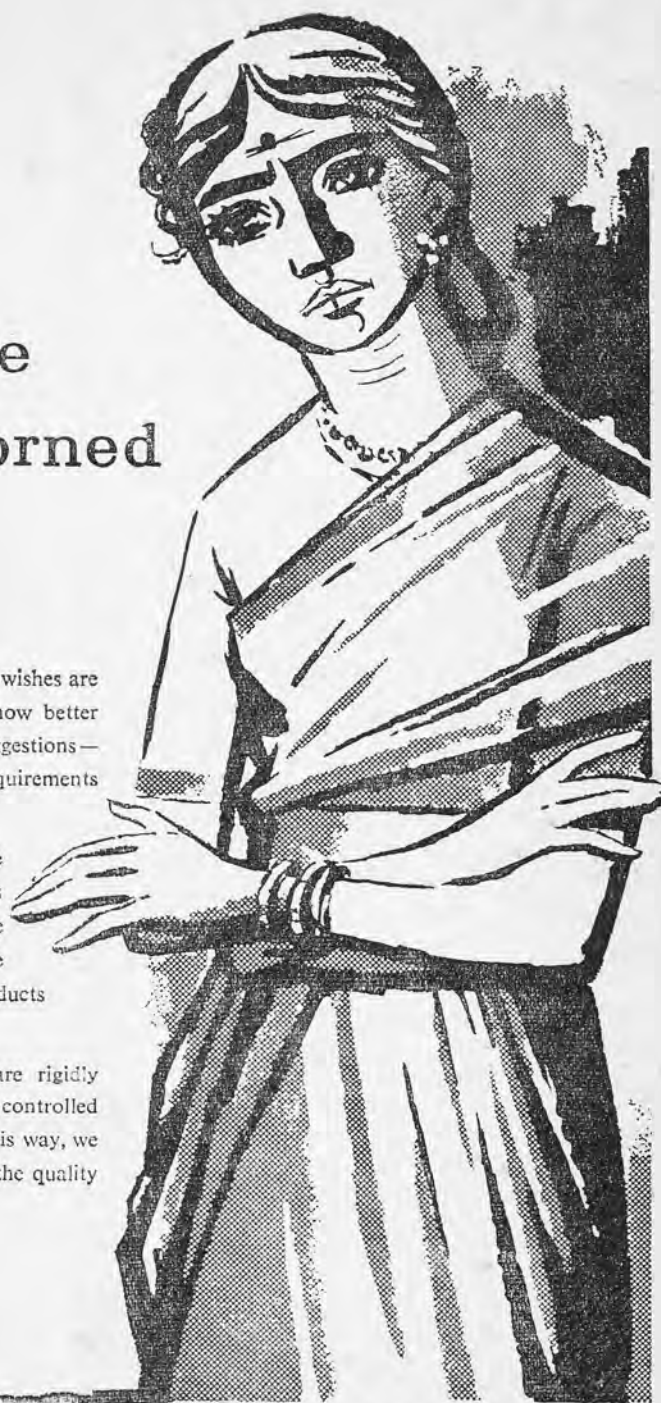
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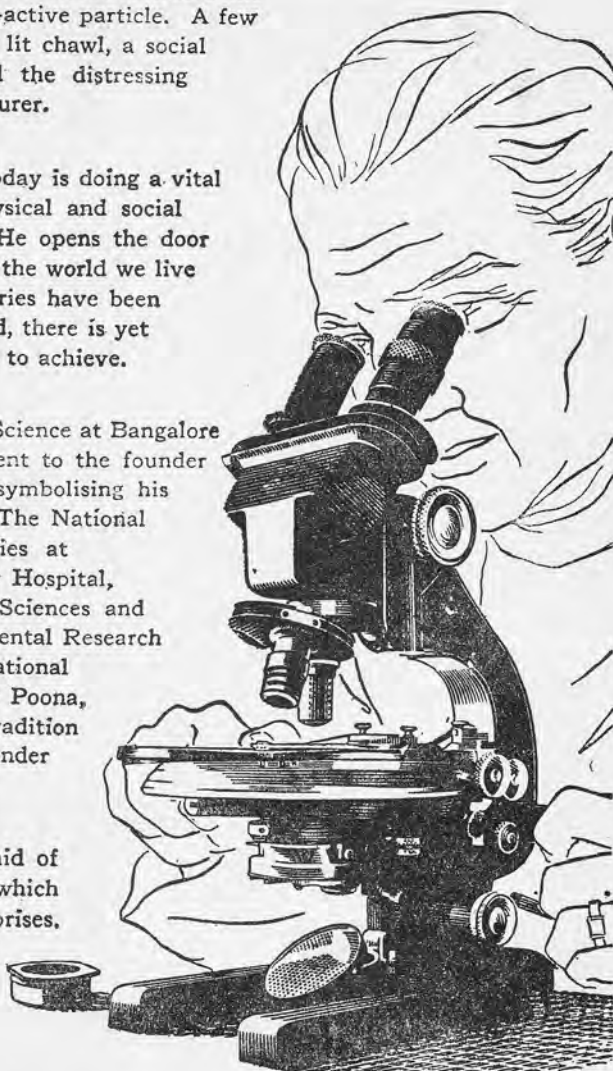
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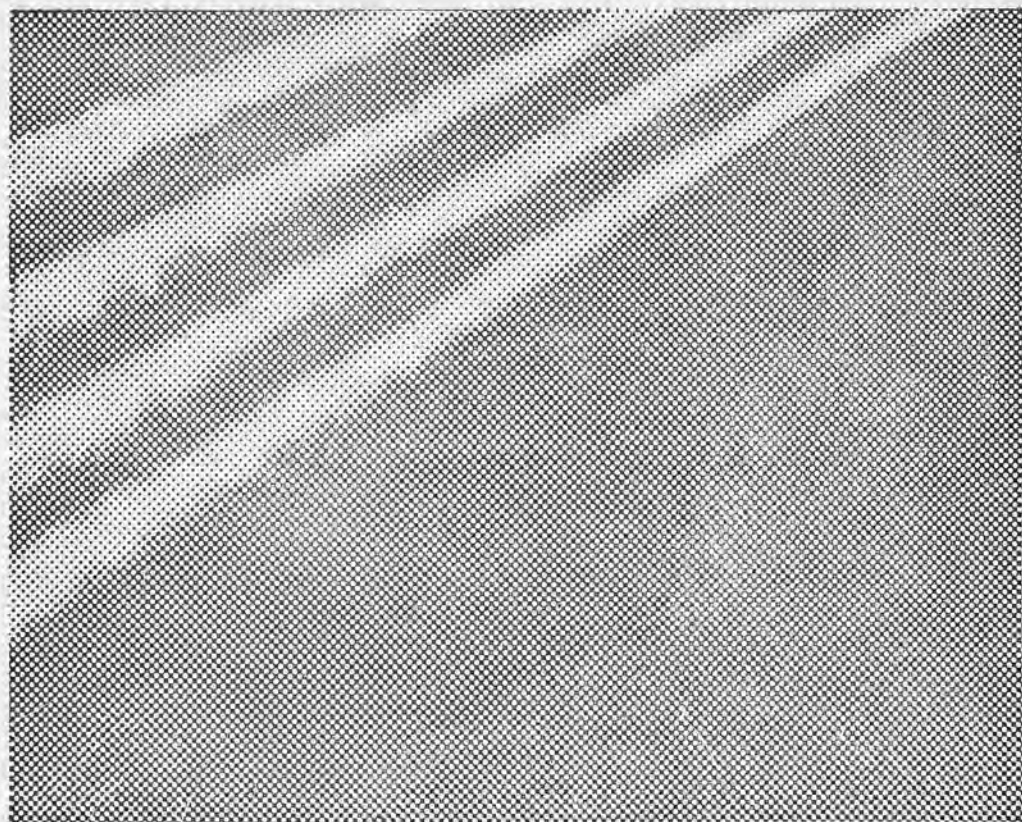


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# *Unilateral Action*

## *An Appeal to India and Pakistan*

By C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

**W**HEN are a people civilized? What are the essential characteristics of a civilized nation? And when can the world which is the larger community be said to have attained civilization?

It is true that a certain degree of material comfort is essential for civilization; but civilization does not consist in an ever-increasing degree and number of material comforts the pursuit of which is made the object of life. Idleness is not civilization. Nor is an unbroken hunt for sensuous enjoyment civilization. It leads to a general condition of society that takes it farther and farther away from civilization.

A community is civilized when its members do not feel the need for physical protection against one another. This is attained when men and women do not covet one another's possessions or the means of happiness they command,—when they do not fear one another and therefore do not require to be always prepared to defend themselves against the encroachments of fellow citizens. A people carrying weapons for self-defence is not a civilized community. The need to be armed proves a state of fear and a condition of savagery. Being entirely free from the fear of being attacked the members of a civilized community go about unarmed.

A state of mind free from fear of one another and taking good behaviour for granted can be brought about only by a general climate in which there is no envy or greed and where men and women respect one another and treat one another's honour, peace and happiness as inviolable. Everyone in such a society works, realising that that is the only way to live. Education, religion and philosophy must serve to bring about and maintain unbroken this prevalence of mutual respect, this climate of honest labour, and this freedom from envy and greed. An ever-rising standard of ease and comfort and an ever-increasing hunt for goods and riches obviously go to produce an opposite climate and therefore to put off civilization. Yet that increasing hunt is deemed to be civilization itself ! Whereas the truth is that it not only is not true civilization, but also prevents any progress towards it.

In a civilized country men and women walk about without weapons of

defence in their waists. They cannot and do not hope to get the police to arrive at every point when a crime may be attempted; yet they venture out just not thinking of any such event taking place and taking peace and good conduct for granted. Everything goes on smoothly. This condition of fearlessness and taking good conduct for granted is what is called civilization. Where this condition does not prevail, the people may be on the way to civilization but are not yet civilized.

What has been said above applies to world civilization too. But alas, the nations are still savages in their mutual affairs. They can hope one day to be civilized. But this can be realised only if they steadily progress in the art of living without covetting one another's possessions or achievements and shedding all fear of one another.

Isaavaasyamidam sarvam

(All things here have their being in God.)

maa grdhah kasyasvid dhanam

(Do not covet what another possesses.)

kurvannevaiha karmaani

jijeevushet catam samaah

(work always, all your life of a hundred years.)

evamtvainaanyathetosti

(This and naught else is the way to live.)

Till we reach the state thus described in the Upanishad mantra, we are not civilized. And when we reach that state we are truly civilized. It is only then we can shed all fear. As long as we thirst for what we do not have but which another has, we must live in fear of one another. And in that state of mind there can be no civilization. As long as we desire to be idle and to live without working we cannot but live a life of dependence and be occupied in ways and means of maintaining such a life which is bound with envy and fear. This is true of a single community and of the larger community called the world.

Who shall bring about this state of civilization in the world? That is to say, which people will set the example in this direction? There is no way of bringing about any good thing but by example. It may be, it is never possible to reach the ideal and our human lot may only be to be ever moving in that direction, fixing our eyes on that ever-receding point of glory. Which nation can set this example? Not certainly any of the nations whose every minute of existence is in fear of some one or other.

Who are the least afraid among the peoples of the world now? Whoever it be, it is these only that can lead and become the teachers of mankind, —not those that have the largest stock of munitions. The insatiable cry for

security is a confession of insatiable fear, an admission that those are not the people that can lead mankind to civilization. If any people can make up their mind to live without thought of security, these may lead the world to true civilization. This is the argument behind the plea for unilateral disarmament. The demand for agreement and safeguards is a symptom of tentative wisdom but not of fearlessness. And it is fearlessness that is the essence of civilization.

What is of great importance is that we have reached such a pass that the alternative to not doing the right thing is total wreckage of human life on this planet. It were tolerable if the only penalty for unwisdom were that we stayed where we were. But alas the alternative is dreadful !

How can we practise fearlessness and take peace for granted when we have obvious peace-breakers around us? This is the vicious circle that keeps fear going and civilization far off. There is no way of survival unless we break this vicious circle by a heroic undertaking of risk. India and Pakistan have a chance to lead the world. Their unfortunate differences can themselves become a great opportunity for exhibiting the fearlessness that alone I have ventured to submit is civilization. And if this be forthcoming, all the difficulties and trials of these two countries will have been a preparation for a great example instead of being a mere misfortune.

---

## *Gandhi and Marx*

By LEON EMERY

THE book of the Corvesal Hindu writer, the title\* of which heads the present article, is not in itself as thorough as it might be, although its interest is heightened by the addition of two long prefaces, one by Lanza del Vasto, the other by Vinoba. It does, however, have the great merit of setting forth with simplicity and clarity one of the major problems of our time, a problem that concerns us more directly than we might, at first, realize. Immediately after its liberation, India enjoyed a moral authority and prestige which are perhaps no longer quite what they were. We now wonder, not without anxiety, what its destiny will be, what direction will be taken by the vast famished mass that the present regime is trying to shake from its poverty and passivity. We do not hide from ourselves the fact that its choice, or the choice that fate makes for it, may determine the balance of the modern world. But in order for this to be understood properly, we must take a backward look.

The peculiar features of the Indian universe are known, if only vaguely, even to the general public. Everyone knows that India is a land where a poorly-cultivated soil provides meagre nourishment for a teeming population that has been confined for centuries within the prison of the castes, that has been beaten down again and again by invaders, that has been exploited by princes and usurers, a population engulfed in its torpor, weakness and poverty. But let us hasten to add that from this dark, shapeless mould have sprung the splendid flowers of a very lofty spiritual life. There is no doubt of the fact that India, along with the Mediterranean Orient and the Christian West, was a cradle of the noblest religious and philosophical speculation. It need hardly be said that these were the achievements of an elite, but they were nevertheless in harmony with popular beliefs, to which they were thus able to impart an ethical dignity and which they illumined with a ray from on high. One might maintain that the result of this was a confirmation of Hindu fatalism, a disdain of action and positive science, a preference for revery and contemplation, and at the same time one might pay homage to the fecundity of an educational influence without which Indian life would have been a dreadful nightmare filled with tigers and serpents.

The amazing history of the Gandhian revolution would be unintelligible without constant reference to this religious climate. We begin to understand it only when we think of the age in which St. Bernard stirred crowds and launched them on the exalting adventure of the Crusades. Yet Gandhi worked under conditions more unfavourable than those with which the Abbé of Clairvaux had to reckon, for he did not have the support of an organized church; moreover, he preached an unarmed crusade, a crusade reduced to deliberate sacrifice of freedom and life. We might, at this point, ask ourselves whether an implacable master would not have bathed the non-violent insurrection in blood, and we ought to do justice to the English too, who, all in all, were clement and moderate and whose state of mind was far removed from that which fiercely crushed the rebellion of 1857. In any case, Gandhi's words, spinning wheel and expiatory fasts—means of action at which realists and sceptics laughed—fomented a national revolution whose scope and purity command respect, especially when we compare it to its hideous Russian and Chinese counterparts. One of the greatest moral victories of all times became a concrete reality before our very eyes.

But nothing occurs on earth without compromises or setbacks. Our purpose is not to dwell upon the strangeness of the Pakistan borderlines or upon the risks involved in total independence, which was unnecessary, since the English were so conciliatory. The basic question was whether Gandhism, after triumphing by virtue of a holy negation, by virtue of self-contempt, non-collaboration, non-violence and the patriotic strike, would be able to direct the building of a new state. André Philip was, of course, right in pointing out that, in view of the somnolence of traditional India, Gandhi's doctrine and tactics meant a constant appeal to heroism, a heroism, however, that was passive, closer to that of martyrs than of conquerors or builders, a heroism more capable of inspiring civil disobedience than social development. Did Gandhism, which was strengthened rather than weakened by the tragic death of the master (who was formally promoted to the rank of legendary saint), include a programme valid for free India, that is, the India left to itself, to its weaknesses and perils?

Let us repeat that a Gandhi is inconceivable outside a thoroughly religious atmosphere; he himself was above all a naive and sublime believer in whose eyes all was absorbed into the divine unity. The material and ritual expressions of popular piety, including, as we know, respect for cows, were dear to him because he saw them as degrees of spiritual ascension. If this is granted, God is obviously the sole owner of earthly goods, of which we are merely the trustees or usufructuaries. One must not

conclude from this that everything is perfect, that everything must remain unchanged, but rather that the distribution and use of these goods depend, as it were, upon a prior agreement with God, an agreement which, on man's part, can only be obedience to the moral imperative. Thus, whether it be a matter of emancipating the pariahs or fighting against poverty, the true citizen relies primarily upon his goodwill, his charity, upon the example he gives. Like the master, he is always offering himself; he works more than he teaches; he expects nothing of that false, that deceitful Providence, namely the impersonal and remote State. The action of reforming, which excludes constraint of any kind and uses only persuasion, takes place by degrees, starting from a living centre and within limits that correspond to the power of each individual. Its basis can only be the village, and it is there that everything begins. If the village succeeds in becoming a fraternal and courageous community, the members will triumph over poverty and will not go off and lose their way in the hell of over-populated cities. From village to village, bonds will gradually be formed, bonds which, without written codification, will define provincial federations.

What need is there to continue the analysis? The social doctrine of Gandhism clearly belongs to the history of utopian socialism. We find in it—in highly simplified terms—the doctrines of Fourier, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Tolstoi and even what the early 20th century anarcho-syndicalists called direct action, which precedes legislation and should make it superfluous. Having duly noted these similarities, we can all the more easily point to a basic difference, which, be it added, is entirely to India's advantage. Most of our utopian socialists thought it possible to achieve their Icaria by contractual means, with conscience and reason dictating to each individual his obligations and duty. That was to expect a great deal of human nature, and one should not be surprised that the result has almost always been disappointing. Gandhism, on the other hand, has blossomed in a climate of spirituality and love that assures a better chance for success; experience bears witness to the fact, though not without allowing serious anxiety to develop regarding the future.

ALTHOUGH FULLY ENGAGED in fighting against the British occupants, Gandhi nevertheless achieved something that can be called social welfare. His efforts on behalf of the untouchables, his role of arbitrator in various labour disputes and his policy of renovating craft and village industry tell us as much as do his articles to what extent he was concerned with material needs and practical life. But the task of continuing and even ampli-

fying the work that had been so well begun fell to Vinoba, the greatest of his disciples. In the biography of him by Lanza del Vasto we get a clear notion of his programme and methods, both of equal simplicity. In a word, it was a matter of achieving by itinerant preaching and temporary cooperation an agrarian reform that would be brought about village by village, in accordance with the principle of free consent.

We see Vinoba wandering like a missionary through a primitive world, exhorting people, recording memberships, promises and gifts, settling land questions, organizing a cooperative status, then going on his way. In each circumstance, the guides are faith and charity, which are better heeded than administrative commonsense and the science of economics. After this, we need merely point out that Vinoba's successes cover an area equal to that of France and are measured in lots totalling hundreds of thousands of acres. His agrarian reform exceeds the one that Italy has been carrying out in recent years by methods that seem to us much more normal.

Observers are amazed and thrilled; they are full of admiration, but without feeling entirely reassured. The familiar objections to any such undertaking are now cropping up. Can the miracle last? Assuming that everything works out for the best within the village community, will it be able to live in a state of autarky, in a state of deliberate ignorance of the modern world, the world of the machine? Will not the humblest commercial relationships, the necessity of procuring tools, entail operations which, willy-nilly, will link up the Gandhian islet with social realities of a quite different structure?

The fact is that the Vinoba experiment is being aided, encouraged and thus controlled by the central government. As it develops, it integrates itself into more complex systems; it is beginning to depend upon the law, upon railroads and telegraph; it can no longer live in idyllic solitude. At the same time, a question arises, one of the utmost urgency: either utopian socialism will demonstrate conclusively, by being recognized throughout India as an example and model, that it is not utopian, or it will suffer the common fate, will be regarded as archaic and impotent and will make way for one or the other of the regimes whose law our age accepts.

A canny destiny placed the government of India in the hands of another disciple of Gandhi, a man about whom we wonder increasingly whether he is not the crowned apostate. We are not trying to enter into the mind of Nehru and even less to judge him, but only to understand what he represents in the course of history. To begin with, let us admit that we have fallen in with the myth or at least with the ideal by seeming to attribute to Gandhi's action the entire merit of having liberated India. In doing so we

have overlooked the role of the Congress Party, of the political machine proper that constitutes the framework of the new state and of which Nehru has remained the leader. Now, it stands to reason that in a country of illiterates and ignorant proletarians, this Party, despite its democratic exterior, cannot be other than a highly limited caste, and that it is bound to hold the reins.

Whether it wishes to or not, the governing elite, which is itself dominated by a powerful personality, becomes a centralizing and authoritarian element. It cannot elude this necessity, particularly in view of the fact that it is constantly at grips with the acutest of problems, the problem of shocking pauperism which is inexorably aggravated by the rise in population. The only way of combatting it is to modernize the Indian economy. but everyone knows that the creation of factories, the increased use of tractors, trucks and trains, and the building of dams and electric power-houses imply the existence of an administrative and social machinery which is clearly incompatible with the rustic and traditional life of the Gandhian communities. Although these communities may subsist for a while or even multiply, for India is a jumbled universe that resists unification, they are nevertheless threatened with rapid and radical transformation.

There is even worse to come. Despite her extent and diversity, despite the softness of her tissues and her physical barrenness, India is in the process of adjusting the frameworks that will make of her, sooner or later, a modern nation capable, like other nations, of introducing technology among its idols or gods. On the path of this evolution, lying in wait for her, is something that claims to be its expressly designated beneficiary, that is, communism. Its tactic and pragmatic arguments consist in maintaining that one cannot stop at half-measures or ambiguous solutions, that a party governs in the name of the people and concerns itself with dragging it from its state of abjection through planning, the use of the machine and the equalizing of conditions. There is a name for these practices, a name that Russia and China proudly wave as if it were a flag; India has only to take inspiration from the tremendous experiments that these countries claim to be decisive.

THUS, INDIA OFFERS an image, an image of our own difficulties, both enlarged and schematic. There everything is present in vast dimensions, in clearly perceptible and almost typical form. A newcomer to political autonomy, after having been roused from her physical lethargy, she must press on and make crucial choice in a hurry. Moreover, we begin to see that the

dilemma posed by the title of the book that has evoked these reflections confines us within limits that are too narrow. In so far as we grant that Nehru has an eminently representative character, he should be placed between Marx and Gandhi.

The socialism that follows from Gandhi's precepts may be called medieval or primitive, upon condition that the Middle Ages be conceived in ideal form or that primitive society be imagined the way the 18th century fancied the societies of the Polynesian Archipelago. If taken literally, it obviously abolishes the civil authority or at least bases it on the spirit of cooperation. In view of this, we find it extraordinary that it has managed at the same time to preserve its ethical value. We are assured that it continues to gain ground, that the community villages send out emissaries to spread the good word and at the same time to give practical instruction, that the Indian revival is thus taking place cell by cell without the accompaniment of the murderous conflicts that blot our history. There is matter here for strengthening hope in the hearts of those who maintain that Utopia is not necessarily quixotic.

However, the Marxist who challenges this attitude with his usual bluntness is in an advantageous position. Our Gandhian writers agree—Corvesal with objectivity, Lanzo del Vasto more eloquently and Vinoba more good-naturedly—that he is the irreconcilable enemy because he is essentially a despot and a technocrat. They are not unaware that genuine Marxism called for elimination of the state and the transfer of power to the local communities, to the soviets; but they fully realize that this was a naive concession to utopian anarchism and the revolutionary instinct, or even, in many cases, a simple tactical ruse, and that the doctrine tends toward monolithic construction, which is an offspring of constraint. They clearly declare that whether India keeps or loses her soul depends upon whether she remains faithful to Gandhi or gives ear to Marxist propaganda.

They are right, but we can imagine the reply and the disdainful tone with which it is uttered, even by a Hindu Marxist whom we shall assume to be the most honest of men and not a conscious agent of Russian or Chinese imperialism. In the first place, it is easy to point out that the action of Vinoba and his friends is being carried out thanks to the protection of the laws and even to the material support of the government; it is therefore bound to be of a provincial character and of minor importance. What would become of it were it responsible for things in general and finally had to assume the task of running the country? Will anyone seriously maintain that four-hundred million Indians will organize themselves into innumerable communities loosely associated by weak contacts?

Moreover, the chief argument will be based on the slowness with which the village achievements are carried out and on the fact that the Gandhian lives outside of time. He will be shown the hungry crowds that are waiting, that are bound to become increasingly impatient and eager as they become conscious of their lot; he will be asked whether they should be taught resignation and permanent recourse to the opium of the people; the Marxist will celebrate the achievements of the great modern empires that were created in a few years. Although Gandhian socialism, which is permeated and spiritualized by religiosity, is effective as a preserving element in Hindu society, how is it possible to avoid the submerging influence of necessity, the spirit of the age, universal industrialization and the overwhelming examples of what happened in foreign countries?

Is it therefore necessary to fall back on the ambiguous, mixed, perhaps unstable system symbolized by the presence of Nehru? There is something in Nehru's policy that disturbs us, that provokes sarcasm and reproaches from those to whom he seems somewhat deceitful, even hypocritical. There is no doubt of the fact that the personality of the Indian leader is somewhat enigmatic, that neither his undertakings nor his silences nor his acts of compliance always give satisfaction. Through him we can see the full extent of the dangers implied by the terms "neutralism" and "progressivism." In all fairness, however, we are forced to recognize that the ambiguity also lies in things themselves and that Nehru stands at the meeting-point of conflicting realities.

As a cultivated man, he is familiar with the vedantic tradition and can also claim kinship with it; as a Westernized intellectual imbued with modernism, he has probably drifted further away from it than he realizes. As leader of a national movement, he calls himself a socialist, in the European manner—which does not prevent him from coming to terms with the industrial and technocratic plutocracy. Although an opponent of communism, because he means to maintain a certain degree of freedom, he is a dupe or an accomplice of his anti-imperialist propaganda, with the result that there is no knowing whether he is in favour of it or is fighting it. He claims that he is combining the lessons of Marx and those of Gandhi; we think with Vinoba, who is a spiritual son of the Mahatma, that this is fundamentally illogical and almost sacrilegious. It may be, however, that political empiricism justifies to a certain degree what reason and feeling reject. He can or must at the same time encourage Vinoba's reform, commission Le Corbusier to build cities, develop shipping and banking relationships with the United States and England, and install iron works that are set up by Russian engineers; such contradictory practice arises, to a large extent,

from the complexity of the problems. Would anyone be so bold as to imagine that he could direct the huge, inorganic body of an India in the full process of mutation other than by feeling his way and trying to keep his balance? We shall probably know in the near future whether the operation is being conducted skillfully or whether it will result in terrible convulsions. All we should like is for the man who is leading it through wind and tide to be a little less inclined to drape himself before the other nations in a virtue which is no longer intact because it tolerates at home many shifting compromises.

EACH MAJOR REGION of our planet has its own destiny, but not a separate destiny; the light is reflected from one to the other. These views on the Indian situation lead us back inevitably to our own country, where very similar and very different problems exist, problems that deserve far more than a brief allusion. We have said that Gandhian socialism can be explained at the summit by religion and at the base by the urgency of free and joint action against intolerable poverty. We have seen that in its fight against Marxism it nevertheless runs the risk of being drowned in it, of being sucked in and absorbed as soon as the similarity of immediate objectives makes one lose sight of radical contradictions. How can we fail to mention the tragedy of Christian Socialism in the West in its relationships with the same Marxism, which it has condemned over and over and which nevertheless does not cease to fascinate it?

As we know, the Christians, tired of hearing it said that they constitute a conservative or backward force, that they do not live by their faith, that they place themselves in the service of the propertied classes by keeping alive the resignation of the poor, have been engaging in social action with such zeal that, from the very start, their outer flank wanted to rush to the extreme Left and come to terms with all revolutionary and modernist tendencies. To denounce the exploitation of man by man in the name of the Gospels, to preach temporal salvation by the institution of a better and, in a word, classless society—these are the imperatives with which the generous candour of present day 'progressives' complies. This is tantamount to saying that they cannot fail to encounter Marxism on their path—and before they have gone very far—and that we cannot but wonder whether they are going to merge with it as a stream flows into a river. That Christianity and Marxism are theoretically and totally incompatible with each other is self-evident; that this incompatibility is reflected in all communist-dominated countries by the intense persecution of churches, which subsist only in so

far as there is no other way but to tolerate them temporarily, is no less apparent. In view of this, it is of the utmost importance to understand by what shifts and dodges—by what sincere ambiguities—so many believers manage to engulf in a strange mental fog truths that the pontifical decisions themselves do not recognize without uneasiness or resistance.

