

QUEST

*An
Adventure
of
Ideas*

Editors: Abu Sayeed Ayyub, Amlan Datta

DAVID McCUTCHION

Who Is Cultured?

RAJNI KOTHARI

A Study in Direct Action

EDWARD SHILS

The Culture of the Indian Intellectual

HAMDIBEY

Little Direct Reportage

PUNYA SLOKA RAY

Roman Script in India

GANGADHAR GADGIL

The Dog That Ran In Circles

ELLEN ROY DISCUSSES THE SWATANTRA PARTY

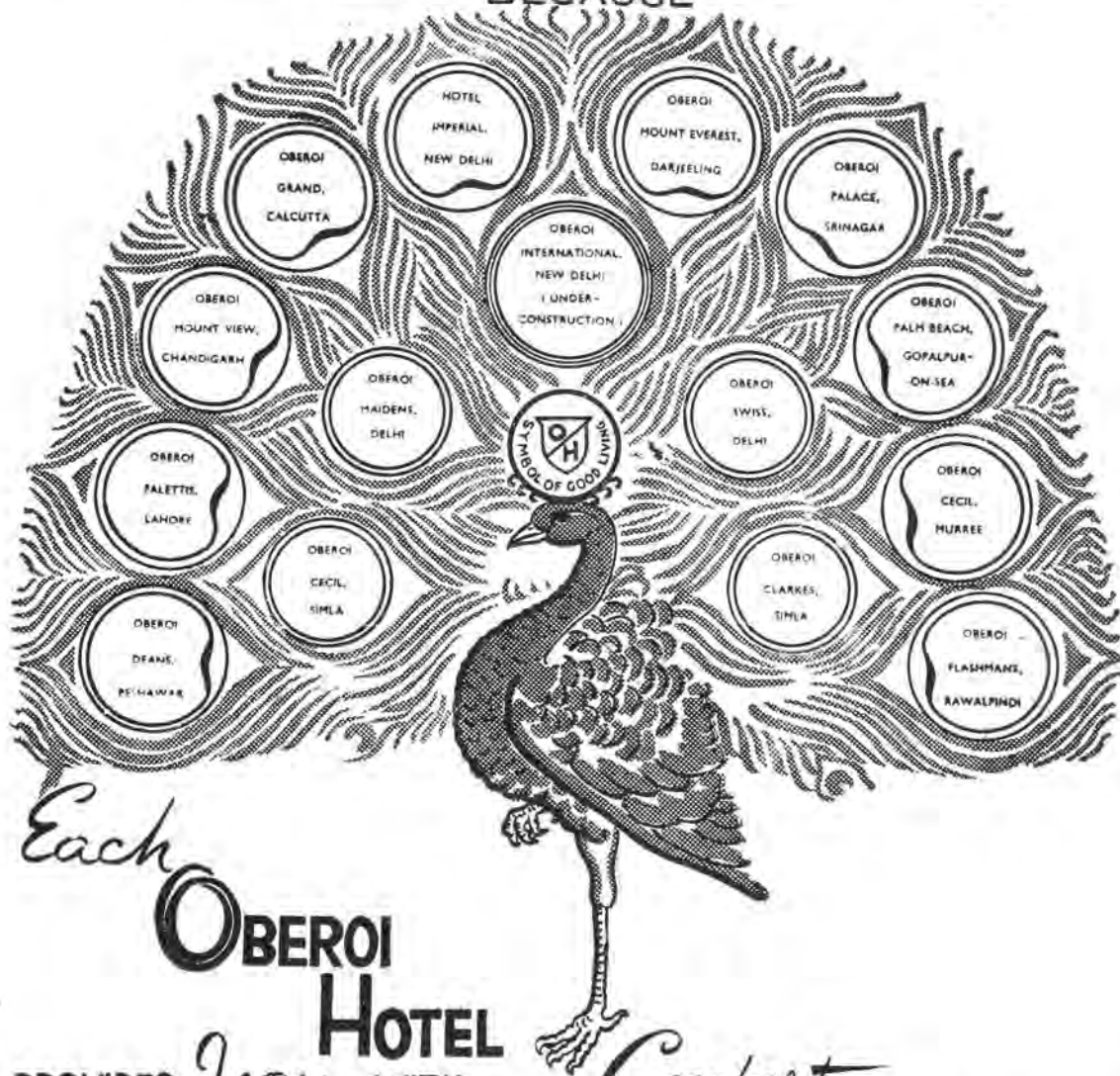
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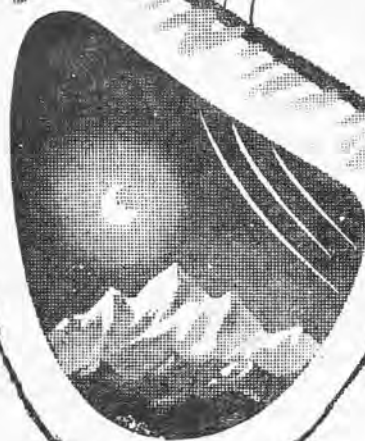
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DOCTOR: Those are the vitamins that help keep your eyes, skin, teeth

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NUTRITIONIST: All of which makes DALDA a rich source of vitamins and energy. To my mind, that's a food—a nourishing food.

YOU: But my family has always believed that things made in a factory are ... well ...

DOCTOR: Not as good as natural products? Doctors would differ with you. Modern treatment of diseases, for instance, would come to a dead stop without synthetic drugs.

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DOCTOR: If it wasn't good, I should have my waiting-room pretty full, don't you think?

WE: The final test of a product's goodness is probably large-scale use of it over a substantial period of time. If it wins out after that (as DALDA has) ... well ... 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating,' isn't it?

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Q U E S T

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Edited by ABU SAYEED AYYUB *and* AMLAN DATTA

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ARTICLES

Who Is Cultured?	9	<i>David McCutchion</i>
Direct Action: A Pattern of Political Behaviour	22	<i>Rajni Kothari</i>
The Culture of the Indian Intellectual	36	<i>Edward Shils</i>
Little Direct Reportage	50	<i>Hamdi Bey</i>
Adoption of the Roman Script in India	55	<i>Punya Sloka Ray</i>
T. S. Eliot's <i>Four Quartets</i>	59	<i>Krishna Nandan Sinha</i>

POETRY

The Advent	62	<i>Buddhadeva Bose</i>
One Who Died in an Accident	63	"
For You and You	64	<i>Dorothy Norman</i>
The Disinherited	66	<i>Pradip Sen</i>
When I Have Got the Sack	67	<i>Feroze F. Moos</i>

SHORT STORY

The Dog That Ran In Circles	68	<i>Gangadhar Gadgil</i>
-----------------------------	----	-------------------------

ARTS

Last Words and Last Chances	72	<i>Martin S. Dworkin</i>
-----------------------------	----	--------------------------

DISCUSSION

A Closer Look at the Swatantra Party	76	<i>Ellen Roy</i>
Talking About Books	90	<i>Sadhan Kumar Ghosh</i>

BOOK-REVIEWS

Back to Life	94	<i>M. D. Hatkangalekar</i>
Charvaka	95	<i>S. H. Dixit</i>
China's Population	97	<i>D. A. Dabholkar</i>
American-Asian Tensions	99	<i>A. H. Somjee</i>
The American Novel and its Tradition	100	<i>M. K. Naik</i>

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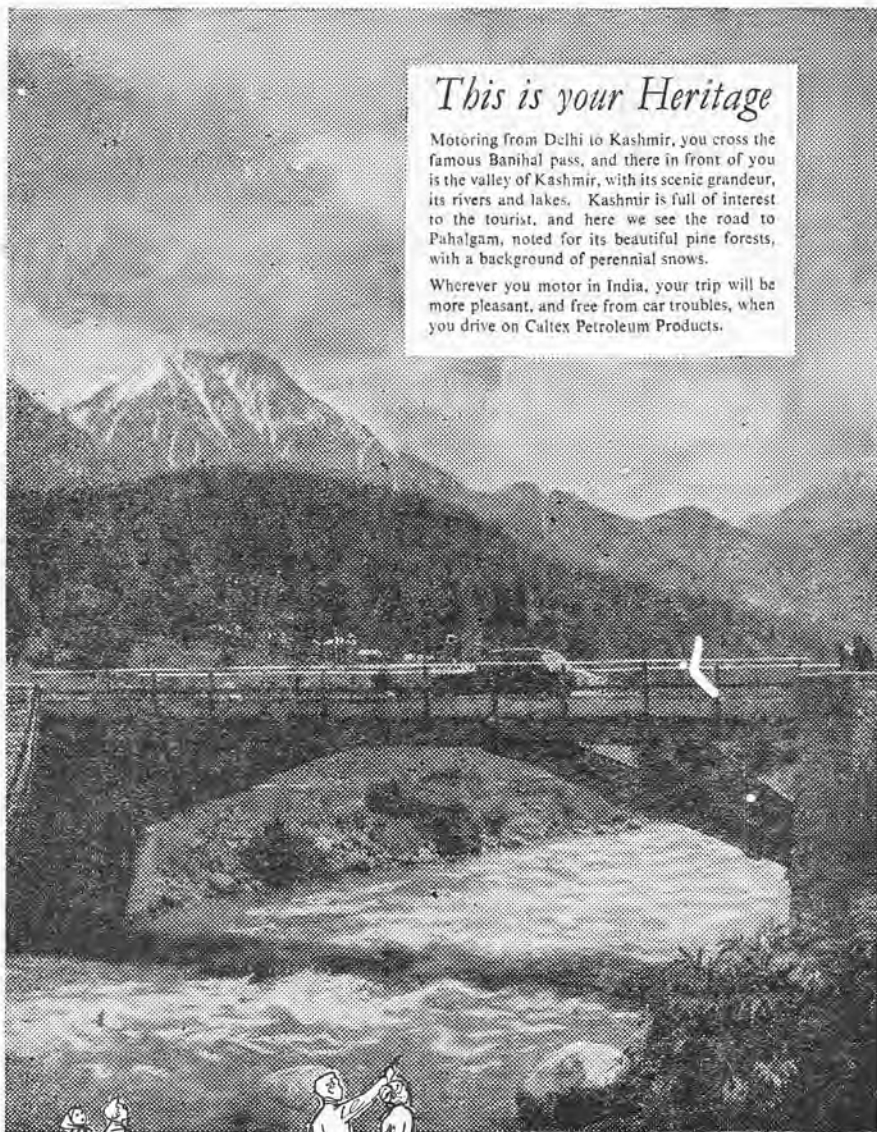
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Who Is Cultured?

By DAVID McCUTCHION

At length, quite exhausted by the attempt to be amused with her own book, which she had only chosen because it was the second volume of his, she gave a great yawn and said, "How pleasant it is to spend an evening in this way! I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of anything than of a book!—When I have a house of my own, I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library."

—Miss Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Let me say that, when I say popular, I mean *snobbishly accepted*; for, in all the arts, what we term popular signifies a selective audience, removed from and very much smaller than the general public.

—Wyndham Lewis: *The Demon of Progress in the Arts* (1954).

SUPPOSE a group of overseas students in India are called upon to give a 'Cultural Programme' for some Distinguished Guest. A Nigerian boy might begin; his song, he explains, is sung by the village witch-doctor to reconcile disputing husbands and wives. He solemnly proceeds and we respectfully listen. This student enjoys singing, but normally, with no Distinguished Guest present, his preference is for modern American songs: 'Love Somebody? Yes I do!' which he sings with far greater gusto than his rather ponderous witch-doctor song. We notice also that he is wearing a brilliant colourful Nigerian costume, which we have never seen before: clearly his culture is usually locked away in his suitcase. The rest of the Cultural Programme reveals at every turn similar discrepancies. In most cases some old folk song learnt at school, or some village round is brought forth a little dusty (unless kept polished for such special occasions) and presented with a slightly apologetic uncertainty. Some students, finding no culture ready at hand, oblige with a modern radio product — 'When The Moon Shines Bright Over Malaya' suppose-

dly representing that country, or perhaps 'Maybe, Baby'. Nobody risks 'Rock-a-Chicka', least of all 'Love Bug Crawl'. The effect of these 'vocals' from the Hit Parade, however more convincing the enthusiasm with which they are sung, is decidedly *not* cultural; the Distinguished Guest imperceptibly frowns. But imagine how much more embarrassing the situation would become if a German student were present who decided to sing one of Brahms' *Four Serious Songs*: 'high' culture would be as inappropriate as popular vulgarity. The root of the trouble is finally revealed: culture cannot be made a programme. But how did the misconception ever arise?

The root of the trouble is that cultures are no longer unified wholes. Within a highly complicated modern civilisation, a great variety of cultural patterns emerge. Compare for instance the different sets of values evolved in England by, say, a factory apprentice, a working-class scholarship boy, a public-school boy, and a bank clerk. For my own purposes here I intend to emphasise the division of a single culture into two main streams, to be called, for want of more adequate terms, *community* and

commercial. Community culture (of tribe, village, town, province, even nation) is traditional, an organically developing whole, the intuitive response of a community to its psychological needs. It is created by the people themselves, from within. Commercial culture on the other hand, (as of films, radio, television, illustrated magazines) is mechanical and imposed from without. Far from awakening fresh awareness, it standardizes responses at a lowest common level, thereby ensuring the widest possible diffusion. It is uncreative, rejecting the possibility of development and calculated to perpetuate the needs it purports to satisfy (e.g. film myths of happy love only widen the gap between longing and realisation). Community culture seeks to enable man to face and accept life; commercial culture provides an escape world. Attic drama was performed on only two or three occasions throughout the year; the modern cinema fan may see as many as ten shows a week. 'It takes your mind off things,' (my italics), as a working-class man told me when I asked him why he read the *Daily Mirror*. Community culture, endlessly driven on by the urge to resolve tensions, rapidly develops highly complex forms and acutely sensitive awareness; it is characterised in all its stages by new and unique appropriateness (e.g. from Homer to Euripides). But commercial culture, contrived in stereotyped patterns to which the public are conditioned (since its aim is no more than to make money by immediately pleasing) is false to reality, repetitive and devitalised. The one seeks understanding, the other perpetuates misunderstanding. The one enriches, the other depletes. All this should not be considered a distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture: community culture produces its 'low' forms (folk art, newspapers), while commercial culture frequently aspires to be

'high' (pretentious buildings, or films such as *The Robe*).

At the same time as this dilemma has affected Europe so acutely, every continent is in process of becoming westernised through industrialisation. Cultural distinctions are fast disappearing: conference delegates all wear the same smart tailored suits. There is some danger of a world-wide uniformity and devitalisation of culture. Under the increasingly conformist pressures of modern life and in view of the courage, intelligence and individual effort required to train oneself for an adequate response to its complexity, the traditional community cultures are everywhere being more and more rejected by the mass of the people, who turn instead to the comforting solace of Hollywood, *Best Romance Stories*, the calendar photograph and everything 'safe'. It is customary to say that this is *not* culture: 'A man of no culture,' we say, but this is absurd. The man is alive and culture signifies the forms in which he lives. Commercial culture, in spite of its dead forms, having replaced anything better, awakens living responses and is therefore *more actively alive* than the living forms of community culture, which, having lost their meaning, are dead in actuality, in effect. Our Nigerian student feels more at home in the Hotel Magnificent than in his native village: his eyes shine and his heart beats — incredible though it may seem, the vulgar little ensemble on the dais tizzing through the latest numbers with nonchalant syncopation, is more attractive to him than the taut rhythms and split-second timing of his childhood songs. Throughout the world the villager is rejecting his native culture for the glitter of town ease and luxury and the degenerate art forms (glossy pictures, ostentation) associated with wealth. Since culture cannot be divorced from life, we are forced to concede that the candy-floss world of pin-up girls and film heroes or

the lax and sickly rhythms of sentimental swing, with all the self-indulgent material values that such a world implies and encourages, is in fact the popular *culture* of a large proportion of the world today and may become universal. Hence the sharp antagonism between popular taste and the dictates of a discerning minority. Many of the inhabitants of Chandigarh might prefer the cream-cake palace of some nouveau-riche, all minarets, twirls and columns, to their own strictly functional dwellings. Likewise the pious villager prefers the gaudy printed religious pictures of the bazaar to the strikingly imaginative paintings he could produce with his own hand. Grand Hotel has become the epitome of style.

What will become of the old community cultures, which were able to rise to Ajanta, Mozart, *War and Peace*? They will persist—but *no longer as popular culture*. Bombay film music is rapidly superseding the classical raga in the mind of the Indian people; for how many more years will the servants understand Professor Godbole's song in *A Passage to India*? The errand boys that once whistled *Figaro* are now tuned to the American Forces' Network; in our time it is the intellectuals who buy the whole opera on long-playing records. In Ceylon, Benjamin Rowland points out in his *Art and Architecture of India*, the monuments of the ancient northern cities 'shone with a splendour only faintly echoed in the tawdry decor of the modern temples of Colombo and Kandy.' As urban commercialisation leaves fewer and fewer people who are naive and spontaneous in feeling and expression, appreciation of genuine cultural forms will rest more and more with the highly-educated (together with a small number of 'ordinary' people, who are sensitive enough to resist the imposition of false values). The return of modern European art (e.g. Picasso) to African and Pre-

Columbian forms is typical of this reversal—back to the roots which none are tending—whereby the intellectual assumes the task of the primitive imagination. The painter Dubuffet with his 'art brut' sought to copy the scrawls and fantasies of simple villagers and children. The outraged laughter with which the bourgeois greeted the work of these two artists exemplifies the antagonisms that arise when a culture disintegrates.

To a certain extent this divorce between popular and intellectual culture inevitably comes into being within the community forms as advanced expression outstrips popular understanding. For the thousands that stamp their feet to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, so few have ever given their enthusiasm to his quartets. Patronised by the aristocracy and ever more involved within its own problems, art left the soil of popular experience, and went on to attain its supreme realisations. The price was alienation: *Greensleeves* may be sung on any occasion, but the *Four Serious Songs* are not for students and clash horribly with the Moon over Malaya! With the growth of the middle-class—also separated from its popular origins—art came up against another form of incomprehension: philistinism. The rejection of Rembrandt's 'Night Watch' is well-known, or the condemnation of Baudelaire and Flaubert. So that finally today, with mass media determining taste and middle-class standards permeating society, we would be advised to accept the divorce as final between popular and discriminating taste, 'low-brows' and 'highbrows'. Even the traditional culture is divided within its own continuity into two opposed groups—the literary and the scientific—which barely communicate with each other, although attempts are now being made to bridge the gulf. Thus cut off from the majority, yet conscious of its great worth, the commu-

nity culture may attempt to impose itself on people for their own good. But the facilities of universal education will ensure that those capable of appreciation will find their way to good art. Whoever has seen the faces of a British working-class family swallowing a dose of Shakespeare on peak-hour television, must recognise the ludicrously misconceived aim of 'bringing culture to the masses'. The divorce may be deplorable, but it is none the less absolute, and neither party need have a bad conscience about it. Without becoming esoteric, art could never achieve its highest flights.

It should now be clear that much of our confusion about culture (for we hardly know what the word means nowadays) is a confusion of two meanings. On the one hand, by original definition, culture signifies the forms in which people live, which embody their self-expression: 'Without thinking about it, they respond alike; that is what a culture means'—C.P. Snow. On the other hand, culture refers to the traditional culture of the community, which to a large extent is no longer the living expression of the people. It is the second, ultimately false use which predominates, which decides that Stravinsky represents culture, but not Pat Boone. As a result, culture is associated with hard work (the school-room), as something difficult to attain, a reward for great trouble, even 'upper-class'. Above all, art is serious: in vain dare we assert that Paul Klee *intends* to be humorous—laughter is for the music-hall, not the picture gallery. In vain might we declare that the appeal of the 'Archduke' Trio lies in its delicacy, simplicity and unassuming openness: these are dismissed as childish qualities—art is the medium of soul-rending passion and solemn insight. The Distinguished Guest disapproves of 'Maybe Baby', because he knows that culture is not a matter of what

you like, but of what you should like. He instinctively feels that 'Maybe Baby' is cheap and vulgar, but fails to acknowledge that modern popular culture *is* cheap and vulgar. Does not the Oxford Dictionary itself define culture as 'refinement'?—shades of the eighteenth century! Culture, he is quite aware, adorns a house with Greek nymphs in alabaster, or arranges sitar lessons for the eldest daughter. The bourgeois both resents and aspires to 'culture', acquires its trappings and dislikes its representatives. Although the word culture made Goering reach for his revolver, he looted for himself the richest art collection in Europe.

We are now in a position to examine some of the curious anomalies that result from this misconception. In the first place, culture carries prestige: it has become a social and national asset. The politicians have been quick to seize upon this. At international exhibitions, such as Brussels, the contending states vie with each other to convince the millions of visitors that theirs is the most impressive culture. Propaganda now includes ballet, concerts, poetry, art. . . . The persecution of Pasternak was not so much on account of his heresy, as because he was championed by the other side. No capital city lacks its U.S.I.S. or Palace of Culture. Even the British, so long unaffected (though occasionally scandalised) by the activities of long-haired Bohemians, Chattertons and the like, now allow a modest grant to the British Council, in spite of protests from the Beaverbrook press. Of course, the British Council is very short-haired and correct, but it nevertheless propagates literature such as would not invariably be approved by those who decide policy at Westminster, just as the Rockefeller Foundation may distribute abroad the novels of Faulkner or Nathanael West, which are no re-

commendation for the American way of life.

If literature were correctly understood, it would not lend itself so readily to political uses, but now that the very word 'culture' has acquired the magic of an incantation, it is sufficient to array a list of thundering names—Shakespeare, Milton, Swift, Wordsworth, Eliot—to awe the mild observer into submission: hastily he performs his devotions and bows to the country that produced great names. Europe is a cultural entity, yet the achievements of individual contributors are being expropriated to serve national glory. Consulates abroad organise displays of 'national' art: thus Bach becomes German, Michaelangelo Italian, Cervantes Spanish, Tolstoy Russian. Yet who can doubt that Shakespeare means as much to a German as to an Englishman, Beethoven as much to a Frenchman as to a German? Will the Swiss claim Paul Klee, the Dutch Van Gogh? And who will have Handel? Happily the height of such absurdity has already been passed when it was considered unpatriotic to listen to 'German' music in England during the Great War.