At the source of this perilous confusion are surely to be found a generous impulse and the consciousness of an injustice that should be speedily eliminated. In all good logic, this sudden and eager impatience, this desire to apply charity on a broader scale, should lead to a Christian socialism whose principles were laid down at the end of the 19th century by the encyclicals of Leo XIII. Bold as it may be, this socialism naturally excludes violence, appeals to class cooperation and the sense of duty, prefers the free initiatives of the corporate body, of trade unionism or of the cooperative spirit to state intervention, and requires that politics and daily life be constantly inspired by faith.

Nothing would be easier than to point out the similarities between it and Gandhism. But it is at this point that the evil star appears and exercises its attraction upon many minds. The Christian progressive realizes, with a certain remorse, that those who call themselves the disciples of Marx have been beforehand with the multitude. He discovers in their language certain formulas that make an impression upon him, that seem to him to correspond rather closely with the facts, that, in any case, have inspired millions of men and have led to tremendous transformations. Does he feel obliged, in all good faith, to recognize publicly what cannot be denied? Does he conclude that in order to lead the outcast peoples one must start by imitating it and even outdoing it? In any event, a deviation has taken place; people are in the habit of thinking that indissoluble bonds have been formed between the cause of the wretched, on the one hand, and, on the other, what is called the Marxist method. As the Christian progressive wants to be faithful to the poor and give them the kingdom of this world before that of Heaven, as he fails to distinguish the true Marxist methods from the despotic undertakings that claim kinship with it, he moves more and more along the path of compromise, indulgence or unseemly approval.

This need not surprise us. By its very nature, a religious mind is less sensitive to concrete facts than to the ideology in which they are clothed. As soon as one talks to him of social justice and universal peace, he is immediately moved and inclined in their favour. Communist demagoguery has long since shown what it can do and, from the tactical point of view, can congratulate itself upon many a victory. We do not mean that the

Christian progressive gives in to it completely, although one must admit that this reservation is, in certain cases, superfluous. The pathetic history of the French worker-priests has made fully apparent the fact that some of them, whose sincerity, courage and spirit of charity cannot be challenged *a priori*, set aside their vows and left the Church rather than abjure the Communist faith that had obviously permeated and conquered them. Are there exceptions? Of course, although in many other cases we wonder to what degree Christianity has not been vitiated and overgrown with ways of feeling and speaking that end by becoming modes of thinking. The believer who yields to the headiness of Communism always has two arguments that appease his conflict of conscience. At times, he deludes himself with the idea that in entering the Marxist camp to bear witness to his brotherly devotion, he is like a missionary who brings the light of the full truth to benighted peoples; at times, he convinces himself that, even if the modern world must go through a universal communist experience, it will be a necessary or providential trial in which men will raise themselves to the notion of a purer justice. Evil be to him who withdraws before this purgatory and this expiation. . . .

Political analysis is of no avail against an act of faith, against a prophetic hope; a progressive whose behaviour disturbs us may very well be worthy of our entire respect. We retain, however, the right to repeat a warning which should be utterly unnecessary but which, as we see daily, is not. When a man of good will ventures to discuss things or cooperate with the Communists, he is generally armed only with his simplicity, and we can feel that he is ready to make concessions which are dictated by his heart. Even if he is an ecclesiastic, he has behind him only an authority that is remote and long-suffering and that is very liberal in these matters. Whoever doubts this has only to read the Christian leftist press. He will be quickly edified, and at times scandalized. The Communist, on the other hand, even if in his private life he is the finest of men, does not exist as an individual; his words and gestures are only the expression of a tactic that has been put into operation by an extremely powerful machine that has been cleverly devised for the purpose of using lies, seduction, intimidation, guile and similar weapons. Strictly speaking, there can be no discussion, since, as has been aptly said, the speakers are not on the same level, do not use the same language and do not have the same mental structure. If we add that nothing equals the secret contempt that the Communists profess for those who come and offer to be taken into the net, if we bear in mind that they can obviously not renounce the atheistic materialism which is the foundation of their doctrine, we can see the error that is made by the

'progressives' who naively persist in coming to terms with Communism or delude themselves that they are outdoing it by going them one better verbally. May they follow Vinoba's example and realize that their socialism cannot, without falling away or betraying itself, favour the mechanization of human life by the establishment of a monstrous statism!

In the last analysis, everything is dangerously distorted in the politics of our time because there has been too great a tendency to believe that a declaration of war against the privileges of fortune suffices to unite permanently all those who sign it. Under the banner of anti-capitalism, of anti-imperialism, fanaticized crowds are preparing for themselves, in many cases an oppression more frightful than the one from which they have suffered. Who does not condemn capital when it is a blood-sucker? Who does not want to improve the conditions of the humble? But one must resist being taken in by words, one must resist blind sentiments and myths forged by propaganda. So many instructive experiments have taken place before our eyes that we are inexcusable when we let ourselves be deluded.

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\* Krishorlal Mashrouwala: *Gandhi and Marx*, Denoel, Paris.

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Each nation aims only at self-glorification in the school textbooks of history. When a man writes his autobiography he is expected to show a certain modesty; but when a nation writes its autobiography there is no limit to its boasting and vainglory.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

# *Decline of the Indian Intellectuals*

## *A Note*

By SIBNARAYAN RAY

**M**OST commentators on contemporary Indian developments usually occupy themselves with the economic and political problems facing this young republic. Compared to the other countries of Asia the record of economic development in this country over the last six|seven years is generally recognised to be rather striking. More impressive still is the record of political integration and stability achieved and maintained so far without gross violation of established democratic processes or the rights and liberties of the people (Kashmir, perhaps, being the unhappy exception). Most analysts, however, would agree that there is something very deceptive about this stability and development, that the statistics of the targets fulfilled or surpassed hardly conceal the growing sense of frustration among the common people, and that the fearful possibility of India being plunged into a civil war between extremists of the right and of the left, though apparently unlikely at the moment, is not as astronomically remote as one would wish it to be. Mr. Nehru at least is deeply concerned with this threat, and has been trying his lonely best to make its awareness dawn upon his partymen.

Important as they surely are, this note is not focussed on the economic or political problems of modern India. There is another aspect of the contemporary Indian situation which is often neglected, but which, I believe, has a profound bearing on the future of this country. This is the phenomenon of the decline of the Indian intellectuals. It would be incorrect and unfair to synchronize this decline with the birth of the Indian republic. The process started earlier; but the last two or three decades have witnessed its dismal articulation.

And yet how does it make sense to lament that Indian intellectuals are on the decline? Thanks to the socialist aspirations of the party in power, the pace and magnitude of bureaucratic expansion have in recent years become indeed awe-inspiring. And the bureaucracy of a welfare state is of course staffed by people of education and intelligence. Moreover, there are now more schools, colleges and universities in this country; more teachers, doctors, lawyers, journalists, authors, technicians and political leaders than we presumably ever had in our history. More books are being published and read; more films produced; more listeners to radio programmes; more subscribers to periodicals and daily newspapers. All

these would naturally suggest that intellectuals are having a boom period in independent India.

If by intellectual we mean people who have acquired some university degree or other or are engaged in activities that require some degree of trained intelligence, then of course my pessimism would be altogether unwarranted. But modern usage indicates a more restricted denotation of this term. It demands much more of the intellectual than mere possession of an academic diploma or a white collar job, however big or impressive that job or diploma may be. As I understand it, the intellectual is a person in whom man's search for significance has become particularly articulate. He makes the multifold of experience tractable to general symbols and yet does not get enmeshed in closed and static thinking. Unlike the majority of the people in any community, he is not an unreflective recipient of norms, general principles or values, conceived and developed by others, and then made sacrosanct by authority, convention or mere passage of time. He combines the twofold function of consciously transmitting the structure of tradition and of amending, enlarging and even transforming that structure through reflection and inquiry. His mind is ever active in drawing nourishment from the cultural heritage of the past and in enriching that heritage through criticism and creative work. It is his responsibility to purify the language of the tribe, to break the spell of custom and dogma, and to replenish the culture of the community with new modes of experience and expression. Of all his contemporaries, he has the keenest appreciation of that 'almost unlimited power of self-transformation' which Pico della Mirandola recognised to be the most distinctive privilege of man, of that 'multiplicity and multiformity' of the human mind which is not chaos but proof of man's power to bring forth significant forms out of the plastic and shapeless material of his experience. To qualify as an intellectual one has deliberately to deprive oneself of the comforts of what Erwin Panofsky so aptly calls the cult of 'insectolatory'—or in less picturesque terms, the submergence of the individual in the group and the surrender of reason to instinct and habit. His skeptical humanism prevents tradition from degenerating into a dead weight on the present; and his highest exhilaration comes from the hazardous adventure of ideas. Perpetually engaged in a dialogue between remembrance of things past and anticipations of future possibilities, between man's existence and his essence, between what Cassirer called 'the polychromy and the polyphony of man's nature' and his 'functional unity', between analysis and synthesis—the intellectual is primarily an explorer in that symbolic universe which is created and inhabited by human beings alone.

It is in the above sense that intellectuality seems to be on the decline in contemporary India. One would indeed have to search very hard among the educated people in this country to discover individuals who prefer and are able to think independently, or whose perceptions of the present developments are trained on close acquaintance with and critical interpretation of even their own past cultural heritage. The state of affairs at the Banaras Hindu University, recently made public, has caused much stir. Significantly enough, most people have been far more alarmed by the evidence of moral depravity than by that of intellectual obsolescence among university teachers. In this latter respect Banaras surely has no claim to uniqueness. By and large Indian colleges and universities today share in a common distrust of critical scholarship and original or independent thinking. No less conspicuously than the young generation of Indian journalists or political leaders, the young teachers in this country are rapidly becoming purveyors of clichés and of the sloppy dregs of tribalist beliefs. At best they prepare pompous dissertations and commentaries which are at the tenth remove from first-hand inquiry or original interpretation; at worst, they specialise in blunting the intelligence of their pupils to be spared the embarrassment of exposure. As to our young men of literature they are often prolific and nearly always innocent. Dedicated to the *mots de la tribu*, most of them have no intimation of the *blanche agonie* of Mallarmé's Swan, or of the awkward exile of Baudelaire's Albatross *au milieu des huées*. They do not aspire to that *miroitement en dessous* which only artists can bring to language through their 'intolerable wrestle with words and meanings'. They measure their success by the decree of the market place, and the market of course demands 'moulds in plaster made with no loss of time'. Presumably there are exceptions, but they are too few or far too feeble to leave much of an impress on the general situation in the country.

But decline is a relative term. It assumes a preceding period of opulence and growth. In the context of modern Indian history, the period of intellectual efflorescence (short as it has been) may be said to start from the second decade of the 19th century. Prior to that for a very long period India had remained in a state of social and cultural stagnation. The elaborate hierarchy of the caste system had made vertical mobility virtually impossible; the doctrine of *karma*, as interpreted by the Brahmin priests, had sapped all personal initiative; the theory of *maya* had reduced all empirical enquiry into meaningless pursuit. The so-called intellectuals of that age of stagnation were mostly priests engaged in devising and amplifying codes of conduct to inhibit every urge for growth, movement, or expansion of understanding. Virtue was conceived to lie in willing resigna-

tion to fate and propitiation of authority; truth consisted in magical abracadabra whispered by the omniscient *guru* to the awed ears of his disciples. These legislator-metaphysicians of medieval India were no more curious about their past heritage than about their present circumstances. Life consequently became closed and parochial; human perceptions lost their acuteness, variety and plentitude; imagination atrophied from lack of nourishment and application; and literature and the arts, deprived of their creative dynamism, were reduced to vacuous repetitiveness.

From this blissful state of intellectual stupor, India was at last rescued by the cultural impact of the West in the opening decades of the 19th century. Europe too had experienced a prolonged period of somnolence from which, however, it made a spectacular recovery during what, since Michelet, has come to be generally known as the European Renaissance. According to Cassirer, possibly the greatest modern interpreter of this recovery, the man of the European Renaissance was "characterised by his joy in the senses, his turning to nature, his roots in the world, his self-containedness for the world of form, his individualism, his paganism, his amorality". The awakening expressed itself in many directions—in the birth of the modern sciences, in the discovery and critical re-assessment of the past, in the phenomenal efflorescence of the vernacular literatures and of the arts, in the formulation of secular ethics and liberal social theories, in new principles and methods of education, in the struggle for the rights of the individual and the emergence of democratic political institutions, in the growth of economic enterprise, and in the discovery of sea routes which exposed the rest of the world to the impact of the newly developing civilization of Europe.

Between Vasco da Gama's landing at Calicut on May 27, 1498 and Clive's victory at Palasi on June 23, 1757, groups and individuals from nearly all the major countries of Western Europe had been arriving in India—traders and soldiers of fortune, missionaries and scholarly globe-trotters—from Portugal and Britain, Holland, Denmark and France, last of all, even from Germany. It was not, however, till the British had established themselves as the supreme power in India (first by defeating the Nawab of Bengal and then by crushing their two principal Western rivals, the French in 1761 and the Dutch in 1781) that the new spirit of Europe could make its impact felt on the social and cultural life of this country. On January 15, 1784, the Asiatic Society was founded in Calcutta to inquire 'into the History Civil and Natural, the Antiquities, Arts and Sciences, and Literatures of Asia'. 'If now it be asked', explained its first president, Sir William Jones, 'what are the intended objects of our inquiries within these

spacious limits, we answer, MAN and NATURE, whatever is performed by the one or produced by other'. European renaissance thus reached India and it touched off a cultural revolution in this country.

The most significant aspect of this revolution was the birth of the modern Indian intellectual. The researches and publications of the Asiatic Society opened new perspectives to those Indian scholars who, though trained in the traditional ways, had started picking up the language of the new rulers of the land. The Society promoted intellectual curiosity about the cultural heritage of India, developed the spirit of scientific criticism, provided tools and disciplines for factual investigation, and opened windows on the great world from which Indian thought had been shut for centuries within the narrow walls of parochialism. Their efforts were considerably reinforced in the first quarter of the 19th century by the educational activities of the non-conformist missionaries and of the governments in Bengal, Madras and Bombay. Meanwhile Indians had been introduced to the art of printing by the western scholars, and the new ideas began to spread through books, periodicals and other publications. English schools and colleges began to be founded, many of them through the efforts of the Indians themselves. The process culminated in the establishment of three universities in India in 1857, registering the emergence of a new type of intellectuals in Indian history.

These intellectuals, like their spiritual kinsmen of the European renaissance, engaged themselves in rescuing, reconstructing and re-assessing their past cultural heritage; in removing the various restrictions on the human spirit imposed by custom and by that fear of freedom and of empirical investigation so sedulously cultivated by their priestly predecessors; in inquiring about man, his symbolic universe and his physical environment; in discovering and developing various forms and modes of self-expression; and in creating their own independent world-outlook and norms of value. Freed from the stranglehold of parochial living, they strove in the true tradition of humanism to combine the 'individual man' with the 'universal man'. Rejecting the lure of both verbalism and reified abstractions, they showed no less interest in collecting the data of experience than in acquiring the tools and methods of generalisation. They worked for various reforms, social, religious and educational, to expand the frontiers of freedom and knowledge of their community. They devoted themselves to purify the language of the tribe and to develop it into the proper tool of man's progressive self-unfoldment. Nourished and moulded by the new spirit, the regional languages of India, brought into being several centuries ago, now came into their own. Modern Indian prose literatures were born; and at least in one

modern Indian language, Bengali, the spirit of poetry experienced a phenomenal reawakening, made evident in the incomparable poetic munificence of Michael Madhusudan Dutt.

The rise of the new intellectuals was possibly most pronounced in Bengal, but it also soon became noticeable in Bombay and Madras, and in the later part of the 19th century in some parts of North India as well. The renaissance of the Hindu intellectuals inaugurated by Ram Mohun Roy in Bengal in 1815 was followed by a Muslim *aufklärung* initiated by Sayyad Ahmad Khan at Aligarh in the 1870's. The first quarter of the present century produced a great literary and intellectual harvest; but thereafter began a process of rapid attenuation, the deadly significance of which has become manifest during the last decade and half.

In the context of the preceding period of growth and development the contemporary decline of the Indian intellectuals is too obvious to call for any detailed description. Some of its more apparent causes are generally recognised, e.g., ill-paid teachers and overcrowded class rooms, low remuneration for writing and consequent pressure on authors to produce more at the cost of quality, emphasis on technical training at the cost of liberal education, etc. Its more profound reasons, however, are obscured by the process of decline itself, and we may as well conclude this note by drawing attention to some of them.

The circumstances and auspices under which the Indian Renaissance took place in the 19th century imposed a burden of ambivalence on the Indian intellectuals which became increasingly unbearable with the passage of time. Unlike in Europe, here the Renaissance was not even partially prepared by any slow but steadfast explorations of some native precursors. It was caused by the impact of an alien people and civilisation. The alienness was brought into sharper relief by the fact that these foreigners were the rulers of the land. The liberators of the Indian intellectuals were also their enslavers. Moreover, opportunities of Western education were available only to a very small section of the community. On the one hand, this section by accepting the values of an unfamiliar dynamic culture became estranged from the common people; on the other, its aspirations were systematically repressed by the very people who had awakened those aspirations and had brought about this estrangement. In an earlier period these intellectuals might have gloried in their privileged isolation; but having imbibed the anti-hierarchical values of the West, alienation from the community made them feel guilty and impotent. Unable to draw much nourishment from their ancient heritage, frustrated by the conduct of their mentors, conscience-stricken by their own isolation, with little hope

to awaken the vast 'masses' of the country to the values and attitudes of a humanist *weltanschauung* within some foreseeable future, many among these Indian intellectuals gradually began to lose confidence in their role as explorers and creators and to develop nostalgia for the lost homogeneity and certitude of their old stagnant and parochial society. The Christian missionaries too, on the one hand by their narrow religious zeal and their ill-informed and arrogant attacks on everything Indian, and on the other by their proselytizing success with the oppressed uneducated lower class Hindus, contributed to intensify the Hindu intellectual's resentment of the dynamic alien culture and his longing for security and power through psychological identity with the community.

Already during the last quarter of the 19th century there were signs that Indian intellectuals, frustrated by their ambivalence, were looking for some make-believe resolution. Their retreat from reality was led by none other than Bankim Chandra Chatterji, a great novelist and prose writer, but at the same time a subtle ideologist of intellectual reaction. Following Rousseau, he invited the intellectuals to submerge their individuality in the General Will: "Society should be worshipped", he wrote, "for Society is our educator, our law-giver, our nourisher and our protector". Claiming to draw support from Auguste Comte, he called upon reason to pay homage to faith; that ancient intellectual trick known as the Two Truths Theory came in very handy for this rehabilitation of religious orthodoxy. Since Bankim was a Hindu, his society was Hindu society; and since what he wanted was to provide his followers with the certainty of faith maintaining at the same time the pretence of reason, he preferred the revealed wisdom of the Gita to the occasionally genuine and therefore disquieting speculations of the Upanishads. Moreover, he was an artist; and out of the two ingredients of collectivism and religious faith he created the potent myth of the nation-mother goddess, which at one and the same time promised relief to the intellectuals from the strain of adulthood and 'atonement' (in the literal sense) with the community. Bankim was followed by others—Vivekananda, Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh, to name only the most outstanding—who further amplified and propagated this cult of religious collectivist populism. They offered the comforts of 'insectolatory' to the harassed Hindu intellectuals; and without possibly quite intending it, provoked the intellectuals of the other major community of India, the Muslims, to seek collective identity in their own religion, thus undoing the brave if belated efforts of the Aligarh school and ushering the age of communal struggle in modern Indian history.

The retreat of the intellectuals had thus already started in the closing

decades of the 19th century, but till the second quarter of the present century it cannot be said to have assumed the character of a rout. Before the twenties the Indian renaissance had not yet fully exhausted its creative influence. Its greatest product and exponent, Rabindra Nath Tagore, after having flirted for a while with Hindu nationalism, had been impelled by his own aesthetic and intellectual needs to make a clean break with it. His *Gora* (1907-1909) may be of dubious worth as fiction; its assertion of the values of an open society was nonetheless unambiguous. Under his leadership Indian intellectuals who had not yet lost faith in themselves made a great effort during the second decade of this century to stem the tide of intellectual reaction and to deepen and broaden the influence of humanist values on the Indian people. The highest watermark reached through their efforts was possibly the founding of the Vishwabharati in 1919.

But two world wars happening in quick succession reduced these endeavours to nullity. In Europe liberalism and rationalism fell into decay. Ideologies and movements committed to authoritarianism, collectivism, instinctivism and closed living vied with one another to lure the West back to a new dark age. They naturally made their impact on India where the social and cultural climate was favourable to their reception. From the twenties onwards the anti-intellectual forces of Hindu and Muslim collectivism began to be supplemented by the new totalitarian ideologies of Fascism and Communism. Communism particularly made a great appeal to those Indian intellectuals who while yearning to return to the familiar ways of a closed society had nonetheless been held back by their liberal education from openly repudiating the legacy of the Indian renaissance. Its dialectical double-talk provided them with a new make-believe resolution of their inner conflict by cleverly combining scientific verbiage with dogma, internationalist pretensions with rabid nationalism, pseudodemocratic ideals with authoritarian methods and by equating freedom with the recognition of necessity.

The intellectuals of India might still have hoped to resist and overcome these pressures but for the spectacular emergence of Gandhi after the first world war. The anti-liberal efforts of intellectuals like Bankim, Tilak and Aurobindo came to fruition in the monolithic personality of the Mahatma. He pitched the intellectuals against the "masses"; their individual reason against the instinct of the herd; their lonely and uncertain explorations against the hoary beliefs of the community. Unlike his precursors, who were after all intellectuals themselves, he did not occupy himself with any theoretical justification of dogma or of the collective will. Instead, he devised very simple and highly effective methods for the rousing and manipulation of mass enthusiasm. In him "the voice of the people" became "the voice of

God". Education, he said, could wait; and since then education has been waiting. In vain did Tagore try to warn India against the Mahatma's cult of the masses; in vain did he argue in *Kalantar* that freedom lay in the pursuit of knowledge and not in the defection of instinct and authority. Backed by the revolt of the masses, Gandhi's anti-intellectual and charismatic personality broke through the last resistance of the intellectuals and drove most of them to seek shelter in one variety or other of collective unreason.

The end of the second world war brought no relief to these pressures. During the last decade and half, Communism has been steadily gaining in power and prestige, especially in Asia. Deprived of their confidence in reason and individual creativity, our intellectuals are becoming easy victims of this deadly ideology. At the same time, partition of India has given new fillip to communalism. According to one estimate published in 1951, the R.S.S. (recognised to be the most militant and well-organised Hindu communal organisation in India) commands an actual membership of 4,00,000 and supporters running to 50,00,000. Moreover, a new pressure on the intellectuals has begun to be felt since independence due to the increasing participation of the Government in cultural and educational activities. Concentration of power and responsibility in the hands of the State is a problem common to all modern societies. In India it has assumed ominous proportions owing, on the one hand, to the absence of any deep-rooted democratic tradition and, on the other, to the vast and pressing task of reconstruction with which the country is faced. With the best of intentions the Indian welfare state has developed into a menace to the last vestiges of intellectual integrity and independence that may have still survived the onslaught of mass-politics and the stranglehold of collectivist ideologies.

Patriotic Indians may, of course, draw consolation from the fact that the decline of the intellectuals is not peculiar to India but has become universal in our time. In the Communist states the intellectuals have been reduced to complete servitude; in Western Europe, according to many critics, intellectuals are being driven to "marginal existence" under the pressure of "mass culture"; and in the United States the "egg-heads" appear to live from reprieve to reprieve. And yet, even if all these were true, a genuine intellectual in any country (including our own) may justifiably be expected to find in this fact not matter for consolation but a profound challenge to his creative role in history. But then, do we honestly still have even a small core of such intellectuals in India who "doggedly insist on being themselves"?

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## *The Impact of Science*

By MICHAEL POLANYI

THERE is a small book called *A History of Freedom of Thought* by the Cambridge historian J.B. Bury to which I often turn with a melancholy, affectionate smile. For it evokes in me the times when I believed what Bury believed when he wrote this book in 1913. He was convinced that the age-old struggle of reason against the oppressive darkness of religious authority had now secured, at last, an unshakeable bastion by the establishment of modern science. The book reminds me how at the turn of the century a brilliant group of young Hungarians founded a Sociological Society which was intended to shed the light of science on the structure of political and social life. Science would guide them in the radical renewal of society. They launched a journal with the title: *The Twentieth Century*. I recall the thrill of these magic words which defied the powers of darkness to enter the great age that was at hand for us.

It is curious that these ideas should have evoked such excitement, for they had actually caused the same exhilaration already in our grandparents, and had stirred the imagination of young intellectuals right back to the 18th century. In 1848 the Communist Manifesto had proclaimed the application of science to social action. Jeremy Bentham had taught the same doctrine in his own way before the time of the French Revolution. Though these ideas did not pass altogether uncontradicted, they kept reviving with unfading freshness and they remain, indeed, widely current unto this day. Bury's little book has been reprinted many times.

Yet looking round at the political scene presented by this planet today, one may feel tempted to laugh at these great hopes set on science. We hear the modern revolutionary powers appealing to science for the justification of their soul-killing oppression of man. And we may watch with even deeper dismay how millions of people the world over still respond spontaneously to the leadership of these tyrannies and lend moral support to their actions. Modern political fanaticism menaces the whole of mankind by appealing to a superior scientific insight into the affairs of man.

To understand this strange outcome of the hopes set on science for the guidance of human affairs, we must view the role of science within the historical perspective as outlined for example by Bury. We must set

aside the practical applications of science to industry, medicine and warfare, which are relatively recent. The tremendous impact of modern science, from Copernicus to Newton, and from Newton to Darwin, was not practical but theoretical. Science shed new light on the universe and on man's position in the universe: this was its liberating force. It endowed the modern mind with a new self-confidence, far beyond the level reached before by the Renaissance and the Reformation. This was the lasting feat of science; this was the impact which evoked and ever renewed throughout the past two centuries the expectation that science might also put right the affairs of men.

From this glance at the origins of the scientific movement in public affairs, we may glean our first clue for the explanation of its eventual failure. The scientific movement started from the study of inanimate nature and the methods developed for this purpose were not suited to other matters. The ideal of science, as derived from the study of dead matter, is to achieve complete exactitude and conclusiveness. But living things obviously cannot be defined exactly nor be represented in precisely conclusive statements. This discrepancy obscures some important issues even in the study of primitive forms of life, though the damage is usually negligible here. When, however, we proceed to apply the ideals of inanimate science to the study of man, we reduce the representation of man to the lowest possible terms. We miss out then all that deserves respect in man and deprive him of any grounds for respecting his fellow men. Science, representing man thus as a creature governed by greed and fear, may well be taken to suggest that men should behave like animals and that governments should treat their subjects as if they were animals.

This criticism is indeed widespread. We hear voices from all sides deploing the destruction of moral values by the naturalistic interpretation of man. But this can be only part of the truth. For the conception of man as a creature governed by pleasure and pain, first developed in the 18th century, has served as a guide to the great era of reforms which has radically humanized Western society. In England and America Bentham's utilitarianism, based on the calculus of pleasure and pain, has been interpreted for almost two centuries as a philanthropic maxim, directing governments to eliminate unnecessary cruelty and to exert themselves in alleviating poverty, ignorance, disease and humiliation.

No, a materialistic conception of man *need* not be ruinous and can in fact be beneficent. But it can develop in a very different manner, as it did at the hands of Marx. Morality, Marx taught, was imposed upon society by its rulers in the service of class interests. Bourgeois morality was merely a screen for the exploitation of the proletariat by the capitalists. Capitalism

was doomed to be superseded by socialism, releasing new productive forces under the rule of the proletariat which would establish a new morality of its own. For all morality was class morality.

Another major offshoot of a naturalistic conception of man was the fierce nihilism of Nietzsche. In his obscure preachings, he exalted ruthless self-love and claimed that the superior individual was a law unto himself. His influence evoked the cult of brute force by which Hitler and Mussolini rose to power.

Here, then, we have our real problem. Why did the beneficent materialism of the great reformers eventually produce these malignant offshoots which turned the twentieth century into a scene of unending cruelties and tyrannies? The answer is hinted at by a word I have used before in describing these disasters of our time. The word was "fanaticism." The nihilists of the twentieth century were ridden by a passion far more intense than the desire of the reformist to give less pain and more pleasure to their fellow men. They rebelled against every tenet of a society for which they had nothing but contempt. It is ridiculous to identify—as so many writers do—this modern materialism with selfishness and love of comfort. Modern nihilism, modern cynicism, are a venomous protest against the complacency and happiness of bourgeois moral practices. The Bolshevik scorns all established moral rules from an overweening sense of his own moral superiority. And he scorns humanitarian reform likewise because its aims fall far short of his own unlimited moral demands.

And strange to say, Nazism has a similar structure. Hitler's frenzy was pure evil, but his followers' response was moral. Like Marx, they believed that in public affairs power alone was real, and therefore accepted savagery as their patriotic duty.

The question is then why this sudden tide of moral demands on society originated at this particular period of history. The first wave of these passionate cravings was released when religious hopes were blighted by the scientific interpretation of the universe. Social reform could offer this tide of moral passions a beneficent outlet, but the situation was unstable. For a further sharpening of scientific analysis denied the very existence of genuine moral motives, particularly in public life. Appeals to conscience and humanity were now scorned as deceptive clap-trap or as utopian sentimentalism. This is when our modern scientific fanaticism was born. The process was favoured in countries where the absence of a civic tradition allowed people to put their theories literally into action. In such circumstances modern man's moral passions rushed wholly into the remaining,

scientifically accredited channels of action: they became embodied in a machinery of violence.

This is indeed what the famous transformation of Socialism from a utopia into a science actually amounts to. It does not change the moving force of Marxian Communism, which continues to lie in its utopian fervour. But this moral passion now operates through supposed scientific predictions, the execution of which is entrusted to a mechanical monster: to a party, a police and an army welded into a single machine. Hidden inside this machinery, the great humanitarian passions of the movement are no longer accessible to argument. Immune against reason and morality, they are made blind, fanatical, inhuman.

The gradual humanization of the Soviet regime that has occurred since Stalin's death may be regarded as a leaking out of the generous passions buried alive under the scientific armoury of Bolshevik violence. Insurgent Communists in Hungary appealed to these original aspirations of Communism by crying for truth and justice.

They died for these ideals and in doing so have opened for us a door to their hopes. The rescue of humanity from the menace of scientific enslavement will depend on such men as they were.

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\* We are thankful to Prof. Polanyi for this text of a broadcast which he recently gave on the B.B.C.

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The poet has withdrawn from language-instrument in a single movement. Once and for all he has chosen the poetic attitude which considers words as things and not as signs. For the ambiguity of the sign implies that one can penetrate it at will like a pane of glass and pursue the thing signified, or turn one's gaze towards its reality and consider it as an object. The man who talks is beyond words and near the object, whereas the poet is on this side of them. For the former, they are domesticated; for the latter they are in the wild state.

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

## *Literary Prospects in Free India*

By TULSI NARAYAN SINGH

SINCE the attainment of independence we have dedicated ourselves to the task of national reconstruction through planning. Obviously the State has a very important role to play in the achievement of this social objective. We realise also, and quite rightly, that changes on the material plane alone, howsoever impressive and spectacular they may be, will not lead us far towards the fulfilment of our national destiny. India has had a glorious past and a rich cultural heritage. Centuries of foreign domination, however, bred a spirit of decadence that had permeated the entire texture of our national life. It is our duty, therefore, to address ourselves to the task of cultural resurgence with the same earnestness that characterises our efforts towards the achievement of a higher standard of life. The State, it goes without saying, can play a vital role in this sphere as well. A democratic government in particular which claims to reflect the hopes and aspirations of the nation as a whole cannot adopt an attitude of indifference towards this aspect of national reconstruction. It is not enough that we satisfy the needs of the body. The deeper urges of the spirit also have to be attended to.

The government of India, it must be said to its credit, is keenly alive to its responsibility in respect of the cultural renaissance taking place all over the country under the impact of a changed national outlook. We have a number of State awards calculated to provide incentive to workers in various spheres of aesthetic endeavour and to focus public attention on the essential unity of our culture. The different linguistic groups which had lived in complete isolation from one another are discovering new points of contact. We are conscious now of an identity of purpose which transcends the barrier of language. The man of letters in particular finds this new climate ideally propitious for the fullest development of his artistic talents. He is no longer a forlorn, contemptible creature depending on the patronage of a fickle reading public. The State is there to confer honour and recognition on him for a really good piece of work published in any of the fourteen languages recognised in the Indian constitution. It is a welcome trend which holds promise of a rich literary harvest in different regional languages of the country.

There is a considerable volume of public opinion, however, which looks askance at this new development in the realm of letters. The artists themselves have held conferences to discuss the implications of their patronage by the State. Is there anything sinister behind the lengthening shadow of the State over a field which was exclusively their own? Does this new development impose any restraints on their freedom of expression? These and similar questions have been agitating the minds of the artists for some time past and the general public also is vitally concerned with the matter on account of its far-reaching repercussions on our intellectual response to the various problems facing the country today. If the State patronage of art results in the artists' subservience to the party in power, and the distribution of largesse has the sole aim of enlisting their support for the government, the prospects for free thinking are indeed very dismal. It is a tendency most inimical to the growth of democratic traditions. The government of India should see to it that there is no ground for suspicion regarding its intentions. The artists also need not take an unduly alarmist view of the interest the State has begun taking in the development of arts. If the government is truly national in its character and seeks to reflect the collective will of the entire mass of people represented by it, its patronage of art and artists will surely yield rich dividends.

The Elizabethan era of English history provides an apt example. England during the reign of the virgin queen witnessed the highest flowering of her literary genius. It was also a period of undisguised patronage of poets and dramatists by the Court and the nobility. Every writer worth the name aspired to bask in the sunshine of the queen's favour. The writings of Edmund Spenser and Shakespeare, to name only the greatest literary figures of the age, are suffused with adulatory references to the sovereign. And yet, there is not even the remotest suggestion in the works of the Elizabethan writers, great or small, that they suffered from any kind of inhibition as a consequence of their willing acceptance of State patronage. Their full-throated praise of the queen was by no means an act of sycophancy. It was in fact a demonstration of patriotism.

At no other time in the history of England are to be found such national homogeneity and unity of purpose as during the reign of queen Elizabeth. She came to embody the hopes and aspirations of the nation as a whole. The heart of the sovereign throbbed in unison with that of her subjects. The writers of the age were wide awake to this unique phenomenon of the contemporaneous British history and considered it their patriotic duty to sing the glories of the virgin queen. In such an atmosphere of harmony and cordiality the State patronage of art was bound to yield impressive

results. Apart from being prolific and offering infinite variety, Elizabethan literature is characterised by that unique vitality which marked the national life of the British people during the heyday of their glory.

With the Stuarts on the throne, however, we find an element of conflict entering into the body politic of England. The sense of national homogeneity that had been the hallmark of the Tudor rule was no longer there. People were in no mood to support kings who claimed absolute power and used it arbitrarily. In the new political climate the relationship between the sovereign and the writer undergoes a radical change. Milton, the greatest literary figure of the age, plunges headlong into the civil strife as a champion of the popular cause. The experience gained during those momentous years was woven into the texture of the *Paradise Lost* and the book is very much more than an elaborate version of the biblical story precisely because of the human significance the poet's experience of the civil war has bestowed on it. While the writers of the Elizabethan era found unrestrained expression of their literary genius through the patronage of their sovereign, the author of the *Paradise Lost* barely a century later felt that he could not achieve the highest fulfilment of his literary destiny without conflict with the king.

In our own country the tradition of the State patronage of artists dates back to remote antiquity. The poet (kavi) was an honoured member of the Raj-Sabha described in the Vedas. Coming down to the times about the beginning of the Christian era, we find the unique example of Kalidasa achieving the climax of literary glory under the patronage of Vikramaditya. As any reader of his works can see, the high standard of aesthetic and emotional expression attained by him could have been possible only in an atmosphere of absolute freedom. It is only in medieval times when the decadent phase of the feudal nobility had set in that we find poets and bards devoting their entire poetic genius to a flattering glorification of their patrons. The Hindi poetry of the *Reeti School* which held sway for about two centuries reveals a phase of feudal decadence. Most of the poets of this school enjoyed the patronage of feudal princes and wrote erotic poetry in order to cater to the depraved taste of their patrons. We find in them a depressing illustration of intellectual servitude resulting from their abject dependence on a decadent nobility.

One thing worthy of note in this connection is that the State and society in ancient India were two distinct entities. While the State was sensitively responsive to all varieties of legitimate social urges and considered it its duty to create conditions for their adequate fulfilment, it never sought to establish its grip over the cultural life of the people. When these

two agencies of an integrated public life functioned in harmony, naturally there was an unhampered growth of art and literature.

It should be clear from the examples cited above that the vital thing for a literary renaissance under the aegis of the State is its capacity to reflect the collective will of its people. A government truly democratic and broad-based so that it commands the willing allegiance of the populace is the most effective guarantee of a healthy cultural life animated by purposeful social ideals. Where the State and society are at cross-purposes, some form of pressure, overt or subtle, is bound to be felt by artists not conforming to the pattern of the administrative machinery. State patronage in such a context may be an insidious device for the brain control of the artist. It is hard to visualise a government tolerant of views running counter to its own ideals.

A very intriguing feature of political developments during the twentieth century is the spectacle of national unity presented by totalitarian States. The identity of purpose discernible between the State and society in such a set-up, however, is more apparent than real. The State with its overall control of public life lays down a rigid code of discipline for artists no less than for people engaged in other spheres of national activity. Everything is set to pattern under the steam-roller of the administrative machinery. Writers not chiming to the tune of people in power are confronted with the grim alternative of persecution and forced exile. Luckily we do not have such a situation in our country and the strong democratic sense of our people, it may be hoped, will never allow the emergence of this pernicious tendency here.

The best method of obviating any possibility of State pressure on artists would be to devise an agency constituted of persons of irreproachable integrity to act as a *liaison* between the two. With full autonomous status granted to them, the various national Akadamies should be expected to do this job splendidly well. The task of determining the comparative merits of the various works of art must be left to men of eminence in different spheres of aesthetic endeavour. Obviously this throws a tremendous responsibility on artists. They have to rise above cliquish considerations that are so much in evidence in the world of arts now-a-days. Rigidity of thought and intolerance do not make for balanced assessment of merit.

Artists in free India should realise that the evolution of a truly national literature reflecting all the cross-currents of life is, in its ultimate analysis, their responsibility. The problem before them is one of developing a high degree of sensitiveness to the intricate social phenomenon around them and a capacity to grasp the basic factors responsible for its changing pattern. Our country today is astir with new ideas of progress. The entire nation is

undergoing a process of revolutionary transformation. It should be the duty of our artists to study this process, to give effective expression to our people's collective urge for progress and finally to point the way to a speedy attainment of our national objective. What measure of success they achieve will depend on the correctness of their social vision and their ability to give it the garb of genuine art. With a bewildering variety of problems demanding more than one approach for their solution, we must ensure an atmosphere of absolute freedom for our artists. This will make not only for a rich variety of literature but also for a presentation of our national life in all its totality.

IT WOULD BE naive, however, to suggest that guarantee of full freedom from all kinds of restraints imposed by the State will alone provide conditions for a prolific output of good literature. While the artists have to resist outside checks, they must also resolutely fight against the restraining influences inherent in their own understanding of their aesthetic objective. We are living in a period of cataclysmic changes. Everywhere we find the traditional values of life disintegrating under the impact of new social forces. It is a disconcerting phenomenon not so much because the old values were in any way ideal for all times but on account of our inability to have evolved a new faith capable of holding us in balance with the changing pattern of life all over the world. The artists with their imaginative grasp of factors responsible for this upheaval in the realm of ideas can guide humanity out of the mental confusion enveloping it today. The conflict between the old and the new has also brought them face to face with the necessity of forging new media of expression. Traditional literary forms, it is felt in many cases, are ill-suited to express the new consciousness of the present. Very often a good deal of experimentation has to be gone through before a new form adequate to the task of the writer is ultimately hit upon. Even writers unwilling to discard the older literary moulds have felt obliged to modify and adapt them to the necessities of the new content they seek to express. An eminent Hindi writer, Shri Vatsyayana, has characterised this experimental trend in modern literature as the quest of personality. Whatever it may be, there is no denying the fact that a substantial volume of literature today, both from the points of view of form and content, marks a noteworthy departure from the traditional line.

There may be writers, however, who are altogether impervious to these new demands of the age. To them centuries of progress in different spheres of life and thought mean no readjustment of mental attitudes. They are slaves to outworn traditions and are content to express the spirit of a dead

past through conventional literary forms. Now, this allergy to fresh currents of thought is as inhibiting a factor as the one already alluded to. It is imperative that our writers keep their minds open and register their sensitive reaction to all new developments crucial to the fate of their country and mankind.

No less risky would be an indiscriminate acceptance of such new trends of thought as are foreign to our own historical traditions and do not harmonise with the state of things obtaining in our country today. With the crumbling down of national and geographical barriers as a result of scientific and technological progress, we have recurrent waves of ideas, no matter where they have their origin, sweeping over the entire globe. Very often we clutch at them and they gain a temporary vogue without ever getting assimilated into our own cultural heritage. Such alien trends transplanted on a soil not congenial to their healthy growth cannot but result in a wayward development of literature. Our writers have to guard against this tendency as well. The lure of everything that is new, whether it answers to our purpose or not, must be resisted. A total repudiation of the past would sever us from our moorings and strike at the very root of a healthy national life. While marching in tune with all healthy and progressive trends of thought in this fast changing world, our writers must preserve whatever is vital and of abiding value in our rich cultural heritage. It is a delicate task requiring a shrewd sense of discrimination and the capacity to organise the apparently heterogeneous elements from our past and present into an organic whole.

Yet another baneful influence on literature is that of sharp ideological conflicts raging all over the world today. We find an increasingly large number of writers entering the lists and making the sphere of art a battleground of ideas. There cannot, of course, be any objection to their sincere adherence to any particular creed or to their interpretation of life and its problems in the light of their personal convictions. For creating art possessed of irresistible aesthetic appeal, however, it is absolutely essential that we provide an extensive base of practical experience to support our ideology. Dogmatic adherence to a creed which is at variance with the facts of life will invariably result in a crude distortion of reality. The writer will be interested in an emphatic presentation of his views rather than in a dispassionate study of the social scene around him. It is important, therefore, that our writers shed off narrowness of thought and develop a broadminded outlook upon the world and its problems. Let them have a distinct point of view by all means; but let them not be dogmatic about their creed. The surest way to a correct understanding of the complexities of the modern

world is to be rational and dynamic in one's thinking. Good art is not so much a result of craftsmanship as of a writer's profound and varied experience of life and a definite point of view which organises this more or less haphazard mass into a shapely form.

With a good many literary competitions organised from time to time under the auspices of the State, our writers in different regional languages have been getting more opportunities of meeting together and having free exchange of views on problems common to them all. It is time they devised a permanent literary forum for the purpose. Discussions of this nature will go a long way towards helping them achieve a high degree of aesthetic and ideological clarity. It may also prove a deterrent influence on the spate of rubbish literature in the Indian book market today. It is very often complained that a large section of our reading public has suffered a severe setback in taste in respect of its choice of books. Discussions among writers in which readers of understanding are also invited to participate will surely mean an improvement of literary taste as well. With a new awareness of the essential unity of Indian culture and a spirit of perfect cordiality animating their literary endeavours, our Indian writers can play a vital role in the resurgence of culture taking place all over the country today.

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Let us by all means collaborate in trying to discover the laws of society, the way in which these laws work out, the best method to go about investigating them; but for God's sake, after we have demolished all the dogmatisms a priori, let us not of all things attempt in our turn to instil another kind of doctrine into the people; let us not fall into the contradiction of your compatriot Martin Luther, who, after overthrowing the Catholic theology, immediately addressed himself to the task, with a great armory of excommunications and anathemas, of establishing a Protestant theology.... Let us not pose as the apostles of a new religion—even though this religion be the religion of logic, the religion of reason itself. Let us welcome, let us encourage all the protests; let us condemn all the exclusions, all the mysticisms; let us never regard a question as closed, and even after we have exhausted our last argument, let us begin again, if necessary, with eloquence and irony. On that condition, I shall be delighted to take part in your association—but otherwise, no!

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon to Karl Marx

## T. S. Eliot

### *Reflections on his 70th Birthday*

By NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE

WHEN I began to read poetry first in the mid 1930s, I was taught to accept Eliot primarily as a modern poet. I stress the word because it did not necessarily mean the same thing as being contemporary. Yeats was considered contemporary, but Eliot was decidedly *modern* — and with the word went a hint of that 'shocking as a fine art' which had brought Oscar Wilde so much notoriety during the early Nineties. Forty years later, in the early Thirties, when Auden broke a line with a hyphen thus—

And the shingle scrambles after the suck-  
ing surf,

or when Day Lewis allowed himself to sentimentalize—

Yes, why do we all, seeing a Red, feel small,

it was argued by 'the Progressives' that such shock tactics were needed to revitalize poetry, whereas the Blimps, sheltering behind their copies of *The Times*, merely spluttered and spoke about 'such sentiments in verse as being quite shocking.' I quote from a correspondence column in *The Times* because between the wars it used to be traditional each year for some letter-writer to attack *modern* art in general and then for somebody else to drag in *The Waste Land*.

Now Eliot has always delighted in the unexpected; in his poetry he frequently abandons rhyme because it gives too easy a clue as to what comes next and uses it only, as in the case of 'afternoons' and 'coffeespoons', when it can create an unsuspected effect; it is typical, for example, of the kind of shock that he likes to give an audience that after the Knights have killed Becket they should step forward and then defend their action. Which, once more, reminds me of my schooldays.

One term a travelling company visited us, led by Martin Browne (Eliot's old friend and regular producer). Posters were put in the hall billing *Murder in the Cathedral*, and on the night of the actual performance, as was the custom, the maids were seated in the gallery. During some of the long opening speeches they began to titter, and after the first interval (and at the producer's request) a junior master was dispatched to try and keep order during the second half; he was successful. They had come, lured by the title, and expecting a thriller; they kept silent, baited by the promise of

attendance at an Edgar Wallace play to be produced later in the term. The next day I remember a senior master beginning a class with the gambit: 'Frankly, I thought last night's show a lot of nonsense. Too high flown by far.' What a shock tactic! Immediately we all leapt to the play's defence, and I think that that was the very first time in my life that I ever had to defend poetic drama.

These are personal reminiscences, and I (who am exactly half Eliot's age) expect that they could be multiplied by many more from my own generation because to us, at that time, Eliot seemed essentially an European figure, whereas by contrast, Yeats, with his interest in Irish politics, appeared a more parochial figure. The mid 1930s, like the whole decade, was one of international implications. Shakespeare was constantly being presented in modern dress, and *Coriolanus* was frequently played against a Fascist or Nazi background; in fact, I recall one enterprising school that dressed the Knights in *Murder in the Cathedral* as soldiers with swastikas on their arms! Of course many of these productions were put on in small converted chapels turned into theatre clubs, and where the repertoire ranged from modern dress Shakespeare to Auden and Isherwood plays, from new classical translations by MacNeice to Spender's *Trial of a Judge*. If Eliot held differing political and religious views to this group of fellow poets, his work none the less was acted before audiences whose sympathies were left-wing and agnostic; again, his own publishing firm who sponsored most of this group brought out his books in a format so similar to theirs that it suggested an uniform edition. No matter how at variance his views were with theirs, it was difficult to disassociate him from the rest: the only distinction that we made at school was that we regarded him as their leader.

At least, this is how I and my contemporaries thought of the literary scene. Were I however asked to write an article about the Thirties now, I should record it differently. I should see Eliot more as an individual than a leader, an individual like Yeats, and I think that for poetic significance (as opposed to political significance) I should now put Roy Campbell, Vernon Watkins and Dylan Thomas in place of Spender, MacNeice and Day Lewis.

I suggest that it is both Eliot's sense of international implications and his deeply religious view of politics that has brought him a fame far beyond the realms of poetry. Perhaps one day an enterprising student may build a treatise round the Eliot quotations that have been chosen as epigraphs, chapter-headings and even as titles by those whose books have no *direct* bearing on poetry. As earlier I stressed the word *modern*, so I now stress the word *direct* since *indirectly*, as Eliot has shown, poetry has a bearing on everything. 'By indirection find direction out,' advised Polonius, while,

in an age of scepticism, Eliot himself has commented: 'If bishops are a part of English culture, then horses and dogs are a part of English religion.' For as a poet, dramatist and critic he has never pursued breadth at the expense of depth, so that behind his approach to every subject there has always been the weight of authority. That authority has been the basis of his leadership, and with the years it has increased. Indeed, is it not rather an odd and glorious thing to reflect on a poet whose books have achieved popularity and sales such as normally are only associated with best-seller novels and the lives of film stars? And is not all this more odd and glorious when it is remembered that no concessions or sacrifices of artistry have been made in the process?

There was a time when critics regarded *The Rock*, *Murder in the Cathedral* and *The Family Reunion* as hole-in-the-corner drama. Certainly it could be said that these productions were put on for an elite, whereas right from the earliest days Eliot has been concerned with fashioning an art that might exert a wider appeal. That appeal was made by *The Cocktail Party* and *The Confidential Clerk*, both as triumphant in the London West End as any Noel Coward comedy. But what was so triumphant from an artistic point of view was the way in which the poet had fashioned a language for his players that could slip from colloquial prose into poetry with such speed and ease that it was hard to know exactly where the transitions took place. At least I am speaking of the reaction in the theatre, of the average playgoer who is interested in judging a play acted, not read. Of course for those that follow the text there is the marvellous echo achieved in the first scene of *The Cocktail Party* over the 'gin and tonic' episode, or that superb use of the three-stress phrase in *The Confidential Clerk*—

And lock the gates behind you,  
which recalls *The Tempest*—

And makes my labours pleasures.

But this is technical criticism; it concerns the practitioner in verse, but it does not really concern the spectator who is only interested in the result.

A century ago, in Matthew Arnold's day, readers were not so concerned with whether Newman's faith was the right one as with whether there was room for faith at all. Today, people are not so much concerned with whether religion is true, but with whether it works. This may sound like an utilitarian view, such as the playgoer's concern with whether a play works; and, on separate levels, it may reflect an attitude to drama and life that is basically the same. Eliot as a writer accepts the prevalence of such an attitude, and using the framework of West End comedy he has attempted to provide a

variation on Divine Comedy. In *The Cocktail Party* in Celia Coplestone he shows his audience the kind of material out of which a saint is made, while through the 'guardians' he tries to show the workings of grace. In *The Confidential Clerk* in the last act when Colby says—

Now that I know who my father is I can follow him,  
the implication would seem to be that not until a man knows his Father in Heaven can he expect to know himself; and in this, as it is hinted at the end, he may be helped by the fact of recognizing in himself a part of the Divine Image. The construction of the second play — a cross between Greek drama and Gilbert and Sullivan — represents a dramatist's form of shock tactics, while the search for a father-figure is a particularly *modern* problem in which psychology, using a different set of words, is only joining in a pursuit which has been a religious quest since time immemorial and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. It should not be forgotten that the same author who wrote *The Confidential Clerk*, a few years previously published his *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. I take a sentence from the appendix to that book: 'An individual European may not believe that the Christian Faith is true, and yet what he says, and makes, and does, will all spring out of his heritage of Christian culture and depend upon that culture for its meaning.'

To the man who can write this, the phrase, 'Oh! God', can be either a blasphemy or a prayer. Years ago when I was at school I can remember a boy being silenced for blasphemy for saying that Christ's last words on the Cross were the greatest poetry in the world. I think that this extraordinary view was held because poetry and religion were then regarded in separate compartments and, separate to both of them, was something called religious poetry connected with solemn faces and black Sunday suits. It has been the achievement of Eliot to break through this compartmental view and in so doing break through to a new generation. It is said that Christianity should go out into the market-place; certainly Eliot has taken the poetry of religious implication triumphantly into the secular theatre. Once, too, the mediaeval dramas in the market-place reminded men of passages from Christ's life; the later plays of Eliot recall those passages, but with a subtlety and weight of authority such as has been unparalleled in this century.

It is perhaps a singularly happy coincidence that such a man's birthday\* should fall on a day when the Church celebrates the death of two early Christian martyrs, St. Cyprian and St. Justina.

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\* T. S. Eliot's 70th birthday falls on September 26, 1958.

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# POETRY

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## HYMN TO THE RIVER

### 1

At last She found her rest.

Not dead, but only transposed  
To the dark interior of the river,  
She has learnt to live more stealthily;  
Bigger than any weed but as deeply living.

Today, her clothes are moss, and beneath  
Is a body light as water;  
When blood was hers, it lay entombed within,  
What is she now but a cool lagoon,  
For water, our ancient solace, has calmed her pores.

### 2

She set out from a hidden lake  
Where unbelievable birds drift silently;  
O my woman, you  
Flooded the nerves of the rain-tree forest,  
Filling with coolness the hot wells of hell;

And when it seemed you would get lost  
In the innumerable lanes of a city of reeds,  
Then, holy river, you saw under the moon  
That pure and ancient water, white as milk and so still  
That you thought the covering sheet of cream

Might break with the sudden splash of your fall.  
But you left not a ripple, so purely  
Of water was your own substance.  
O ancient, beloved mother, keep  
Our innocent daughter in your deep certitude.

JYOTIRMOY DATTA

(These two poems are part of a longer sequence of poems. Translated by the poet  
from the Bengali)

## THE GOLDEN FOX

I saw the golden fox within my garden.  
 I felt desire rock within my heart.  
 I begged my friends to grant me pardon  
 For with the golden fox I must depart.

And I must follow him all nights and days  
 Beneath the pulsing stars and sun,  
 And through the frost of winter ways  
 In which he leads till fox and I are one.

But you who know my strange delight  
 Or leap from eagle's cliffs, and have not daring  
 To follow foxes through the night—  
 Know not love nor love's despairing.

JEREMY NELSON

## O HEART I HAVE SEEN

O heart I have seen  
 A sorrow in your blood  
 And since that sorrow is,  
 Your soul shall not confound.

Between the truth and lie.  
 The monument you raise  
 Trembles in the wind  
 Beneath a blackened sky.

The Tower of Babel falls  
 And into isolation  
 Man is thrust away  
 From man and no-one calls.

O sorrow you are mine  
For I recall my childhood  
When the morning star  
Arose as white as wine,

And night was purified  
Because the strutting cock  
Beneath the star awoke  
And spread his comb and cried.

Long ago youth once spun  
A beauty fierce and strong  
To climb and conquer every  
Mountain of the sun.

And tangling all the moon  
Within the tree's wild lace  
A heart once crowned in love  
Was beckoned to the chase.

And though I'm old and lame  
Still daring bids me come  
And follow, follow blindly  
To the mountains of the sun.

But beauty strips my mind  
And casts my gold away,  
For sorrow in my heart  
Is evil in this way.

JEREMY NELSON

## THE BAT

He is not one of the birds' tribe; and, therefore, does not prosper  
 In their social chirping. Nor is he related to beasts. And he has  
 No petition before their assembly. In morning or evening,  
 He is never bandied about in any hushed gossip. In this world  
 He is a lone excess. The very justification of his existence  
 Has been the continual scoff of both the aerial and the terrestrial.

Yet in the night his wings catch the weird sky.  
 The apes huddle together. The birds retire.  
 But he is dauntless: with piercing eyes he discovers the headless goblin  
 Under the circular Chhatim, and stops for a momently concentration  
of friendly warmth.

In the next breath waking the unfriendly world  
 He declares, 'Here is my challenge. Accept, if you can.'

Then heedless like a moon-struck youth he roves  
 In the domain of the night, self-willed, possessed, flying,  
 He crosses the stairs of the wind as if to hug the clouds;  
 Or, perhaps, to send out the puff of the wings to the constellation  
of the Great Bear.

On a sudden impulse he reclines on the railing over the Qutub,  
 And looks below where the world is half-revealed, and with a soft sleep  
 Wraps birds and beasts, when none but he is awake.