Industrial society has resolved its conflict with art by allocating it a place—as ante-room decoration. This patronage depends upon a carefully-fostered misconception: a self-respecting society produces great art for appreciation by its self-respecting members. In the process of adaptation, art is rendered innocuous. For society is fundamentally unconcerned—at bottom it dismisses art much as it dismisses the fancy clothes of Chelsea—useful as window-dressing for overseas visitors, but not to be taken seriously. This is the death of art. Although there are still self-respecting citizens of Nottingham and Derby who protest loudly at the mere mention of D. H. Lawrence, they are quite likely to walk by a Bosch or a Breughel in the National Gal-

lery without a murmur (unless it be a chuckle)—for the National Gallery sanctifies, whereas Lawrence is not yet quite sanctified. Art has indeed become a religion (with ritual attendance, devotion to saints, and public sermons)—but not in the way Matthew Arnold intended: as cultural decoration, it is no more a source of spiritual and moral strength than the army label 'Church of England'. Much as God was imprisoned in churches, we now store Goya and Titian in museums, bring out Proust and Strindberg in deluxe bindings, or film Shakespeare and Dostoevsky in super-colossal vista-vision. The results of this objectification of culture are strange: the quiet litterateur may march in protest against the H-bomb, yet dips with composure into the Marquis de Sade; the elderly lady enters the Expressionist exhibition murmuring 'How nice!', and the American tourist visits every cathedral in Europe. We are gluttons for culture with none of the fastidiousness we bring to table.

For culture has become an adjunct to the personality—yet another *possession*, as D. H. Lawrence would put it—a means not of integration, but of evasion. In the essay on his paintings, Lawrence refers to our modern connoisseurs of the old masters: 'Even those that get a thrill, even when they call it ecstasy, from these old pictures, are only undergoing cerebral excitation. Their deeper responses, down in the intuitive and instinctive body, are not touched.' Lawrence's own paintings did touch these responses, and were accordingly confiscated (not fit for the ante-room). Likewise, when John Galsworthy was the touchstone of enlightened opinion, *Ulysses* was banned as filth, *The Rainbow* found 'nauseating', and T. S. Eliot decried for a 'drunkard's helot'. The books have not changed, yet few nowadays risk belittling the achievement of Lawrence or Joyce, while Mr. Eliot is arch-priest of the Establishment.

Once it is a social asset to have read the best books ('digest' form will do), once it is considered a sign of intelligence to approve Cézanne, once Bartok is the last word, then valid responses are replaced by a reflex. In the room the women still come and go, but now they talk of T. S. Eliot. How many, asks I. A. Richards, would commit themselves as readily to praise of a poem, if they did not know the name of the poet? How many, left to themselves, would not prefer *The Citadel* or *Gone With the Wind* to *Middlemarch* or *The Brothers Karamazoff*? The dishonesty of false pretences frequently nourishes the roots of our present-day reverence for art.

In an essay on Jane Austen, Lionel Trilling concludes that she is the first novelist to show the effects of what Hegel was to call the 'secularisation of spirituality', i.e. the impulse to conform socially to spiritual and moral standards which are no longer inspired by religious conviction. Or, as Trilling puts it, the necessity 'to put our lives and styles to the question, making sure that not only in deeds but in décor they exhibit the signs of our belonging to the number of the secular-spiritual elect? Continually exposed to an unexpressed anonymous judgement, we sacrifice our independence of expression in self-demonstration for best advantage. Hence the contradiction between the 'outside' and the 'inside', which so obsessed Kierkegaard. An outward show of fearless opinion (itself a conformist pose), may accompany the most enslaved attitudes (as in frequent book-reviews). We seek not truth but credit. These effects are those of what might be called the exteriorisation, or socialisation of culture—when it is detached from inner necessity. This is the situation which has created the problem of sincerity, central and insoluble in our assessment of both reader and writer. The question of 'authenticity' cannot arise in the spontaneous cul-

ture of a young community, for the primitive admits no conflict of appearance and reality. But when the content of art is no longer related to actuality, culture ceases to affect behaviour. It is not uncommon to find sensitive and refined people whose reading embraces the highest ideals, yet who lead lives of sordid dishonesty. The dictatorship of Hitler received the support of some of the most 'cultured' elements in German society; in his 'New Year Letter' (1941), W. H. Auden wrote of

'... culture on all fours to greet
A butch and criminal elite
While in the vale of silly sheep
Rheumatic old patricians weep.'

Had not Lichtenberg warned us long ago against '*eine gelehrte Barbarei*', and Nietzsche castigated the '*Bildungsphilister*'?

The detraction which greets new departures in art is most revealing for our theme. It is a common complaint that modern poetry is esoteric. Naturally: all art is esoteric. The poet must assume a degree of common awareness in his readers, a set of assumptions to which he can refer in order to express new meanings implicit within them. For precision of feeling and compact expression, he draws on a stock of symbols which his readers share. They may be common to all cultures, like the sun and rain. But where Homer calls on Apollo, Dante calls on Christ. A cow has very different connotations for an Indian and a European. Nevertheless, within their respective cultures, all these symbols hold meaning. All speech tends to exploit compressed, economic forms of expression, and also replaces clichés by new images and allusions, thereby retaining its vitality. The language of the factory-hand is no less obscure than that of modern poetry. When the English shop-assistant talks about football ('He done a Stanley on 'em'), or drink ('Have a quick one at the Red Horse'),

he presupposes a knowledge as special as that of the poet. The enigmatic headlines of the sports page, the professional jargon of the Stock Exchange, the slang of an army barracks, the subtle barter of the market, innuendoes, ironies, or the private language of personal reference between friends, are all equally beyond the comprehension of the uninitiated. Who but a Cockney could disentangle Cockney slang ('rabbit' = 'rabbit's paw' = 'jaw' = 'conversation')? Culture, like language, is unique and exclusive.

The assailants of modern literature, however, declare that they share the same culture and language, so why should they not understand? They fail because culture is for them a fixed pattern—an assurance against change, a ready-made nest. But neither culture nor language is static. New situations call for new responses: just as the child outgrows nursery rhyme; and turns to school stories, and (it is to be hoped) will finally turn to Dickens and Forster. (All too evidently, however, a majority stop short at Raymond Chandler and Daphne du Maurier.) Like the child, a culture grows; situations are not eternal. The epic, like the fairy tale, ceases to satisfy; Shelley may pall beyond adolescence. A Donne or Wordsworth may have expressed to perfection the response to their particular situation, and in so far as we still share it, we turn to them, as we may also turn back to the fairy tale and Shelley. This validity is eternal. But the contemporary situation has never completely occurred before: it creates new needs, which at the same time embrace all previous experience. The reader, sensitive to such changes, recognises in the new poetry the response to these needs. Some readers, however, (most of us beyond a certain age it seems) continue to live in the past, our responses conditioned to a previous situation. Without new responses a culture stagnates and put-

refies. To guard meaning jealously, is to lose it.

Throughout the nineteen twenties and thirties many Englishmen continued to think and feel as if the Great War had changed nothing. Such readers, attuned to Georgian prettiness, were not likely to be attracted to the new movement in poetry. In 1850 Tennyson had published "In Memoriam":

'Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill . . .'

In 1919 Eliot published "Gerontion":

'Think

Neither fear nor courage saves us. Un-
natural vices
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
Are forced upon us by our impudent
crimes. . .'

Both poets face the problem of evil, and both conclude that man alone can do little to solve it. But trustful pleading and consoling regularity of rhythm have given way to harsh mistrust and broken mocking lines. An age of despair has supplanted an age of hopefulness. The second poem, by rejecting a vague hope that God will put things right when they seem to go wrong, has reached a more mature awareness of the nature of evil and human responsibility. They are stages in the same confrontation. The futility of pain and violence have become too close for men still to believe

'That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire?'

From Rupert Brooke, returning soldiers turned to Wilfred Owen. From 'an infant crying in the night' to the 'thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season'.

The question arises: why should those who are content with the old responses, object so vehemently to the new ones? They are no more obliged to read Empson than Einstein. Why should the largely irrelevant charge of obscurity be raised?

When our interest is engaged, no obstacles defeat us. Pope is as full of allusions as Eliot, but those who dislike the eighteenth century do not hesitate to say so. When Wordsworth evokes Milton and calls England a stagnant fen, no objection is raised, but when Eliot recalls the 'Sweet Thames' of Spenser, to contrast it with the sweating river of today, he is accused of writing for a coterie. Among the many reasons for such denigration, it is evident that people desire to read modern poetry, not to satisfy any inner need, but for reasons of prestige. They see themselves as poetry-lovers, so they must love all poetry. Humiliated by failure to understand what they have no impulse to understand, they cry it down, so that dilute Tennyson may take its place. Everybody likes to be avant-garde. Similarly many people write poetry not under inner compulsion, but in order to be poets. In art, as in politics, every man considers himself an expert. The layman does not question the authority of a leading metallurgist or propose alternative theories of physics. Yet for one bad poet there are ten worse critics, about whom Pope said the last word two and a half centuries ago:

'Tis hard to say if greater want of skill
Appear in writing or in judging ill;
But, of the two, less dang'rous is th'
 offence
To tire our patience, than mislead our
sense.'

Without long submission to a specialised discipline, who would attempt a thesis on, say, entomology? But the merest café conversationalist will hold forth on aesthetics, and flattery may encourage him to set it all down. Who can refute him, since there is no finality of argument in literature? The engineer asks: does it work? The poet replies: you make it work!

Modern society, then, manifests three distinct attitudes to the developing com-

munity culture. First, the indifference or hostility of the masses, who turn instead to commercial culture. Second, the aspiration of the socially pretentious, who wish to be considered 'cultured'. Third, the delight and curiosity of a discriminating minority, whose responses remain genuine and are highly developed. Opportunities for the enjoyment of good art have never been more widely enjoyed. In Europe, thanks to the influence of radio, more people are enjoying the music of Bach and Mozart than at any time since they wrote. Books of art reproductions have acquainted millions with painting from Lascaux to Jackson Pollock. Universal education has put Milton and Coleridge into the mind of every schoolboy. Such an impact has inevitably enriched those who responded, however many were left untouched or professed an interest which they did not feel.

But even the appreciation of this sensitive and educated group risks becoming a detached, 'aesthetic' enjoyment. The cherishing of art by a cultivated minority does not lend itself easily to the integration of life and art we so envy in earlier ages, when art was a form of collective response, both of creation and appreciation, in which the entire community participated. The student of Fine Arts who today stands in Canterbury or Bamberg cathedral is not united in feeling with the structure, as were its builders — workmen and citizens — who saw in it the perfect and only possible form of their self-expression. The majority of citizens of Coventry or Chandigarh are not identified in any vital sense with the planning and construction of their cities: architect and populace are separate — expert and recipient. Le Corbusier's Secretariat and High Court, or the new 'contemporary' cathedral of Coventry, appear as curiosities or an affront. The art student, sketching in his notebook the vaulting of Ely or the statuary of Chartres,

may well be an atheist, more interested in the harmony of proportions and their historical variations than in any spiritual significance the church before him may reveal, unaware of any vital relation to his own needs. His pleasure is 'cerebral excitation': he has missed the point.

We tend to be proud of our vast reading, our world-wide travels, the enormous scope of our knowledge. 'Art has made us myriad-minded', said Oscar Wilde; yet he himself was to realise that the experience of art is meaningless unless rooted in the experience of life. In *De Profundis* he confessed that nothing less than intense personal suffering could ever have brought home to him the meaning of so much that had previously been little more than cross-references in a game of cultural repartee — Dante, Baudelaire, Sophocles, Christ... Culture is not for private cultivation. Its appearance and assimilation are organic — a largely unconscious process. The builders of the great mediaeval cathedrals, the poets of Attic tragedy, the sculptors of Buddha on his lotus throne, were realising a visionary need which arose at that level of their development. If we force ourselves to gaze upon such art without the spiritual development it presupposes, our appreciation must be false. It would be equally futile to read Yeats without investigating his symbols. In cherishing the past we tend to atrophy the creative impulses of the present. The young architects who copy the motifs of Bhubaneswar for incorporation in their designs for administrative offices so that they may be 'in the Indian tradition', are unlikely to produce anything of value. Art germinates in response to a vital impulse, blossoms in the perfection of that impulse, and falls to seed in excess. From these seeds should spring new growth — but not if the seeds are assorted into packets for display! European culture is not unlike a seed counter these days:

the great creations of the past are arranged and tabulated in gay cartons — a guide and pocketbook culture. If so, the best we can expect for the future is a suburban garden.

It is an assumption of the tourist industry that art communicates spontaneously. Perhaps some art does — expressionist painting for instance: 'Wham!' as an American friend told me, 'Dig that crazy genius, man!' But the appreciation of most great art is of slow growth, intimately linked with experience of the culture that produced it, demanding a continuous training of the senses and some participation in the problems confronting the artist. A child is quickly bored by a symphony, yet the germs of the symphony exist already in his nursery songs: the progress of his appreciation is a slow continuity. Our ability to profit from art depends on the degree to which we are prepared for it. Spiritual content presupposes spiritual awareness: the 'voices of silence' cannot speak to the deaf. One of Lichtenberg's aphorisms remarks on the effect of a good book: 'It made the simple simpler, the wise wiser, and the remaining thousands stayed unchanged.'

Yet our schools impose a syllabus of literary studies which the student must follow regardless of individual need. Poetry is a recourse and a delight, but the school-boy is forced to it reluctantly. In the minds of most Englishmen, Shakespeare is associated not with the theatre, but with the classroom. T.S. Eliot has remarked on the inadvisability of forcing ourselves to read poets for whom we feel no sympathy — this may be rewarding, but requires a particularly mature discipline. Most modern educationists agree that the child in particular should be led to assimilate through interest. As Samuel Butler wrote: 'There are plenty of things that most boys would give their ears to know — these and these only are the proper things for them to sharpen their wits upon.' As it is, the child

is taught grammar before he realises the need for grammar. He is presented with knowledge not grounded in his intellectual or emotional needs: he must take it all on trust. In the same way the art-lover is told that Ajanta, Utamara, Rembrandt, Botticelli, Rajput miniatures, Buddhist scrolls, Constable, Toulouse-Lautrec . . . all represent great art. Where is he to begin? By what standards can he judge? So acceptance precedes understanding; submission takes the place of choice. Our culture is a culture of names. But eclecticism is no standard: a compliant approach to art, embracing all that is recommended, can expect neither profit nor understanding. If Goethe seems dull, then leave him alone and admit it. And the tourist should admit that what he wants is not museums and cathedrals, but picturesque curiosities and good dinners.

When we come to experience art which lies outside our own cultural tradition, the difficulties are greatly increased. The long failure of the English to appreciate Indian temple art reveals how the prejudices of one culture can operate against another. Not only was some explanation necessary of the symbols and intentions of this art, but a sympathetic leap had to be taken into an alien element. As late as February, 1910, we find Sir George Birdwood writing of Buddhist statuary in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*: '... a senseless similitude, vacuously squinting down its nose to its thumbs and knees and toes. A boiled suet pudding would serve equally well as a symbol of passionless purity and serenity of soul.' It is futile to approach another culture with the preconceptions of one's own. In 1936, we find Rabindranath Tagore making the same mistake in milder terms when he writes: 'It sometimes seems to me that the literature of Europe takes a special delight in picturing the kind of mad novel, without aim, without end, devoid of peace. But we cannot look at this as the perfec-

tion of culture; it appears to us as a deviation from human perfection.'⁶ Yet who would decry Michaelangelo's slaves bursting the bondage of their rock as a failure to express tranquillity? Rabindranath's disgust at *The Beggar's Opera*, which he could stand for no more than a few scenes when it was presented at the Lyric, Hammersmith, shortly after the First World War, arose from a similar unwillingness to project himself into circumstances foreign to his nature and ideals. But a work of art can only be experienced in its own terms, by participation in its problems and aims. Well-wishing curiosity is as useless as puzzled resentment.

In spite of these dangers, it is commonly supposed that the international diffusion of culture will promote world understanding — that if the literature, art and music of all countries are made accessible to every man, nations will no longer misunderstand and vilify each other. It is undeniable that familiarity reduces fear and that knowledge is essential to understanding. But lack of sympathy with alien ideals and forms may even increase intolerance. And we have established that culture is devitalised when it is consciously adopted for ends outside itself, and that confrontation, however sympathetic, is no guarantee of understanding. Furthermore, if we take an anthropologist's view of world culture, surveying and impartial, we fail completely to understand it. Acquiescence is no response: all art is fraught with challenge. For culture is the expression of value, and is experienced through identification with it. The passive acquisition of culture is meaningless — like collecting stamps. A culture can only be fully experienced through its successive phases. This is a process of self-development and integration — actively engaged in. Each commun-

⁶ 'The Sense of Beauty'—Visva-Bharati Quarterly, May, 1936.

ity produces its own culture in response to the particular challenge of its setting, to satisfy human needs common to all communities. Each culture is in itself a dynamic whole, realising its own particular truths, aspects of the whole truth.

This is not to deny that different cultures are only isolated from each other at a very early level of development. Most cultures now contain elements of other cultures; many are composite cultures, as Indian culture is a combination of Dravidian, Aryan, Moghul and Western elements. It is also common for a man to draw on other cultures through his own culture from quite an early stage in his development, as for instance a Bengali student draws on English, or a German on French. Nevertheless, it is more essential to experience the totality of one's own culture, including what it has assimilated of other cultures, and the aspects of other cultures on which it opens, rather than to wander haphazardly among the cultures of the world with some vague notion of 'broadening the understanding'. It is necessary that each step of cultural development be related by need and interest to what has previously been experienced. We have seen that the appreciation of art requires (1) a spiritual and intellectual preparedness approaching that of the artist, and (2) imaginative projection into the circumstances that produced it. A living culture provides this effortlessly. The English progress (some of them) from Humpty Dumpty to James Joyce. But the Trimurti of Elephanta has no meaning for those unacquainted with the concept of Ishvara, nor a classical rag for the Westerner newly arrived in India. The European who knows Chinese art only from a passing exhibition could not readily distinguish between good and bad examples.

The logic of our argument would require a man to transplant himself into the cul-

ture whose art he wished to understand, and successively identify himself with the different stages of its evolution. Indeed Indians have occasionally doubted whether all the learning of European indologists has enabled them to penetrate the core of Indian art. The scholar reduces art to an explanation of its meaning, whereas the participant *experiences* the meaning. But there is no reason why the interested foreigner should not participate in his own way from within the experience of his own culture, since humanity is one and the aims of art ultimately coincide. The possibility of responding to every culture is contained within the experience of one. Fertility symbolism, for instance, is found throughout the world, answering the needs of a common humanity. Swedenborg's novel conception of heaven as a giant human form echoed the remote and far more ancient system of the Jains, while his idea of life and death is considered by Heinrich Zimmer an 'exact counterpart' of the karma theory of Sankhya and Yoga. When Schopenhauer discovered the Upanishads, he experienced a shock of recognition, because they answered needs which had arisen within his own culture. The ideal of Buddhahood may be apprehended, however imperfectly, through a knowledge of Christian mysticism. Keats may be approached through the Vedas. Such participation, though it may recreate the original experience in modified form, is far preferable to uncommitted understanding. The perceptive imagination, fostered by the experience of any culture, has powers of intuitive penetration: study is only a support. The paradox therefore emerges that the best preparation for understanding the world as a whole, the best training for the sympathetic imagination, is active and total participation in one's own culture. For each culture is an approach to total humanity. As Bipinchandra Pal declared in

1923: 'I want to study all the cultures of the world from the point of view of Indian culture which is my own inheritance, which courses through my blood.' Only as an integrated citizen of his own community (however small a minority) is a man fit to become a citizen of the world. Otherwise, how shall we avoid one undifferentiated world culture, with all forms of expression reduced to common formulae, Buddha equated with Christ (both reduced to economics?), and everybody wearing tailored suits?

The author meets some objections:

1. *Quest:* You seem to presume that culture cannot teach. In fact art reveals truth. The tourist who sets out to visit what the guide book recommends, returns spiritually enriched, however little he may be spiritually developed. For the sensitive schoolboy, poetry is the entry into a new world. The very diffusion of culture you condemn has itself prompted much of the widespread appreciation art enjoys today. Why sneer at museums? Great paintings are far more likely to enrich a community and serve their original purpose—i.e. to be seen—when accessible to all, than hung in the stately homes of fox-hunting gentry, or the palaces of ancient cardinals. State patronage is better than neglect: didn't Augustus commission Virgil? So too with consular exhibitions and pocket books: without such aids, abused or not, art would not even reach those capable of response. And why should Proust not be brought out in luxury editions?—presentation is part of form.

Ans: My concern was mainly to refute the myth that art communicates spontaneously. In fact, most tourists and schoolboys remain unaffected. Those accustomed to Victor Sylvester cannot thrill spontaneously to Bach. The lover of *Woman's Magazine* stories discards Forster in sheer boredom and Gertrude Stein in blank astonishment. On the other hand great art may well stimulate a desire to understand it completely, and so to penetrate the values it embodies and partly reveals: in fact, by repeated experience the reason may be bypassed and the meaning grasped intuitively. Thus museums etc. are justified, even for

casual visitors who see art out of context. State patronage may encourage good as well as bad—the individual will distinguish. But if culture were not so readily accessible, people might be more likely to create their own. Hi-Fi records are part of a general tendency away from personal performance, and luxury editions are seldom read. Private initiative, within a living cultural nucleus, seems now largely confined to the lower levels of achievement (piano-playing, verse-writing, amateur rep)—although just such a 'provincial' culture produced Lawrence.

2. *Quest:* Sir, you're a prig! (and probably a scoundrel). Why shouldn't a reader prefer *The Citadel*? By your own criteria of honesty we should read what satisfies us. I know what I like!

Ans: So do I.

3. *Quest:* You condemn the present teaching of literature in schools, yet offer no practical alternative. A choice of poetry to suit the level of every pupil in any class is impossible. Do you advocate that literature should not be taught at all, rather than forced on unwilling ears? Yet many have subsequently benefited from reading great works at an age when they could not understand them. *Hamlet* grows in our minds, develops as we develop.