PURNENDUBIKAS BHATTACHARYA

(Translated by the author from the Bengali)

## THE FIRST YEAR

(For Anima and Parameswara Sarma on their daughter, Tun's first birth day)

Come words to me  
crossing countries beyond my blind senses,  
as You came  
to your present point of flame  
that is your mother's miraculous flesh—  
you invaded her holy hills and rivers,  
dived into her dark, fertile depths,  
and after a nine-month seize,  
made friendship with her country—  
From country to country  
you are here now for a year,  
a year burning like a candle without ends,  
flickering against the night of time.  
Your noises like their twitters  
and your gestures fluttering like birds  
have built nests on our lonely trees!  
Now that you have brought your first year,  
an argosy laden with the loveliest gifts,  
to our unexpected shores,  
now that you have unhorned the first bull of time,  
may your first year, guesting with us,  
multiply into an archipelago of spices and pirates,  
and may your first year join all our years,  
may it hang like a lamp in your father's house,  
guarded by your mother's mascara eyes,  
and may our sins and sorrows  
perish like moths over its singing light!

K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

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# ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

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## The Necessity of English in India

By A. M. GHOSE

THE recommendations of the English committee headed by Dr. Kunzru, we hope, will be seriously considered by educationists all over the country.

If we scrutinize the reasons put forward by the protagonists of Hindi, or for that matter of any other language, we are forced to take into account certain issues, essentially cultural, not clearly visible on the surface. Those who think that English cannot be retained any more believe that Hindi can or ought to express the genius of the Indian mind. India, the argument runs, is not yet culturally free and, culturally we cannot emancipate ourselves till English continues to occupy the position it does. Cultural freedom, according to these champions of Hindi, consists in doing away with the legacies of the west and reviving the ancient ideals. The acceptance of Hindi, the language that is spoken or understood by the largest number of people in the sub-continent, will, it is hoped, hasten the process of cultural emancipation. Basically therefore, the problem before us is twofold. Is cultural emancipation in the sense mentioned above at all possible? and, secondly, is it desirable?

A country's cultural life is inextricably connected with her political ideals and economic goals. Political and economic aspirations, in turn are, to a great extent, shaped by the achievements the country has made in the fields of science and technology. A study of the history of our recent past makes it clear that in the fields of

science and technology, politics and economics, we are overwhelmingly indebted to the west. The ideals of democracy, secularism, welfare, planning and many others, as they are understood today in this country, are characteristically western. Our cultural life, in short, is already westernized, in spirit as well as in form.

If by cultural emancipation is meant the revival of ancient ideas and ideals, the future seems to be extremely uncertain. It is, however, not impossible to revive some of those lost or forgotten ideals temporarily. But they can never function with an enduring vitality since their existence will be rootless in a world of ideals nourished by a set of alien and yet powerful ideas. An attempt at reviving ancient cultural traditions, in other words, may meet with an initial and perhaps flashy success but in the long run the traditions will atrophy because of unpropitious surroundings.

A genuine synthesis between the old and the new is not as easily achieved as we like to think. We have heard so much about the synthesis of the east and the west that any observation on the subject may appear redundant. There can be a synthesis in the true sense only when the tendencies to be synthesised are equally active and dynamic. When they are otherwise, the more dominant of the tendencies overpower and lead to the impoverishment and depletion of the less dynamic tendencies. The indigenous tendencies in this country are either lost or weak or already sufficiently diluted

in the sense that they have lost their original freshness. A synthesis, therefore, in the true sense of the term, does not seem to be possible.

We may, however, be asked to explain the nature of the awakening the country saw in the 19th century. The awakening was no doubt remarkable. But what was the 'Indian culture' with which the culture of the west was synthesised? If some meant by Indian culture the culture of the Hindus (of which part of the country? and of which period?) others referred to the composite Indo-Islamic culture. Yet a third group felt that both the Hindu and the Indo-Islamic cultures were equally stagnant and infertile. The awakening, according to the third school, was the sudden spurt gained by a small section of our people as a result of its contact with a living culture. Those who talk of synthesis should remember that the total picture even today is not very different. The complicated structure of our cultural life, here old and dilapidated, there partially synthesised and not adequately recognised, elsewhere half-synthesised and decadent, and still elsewhere young and restless, does not, on the whole, seem to hold any promise. For, to continue with the metaphor, the foundations are either old and unreliable or hastily constructed and weak. On such an insecure basis, the erection of a superstructure would be hardly possible; and even if it were, it would at best enjoy a brief glory.

The soul which Hindi aspires to express, I fear, does not exist any where except in the imagination of a few revivalists. The simple fact is that the 'soul' itself has changed; we are rapidly being westernized, not only in the fields of science and technology, politics and economics, but also in the fields of philosophy and religion and art and literature—aspects of our civilization with longer and hoarier traditions. We are increasingly turning to the west not

only for appreciation but also for inspiration; our religious and philosophical wisdom, as I said, are being increasingly interpreted in terms of the idiom of the west. Our entire attitude to the past, the very eagerness to discover the foundations of our culture and civilization, the methods we adopt to study and evaluate the achievements of the past are all borrowed from the west. In fact the whole of the modern world is rapidly being westernized. Our future, as far as one is able to predict it today, is going to be more westernized as we imbibe more of western science, technology and political ideas.

English, therefore, ought to be given a very important place in our educational schemes. The reasons for being ashamed of retaining English as the language for expressing our thoughts are without any meaning all the more because the best of our thinkers and philosophers (not to speak of scientists and mathematicians) have, as a matter of fact, expressed themselves in English. A couple of centuries of foreign rule has surely de-Indianized us. And why should we regret? There is no reason to be grieved because what we lost, judged by modern standards, had become artificial, sterile or morbid. And if we lost something worth preserving that was perhaps not so significant compared to what deserved demolition. Our caste system, social stratification and wide-spread poverty, the absence of any policy towards education, our lack of awareness of the scientific, technological and political changes in the world around and, above all, our other-worldly philosophy and selfsatisfied contentment all very clearly account for the appalling weakness that had crept into the life of the Indian people during the last six or seven centuries or even more. A people obsessed by the philosophy of the Upanishads, the keynote of which is supermundane intuition and world-denying 'moksa', could not possibly lay the foundations of

the physical sciences as, for example, did the Greeks in ancient Europe. We are lost in a morass of doubt if and when we want to trace the origins of modern science or its methods in what are often called the positive sciences of the ancient Indians.

If we are seriously thinking of 're-Indianizing' ourselves, the only way out is to refuse to accept the literary, artistic, scientific, technological, political and social—they are all interconnected—ideas, ideals, knowledge and skill that have come to us from the west and go back to the untarnished and indigenous sources of those ideas and ideals, and independently develop and nourish them till they are able to operate as powerful rivals of their modern western or westernized counterparts. But the discovery of the native and untarnished sources is difficult partly because the past to which they belong is almost lost and partly because our vision is thickly coloured by the mist of intervening centuries. The scholars, Indian as well as European, who have made sincere attempts at reclaiming our lost legacies deserve our gratitude. But recalling the glories of the past is not enough; unless we are able to trace an uninterrupted continuity the past remains only as a splendid relic. Our cultural history has innumerable gaps.

We can think of abandoning English only when we have at our disposal an equally powerful language, just as we can think of abandoning modern medicine only when we have at our disposal a reliable system of indigenous medicine. The growth and development of languages, not unlike that of literatures, obeys its own mysterious rules. We cannot exactly plan their growth or expansion. A language grows when great and original writers write in that language. It is here that we face the crux of the problem. We should not hope to give up English in the near future precisely because really original works are not being pro-

duced in any of the Indian languages. The reason behind this is not that the Indian languages do not get proper recognition and status, which is only partially true, but that the standards of scholarship are unimposing; our system of education does not encourage original and creative thinking. How the system has to be improved, therefore, is the really important problem. The solution, I believe, is not to be found in merely changing the medium of education.

It may, however, be said that our educational system is defective largely because the medium of instruction is a foreign language. Without going into the details of the merits and demerits of having a foreign language as the medium of education two observations could be safely made. First, the standards of schools, where the regional languages have already been media of education for some years, instead of showing any improvement have, in fact, deteriorated. This, however, does not mean that the change of medium of education alone has been responsible for the fall in standards; other factors have undoubtedly been there. Except perhaps at the primary level the medium of instruction does not seem to be an important problem. Secondly, it is 'foreign' education that has produced all our greatest mathematicians, scientists, thinkers and statesmen. Creative and original thinking depends more on the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, the comprehensiveness of the courses of study, academic freedom and the character and scholarship of the teachers, than on anything else.

The idea of imposing Hindi on the whole country should be given up for two other reasons. The two important goals before us are the unity of the country and the betterment of the standards of living. Our recent experiences make it abundantly clear that the imposition of Hindi on those whose mother tongue is some other language might be a serious threat to what has been

called the 'emotional integration' of the country. Raising the standards of living fundamentally means rapid and steady progress in science and technology. And one of the means of raising the standards of scientific research is closer contacts with the scientifically and technologically advanced countries. The study of English thus is indispensable. In the world of trade and commerce too English occupies an important place, particularly today.

We have often heard our leaders say that there is a gulf between those who have learnt English and those have not; such a schism, it is said, is unhealthy for the progress of the country. But will Hindi bridge the gulf except in those regions where the mother tongue of the common man is that language? And even in those regions more fortunate parents will continue to send their children abroad as they do today. The gulf, I believe, will widen in course of time. If the unity of the country is at all threatened, as, in fact, it perhaps is, the reasons are to be found elsewhere. Religious fanaticism, communalism, lack of vision and narrowmindedness and, above all, inadequate awareness of the goals to be achieved, explain the situation better. To say that the absence of a common language is the cause of disunity is to attach undue importance to an unimportant reason. Our social structure, our laws, our systems of agriculture and education, in short, our entire outlook toward life requires change. There are formidable obstacles in our age-old superstitions; it is these that have to be removed. One such superstition is our inordinate love of the past. Glorification of the past is perhaps a natural response of a people with a long history. The glories of the past are often recalled to soothe our vanity, and history is used as an instrument of propaganda.

The rapid changes in the fields of science, industry and political institutions in the 18th and 19th centuries in this continent gave the average European a sense of superiority. The oriental countries with their hoary civilizations could not quite reconcile themselves to their inferior positions. One of the reactions was to discover the past and draw inspiration from lost legacies. But the widespread antagonism to the west was responsible for two grave

mistakes. In the first place, the dynamic, rationalistic and positivistic attitude of the western mind was condemned as 'materialistic' and, in the second place, the past that was glorified engulfed their vision. The future did not arouse enthusiasm. History was studied to detect patterns, messages were read into the concatenation of events and facts were conveniently distorted. Such an attitude might have helped us in achieving certain ends when the country was not free. Our independence and our enlightened leadership ought to give us a sense of respectability; our historians should now be able to dispassionately assess the past; the failures will have to be candidly pointed out and their causes exhaustively analysed.

The unity of the country, a point on which so much emphasis is being laid today, I think, was never an accomplished fact in the past. The vast size of the country and the poor means of communication, the diversity of languages and religions, cultures and climates, were all responsible for a peculiar kind of unity in this country. For the purposes of administration, a few powerful kings did in a sense bring about a kind of unity which the country's geographical situation to a certain extent helped. But the unity of the country became a conscious goal and one worth pursuing only during this century. Until we have been able to remodel our schools and colleges where minds are moulded, we cannot hope to achieve true emotional integration.

The important issue, therefore, is neither the adoption of Hindi nor the rejection of English; the really important goal is the revitalization of this stagnant nation. Our political emancipation instead of being regarded as a goal should be regarded as the beginning of a series of stupendous experiments. To be sure, the most important experiment is not one of assimilation or synthesis, as it has often been said, but one of offering new and original responses to the challenges thrown by history by bringing into existence new beginnings in the different departments of life and thought. Since English serves an important purpose in this task of reconstruction it is necessary to retain that language. At the moment there is no other language in the country which can take the position of English.\*

\* Please see Correspondence Section.

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# ARTS

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## I. 'Orissi', the Ancient Classical Dance of Orissa

By INDRANI RAHMAN

FROM the earliest times, Utkal has contributed a glorious cultural heritage to Bharatvarsha. The Lingaraj and other temples at Bhuvaneswar and the Sun temple at Konarak still stand, broken but proud reminders of Utkal's great architects, sculptors, dancers and musicians. Dance has long been a part of life in Utkal. The earliest record is found in the Hatigumpha inscription at Udayagiri, Puri district, from the 2nd century B.C., which states that the king, himself an expert in music, arranged a performance of dance and music for his people. In the Rani Nur Gumpha is seen the figure of a king, seated in the dancing hall, with dancers and musicians performing before him. Perhaps the earliest evidence of Maharis (Devadasis) being employed within the temple in the service of its God, is to be found in an inscription in the Brahmeswar temple at Bhuvaneswar (middle of the 8th century A.D.), since when it may be presumed that the dances and songs of the Maharis became an integral part of temple ceremonial throughout Utkal. With the decline in the cult of Saivism and the emergence of the supremacy of Vaishnavism, the temple of Lord Jagan-

nath at Puri became the centre of religious and cultural activities from the 12th century onwards. At about this time, Jayadeva composed his immortal *Gitagovindam* which gained immense popularity, and the singing and dancing of its ashtapadis became an essential part of the Maharis' performances. The Maharis and their musicians were granted land by the kings for their services and enjoyed an esteemed position in society. Several of the queens became known for accomplishments in dance and music.

From the end of the 15th century began a critical period in the history of Utkal, and we notice the gradual decline of her empire through internal disintegration and finally as a result of the successive invasions by the Moghuls, the Nawabs of Bengal, Marathas, and the English. In 1850, during the reign of the Moghuls, Ramachandradeva, the Raja of Khurda, was put in charge of the Jagannath temple, and it was he who first introduced the custom of dressing young boys as girls to dance before Jagannath; they were called 'Gotipuas'. Although the Maharis continued to perform in the temple, they also began to perform in the



INDRANI RAHMAN IN THE POSE 'DARPANA BHANGI' THE ORISSI DANCE 'NARTANA',



'VASANA'



'TARANGA'

**GURU DEBAPRASAD DAS**  
**OF CUTTACK**  
**IN VARIOUS ORISSI DANCE POSES\***



'DHVAJA'

\* For all these photographs we are indebted to DR. CHARLES FABRI, who has done the most to get Orissi recognised as one of the important dance forms of India.  
 —Editors,

Royal courts as entertainers, and so their social position declined rapidly. The hereditary Gurus of 'Orissi' dance seemed then to take a greater interest in teaching the young boys, Gotipuas, to whom no social stigma was attached as it was to the Maharis. The Gotipuas thus became the dancers for religious festivities and for social gatherings as well, and it is they who have continued the tradition of Orissi dance and music up to the present times. The Maharis still perform before Jagannath, but they have forgotten their ancient art and often simply sing songs, beating the rhythm with their feet. Since the ending of royal patronage their existence has become difficult; they may receive as little as five rupees a month from the temple.

'Orissi' as we see it today, is a classical and highly developed dance art obviously based on the principles of the *Natya Sastra*. It is rich in *Nritta* (pure dance patterns) with complex footwork and rhythms. Its gesture language and *abhinaya* is similar to *Bharata Natyam* but with a more highly lyrical manner of exposition. Many of the basic postures of Orissi as performed today, are depicted on the ancient temple sculptures at Konarak and Bhuvanewar. The *tribhanga* (thrice bent) postures of the body are used profusely in Orissi, as are a number of postures that are stipulated in the *Natya Sastra* but which have ceased to be used in our other forms of classical dance. In the dances of the Gotipuas one can see certain gymnastic-like difficult postures which remind one of the *karana* and *angahara* sequences at Chidambaram temple in South India. These postures must have formed an integral part of classical dance throughout India in ancient times, as depicted in her sculptures, but were latter dropped from women's dance, perhaps because they were considered unseemly. It is in the Gotipuas' dance that postures similar

to these can be seen in actual dance today, and this should be a subject for study.

The primary position of Orissi dance is similar to *Bharata Natyam* except that the feet are placed wider apart, at right angles, and the palms of the extended hands face down. This placing of the arms is in imitation of Jagannath's own arms. Aside from a few similarities to *Bharata Natyam*, Orissi is an entirely different and individual dance art. The feet are beaten on the flat, ball, and heel as in other forms, but one unique and difficult step in Orissi footwork consists of placing the body's entire balance on the heels of both feet and moving backwards with rapid beats of the heels.

Orissi dance is accompanied by a music also called Orissi, a musical style peculiar to Orissa. Its songs are in either Oriya or in Sanskrit, most of them compositions of the classical poets of the past, although there are some from present day composers too. The themes except for a few *slokas* are the loves of Radha and Krishna. Some dances are accompanied by recitation of the 'bols' alone, others by the recitation or singing of rhythmic phrases such as 'tarita jhenu tajhum ta tatarita jhum' for pure dance sequences. The instruments accompanying Orissi dance are *Mardal* (Pakhawaj), *Gini* (Mandira) and the flute.

Just as there is a 'set' of dances in *Bharata Natyam*, Orissi also has a systematic set of dances, but the duration of a full set does not last longer than an hour at most. The dancer begins with *namaskara*, a *sloka* performed with *abhinaya* dedicated to Siva, Ganesha or any other god or goddess. The first dance is 'Batu', a pure invocation dance. It consists of 16 rhythmic sequences (*bols*) which are linked together by 16 different ways of returning back-stage and of interpreting the basic rhythm. Next is *Nartana*, another pure dance, but less formal and containing many sculpturesque postures. Then follows the exposition

with abhinaya interpreting the Sanskrit verses, and describing the Raga Swarupa, Raga Lakshana, and the raga-notes of the raga that the succeeding song will be in. This is followed by 'Pallavi', a sequence of rhythmic syllables recited and sung to the raga, and which is accompanied by pure dance. Next is 'Parija', the actual song usually concerned with the loves of Radha and Krishna, which the dancer interprets with abhinaya and gestures. Natangi is the joyous final dance. It is pure dance rich in sculpturesque patterns, and suddenly changing in the second half into 'jhula,' a swinging rhythm. Ashtapadis of *Gitagovindam* (Jayadeva belonged to Orissa, or at least that is what the Oriyas believe) are also performed with abhinaya in the course of these 'sets'.

There are many hereditary Gurus still to be found in Orissa, but their number is rapidly decreasing. Their students, the Gotipuas, still perform on festive occasions in villages and cities. A few young men outside of these communities have studied Orissi from the old Gurus, and are now the popular teachers of Orissi in the larger cities.

Besides the Maharis and Gotipuas, there are today many young girls from good families who perform Orissi as amateurs. It is urgent that Orissa now produce a few

professional dancers to sustain the art. With encouragement these could easily come from among the neglected Maharis. In the larger cities of India it is becoming fashionable to produce 'dance-dramas' in Orissi style, with young amateur dancers. Since Orissi is a solo dance not easily adapted to group choreography, these dance-dramas are usually a medley of all kinds of heterogeneous elements, and so have been disparaged by authoritative critics. This displaying of the Orissi dance dramas outside of its Orissan context does not help Orissi to gain its rightful place as a classical dance.

There is a controversy going on as to whether Orissi deserves to be recognised as a classical dance in the same category as the other four recognised forms: Bharata Natyam, Kathakali, Kathak and Manipuri. I believe that if Manipuri, a semi-folk dance, which does not conform to the rules of the *Natya Sastra* (not having any abhinaya at all), can be recognised as "classical", then Orissi, which does greatly conform to *Natya Sastra* and has elaborate *Nritta* and abhinaya, must surely be placed beside the other four systems in the classical category. I do hope the pure, classical, solo Orissi dance tradition would be further revived, and its genuine exponents and teachers encouraged.

## II. Fyaz the Romantic

By JAGANNATH BANERJEE

ALTHOUGH bred in the historic tradition of the Gwalior mode of classical music, Ustad Fyaz Khan developed a style of his own that was not an inconsiderable departure from the parent line. This departure, consisting mainly in the incorporation of novel lilts and cadences in the handling of notes and patterns particularly in *Khyal* according to the mannerisms of the *Rangile* School of Agra (which is materially an offshoot of the Gwalior School), bids fair to go down in history as a sort of romantic revolt in Indian music. Fyaz Khan, as far as I have seen, gave this revolt a remarkably progressive touch, thanks particularly to his vigorous, yet adaptable, voice enriched with *lag dant* and his musical temperament of a high order. Indeed, his was a towering personality in the realm of music, and the address of his style could hardly leave one unmoved. For the matter of that, even a determined chauvinist in relation to a different *gharana* would think thrice before rising in criticism against a rendition so rich, majestic and colourful.

In conformity with the Gwalior tradition, of course, there were in his music full-throated, yet easy, expressions of notes, deft uses of gamak as in *Dhrupad*, discriminating productions of *sruti* and straight sparkling *tan*. Special mention should be made in this connection of his *Alap* which was redolent of various features of this tradition in much the same way as were his *Dhrupad* and *Dhamar*. There is no doubt, however, that his execution of these types of music did not merely pursue the beaten tracks of use and wont; it was always invested with special qualities and

charms due, among other things, to a vision that was markedly his own. Besides this intelligent faithfulness to the parent tradition in the way of re-creating its special features in the course of his executions, the most important point about Fyaz Khan's music is its arresting note of romanticism which listeners not merely heard but felt over a whole half-century. This is where comes into the picture the great *Khyal* composer Ustad Mehoob Khan (*Daras Piya*), his father-in-law, in whose teaching Fyaz Khan found the most suitable scope for self-expression. The new jovial twists and turns of notes and passages, among other things, in the compositions of his father-in-law which the young pupil was not slow to absorb, prepared a groundwork for the maturing of his inborn romantic mind, and opened out new vistas of imagination for him. It is seen, therefore, that while Fyaz Khan was remarkably at home with his great *Alap*, *Dhrupad* and *Dhamar* in which he was initiated by his maternal grand-father Ghulam Abbas of Gwalior allegiance and which were rather on the side of this older tradition, perhaps he came to be more in his element in singing *Khyal* in the *Rangile* way after Mehoob Khan's impact on his musical development became perceptible enough to inspire his romanticism with novel compositions and mannerisms.

This *Rangile* singing of *Khyal* by Fyaz Khan involving a grand emotional sweep and a mercurial marshalling of notes with profuse *rang* and *dhang* points unmistakably to the romantic build of the artist's mind. Nevertheless, his romanticism, as

seen in his *Khyal*, was rather limited, being more on the side of dramatic form, colour and hilarity than a contemplative process of Raga-development resulting in lyrical pathos. Frolicsome handling of notes, rhythmic distribution of passages, employment of series of *bol tan* (as influenced by his mastery over *Dhamar*) and *halak tan* in a row, for example—all couched in the characteristic brevity of his *Khyal*—certainly produced a high romantic effect on his listeners. As a consequence, they were literally so carried away by the compelling attraction of this strange colourful form as to be hardly able to think very seriously whether any distinctive attention had been paid to the proper development of the Raga. Still, though strong, the communion that used to be established between Fyaz Khan and his listeners over his romantic *Khyal* was unavoidably rather extrinsic, as the appeal, usually, was based on its form rather than on its *Raga*-message. A water-tight demarcation, of course, between appeals based on extrinsic values on one hand and intrinsic ones on the other is not our contention for the present. Neverthe-

less, the fact remains that Fyaz Khan's *Khyal* seemed naturally to have more of the former than of the latter in view of the artist having been occupied more with formal embellishments of songs than with material and introspective developments of *Ragas*. This is why the systematic luxury or ruminating subjectivity attaching to *Raga*-development (the *behlave*, as in the finished form of Gwalior style) could not find much room in his *Khyal*, which was pre-eminently a fast dramatic movement rather than a slow lyrical process. Still, to experience his music was to be so engrossed with its romantic form, colour, technique and hilarity of expression that for the moment at least we could ill afford to feel in it the want of adequate *Raga*-development or that abandon of lyrical pathos to which an artist like Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, for instance, would attach the first importance. This is where the greatness of the romantic artistry of Fyaz Khan's style lies, although it is rather unilateral and confined mostly to formal values—a greatness that is conspicuous by its absence in the performance of his emulators, who in fact mimic rather than emulate him.

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# LETTER from TOKYO

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## The Place of Religion in Modern Japan

By JOSEPH ROGGENDORF

WHEN I returned to Europe last year for the first time after almost twenty years in Japan, I found that Europeans somewhat overrated the importance of the traditional religions in contemporary Japan. Many Europeans seem to imagine that the sophisticated mysticism of Zen pervades the daily lives of the people and that the morning meal is consumed in the reverential attitude of the tea ceremony. A young labour leader approached me after a lecture in Paris with the idea that French working men might learn a lot from their Japanese comrades who, he understood, relaxed in the evenings with the contemplative exercise of archery; he had read the French version of Herrigel's *Zen and Bowmanship*. It is commonly thought that at least some of the millions of fervent Buddhists must flock to the temples when the bells ring on a Sunday morning, while it is a matter of general puzzlement how General MacArthur could so easily void the "divinity" of the Emperor in which the nation had, after all, so ardently believed.

Many of these observations are, of course, based on nearly complete ignorance of the complexities of the modern Japanese scene. But many also come from the new mood I discovered in Europe, a mood of guilt at the Frankenstein monster of technology which, they fear, they have set into irresistible motion; a mood also of apprehension at the gadgets and ideologies of Western invention which seem to be turning the entire globe into one tasteless cultural jelly. The wish becomes the father to the belief

that a healthy religious tradition continues to safeguard the cultural identity of Asian nations.

Professor Toynbee must have spoken along these lines when in Japan a year ago, to judge from an interview published in December, 1956, by the monthly *Chuo Koron*. His Japanese interlocutor stated that religion amounted to little in the life of the nation and to practically nothing in the thinking of educated Japanese. Professor Toynbee replied that it was the same in Europe, where Christianity seldom entered into play except for christening, wedding and funeral ceremonies. "In every European country," he was quoted as saying, "the intellectuals think highly only of reason. Not only do they not believe, but they consider it a matter of shame to believe."

One dislikes to contradict such sentiments, not only because they are animated by a gratifying spirit of humility but also because any contrary assertion smacks somehow of the attitude of the pharisee in the temple. Nevertheless, it must be said that such simplifications do not help an objective appraisal of present conditions in Japan. That intellectuals are 'ashamed to believe' is as a general statement untrue of Europe, but it is true of Japan. That religion means nothing but an occasional service during one's lifetime can be said of wide cross-sections of Europeans but by no means of all, while it does apply to the overwhelming mass of modern Japanese. Statistics in matters of religion are a distasteful thing and not necessarily indicative of realities. Even

so, one may doubt whether religious indifference in Europe has reached such dimensions as certain official inquiries seem to reveal in Japan: 61.3 per cent of the inhabitants of the major cities without interest in religion, only 15.8 per cent of college students professing a religious conviction, or, again, 35 per cent of the students in a Buddhist seminary without faith in Buddha, 48 per cent without belief in the immortality of the soul.

After living for a long enough time in Japan, one is not surprised to run across such figures. They agree with impressions gathered through daily contact with the people. The lack of interest is almost total. The Japanese word for religion, *shukyo*, is itself almost disliked, so that publishers sometimes tell one to keep it from the title of a proposed book if it is to sell. It is true that religion means far less in the public institutions of the nation, in government, business, law, the schools, than in the smaller units, such as the family or the villages; less in the large urban agglomerations than in the country; less among the educated than among the common people. But these differences in degree are far less important than the amazing similarity of attitude throughout the nation. I submit that it is this basically identical attitude in all strata of society which distinguishes the situation in Japan from that in Europe.

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Few Japanese make the attempt to co-ordinate religion with reason and knowledge. The intellectual curiosity that is so prominent a national trait seems to abdicate before the phenomenon of religion. The tourist will try in vain, even where language is no barrier, to elicit any kind of interesting information concerning the meaning of a procession, a religious symbol, or an image. When the traveller does encounter an expert he may get answers on positive facts, but too much probing will only disconcert his guide. I recall the case of a young *bonze* conducting people around his temple and pointing out its various treasures with justifiable pride; when one of the

visitors asked whether the divine figure, *Daikoku*, had really appeared above the lake, or whether the story was a mere legend, the *bonze* answered: 'Well, originally it must have been a legend. But it happened so long ago that by now it has become a historical fact.'

The question of truth, one feels, does not really arise, and most Japanese dislike nothing more in matters of religion than any attempt at arguing, for which they use the contemptuous term '*rikutsu*.' This is not an unsympathetic trait; for faith is certainly not essentially a matter of argumentation, and I personally confess to feelings of discomfort when I was back last year among Europeans with their self-assertive and argumentative habits. Yet the Japanese are inclined to the opposite extreme. One gains the impression that a nation so highly educated, and so thoroughly schooled to tackle its everyday problems according to the norms of sensible conduct, is harming itself by excluding radically any rational criterion from religion. The result of this divorce is a kind of national schizophrenia. The common people are cheerfully unconcerned about their beliefs in faith-healing, fetishism or idol-worship. They are literate, and therefore not in the same category as peasants in certain backward regions of the West. Nor is there much indignation about this among the better educated Japanese. On the contrary, the average intellectual shares the conviction of the superstitious peasant that religion is essentially irrational, only he draws a different conclusion. Where the common people reject reason in the name of religion, he despises or ignores religion in the name of reason. For long the prevailing attitude of the intelligentsia was one of amused tolerance. There are signs that it is changing into one of grim contempt, not only for the more repulsive manifestations of popular religion in Japan, but of religious phenomenon as such. One suspects that this change is due to the influence of the powerful schools of postwar sociologists, with their Marxist bias.

One consequence of the separation of faith from religion is the relativist Japanese

concept of religion. Since the question of truth does not arise, what remains is the relative value of faith. 'It wouldn't do for me,' a professor will say after listening to an explanation on a point of faith, 'but my friend X would believe it.' He would not insist on more clarification for himself. Clarification and conviction are not at stake anyway; the question is rather the emotional appeal of faith and its utilitarian value. The mention of religious truth in an absolute, as opposed to a relative, sense is, therefore, usually mistaken for intolerance. When Professor Suzuki Daisetsu returned from Europe a few years ago, he reported in glowing terms on the signs of religious earnestness he had witnessed. But he also spoke of his amazement at discovering so many 'educated people who still believed in the historical revelation of Christ.' He was shocked not only because of the 'unscientific' nature of such views, but of the 'intolerance' they implied. He quoted Professor Toynbee as sharing in his indignation at the religion of the 'jealous God Jehovah.' He could easily have quoted other European relativists. The point to be retained in our analysis is that, in this case, Professor Suzuki presumably speaks for the majority of his countrymen, while Professor Toynbee does not, if one is to judge from the violent rejection he is encountering in England. To the Japanese, at any rate, relativism is so evident an assumption as to be taken itself not as relatively but as absolutely true. I have heard a well known critic argue that humanism was compatible with any form of ideology or creed except monotheism. That historical humanism has, in fact, grown up in an atmosphere of monotheism did not count. What counted was that nothing is true except the relative meaning of truth; several gods make for more tolerance than one.

It is only one step from here to the syncretism which is so strangely alluring to the Japanese mind. The temptation is felt more strongly today, in a world that searches for a principle of spiritual unification. Few Japanese thinkers, however, are concerned with the metaphysical quest for the trans-

cendent unity of mankind based on a common natural theology and natural mysticism, after the manner of Aldous Huxley, René Guenon or Friedrich Heiler. Nor are they as sure of their remarkable syncretistic creations as are certain Indian thinkers, such as Aurobindo Ghose, Radhakrishnan, Vivekananda, who hold that their version of Hinduism is the final fulfilment of all religions and, indeed, is that religion which is alone capable of unifying mankind. (It is worth remembering, nevertheless, that, at the time of the Greater Asiatic Co-Prosperity Sphere, the forces behind the movement of *hakko ichi-u* or 'The eight corners of the world under one roof,' were not exclusively or even principally of a militaristic nature but came from the syncretistic visions of such men as Toyama Mitsuru, Okawa Shumei, Fujisawa Chikao.) The proposition that all religions are equally good has so enormous a popular appeal because the Japanese find it easy to conceive of religion without reference to its historical source, theological content or logical consequences. Few people see anything ludicrous in the emblem of the Seicho-no-Ie sect, one of the new religions, which ingeniously manages to combine in one design the cross, the swastika, the star of David and the crescent. There is much genial good will behind this desire to welcome anything good wherever it may come from; there is also the secret wish not to risk falling out with any of the mysterious entities which, one never knows, may after all exist and may perhaps appreciate the ever so perfunctory polite gesture at a shrine or temple. I find most charming and revealing the story of the young man who, taken to church by his prospective bride, a Christian, replied to the question whether he believed in God: 'Of course, I believe in all the myriad gods (*yorozu no kamigami*) there are.'

It is these characteristics of the Japanese idea of religion, perhaps, that explain the light-heartedness, not to say frivolity, with which they can treat the sacred. Brothels in the shadow of temples, strip teasers enacting the Crucifixion in cabarets, a newspaper campaigning for subscribers with a

display of the Great Buddha of Kamakura reading the paper, drunken orgies with Christmas carols in the Ginza bars—these things are disconcerting to foreigners. But they are not intended as blasphemy. Religion is not supposed to be too closely connected with the rest of human activities.

Most of the attitudes here described as typically Japanese can easily be found in Europe too. Much sentimental pragmatic subjectivism is penetrating into the religious views of Westerners. Nevertheless, the view is held far more universally in Japan that religion is a mere matter of private feelings and entirely irrelevant to other responsibilities—except (in the more conservative families) the responsibility of ensuring the continuity of the household. What European dictators have tried to accomplish in Europe, Hitler in Germany and Stalin in the satellite countries—to confine the Church to the sacristy—has been brought about in modern Japan without martyrs and without rebellions.

If our analysis is correct, the question still remains how so radical a withdrawal of religion from culture could happen. The answer that immediately comes to mind is that it must have been the impact of the techniques and institutions of the West with their destructive effect on the social fabric of the nation. European observers are inclined to this view. Already in 1864 Sir Rutherford Alcock expressed the fear (*The Capital of the Tycoon*) that the sudden contact with 'new elements of thought and action' would corrupt and confuse this 'happy, contented and well-to-do population.' Apart from the consideration that the modernization of Japan was unavoidable—a fact which Sir Rutherford seemed to doubt, with more excuse perhaps than many of the later portrayers of a fictive idyllic Japan—the question still remains why Japan's traditional religions should so easily have abdicated their inspirational function when suddenly confronted with the new. I think the answer is to be derived from factors that lie much further back in Japanese history.

Religion has always sat lightly with the

Japanese. Sir George Samson has said of the early centuries, when the Japanese were absorbing the first powerful religious influences from abroad, that 'the terms of Indian metaphysics became a kind of fashionable jargon, Buddhist rites a spectacle, Chinese poetry an intellectual game.' Even the genuine zeal generated by the religious revivals of the thirteenth century did not pervade national life for long. The new sects fell out with each other, as had the earlier denominations since the Nara Period, and only contributed to the pluralistic chaos. Both Mahayana Buddhism and the native Shamanism which it encountered were extremely accommodating world-views, and the ease with which they interpenetrated each other must early have fostered the idea that religious commitment was a matter of subjective choice if not of unpredictable chance. Nevertheless, as one contemplates the masterpieces of ancient and medieval religious art, one is deeply moved by the obvious faith which must have animated culture centuries ago, and one asks oneself why this inspiration should have ceased so completely and at a date so much earlier than in Europe. I have neither expert knowledge nor definite views on the subject, but I suspect that the emphasis of Buddhism, at any rate of Japanese Buddhism, on the epistemological character of salvation, the insistence on the demasking of an illusory world as the way to deliverance, has something to do with it. This preoccupation leads to a variety of speculative systems that may be fascinating and even spiritually elevating but cannot, it would seem, satisfy the profound religious urge of ordinary individuals. A distinction is then established between religious truth as valid for the ordinary populace (*zokumon*) and that for the elect (*seimon*), and the characteristic dichotomy is, as it were, legalized. With almost iconoclastic fervor, Japanese Zen rejected all sutras, images and systems.

Nor is it surprising that the cultural policy of the Tokugawa regime, which has left such indelible traces on the national character, should also have influenced Japanese concepts of religion. The Shogunate ruth-

lessly suppressed Christianity and the Ikko confraternities and emasculated the Buddhist sects by strictly regimenting their status and their activities. The Tokugawa court philosophy was the positivistic and pragmatist Shushi version of Confucianism. It provided the common people with a practical code of behavior, although it hardly affected their beliefs and, in the long run, was unable to check the different set of moral standards which the rising merchant class evolved on its own. But Shushi Confucianism did largely fashion the thinking of the intellectuals. If one reads the records of the interrogation of Padre Sidotti—who landed in Japan during the Seclusion and later died in prison—by the scholar and Tokugawa official Arai Hakuseki, one is in the presence of a rationalist agnostic who finds it incredible that his obviously learned protagonist should sincerely believe in such absurdities as the Creation or the Fall. The intellectuals who prepared the Meiji Restoration were of this mind.

The builders of the modern Japanese State—politicians and educators such as Ito, Okubo, Itagaki, Okuma, and Fukuzawa—were typical representatives of a coolly pragmatic and thoroughly secularized Reason. They brought down the Tokugawa regime and its semi-feudalistic order, but they did so in the name of the rationalistic principles and the practical discipline they had learned in the hard samurai schooling of the same regime. They instinctively understood the mood of the nineteenth-century West, the optimistic progressivism which was then at its height. For Europe too, since its last appearance on the shores of Japan, had undergone a process of secularization. It had perhaps not been as thorough as that of Japan, but it was sufficiently advanced to create a facade behind which to conceal many of the still-alive spiritual values of the West. Yet more decisive for subsequent developments than too abrupt and too large a dose of the nineteenth century brand of Western materialism have been the secularistic and progressivist prejudices of the Japanese themselves. Ever since Meiji, the

Japanese have extended the distrust of their own past to the spiritual traditions of Europe and thus, while roaming the Western world in search of the new, have usually overlooked what, even if old, is equally needed to overcome a crisis which, in its essentials, the West shares with the East.

The passionate preoccupation of the modern Japanese with progress is not only understandable when one thinks of the problems which the technological order was posing then and is posing still: it is also justifiable in many other fields. Yet to apply only the standards of expediency and progress to the realm of spiritual values can lead to disaster. In fact, it has led to disaster; for the militaristic phase of recent Japanese history was not, as is often assumed, the resurgence of an indigenous feudalism or a revival of ancient Shinto myths which had always been dormant. It was an experiment in ruthless progressivism, the Total State enforcing absolute allegiance in the name of efficiency and by the most modern device of an artificially created semi-religious mythology.

I do not want to create the impression that I believe Japan is heading for immediate disaster because of the glaring spiritual vacuum in the nation. On the contrary, much of what is best in the Japanese mind has survived the turbulence of Japan's cultural history. There is a depth, tenderness and devotion in the religious outlook of many Japanese which, because of its delicate nature, instinctively shies away from public display and public activity and yet constitutes an incalculable force even today. There are also those who may not be disturbed by the quest for ultimate answers but who are inured to the dehumanizing tendencies and ideologies of our age by virtue of a resilience, patience and cheerfulness which, one may surmise, they have learned precisely in the bewilderingly pluralistic atmosphere of their country. One can only hope for the continuing good sense of these many quiet citizens and for some wisdom on the part of those responsible for moulding their thinking.

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# DISCUSSION

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## 1. Historical Materialism

### In Defence of Historical Materialism

By SATINDRANATH CHAKRAVARTI

MR Abu Sayeed Ayyub's article on historical materialism in Quest 17, raises in a clear manner a number of important issues, discussion of which can only be beneficial to an understanding both of historical development and of Marxism as a method of studying that development.

Limitation of space does not, however, permit me to examine a good deal of what he says; nor to trace the new humanist/existentialist genealogy of Mr. Ayyub's position.

In this article, I shall confine my attention to a criticism of some of the most glaring misconceptions in Mr. Ayyub's article and to a defence of Marxian historical materialism.

It is common knowledge that historical materialism represents the *application* of the principles of dialectical materialism to human society. Lenin describes historical materialism as "an integral formulation of the fundamental principles of materialism as *extended* to human society and its history."

Mr. Ayyub, however, separates historical materialism from dialectical materialism and says, "Historical materialism ranks far above the general theory of dialectical materialism."

To isolate historical materialism from dialectical materialism, is, to jeopardise the systematic unity of the Marxist world view. This is exactly the style of the platitudinists. And then again, to say that historical

materialism ranks far above dialectical materialism is like saying that the law of planetary motion ranks far above the law of gravitation. Moreover, Marxists nowhere accord this ranking order to historical materialism. While philosophically criticising historical materialism, Mr. Ayyub is, therefore, expected to state first the views of his opponent as objectively as possible, without an admixture of personal opinions and beliefs. It is obvious that Mr. Ayyub has made a departure from this legitimate expectation, for reasons best known to him.

Mr. Ayyub begins by posing the following premises:

(i) The material life of society is not primary; on the contrary, the constituents of material life of society e.g. the goods produced by man, the raw materials, implements of production etc. 'come into human life only because of certain needs, desires, impulses, motives—thoughts and ideals of man—all of which are mental and not physical'.

(ii) Historical materialism should be more appropriately named 'the economic conception of history'; and the economic conception after all, is a 'rigid theory of one-way determinism'.

(iii) The non-economic factors, being higher than the economic base, cannot be reduced to or explained in terms of the latter i.e. phenomena at a lower level.

Let us consider the above points.

(i) *First:*

Marx's historical materialism originated as an anti-thesis to the view that history is to be interpreted in terms of the self-development of the Absolute. Hegelianism today is dead. But, various brands of individualist explanation are current in the field of history. Mr. Ayyub has persuasively stated one such explanation.

It is not necessary that Marxists should contend that needs, desires and impulses, 'thoughts and ideals' of men, have no bearing on social historical causation. But the crux of the question is—*why* these needs, impulses, ideals and not any other? Why for example, the principle of authority in the 11th century and the principle of individualism in the 18th? Why suddenly the 'need' to emancipate from the restrictions of the Catholic Church during the period of Reformation? Why the 'need' for nation-states since the 17th century and not in the 11th? Marxists would argue: Given the economic situation of Europe at the close of the 15th century, it was necessary that the loose unity of medieval Christendom should be broken up, that the claims of the Universal Church should be repudiated, that strong nation-states should be brought into existence, and that the capitalist entrepreneur should escape from the restrictions imposed on him by guild and church and should take to himself an ethical and a religious outlook in harmony with the changed economic needs.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Ayyub, however, would explain history with his 'needs—impulses—ideals' theory. Has Mr. Ayyub clothed his subjectivist—individualist theory in historical flesh and applied it as an interpretation of some actual period of history?

Unfortunately not. Has he reconstructed some 'Age' in pre-history, so that its full meaning could be apprehended? No. His theory is perhaps an a priori scheme into which later he will fit historical facts.

The Marxist historical materialistic methodology begins at the economic end of the social complex. And as John Strachey

says—the economic substructure of society is the skeleton on which hang the flesh, blood, connective tissues, nerves, sense-organs and brain of the body social.<sup>2</sup> Certainly the skeleton is not the only part of human body: But Mr. Ayyub has been a rash anatomist who did not begin with the bones of his subject.

*Secondly:*

Historical materialism as a method of historical analysis has never been a pious wish. It is based on evidences from various fields of human knowledge, especially from the social sciences. The guide to study known as historical materialism has, by common admission, shed considerable light on (a) the close of the middle ages (b) the religious struggles of the 16th and 17th centuries (c) the 17th century struggle in England (d) 1789 in France (e) the rise of nationalism and (f) the whole epoch of industrial revolution in Europe. Likewise, as most scholars accept, little, if any, sense can be made of events of the past half-century, dominated by Imperialism, Capital-labour problem, the issue of Capitalism versus Socialism and War and Peace, by an interpreter who does not use the categories of historical materialism.

The fruitfulness of historical materialism as a method of enquiry has been gaining recognition in Archaeology, Ethnology, Economics and other social sciences. An eminent archaeologist says: 'Marx insisted on the prime importance of economic conditions, of the social forces of production, and of applications of science as factors in historical change. His realist conception of history is gaining acceptance in academic circles remote from the party passions inflamed by other aspects of Marxism'.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Ayyub, however, is not to be convinced.

He would argue—if economic conditions be of prime importance, then historical materialism should be 'more appropriately named the economic conception of history'—'historical economism', and historical economism is untenable. Presumably, he does not accept the legitimacy of gloves-off

philosophising. Otherwise, how can we explain the utter confusion made by Mr. Ayyub in comprehending the essence of historical materialism?

(ii) *First:*

Is historical materialism 'the economic conception of history'—historical economism? The answer is in the negative. The economic conception of history—economic materialism—implies a theory which holds that the economic aspect of society is the *unique* determinant, the *only* determinant, of all the rest. (vide Narodniks & Subjectivists in Russia)<sup>4</sup> Marxian historical materialism implies the conviction that the economic, political and all other aspects of society are *interconnected*—that all these *react* upon one another and also upon the economic basis, but that there is interaction, on the basis of economic necessity, which *ultimately* always asserts itself.

If, however, the economic base, the economic necessity, ultimately asserts itself, then what is the status of the non-economic factors—political, juridical, philosophical, religious, artistic etc.? Is it not a fact that 'ultimate determination' by the economic base entails not reciprocal action but a rigid theory of one-way determinism? That is exactly the philosophical claim of Mr. Ayyub.

Now, Mr. Ayyub's confusion is traceable to the fact that what he lacks is dialectics. To him, men make several *distinct* histories—the history of 'economic factors' and the history of law, the history of morals, the history of art etc. Economic factors and non-economic factors are, as it were, discrete 'forces' which drag human society, each in its own way along the path of history. From the standpoint of the materialist conception of history, however, men do not make several histories, but *only one* history, the history of their own social relations, which are determined by the state of the productive forces at each given period, the social complex comprehending various aspects—economic, political, philosophical, etc., in its inter-related unity.

*Secondly:*

The materialist conception of history is based on the legitimate assumption that human beings are polyatomic and that human actions take place in the world of macroscopic bodies entailing subjection to the laws of causation. In fact, the materialist conception of history is a generalisation about the dominant lines of social causation.

Now, social tendencies and historical movements deal with a large number of people at the level of the group or class (admitting of course, the role of individuals in history) and not simply with individuals 'floating upon the social tide like ambergris, cast out by Leviathan but of great perfume'.<sup>5</sup> If that be the case, then, as Dobb says, it follows that social tendencies and historical movements are much more capable of being subjected to causal analysis than those who make much of 'historical irrationalism', of 'the unique quality of the historical event' or 'the intricacy of the world of time', have been willing to allow.<sup>6</sup> For, at the *level of the group or class*—there is much greater uniformity in the response of human beings to various situations and various stimuli than can be noticed, when one is observing individuals.

(iii) Once this is granted, the claim of 'economic factors' (to use Mr. Ayyub's expression), the skeleton of the body social, to exercise determining influence in shaping the actions of social groups and classes is an extraordinarily high one; not on the ground that the skeleton is the *only*, or even in many respects the most important part of the body social, but because so much in the mode of life of man in society, his nature, habits and conventions, his prejudices and sense of values—his cultural-artistic opportunities and pursuits hang on the skeleton.<sup>7</sup>

Historical materialism does not deny that 'ideas'—'non-economic factors'—enter into historical interpretation *both as cause and effect*; what was denied was that 'ideas' could be explained entirely or even mainly, in terms of a genealogy of their own, only by their inner dialectic. Ideas are not *sui*

*generis* reals. Moreover, within the complex *interlocking* of causal chains, within the process of 'reciprocal interaction' between ideas and economic conditions, the *two-way influence* of each upon the other was not symmetrical.

For Marx and Engels a causal statement was never more than a partial truth and an approximation, a statement in a particular context, derived by isolating certain factors and certain chains of influence from the complex interacting whole of which they were part. As such they were essential for practice, in throwing into relief certain dominant influences. A situation about which one can say *no more* than that there is a reciprocal interaction or a variety of proximate causes is a situation about which one does not know very much. That the state of mind of a tuberculosis patient may react on his state of health, does not invalidate the medical diagnosis of the disease; nor does the fact that moons and planets interact make nonsense of the statement that moons go round planets and not planets round moons.

Marx's view of the relation between economic structure and ideology amounts to a statement about both the directness and strength of the influence that the former exerts over the latter. By contrast, the influence which ideas have on society is subject to much straiter limitations.<sup>8</sup>

Hence the conclusion of historical materialism,—the determining element in history is *ultimately* production and reproduction in real life.

Does historical materialism deny human volition, ideas, passions, deliberation and such other non-economic factors? The answer is in the negative. The following chain of historical causation exhibits in a schematic manner the premises of historical materialism:

- (a) History is the work of *men*;
- (b) *Action*, which makes history, is determined by their *will*;
- (c) The will is the expression of their *ideas*;

- (d) These ideas are the reflection of the *social conditions* in which they live;
- (e) It is the *social conditions* that determine the *classes* and their struggles;
- (f) The classes themselves are determined by the *economic conditions*.<sup>9</sup> Such is the implication of historical materialism.

It is amazing that a theory which gives so much importance to the struggle of classes (economic, political, social and ideological) as the motive forces of history should be misunderstood as being a variant of rigid economic one-way determinism. Ideal driving forces operate in history. But the ideal factors have their origin and reflect (no mirror image, nor passive) social reality and are ultimately conditioned by them. A historical materialist, therefore, can readily accept that 'the relation between the economics of society and its culture is very complex and the inner dialectic of an intellectual enquiry or an artistic current may supply a propulsion of no mean strength in shaping their lines of development'. For did not Engels himself refer to 'the fatuous notion of the ideologists that because we deny an independent historical development to the various ideological spheres which play a part in history we also deny them any effect upon history.'<sup>10</sup> 'The ideological factors, on many occasions supply a propulsion of no mean strength'—true, the only point to remember, in addition to this truth, is that 'ideas' ultimately depend upon the economic substructure—the skeleton of the body social—and are not entities springing from nobody knows where.

Having left himself with a world constituted of economic and non-economic factors, where non-economic factors, such as intellectual curiosity, moral and religious zeal, national rivalry, racial hatred etc. dominate, Mr. Ayyub legitimately concludes—'This, of course, makes the study of history immensely complex and historical prophecy impossible'. Obviously Mr. Ayyub does not recognise history as a scientific discipline, accepting as he does, Russell's witty but tragic generalisation—'All along in history nonsense has inspired more zeal

and self-immolation than sense or good sense'.

Like professional philosophers and historians, unmindful of a rapprochement between theory and practice, to whom history is a 'play of the contingent and the unforeseen', Mr. Ayyub too is here irresponsible.<sup>10</sup>

Mr. Ayyub is an anti-materialist and consequently accepts that human history hangs upon the thread of a thousand chances (but not on the production and reproduction in real life); and he believes in only *interpreting* the world. That the anti-materialist philosophy of history may cast up such precious jems as the following, may not be unknown to Mr. Ayyub:

"Admitting that great forces are generated by economic causes, it often depends upon quite trivial and fortuitous events which of the great forces gets the victory. In reading Trotsky's account of the Russian Revolution, it is difficult to believe that Lenin made no difference, but it was touch and go whether the German Government allowed him to go to Russia. If the Minister concerned had happened to be suffering from dyspepsia on a certain morning, he might have said 'No' when in fact he said 'Yes,' and I do not think it can be rationally maintained that without Lenin the Russian Revolution would have achieved what it did. . .

"It may be maintained quite plausibly that if Henry VIII had not fallen in love with Anne

Boleyn, the United States would not now exist. For it was owing to this event that England broke with the Papacy, and, therefore, did not acknowledge the Pope's gift of the Americas to Spain and Portugal. If England had remained Catholic, it is probable that what is now the United States would have been part of Spanish America."<sup>11</sup>

From such wonderful philosophies of history, only one conclusion can follow: 'historical prophecy is impossible.' Marxism, however, is a method, not only of interpreting the world, but of *changing* it; and to be an effectual method of *acting* upon the world, it must apprehend the essential truth about the nature of the world (not simply the Minister's dyspepsia or Henry VIII's love-episode), even if that truth cannot be final and absolute.

Marxists have, of course, consistently disclaimed any pretensions to being prophets and have been content to study as precisely as they can 'the real movement going on under our very eyes', and to undertake the most detailed study of actual situations. This quality of realism in the thought and practice of Marxism, explains, why, when idealistic and pseudo-idealistic theories have died of inanition, Marxism goes on triumphing.

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## 2. Historical Materialism: Further Examination

Reply to Prof. S. N. Chakravarti

By ABU SAYEED AYYUB

THE difficulty with contemporary Communists is that though they have mastered the physical means of blowing their military opponents of today (and the earth along with them) to dust and ashes, their mental equipment is good enough only for fighting their ideological opponents of yesterday. Petrification of ideas in the midst of a prolific growth of the literature of scholasticism makes the Marxists of the nineteen-fifties argue against everyone as if he belonged to the eighteen-fifties or thereabouts. What is more, their theory of class war carried to all spheres of human activity makes them assume clear-cut divisions and head-on clashes everywhere. 'He who is not with me is against me' is bad enough, but to suppose that anybody who ventures to criticise me must obligingly match my naive materialistic philosophy with a particularly naive brand of idealism so that my thrusts may go home, is a little too much. It is amusing to see Prof. Chakravarti tag on to my name such easy and long-practised targets as 'there are several distinct histories, the history of economic factors, and the history of law, the history of morals, the history of art,' 'ideas could be explained in terms of a geneology of their own,' 'culture, intellectual enquiry, art are not determined by social existence but are autonomous (in the sense of being independent of all external constraints)'; 'the movement of society and the movement of culture are polar opposites' etc. I do not know if any living person believes in all these things; anyway I would not be interested in him. And if Prof. Chakravarti is interested only in refuting these ghosts of the nineteenth century, he might have spared himself the pains. Of the views of his flesh and blood opponent whom he mentions by name, he shows little awareness. Far from asserting that 'economic and non-economic factors

are as it were discrete forces which drag human society each its own way,' I had expressed myself in the following unambiguous words:

The relation between the economics of a society and its culture is very complex indeed. No doubt, economic conditions play a great part in moulding the general direction of cultural and artistic activities, still more so in presenting certain problems and suggesting certain themes to thinkers and artists. But the inner dialectic of an intellectual inquiry or an artistic current itself supplies a propulsion of no mean strength in shaping their lines of development, and in opening out new vistas for them. Marxists have rightly pointed out the importance of the economic factor in the causation of great historical events. But that in no way takes away the necessity or diminishes the importance from other points of view of other factors, such as intellectual curiosity, moral and religious zeal, national rivalry, racial hatred, etc. And if we look into the causes of these causal factors themselves, the non-economic factors will no doubt include the economic factors amongst their causes, but not exclusively. Equally will the economic factors include the mental and spiritual factors besides the economic and geographical factors amongst their causes. This, of course, makes the study of history immensely complex and historical prophecy impossible. But why must we presume otherwise? (QUEST 17, April-June, 1958)

No room for misunderstanding was left; nevertheless a misunderstanding—I am inclined to call it a deliberate mis-statement has taken place. The reason is not far to seek. The literature on which Prof. Chakravarti has allowed himself to be nourished provides him with some logic and much rhetoric against the views which he has foisted on me. Unfortunately, it is silent or confused about the kind of views which I do hold. Let me hope, however, that fighters on the ideological front will some day hear the story of the aspirant for boxing championship who explained his failure by

saying: 'I did hit hard every time, but whenever I hit him the bloke happened not to be there.' Hitting hard is a good thing, provided you sometimes land your blows where your opponent happens to be, instead of imagining all the time that your opponent is where your blows fall.