Ans: There is no practical alternative. Nevertheless, the hostility aroused by the imposition of culture in school is responsible for much antagonism, and prevents more people from re-reading *Hamlet* than it leads to later benefit.

4. *Quest:* You seem to intend that your cultural minority should live on the same high level of intensity all the time, like enraptured saints. But the essence of life is variety — we swing between exaltation and repose. Why should the Professor of Fine Arts not enjoy vulgar films and sentimental music between lectures? Why should the archaeologist not write detective stories, the devotional writer prefer China dogs to Italian Primitives? 'A man without vulgarity could no more exist than a man without bowels'—G.B.S. The poet takes refuge in the pub. Relax, man, relax!

Ans: You speak as if 'culture' and 'pleasure' were distinct spheres—the one for the furrowed

brow, the other for the broad grin. But the varying demands of life (concentration, relaxation, etc.) need not involve contradiction. The lover of Montaigne can find less demanding authors for after-dinner hours who are not necessarily slick, pretentious or false to experiences. Can the admirer of Strindberg and O'Neill 'turn off' his principles of judgement in order to swallow the cosy clichés of a sentimental film? An underlying integrity usually determines the tastes of the mature personality — from his favourite cartoonist to his choice of authors. On the other hand, poets demand the right to contradict themselves, and the completely consistent person is generally spiritless.

5. *Quest:* Many of your terms need re-examining. For instance, the 'people' (who exactly?) react as 'spontaneously' to vulgarity as they previously reacted to their folk culture, and in either case they are conditioned.

Ans: I tried to distinguish between conditioning from within the community pattern, and from without. But the issue is very complicated, for the commercial impulse itself has developed from within the community. Even decay is part of the process of organic growth. The ramifications of a culture are really far too complex for reduction to the simple schemas which must be adopted in order to point out larger tendencies. 'People' = general public, (see next answer).

6. *Quest:* How can you assert that popular taste is permanently degraded? The natural vitality of the people will always reassert itself. Degeneration of taste is middle-class. What about the origins of O'Neill, or the recent success of Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop? What about the Russian folk dancers?

Ans: My point was that the people are becoming middle-class: after a generation or so there

will be no 'people'. And it is precisely in becoming middle-class that they lose their vitality of expression. Joan Littlewood has spent all her life attempting (with some success) to promote popular theatre, but the very necessity of her tireless presence reveals the extent to which popular expression lacks spontaneity — except in the pub. She herself admits that Theatre Workshop is largely patronised by intellectuals. The bawdy of such as Brendan Behan appeals to an urge of the cultivated to react against their own refinement, and the desire for piquant alien experiences — witness the enthusiastic reviews in intellectual weeklies of recent books on prison life by their inmates, studded with 'unprintable' words. The 'people' tend to read such books with startled guffaws and a certain embarrassment: they take it for granted that the world of print and the world of reality are different spheres. The Russian folk dancers, for all their excellence, are as far removed from popular self-expression as Cambridge undergraduates performing highland reels.

7. *Quest:* Your trite nostalgia for a Golden Age when art and life were one, is a sad illusion. How can we presume that the Mediaeval rowdies appreciated Gothic architecture? It is certain the Elizabethan groundlings looked only for blood and ribaldry: doesn't Shakespeare himself say they were 'for the most part... capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise' (*Hamlet* III. ii. 12)? Did the eighteenth century produce no great work, when art was as much cultivated for personal prestige as it has ever been? Culture has always been the prerogative of a minority. The Vedic Aryan kept his wisdom secret, safe from the contamination of the herd. Only at the level of myth are art and life united—at one with fear and superstition. Art is by individuals, for individuals, aristocratic.

Ans: At least the life of the individual must be at one with his art.

Direct Action : A Pattern of Political Behaviour

By RAJNI KOTHARI

THE various direct actions that have taken place and are taking place in this country seem to form a pattern of political behaviour. The general approach to the problem of direct action in this country has been merely one of approval or disapproval; there has hardly been any serious study of the subject. It is not enough to speak of the propriety or otherwise of a social phenomenon without inquiring *why* it occurs and what is the situation that gives rise to it. The direct action is objectively there. It must have causes. It is necessary to inquire into these causes.

Such an inquiry must begin with an examination of the context in which direct actions take place. In this country, they have taken place under a parliamentary democratic form of government. In the present article we propose to examine critically the bases on which the parliamentary form of government rests, the chief aim being to investigate how far the idea of democracy can be realised in this form. We then analyse the relation between parliamentary government and direct action. This is followed by an evaluation of the direct action that took place in Kerala as a particular instance of a general phenomenon. Finally, we try to construct a causal theory of direct action based on our experience of this phenomenon.

I

BASES OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

THE IDEA OF DEMOCRACY has had a long pedigree from the Greek city-states to the modern times, but it is not necessary to trace its history here. The idea is simple. In the political sphere, it is the idea of participation by the whole community in the political process. It bases political authority on the will of individuals who by a process of co-operation make decisions that are binding on all. Our main interest here, however, is in the modern form that democracy has taken, namely, the parliamentary form. In our own country we are committed to the promotion of the idea of democracy through the institution of a particular

form of democratic government. An examination into the form is more important in such a situation than in countries where a 'spirit' of democracy preceded the institution of forms and where the 'spirit' is capable of transcending the shortcomings that accompany the forms.

(a) *Philosophical Basis:*

The basic assumption on which parliamentary government rests relates to the nature of the society it pre-supposes. It is the well-known assumption of 'natural harmony' between man and man and between individuals and society. For it is clear that if there is a fundamental cleavage in society, parliamentary government could not work. The belief on which the classical view of society was based assumed that there is no possibility of a permanent or basic conflict between sections of the people, the task of political organisation being merely to make 'adjustments' and arrive at 'compromises' between apparently opposing points of view on relatively minor issues of policy. The 'invisible hand' would see to it that the individual, in following his enlightened self-interest, also promotes the general good of the community.

Recent developments have belied this belief. Even in England issues like the Irish Home Rule and the position of the House of Lords in the constitution brought the parliamentary fabric very near to breaking-point, which was only saved by a determined attempt to preserve the 'spirit' of democracy that had permeated the consciousness of the British people. Elsewhere, fundamental differences both in respect of ideology and of interests have divided societies into several political splinters and rendered parliamentary government unworkable. The chief defect in this belief in 'natural' harmony, however, is not that there is no possibility of harmony among people. It is rather that by positing such a *pre-existing* harmony the theorists of parliamentary government discounted the necessity of *true participation of the people in the political process* which alone could have made such a harmony possible. The object

of political effort was 'assumed away', and that accounts for the inadequacy of parliamentary government in many countries in the realisation of the democratic ideal.

Parliamentary government found another justification in the hands of the utilitarian philosophers of the nineteenth century. For the quantitative form that democracy has taken under parliamentary government is based on the utilitarian theory of the 'social good'. Faced by the prospect that the pleasure of one man might be opposed to the pleasure of another (for example under the capitalist mode of production), the hedonist philosophers of the nineteenth century struck upon the idea of the 'greatest good of the greatest number'. Imperceptibly the principle of the greatest good turned into the idea of a 'social good' as opposed to an 'individual good'. There was to be something like a 'total pleasure', where the pluses and the minuses were to be cancelled out. At this stage individualism came under the shadow of a 'General Will' and turned to collectivism. The idea of social good now ceased to have reference to the individual, and democracy degenerated to a mere counting of heads. The individual who was the bearer of the head was reduced to an abstraction. It is this defect in the theoretical basis of parliamentary government which explains the practical situation where the individual finds himself lost before the 'machine' of the state.

(b) *Institutional Basis:*

The fundamental institution on which the parliamentary system of government is based is that of periodic elections. In fact, elections have become the linchpin on which the entire constitutional apparatus of parliamentary government hangs. It is also the only form of popular participation provided under this system. This gives rise to a number of problems. The enormous importance given to elections tends to equate democracy with majority rule. This is because the chief purpose of elections is to give power to that party which wins a majority of seats in the legislature. In effect, this so-called majority rule is only the rule of a minority. Under a system of franchise as we have in India or in Great Britain, it is possible for a government to command a majority of seats in parliament on the basis of a minority of votes. But this is both unavoidable and hardly objectionable in itself. Only the pundits of a quantitative democracy can take serious objection to it.

What is far more objectionable is the qualitative nature of the system. Elections under a parlia-

mentary system become highly formalised. The electorate is divided among contending political parties. Political opinion gets regimented along one line or another. This gives rise to a situation where all that an elector does is to stamp his approval or disapproval on one or another consolidated programme (known as a 'manifesto') presented to him. This mechanical division of the electorate projects itself in the legislature where parties face each other as highly disciplined battalions. This means, further, that all the most important decisions are taken by the top leadership of the party in power outside the precincts of parliament. The enormous importance given to a few men in this system is also due to the fact that the parties have to rely on the 'charismatic' character of their leaders in order to appeal to the irrational instincts of the voters. All this leads to an increasing concentration of power in the hands of a few leaders. Gradually and almost imperceptibly, the institution of elections gives rise to a process whereby power is transferred from the base to the apex and concentrated there.

Finally, there is the point that elections, under the present system, fail to fulfil the very purpose for which they are devised. Even the limited mode of participation allowed to the people—namely, the casting of a vote—is highly ritualised. An election is not held when the people want it and when they are dissatisfied with the existing government, but only when it is 'due' or when the government wants it. This gives rise to a dilemma where the only type of participation allowed to the people is denied to them at crucial times. All this leads to the clear conclusion that elections provide a very inadequate basis on which a democratic system of government can base itself. The problem of democracy is as L. T. Hobhouse said, 'how to secure any effective expression of will from the ordinary man'. This the elections are clearly incapable of securing.

(c) *The logic of the system:*

The theoretical justification for the institutional structure of parliamentary government is provided by the theory of representation. The theory of representation also claims two other things. It claims to base parliamentary institutions on the will of the individual and it claims to make government a government by the majority of the people. The logic of these claims is as follows. Each individual in society, once he has attained maturity in age, is entitled to have his will represented through a representative in the assembly

which makes laws for the people as a whole. Since the representative represents a majority of his constituency and since government represents a majority of such representatives, representative government is a government by a majority of the people.

We have already seen that such a calculus of 'a majority of a majority' is refuted by experience. But such quantitative considerations do not necessarily provide, in our view, a decisive argument against the theory, which suffers from more serious defects. Above all, there is the question of the proper function of a representative. Does he merely 'represent' opinions as he finds them in the constituency or does he, following Burke's dictum, arrive at his own synthesis of such opinions by using his judgement? The former theory of 'instructed representation' falls to the ground in a dynamic society where there is such a variety of views and where it is just not possible to 'instruct' the representative on all possible contingencies. The Burkean synthesis, on the other hand, cannot be a true synthesis. A true synthesis of various viewpoints necessitates that the constituency is itself so organised that through a free and rational discussion, an opportunity is created for a true reconciliation of all contending views. The synthesis that the representative claims to have arrived at is little more than his own viewpoint, or rather his party's viewpoint, imposed on his constituents. The upshot of all this is that a mechanical theory of representation cannot become the basis of political obligation. A democratic government must ultimately find its justification in the consciousness of the people it seeks to govern. This is not possible without true participation of the people in the political process. This the theory of representation does not provide for. On the contrary, the political arrangement that it posits denies both the scope and the necessity for such participation.

It is an arrangement in which all representation is representation of a party. In the parliament, in the government and in the constituencies, it is his party that is represented by a representative. This means that in effect the representatives, instead of being the agents of the people, are truly the agents of the Prime Minister or of the leader of one of the opposition parties.

Conclusion: The true relations of power:

If we now bring together the various threads of analysis that we have so far conducted we can see that each of the bases on which parliamentary

government rests suffers from serious disadvantages. We have found that the institution of elections is inadequate as a basis of democratic government, that the theory of representation is misleading and fails to base government on the will of the people, that the ethical basis of parliamentary government in hedonism renders it incapable of imbibing the true spirit of democracy, and that the assumption of natural harmony proves inimical to true participation by the people in the political process. What we find in reality is that power tends to get concentrated under parliamentary government. The participation of the people in the processes of government is kept to a minimum, the power of the people's representatives is equally minimised under the impact of political parties, and government—to speak in a language stripped of all constitutional verbiage and legal jargon—is a government by an organised minority. In a country like India there is also the important fact that if political power is so concentrated, any attempt at diffusing economic power through the agency of the State is bound to defeat its own purpose.

Concomitant with the concentration of power in a few hands under parliamentary government is the development of a bureaucratisation of political processes. The concentration of authority at the top necessitates a vast machinery of government which spreads its tentacles throughout the state. Bureaucratic government, in fact, lies in the very logic of parliamentary government with the enormous institutional hiatus that divides the government from the governed. The result has been aptly described as apoplexy at the centre and anaemia at the periphery. Bureaucratic power becomes unwieldy and dehumanised while those that are affected by it lose all initiative and power to think for themselves.

These, then, are the true relations of power under the parliamentary system of government. It can be seen that this is a far cry from the democratic ideal, and simply shows that the best ideals may be incapable of being realised if the forms evolved to express them 'become so many fetters' and thwart such realisation.

II

THE RELEVANCE OF DIRECT ACTION

WE HAVE EXAMINED so far some of the institutional and theoretical grounds on which the system of parliamentary government is based. In the process we have tried to point out some of the

weaknesses of the system. Such criticisms as have been offered above, however, touch only the surface of the problem. In order fully to appreciate it, we must now examine the ideological moorings of the system.

The Norm:

Now in our characterisation and criticism of parliamentary government, we have so far been vaguely guided by a certain norm. It is, in fact, the norm of 'democracy' itself—democracy as understood in a basic and essential sense. In this sense, the individual is the starting point of democracy. The chief tenet is that man is the maker of his destiny and the task of the political institutions is to enable him to be so. This stress on the freedom and self-development of the individual should not, of course, be taken to mean that society is to be in a state of anarchy or that there should be no law binding on man. In fact, democracy is a form of social organisation where everything would be governed by a law. It only points that *man* must be the creator of his own law, in association with his fellow-beings. Freedom here is considered not as absence of law but as a right to shape law. An entity is free in so far as it creates its own law. The degree of freedom associated with a social system is measured by the actual scope it offers to individuals towards their self-fulfilment. It is freedom to change one necessity into another. Under such a system, all laws and institutions are no more than the creation of men seeking and shaping their destiny. All government is 'self-government' in a democracy.

The Form:

If this is a proper understanding of democracy, the next step in the argument follows. It is that parliamentary government is a system of political institutions designed by men who seek to realise the idea of democracy and that its success or failure can be measured according to the degree in which it enables men to realise the chief tenets of democracy as outlined here.

We have tried to show that, by and large, parliamentary government has failed to embody the idea of democracy, and this failure principally stems from the fact that under it there is little scope for popular participation. Our experience proves that there is a growing hiatus between the government and the people and a consequent electoral apathy to governmental processes. People do not feel the government as their own but

view it as something 'there' and 'beyond them', initiating and executing activities of which they are the docile spectators. This has resulted in the phenomenon of non-voting i.e. a large number of possible voters remain away from the polls. Compulsory voting laws are made in some countries to check this tendency but such compulsion is a superficial way of tackling the problem. The need is to understand the phenomenon a little more deeply. It is a phenomenon where the individual thinks of himself as a nonentity whose opinion and vote do not make any difference to the political process which seems to him to go on in an inexplicable and mysterious manner.

This lack of participation leads to a sense of insignificance in the people, especially in those sections which are more politically conscious. Faced with a situation in which political power is concentrated, they groan under a sense of powerlessness. In them there is an inward feeling of unrelatedness to anything significant. There is therefore a complete lack of creativity and initiative. And all this is in sharp contradiction to the ideology of democracy on which the individual has been brought up from his school-days onward. For the fact is that the maxims uttered from time to time by the apologists of parliamentary government are essentially democratic maxims. It is the large gulf that divides this ideology from the actuality that leads to a sense of impotency and frustration in the people.

The context of direct action:

At this stage of the discussion, and from what has already been said, certain conclusions emerge regarding the nature of the relation between direct action and parliamentary democracy. It is easy to dismiss direct action as unpermissible under parliamentary democracy; it is difficult to obtain conditions under which the need for direct action is wholly removed. This is not because the people are not mature. Nor would it suffice to say that parliamentary institutions have not taken root in our country. It is really because it follows from the very nature of parliamentary government. It is democracy which gives rise to certain deep-rooted expectations; but the fact that the democracy is parliamentary frustrates these very expectations. Frustration, more than anything else, characterises the political picture under parliamentary democracy. The conflict between promise and possibility is latent all the time. In times of strain it comes out in the open. The result is direct action.

The underlying reason for this is that in parliamentary democracy the individual is just a constitutional fiction. He has, of course, the right of casting his ballot every four or five years. On that right, indeed, hangs the whole system. But apart from that functional link in the mechanism, the individual as such has no role to play. For, under the institutional set-up of parliamentary government, power gets centralised. This leads to insensitivity at the centre to what is happening at the circumference. The gulf between the electors and the elected cannot easily be bridged, and centralised power tends to move according to its own momentum. Decisions taken at the seat of power and enforced by its agents come as *fait accompli* to the people. Grievances accumulate. A psychological case is slowly built up in the minds of the people who are affected by such decisions. The normal channels provided for removing the accumulated grievances prove to be impotent when serious disagreement is the issue. The stage is set for direct action.

Government and the governed, into which the people are divided in a parliamentary set-up, tend to become rigid categories. These categories can pull on together only under two conditions. Either the issues which divide them should be issues of only secondary importance, in which case some compromise is always possible, or the governed must reconcile themselves to the fact that it is not possible to influence the government in any significant manner. Where none of these conditions obtain, divergent interests assume the form of a permanent conflict. The result is a show-down sooner or later.

The usual arguments against direct action:

It is so often argued that if direct action is allowed in a parliamentary democracy, the result would be chaos and anarchy. Fear of anarchy in the body politic, however, is the symptom of a deep-lying malady. It is no use dismissing direct action without giving due thought to the conditions in which it takes place. The helplessness of the people and the inefficacy of the prevailing machinery to relieve men from their 'sense' of helplessness might give rise to a situation where men are no longer prepared to tolerate things.

Another argument advanced against direct action is that though it is justified against an alien government, it is highly inappropriate under a government which is 'our own government'. It is after all, we are told, 'self-government'. The snag, however, is that though self-government

is indeed the ideal of democracy, it is largely unrealisable in a parliamentary matrix. We have seen the hollowness of the theory of representation which serves as the only basis for the identification between 'self' and 'government' in the parliamentary system. Not until real self-government where the 'self' in fact participates in the process of 'government' is achieved, can the people be expected to identify themselves with the government. For, until then, the state is still an *alien* 'power'; it has not established itself as an 'authority' acceptable to the people.

It is also argued that the electorate ought to give a fair chance to the government in power and that it is free to overthrow it in the next elections if found unsatisfactory. But surely the trouble is that elections, under a parliamentary system, are no more than a rubber-stamp on one party's manifesto or another's, which may be drawn up deceptively leaving out measures which are likely to be unpalatable to the public. These manifestoes are hardly ever a true index of the parties' real intentions. Under such conditions it is possible for power to be grabbed by a party which has no intention of upholding the values most cherished by the people. The mechanism of the 'mandate' so often proposed, also tends to become more of a tug-of-war between opposing political parties than a device for investing the people with true sovereignty.

Finally there is the argument that direct action makes a mockery of the sovereignty of parliament. However, the fact is that while in some countries it was the parliament that fought for the liberties of the people against the arbitrary rules of the monarchy, parliament can itself, under different circumstances, become arbitrary and remote from the people. Parliamentary sovereignty in effect often turns out to be the sovereignty of an organised minority, with the majority having little participation in the political process. The curious fact, indeed, is that the only real participation possible for a majority of people under such a form of government is the participation in direct action. Kerala is a case in point.

Inevitability of direct action:

From all these factors, it is possible to formulate one proposition. It is that *direct action may become inevitable under parliamentary democracy*. The general climate of frustration, the ineffectiveness of known channels of communication, the alienation and atomisation of the individual, the tendency towards regimentation and the conti-

nuous state of conflict (which may remain latent and suppressed for a time) between the rulers and the ruled — all these make the ideal of self-government more and more remote and render parliamentary government an unstable form of political organisation. *It needs to be rejuvenated from time to time by a more general and direct impact of democracy*, and failing such rejuvenation it is likely to degenerate into a constitutional dictatorship.

There is need to guard here against two possible misunderstandings. It is not suggested that because direct action is inevitable under parliamentary government *any* direct action is necessarily desirable. We shall return to this point later. The other point is that in drawing attention to the limitations of parliamentary democracy, we do not wish to posit it as opposed to real democracy. The fact that parliamentary democracy is a great improvement on more authoritarian forms cannot be doubted. Nor can it be denied that parliamentary government, together with the institution of local self-government, has proved successful in some countries in channelling the initiative of the politically-minded. What is contended, none the less, is that in the absence of more direct participation of the populace in the process of political decision-making, parliamentary government tends to be formal. Not until the common experience of all is pooled in the political process can the arbitrary and insensitive character of such a system be removed. And so long as arbitrariness and insensitivity are parts of the system, direct action is the only method open to the people to assert themselves.

In posing the issue of direct action in this manner, we are up against a difficult problem. Without both the threat and the actuality of direct action, the limitations of parliamentary government cannot be transcended. On the other hand, to justify every type of direct action would undermine not only parliamentary government but democracy itself. There is therefore an urgent need to reformulate the concept of 'direct action'. We may start by defining direct action in general and irrespective of the form it takes.