My 'glaring misconceptions' reside only in Prof. Chakravarti's ready imagination, but I had some very real difficulties in regard to the Marxist theory of history. Prof. Chakravarti has done nothing to remove them; instead he has merely reiterated and re-emphasized those features of Historical materialism which I find most incomprehensible. The proposition that the economic structure of society determines its political and cultural patterns is not a bone of contention between us, provided it is admitted—and Prof. Chakravarti assures me it is—that the determination is reciprocal, also that it is multiple, meaning thereby that each aspect of society is under the combined causal influence of all the other aspects. My difficulty—and the point where we join issue—is connected with the notion of 'ultimate determination,' 'primary determination,' or 'determination in the last analysis.' It is perfectly clear (though Marxists fight shy of stating it baldly) that when these adjectives or adverbial clauses are added to 'determination,' then the economic factor is claimed to be the *sole determinant* of history. For I am sure no orthodox Marxist will be prepared to admit that ultimately or in the last analysis art, philosophy or religion determines the course of history, though as proximate causes their role is not denied. The implied but unmistakable assumption of the Marxist theory of history is that historical changes have an ultimate cause, and that this ultimate cause is only one single factor of the social complex. As soon as attention is drawn to this, the speculative character of the doctrine begins to strike us. It is as metaphysicians that Marxists are enamoured of ultimate causes, and as metaphysical monists that they are insistent on the oneness of the ultimate determinant of history. Their concessions to pluralism and reciprocity

are all half-hearted, superficial and easily forgotten.

What meaning, I ask, can an empirical scientist discover in the statement that although B,C,D jointly determine A, only one of them, B, is its ultimate determinant? Though near and remote, direct and indirect causes have an empirical meaning, the distinction between non-ultimate and ultimate causes is alien to the practice of working scientists. Let us take an example. An initial tangential velocity and a centripetal gravitational force may be indicated as the joint causes of the elliptical motions of planets. Is one of these only the secondary or proximate cause and the other the ultimate cause? If so, which one? Are both merely proximate causes; what then is the ultimate cause of planetary motion? Such questions sound empty in solar mechanics.

But someone may point out that it makes perfectly good sense to say (and an empirical scientist need not be disinclined to speak in this fashion) that the ultimate causes of all physiological or biological changes are physico-chemical. It is unnecessary to examine the soundness of such a physico-chemical interpretation of biological phenomena. For even if it is true, it gives hardly any analogical support to the economic interpretation of historical events. Let us be quite clear as to what the physico-chemical theory of biology means and what it does not mean. It does not mean that a particular physiological phenomenon has different types of causes, some of which are physico-chemical, others physiological, still others of a different kind; and that only the first are the primary or ultimate causes—all the rest being merely secondary or proximate causes. What the physico-chemical interpretation of physiology does mean to assert is something very different, viz., that though physiological phenomena appear to be different in kind from physical, the difference is only one of degree. All physiological phenomena are in the last analysis *nothing but* physico-chemical phenomena of a certain degree and a particular pattern of complexity. In other words, all the pheno-

mena that we study in physiology can be *reduced* without remainder to physico-chemical terms. Some extreme Marxists appear to be materialists in this forth-right 'reductionist' sense, but the majority of accredited Marxists would, I have no doubt, condemn such materialism as mechanistic and might even be inclined to call it anti-Marxist. Historical Materialists give us to understand that artistic production is qualitatively and irreducibly different from economic production. They break away from any analogical link with the mechanistic biologists when they reject (I hope they do reject it) the parallel proposition that although Protestant Christianity or post-impressionist painting appear to be phenomena of a different genre from the economic, they are in the last analysis nothing but some kind of a complicated manifestation of the economic structure of society. And without 'reductionism' the concept of ultimate or primary determination seems irrelevant to history. I am, of course, using the term 'primary' in its logical sense. Some Marxist writers, notably Plekhanov, have assigned the primary role to material factors in a temporal sense. I have shown in my previous article that this takes us beyond history to zoology. I am not interested in disputing a materialistic interpretation of zoology; my contention is that within the domain of recorded human history the application of terms like 'ultimate,' 'primary' or 'basic' to any aspect of society, material or ideal, is devoid of any proper significance.

The doctrine of Historical Materialism in its full import or undiluted form derives no support from science, and is scarcely intelligible in scientific terms. Could we find some justification for it in the domain of metaphysics proper? Stalin, I pointed out in my article in Quest 17, wrote as if no reasonable person can doubt the truth of the general philosophical theory of materialism expounded by Marx and Engels; and since the truth of Historical Materialism 'follows' from the truth of Dialectical Materialism, that too has an unshakable claim on our acceptance. It can be argued, though this is not the place to argue it, that

Dialectical Materialism far from possessing any axiomatic certainty or self-evidence about it, is full of inconsistencies within itself; furthermore, as a metaphysical theory—and it is a metaphysical theory in spite of all Marxist attempts to dress it as science—it is characterised by the same speculative boldness as its opposite number, Hegelian Idealism, and is equally in need of an act of faith. But what I would like to urge here is that even if we fully accept the truth of Dialectical Materialism, Historical Materialism acquires no claim to validity from that, for it is not materialism in any proper sense at all. Whatever may be the philosophical meaning and justification of saying that matter is primary and ultimate and mind secondary and derivative, in the theory of Historical Materialism what is claimed to be the primary or ultimate determinant of historical movement is not a material structure at all. The economic structure of society (a complex of forces and relations of productions) is a human structure, in which material and mental elements organically inter-penetrates. Prof. Chakravarti may object to my calling their theory 'the economic conception of history' because of his dislike for its Narodnik version known as 'historical economism'. It does not matter what it is called; my point is that the so-called materialistic interpretation of history is not philosophically speaking a materialistic theory at all. To say that forces and relations of production, in other words purposeful human activity and organisation directed to the satisfaction of economic needs, ultimately determine the shape of other types of human activity directed to the satisfaction of other needs (religious, artistic, etc.) is just as compatible with idealism as with materialism, and is derivable from neither.

The reason why the Marxists, nevertheless, persist in saying that Historical Materialism is an application of (or deduction from) the wider principles of Dialectical Materialism is that in one corner of their mind they realise the inadequacy of the empirical arguments which they marshal in support of the former principle. What

they *can* justify empirically is much more modest and less inspiring, viz., that the economic factor is one amongst the many important determinants of historical events, and that in our study of cultural phenomena we would do well to pay attention to the economic *milieu* in which they arise. What Marxists claim, however, to have established is that (1) 'ultimately' or in the 'last analysis' economics and economics alone determines the course of history; (2) that cultural movements can be fully 'explained' in terms of economic changes. The wide gap between the former set of propositions and the latter set does not worry them as it worries those who 'lack dialectics.' Metaphysical support (however shaky) is had recourse to for the latter, while scientific evidence (on the whole not unacceptable) is offered only for the former, and the logical gap between the two is negotiated by means of a dialectical jump. When you trip badly in logic (preoccupation with which is the mark of petty-bourgeois mentality) you can always claim to have proceeded with steady dialectical steps.

Prof. Chakravarti has not brought forward any fresh arguments in his 'Defence of Historical Materialism.' Nevertheless, I should like briefly to cross-examine his defence such as it is. It appears to me that quite central to his whole argument is his conception of the economic structure as 'the skeleton of the body social.' I need not remind Prof. Chakravarti that simile is no argument—even though the simile or metaphor is provided by no less a person than John Strachey. But I should like to tell him that this is a particularly inept and misleading metaphor—a shade, but only a shade less objectionable than the more popular architectural metaphor of Marx in which a building with its fixed upper storeys and its normally static foundation is taken as the proto-type of the various aspects of society, each intrinsically dynamic and all reciprocally active. John Strachey's anatomical metaphor has the merit of being dynamic, but it has all the wrong dynamical properties. To specify some: (1) The animal body grows to adolescence, remains more or less

stationary for a number of years, decays and finally disintegrates. (2) Apart from this normal growth to adolescence which constitutes only a fraction of an animal's life, other anatomical changes in one or other part of the body are mostly in the nature of diseases. (3) In the period of growth, all parts of the body change together and in co-ordination with each other; it is not that the bones go ahead with their development, while the muscles and other organs remain stationary for sometime in their earlier state; this lag produces a tension or 'contradiction' between the new skeletal structure and the old muscular and other structures, resulting in a sort of revolutionary overthrow of them and the establishment of a higher order of blood-vessels, nerves, muscles, etc., appropriate to the developed bones. (4) The exaggerated importance which Prof. Chakravarti and his Marxist preceptors attach to the skeleton in the total structure of the body (which induces them to compare it to the economic structure of society) betrays ignorance of the elementary facts of anatomy and physiology. The body as a whole depends upon the skeleton as much as it does upon its heart, brain, muscles or kidneys. And all these organs depend upon each other in a way in which there is nothing particularly 'ultimate' 'primary' or 'basic' about the skeletal system. A poetic metaphor may be as fanciful as one likes; but if argument is to be based on analogy (which is in any case a weak argument) the analogy should run pretty close to facts. The architectural and anatomical metaphors, which appear to be the main props of the defenders of Historical Materialism, have the flimsiest basis in factual similarities.

Prof. Chakravarti is ready to concede to his critics that ideas, needs, etc., may play some role in history, but insists on enquiring into the origin of these ideas and needs. Quite legitimately he asks, 'why suddenly the 'need' to emancipate from the restrictions of the Catholic Church?', and rather illegitimately answers: "Given the economic situation at the close of the 15th century it was necessary etc." Surely, the rise of

Protestantism was not necessary because of the economic situation of the 15th century alone; many other things had to be 'given' before Protestantism could arise. But the point that I would like to press is: what is the meaning of this 'given'? Is it some kind of an absolute datum? A little further on, Prof. Chakravarti lays down: 'The Marxist historical materialistic methodology begins at the economic end of the social complex.' There is no harm in beginning your study of society at the economic end, provided you are prepared to grant equal rights to those who want to begin at the philosophical, religious, scientific or technological 'ends' of the social complex. I would, however, substitute the term 'aspect' or 'feature' for Prof. Chakravarti's term 'end,' for none of these features is the 'end' or 'beginning' of the social complex in any proper sense. All such studies will be incomplete, though none will be quite false. And each will have its importance according to the interest and purpose with which you study history, e.g., whether you are a historian of art, philosophy, technics or economics.

"The only point to remember ..... is that ideas ultimately depend upon the economic structure — the skeleton of the body social, and are not entities springing from nobody knows where", says Prof. Chakravarti. Does anybody know from where the economic structure springs? Marx seems to have believed, as Schumpeter points out, that "the forms of production themselves have a logic of their own; they change according to necessities inherent in them so as to produce their successors by their own inner working". (*Socialism & Capitalism*, p-12). On the other hand, Lindsay thinks that under the influence of Darwin Marx toyed with the idea of chance mutation in regard to the forms of production (Karl Marx's *Capital*). Most Marxists at any rate seem to have such queer fancies in the back of their minds, otherwise why should they enquire twenty times into the origins of needs, ideas, science, etc., but not once into the origin of the forms of production themselves? That enquiry, leading back to the

sphere of the intellect, would be fatal to their theory, and they know it.

It is rather peevish of Prof. Chakravarti to think that non-Marxists regard historical prophecy as impossible because of "such (viz. Russell's) wonderful philosophies of history". Apart from the question of the role of the individual in history and the age-old controversy in regard to free will vs. deterministic laws, prophecy is practically impossible here because historical causes are so immensely complex that the total configuration never repeats itself for our observation. Consequently, it is beyond the powers of historians to formulate such comprehensive laws as will enable them to predict unambiguously (that is, not in the fashion of the oracle of Delphi) significant historical events. And at any given moment so many forces are active in the dynamics of history and in such criss-cross ways, that though the separate effects of one or more of them can be foretold with some confidence, no social mechanics is known by means of which the resultant (or resultants) of all of these can be geometrically pictured or algebraically worked out. This is precisely why the future course of capitalism as forecast in detail by Karl Marx has turned out to be so wide of the mark.<sup>1</sup> He had omitted to consider the effects of politics, of trade unions, or of his own teachings. There is nothing to get particularly excited about it. With all the breath-taking advances in the physical sciences it is still seldom possible to prophesy with any accuracy natural non-cyclic events, as opposed to cyclic events like eclipses or artificial events like the results of laboratory experiments. No physicist will risk his reputation by predicting when the next rainbow will be visible, say from the roof of the Cavendish Laboratory. And how we wish the times and places of the occurrences of floods, droughts, storms, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions of the next five years could be definitely foretold! I would not grudge Prof. Chakravarti consoling himself with the thought that these scientific prophecies are impossible "because of such wonderful

philosophies of science" as Russell's, or Eddington's (another *bete noir* of the Marxists).

Let me, however, go back to Prof. Chakravarti's contention that once it is granted that history deals with large numbers of men and that group responses show greater uniformity than individual responses, 'the claim of the economic factor to exercise determining influence on the actions of social groups and classes is an extraordinarily high one.' Prof. Chakravarti bases this claim on an anatomical analogy, which really avails him nothing. But let us note the metaphysic which is lurking behind. It comes into the open in the leading sentence of this section: "The material conception of history is based on the legitimate assumption that human beings are polyatomic and that human actions take place in the world of macroscopic bodies entailing subjection to the laws of causation." Here the materialist has had the better of the dialectician. Men are conceived not even as animals but as just polyatomic bodies; the dialectic leap involved in the transition from inorganic bodies to animal organisms, and from animal to man has been conveniently slurred over. After this it is natural to treat human societies as a chemist would treat polyatomic bodies. It is this implied metaphysical outlook which makes the materialistic interpretation of history so attractive to Communists and so repulsive to Humanists. I have said that the materialistic interpretation of history is a misnomer, and that this theory of history is no more an integral part of materialistic philosophy than of idealistic philosophy. But I was forgetting the 'double-think' which Communists are capable of. In spite of all dialectical protests, deep in their minds they have the firm conviction that human beings are material bodies rigidly subject to the laws of causation. This is an essential import of the materialistic interpretation of history. This is what a champion of dictatorship and total planning inevitably believes. You can not plan the lives of free individuals endowed with moral responsibility except marginally.

No doubt, Engels talks of the transition from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom in a classless society. But Lenin, Stalin and their successors have revolutionized the old fashioned Marxist ideas about this transition. The free society is not to emerge immediately or soon after the proletarian revolution and the abolition of class society. There has to be an indefinitely prolonged era of the dictatorship of the proletariat involving, as we now see, the division of society into two new classes, based not on property but on power—the class of planners and the class of those whose lives are to be fully planned out in every department—economics, politics, education, and even leisure. The class of super-planners may sometimes shrink to a single-member class as during the later days of Stalin, sometimes expand to the entire Central Committee, or rarely, to the whole Party. But the class distinction remains. The planners of course are not polyatomic lumps of matter, for these are not capable of discovering rigid causal laws and applying them to control and guide the actions of other polyatomic bodies. With the emergence of the phase of dictatorship, the dictators, the super-planners, at once mysteriously 'ascend the kingdom of freedom.' The plannees remain in the kingdom of necessity, obeying the 'dominant laws of social causation' and of course those who apply these laws. Till when? A millenium is perhaps an over-estimate. Far-reaching changes may take place much sooner resulting from the new industrial revolution about to be touched off by nuclear technology which is already in course of development. This revolution will enormously increase the amount of material goods available to all. Will it increase or decrease the amount of freedom available to the vast majority of men? That is the 64,000 dollar, or shall we say the Stalin-prize winning, question.

Engels' notion that a certain future date in history will mark 'the ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom' is, to my mind, fraught with mischief and danger. It is to be con-

trasted with the usual philosophical conception (contemptuously dismissed as 'bourgeois philosophy') that man is essentially and always a free and responsible moral being, though the full expression of his freedom may be more or less circumscribed by his economic and political environment. In Indian idealism freedom (*mukti*) is described as the goal of the human endeavour (*sadhana*), but that is just a way of speaking. What is sought is only the removal of a veil (*maya*) behind which the freedom of man (already real) is hidden from himself. The paradox of freedom, or rather one of the paradoxes of freedom, is that it is only the free individual who can seek freedom, not a macroscopic body of complex polyatomic structure. If as materialists you believe that man is hitherto unfree (a denizen of the kingdom of necessity totally subject to causal laws) but can be made free only when 'anarchy in social production is replaced by plan-conforming, conscious organisation' (Engles—*Anti Dühring*, p.392), then first of all, you assign to a small section of society (who will consciously form the plan) the task of leading the great majority of men (who will have to conform to the plan) from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom. In a totalitarian society it is preposterous to talk of everyone or even the entire working class participating in the dictatorship,

which in effect amounts to the power to draft the over-all plan and have it executed at all costs. Secondly, you put the planners in the greatest and most irresistible of all temptations that history records—the temptation of controlling and guiding from one plan-period to the next, and then to the next, the destiny of millions of men supposed to be creatures of 'necessity'. If fond mothers could at will keep their children all their lives young, tender, helpless and dependent upon them, few would let their children grow up and grow out of the need of their loving care. I doubt if any planner would by an act of self-abnegation ever let his charges ascend the kingdom of freedom, though he might be perpetually helping them up the ladder. The period of transition from the one kingdom to the other for the vast majority of men must unfortunately be long everywhere, for an enormous vested interest is bound up with its prolongation—a vested interest which is noticeably greater in the Communist than in the Capitalist countries today. And there is no reason to believe that vested interest in the possession of naked and unashamed power would be easier to dislodge than vested interest in the possession of wealth, which today is at least beginning to be ashamed of itself. The Capitalist upper classes are hypocrites; the Communist upper classes do not even see any need for hypocrisy.

<sup>1</sup> How wide has been discussed with competent scholarship in an article by Herbert Luethy to be published in our issue No. 20, Jan — March, 1959.

# 1. Oriental Despotism

## Oriental Despotism and Dr. Somjee

By EUGENE KAMENKA

IN the days of the Han dynasty, the greatest of Chinese historians, Ssu-ma Ch'ien, a trusted official, suddenly incurred the displeasure of the Emperor. He was not accused of high treason, or corruption, or administrative incompetence. He had only dared to differ with his Emperor's evaluation of a defeated general, and he was only sentenced to be castrated.

According to the law of the time, his punishment could have been remitted by the payment of a large sum of money, and this could have been done, for Ssu-ma Ch'ien had high-ranking and wealthy friends. But not one dared to help him. No one dared to show sympathy for a man who had angered the Emperor.

So Ssu-ma Ch'ien was led into the dark room and mutilated like an ox.

There was about this event, tragic as it is, nothing out of the ordinary, nothing violating the entire traditions and character of the society in which it occurred. It was no isolated act of barbarism, no result of temporary despotism. For 3,000 years it could have happened at almost any time. Why? This is the question worth asking. Why did a solid core of countries in northern and western and southern Europe, for 3,000 years, even in the midst of a material and cultural barbarism infinitely below the civilisations of India and China, maintain a tradition of individual rights, of political liberty and institutional autonomy, which may have been consistently threatened but was never totally submerged? Why, on the other hand, did the various individualist and independent movements of Asian society never succeed, until 'colonial' times, in rising from the sub-political level, and challenging the ancient traditions of despotism? Why again, do we find certain fringe areas, like the Middle East, the Byzantine

Empire and Russia, which appear to vacillate between the two worlds?

Karl Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism* is an important, even if not utterly convincing, attempt to answer these questions. It is important because it does offer us a coherent, intelligent and extremely suggestive theory of why political development varied utterly in different parts of the world, and because an examination of the theory's inadequacy will do more than anything else to pave the way to a better account. This is why Dr. A. H. Somjee's review of *Oriental Despotism* in *Quest* of February-March this year is so disturbing. For confronted with a serious analysis of Asian society, what does Dr. Somjee do? He hangs up a sign 'UNFAIR TO ASIANS', introduces it with a few garbled misquotations whose purpose is entirely emotive and a number of 'facts' which are wrong, and sits back like a David who has just slain the Philistine. The first task of the Asian intellectual is to build a cultural atmosphere in which this sort of thing will not do.

Dr. Somjee's review, of course, does not give readers a genuine indication of what Wittfogel's theory is. Fortunately, they can remedy this easily enough by looking at the reviews in your sister publications in Australia, England and France, or, preferably, by reading the book itself. But Dr. Somjee's review does, through its criticisms, give a seriously erroneous impression of Wittfogel's attitudes, as well as a somewhat rather elementary misinformation about the history of political studies. This needs correcting, if only in the form of brief points.

I. 'Marx may be said,' writes Dr. Somjee, 'to have made the first 'scientific' attempt in the understanding of complex groups of factors which determine human relationships and institutions. His attempt was

'scientific' because he consciously made hypotheses and verified them with the help of his great scholarship in social and economic history.' Consider Ibn Khaldun, the 17th century economic determinist Harrington, Vico, Hegel, Montesquieu and above all Comte, from whom Marx got what proved to be only a passing belief in the possibility of replacing philosophy with a positive science of society. Certainly all these men, even the allegedly metaphysical Hegel, consciously made hypotheses about the factors which determine human relationships and institutions and sought to verify them from history, mostly in considerable detail. In many points they were sounder than Marx, whose insight was indeed often acute, but whose historical scholarship was in fact never great.

2. Throughout his review, Dr. Somjee gives the impression that Wittfogel speaks constantly of 'Asiatic' society, ('a term which he has made as derogatory as he possibly could', according to Dr. Somjee) and that all good 'Asians' will therefore know where to stand. In point of fact, Wittfogel insists on using the term 'hydraulic society', thus lacerating Dr. Somjee's nerves, precisely because he believes that the societies he is describing are not confined to Asia, but are also found in pre-Spanish America and Hawaii, for instance, and because he believes that there are Asian societies (e.g. Japan) which are not hydraulic. If Dr. Somjee believes that it is derogatory to Asians to draw attention to the lack of political liberty, independent political institutions, representative government, etc., in the majority of Asian societies throughout the major portion of their history, then Dr. Somjee would do best to stop reading or studying Asian material at all. And if he believes that using the word 'Asiatic' is evidence of prejudice, then he should have the fairness to point out that Wittfogel uses the word only in quoting from Marx, and that in Marx's time there was no other form of the adjective. (According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 1952, there still isn't.)

3. 'The conceptional framework used by

Wittfogel is not free from Marxian economic determinism or naive historicism. Both these concepts have been refuted by twentieth century social science,' says Dr. Somjee, in a typical piece of distorted half-truth. What has been 'refuted' is the Marxist conception that that historical development is unilinear, and that economic factors, are, in the last analysis, the only determinants of social change. Wittfogel emphatically rejects both conceptions, and insists that institutions, ideologies and other factors may arise independently, or may acquire independent power and react back into economic determinants. I should not have thought that his resultant view of history as a multilinear development in which certain factors may on certain occasions nevertheless be decisive had been 'refuted' by anybody, even if his detailed theory were wrong.

4. Dr. Somjee quotes one alleged indication that Wittfogel's facts are not always reliable. According to Dr. Somjee, Wittfogel says on p. 433 of his book that in 1950, eighty per cent of land in India was owned by absentee landlords. We can find out that this is false, says Dr. Somjee, by consulting I. S. Gulati's *Capital Taxation*, which puts it at 30-40 per cent.

Now if we look at Wittfogel's book, we find that Wittfogel, too, had done some consulting. He does not simply say that eighty per cent of India's land was owned by absentee landlords, but quotes India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting as saying so in its publication *Agriculture in India* (Delhi, April, 1950). The Indian Government, of course, may be wrong, and Mr. Gulati may be right. But I should have expected, when sources conflict, that Dr. Somjee would give us some *argument* to show Wittfogel's source wrong. Certainly, Dr. Somjee's procedure here seems far more irresponsible than Wittfogel's.

5. Dr. Somjee, again irresponsibly, claims that Wittfogel argues that Western society has a social and economic past *necessarily* conducive to freedom, and that the existence of Hitlerism proves Wittfogel wrong.

Of course, Wittfogel says nothing of the sort. He does not say that Western social institutions *necessarily* produce freedom, he says that the existence of property rights assertable against the Government is one of the factors tending to produce political independence, while the hydraulic state's complete suppression of all *politically relevant* organisations outside its own control produces the opposite. If Hitlerite totalitarianism had lasted 1,000 years, and had not depended initially on the support of propertied classes, then Dr. Somjee might have a case. As it is, the internal instability of the Nazi dictatorship, its inability to gain total control over industry until war broke out, its dependence on traditional class antagonisms, all provide a strong confirmation of the complete difference in kind between hydraulic totalitarianism and the insecure despotisms of other types of society.

Dr. Somjee's criticisms, then, do nothing to advance the serious consideration of the issues raised by Wittfogel, and in fact only help to obscure them. On the other hand there are possible criticisms of Wittfogel which would do much to advance these issues, and which one would hope for precisely from an Indian journal and an Indian reviewer. Elsewhere, I have suggested that Wittfogel's static dissection of a model hydraulic society in this particular book, and his failure to apply it in detail to the continuous history of even one society, makes one feel that he has not proven his point, though he has certainly shown it worth investigating. In his previous books, I think, Wittfogel has shown that his pattern will work for China. But in *Oriental Despotism*, where Wittfogel vastly extends the geographical applications of his pattern, we become uneasily aware of the fact that the pattern is obviously drawn from China, and perhaps even Chou China at that. Will it fit the rather different, and in many ways more complex, history of India, where talk of 'Asian feudalism' is somewhat more plausible, though still, I think, misleading?

Is Wittfogel right in denying that merchant guilds and land-'owners' in India ever succeeded as such in gaining any political power or influence until Western colonisation began to change the whole social pattern? Will the picture of a political managerial despotism built on the need for large-scale irrigation and flood control, with its huge quantities of corvée labour, fit the origins of Indian absolutism as well as it does Chinese absolutism? Can one account for the seemingly much greater development of sub-political religions, movements and associations in pre-British India, as compared with China? Did these ever burst into the frankly political sphere to produce a significant degree of political independence and anti-authoritarianism, as opposed to conflicting despotisms?

These are the sort of questions in which anybody interested in the general features and necessary conditions of totalitarianism would expect Indian specialists to be able to make a specific and most valuable contribution, apart, of course, from the general contributions they may make merely as thinkers. It may be that the specialists will be able to show Wittfogel wrong or inadequate in many particulars. But even if they reject him entirely—and I should think that impossible—they must not lose sight of the genuine historical differences between most of Asia and most of Europe from which he takes his departure. For it would be a pity if like Dr. Somjee they approach his work in the spirit of Asians defending their social tradition against a malignant 'Westerner'. On the contrary, one would hope that those concerned with critical enquiry, and with 'cultural freedom', will turn their attention to those forces *in their own society* which are hostile to both, and seek to understand and combat them. Under no circumstances must we allow national pride to blind us to the fact that the struggle for liberty is best waged at home. And we must never allow any struggle, at home or abroad, to blind us to the facts.

## 2. Oriental Despotism

### Oriental Despotism and Prof. Kamenka

By A. H. SOMJEE

PROFESSOR KAMENKA has accused me not only of failing to see the greatness of Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism*, which according to him was seen by reviewers in Australia, France and Britain, but also of a deliberate attempt on my part to distort Wittfogel's thesis by giving an impression to the readers that he is some sort of a 'malignant "Westerner"' who has tried to run down all that is sacred and great in our past. To take the latter accusation first, let me state at the very outset that nowhere in my review have I called Wittfogel a 'malignant "Westerner"', and by attributing these words to me Professor Kamenka has done much less justice to himself than his otherwise highly academic criticism of my review would have done. And so far as his former accusation is concerned it would help neither me nor him if I were to say that he had better look up the review of the same in one of the leading journals in this country, namely, *The Economic Weekly*. The trouble is that Professor Kamenka does not seem to concede the point that there can be an academically honest way of looking at this book which might radically differ from his own. For he has a ready explanation for a dissident approach. No wonder his criticism of my review ends with a pious note of advice to Indians not be sensitive to any criticism of their own society: that unless they become free from the touchiness of this sort they would not be really 'free'. The implication of course is that all our differences with the western thinkers in the analysis of our society are the outcome of our touchiness. That if we agree with them we are academic. But if we do not then we are unduly

sensitive and keep on fighting the ghosts of political imperialism.

'Why did a solid core of countries in northern, western and southern Europe, for 3,000 years, even in the midst of material and cultural barbarism infinitely below the civilization of India and China', asks Professor Kamenka, 'maintain a tradition of individual rights, of political liberty and institutional autonomy which may have been consistently threatened but was never totally submerged?' This to my mind is a misleading question. While I do not consider myself competent to pronounce any judgement on a statement of this nature I do believe that it contains an assertion that is rather farfetched, viz., that continually for the last three thousand years all the parts of Europe excepting the obnoxious east of course maintained a tradition of 'individual rights, political liberty and institutional autonomy'. According to Wittfogel, the 'anti-totalitarian' forces in Europe, such as, the organized church, nobility, guilds and gentry, offered a successful resistance to the political power. Would Professor Kamenka say that all these forces have existed in Europe for the last three thousand years? As a student of Political Science I should have thought that the oldest of these forces, namely, the organized church, does not come in conflict with the state till the fifth century. This conflict is clearly reflected in the ideas of St. Augustine and only in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries Europe begins to enjoy the fruits of their prolonged struggle. The forces of Reformation and Counter-reformation and the decline of feudalism simultaneously gave rise to

nation-state and individualism, and the latter, when it grew into a powerful force, demanded constitutional checks on the powers of the monarch.