A tentative definition of direct action:

The first thing that is clear about direct action of any type is that it is essentially a technique of political action. Secondly, it is directed against constituted authority. Thirdly, the means it follows are extra-constitutional, that is, they are not provided by the legal and constitutional machinery of

the state. Its method is that of by-passing the existing parliamentary forms and evolving new categories of political behaviour. Fourthly, it takes on the character of group action. This may take the form of a spontaneous mass upsurge at the bottom or it may be engineered by a group or groups, however motivated, that either are already political or have 'become political'. Finally, it is aimed at some political change: a change of a particular policy or policies, or a change in the constitutional machinery, or a change in the government in power. In all cases a change is desired, and it is a change in the political sphere. Thus, briefly, *direct action can be defined as an extra-constitutional political technique that takes the form of a group action, is aimed at some political change and is directed against the government in power.*

Having given a tentative definition, we can proceed to formulate the concept of direct action. Now in the formulation of any concept the first maxim is that it should enable us to explain that part of experience to which it refers in an objective and efficient manner. In this case the essential need is to rid our minds of a certain connotation that we are apt to attach to direct action but which does not necessarily follow from its definition. The orthodox Communist, Syndicalist and other terrorist movements and theories have conditioned our minds in such a way that we have come to identify all direct action with unbridled and unscrupulous violence. We must get out of this conditioning. An action can be direct with or without being violent; it can be aimed against the government with or without inciting the baser instincts of men; it can by-pass the existing categories of political action with or without becoming, in the process, unprincipled and opportunistic. If we do not wish to exclude a large part of the experience of the civilised world, we have to admit under the category of 'direct action' activities that are admittedly directed against constituted authority but whose main aim is to strengthen the democratic character of existing forms by appealing to the 'spirit' that is supposed to be embodied in these forms.

If this is not allowed we have to dismiss all agitation from below. The result is that we have to satisfy ourselves with parliamentary government as the highest form that democracy can take in the present stage of our knowledge and inventiveness. In other words, all the disadvantages of parliamentary democracy cited above have to be accepted irrevocably as part of the system. This would be an impossible situation from the point

of view of democracy. Unless our notion of direct action is rid of its existing connotations and re-formulated, we would have to rule out all possibilities of strengthening and rejuvenating our democracy. Experience of some countries suggests that it is possible to rise above the parliamentary forms and participate in the democratic process by resort to actions which are essentially direct actions.

Democratic direct action:

In our own country we have the example of Gandhiji, who by resorting to peaceful but none the less effective direct action against the government in power forced it to change its policy on a number of issues. Gandhiji's technique of arousing the opinion of the people and thus influencing the government of the day was not confined to the British. He tried that technique even after independence on the issue of the rights of Muslims in India. Another remarkable aspect of Gandhiji's method from which we can learn an important lesson was shown in 1920 when he withdrew his movement as soon as he found that it became violent and unprincipled.

When we turn to other democratic systems, we come across instances which are a tribute to the maturity which the 'democratic sense' has reached in those countries. The British people provided such an instance during World War II. The wave of opinion, running across the country and at all levels of society, on the highly moral issue of whether or not to appease the Facists, will live in the memory of all democrats as a standing testimony to the degree to which the principle of democracy has taken root in the conscience of the British people. This agitation was for the most part extra-parliamentary and direct, though it did find its echo in the parliament. The Suez crisis also showed that although the government never lost its hold on its legislative majority, the way in which the people in Britain reacted to the incident and showed to what extent their moral sense had been violated had to be reckoned with. It led to a reversal of policy and ultimately to the resignation of Sir Anthony Eden. America also, very recently, gave us an example of the high degree of democratic sense that had developed there, especially among the intellectuals. We refer to the way in which the professional and academic people fought against the onslaughts of Macarthyism.

It might be objected by some that it would be a misnomer to characterise these actions of the

British and American peoples as direct action and that they are in any case very tame affairs compared to the agitation that took place, for example, in Kerala. If one looks closely into the matter, however, it will be seen that each case was a case of a major difference on policy where a large part of the public could not see eye to eye with the government, and secondly that in each case what took place was an 'agitation' that by-passed the existing parliamentary forms. It is only because of the maturity of their democratic system and the high degree of sensitivity that characterises their legislature and government that the agitation stopped short of violence. The extreme form an agitation takes in India is only the result of a situation where while lip-service is paid by all to democracy no one really acts democratically. Neither the government nor the legislature is sufficiently responsive to changes in public opinion. But that does not prove that the basic issue is any different here than in other countries.

Types of direct action:

Assuming that the concept of direct action covers all such experiences, our next task is to distinguish between two types of direct actions — those that enable us to give to the parliamentary form a greater democratic content and those that lead to its deterioration towards authoritarianism. The characteristic of the latter type of direct action is that it uses any means to achieve its end, is unmindful of consequences and considers success as its sole justification. The former, on the other hand, is characterised by a selection of means, is careful of the democratic content of the action and judges itself not by success alone but by other considerations as well.

It is possible to define certain criteria by which to judge whether a direct action has taken a desirable form. The chief criterion is that the means used must be intended to further the principal aim of strengthening freedom and democracy. The action is desirable only if the political change desired by the group involved in direct action offers a greater scope of political freedom than is offered by the existing political arrangements. This would also mean that no section of such a group should intimidate those outside the group and thus narrow the area of freedom. Finally, the actionists should be in constant touch with informed public opinion and be sufficiently responsive to the same. The assumption here is that the conditions for a higher form of democracy

exist in a rudimentary form in the system of parliamentary democracy and that these provide us with a beginning and a basis for experimentation. The great merit of parliamentary democracy is that it allows freedom of expression. That makes a direct action possible. It is clear, then, that a direct action can be justified only if it furthers, and does not impede, the cause of democracy.

Now it is true that direct action, under certain conditions, takes undesirable forms. In a situation where people's patience and forbearance have been exhausted, various forces, social and psychological, come into play. If the direct actionists act under the impulse of unconscious urges or under the direction of a wrong type of leadership and do not give due consideration to the ultimate outcome of their acts, it is quite probable that they would pull the parliamentary form of government to pieces and push the country into the hands of a dictatorship or a military junta. In order to prevent such a catastrophe, therefore, it is imperative to evolve conditions under which direct action would not take such a form. For if it is clear that at some point parliamentary government leads to direct action, the essential problem is to provide constructive channels to such action. It is futile to talk of the dangers of direct action without reference to the conditions under which they take place.

II

APPLICATION TO KERALA

SO FAR WE HAVE TRIED to analyse the problem of direct action in a general manner. In the course of this analysis we referred to the Indian situation from time to time for purposes of illustration. We shall now try, in the light of this general analysis, to examine the situation in Kerala before the Union government intervened to establish Governor's rule in that State. The relevance of the recent events in Kerala to the future development of the country's internal politics is so crucial that it is necessary to analyse them in some detail here. The procedure we shall follow is to state and evaluate the social and political facts of Kerala and then to draw some general conclusions regarding the political situation in India, the place of direct action in it, and the location of the motive force behind direct action in the social structure of India.

The background of direct action:

The politics of Kerala on the eve of the general elections held in 1957 was in a state of confusion.

In the ten years that had gone after independence there had been as many as eight administrations in the State, including two periods of President's rule. The Congress Party in Kerala had been torn by internal wrangles, and instability of government had become a characteristic of the politics of that State, with the result that urgent economic reforms were neglected and the populace suffered from mounting hardships. The general consequence was the prevalence of a deep sense of frustration among the people of Kerala.

The political situation:

It was against this background that the Communist Party came to power in Kerala. This does not mean, however, that a search for stability led the people of Kerala to vote the Communists to power. It was believed by some at that time that the choice for the Communist Party was a conscious and calculated choice on the part of the people as a whole. The facts belie this belief. The Communists came to power on a minority of votes. The Communists could form a government in Kerala in 1957 as a result of (1) the acute dissatisfaction in the people of Kerala with the Congress and the PSP and (2) the disunity among the parties that opposed the Communists in the elections. On the positive side, those who voted for the Communists on the basis of their programme did so under the impression that they were the only party that could relieve unemployment and solve the problem of industrialisation in Kerala.

The Communal grouping:

The communal background of Kerala politics contributed to the victory of the Communists in the 1957 elections. They drew their major support from the Ezhava community and the scheduled castes, from the split among the Nairs, a large part of whom were alarmed at the growing Christian influence over the Congress party, and from the Muslims in constituencies where the Muslim League did not put up candidates against the Communists.*

Economic Stratification:

Such an analysis in terms of the communal and religious divisions in Kerala should not, however,

* For a detailed discussion of this, as well as other aspects of Kerala politics, the reader is referred to a recent book by Dr. Jitendra Singh, *Communist Rule in Kerala*, published by the Diwan Chand Indian Information Centre, New Delhi.

be overstressed. The division into social and economic classes is also relevant and is growing more and more important in recent years. There is a constant interaction between economic class, caste and religion which must be taken into account. Thus the Christians who support the Congress are also economically and educationally more advanced than the other communities. At the other extreme, there is the Ezhava community which is economically and socially depressed and identifies the interests of its class with the Communists.

What was the class composition of the voters who supported the Communists in 1957? *Positive* support came from a large majority of landless labourers and subsistence farmers (subsistence farming is a prevalent feature of Kerala agriculture where fragmentation of land has reached ridiculous proportions) and a sizeable section of industrial workers. The reasons for this support are clear. The landless labourers, who largely came from the Ezhava community and the scheduled castes, had been organised by the Communist party. The industrial workers were also organized in Trade Unions, some of which were controlled by the Communists.

The Middle Class:

But all this evidence of positive support from the lower classes would not have brought the Communists to power. It was the negative support they secured from the splitting of the middle class votes that did the trick. The political attitudes of the middle class, which held the balance of power in Kerala, are interesting. It is a class that has imbibed democratic values and aspirations. Although it has a keen desire for a progressive economy, it is also normally against undue encroachments by the State on the life of the individual. This has, possibly, led to a general feeling of frustration among its members in the wake of recent economic and political developments all over the country. The large majority of secondary school teachers in Kerala were unhappy over their lot. They tended to be anti-Congress though not definitely pro-Communist. The lawyers and other professionals with their ingrained belief in parliamentary government and their general sense of respectability may be said to be anti-Communist in their attitude, though not necessarily pro-Congress. Such hesitancy informed the attitude of the middle class in Kerala. It was an attitude of non-commitment. The political result of such an attitude was that during the elections the votes of this class got divided between contending

parties, although there was hardly any feeling of loyalty towards any of these parties. Chance oscillation in the voting behaviour of this class, therefore, could effect the outcome of the elections decisively. It was this that made political prediction difficult in Kerala where the middle class occupied a crucial position, and it has been observed by some that the Communists were themselves surprised at their victory.

In numbers, also, this class is important. According to the 1951 Census of Travancore-Cochin, the non-agricultural classes constitute 45.2 per cent of the population, and among these the 'independent workers' and 'others' — categories constituting the usual professional and middle classes — account for 45 per cent. Thus more than 20 per cent of the total population in Travancore-Cochin belongs to the middle class. As it is also the more educated, more conscious and more influential section of the population, there is no doubt that the middle class occupied, and still occupies, a strategic position in the politics of Kerala. Thus the Communists benefited from the fact that over and above the positive support from the lower classes, the negative and politically non-committal nature of the middle classes towards the elections paved the way to tilt the balance in their favour.

And it was precisely the middle class which played a decisive role against the policies of the Communist government when it came to power. It not only brought together the traditionally rival communities of Nairs and Christians but also forced all opposition parties to unite on a common platform against the government.

Communist conflict with the middle class:

Had the Communists in Kerala succeeded in breaking the political neutrality of the middle class and winning their support, the experiment might have fulfilled the expectations of the proponents of co-existence. But, as everywhere else, they developed a conflict with this class and succeeded only in placing it in active opposition to their rule. The conflict that developed was not based on economic reasons. For the middle class can hardly be called a class of exploiters except on the basis of a far-fetched logic. The reasons behind the conflict were mainly psychological, although in the direct action that ensued the economic factor also played its part. As we intend to show below, with the assumption of power the Communists in Kerala began to humiliate this class. Perhaps this is true even of the Congress

party wherever it is in power. But with the Communists it is deliberate, more organised, more direct and less subtle. Besides, with the Communists this conflict with the middle class is part of their ideology not only in India but wherever they have come to power. But here in Kerala their success demanded of them a greater awareness of the situation in which they were placed. They overlooked the fact that they were working under a system whose basis lay in the political consciousness and support of the middle class. They forgot that it was a system which was not of their own making. Their ideology of economic determinism prevented them from giving due consideration to a class which their theory held in contempt.

The fact is that the middle class was already finding itself politically alienated under a system of parliamentary government which made it feel powerless, and therefore indifferent, to the question of who came to power. The Communists having come to power as a result of this indifference further alienated the middle class. With the assumption of power, they found themselves placed in a peculiar situation. Their entire prestige was based on their militant opposition to the alleged exploitation of the masses by non-State agencies. Their rise to political power owed a great deal to the impression they had created in the general mind that they alone could solve the economic problems of unemployment and speedy industrialisation. This impression in turn was based on the achievement in these spheres in the countries under Communist rule. It was, however, largely overlooked that the basis of success in those countries lay in state-coercion of a type that is not possible to enforce in a parliamentary state which has to function under a quasi-federal democratic constitution.

Stage one: Loss of prestige:

The obstacles to their basic approach became clear in course of time. They could not materially affect the vested interests in the state without the co-operation of the centre which, however, was dominated by the Congress party. One of their first declarations on the assumption of power was to nationalise foreign-owned plantations in the State. But they could not take even the preliminary steps in that direction during the whole term of their office because the centre made its stand against any such step known to the State government. Thus the Communists in Kerala

found themselves in a position where they could not 'expropriate the expropriators'. On the contrary, to further their economic goal they were led in the opposite direction. They tried to placate big business by offering liberal economic incentives of the type which even the Congress governments were reluctant to offer in their respective States. There was also considerable labour unrest in Kerala at the same time as this offer was being made. Some of this was engineered by the unions led by the Communist party. But a sizeable part of the workers in Kerala owes allegiance to trade unions led by other parties which, too, did not obviously want to lag behind in demands. However, when it came to settling these disputes, the Communist government brazen-facedly discriminated against the workers led by the non-Communist unions in all possible ways, including protection of the employers by resort to firing, as it happened in the Chandanthope factory dispute. These actions of the Communist government together amounted to a considerable loss of prestige among the progressive but 'uncommitted' sections of the middle class in Kerala.

Stage two: Show of strength:

As if to compensate for this loss in prestige and for their failure to affect big business, the Communists in Kerala turned severely on the lesser among the vested interests. All such interests belonged to the middle class. The government began to enact rules against these small interests in a manner which annoyed and humiliated them. The minor incident of the ferry-boat charges in Kuttanad, after the taking over of the private ferry boats by the government-controlled Water Transport Corporation, becomes highly significant in this context. The increase in revenue could hardly have been the purpose behind the decision to quash the one-anna concession to students travelling by these boats. It was clearly a case of humiliating the 'petit bourgeoisie'. On the side of the middle class too, the seriousness of the protest was out of all proportion to the incident—which only shows how intense and 'pent-up' was their feeling of humiliation under the Communist government. This was the beginning of the conflict between the middle class and the government in power in Kerala. Another point to be noted here is that contrary to the Communist charge that the students' movement was instigated by the opposition parties, the fact is that the initiative came from the students and their Action Council who then forced the opposition leaders to support the

movement. In a sense this was a precursor to the direct action that was to follow later.

Stage three: The Education Bill:

The Education Bill could also be described as a measure directed against the small vested interests. The interests adversely affected this time were the private school managements. It is wrong to characterise the school managements as 'big' vested interests by reference to the control of the Church or of a society like the Nair Service Society. The important thing to note here is that the section which was represented by the Church or the N.S.S. belonged to the middle class as much as the teachers who were employed by these institutions. While it is true that all was not well with the service conditions of the school teachers in Kerala and also that some statutory measure to rectify things was certainly called for, it is also true that the Communists were completely mistaken, as subsequent events proved, in treating the dispute between the managements and teachers on a class-war footing. In fact, the extreme measures of the Communists brought the two groups together against the government.

Stage four: Deviations from the rule of law:

When this conflict was developing the Communists also estranged those sections of the middle class who are very sensitive to the maintenance of the rule of law. The Communists began to tamper with the administration of justice. For them it was a moral problem. How could they let down their comrades even if they perpetrated 'crimes', for the crimes were after all committed for a common 'cause' and may be at the behest of the party? This subservience of the governmental process to the interests of the Communist Party began to pervade all political relations in Kerala. The party cells in villages and towns began to function vigorously. There were allegations of intimidation and violence by the Communists. Non-Communists were harassed and instances of lawlessness began to accumulate. The secretary of the local branch of the Communist Party reigned supreme in his locality. The unchallenged authority of the local secretary and his accomplices also meant that the local administration and the police force were gradually emasculated and rendered impotent. The non-Communists, including the uncommitted sections of the population, naturally felt more and more insecure. It is possible that the general sense of insecurity that prevailed in Kerala under the

Communist regime may have been the result of only sporadic instances engineered by some unscrupulous party-men. But the fact of the prevailing sense of insecurity was certainly there, and perhaps in a large measure.

Stage five: Rule by the party:

All these developments and the mounting feeling of opposition to its rule made the Communist government apprehensive of the impending crisis. This made them place the faithful in positions of effective power in the administration. In all the strategic spheres, like the Police, Civil Administration and the Magistracy, the key posts were given to officers who were considered more reliable or manageable by the Party. Merit became synonymous with the goodwill of the Party. Naturally, therefore, an impression was created that the entire administration was passing off into the hands of the Communist Party. Not much imagination was required from this point onward to think in terms of the impending strait-jacket of Communist rule one heard about in the Communist countries. People who looked on with disapproval felt, therefore, that the end of freedom was close-by and that they must either give in to what seemed certain to follow or fight and get out of Communist control. Direct action became inevitable. *The urge for direct political participation, the accumulated grievances and the mounting public opinion against the government—all these factors together gave rise to a situation where the tussle between the government and the governed came out into the open.* It is futile to lay all blame for direct action in Kerala at the door of the opposition parties or a few unscrupulous individuals who might, of course, have taken advantage of the situation. The fact is that the initiative for direct action did not come from the opposition parties. Rather, the opposition parties were forced to unite on a common platform of anti-Communism by the gathering temper of the people, especially of the middle class.

IV

THE CAUSATION OF DIRECT ACTION

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER is to make an objective study of 'direct action' so as to locate its rightful place in the sphere of political actions. Earlier, we formulated the concept of direct action and defined its meaning. Its precise character was brought out in the analysis that followed of Kerala

as a particular instance of direct action. It was emphasised there that direct action was the expression of a political conflict between the aggrieved sections of the middle class and the political apparatus of a parliamentary democracy. Although Kerala had its special character, it was only one of many agitations that have taken place in India after independence. The events in Andhra, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Punjab are all instances of the same type. In each case the movement originated in the middle class and was sustained by it, though it generally spread to other classes and thus gave direct actions the character of mass movements. A general analysis of direct action must therefore begin with an analysis of the middle class itself.

From the viewpoint of social composition the middle class is not a homogeneous class. Various sections of this class perform diverse functions and belong to diverse social groups. In spite of this fact, however, there is a running thread of unity between all these sections. This is found in the mental trait which is necessary in the performance of these various functions. It is the capacity to represent objects on a more or less abstract level. Such capacity is common to administrators, lawyers, teachers, doctors, clerks, technical personnel, etc. The members of this class have received at least secondary education and possess a fair knowledge of their immediate environments. *These characteristics—knowledge of environment and capacity for abstraction—single them out to constitute a social class.*

It is in their relation to the political society that we find divisions within this class. The principle of this division is the presence or absence of participation in the political process. Some are placed in positions of power and the rest are debarred from participating in the political process except in the form offered by the institution of elections. The middle class is thus divided among the rulers and the ruled. And the problem for the politically dispossessed sections of this class is how to mitigate these conditions and create new ones in their place. Direct action is one form that attempts to solve this problem.

The hypothesis:

We can now formulate our hypothesis regarding the causes of direct action. Such action is determined by four factors: (1) the division of the politically conscious middle class into the rulers and the ruled; (2) the need or desire felt by the ruled to be the rulers; (3) the rigidity of

the political system in frustrating this need and (4) the ideology that this need is their birthright. Apart from these causal factors certain other conditions must be fulfilled before direct action is actually resorted to. These are: (1) The feeling of dissatisfaction and the sense of injustice must have reached a high pitch (thus, to take an illustration, in the Bombay State the issue of prohibition did not lead to a flare-up but that of linguistic autonomy did) and (2) there must prevail a large consensus of opinion in favour of some drastic action and a widely felt desire for it. These six elements—four causal factors and two conditions of efficiency—provide us with a total causal scheme for any direct action. Together with the definition of direct action given above they provide us with a theory of direct action.

Prevailing views on direct action:

Such a formulation of the causes of direct action runs counter to the prevailing opinions, specially those held by persons in power. They trace direct action to the activity of local *apolitical* groups. Mr. Nehru, for instance, had attributed the cause of direct action, when it took place in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Punjab, to the parochialism of linguistic or religious groups; while the Communists in Kerala traced the direct action there to the presence of vested interests. A little analysis would, however, demonstrate the weakness of this position: (1) Following Mr. Nehru's reasoning, take away parochialism and there will be an end to direct action. This stands refuted by the events in Kerala. (2) According to Communist reasoning, remove vested interests and there would be no direct action. This stands refuted by almost all the direct actions that have taken place in this country. The fact is that this type of reasoning confuses cause with condition. Parochialism and the rest are merely social conditions under which direct action takes birth and develops. They play the role of giving a particular 'colour' to the action. They do not 'cause' direct action. The cause lies, as suggested above, in the urge to take part in the functioning of the political society which, being split between the rulers and the ruled, frustrates the urge for the large majority.