While I do assert that the various traditions of which Professor Kamenka speaks are not as old in the European societies as he makes them to be, I cannot give him any instance of castration of a historian in the European courts. I would much rather leave it to his scholarship to find out similar tortures with an assurance that the presence or absence of such incidents are merely extraneous to Wittfogel's thesis of which we are the two disputants.

Equally misleading I believe is the following question: 'Why... did the various individualist and independent movements of Asian society never succeed, until 'colonial' times, in rising from the sub-political level, challenging the ancient tradition of despotism?' I do not know what Professor Kamenka has in mind when he refers to 'individualist and independent movements' but I would much rather take the term that he has used in the context of European societies, namely, 'institutional autonomy'. Professor Kamenka ought to know that the harshest of political despots in this country left the fabric of caste-system untouched. Moreover, for their day to day activities and administration the remote villages did suffer from the interfering hand of the agent of the despot. But it certainly is a farfetched assertion to say that such agents formed themselves in some sort of bureaucracy and constantly received policy dictates from the despots. Roughly speaking excepting during the emergencies of war, the villages paid the levies of taxes and soldiers to these agents. At the same time in each village an organized public opinion grew up which expressed itself through the councils of village elders and which even the agents of the despots had to respect. These facts are so obvious in this country that they hardly need any mention. They however do deserve a mention in order to refute Wittfogel's appalling theory of 'beggars' democracy, and Kamenka's unsubstantiated contention that all sorts

of freedoms in Asiatic societies are the blessings of the 'colonial' times.

Professor Kamenka praises Wittfogel's theory in the following words: 'It (Oriental Despotism) is important because it does offer us a coherent intelligent and extremely suggestive theory why political development varied utterly in different parts of the world, and because an examination of the theory's inadequacy will do more than anything else to pave the way to a better theory.' Then he begins to have some doubts as to the adequacy of this theory. He says. Wittfogel's static dissection of a model hydraulic society... and his failure to apply it in detail to the continuous history of even one society makes one feel that he has not proven his point... But these doubts are considerably checked when he says that 'It may be that the specialists will be able to show Wittfogel wrong or inadequate in many particulars. But even if they reject him entirely—and I should think that impossible—they must not lose sight of the genuine historical difference between most of Asia and most of Europe from which he takes his departure.' Thus even in the moments of healthy doubts Professor Kamenka retains his unshakable faith in the partial if not total irrefutability of Wittfogel's theory. His own little complaint against Wittfogel is that the latter has not made use of a developmental conceptual framework in the study of a developing hydraulic society. But precisely here Kamenka has contradicted the master. For Wittfogel if there is any dominant characteristic of a hydraulic society, it is its *stagnation*.

Again to mention a minor dispute among them, Kamenka feels that Wittfogel has not proved his point even by applying it to the continuous history of a single society. That Wittfogel's intellectual schema is one that is intrinsically related to China and Chou China at that, and that he has unwittingly extended it to other regions. But beneath such minor criticisms Professor Kamenka unmistakably retains the belief that one *can* give an omnibus explanation to explain all the non-European societies

even if such an explanation stretches over a period of three thousand years. He has nothing to say against the ageold longing of the historians to frame laws and explain historical events of thousands of years in terms of them. The attempt made by Marx, under the impression that he was 'scientifically' approaching the social and economic history because he was consciously framing hypotheses and was at least theoretically prepared for their *public* verification, is understandable in the contexts of his own time. In his attempt to empiricise the methodological framework which he had inherited from Hegel, he had drawn heavily from the natural sciences of the nineteenth century. The natural sciences of this period were engaged in replacing the theological laws by natural laws in their explanations of the natural and biological phenomena. Thus the natural sciences of this period inherited some sort of law-making approach and ambition from the explanations that they were engaged in rejecting. Such a law-making phase in the natural sciences did not last long. It was soon replaced by humbler claims of studying *specific problems* which they confront and of not seeking the validity of their generalizations beyond the *specific situations* that they study. They hesitate to generalize beyond the perimeters of the specific problems that they throw light on. Their theory of knowledge is what Professor Popper calls 'a searchlight theory of knowledge.'

This humility which is universal among the men of science who probably are pursuing what Dewey calls 'the most dependable form of knowledge' is now spreading, though not as rapidly as it ought to, among psychologists, economists, sociologists and political scientists. And it seems that it has not yet entered the school of Asian History of which Wittfogel and Kamenka are the two exponents. While Wittfogel has attempted an explanation which would have been envied by Montesquieu and Comte his supporter Kamenka does not reject the possibility of such an explanation, let alone finding its absurdity. He merely maintains that Wittfogel has not proved his point even in his

study of one country. But that he could have done so and even more if he had only expanded his schema to embrace a few more diversities. Thus from the point of view of Kamenka's physical sciences and nominalistic researches in social sciences have been unnecessarily limited and probably suffer from neurotic doubts. That there is no harm in claiming the validity of generalizations based on the study of few specific problems to the remaining range of problems. That certain generalizations can be geographically and even hemispherically valid! One must have the courage to attempt them.

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Professor Kamenka I believe is unduly sensitive to my criticism of Wittfogel's emphasis on economic determinism. Wittfogel's thesis on 'hydraulic society' and resultant growth of the harshest form of political power rests on the single dominant factor and that is the ability of the State to provide water by means of irrigation canals and build dams in order to control floods, and through them control the freedom of the people. It was not my assertion that Wittfogel has failed to emphasize the part played by non-economic factors, but according to him their role, as in Marx, is merely subsidiary. Wittfogel's thesis is in fact carried to absurd limits when he argues that employees of the Mauryan emperors were punctual in opening and closing the sluice so as to keep the population in subjection. We are told that for thousands and thousands of years, one despot after another controlled the freedom of the people in this cursed hemisphere by means of canals and dams. And one is of course left to wonder why we are still building canals and dams in this country when for the last three thousand years they have been made use of in order to control our freedom.

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This brings me to my criticism of Wittfogel's naive historicism, which Professor Kamenka rejects without giving any reason. I am sure Kamenka would agree with me when I say that a historicist approach is one by which a historian tries to point out

a pattern of behaviour of historical events and formulate a law to explain such a pattern. That a historicist approach essentially implies 'historical prophecy' as opposed to any kind of 'scientific prediction' as Professor Popper points out. Having studied the past behaviour of hydraulic societies Wittfogel ventures a historical prophecy about their future behaviour. He maintains that societies with hydraulic past retain a latent fascination for returning back to their hydraulic past. The following two passages clearly indicate this view:

'We must remember that most constitutions of the new sovereign Asian nations (Nationalist China, India, Burma and Indonesia), directly or indirectly proclaim statism as basic feature of their government.' (p.444).

'To be sure, Western rule in India and other Oriental countries provided new possibilities for a nontotalitarian development; but at the end of the era of western colonialism and despite the introduction of parliamentary governments of various kinds, the political leaders of the orient are still greatly attracted by a bureaucratic-managerial policy which keeps the state supremely strong and nonbureaucratic private sector supremely weak.' (P. 9.)

Whether we like it or not the people with hydraulic past are the doomed people. And Wittfogel's and Kamenka's fear, which is born out of some sort of historical prophecy, is that if we do not become aware of our hydraulic past and consciously work against the almost inexorable laws of hydraulism we might never be able to build up a non-hydraulic society.

Professor Kamenka has some justification in complaining that I did not care to put forward any valid arguments when I was quoting Dr. Gulati's figure on absentee landlordism as against Wittfogel even when the source of the latter was none other than a Government of India publication. He would I am sure agree with me when I say that in a short review one cannot always explain one's preference for one source over the other. I am more inclined to accept Dr. Gulati's estimate because it is based on scientifically collected data published by the Planning Commission (Government of India) in its Five-Year Plan and secondly because later investigations have tended to confirm this estimate. According to the estimate worked out by the Land Reforms Panel of the Planning Commission on the basis of the census of landholdings, the land held by intermediaries before the coming into effect of the legislation abolishing the intermediary interests in land was around 43 p.c. of the total (See *India-1957*, Published by the Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting P. 146.). Further it might interest Professor Kamenka to note that by 1957 the proportion of land held by these intermediaries had fallen to 8.5 p.c.

Finally, I do agree with Professor Kamenka that *Oriental Despotism* is the most provocative work that has appeared on the least studied Asian societies. Its publication is bound to lead to the undertaking of a lot of research work, if not for anything else at least for refuting its fantastic generalizations.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### Passion, Revolution And Nation

MR. ROUGEMONT does not 'in the least' intend to describe Western civilization as a whole, but only the human attitude which it presupposes and that has made its most typical creations possible.' And the two main specific products of man's Western Quest are the person and the machine. He takes it for granted that man has followed two different paths which may be indicated by terms which are symbolical rather than geographical—the terms, East and West. He very significantly differentiates between the Eastern Way and the Western Quest and grants a common origin to both. The *Indian Way* has been recognised by Mr. Rougemont as typical of the Eastern Way. He puts the difference between the two—man's Eastern Way and man's western Quest in a symbolical language. 'All over India there is nothing but pilgrimages, sanctuaries, holy places, and holy quarters of towns; sacred trees, rivers, and animals; men and women crouching in prayer on their threshold, at the side of the street or road, or else solitary and erect before an idol. And a universal poverty.'

'In Europe, in a landscape where church steeples are still generally the principal feature of the silhouette of village and town, a few pilgrimages and holy places, a few hundred old castles (in mysticism, symbols of the soul) are evidence of a sense of the holy the antiquity of which causes it to be prized, but are cut off from life, and are being impatiently hemmed in by the great

industrial suburbs and the scenic appurtenances of technics.

'America is without a single holy place apart from the churches in rich fake-Gothic, upon which the skyscrapers look down from a great eminence; without a single pilgrimage or a single real castle.' (pp.6-7)

One may disagree with the above picture and hold that Europe also went through the same stage as India is going to-day; the only difference between Western and Eastern societies is that while the Western society is *progressive*, the Eastern society is trying hard to cling to the old, moribund, and anachronistic way of living. But we cannot disregard a difference—if there is a difference at all—by invoking a theory of social evolution. The contention that on the whole the Eastern outlook is characterised by life-and-world-negation and that the Western outlook is characterised by world-and-life affirmation has much to commend. Mr. Rougemont, however, refrains from any value judgement between the two as his main concern is to describe man's Western Quest.

Man's Western Quest originated in the Greek view of life. Protagoras declared *homo mensura*. But man himself, the haven of whose life, according to Menander, was *paideia*, drew his unique dignity from some inscrutable essence. The Greeks delivered their 'atomized' society 'to the brutal regimentation of the Roman.' Greek *paideia* was replaced by Roman *pietas* and *gravitas*. Virgil characterised the Roman destiny when he wrote:

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MAN'S WESTERN QUEST by Denis de Rougemont. Pub: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London: 1958, p. 157. 15s.

But Romans, never forget that govern-

ment is our medium! Be this your art: to practise men in the habit of peace, Generosity to the conquered, and firmness against aggressors.

The decisive Western Quest was proffered by Christian *agape*. Greek dialectic and Roman jurisprudence were, so to say, catalyzed by Christian *agape*. In its doctrine of redemptive suffering Christianity added a new factor of some significance in a world dominated by a suffering which it could either grimly accept with the Stoics or hopelessly evade with the Epicureans.

'Yet the Christian way is not the whole of the West. It has its start in the decisive shock from which we date our history. But it was opened up in a world unmistakably real, which already possessed a powerful armature combined from Greek teaching, the religious traditions of the Near East, and the imperial Roman order. Making use of one of those elements, setting aside another, snatching up a third while on the move—and frequently damaged by this latter feat—it set everything in motion again. And the motion, taken as a whole down to our own day, is Man's Western Quest. No doubt the Christian way is not the only active element in it, but it was decisive and it remains axial: by reference to the Christian way, we shall be able to measure our swings of the pendulum, alien contributions, progressions, and the derivation of our culture.' (p. 29).

The two main tenets of Christianity are respect for human life and recognition of the tangible world of nature. Here one may argue that the East has also a respect for life, that there were times when the Christian Church conducted itself as though it were a Party. Mr. Rougemont points out that though 'the East has professed a respect of life that goes so far as to involve refusing to destroy vermin,' 'the adoration of life in general does not mean respect of human life.' Oriental cruelty is fated. If it is recognised that the *self* is nothing but a temporal illusion, if the real self is believed to be inviolable, cruelty to life is not a

crime. To the Western man cruelty is always criminal and nothing can justify the belligerent delirium of the Western man. Yet *Christian justifications* were found out for the horrible acts of inquisition and crusades and scores of other cruel deeds. One may feel content with the facile explanation of Mr. Rougemont: '..... Wherever the conducts itself as though it were a Party, it is plainly *betraying its faith*;....' (p. 49) If all failures are due to a betrayal of the faith, if all cruelties are due to the prevalence of an unChristian spirit, Christianity itself will indeed remain pure and ineffably good and justifiable.

Even the three diseases of the West — passion, revolution, and nation — diagnosed by Mr. Rougemont have arisen out of a misinterpretation, albeit a necessary misinterpretation, of the Christian Faith. Though these diseases threaten the very existence of the West, Mr. Rougemont thinks that without them the West would appear almost unthinkable. These diseases have congenital relations with Christianity. They resurrect among us the sense of the holy —that is, the religious instinct which true Faith transcends. They measure how far Western man goes *adrift* once he is no longer guided by the stars. They illustrate three forms of one and the same revolt against the final Goal of the Venture, which can never be grasped except by faith." (pp. 80-81) And all this has been possible as 'The West *qua* historical whole was never converted, and indeed never could be, from the mere fact that it is a person.' (p.82) *Agape* was syncretised with *eros*, *philia*, *philanthropia*, and even some of the narrower virtues. "But the original ferment of Christianity, its demand that the *absolute* should be realizable in this restricted life, within the limits of time that is ever slipping from us, within this imperious week flesh, has never ceased working in the human spirit over twenty centuries." (p.82) The errors of the Western man are germane to his Quest. Mr. Rougemont would not recommend the injection of the same virus, even as a vaccination, into the body politic of the East. He shows concern

over the problem of the spread of Western *diseases* in the East. The Western maladies could be partially neutralised in the West due to the presence of a general Christian outlook and also due to the enduring resistance of local groups of various political and professional international bodies. "Such defensive reflexes of the body are not put forth in the East," and the Western *diseases* may break out in the East with an extraordinary virulence and demand a heavy toll. If passion, revolution, and nation are allowed to thrive in the East, it is possible that there may be a headlong clash between the East and the West at the very moment when the West is beginning to have a glimpse of the extent of its folly and to seek the cure *which it alone can invent*.

Mr. Rougemont, unlike some of the *laudator actus temporis* or prophets of misfortune, does not suggest that the Western civilisation is heading towards an *inevitable* catastrophe and that in order that this catastrophe may be avoided West must travel East. He is fully conscious of the fact that the inwardness of the Eastern Way has the danger of losing the created world. The Western man has created two Frankensteins in technocracy and scientism. Mr. Rougemont would not suggest that we should put a stop to technological and scientific developments. There is nothing wrong with technology and science as such. What is urgently needed is not control of technological and scientific developments but the control of the man who uses them. The problem of the Western man is what to do with the leisure released through the increasing mastery over nature. The paradoxical nature of the Western Quest which cannot be resolved by the reduction of one of its terms but which will have to be lived through shows the paradoxical nature of active love which is Christian *agape*.

Mr. Rougemont has dealt with the different attempts to deal with the paradoxical nature of the Western Quest that we find in the tension between totalitarianism and democracy and such other tensions. He thinks that the paradoxes are not to be resolved but lived through. If the West stops

living through the paradoxes which are germane to its Quest and finds its consolation in technocracy, scientism, nationalism, passion, revolution and totalitarianism, it will cease to be the West.

He thinks that a dialogue between the Eastern Way and the Western Quest is not only possible but also necessary. The ground for such a hope is the increasing appreciation by the Western man of the Eastern Way and *vice-versa*. Even in this dialogue there is a paradox. The East wants more of material welfare and refuses to recognise that the Western Quest has also a spiritual core. Mr. Rougemont sees much ground for a more fateful future in the movement initiated by Ram Mohan Roy who and whose 'disciples have supplied the West with the most widespread, if not the most exact, interpretations of Hindu thought.' (p. 187) Unfortunately, in the footnote to this passage, he writes: 'Ramkrishna is the most well-known of them in Europe.' Ramkrishna may be the most well-known person among the Hindu interpreters of Eastern thought to the West, he was never a disciple of Ram Mohan Roy.

Mr. Rougemont has also recognised another very important factor which may help the establishment of a rapport between the East and the West. "...the voluntary or compulsory relinquishment of European colonies in Asia has just abolished the most irritating cause of the sense of inequality that obstructed any fruitful dialogue.' These are on the credit side of the dialogue between the East and the West. But the growing national pride and national feeling with its consequent *arrogant inferiority complex*, to use an expression which the late Professor Laski used while addressing a meeting of Indian students, are working as impediments to a fruitful dialogue between the Eastern Way and the Western Quest. Indeed, recent developments in India as well as in other countries of the East give us enough ground to apprehend that this dialogue, which may prove to be extremely fruitful if it takes place, may not take place at all.

M. K. HALDAR

**NIKI** (The story of a dog) by Tibor Dery. English version by Edward Hyams. Secker and Warburg, London: 1958, p. 144, 10s.6d.

**E**QUIVOCAL relationship, whether between man and man, or between man and animal, leads to emotional entanglement. So at least it did in the case of an elderly Hungarian couple, Ancsas and a bitch Niki. The Ancsas, who had lost their only son, at first tried to reject a new burden of feeling; but in spite of the resolve they had surrendered to the deliberate affections of the slender, shaply and smoothly white fox-terrier. Tibor Dery has depicted with perfect economy of expression and without a touch of sentimentality, how the attachment between the Ancsas and Niki grew. The summer afternoons and the hilly country with its brilliant colours had intensified the young bitch's joy in living and Mr. Ancsas, the engineer too was happy to be alive. He was a conforming communist and the idea of building a new society had stimulated his imagination and also his social sense. Tibor Dery has wonderfully brought out the character of the engineer with the remark 'And when he found himself on terms of familiarity with an animal, he did not confine himself to attending to its physical well-being but also respected its personality.' Niki was, therefore, treated with tact and consideration and when they moved to Budapest, he helped her adapt to city life.

Then follows the sudden dismissal of Ancsa from his post as Director of Mining Equipment. Here once again Tibor Dery shows himself a great artist when he does not discuss the Communist regime but only remarks, 'This was an unexpected as it would have been if his wife after 28 years of conjugal happiness had suddenly left him.... Incomprehensible hair-splitting, the whole thing; we will say no more about it.' Dery's insight in the mind of a conforming communist is revealed in the flashing remark, 'Seeking the fault, rather, in himself, he (Ancsa) found dozens, as usually happens in the case of a man afflicted with sensitive conscience'. Ancsa had accepted Niki as his companion and the examinations

of conscience just mentioned, were usually made by Ancsa in the course of the long walks they took together along the Danube embankment.

Niki had difficulty in getting used to strangers and Dery has described her perturbation in the presence of a friend of Ancsa, Jegyes-Molner who wagged his ears and who was of opinion that the bitch must be made to get used to fear, like human beings, like Ancsa himself.

Ancsa got another appointment in a subordinate position, and Niki found herself more in the hands of her mistress. Tibor Dery a great artist as he is, has described the relationship in such pithy statements as: 'Mrs. Ancsa, who experienced a certain solidarity with Niki as of one female with another, watched her with all her feminine perspicacity.' 'Women envisage love in a more objective but also in a more mysterious guise than men'.

Dery has conveyed the agonizing situation in Hungary, with a few masterful strokes of pen. Ancsa was removed to a still lower job, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was tried and dubbed as a spy and henceforth Ancsa, like the whole nation, became reserved and taciturn. 'The entire country was learning hypocrisy, and that too at an advanced School'. How Niki had created a place for herself in the family, is seen when as they went out for a walk, she insisted that they should be together.

Then followed a terrible period of trial, when Ancsa was arrested and was not heard of for over a year. Mrs. Ancsa hoped that her husband would return and remembering a remark of her mother-in-law expressing her fondness for animals, decided not to give up Niki.

Dery then gives an account of many things which happened to Niki—her chase by the Government officials, her fidelity of affection, the moments when 'Life flowed into her thin body with such intensity that she seemed too crowded inside her own skin', how she slowly forgot her master, and how when she chased a hare, Mrs. Ancsa remembered her former chase and realised that in five years she had aged fifty. Then

came the last illness and the almost pathetic end of Niki underneath the cupboard. Mrs. Anca had a presentiment of Niki's death and was in despair because 'She could not accomplish her mission as woman viz., helping others to live and to die'. At this moment, her husband, released unexpectedly, came home. He had endured every thing with rare courage for five years and just lost control of himself under the stress of his feeling at being at home again. But Niki was not there to cowl to him.

On two or three occasions in the course of the narrative the presence of the writer is felt too much, particularly when he makes such remarks 'Had we the slightest inclination toward satire we should be wondering. . . .' or 'We are not going to the length of propounding the ridiculous hypothesis. . . .'

Apart from such minor blemishes, the novel is a touching story which presents a profound human tragedy in the context of a canine situation.

G. P. PRADHAN

**IS THE LIBERAL WEST IN DECLINE?**  
Hans Kohn, Pall Mall Press, London: 1957  
pp.74; 7s.6d.

**H**ISTORY, though it does not serve society, serves man—beyond enriching his knowledge—by equipping him with a deeper understanding of himself, of his fellow-men, and of the situations in which men are put. These words of his admirably express Professor Hans Kohn's conception of the role of history. He rejects historicism which in Hegel and Marx led to a metaphysicization of history as also to the historization of metaphysics, whereby everything becomes relative and valid in itself. Whereas the first attitude raises historical categories to absolutes, the second easily leads to nihilism, to the rejection of any absolute standards or values. Professor Kohn characterizes history as the interaction of objective and subjective factors. 'The facts of the past present the objective material; the ethos and the personality of the historian present the subjective factor without which the facts of the past and the past itself remain dead.' This approach to

history is the unifying factor in the five essays, which make up the contents of the small book under review. Besides the title essay, the book includes 'The Historian in our Time', 'Civilization in Crisis: A Critique of Toynbee', 'Challenge to the West: Crisis and Response' and 'A New Look at Nationalism.' Professor Kohn, a world authority on nationalism—more appropriately, nationalisms—discusses in these essays the dangers of nationalism and the pessimist's diagnosis of the 'decline' of the liberal West. He takes a more cheerful view than Spengler or Toynbee, and after a sober examination of the case comes to the conclusion that far from being at the end of its tether, the West is on the threshold of still greater achievements.

Ever since Oswald Spengler discovered and announced in 1914 the 'decay' of the West, there has been no dearth of jeremiahs who gleefully predicted its doom and replacement by a more vigorous if ruthless civilization. It is true that the opponents of the West have often had to borrow 'The rhetoric, (and) the aims they proclaim' from their intended victim. For even those who wield the hammer and the sickle in dealing with others claim to do so in the name of the very values which modern Western culture stands for. This fact, while testifying to its moral superiority, is also responsible for giving to many in the West a sense of guilt and undermining their faith in the values which are the distinguishing feature of their way of life. Professor Hans Kohn is one of those refreshing exceptions among Western intellectuals who refuse to be impressed by the quiet flow of life in Confucian China or the 'spiritual genius' of other equally old civilizations. The present crisis in the West is, according to him, a symptom of growth rather than of decadence. And he has good reasons to believe so.

When one talks of the crisis in Western culture, one has generally in mind the ideological attacks to which it has been subjected by Fascism, Communism and Nazism in the post-1914 period. However, these movements grew up in countries which

never really accepted the values of modern Western culture. The liberating experience of the Renaissance which initiated in countries like Britain, France and the Netherlands a process of creative synthesis of the Christian and Greek traditions with the new understanding of man and his universe provided by the sciences—this liberating experience always remained alien to Germany and Russia, Italy and Spain. True, the Renaissance began in Italy. But owing to unfavourable political and economic conditions it did not lead to a trans-valuation of values and a transformation of institutions. The other countries merely acted as a bulwark of orthodoxy and reaction. These countries, like those of Asia that have attained to nationhood in the present century, were 'Westernized' in the sense that they adopted the technology and other artifacts of the West. But they did not assimilate the human values which informed its scientific civilization and served in considerable measure as a guarantee against its use in the cause of evil. It is therefore necessary to remember that there are really two European cultures—the liberal western culture of the countries of North-Western Europe and the non-liberal culture of Eastern and Southern Europe. Even the Christian tradition, which is their only common element, operates in different ways in the two cultures. In other words, it is indicative of historical illiteracy to regard Communism and Fascism as the fruit of Western liberal culture. As Professor Kohn puts it 'they are a rejection of it and of its spirit, though eager to take over its technology and material results. Communism and Fascism gained hold in countries where modern Western civilization had not taken firm root. They were a 'return' to the 'Middle Ages', in Russia and Italy, Germany and Spain.' What is taken to be a crisis of Western culture is therefore not the result of a disownment, except by a handful of part-time intellectuals, of its values and institutions. Nor is it due to any inherent weakness of its own fabric. It is due to the fact of its values not having been accepted by a sufficiently large part of the world.

The other attack on Western civilization has come from the nascent nationalism of Asiatic countries. Here a variety of reasons have continued to give Asian nationalism an authoritarian tinge. By the very nature of its origin nationalism in the liberal West was a movement for the assertion of individual liberty, of the citizen's rights against those of the state and of traditional authority. As it travelled eastward, it became the rallying ground either of peoples whose culture was threatened by the triumphal march of western liberalism, or of those whose political consciousness was the result of the impact of this culture on their own life. In either case the ideal of liberty and of individual rights was transferred 'from the individual (where it originated) to an organic or at least historic collectivity,' and nationalism became a trend towards collective self-assertion of groups based on common descent and language, homogeneity and uniformity. By the time it came to Asia, it had already degenerated into a collectivistic ideology in which the individual counted for less than the strength and authority of the national whole. It is no mere accident that while Tilak and Gandhi took their stand *vis-a-vis* the British on values which were accepted by the rulers themselves, they should have also successfully appealed to their own followers in the language of the moribund authoritarian culture that Hinduism has for centuries been. Japan, which did not come under Western domination, could go one better than other Asiatic countries and create a precedent for later totalitarianisms to follow.

Besides its authoritarian cultural tradition, there was another reason for Asian nationalism to adopt an anti-West attitude. The contrast of the extreme poverty of Asia's teeming millions—which their white rulers did little to ameliorate—with the latter's prosperity; the inferior treatment meted out to 'natives'; and the victory in 1905 of a small Asiatic country over Russia, which was then looked upon as a Western power; these were some of the factors which stirred the nationalist imagination with feelings of hatred and jealousy of the West, and the

desire for revenge and for a 'rightful' place in the comity of nation. It is true that Western imperialism, with all its ugly features, was less inhuman than that of Germany or Russia. It is also true that if, for instance, the British had not taken over India, she would have in all probability either disintegrated or else developed along authoritarian lines as Japan did—and either of these alternatives would have been worse than what actually took place. However, this can be no extenuation for Western imperialism. For, as Professor Kohn himself would agree, historical judgement should be passed not by reference to what everyone else was doing but by reference to the best that could have been done in the situation under discussion. Judged by this criterion, the West no doubt achieved great things in the colonies but utterly failed in winning the confidence and respect of the colonial peoples. In his enthusiasm to undo the mischief that the prophets of doom have played, Professor Kohn seems to have missed this point.