The difference we have drawn between the causal factors on the one hand and the particular social conditions on the other is important in understanding not only the problem of direct action but also the remedies suggested for its solution. For, the specific conditions may change but the causes remain. If a condition is identified

with a cause, the remedy suggested will prove impotent. For instance, Mr. Nehru, convinced of the theory that parochialism is the root-cause of direct action, tries to eliminate parochialism by generating an intense feeling of nationalism. But experience so far bears out that this does not work, not because there is no feeling of nationalism among our people but because this remedy fails to attack the root of the problem. The basic problem lies in the latent need to participate in the political process which is denied to much the greater section of society under a formalistic democracy like ours. Parochialism serves the function of merely providing moral support to this need. The need to participate is at the individual psychological level; it is an expression of the individual's need to be free. But under the peculiar cultural environments of our society the individual need is not held in esteem, with the result that the moral support is sought in parochial institutions. Our authoritarian culture tends to suppress an individual need as against an 'institutional' need, and the consequence is that direct action tends to take on an 'institutional' or parochial garb. The individual acts not for himself but for a 'cause'—language, religion, caste or class. This explains the importance of parochial groups, and also the distortion of direct action towards violence and rowdiness which are justified in the interest of the 'cause'.

The view that parochialism is not a cause of direct action is supported by the fact that practically all people have local and parochial loyalties and still are divided on the issue of direct action. Some favour direct action, others do not. The criterion by which the parochial group splits itself cannot be parochialism. There must be a criterion different from it. We suggest that such a criterion is provided by the extent to which one's 'urge to participate' is satisfied. Those who either hold power or can influence it are satisfied with the existing state of affairs; others are not. This polarisation provides the political problem that India faces today and also the background against which direct action takes place.

The need to be free:

The need to be free is basic in man. It exists at the biological as well as at the psychological level. And it is precisely this need that leads men to live in a society governed by laws. As pointed out in a previous section, freedom does not consist in the absence of laws. Even at the individual level, law is necessary. Every man has to evolve a law of his being, a law on the basis of which

he orders his own behaviour. The function of such a law is to arbitrate between conflicting needs and demands of the individual self. And it is the same at the social level. In order that their freedom may be more secure men frame laws and agree to abide by them. The function of these laws also is to arbitrate between conflicting needs and demands. Then as social institutions become more complex, this function of arbitration between conflicting needs is institutionalised in the form of a state. The state is thus no superior institution; it is merely another social form whose sole justification lies in the needs of individuals. When the needs multiply, the functions of the state increase correspondingly, and as a result the state becomes a powerful entity. It is then that the state may begin to overshadow the individual whom it was originally meant to serve. When this happens, the individual comes face to face with the state whose incursion into the individual's life increases every day. The urge to be free is now translated into the desire to participate in the political process.

The political need:

The desire to be politically free is thus an expression of a fundamental human urge. The political need, however, may remain dormant for a long time in the process of social development. Then at a certain stage it comes to life and begins to agitate man. This activation of the need is conditioned by historical and social as well as personal circumstances. Throughout the medieval period the need was suppressed under the hoary institutions of religion. During the eighteenth century in Europe the need to be politically free was suddenly felt, at first by the rising middle classes. (The English tradition of 'freedom broadening from precedent to precedent' made the nobility also fight for political freedom.) The process culminated in the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the Bill of Rights in the American Constitution and the extension of the franchise in Great Britain. The process is still continuing and spreading in Asian and African countries.

The political need in India:

The experience of the struggle for freedom in European countries had its repercussion in India. The vehicle of this repercussion was the middle class in India, in whom the need to be free was kindled. Being trained to think at the abstract level, they alone could absorb the experience of the Euro-

pean people and feel the need for a similar experience of political freedom. It was the presence of a large middle class (in whom the need to be politically free had been kindled) that singled out India from other Asian countries. It also explains why today she continues to cling to the democratic ideal while other countries in the Middle and Far East are turning to dictatorship.

The role of the middle class:

The pioneers of freedom in India saw clearly the problem of spreading the need to be free in their fellowmen. Their understanding of this need was not limited to the idea of political independence but extended to the idea of political freedom for the individual in the ordering of his own destiny. They saw that not until the need to be free is kindled in the people, especially among the educated sections of society, could they hope to achieve their goal. They succeeded in their task. It was on the basis of such an awakening that the existing state came into being. The problem facing India today arises out of a strained relation between the need that was then kindled and is still alive and the institutions that are supposed to fulfil that need but fail to do so.

During pre-independence days it was thought that the establishment of parliamentary institutions would solve the problem of political freedom. As it turned out, however, the problem continued. The rigidity of the holders of power in the working of these institutions created conditions where direct action took place from time to time in one form or another. It was the only way left to large sections of the middle class to express their need for political freedom.

The other classes:

In the case of other classes like the peasantry and the working class, the need is not so keenly felt. This is partly because they are so pre-occupied

with their material needs that the political need remains dormant, and partly because their conception of freedom hardly goes beyond the level of material well-being and personal security. There is also a relative absence of the knowledge of environments; the will to be a free agent requires such a knowledge. In spite of all this, however, when direct action ensues, the workers and the peasants do not remain immune from it. They are influenced in their actions by the beliefs and values of the middle class. This has been so all through in our country. The leadership of the independence movement right from the village level to the national level had been in the hands of the middle class. The historical explanation apart, in every society and more so in a semi-literate society, the educated members tend to take a lead in social and political matters. The involvement of the masses in the direct action is thus rooted in their social relation with the members of the middle class. On the whole, it can be said, then, that the middle class holds the balance of power in India, that any direct action is initiated and sustained by members of this class and that in so far as other classes join a direct action they do so by virtue of their being influenced by the middle class.

Conclusion:

The above analysis is meant to be approximate and tentative. Its importance lies in assisting us in our understanding of direct action. Our approach in this paper has been to understand the phenomenon of direct action for what it basically is. The phenomenon, we are convinced, is not an accident. It forms a pattern by itself and in turn imparts a pattern to our political process. The fate of our democracy rests on an understanding of this pattern, which the conspiracy theory and the theory of parochialism do not explain. We have advanced an alternative theory in this paper which attempts an explanation.

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The Culture of the Indian Intellectual

By EDWARD SHILS

IN Madras, while walking on the street one burning hot day, I met a swami in saffron robes. In the course of our conversation, he quoted Wordsworth's *Prelude*. When I asked him whether he still read English literature, he said that of course he didn't but that more than thirty years ago he had studied it in Presidency College where a 'wonderful teacher' had instilled in him an imperishably loving memory of English literature.

On the other side of India, I sat with the editor of *Harijan*, a gentle little man, a loyal Gandhian, who had left his college at the call of Gandhi for the first civil disobedience movement. His niece came into the room, a plump little girl who was a student at Elphinstone College. I asked her what she wished to do when she graduated and she replied that she wished to go to Cambridge to study English literature. I told her of Trinity College chapel vestibule where statues and plaques commemorating the great literary men, scholars and statesmen who had been connected with the College made up part of the environment of the young student. The editor smilingly recalled the pictures of Wordsworth, Macaulay, and of other lights of English literary history that hung on the walls of Elphinstone College—which he had left for political reasons—and told of how they had inspired him and his classmates forty years ago.

Just after the Second World War, a South Indian publisher arranged a symposium on *Books That Have Influenced Me*.¹ His contributors included some of the more eminent academic and political nota-

bilities of the then older generation. They were predominantly liberal in political tone but included a veteran Congressman like Rajagopalachari, first Indian Governor-General of independent India, Mr. M. C. Chagla, the present Indian Ambassador to the United States, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, the Christian lady who later became Health Minister, and Professor Sir C. V. Raman, the sole Indian Nobel Prize Laureate in a scientific subject. Here are some of the influential authors: Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Tennyson, Browning, Dickens, Carlyle, Emerson, Thoreau, George Eliot, Shakespeare, Burke, J. S. Mill, Morley, R. L. Stevenson, Hardy, Ruskin, Meredith, Plato (above all, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*), Balzac, Dumas, Victor Hugo, Anatole France, Tolstoi, Edward Arnold (*The Light of Asia*), James Martineau, Herbert Spencer, James Frazer, Tyndall, T. H. Huxley, Renan, Shaw, Ibsen, etc. The twelve symposiasts mentioned about one hundred and eighty individual authors of particular books like the *Iliad* or *Robinson Crusoe*. Only about one-fifth of the books or authors cited were Continental or Indian (of these approximately half were Indian—only three were modern Indian literary figures, the others being religious classics or modern religious-social reformers). All the rest were authors in the English language, the overwhelming majority British and an inconsequential minority—Emerson, Thoreau and Upton Sinclair, to be specific—were American.

It is almost as if this older generation had taken as their guiding star, Macaulay's

lightly uttered assertion of the superiority of a shelf of books of Western literature and science to whole libraries of Oriental works. The situation has been little different in the generations now between their middle thirties and their middle fifties. The names have changed to some extent but the distribution of attention remains the same. Tennyson and Browning fall away, Blake and Donne take their places. Keats, Shelley, Byron are recalled with distant honour. T. S. Eliot, Wystan Auden and Ezra Pound replace them. Dickens and Thackeray are supplanted by Aldous Huxley, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Sartre, Camus, Mann, and Moravia. Thomas Huxley, John Morely and Burke yield place to Bertrand Russell and Harold Laski; Mazzini and Ruskin are supplanted by Marx and Lenin; Bergson by Freud. Among the less intellectual intellectuals, Somerset Maugham, Stefan Zweig are much appreciated. *Encounter* and *The New Statesman* bring a continuous flow of new names which many know about and some read. The idols of the Victorian generation which in India lived on longer than it did in the West, continue to hold high places because they continue to be 'set books' in secondary school and college.

Nonetheless, in the younger generations no more than in the older, do British and other Western writers have the field to themselves. More often than not, and not only among those in their sixties and seventies, the *Gita* also has been read; in many cases it is still read frequently and in some instances daily. Gandhi's writings and Nehru's are widely read. More studied efforts are made to cultivate an interest in Sankaracharya and the Upanishads, and to read some of the better short story writers, novelists, poets and critics in the Indian languages. The amount and intensity of the attention which they claim is, however,

still greatly overshadowed by what is read in English.

Bengal is of course a major exception; there, contemporary Bengali writers such as Tagore, Saratchandra Chatterjee, Sudhin Datta, Bishnu De, Tarasankar Banerjee, and many others continue, as they have done since the last quarter of the 19th century, to engage the mind and sympathy of sophisticated readers. But there too the intellectual output of the West enjoys the same serious reception, even if it is not so overwhelmingly preponderant, as in the rest of India.

II

One often hears it said within India and outside, by foreigners and by Indian intellectuals themselves about other Indian intellectuals, that the Indian intellectual is uprooted, that he has lost contact with his country and its culture, that he belongs neither to India nor to the West—and all this because he is an Indian taken by Western ways and ideas. In consequence of this, he is alleged to be neurotic, schizophrenic, ambivalent, suspended between two worlds, and rooted in neither.² This common contention seems to me to be superficial. It is a romantic distortion of a partial, very fragmentary truth. It is desirable to disentangle the elements of truth in this distorted view. The culture of the Indian intellectual is composite—it derives from traditions from very different sources. In this respect it quite understandably resembles the culture of intellectuals everywhere. They would not be intellectuals if their culture were the autochthonous culture in which they grew up. By becoming intellectuals they participate in a tradition which transcends their local culture and therewith, to some extent, they renounce that local culture. They do not renounce it entirely in France, England, Germany or

any other modern country. In this respect, the Indian intellectual is not in a fundamentally different position from the intellectuals of modern Western countries. Most of the Indian intellectuals I have met in person, or encountered through their writings, seem to be quite firmly rooted in India, in its past and in its present. By rooted I mean possessing within themselves, and accepting, important elements of its traditions and its present life.

With very few exceptions, the Indian intellectual has been brought up in an Indian household. Even where his father, as we find especially in Bengal, was a cultivated lawyer who wore elegant London-made suits and felt himself to be a quasi-English gentleman, or as in the case of Mr. Nehru's father, was alleged to send his shirts to Paris for laundering, or where his father was a school or college teacher who inculcated in his son a love of English literature, as we find so often in Western India, or where, as we find everywhere in India, his father was a government clerk or lesser official, there was almost always a very strong Indian influence in the household. For one thing, the fathers were almost always more attached to India and Indian traditions than a generation, loyal to its British rulers and employers, would admit. But more important, the mother was nearly always a very religious woman who insisted on Hindu dietary observances at home and who jealously watched the conduct of the servants to make sure that nothing would be done to offend religious scruples. She nearly always maintained a shrine for daily family worship. The Brahmins had their sacred thread ceremonies almost without exception. The older servants who performed auxiliary parental functions had been with the family for a long time and were as completely Indian as any one could be; they were almost untouched by West-

ern culture. The household was full of aunts and uncles and cousins, all speaking the Indian language in which they had been raised. Then there were the paternal grandparents especially the grandmother who brought a powerful force of Hinduism into the life of the child. Stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* coloured the childhood world of the Indian intellectual.³ He did not usually learn English until some years after he had learned his mother tongue. His childish games were played in an Indian language. There were the numerous religious festivals with their lights and processions and noise and merriment and delightful sweetmeats for the children. Intellectuals from poor village families have such memories as well as those from rich families in Bombay and Calcutta. The entire childhood of the Indian intellectual was spent in a deep immersion in traditional Indian life. The memories of that immersion are, on the whole, very happy memories to which the mind goes back with facility and devotion.⁴ These memories were neither eradicated nor made shameful by an education which was increasingly westernized with each advancing level.

It is not only the intellectual's background of a happy Indian childhood that makes him an Indian living in the shade of India's traditions. His own family life is Indian, too. The large majority of the intellectuals whom I interviewed were married, within their own caste, by parental arrangement, although some of the more liberated among them had first met the young woman and suggested to the parents that they approach the young woman's, or rather the girl's parents. Most of them seemed fairly satisfied with the result and only one divorced his wife because he felt that it was wrong to try to sustain intimacy with a person to whom one had no personal attachment. Those

who were married without the traditional ceremonies were a very tiny minority. Even those who were sufficiently liberated from the pressure of tradition and family to seek and find their own mates generally accepted the necessity of a religious marriage ceremony. (This latter group includes a number who consciously think that they reject the Indian religious and social heritage.)

Family life is heavily bound about by tradition. Where father, mother, brothers, sisters-in-law are none of them intellectuals, life is bound to be lived within the framework of Indian tradition. And even where the male members of the family follow professions requiring a modern university or technical education, the situation is not much different. The center of gravity of the internal life of the family is almost always determined by the more traditional members, and especially the women of the family who in nearly all cases are more traditional than the men in the same family. The older men who whatever their views when young, often spend their declining years on the study and meditation of the Gita, on the Upanishads, on Sankaracharya and the great writings of orthodox Hinduism, on domestic and public devotions. The devotions of the women are less intellectual but no less traditional. They take care of the domestic shrines, adorn them with flowers and attend devotional services at the temples with other old ladies of the same inclination.

The pressure of tradition is less heavy where the extended family does not persist. About half of the intellectuals I interviewed (nearly five hundred) lived in nuclear families—the bachelor is nearly a non-existent species—but there too the same force operated although in a more attenuated form. Parents visit and are visited frequently, the elder brother still carries a

major authority which he almost always accepts and the wife is usually less educated and more implicated in traditional practices and beliefs than the husband.

At home, with his wife, his children, his parents and his siblings, the Indian intellectual usually speaks his own mother-tongue. It is unusual for him to bring friends of another caste home for a meal. Many who have few or no conscious desires to maintain caste barriers and who are proud of the intercaste nature of some of their friendships would not think of inviting a person from another caste to take food with them at home 'because it would cause distress to my women-folk.' The same attitude is to be seen regarding religious observances. Many times I was told that 'I don't believe in these acts of worship but why should I cause pain to my old mother or my wife?'

In the marriage of their offspring, men whose attachment to Hindu ritual prohibitions and injunctions—in food, association and observance—seems slight, would often say that although they are indifferent as to whether their sons or daughters marry outside their caste and on their own choice, they expect to arrange the marriage of their children to persons of the same caste because otherwise 'my wife would be unhappy.' Others say that they would willingly allow their children to marry outside their 'community' but that India being what it is, it would be difficult. 'Where can a young man meet a refined young woman?' Hence, some effort to arrange a marriage is thought to be necessary. Moreover, even those who in the public sphere are entirely liberal and 'modern' and who have seen something of the world, are not so impressed by the value of marriage, voluntarily arranged between the young man and young woman. This is not to say that there are not many marriages in which the spouses have voluntarily chosen each

other, even in some cases without parental consent.

Intellectuals of Parsee origin or that small band whose lives were moulded by the powerful personality of the late M. N. Roy, are more prominent among these free spirits, but both of these are tiny islands in the vast ocean of Indian society. In the South of India, where a Burkean liberalism still survives, it is not at all regarded as untoward or even in need of explanation to a Westerner, to recount the proceedings involved in the arrangement of the marriage of offspring. One Southerner, a liberal loyal to Burke, Maine, Bagehot, Mill and Morley—and the *Gita*—told me that when his son, conducting advanced scientific research at a Western institution, wished to be married, he wrote his father asking that a bride be sent him. The father replied with an inquiry as to whether the bride should be educated or obedient. The son wrote that it made no difference, he wished only that his wife should not attempt to dominate him. Whereupon a young woman was chosen; she travelled overseas to her prospective husband and now they live abroad in mutual satisfaction while the husband pursues his research.

The hold of traditional practices thus seems very firm indeed. Some of these men who allege to respect the traditional practices on the grounds of concern for the sensibilities of their womenfolk, seem only to be hiding themselves behind the women's saris. Many of them still feel a real attachment to these traditional practices but are unwilling to justify that attachment, particularly to a Westerner who, they think, disapproves of such practices.

There is no such shamefacedness about religion. While a few Indians say that they are atheists or agnostics,⁵ they are an inconsequential minority, not more than ten per cent of our interviewees. Most of the others have—as compared with their

fellow intellectuals in Europe and America a quite elaborate religious consciousness, ranging from the performance of religious exercises early each morning, the daily reading of a sacred text, and the temptation to 'go into the forest,' to an ineffable sense of the working of a trans-individual power or a belief that there is a ruling spirit in the Universe. Few Indians seem to lack this sense of the numinous. The religious indifference which is so widespread in the educated classes of the West has little counterpart among Indian intellectuals; even those without very intense religious sensibility speak in religious metaphors. The Hindu pantheon permeates their imagery in a manner evocative of the prominence of Biblical imagery in the writings of Victorian intellectuals in Britain and America. Moreover, the ecclesiastical amorphousness and doctrinal flexibility of Hinduism render easier the retention of Hindu affinities. It would not be an outlandish exaggeration to say that it is impossible for an Indian of Hindu descent to cease to be a Hindu.

This is not something that is put on by Indians for the benefit of Westerners. In fact, it is the reverse that is sometimes put on—Indians who are of a belief-ful disposition sometimes deny this to Westerners because they think it will cause them to be thought retrograde. Indians who despise the cant which contrasts East and West, spirituality and materialism, likewise manifest this impressive religious sensitivity. Perhaps it is more in their religiosity than in any other sphere that the Indian intellectuals evince their rootedness in what is central in their culture. The charismatic inclination which shows itself in the politics of the Indian intellectual and the closely related muting of individuality which is so often manifested in Indian family life are both indicative of the power of the Indian religious sensibility. The oceanic feeling, the

feeling of fusion with all being, of rising above the earth-bound shell of the senses and of daily experience which, in the West, are to be found only among the *virtuosi* of religious experience, are much less uncommon in Indian educated circles. Highly 'secularized,' very intelligent and thoughtful men have told me of their frequent oceanic fantasies: an editor of a scientific journal told me that in the course of his psychoanalysis, this often emerged; one of the most sensitive individuals I encountered, to whom E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf were everything and who hated India because 'it destroys personality' said almost at the beginning of our conversations that the state of mind he admired and sought was what Indian sages meant when they spoke of absorption by Brahma. I often received an impression, difficult to articulate, that individuality—the valuing of individual, concrete experience, the assimilation of experience and the awareness of the boundaries of selfhood—has been realized less in India than in the West. The lesser elaborateness and definiteness of individuality renders it relatively easy for an Indian, even one who is trained in the arts and sciences of the West, to feel himself into the state of oceanic envelopment, to a merging with Brahma or some other trans-individual symbol.

One can go on almost indefinitely about the extent to which the cultural tradition of India lives on in the Indian intellectual. For example, let us consider astrology: astrology is laughed at by many. There are some who, speaking hyperbolically, say that the President of the Republic's personal astrologer should be kicked down the front steps of the Raj Bhawan, or who take pleasure in recounting a story which alleges that the Prime Minister actually did kick the President's astrologer out of the building. There are, however, many more who say that they 'believe and don't believe,'

that 'it is not a genuine science but that there is nonetheless a lot to it,' or that 'of course it doesn't work if the horoscopes are not perfectly accurate but if they are, then it is different.' A very well-trained and competent statistician, employed and doing a very good job at one of the best research institutes in India, explained to me that he would like to establish a research center which would place astrological prediction on a truly scientific basis. As a result of the work of this institute, it would then be possible to improve the techniques of astrological prediction and also to improve immeasurably the quality of the profession through weeding out the incompetent and selecting only those whose gifts were suited to the work. This desire to put astrology on scientific foundations is not a widespread aspiration, but it is representative of a much more common state of mind.⁶ Another intellectual whose outstanding achievements are widely appreciated in the West and whose admirers claim that he stands in the greatest Western tradition in his field of work sadly recounted how he had married contrarily to an astrologer's counsel, how he had resisted his prospective father-in-law's arguments that a marriage disapproved by astrology should not take place and how, not long after the marriage, his beloved wife had died.

Dr. Sampurnanand is the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, a scholarly student of ancient and modern subjects, a patron of learning and of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom. He is a great proponent of interplanetary research and travel and his interest in this subject arises from his belief that in some measure the stars rule our destinies. His interests are not infrequently discussed with derision. Let, however, someone in the company which is discussing him or some other devotee of astrology, begin a story with the phrase 'It is difficult to explain but let me tell you of

my experience . . .', and then launch into a long complicated tale of how against his better judgment he was persuaded to go to an astrologer who then astonished him by the remarkable accuracy of his predictions; the rest of the company listens, entranced, and when the story is over, there are usually some who add their own marvellous experiences, and others whose skepticism is tempered by the thought that 'there is probably something to it although it may not be a science'.

Let us turn from what appears to many Indians to be no more than baseless superstition, which could well vanish without impairing the substance of Indian culture, to an element at the very heart of the Indian ethos—the theory of the four *asramas*, or stages of life. The third and fourth stages—the stages of withdrawal from the routine of daily life and of the solitary wanderer who has completely renounced the world and whose forest life is consecrated to meditation—continues to have a tremendous power over those we interviewed. Its present observance does not take a literal form. There are of course very few who find it possible to follow this kind of life. Their involvement in the affairs of their families, the need to earn a livelihood sufficient for the requirements of their families, their attachments to the meagre comforts which the life of an urban Indian intellectual affords in contrast with the strain of solitude and the inconveniences of mendicancy—all these keep them from following the life of a *sannyasi*, although there are some who have actually made the leap. There are others whom the life of the third and fourth stages does not attract—persons whom the life of this earth pleases, who find satisfaction in their work, in the tasks and creations of their society and in the company of their family and friends. Yet between the extremes of those who actually enter 'the forest' and those

who are entirely indifferent to it lies the majority to whom in an attenuated and 'secularized' form the asramic image of the right pattern of life is a lodestar. It is not an accident that the greatest personality of Indian socialism, perhaps even of contemporary world socialism, and a man who even more than the Prime Minister stands immune from the carping criticism which tend to envelope nearly all Indian political personalities, Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan,⁷ has withdrawn from politics into the Bhoodan movement. It seems no more accidental that Aurobindo Ghose,⁸ in his Anglicized youth, a brilliant candidate for the I.C.S., failing only in the horse riding test, and later, a famous figure of Bengali extremist politics, withdrew to an *ashram* for a life of spiritual meditation; or that the great revolutionary M. N. Roy⁹ ended his career by ordering his followers to withdraw from politics and to form a movement, the main extra-literary activity of which was an annual 'camp', an *ashram*-like place for reflection on the right ends of life (from an humanistic point of view!)¹⁰

Although very few can envisage themselves discarding their families, their homes, their handful of books and their scant wardrobe of clothing for the life of a *sannyasi*, many perceive within themselves a disposition to that life. They feel themselves drawn to it. They appreciate those who have yielded to the pull and they appreciate even more activities which possess some of the qualities of the third and fourth *asramas*. The transcendence of the concrete self, unattachedness, renunciation, escape from the routine and the compromise of market, hearth and committee room—these are some of the ideals of the third and fourth stages and they are the common ideals of Indian intellectuals. It is not just in the religious sphere, but in the whole round of life that this attitude is expressed. The maintenance of this

attitude is quite unforced. It is nearly as spontaneous as breathing.

III

Nonetheless the Indian intellectual is troubled about his relations with his country. Just as foreign observers so often describe the Indian intellectual as 'rootless', so the Indian intellectual charges himself and, even more bitterly and frequently, his fellow-intellectuals, with being 'out of touch with the people.' There is truth in this allegation but it is at best a very deformed truth. In principle, it applies equally to all intellectuals as such, in all cultures; it is to some extent inevitable and it is also desirable if they are to do intellectual work properly. Are British intellectuals whom Indians so much admire 'in touch with the people'; are E. M. Forster and T. S. Eliot, so beloved in India 'in contact with their people'; was Harold Laski 'in touch with the people'; are Sartre or the other heroes of the Indian intellectual 'part of the earth' of their respective countries? The demand is not addressed to foreign intellectuals; it is something which the Indians demand of themselves.

After all, 'being in touch with the people' is not everybody's responsibility and one cannot be equally in touch with everything in life. A physicist must do physics and physics must be an obsession with him if he is to create something in it. An economist or a philosopher must devote most of his time and strength to his subject if he is to achieve a worthwhile standard in it. Such men cannot be peasants, and they cannot think like peasants, least of all uneducated and illiterate peasants, if they are to perform at even a very moderate level of competence in their subjects. Nor could all intellectuals become 'community project' workers in the vil-

lages, unless all other spheres of intellectual life are to be depopulated. Occasionally I put such arguments to my friends among the intellectuals I interviewed but I did not persuade them. The feeling was genuine—many of them did feel isolated, 'cut off.' Few could give concrete descriptions of this sense of alienation in their own lives and those examples they gave seemed not at all compelling. Nonetheless, the melancholy and even unhappy tones in which they insisted that they were 'cut off' from the stream of life around them persuaded me that they really felt that way.

By no means all felt that way. Higher civil servants, experienced businessmen, senior scientists with established reputations, editors with a lively participation in their professional tradition did not have it as much as college and university teachers, the literary men, ordinary journalists and the 'left-wing' intellectuals, regardless of their professions. Men and women who did a job of work which they enjoyed, in which they were interested and which called forth their esteem and the esteem of others did not feel 'cut off.' Some would even deny such an attitude with derision. An excellent young historian, trained at Oxford, productive as a scholar with three books published by the best British publishers and himself the head of a division in an important Ministry, said: 'I don't feel out of touch with the people; they might feel out of touch with me but that is their concern, not mine.'

Nonetheless it was widespread enough to be massively impressive. Hence it is just to try to consider the matter sympathetically and in detail. In what sense are Indian intellectuals 'out of touch with the people?' Many of them come from villages, they live almost always in very Indian quarters of the towns studied, they usually knew the ordinary people of their streets and buildings and some even claimed that they en-

joyed the respect of their neighbors. Many of those who complained of isolation from the people live in extended families. What could they have meant?

This feeling of alienation focusses on the embarrassing consciousness of having been educated in English, of speaking in English, of writing in English and of reading and thinking in English. There are those who feel guilty about this. Some declare explicitly that English education led them away from the 'Motherland.' In the words of the Tamil poet Subramanya Bharati, who died in 1921, they say: 'I am in love with the virgin/but my father he dedicated me/to the embrace of the hag/Prosperity./He wished me well but he put me into/an English school' (where) 'They teach you all the sciences, but the art of living/escapes them forever... They know not the old glories of India./They heed not the present degradation./My heart hurts and burns when I think/of the English school.'¹¹ In 1959, a very gifted young Indian writer, living in London, who regards it as his task to 'reformulate Brahminism in 20th century terms' and whose first novel is a work of very outstanding merit, told me of the guilt which he felt, after independence, for writing in English. Uneasily he asked me, as other Indian writers in English had asked me before him whether it was at all right for an Indian to write in English.

Without attempting to belittle these sentiments or deny their intermittent painfulness to those who take this view of things, I must say that I do not think that this cuts the Indian intellectual off from his people. After all, every Indian intellectual speaks his mother tongue and understands it. Most of them can read at least one Indian language and many can understand several. If they do not read much in them, it is for the same reason that I and my

like do not read the novels of Margaret Ayer Barnes or *The Ladies' Home Journal*—the stuff is just too poor. There is no necessary reason to condemn oneself as a snob or to feel guilty for not doing so. It is not English or modern culture which separates the Indian intellectual from his people. In what is really essential in religious sentiments, ritual observances and family obligations, and more than anything else, in the deeper feeling for life,¹² he is as closely bound to Indian society and culture as traditional Indian social structure and a differentiated modern urban society allows anyone to be. What is it then that leads the Indian intellectual to feel estranged from his people and why does he attribute this to his being 'half an Englishman, half an Indian'?

The unhappy sense of alienation of the Indian intellectual from his people seems to me to arise primarily from the conflict of his tremulous sense of nationality, and his desire to be a democrat, with an obtrusive and pervasive sensitivity to caste and community.

It is aggravated by poverty, by mal-employment, by the belief that he is disregarded and despised and by the failure, up to now, of traditions of creativity in modern fields of intellectual work to establish themselves firmly in India.

Indian intellectuals, like everyone else in India, although perhaps somewhat less than everyone else, are caste-conscious. They are sensitive to the caste of their fellow-intellectuals and even if they do not turn it into a basis for discrimination and choice, it is one of the features of a man on which the mind settles. Among the more detached it is the basis of witticisms. If a man is stupid, it is said 'How can a Brahmin be so stupid?' If someone is brilliant, the comment might be 'naturally; he is a Brahmin,' or if the brilliant one is not a Brahmin, that

might be the object of much half-playful astonishment.

Most of them believe it to be a wicked arrangement, although they are by no means free from ambivalence about it. (Their ambivalence about it finds expression, for example, in the frequent readiness to explain that 'it once performed a useful function,' and that 'it played an important part in holding Indian society together during the British period,' or that 'it was not intended to penetrate into economic, small and political relations but was rather intended to be confined to the spiritual sphere,' where it is entirely reasonable and necessary. However much they reject it ethically, Indian intellectuals remain Indians and so they cannot expunge it entirely from their spirits. If Indian intellectuals are 'cut off from the people' more than the intellectuals of other countries—and this is quite compatible with living well within the stream of Indian traditions—it is perhaps attributable to the caste-system.

The alienation of the intellectual from Indian society is probably less pronounced than is the alienation of most other Indians from Indian society. The survival of the caste system—not just in its connubial or commensal prohibitions but in its more profound penetration into the fundamental categories of sociality—cuts human beings off from each other. It inhibits the growth of those sensibilities which are required for the perception of the moral quality of other human beings. It is the caste system which cuts human beings off from each other by denying to them the possibilities of connubial and commensal intimacy and their more basic affinity as moral entities. It is the caste system which deadens the imagination to the state of mind of other human beings. It is the caste system, perhaps even more than the other factors like poverty and the crushing ubiquity of other

human beings which makes the upper caste Hindus, from whose circles most Indian intellectuals are recruited, fundamentally and humanly insensate to the mass of the population who belong to the lower castes.

Indian intellectuals who work in offices can be extraordinarily unperceptive of their subordinates, utterly unempathic about their responses and problems. They cannot enter the minds of their fellow-countrymen. The Indian intellectual's 'social blindness' is manifested in the Indian press in the extraordinarily small amount of human interest material or political and social reportage. In literature, the novel which requires prolonged dwelling in the mind of other persons is poorly developed,¹³ biography is likewise in a most rudimentary condition and empirical sociology which depends on empathy is practically non-existent.

The sense of nationality fostered by the Independence movement and India's emergence as a sovereign nation has engendered a troubled sensitivity in many Indian intellectuals. It is a sensitivity to the discrepancy between pride in one's nation and attachment to its symbols on the one hand and the absence of any sentiment of affinity with one's fellow nationals, on the other. The response to this discrepancy is made more acute by the feeling of distance from the ruling authorities which is so common in certain Indian intellectual circles. Like the Russian intellectuals of the 60's and 70's of the last century, Indian intellectuals feel the need to be close to the people partly because they feel so distant from the authorities who rule their society. Like the Populists, the Indian intellectuals whom we are discussing have their nationality acutely on their minds; their sense of nationality like that of the *Narodniki* is exacerbated by their awareness of the contrast between their own country and the West. Once the sense of nationa-

lity was awakened, first stumblingly by Vivekananda, Dayananda, Tilak and Tagore and then to a high pitch by Gandhi, it found a gratifying expression in the nationalist movement. When, however, the movement became the government and the government acquired the bad name which all governments must in some way acquire everywhere and to which constituted formal authority is especially subject in India, the sense of nationality lost its resting place. The need to be in contact with the people which has become especially poignant since independence among the 'outsiders' in the ranks of the Indian intellectuals, seems therefore to be an expression of a sense of nationality aggrieved and aggravated by alienation from those who rule the nation.

This anxiety about the failure of 'contact with the people' enters forcefully into the recent passion about English, Hindi and the regional language or the mother-tongue. The mother-tongue—the language of the ordinary people—and its glorification is a link through which the intellectual seeks union with his people. The three centers of high linguistic passion in the past few years have been Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. In Bombay, Marati-speaking intellectuals have fought the political and administrative separation of Bombay from the rest of the Marati-speaking area. In Calcutta, intellectuals of all political positions united a few years ago to oppose the merger with Bihar, which would have brought them into an intimate association with those who speak a language—Hindi—which is repugnant to the lovers of Bengali; and the antagonism to the ascendancy of Hindi is very intense. In Madras, there is equal, if less turbulent, resentment against the establishment of Hindi as the official language of India. In each of these centers, the issue is very complicated: economic considerations play an important part—e.g.,

access to the wealth of Bombay, protection from Gujarati communalism, the protection of the opportunities of South Indian Brahmins in the Indian Administrative and other Union services, the sophisticated Bengali's contempt for the Hindi-speaking rustics—are only a few of the forces in operation. Nonetheless some place must also be allowed to the simple attachment of the intellectuals in these disputes to their own regional language.

Marati, Bengali and Tamil all have an old and well-developed literary tradition. Modern Bengali literature represents a very notable creative achievement and there are a number of interesting Marati writers. Even if they are not in love with the literatures written in these Indian languages, or regard them as the world's greatest literature, their denial and destruction by Hindi constitutes, to the Indian intellectuals of these important regions, a simultaneous degradation of a vital tie with 'the people.' Interestingly enough the argument for the regional language often has associated with it the longer retention of English as the official language of Union affairs and of interstate communication and in many minds it also carries with it the retention of English as the medium of higher education. Thus, simultaneously the need to be 'in contact with the people' and the need to be in contact with the West are both gratified by the antagonism towards the elevation of Hindi.

The argument for the establishment of Hindi is not, however, to be regarded merely as an act of 'Hindi imperialism.' It, too, is an expression of the anguish of the Indian intellectual over what he regards as 'separation from the people.' How can the Indian intellectual feel that he is at one with his people if he speaks and writes a language which can never become the language of 'the people.'¹⁴

The 'return to the people' has other

manifestations. One is the renewed interest among the educated in art and architecture, in Indian dancing and music. Since independence and particularly in the past five years the great Indian dancers of Katha Kali and Bharat Natyam, and the leading Indian instrumentalists have had a great vogue. Temples are visited more now than ever before; people who before independence felt little interest in the artistic monuments of India now often express the desire to make a grand tour of the caves and temples. Painters seek to rediscover some connection with Indian traditional and particularly folk-styles as well as subject-matters. Even in painters who use modern Western styles, the concrete

subject-matter and symbolism are connected with village India, with the peasant, with 'the people' (e.g., Husain). Others use Indian folk-art styles even to portray Western themes, such as Jamini Roy in his Last Supper paintings. A very competent and pleasant painter like Jehangir Saba-vala, whose artistic education and most of whose past output has been Western in style and theme, feels the need to portray village scenes—and he does so with a real authenticity of feeling.¹⁵ Interest in Indian philosophy, too, has undergone a revival; the great religious texts are read—often in English translations—by the intellectuals more than their fathers' generation or their own did in earlier years.

(To be concluded in the next issue)

¹ Srinivasa Sastri, C. V. Raman, et al., *Books That Have Influenced Me* (Madras, n. d.).

² The *locus classicus* of this interpretation is in Mr. Nehru's own self-characterization: 'I have become a queer mixture of the East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. Perhaps my thought and approach to life are more akin to what is called Western than Eastern, but India clings to me as she does to all her children, in innumerable ways; and behind me lie, somewhere in the subconscious, racial memories of a hundred generations of Brahmins. I cannot get rid of either that past inheritance or my recent acquisitions. They are both part of me, and, though they help me in both the East and the West, they also create in me a feeling of spiritual loneliness not only in public activities but in life itself. I am a stranger and an alien in the West. I cannot be of it. But in my own country also, sometimes, I have an exile's feeling.' Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London, 1936), pp. 597-598. Additional, no less representative, expressions of this excessively prevalent view are: Sampurnanand, "The Neurosis of the Indian Intelligentsia," *Freedom First* (Bombay), No. 17 (Oct. 1953), pp. 1, 9-12; Hamdi Bey, "The Indian Intelligentsia and the Modern World," *New World Writing* No. 3 (1953), pp. 213-17; D. P. Mukerji, "The Intellectuals in India," *Confluence* (1956), pp. 443-455; G. S. Bhargava, "The Indian Intellectuals: A Survey. Ambivalence is Nearly Universal," *The New Leader*, Vol XXXIX, No. 22 (May 28, 1956), pp. 17-20.

³ That wise and subtle man, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, a great political leader, a fluent and powerful writer in Tamil and in English, says at the end of an essay in which he acknowledges his indebtedness to Thoreau's *Duty of Disobedience*, Robinson Crusoe, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, J. S. Mill's *Essay on Liberty* and *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, "May I add by way of caution that it is not English books which have made me whatever I am. It is the stories my mother and two aunts of mine amused me with that built me up." (In Srinivasa Sastri et al., *Books That Have Influenced Me*, p. 51) Mr. Nehru, that self-alleged "rootless" intellectual, also says: "There were other stories also that I listened to (as well as tales from the Arabian Nights and accounts of the Mutiny, e.g., stories from the old Hindu mythology, from the epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata) that my mother and aunt used to tell us. My aunt . . . was learned in the old Indian books and had an inexhaustible supply of these tales, and my knowledge of Indian mythology and folklore became quite considerable." (Nehru, *op. cit.*, p. 8) I have heard exactly the same from Indian intellectuals of every sort and condition, from the highest members of the Indian Civil Service to harried journalists and bedraggled college teachers of English literature, from rationalistic Marxists

and proponents of free enterprise to Gandhian socialists and, naturally, members of the Jan Sangh.

⁴ Cf. for example *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, by Nirad C. Chaudhuri (London, 1951). The early parts of this book will rank highly among the recollections of childhood. Even many Indians who are violently repelled by Mr. Chaudhuri's pronounced and negative judgements of modern India, acknowledge the truthfulness and representativeness of these vivid reminiscences.

⁵ The Indian Rationalist Association is a tiny body, disgruntled and isolated and so poor that it was recently faced with the necessity of discontinuing its publication. A good part of the present impetus for its existence comes from hatred of the injustice of Brahmin ascendancy in Indian society. The Radical Humanist movement carries on the outlook which M. N. Roy attained in the last years of his life. It emphasizes the enrichment of individual life, and the formation of a polity around values which honour individual creativity and well-being. It carries on no propaganda against religion; indeed, some of its members have, with the years, softened in their attitude towards religion and now take a more "understanding" and sympathetic view of it.

⁶ *The Illustrated Weekly of India* is a mixture of *Life*, *The Saturday Review* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. It has until recently been edited by a cultivated Anglo-Irishman and one of the leading Indian art critics. It is now edited by a well known "highbrow" journalist of leftist tendency. It reproduces paintings by the best Indian painters, publishes short stories and articles by the better Indian writers and book reviews of significant books appearing in Britain. It also has the qualities of a family magazine. Its circulation was about 58,000 in 1955. Now, this more or less intellectual magazine, popular among "middlebrows," published an article in its issue of January 12, 1958 by a vigorously independent member of the Lok Sabha, H. V. Kamath, called "Do You Believe in Astrology?" The nub of his argument is as follows:

"In April, 1957—so I am reliably told—the Chief Minister of Kerala refused to be sworn in during the *Rahukalam*, and the ceremony was, therefore, held after its expiry. Does a communist, who swears by materialism and rejects God, believe in astrology? Or is he merely curious about it?

"And why not? Who dare assert that he has no curiosity whatsoever about astrology and the 'predictions' of astrologers? Belief apart, it is a common human 'failing' to try to lift the veil, be it ever so slightly, that a merciful God has drawn over the future.

"Till about ten years ago, I myself was rather skeptical about astrology and astrologers. But the performance of some among the many I have met in recent years, and particularly the breathtaking revelations of the Kausika Nadi, in Tamil, in my own case, have wrought a change in my attitude; and I now think that there is more in it than meets the eye. The subject is such that it merits scrutiny and investigation; and an empirical, as distinguished from a dogmatic, approach is the only one worthy of a rational scientific mind.

"Time was when Prime Minister Nehru used to dismiss Ayurveda as unscientific. Yet his government is today assisting research in Ayurveda. A research Institute in Astronomy-cum-Astrology should be established in India, with or without government participation. It must attract talent from all over the world. I cannot believe that Varahamihira, Jaimini and Parasara of India, and Ptolemy in vain, perpetrating a prodigious hoax on mankind."

⁷ Mr. Narayan was for a long time a Marxist, modern in every sense. He spent about eight years in America as a student at the University of Wisconsin and as a worker. He was, as the leader of the Congress Socialist Party and of the Indian Socialist Party which was born out of it, the hope of Indian socialists. Several years ago he announced his withdrawal from party politics.

⁸ As Sri Aurobindo he became the center of the Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry where thousands went to him for spiritual counsel and consolation. Since his death, the Mother, a French lady who was his chief disciple and interpreter, continues to confer spiritual insight and serenity on those who come into her presence.

⁹ M. N. Roy as a youth was a Bengali terrorist, who, following a long incarceration, settled down in an ashram in Murshidabad. He then swung back into conspiratorial politics. After

many adventures, he came to America. When America entered the First World War, he fled to Mexico, where he became a Marxist and played a major part in the founding of the Mexican Communist Party; he was a member of the Presidium of the Communist International until he came into conflict with the then prevailing communist policy concerning the colonial question. After his return to India, and following a long period of imprisonment, he was for a long time a dissident independent communist. He disavowed first Leninism and then after revising Marxism, renounced it as well. He founded the Radical Democratic Party which he later dissolved in the name of an apolitical Radical Humanism. He was a personality of extraordinary force and he gathered around him a group of disciples of outstanding human qualities.

¹⁰ Cf. "Monasticism as a Way of Life" by the Swami Agehananda Bharati in *The Humanist Way* (Vol. V, No. 1, 1952). The Swami Agehananda Bharati is an Austrian member of Hindu monastic order. The significance of his article lies in its publication in a Radical Humanist journal. Another article indicative of the "ashramic" orientation among secular intellectuals is "The Ashram Ideal in Politics," by Professor M. A. Venkata Rao, in *Quest*, Vol. II, No. 4 (Feb.-Mar. 1957), pp. 21-6. *Quest* is the organ of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and Professor Venkata Rao was for a time Secretary of the Democratic Research Service, a liberal organization in Bombay devoted to the publication of documentary material about communist activities in India and at the very opposite pole from Hindu traditionalism.

¹¹ From "English Education," translated by "Andal," *Quest*, Vol. III, No. 2 (Octo.-Nov. 1957), pp. 22-23.

¹² Cf. Betty Heimann, "Der Begriff des Individuums in der indischen Weltanschauung, Studien zur Eigenart indischen Denkens" (Tübingen, 1930), pp. 223-57.