Nor would it have been necessary to raise it if it had no contemporary relevance. Distrust of the West is as powerful a factor as its own authoritarian cultural heritage in determining the international postures of Asian nationalism. Without having a guilty conscience as regards its past, the West can help Asian nationalism to shed its undesirable traits. It can do so by adopting the attitude of an educational, not a political, crusader, and in education the best way of persuading others of the truth of a proposition consists in demonstrating it in practice. In other words, it is not enough that America, for whom Professor Kohn primarily speaks in discussing the West's response to the challenge it faces today, should illustrate democratic values in her relationship to the non-Western, non-totalitarian world. Her allies too have to make a similar response before it is too late, and America should not hesitate to tell them off if they do not seem to be very keen on doing so. This, of course, does not imply that programmes of economic and military aid should be scrapped. They are indispensable but inadequate means of meeting the chal-

lenge that communism poses today. It nationalism is not to be a tool of international communism, the people of the non-western world must be enabled to feel that the West is a senior comrade in a common venture and not an old man from beyond the seas who would not voluntarily get off their back. For the defences of freedom, as of peace, must be built in the minds of men and at present this can only be done in a climate of confidence in the West and respect for its aims.

A. B. SHAH

**LANGUAGE, THOUGHT, AND REALITY:**

Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf. Edited and with an introduction by John B. Carroll. Foreword by Stuart Chase. Published jointly by the Technology Press of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York. Chapman & Hall, London: 1956. \$7.00.

**W**HORF engaged in linguistics only in the leisure he earned as a successful executive in a fire insurance company. He died at the age of 44. Thus he had only a very short time for the achievements he did attain to in his chosen field of study. He produced highly competent descriptive analyses of at least two languages. Several of his suggestions and definitions have become part of our accepted knowledge. But Whorf was not just another competent linguist. Incomparably more important is his programme of what has since been known as Metalinguistics. His work has passed into philosophy.

I can try to put Whorf's fundamental intuition in this way. A language is a system of symbolic forms created by a multitude of people thrown together by geography and history. Such a system of forms can be altered by the efforts of any individual speaker only to a very small extent and that too not so much by conscious endeavour or deliberate action. For the most part the system is part of the inheritance of a people within the totality of its ways of speaking and behaving. It consists in the general unifying patterns in a mass of overlapping patterns within such a community, a system amidst patterns of speaking about

whatever people may ever want to speak about. It is possible to study the terms in which people have to speak, if they wish to speak in that language at all. It is equally possible to study the types of statements that can be made in that language. In other words, grammar and syntax are possible. Now if we are to speak about anything at all, we have to speak about it in one language or other. The language we choose has its own peculiar grammar and syntax. That is to say, each language imposes upon its speakers certain conditions in the formation and relation of the terms of speech as part of the bargain. Whorf showed with an almost unrivalled thoroughness how widely these differ from language to language. He also showed how these differences in the standard and habitual ways of speaking could be studied in their interconnection with the standard and habitual ways of behaving of peoples. Above all he showed how an entire logic and a metaphysic might be discovered as implicit in a language.

It is undoubtedly not easy for a layman to realise how different and relative the terms and the types of speech can be. Let me take an example. In English there is only one obligatory type of a full sentence, that which analyses the situation in terms of an actor and an action. We say — "Jane/ is sitting", "Bill/ is a lawyer," "The sunset/ was lovely", "Under the window/ is a table". But in such a language as Bengali four different types are available. We may certainly talk in English about things and events which we would not, as a matter of up-to-date science or personally accepted philosophy, classify either as actor or as action. But so long as we are using the English language, we have to speak of them as if they could be exhaustively and exclusively classified into actors and actions. In such a sentence as this — "The sunset was lovely", the sunset may not be identifiable as an "actor" nor being lovely accepted as a special class of "action", if we consider the matter from the point of view of our chosen philosophy. But whatever be our individual philosophies we all are compelled

led to speak about a sunset and being lovely as if one is comparable to an actor and the other to an action, if we at all choose to speak in English. Linguistic categories may not correspond to the categories of physics or metaphysics. But they are no less obligatory and universal.

Whorf has given a classical demonstration of this method of study in his papers on the Hopi language which are included in this book. He showed the standard average European formula of representing any existent as a form plus a formless material continuum, derived as it is from ancient Greek, is not suited for Hopi. The Hopi world-outlook, as evidenced in the categorial system of the language, seems to have analyzed reality largely in terms of events (or better "eventings"), referred to in two ways, subjectively and objectively. Objectively, and only if perceptible physical experience, events are expressed mainly as outlines, colours, movements and other perceptive reports. Subjectively, both physical and non-physical events are considered the expression of invisible intensity factors. The analysis of non-physical experience in terms of a spatial analogy is foreign to Hopi. The analysis of time is not in terms of a surveyable objective series but in terms of subjective preparation. Significantly, the count of numbers is by the ordinals only. In such descriptive analyses as just mentioned Whorf's skill amounted to genius. It must be noted, however, that Whorf did not himself extend the application of his method beyond the study of roots and the parts of speech to the study of the features of syntax.

It is of course possible to criticise Whorf's work as onesided on two points. He had been all along concerned with that factor in a language which consists in the finding of meaning in the sounds and the patterns of their succession in the units of communication. Another factor is that which makes for the stabilization of the symbolic forms across individual situations in space and time. Such stabilization through conventionalization is also a process of abstraction from the varying contexts. One would-

ers if Whorf realized that the meanings he discovered were unaware meanings. The other point is that Whorf in his enthusiastic concern to find unity amidst the apparent chaos did not come to any exact assessment of the alternative and overlapping patternments which exist in a language subsidiary to the larger unifying patterns. But this second criticism anticipates discoveries not made in his time.

Far more serious is the criticism that Whorf's assertion of an interconnection between the ways of speaking, the ways of thinking and the ways of behaving of a people does not present an established fact. That such an interconnection holds may be admitted. But the extent and the nature of that interconnection cannot be determined a priori. In this field Whorf's question has turned out to be of greater importance than any of his answers. His is that rare kind of a question to which only specific and no general answer is possible. What Whorf has succeeded in establishing is then not a fact but a programme.

Let me close this review with my admiration for the popularly written essays included in this collection. Unlike most of the popularisers Whorf brought about the required simplification just by emphasizing the fundamentals. Whorf knew how to write for the layman without saying absurdities or vague nothings or banalities. And, his writings are suffused with that wonder and enthusiasm which is after all the heart and soul of linguistic study.

PUNYA SLOKA RAY

**DRAMA OF THE GROUP** by P. J. Norrish  
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play a personality which is distinct from that of every other character, and develops the clash of personalities into a dramatic action. Drama is essentially *individualistic*, laying great stress on the differences between individuals rather than on their similarities.

The plays of Jules Romains, on the other hand, seem to show how individuals lose their individualities and become undifferentiated members or units of a group which has an individuality or personality of its own. The basic idea is a 'unanime', a collective being with a mind and a soul of its own 'distinct from, and usually superior to, individual souls'.

Mr. Norrish gives a carefully documented account of this key concept of unanimism in the first part of his study. He points out that Romains was not the originator of the idea, which was already developed by sociologists like Durkheim. Romains, however, deserves to be regarded as a pioneer in the application of this concept to drama. He systematically developed in his plays the idea that unanimism is both a fact and an ideal. In a play like *Knock* he shows how a collective mind is created: the inhabitants of a small town, originally existing as individuals, develop a collective consciousness under the influence of Dr. Knock who is 'a master in the art of indoctrination.' The process of this unanimist transformation of individuals into a collective being is shown with dramatic effectiveness in the play. Similar themes are developed in a number of other plays by Romains. As realistic representations of mass psychology and the gullibility of crowds, the plays are valuable.

In some of the later plays Romains appears to present unanimism not only as a fact but also as an ideal. Thus, *Le Dictateur* shows how a unanimist society should be built up and established by a strong leader. Denis in this play has a significant resemblance with the Italian Dictator, Mussolini. Mr. Norrish sums up his impression of the play in these words: "In *Le Dictateur* we find the establishment and the maintenance of the ideal 'vie unanime' closely associ-

ated with the principles of strong leadership, even of dictatorship. 'La vie unanime' at all costs: no doubt dictatorship was later to prove so costly to the world that Romains changed his mind; but he did not yet know the price, and he was willing to speculate just a little."

While the dramatic presentation of the personality of Denis in the play, the unfolding of the stages by which the former revolutionary leader becomes a dictator and a champion of law and order is impressively realistic, the toying with dictatorship as the means towards the establishment of an ideal society reveals the ambiguities and uncertainties in Romains's political ideas. In fact, this aspect of his plays deserves to be unambiguously condemned. It minimises the value of individual freedom of choice and seeks to create a mystique of 'la vie unanime'. Political and social maturity indicates the fostering of social conditions which will provide the individual with adequate opportunities to develop his individuality without, of course, jeopardising the integrity of the community. Unity does not and should not involve uniformity. Jules Romains appears to have a sentimental leaning towards a unanimity, a uniformity which makes the group, the collective, more important than the individual. There are serious developments in modern technologically advanced societies which militate against the preservation of individuality: it is necessary to study them with a view to counteracting them. Mr. Norrish has rendered a valuable service in giving his readers a critical study of 'unanimism' as it is presented by Jules Romains in his plays.

M. G. BHATE

#### CORRIGENDUM

Mrs. Ellen Roy's article on "Our Conception of Democratic Socialism" was contributed to the Symposium of the Congress Socialist Forum at New Delhi, April 1958. The omission of the footnote acknowledging this fact is regretted.

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# CORRESPONDENCE

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## THE NECESSITY OF ENGLISH

1.

Dear Prof. Ghose,

I would like to state at the outset that I admire your bold thinking and independent way of writing. I find much to commend in this article, and yet there are points in it which have baulked me. This does not appear to me to be a purely personal difficulty; I am inclined to think that these points might stand in the way of many other reader's appreciation or acceptance of your article. I, therefore, wonder if you would like to reconsider some of them.

1. When you oppose the replacement of English by Hindi, you do not make it clear whether you oppose it only for the non-Hindi regions or for the Hindi-speaking areas also; nor whether your opposition is directed to the advocacy of Hindi for official purposes only or for other (I should say more important) purposes as well. To plead for the retention of English as an integral part of our higher education, as 'a window on the world' through which we would continue to be invigorated by the fresh breezes of Western science and humanistic thought is one thing. But your arguments are so stated as to be equally applicable to all the Indian languages and in all the cultural roles in which they have pressed or may press their claims against English. To mention one such fundamental role: In the middle of the 19th century some attempts were made (notably by Michael Madhusudan Datta) to use English as the medium of expression for our creative writing too. This attempt failed by and large, and to-day the Indian languages (including Hindi of course) have almost universally come to be regarded as the natural means of expression for the creative writers of India. You do not expressly oppose it, but your article seems to suggest that you would welcome English taking up this role also. For if our culture were to be entirely westernised (as you both desire and predict), it would be natural to support its seeking expression in all spheres (including the creative) through the English language.

2. You would acknowledge that you have expressed rather an extreme point of view, opposing not only the obscurantist attempts to resurrect in the middle of the 20th century our Vedic or Pauranic civilisation and culture in all their pristine purity, but also the possibility of any kind of synthesis between our ancient cultural heritage and the modern culture coming from the West. You foresee as well as welcome our total de-Indianisation and Westernisation. And you reject the possibility of synthesis rather summarily on the ground that there can be no synthesis between an element that is aged and moribund and another that is young and vigorous. Do you really believe that revivalist forces in India are that weak? I would say: unfortunately they are not. Furthermore, synthesis between a weaker and a stronger cultural trend is neither theoretically inconceivable nor historically unknown. I could refer you to the histories of Rome and Iran—though my knowledge of history is elementary. In the former, Graeco-Roman and Christian trends possessing unequal strengths clashed but finally coalesced; and in Iran a synthesis of its indigenous decadent culture was found possible with the more virile Islamic culture coming from Arabia. And here in India, would you not admit that our own traditional cultural elements did manage to reach some form of synthesis in the life and thought of men like Ram-mohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi. I don't think you could characterise these men as wholly westernised—as you well might a man like Nehru who, strangely and fortunately enough, continues to be our national idol in spite of that. And wouldn't you be wrong if you wanted to maintain that Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan (revivalists in some ways) were unaffected by Western values and philosophies? The only alternative for you would be to contend that no real synthesis was achieved in the life or thought of these eminent Indians; what we find there is only syncretism, or worse, mere co-existence of cultural trends on terms of 'cold war'. This is a possible position, but by no means plausible.

I would not proceed any further along this line. Perhaps you feel like replying to some of the points I have raised above, and others which you

can easily visualise. If so, I wish you would incorporate your new arguments or further elaborations of your previous arguments in the body of the article itself.

Yours sincerely,  
ABU SAYEED AYYUB

## 2.

Dear Mr. Ayyub

Perhaps I have expressed an extreme point of view. The history of our country as I have studied it leads me to believe that on innumerable occasions the smug Indian mind has been responsible for a peculiar kind of indifference to alien ideas and ideals. And I apprehend that our independence might tempt the revivalists to adopt a similar attitude of indifference.

The two points you have raised are certainly interesting. First to the question: Is English going to be the vehicle of creative writing in India?—frankly speaking, I have no answer. But I would like to raise another question. Let me state my position. I take it that creative writing means poetry, drama, belles-lettres etc. The cultural life of a people, however, is certainly much wider in that it includes within its scope their dress and *mores*, architecture and painting and, above all, their characteristic ways of thinking. In this broader sense I believe our cultural life is being rapidly and steadily occidentalized. If this is accepted as even partly true then the occidentalization of our self-expression through literature seems to me to be inevitable. What eventually will be the shape of our creative writing I admit I can't visualize. But my question is: Isn't it a fact that English has been the vehicle of some of our poets, novelists and essayists? Aren't we proud of the writings of Toru Dutt, Man Mohan Ghose and Sarojini Naidu, of Aurobindo (and even Tagore), Gandhi and Nehru, Dhan Gopal Mukerji and Mulk Raj Anand, Kamla Markandeya and Shanta Rama Rau? Isn't it a fact that journals like the 'Modern Review' and the 'Calcutta Review' and dailies like the 'Amrita Bazar Patrika' and the 'Hindu'—to mention a few—played an important role in the cultural life of the country? Yet I confess I can't recommend English to be the medium of expression for all the creative writers of the country.

The second issue: By synthesis, I should like to say at the outset, I mean the synthesis between the modern European and the traditional Indian cultures and, not between the former and the forces of revivalism. Let me add that revivalism, as I see it, is ultimately doomed to failure. What after all are the revivalists going to revive? If it is

the ancient Indian culture then my objection is that layers of culture are not stratified as are some rocks, so that one could easily discern the seams and strata. In the very act of unearthing the past the revivalist is bound to come across certain layers whose presence offends him. More often than not in ancient Indian history the Pre-Buddhistic, Buddhistic and Post-Buddhistic, the Greek, Iranian, Islamic and various other currents get indistinguishably mixed up. And I am not prepared to believe that our revivalists are such clever diviners that they can distinguish unspoilt 'Hindu culture', for example, from other cultures. That is why I said that the revivalists are trying to perform an absurd task. The revivalist's point of view is weak again because his laudatory attitude to the past is not the natural outcome of a profound study of the history and pre-history of the country's civilization. The spirit of laudation, on the other hand, is a carefully cultivated habit of mind. Emotionally rich, the spirit of revivalism lacks in intellectual depth and comprehensiveness. The study of a country's past in all its aspects is one thing, while the eagerness to read 'patterns' into the concatenation of events, to find a 'message', to detect a 'purpose' and to see a 'continuity' in the events that constitute that past is entirely another thing. Our revivalists should do well to remember the pungent observation made by G. Unwin: "if we steadily ignore much that seems to lead nowhere, and much that leads in the opposite direction, we soon perceive a chain of historic causation leading to one great result." (*Studies in Economic History*, ed. by R. H. Tawney, p. 37).

To come back to the main issue. Yes, I believe there cannot be durable and genuine synthesis between two tendencies when one is other-worldly, weak and static and the other secular, powerful and dynamic. The forces of revivalism are only relatively strong; I mean if the forces opposing revivalism are not allowed to assert themselves, revivalists are likely to establish their sway at least temporarily, e.g. the Arya Samaj movement, the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement etc.

Talking about synthesis you have referred to the histories of Rome and Iran. If the Graeco-Roman civilization ultimately coalesced with Christianity it is perhaps because the former stood in need of a religious world-view which the latter adequately supplied. The Graeco-Roman civilization was powerful in certain respects but Christianity was perhaps more powerful in certain other respects. Christianity gave the Romans a highly evolved religion with its pure and austere morals while the influence of Rome on Christianity is clearly visible in the field of ecclesiastical organization. As. H. J.

Randall says, 'if it (Christianity) were Semitic in origin and Roman in organization it was Greek in language and thought' (*The Creative Centuries*, p. 133). I am sure there has been no such give-and-take between India and the West; and if at all there has been any, it is Christianity that has influenced Hinduism. Some scholars hold that the medieval Bhakti movement was at least partially influenced by early Christianity. The influence of Christianity is again visible in some of the ideals of the Ramakrishna Mission, in the Gandhian non-violence and in the monogamous marriages of modern Indians. In brief, the cultural synthesis achieved in Rome is, to my mind no historical analogue. About Iran. Here too we should be careful in avoiding the twin errors of overestimating the strength of the Arabic civilization and underestimating the contributions of the Iranian civilization. Arabia was strong not only because the country had evolved a sublime monotheism, but also because the Arabs were an adventurous people, because the early seafaring Arabs had come in contact with other civilized peoples all around them. On the other hand, in spite of their decadence the Persians contributed most to what is called 'Arabian science'.

You have asked, 'would you not admit that our own traditional cultural elements did manage to reach some form of synthesis in the life and thought of men like Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi?' To say that the life and thought of these men did not bear the stamp of synthesis would be to make an absurd statement. Yet I feel that these men were much more westernized than we like to believe. Besides, Ram Mohan, Sir Syed, Tagore and even Gandhi represent a very small section of well-to-do educated Indians. The vast majority of even the English-educated middle class — not to speak of the illiterate masses — were not represented by any

one of them. And why do you call Nehru 'wholly westernized'? I think he is as much Indian as any other name mentioned above. Had you asked a genuine revivalist about Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan he would have said that they are occidentalized Indians distorting and sophisticating the ancient Indian philosophy. According to him 'the India of sages and seers' is represented by our Shankaracharyas, Ramanujacharyas and Vallabhacharyas; by the Kashi Pandit Mahaparisad and the Kashi Vidwat Parishad who combined to proclaim on the 16th February, 1958 that the old temple of Viswanath has been defiled because Harijans entered into it!

But let us take it for granted that Ram Mohan and others did synthesise the cultures of the west and their own country. In this connection I have two observations to make. First, synthesis in the life of an individual is one thing while synthesis in the life of a people as a whole is another thing. Secondly, a genuine synthesis is reciprocal. India was tremendously benefited by men like Ram Mohan, Sir Syed, Tagore, Gandhi, Aurobindo and many others. But do you think that they played any significant role in the alien cultures they imbibed? Can you suggest any other field of life or thought in the west where the impact of our civilization has been perceptibly felt? In a genuine synthesis the tendencies coming together are mutually enriched; often these tendencies bring forth new and brilliant movements in art, literature and religion. Indo-Persian art, Sufism, medieval European Christianity are some examples.

I don't know if I have digressed a long way off. If I have, you will please excuse me. I was tempted to write this rather long letter on going through your extremely stimulating observations.

Maharaja's College,  
Jaipur.

Sincerely yours,  
A. M. GHOSE

\* \* \* \* \*

*I have still many a bone to pick with Prof. Ghose, but I am resisting the temptation for I feel that quite a few of our readers would be eager to join in the discussion—to refute or support Prof. Ghose's thesis. Those who have given some thought to the matter and are not merely urged on by emotional response are invited to participate. May we remind our contributors that it is a matter of policy with QUEST to keep all discussions at a completely impersonal level?*

ABU SAYEED ATYUB

## HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

Dear Sir,

I read with interest your article on 'Historical Materialism'. I think, however, that analytical discussions of the allegedly scientific constructs of Marxism are frustrating skirmishes unless they get at the spiritual 'basis' of Marx' thought. Marxism after all does not derive its vigour from single systems of constructs which have proven to be rather limited and unrealistic in their applicability. Marxism has its appeal because it is a chiliastic religion, expressed in modern terms, which ingeniously derives from its three elements: economic theory, historicism and philosophy combined, the stirring message that there will be a crisis (break-down of the economic order) which ushers in the end of time (dissolution of historical determinism in the classless society) and thus opens the door for the golden age of freedom. This messianic appeal is supplemented by a deep concern for the 'self-alienated' human individual. This individual will experience a reversal of this process of alienation as soon as it becomes conscious of its situation and adopts the cause of the class which is

most advanced in the chiliastic process. An increase of the autonomy of the individual can be the only result of such reversal. (Since God has been eliminated from the system, Man remains the only beneficiary of the process of spiritual growth which had been outlined by Marx' Idealist predecessors). —Indeed, even Nietzsche's 'superman' is a poor, lonely and confused creature when compared with Marx' man of the future.

This invitation to a self-redemption by right recognition of the social situation is the most formidable challenge to a lot of Establishments all over the world at a time when these Establishments can no longer fire the imagination of individual human beings. It is only this standing invitation, which made Marx famous and perpetuated his influence. Curiously enough this aspect of Marxism usually fails to attract the attention of analysts.

Once this aspect of Marxism is understood, then it is easy to realize why Communism has usurped the tasks of Liberalism in our century:

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Philadelphia 4 Pa.

Yours sincerely  
DIETMUR ROTHERMUND

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## Contributors

**C. Rajagopalachari** is an elder statesman who is held in high esteem everywhere in India and by all shades of political opinion. If his eminence as a politician has outshone his eminence as a litterateur, except in Madras, that is because India is a land of many languages. He is best known in the land of Tamil for his essays, short stories and translations from Sanskrit classics. Incidentally, he was the first Governor-General of independent India, but this is a very little incident in the life of a man like C. R.

**Leon Emery** is a writer and musicologist and former professor at the University of Lyon. He has lost his eyesight but is still publishing a magazine called *Caheiers Libres*. He has written a number of essays and books on Balzac, Victor Hugo, Beethoven, Goethe, the French revolution, etc.

**Sibnarayan Ray** is a professor of English literature in a Calcutta College and is well known as a literary critic for his incisive style and iconoclastic ideas. He is the leading theoretician of the Radical Humanist movement after M. N. Roy and is co-editor of its weekly organ. Author of *Radicalism and Explorations*; joint author of *In Man's Own Image*.

**Michael Polanyi, F.R.S.**, was born in Budapest. He resigned his life-membership of Kaiser Wilhelm Institute fur Physikalische Chemie in 1933 in protest to anti-Jewish legislation. Later he joined the University of Manchester first as professor of Physical Chemistry and then as professor of Economic and Social Studies. Amongst his many distinguished publications on Science and Humanities "*The Logic of Liberty*" is perhaps the best known. *Personal Knowledge—Towards a post-Critical Philosophy* has recently been published by Routledge & Kegan Paul.

**Tulsinarayan Singh** is Lecturer in the Dept. of English Literature, Banaras Hindu University. His doctorate thesis on "The Correlation of Form and Content in the English Novel" is to be published shortly.

**Neville Braybrooke**, a young British writer, has just edited a symposium on T. S. Eliot on the occasion of his 70th birthday, published by Rupert Hart Davis, London.

**Jeremy Nelson** is a young poet from Australia who is studying Political Science in the University of Calcutta on an exchange Scholarship.

**Purnendubikash Bhattacharya** teaches English Literature in a Suburban College. His first book of verse was published last year.

**K. Raghavendra Rao** hails from Mysore and lectures on Politics at Gauhati University, Assam.

**Jyotirmoy Datta** is a very modernist modern poet who is establishing himself as a critic.

**Indrani Rahman**, in private life the wife of a distinguished govt. architect, is a well-known exponent of Bharat Natyam. She has for some time now been receiving training in Orissi and taking a keen interest in its revival. She is the first dancer to present Orissi on the professional stage.

**Jagannath Banerjee** has composed numerous Hindi songs in various styles and covering over three hundred ragas, many of which have been published in Bengali and Hindi monthlies with notations and raga analysis.

**Rev. Father Joseph Røggendorf, S. J.**, is a German scholar and linguist who has lived for 20 years in Japan. He is Dean of the Graduate School of Sophia University in Tokyo, a leading authority on Japanese literature, and edits the *Jochi* quarterly magazine.

**Satindranath Chakravarti**, Head of the Dept. of Philosophy, City College, Calcutta, is a well-known contributor to Marxist periodicals.

**Eugene Kamenka**, a graduate of Sydney University, is at present Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Malaya, Singapore.

**A. H. Somjee** is Reader in Political Science, M. S. University of Baroda.

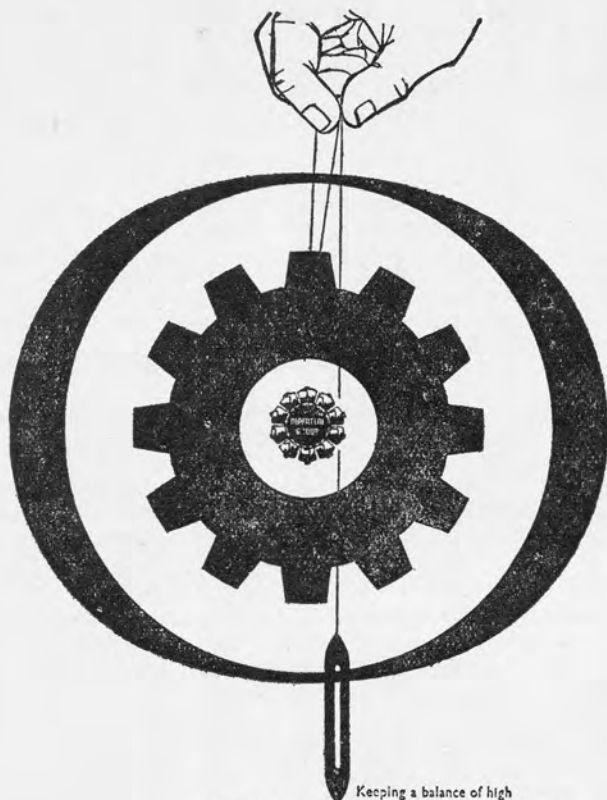
**M. K. Haldar** lectures on Philosophy at the Delhi University, and is a well-known intellectual; he contributes to the *Radical Humanist, Thought, Mankind* and *Quest*.

**G. P. Pradhan**, a well-known Marathi critic, lectures on English Literature at the Fergusson College, Poona; a frequent contributor of *Quest*.

**A. B. Shah** is a Professor of Mathematics at the Fergusson College, Poona; Reviews Editor, *Quest* from the current issue.

**Punya Sloka Ray** lectures on Philosophy at the Utkal University; holds a doctorate from the University of Tuebingen, West Germany, with a dissertation on the Special Logic of the Human Sciences.

**M. G. Bhate**, Principal of the Bombay College, Bombay, is a B.Sc. of the London School and lectures on English Literature.



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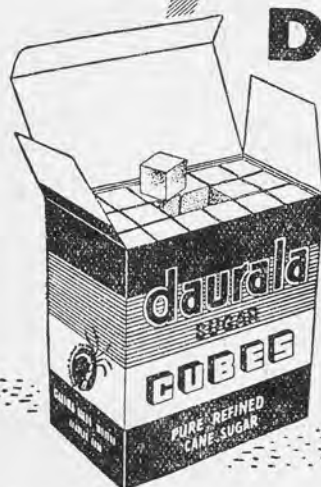
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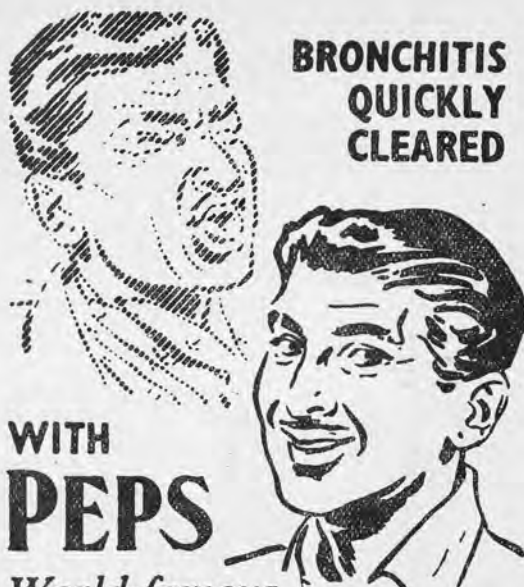
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