¹³ Cf. the shrewd observations of Hamdi Bey, "The Dilemma of the Indian Novelist: Can He Create a True Character?" *Quest*, Vol. I, No. 4 (Feb.-Mar. 1956), pp. 11-15, in which it is asserted that the reason for the undeveloped state of the Indian novel lies in the incapacity of Indian authors to perceive moral crisis and in the low capacity of Indians to experience such crises. Mr. Bey intimates that these deficiencies are a result to the stunted growth of individuality, which in its turn is engendered by such Indian social institutions as caste and the extended family. There are numerous exceptions to Mr. Bey's strictures; writers like Miss Attia Hosain, Mr. R. K. Narayan and Mr. Sudhin Datta—to mention only a few—do not fit this pattern, but neither do the latter two seem to be preoccupied with being "cut off from the people."

¹⁴ If we discern, from time to time, an instability in the views of Indian intellectuals regarding the solution of "the language problem," such as supporting resolutions for Hindi or the regional language as the medium of higher instruction while privately expressing the hope that English will somehow survive, it is not just a product of hypocrisy or of cowardice before what they believe is official opinion. Nor is the espousal of incompatible solutions merely a failure to think the question through. Rather these instabilities and inconsistencies of attitude arise from a very difficult choice, from the need to make a very hard decision. The Indian intellectual except for a few back-country types, a few zealots and traditionalists, is profoundly attached to English and the culture of the English-speaking world and at the same time he feels this urgent necessity of "being in touch with his people" and to make some amends for being so distant from them by virtue of his cultivation of English. It is a tragic situation which only the passage of many decades can resolve.

¹⁵ I notice that, of these three painters, whose names I have chosen at random from among the many painters in India, one is a Parsee, another a Muslim and the third a Bengali. The former two are not so dominated by the Hindu *Lebensgefühl* which naturally colours everything in India, and the third comes from that part of India which has developed the most elaborate, specifically modern culture in India. Like their fellow-intellectuals in India, these three painters feel the need to be "in contact with the people," but coming from environments which are not so dominated by traditional Hindu culture, they are also freer from the "social blindness" of traditional Hinduism and they can accordingly establish that contact with greater ease and effectiveness.

Little Direct Reportage

By HAMDI BEY

THE main drawback of the press in India — which has recently been criticized in the U.S.A. and defended in Britain at the Commonwealth Press Union conference — is its lack of direct observation. This lacking can be ascribed to the combination of several factors, partly physical, largely financial and to a fair extent historical, and to a marginal extent deriving from the Indian theory of knowledge.

The size of the country and its being mainly rural does restrict opportunities for quick and direct reporting. There are 328 districts in India, and though arithmetically the average size of an Indian district is a little over 3,800 square miles, there are some districts over 7,000 square miles in area, and these have the poorest means of communication and transport. The only point over this large area at which news can be collected is the district headquarters, still largely an administrative centre too dependant upon the local bureaucratic corps for its tempo of life.

No Indian newspaper yet maintains one correspondent in each district of the country. The expense of maintaining one in each district, even at a remuneration of Rs. 25 per month, would work out to Rs. 8,200 per month or a lakh of rupees yearly. The sum is not big but a bit beyond the resources of all but the five national dailies because the total advertising in the country totals only Rs. 9 crores and is shared out between 3,992 journals of which 330 are dailies.

The five national dailies — *The Statesman*, *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, *The Hindustan Times* and *The Indian Express* — have revenues approaching Rs. 10 lakhs a year. They have not given attention to the need for having stringers in each district of the country, because till air delivery of

newspapers started ten years ago they were purely regional newspapers. Even now the exchange of newspapers is limited to the four main cities — Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The night air mail is not yet availed of by the dailies to reach cities other than that of their printing early in the morning, when hawkers can distribute the outside paper along with the local dailies. The papers are carried by morning planes and reach at a time when distribution is restricted to small office areas and subscribers.

The responsibility for the lack of use by newspapers of night air mail facilities is partly of the Government, because it has not yet offered concession rates for carriage of newspaper packets by the night air mail. In the absence of such a concession the newspapers do not take out a late evening dak edition, and still time their last dak with the departure of the last long-distance train from their city of printing.

If the night air mail was used a late evening dak printed at about 9 p.m. by newspapers in Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, and a still later edition printed at 1-30 a.m. at Nagpur would have a chance of being sold early next morning in all the main cities of the country. That would enable a truly national press to come into being.

In the absence of such a truly national press, the five main dailies still retain regional bias in the organization of their news services. They concentrate on their area of circulation, and each has correspondents only in the district towns of its respective territory. For news from outside its territory, even these dailies (which I have called 'national' for the sake of courtesy) mostly rely on the only newsagency—the Press Trust of India—which has correspondents in most district towns.

This seems a workable arrangement because the newsagency can lift from the main dailies and the provincial papers stories from the district towns in addition to what it gets from its own correspondents. Two of the national dailies — *The Statesman* and *The Times of India* — being printed in two editions, one of each from Delhi and one respectively from Calcutta and Bombay, cover a fairly big part of the country through their own correspondents. They have private telegraph lines between Delhi and Calcutta and Bombay to exchange reports which are not purely local. A third national daily, *The Indian Express*, till recently used to appear from three centres, Delhi, Madras and Bombay, and was best placed to organize coverage from all but the East Indian districts. Unfortunately, its Madras edition has been suspended.

While the national capital, Delhi, shares its newspapers with regional (though older and more primary newspaper centres in a sense), metropolitan cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, none of its newspapers has a simultaneously appearing edition in India's fifth largest city, Hyderabad, which could be considered the regional metropolis of Central India. Neither has any paper a simultaneous edition appearing in both Delhi and Nagpur, though Nagpur being the focal point of the night air mail and of cross-country east-west and north-south railway trains is the best placed city for a newspaper seeking some all-India circulation. Years ago a link-up between *The Hindustan Times* and the *Nagpur Times* had seemed likely but has not come about so far.

The arrangement of news exchange between two editions of the same paper from two cities or between all the newspapers through the newsagency break down because of the weak position of the district town correspondent. Whether he works for

a newspaper or the newsagency, he is a part-time reporter only. He can hardly go to the site of an incident, meet the people concerned or the eye-witnesses either within his means or within the time at his disposal when his employer is ready to bear the cost of the journey, which is not often.

Under the circumstances the district correspondent relies on hearsay, and in the process destroys the entire freedom of the press. The place where an incident happens may be too far away in the countryside, the means of transport bad and slow and expensive. The sources of his information being unpaid are generally interested in the slant to which a news may be susceptible. When political parties report to the district correspondent an incident they process it to suit their ideologies and tactical needs. When officials impart to him the information they have, they act as censors because the bureaucracy believes that somehow it is responsible for whatever has happened. Even the Meteorological Department thinks that it polices the weather and press reports should be understatement describing storms as thunder-squalls. Even the Calcutta storm of May 21, 1959, in which several people lost their lives, was described in newspaper reports under the Meteorological Department's suggestion as a 'thundersquall with the characteristics of a tornado'. Circumlocution impinges on the freedom of the press, because surely the press is expected to call a spade a spade.

What does not interest the political parties or the bureaucracy escapes the divided attention of the district correspondent, because his main source of livelihood is something else. Even in those matters which do interest the political parties and the bureaucracy there is total suppression, not only slant and understatement. The local bureaucracy does not often want to call attention to unpleasant things. The

political parties' own reportage is haphazard and slow. As a result the district correspondent misses the story, which may be later picked up at a higher administrative level. Higher officials are less reticent, but surely are not innocent of censorship or interpretation and interpolation, though often unintentionally.

The weakness of the district correspondent's position induces greater emphasis on the collection of news at State capitals. In its turn this emphasis leads to the minimizing of the importance of the district correspondent and to the decline of his interest in a poorly paid part-time job. News in India is mostly covered second or third hand and being so handled hardly remains news. One buys a newspaper because one cannot be everywhere to see things for oneself or to make inquiries after something has happened from those who saw it. The newspaper undertakes to do this for its readers, but when it cannot do so, it fails grossly in its duty.

There are historical reasons which inhibit direct reportage, the first requirement of a free press. When late in the 18th Century the British community in India started the country's first newspapers, it was naturally more interested in reports from Europe and what the British community in the cities was doing. Not having had any other models to work from, Indian newspapers also have tended till very lately to give more space to foreign news and to occurrences in the cities. The readership of the Indian newspapers is still a minority community, that of the middle class city dweller, and their urban middle class bias tends to limit their circulation in villages.

The bias treats a crop report as unimportant, hail which flooded acres of crop as a curiosity, while a shower which disrupted a football match or drenched clerks going back from office is made much of. Since the bigger part of India is rural and most of

her people live in villages, the purely urban coverage of Indian newspapers gives them a slightly unreal look. Even though life in the cities is more intense and dramatic than in the villages, in a total sense more things happen in the villages than in the cities.

The bias goes further. It has tended to doubt the veracity of the district correspondent and often of the correspondent in the State capitals. The earlier British papers preferred to get their Indian news from official sources, and that severely limited the function of reporters and correspondents to interviewing officials, and obtaining their version of an incident and ranking it as truer than what they had received from other sources. At least this version was reliable in the sense that it could not be contradicted by the only possible source of contradiction, the official. Most Indian papers also followed this policy to avoid getting into trouble with the officials who viewed Indian papers with suspicion. Even the district correspondent, imitating his betters, plays safe and prefers the official sense to his own.

Before representative government, which dates only to 1937 in the States and to 1947 at the Centre, officials were the main dramatic personae in the Indian news world. They made the pronouncements about taxation and all the things that affected the life of the people. Their appointments, promotions, leave and transfers made news, and till World War II's newsprint scarcity drastically cut the size of Indian newspapers even the best dailies used to reproduce weekly from the official gazette such information even though it was months old. Even now some newspapers print that information.

The shadow of the bureaucracy falls heavy on the Indian press. Not long before, it made news; now it gives out most of the news. More attention is devoted to what is called in press parlance 'lobbying' in Secre-

tariats than to reporting of legislatures. There is little chance for a scoop in reporting legislative proceedings, while there is some chance for distinguishing oneself in the eyes of one's employers if one brings in the report of an administrative decision ahead of other reporters. Such scoops are earned at the cost of freedom of the press, by cultivating officials, who extort their price by expecting silence over defaults in administrative action. It is a curious picture of policy debates by the legislature being given less attention—they deserve critical attention and study—than executive follow-ups of such policy decisions.

Reporting of the legislatures, even of the national Parliament, is perfunctory and literal. There is no attempt at organizing the points made, avoiding repetitions which are bound to be there, and explaining what might escape the reader. The introductory paragraphs which have become fashionable are written only to bring out the paper's angle, and not the trend of the debate. The best men prefer to have political (Secretariat lobbying) assignments rather than parliamentary; the former is considered superior. When journalists stress the value of contacts more than that of observation, corruption sets in.

When the bureaucracy is the source of news, the press cannot be free. The version of an incident appearing in all papers would also be similar. To that extent the American criticism of the Indian press being dull, unvaried and dependant upon officialdom is factually correct.

A word about the only newsagency may not be out of place here. The newsagency is jointly owned by the newspapers but draws a large part of its revenue from the Central and State Governments through subscription of news supplied to them and to the Government-owned-and-controlled All India Radio. Both the Government of India and the newsagency maintain that the

funds provided by the Governments is not a subsidy, but money paid for news bought. But in 1937 when the first Congress Governments in the States decided to subscribe to the services of the United Press of India in addition to the news being supplied by the Associated Press of India (the predecessor-organization of the Press Trust of India) the representations and counter-representations made by the two newsagencies left little doubt as to the nature of the transactions. However, it must be admitted that there has not been any overt pressure by any Government on the newsagencies, though during the States Reorganization phase the interest of the State was a phrase often bandied about in dealings between State Governments and the newsagencies. Even now reports of natural calamities are to some extent influenced by the same consideration, the interest of the State, in the sense that magnified reports enable a State to secure a bigger Central subvention for relief work.

Such exaggeration is often voluntary by journalists anxious to be on good terms with the State Government, and this will continue as long as journalists depend upon contacts and the executive is considered more important than the legislature and there is no direct reportage. As against this there is some suspicion of suppression of news by newsagencies to please proprietors of big newspapers who often have industrial and business interests which come in conflict with trade unions and consumers. At least on one occasion there was some futile canvassing, not by the newsagency or the concerned newspaper, to keep out of Calcutta newspapers reports about the arrest of the proprietor of a Bombay newspaper in connexion with affairs not related to his newspaper.

The Indian press shares with the entire world's free press some curbs on its freedom. William Faulkner in his *Pylon* makes

a journalist moan: '...What Grandlieu Street kikes tell us to print in their half of the paper and tell you what you can't print in our half and still find something to fill the blank spaces under Connotator of the World's Doings and Moulder of the People's Thought. Grandlieu Street has its Indian counterparts, for example in Clive Street. The law of libel is there which permits free criticism only of the Government and the public sector and which till twenty years ago made it difficult to report correctly an accident on a Company-owned railway even after visiting the site of the accident. The unadmitted official pressure is an additional restriction.

One could have hoped for better financial conditions and the diminishing of official influence on the content of news with time, with the growth of parliamentary government, if the marginal factor, that of the Indian theory of knowledge, did not intervene. Newspapers in the West grew with the dissemination of science and the logic that accompanies it, of working out general principles from specific instances. The press in such a climate makes its own observations and comes to its own conclusions.

In India the predominant logic still is religious, that of accepting axioms and general principles first, and then applying them to specific instances. *Shabda praman*—the evidence of the authoritatively spoken or written word—is still held as valid. In no field of life is it clung to so tenaciously as in the press, where hardly anything is reported except on the authority of somebody. Hence the prolix speeches, and quotations from what a weather expert or an official might have said about something.

If these quotations were printed alongside what the reporter himself saw or found out, they would not be restrictive of information. The tendency is to omit lay observation as soon as any technical or official statement is available, however doubtful the latter's credentials or veracity may be.

When a newspaper doubts its own re-

porters and correspondents, and the latter because of the newspaper's attitude begin to trust official versions more than their own sight and hearing—in fact the training is such—a free press cannot exist. It cannot also influence public opinion, and most common people in India disbelieve newspapers because they consider it to be purveyors of the official opinion or not allowed to print what is against the Government. Once again the American comment about the lack of hold on public opinion of Asian (including Indian) newspapers is justified.

The British defence that on two issues—Hungary and Tibet—the Indian press was able to lead the Government ignores the fact that both the issues were remote and did not call for direct observation by the press.

Having worked for the Indian press for 24 years in many humble capacities I can report some improvements. Interviews have become less frequent and have been replaced by Press conferences at which reporters have some semblance of equality with the person holding it. The interviews were mostly wholly dictated, and people resented one's not taking dictated interviews. No uncomfortable questions, such as those at a Press conference now, were ever asked for fear of causing offence. Even at the first Press conferences journalists were not treated as equals, and in 1941, I was turned out of a Press conference because as the President of the local Journalists' Association said: 'You have no right to cross-examine.' The authorized versions of speeches, such as those delivered by Mahatma Gandhi at his daily prayer meetings, have gone out of fashion, though I am doubtful if the press will consider them as infringement of its right if revived by somebody like Acharya Vinoba Bhave. More reporters now go on conducted tours as well as on their own to places, even into the countryside.

But that is all the progress that can be reported. The Indian press still is without adequate direct reportage, even without belief in it.

Adoption of the Roman Script in India

By PUNYA SLOKA RAY

IF we ever agree to change our scripts for a common and more practical system of writing our different languages, we should adopt the Roman script. It is basically more scientific than any of our Indian scripts and that for three reasons. It uses not mere diacritical marks but independent signs for writing the vowels. A sign in its system is the same irrespective of whether it occurs before or after another sign. It does not use compound letters. Thus the total number of signs needed to write or print a particular language can be kept down to a very low minimum. The gain in practical efficiency is enormous. Portable typewriters and other useful office machines, not yet invented for most of our Indian scripts can be used straight-away if we change to the Roman script. If we wish to use our languages for all the purposes of life in an age of technology, commerce and organisational efficiency, such advantages should mean much.

The Roman script is international. It is indeed the only script which can be said to be genuinely international. It is significant that inspite of their nationalism the Chinese are replacing or at least supplementing their ancient script, and that inspite of their militant communism they are not adopting the Russian script. The Chinese are on the eve of adopting the Roman script for their language. Several other communist countries, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Rumania use the Roman script. Among Asian countries, Indonesia, Turkey and the Philippines have already adopted this script.

Only the Roman script can serve the purpose of international communication.

Still another consideration is that if a common script can bind the different parts of India together, it can only be the Roman script. The Roman script belongs exclusively or pre-eminently to no particular language or group of languages. That is why any language can adopt it without losing identity or its being felt as the language of a defeated minority. It will be very different with the Devanagari script. Only Hindi and Marathi are written in it. For the rest of India it is too obviously connected with the expansion of Hindi. There is also the consideration that the adoption of the Devanagari script will mean no improvement in practical efficiency. The Roman script is on the contrary something super-national, like modern science or technology. We can surrender our own scripts in its favour without feeling that we are getting into a disadvantageous position in comparison with other groups of people in the Union.

If we accept the basic necessity of adopting the Roman script, it becomes a real problem to find the most suitable method. The existing system of transliterating Sanskrit will not do. This system was invented more than a century ago when the scientific study of language-writing was still unborn, and was meant for printing Sanskrit alone. It takes over unnecessary distinctions from the Bengali or the Devanagari script and is neither elegant nor consistent nor economical in design. It takes less space than Bengali or Deva-

nagari to print, but is otherwise nearly as cumbersome and unpractical. It will be best to make a new start altogether. Actually there is common agreement about 23 signs composed with 15 letters: *i u e o h n m k kh g gh c ch j jh t th d dh p ph b bh*. There are four ways of solving the difficulty about finding the rest of the signs.

One solution is to use new letters specially invented to suit Indian sounds. There are precedences. German and Norwegian use each one special letter, Icelandic two. But we cannot really recommend this method. For one thing it will set us apart from the international system of writing. For another it will not be possible for us to keep down the number of signs to one or two; we shall need a far larger number.

Another solution is the use of diacritical marks. Many of the languages now being written in the Roman script use such marks. German, French, Danish, Swedish, Polish, Hungarian etc. may serve as examples. But if this method is to be practical the number of marks and signs with marks must be kept down to a low number. The main disadvantage of diacritical marks is that they slow down writing and cannot get across telegraph wires.

The third method is the use of digraphs. Two or more letters may be written together to signify a single unit of sound. The use of *ng* in the English word 'singing' is digraphic. Of course only such clusters may be used as digraphs which do not normally occur in the language. English can use *ng* as a digraph only because the sound cluster, *n* followed by hard *g*, does not normally occur in English. This method has the great advantage that it does not require any new types. Its only disadvantage is that it makes words look rather elongated. Of the many languages which use digraphs English is the most familiar example.

The fourth method may be used together with the third. Such letters in the

Roman inventory of letters which have no near equivalents in the Indian languages can be used to indicate characteristically Indian sounds. The letters *q f w x* would be superfluous for us if we adopt a system of writing as nearly like the current convention as possible. But we can also adopt them and assign them altogether new and peculiarly Indian values. In this we shall be emulating the Greeks, when they adopted the Phoenician system of writing but decided to use the unwanted signs to represent the till then unrepresented vowels.

If we are to adopt the Roman script, we should produce a design that will have no new letters and as few diacritical marks as possible. We may learn much from the other peoples who have adopted the Roman script for their languages so successfully. It will be decidedly better if we could select the diacriticals and the digraphs we need from among those now being used by them. Let me mention a few examples: In Hungarian *s*=English *sh*, *sz*=English *s*, *a*=English *a* in 'ball', *á*=English *a* in 'palm', in French *é*=English *e* in 'get', *ê*=almost as English *a* in 'man'; in Indonesian the letter *j* is used as a sign for the palatalisation of the preceding consonant or group of consonants so that *tj*=English *ch*, *dj*=English *j* and *sj*=English *sh*.

We shall go into the details first with the Indian vowels. Sanskrit has 12 vowels which may be written: *a aa i ii u uu r l e ai o au*. Since the semivowels *r l* do not occur in the same contexts as the vowels *r l* we need not distinguish the two pairs in our script. Now Hindi has only 10 vowels and Bengali only 7. Oria has 6 or 5; there has not been a dependable analysis as yet. If we are to be just to the Indian languages we must alter the design a little to suit the different sound habits of each. In Hindi the short vowels never occur at the end of words; hence the long vowels in those

positions need not be distinguished in writing from the short. Two of the vowels used in Hindi and Bengali are new. In Hindi these are often written with the digraphs *ai au*. They may be written, especially in Bengali, with the diacriticals *ê ò*. The South Indian languages will need the distinction between short *e o* and long *ee oo*. While Sanskrit and Hindi may both use *y v* for their two semivowels, such a language as Bengali will have to use *bar̥ i u e o* for its four semivowels and, on occasions where confusion is to be guarded against, emphasise the syllabic vowels as *ii uu ee oo*. There is one more problem with the vowels. In many Indian languages nasalised vowels have to be distinguished from those which are not. We may adopt either the apostrophe or the superfluous letter *w* as the sign of nasalisation of a preceding syllabic vowel. For Sanskrit, of course, we shall need signs for the Anusvara and the Visarga; we may adopt *w f*.

Diacriticals may also be used instead of digraphs to mark the difference between the long or the syllabic vowels and the short or the consonantal vowels (semivowels). We may write *a á i í u ù e é o ó*. Perhaps, in this particular case, the two methods may be accepted as equally good alternatives.

The major problem with the consonants is about the distinction between the dental and the retroflex (the so-called cerebral) sounds. Only Assamese does not need the distinction. For other Indian languages we may write *t th d dh l lh r rh n nh s z*, bare for the plain sounds and with a dot under each for the retroflex. I must mention, however, that the use of diacritical marks under the main letters does go against the fundamental principle of the Roman script that the letters should stand up on a line and not hang down from it. We may however use the superfluous letter *x* as the sign of retroflexion (cerebralisation) thus:

tx thx dx dhx lx lhx rx rhx nx nhx sx zx.

Since the velar and the palatal nasals do not occur in Sanskrit between vowels, or in the beginning or the end of any word, but only between a vowel and a velar or a palatal consonant, one letter *n* will do perfectly well for writing the three nasals unnecessarily distinguished in the Indian scripts. But Bengali needs a separate sign for the velar nasal and it may be recommendable to borrow the digraph *ng*, since in Bengali *n* is normally never followed by *g*. I have been told that Tamil and Sindhi need a sign for the palatal nasal; the digraph *nj* may be suggested. For Tamil it seems we shall need signs also for the palatal *r* and the palatal *z*; we may use *rj zj*. In Hindi the more common sibilant is the dental; this may be written as *s* and the less common palatal may be distinguished as *sj*. The English digraph *sh* should not be borrowed, since *h* may sometimes occur after *s* within the same Hindi word. In Bengali it is the palatal sibilant which is the more common; in writing Bengali, therefore, we may prefer to use the single letter *s* for the common palatal and the digraph *sz* for the rare dental. To distinguish the so-called dentalised palatals of Marathi, Telugu and Kashmiri, *cs chs js jhs* may be suggested. The spirants of Urdu may be written *kh' gh' ph' bh'*. With the exception of its use in Urdu the letter *q* will remain superfluous.

I have discussed these details not for the purpose of providing a master plan, all ready for immediate implementation. I have only tried to outline and illustrate the basic techniques with which a simple and practicable scheme can be made out for each of our languages. Our people have not been, till now, enthusiastic over the proposal to change to the Roman script. I am convinced that it has been because of the failure of our experts to bring forward

a really feasible scheme. Even the latest recommendations of the Ministry of Education do not at all succeed in making improvements on the existing convention. It must once for all be clear that we will not be able to reproduce every single detail of the existing Indian scripts in any adopted version of the Roman script. If we wish to preserve all the idiosyncrasies and irrationalities of the scripts now in use there is really no reason at all why we should ever change to the Roman script.

Romanisation can be successful only if we preserve that practicality and simplicity which is its characteristic advantage over the Indian scripts. The task will be easier and indeed first possible only if we take it as a principle that we shall transcribe the languages in their standard *spoken* forms, and not just try to transliterate them as they are written today in the existing scripts. The same borrowed words will have to be spelt differently in the different languages, insofar as they are actually pronounced differently in those languages. The situation will be similar to that in Europe. The same word is spelt 'nationalism' in English, 'nationalisme' in French, 'nationalismus' in German, 'nazionalismo' in Italian and 'nacionalismo' in Spanish.

Let me end this essay with a few passages transcribed in accordance with the suggestions outlined above. I regret that I am unable to give an example for each of the Indian languages. Many of them have been as yet inadequately analysed and, in any case, my personal knowledge does not comprehend all of them. I propose to give an example each in Sanskrit, Hindi, Old Literary Bengali, Current Standard Bengali and Oria. I hope readers who speak other Indian languages will find

no great difficulty in working out equally simple systems of transcription for those languages.

Sanskrit:

*esxa devo visjakarmaa mahaatmau
sadaa janaanaaw hrdaye sannivistaf,
hrdaa mantixaa manasaabhiklpto
ya etad viduramrtaaste bhavanti.*

Hindi:

*kisaan gaarxipar ja baithxa, yuvakne
pahiyowko zor lagaakar ukasaaya. kiicarx
baht zyaada tha. usne phir zor kiya, udhar
kisaanne bailowko lalkaara. bailowko
sahaara mila, himmat bandh gayi, unhowne
kandhe jhukaakar ek bar jo zor kiya to
gaarxi naaleke upar thi.*

Old Literary Bengali:

*srabon maser sôkalbêlae megh katxia gia
nirmôl roudre kol'katar akas bhorja giache.
rastae garxighorxar biram nai, pherioala
ôbisram hawkia coliache, jahara apise
kaleje adalote jaibe tahader jonno basae
basae machôrkarir cuprxi asiache o ranna-
ghôre unan jalaibar dhowa uthxiache.*

Current Standard Bengali:

*sonibar rat dôstxae chelera stximar theke
neme gele ôlpokkhon pôrei sue pôrxa gêlo.
gôrôme gae kômbol rakha gêlo na. rat
dutxoe êkbar uthxechilam. car dike alo.
stximar pul kholar protikkha korche.*

Oria:

*bortoman sorotokalo. kintu khub jôr
borsa hóuci. megho dxakuci, panxi porxuci,
batxo upor dei srôto bohi jauçi. aji ratijako
borsa hobo bóli mone hóuci. mu thxakuro
dekhibaku jibi bhabuthili, kintu ile jai paru
ni.*

The Voice and the Voices in T. S. Eliot's **Four Quartets**

By KRISHNA NANDAN SINHA

Speaking of the three *voices* of poetry, Eliot says :

The first is the voice of the poet talking to himself or to nobody. The second is the voice of the poet addressing an audience, whether large or small. The third is the voice of the poet when he creates a dramatic character speaking in verse, when he is saying, not what he would say in his own person, but only what he can say within the limits of an imaginary character.¹

THE universe of *Four Quartets* which mirrors reality in the most sensitive way is full of echoes and reverberations of many voices. These voices are varied and numerous, representing the actual waking plane of existence as hints and guesses rising from the psyche. We might say that the whole poem is a curious chorus of diverse voices. This was especially the case with *The Waste Land*, which is the best example of this kind of organisation. Eliot himself admits that there is a 'dramatic element in much of my early work.' But the progress from *The Waste Land* to *Four Quartets* marks a greater assurance in his art and the distinction between the voice and the voices seems to disappear. Whereas *The Waste Land* remains an anthology of the highest points of drama, *Four Quartets* actually attains an organic structure of rare beauty.

The voices begin to ring the moment the first quartet opens, and out of the world of

memory and dreams certain figures come into existence :

Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind.

(BURNT NORTON)

The echoes have become a world. But 'Other echoes/Inhabit the garden.' The voice of the thrush is a perpetual echo. The season is autumn. The vibrant air, the unheard music, the unseen eyebeam, and a stillness greater than anything we know, inhabit the garden. We have the phenomenon of 'seeing' now. The glimpse of the pool with the dance of sunlight and lotos within and clouds without, exist in the magical moment of pure duration. And then the whole vision crumbles: 'Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind/Cannot bear very much reality.' The allegory in its profound ambiguity conveys the impression that the vision is transcendental and may symbolize the ultimately real. It is suggested, by implication, that such visions are fruits of rare illumination. This is the central and basic thought in 'Burnt Norton'. If there is any uncertainty about the protagonist of the *Quartets*, it is here. The setting does not give any clue even when it is vividly and concretely drawn. Raymond Preston points out that 'Eliot says he was unacquainted with the history of the place.'² Shall we assume, then, that the protagonist of 'Burnt Norton', is aware of the theory of relativity and is a product of the general European culture, its aristocracy, music and

¹ T. S. Eliot, *The Three Voices of Poetry* (New York, 1954), pp. 6-7.

² Raymond Preston, *Four Quartets Rehearsed* (London, 1948), p.9

arts; and finds himself torn between time present and time past? His desire to transcend the time-ridden flux in order to reach the 'still centre' shows his profoundly religious sensibility. He is talking in his own voice. He resolves to reach his destination by the severest discipline of penance and negation, a resolution reached through meditation :

Descend lower, descend only
 Into the world of perpetual solitude,
 World not world, but that which is not world,
 Internal darkness, deprivation
 And destitution of all property,
 Dessication of the world of sense,
 Evacuation of the world of fancy,
 Inoperancy of the world of spirit.

(BURNT NORTON)

But only resolution is not enough; it is not enough for the pilgrimage. The tender, wistful spirit of the protagonist is further revealed in his prayer to God, the Father, in the fourth movement of 'Burnt Norton'. The effort to revive the rare moment of illumination is an unceasing quest through visions and illusions, discipline of art and life, movement and non-movement. In the final movement of the poem, the return home to reality is marked in the 'shaft of sunlight'.

In 'East Coker', there are no more echoes but voices, and above all the clear, confident, and resonant voice of the protagonist. Here the poet is speaking in his own voice. Other voices constantly break through into the dark symphony of 'East Coker', — the voice of the rustics, of Thomas Elyot, St. John of the Cross, and Milton. Again as in 'Burnt Norton', the setting relates itself to the Renaissance, establishing links with the past, with the poet's own ancestry. East Coker, a village in Somersetshire, was the home of the poet's forebears from where Andrew Eliot migrated to America in the seventeenth century. A journey in the summer afternoon to East Coker is all the action

the poet is concerned about, but there are a thousand and one actions working synergistically in the mind. Mr. Moore nicely suggests that, 'at a certain stage in his given experience, he (Eliot) becomes aware of a sense of a mass of thought on the threshold of his consciousness and to feel those thoughts tending to coalesce in a unity proper to their confused near-emergent condition. Then he drops in the village on a sleepy summer's day, and realizes, 'Yes, this is the kind of thing I've been looking for.'¹ The entire landscape is one of flickering darkness: 'dark in the afternoon'. The voice of Mary, Queen of Scots, begins to resound: 'En ma fin est mon commencement.' In the direct line of vision, the shadowy figures of the poet's forebears are conjured up, engaged in a dance: 'The association of men and women! In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie.' This is the voice of Thomas Elyot, the author of *The Boke Named the Governour*. By the antique flavour of the spelling and diction, the whole image of the dancer's movements is vividly portrayed. This, at the coming of dawn, leads to the dance at the 'still centre': 'I am here/Or there, or else where. In my beginning.' The dramatic tension of the poet's own craft further reveals the identity of the speaker. The voice directly musing is that of the poet: 'So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—/ Twenty years largely wasted, the years of L'entre deux guerres.' But in the third movement of the poem, the voice of St. John of the Cross begins to be audible and culminates in the utter negation of everything. The hymn to Christ in the fourth movement further shows the purgatorial nature of the undertaking, and at the end of the quartet, once more the vision of supreme reality is made possible by love: 'We must be still and still moving! Into another

¹'East Coker: The Place and the Poem', *Focus Two* (1946), 93.

intensity/For a further union and a deeper communion.' The progress from the first to the final movement of the poem is amazing. The drama of the mind cannot be more intense.

'The Dry Salvages' opens with 'I', but that pronoun is abandoned almost completely, only to appear in the opening line of the third section. Out of the sea and from its mysterious deep, reels a symphony of voices, prophesying the trail of eternity. But in the confusion of voices, the voice of the poet is unmistakable. Reid McCallum says, 'In this poem we narrow the matter of origin further, to the child, father of the man'.¹ Eliot spent the first eighteen years of his life mostly at St. Louis by the side of the Mississippi, the river which he feels within him:

His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom,
In the rank ailanthus of the April dooryard,
In the smell of grapes on the autumn table
And the evening circle in the winter gaslight.

(THE DRY SALVAGES)

This implicit journey to his outgrown past marks the beginning of his allegorical journey. This double imaginative return to America and to his own infancy prepares for the return to the very centre of creation as symbolized by the sea. The voices of the sea are too deep and massive for human consciousness to bear: 'The sea has many voices,/Many gods and many voices.' And all these voices culminate in the clang of the bell as the ground-swell breaks since times immemorial. On this timeless ocean is not merely the undoing of the anxious worried women, but of all time-imprisoned multitudes. After the flowers have withered, the world has been renounced, and the bone has prayed to death, its God, there

is still the voiceless wailing. All journeys die here: hope and wish are lifted. The moments of illumination whether of agony or ecstasy are the only real things to cling to. The granite erosionless rock is the only harbour for the soul. And in the third movement, the voice of Krishna begins to reverberate: 'Fare forward, you who think you are voyaging'. Unlike 'Burnt Norton' and 'East Coker', there is no vision of imagined beatitude, but inevitable reverberations. Our insensitivity to shafts of sunlight or music is well-marked. Only saints achieve the glory of 'hints and guesses', realized through adoration and love and self-surrender.

In 'Little Gidding', communication is perfectly established. The protagonist comes to the chapel of Little Gidding in Huntingdonshire where Charles II had come twice, once in 1633 and again in 1642 after his defeat at Naseby. 'Here, the intersection of the timeless moment/In England and nowhere. Never and always.' The communication with the dead is established in the Dante-like section where the poet encounters the 'familiar compound ghost'. This intimate and undefinable figure may be that of Brunnetto Latini, Oderisi, Hamlet's father, Stetson, as also of Dante, Mallarmé, Milton and Swift. Their dark colloquy, in which the poet takes part, ranges on the vanity of human wishes, the need for renewal of language, the desirability to dance in the flames of purgation. The voice of Juliana of Norwich begins to be heard prominently: 'Sin is behovely, but/All shall be well, and/All manner of things shall be well.' Other historical figures enter the landscape of the poem, and yet all of them are comprehended and identified in the voice of the poet himself. The voices of Juliana of Norwich and of Dante transmit their clear music. The voice is silent and the voices are mute when the poet realizes that 'the fire and the rose are one'.

¹ Reid McCallum, *Imitation and Design and Other Essays* (Toronto, 1953), 135.

POETRY

THE ADVENT

And then came the angel. Not as I had heard
Told in book or legend, not on wings of loudness,
Not redly girt in flaming sword,
Bereft of all adornment of the godly.

It seemed a small, warm, strenuous bird at last
Had crossed the waves of dim, abandoned years,
With stain of youth's old weeping on the breast
Now faded and yellowing in autumn.
And yet between the beaks was held the first
Sweet nesting straw—the whole great weight of Spring.

Unforgetting bird, bird untired in patience,
Like a small enduring hand infinitely clasped.

That was my hour on the derelict coast.
There, where locked in solitude,
Rock, rubble, weed, and dead, upstaring fish
Lie indifferent to the vanishing smoke of the liner,
There a feather fell, and that sufficed
To change my death to an isle of loveliness.

—But why all this? That parted lovers meet?
And winds announce the final voyage home?
That's but an idle thought of those who never have loved.—
Still stretch the waves, the angel cannot rest,
Therefore is the chosen being denied
All things except that anguish of desire
Which rends the hardened grave.

And that is blessedness.

BUDDHADEVA BOSE

IN MEMORY OF ONE WHO DIED IN AN ACCIDENT

He just strode across:
Did not become the slow
Spluttering lamp at dawn,
Nor suffer a sland'rous dawn
To chill and foul the cup
When all the lovely wine
Had been drunk, drop by drop.
He did not fend or fear,
But, as stormy-eyed
As an emperor who turns
With half an eyelid's flicker
The whole banquet-hall
With lights and dancing girls
And strange trophies of war
To a mere painted scene
That must be put away
Because he's changed his mind—
Even so, without
A word of ruth or pity,
Or a moment for courtiers'
Or queens' despair or pity,
Proud, unquestionable,
All in tact to the end,
Suddenly he rose,
Left everything behind.

BUDDHADEVA BOSE

(Adapted by the author from his Bengali)

FOR YOU AND YOU

Oh love: The final choice is not in me

Your deepened eyes
 the tenderness of sweetened lips
 the delicacy of wisdomed thought
 the sought for pattern set so long ago:
 I trembling yield

The large in-loveness long foreshadowed
 as with special tracery
 this all-engulfing image
 with a blinding accuracy

Oh love: it was forever so provisioned preordained
 so effortless so sure so deep
 all other acts must cease

It touches earth at core:
 The world revolves in this
 how then to turn away
 from earth's own turn
 or feel regret dismay

Am lost in press of wonder
 exquisite the world enfolds
 in perfection of our lingering embrace
 the universe fulfilled reborn
 the kiss of ever on our twined lips

The vision merges every certainty
 all ecstasy is breathed all pain dispelled

The fragile flare of sunlit petals
 blazons forth all men made free
 each wish of tenderness made possible
 the way known better now: through this

The pen aroused anew
the brush stroke quickened: sound enriched: the act enforced

And then my love the pattern largens
through our very love's release

Again no choice
the next prevision sighted
blurs but not obscures the last
and we are lost to it
as now to this

FOR YOU AND YOU – 2

Yet garnered in the wonder
as the widening movement strikes
there rests a sadness hurt
as though betrayed
(from in and not from out)
a separateness adrift
a wound unhealed
impotent lost
the temporary image sought and found so perfectly
lies marred as though it never were
until the unexpected moment of erasure
leaves the sacredness intact once more
despite impingement of an even larger replica
of destiny's presumed exactitudes

Oh love: come close
there is no choice save this
in sharpest spontaneity
no time save now: your lips in utter trust

THE DISINHERITED

Have we not inherited the earth?
We who were meek once;
Not the world revolving round us,
But the sodden soil
On which we plant our feet,
Filled with scorn for buried faces,
Faces once painted by the sun.

What love can we have for them?
But for whom
We would not have known,
The agony of waiting
With outstretched palm,
Forgotten on crowded corners,
An excuse for the averted glance.

Man's ways are stranger than God's
Making of charity an evil thing;
The times are changing
And the act of giving
What is not yours,
Must be indulged in secretly,
And not without a degree of caution.

With the darkness creeping in the flesh
We who were meek once,
Can no longer be mute,
Have we not inherited the earth?
Not the world revolving round us,
But the sodden soil
On which we plant our feet.

PRADIP SEN

WHEN I HAVE GOT THE SACK

When I have got the sack,
hounded out of livelihood,
to brood upon the stacks,
the politics and the rot
of living for one's stomach;
when I have gone from this place
of trite norms and elaborations —
were I destined to return
by these stony tracks
and tread past this gate,
past love, a refuge, and my home,

I would tarry these old limbs
and lift my grey head,
and gaze for a moment
on my memories.

Bygone acquaintances
cannot recognise the wrinkled face
raised up in greeting, nor the voice
of laughter, grown cracked and thin.
I am become a stranger
to those with whom I shared my bread,
a stranger to myself, and when dead,
a stranger to the tomb.

SHORT STORY

The Dog that Ran in Circles

By GANGADHAR GADGIL

I WAS walking lazily towards the bus stop. I had to go somewhere — oh, anywhere. I was feeling so restless and so depressed, I knew I had to write a story. So I was walking to enjoy the restful pause at the end of each step. 'I want to write a story... a story... a s-t-o-r-y...' I was saying to myself mechanically, over and over again. 'A story... a s-t-o-r-y...' The word became bloated and shapeless. It started at me and drove my consciousness into a stupid daze. Deeper down, in the half asleep wakefulness something was astir. Wandering circles were being traced with a weak insistence. They were dully luminous. Caught in the tangled web of the circles would appear a shape like a mark left by a faded flower in a book. Mute shapes that paused on the brink of life and meaning! Suddenly they would acquire bold outlines. But before they could mean anything to me, they would become spreading blots of ink, shapeless and dead. I stared at them, hoping to see through them. But they gave away nothing....

I was utterly engrossed in this tantalizing search — lost in a dark brown cloud of concentration tinged by fleeting moods and fancies. I wanted to see nothing, hear nothing. I reached the bus stop and stood there staring blankly at the street.

I was seeing a shape, although I did not in the least want to see it. I was out there

in the street. A brownish shape — a dog, faded and limp, lying in the street. I couldn't take my eyes off its starved and heaving belly. It heaved in quick spasms, as if it wanted to get the whole thing over and done with. The dog lay still, in the midst of the endless scribble of traffic and movement on the street. Possibly it had bumped into a passing car and fainted.

A crowd had gathered on the sidewalk. It was swelling and imperceptibly edging forward over the curb into the street. Vagrant boys, hoodlums gambling at the street corner, old women stooping and shrivelled, hawkers and labourers! The white collared gentry stood at the bus stop, stiff and indifferent, giving the dog now and then an anaesthetised look. They wouldn't stoop to anything as plebian as a mouthful of pity or a squirt of casual curiosity.

The crowd stood there, hesitant and slightly ashamed of its concern over a street dog. Yet, they all felt relieved as each car swerved to avoid running over the dog. Unwittingly, they started signalling to the cars that came along.

One of the old women started muttering. She looked around to gauge the attitude of the crowd and then raised her voice.

'You there! You brat! Go and get a pot of water. Pour it on the dog's head, will you?'

she said, and shoved the boy in the direction of the restaurant.

'Well auntie! That's a good idea. But why don't you do it yourself?' said a man who stood behind her.

Everybody laughed, and the interest in the dog became more lively. A couple of boys ran forward. A thin straggling line of people followed them hesitantly. Soon the whole crowd was standing on the street around the dog.

I couldn't quite see what was happening. The boy whom the old woman had shoved ran to the restaurant and came back with a pot of water. The whole crowd leaned forward. Those at the back stood on their toes. The people watching through their windows leaned out and craned their necks. 'Hey!' everybody cheered happily. The crowd made way and the dog emerged, still dazed, but now on its feet. It staggered towards the curb. The crowd followed it.

It was a starving, shrivelled dog. It had a pitifully meek expression. The kind of dog that gets in everybody's way and is kicked for it. But for its eyes, I wouldn't have looked at it twice.

The eyes were moist in a queer way. It wasn't the kind of moistness that calls forth pity, but different. The eyes asked for nothing. In fact, nothing had any meaning for them any more. They expressed no hunger, no fear. They had nothing to do any longer with the world of dogs. If they expressed anything at all, it was compassion — the kind of compassion one sees in the eyes of a saint. But this of course was my crazy fancy.

The queer moist look in the eyes made me uneasy. I had a feeling that apart from the people, the vehicles and the shops with their gaudy make up, there was something else present there, something more substantial and compelling. It was right there

in front of me, and those eyes were seeing it.

Mechanically, the dog sniffed at the ground and at people's feet. It wagged its tail and licked its nose. It settled down near the curb, resting its head on its paws.

The crowd still stood around and looked at it with pity. People, walking along the sidewalk, stopped and asked eagerly what was the matter. Mostly they didn't get any reply, and if they got one it told them nothing. Many in the crowd had come there too late to know what had happened; and even those who had seen everything had nothing to tell. Nothing really had happened.

But there was one in the crowd who had seen everything, and, whenever asked, he would look straight ahead with a very solemn face and narrate everything in tedious detail. His listeners would look puzzled, for what he said didn't lead to anything at all. They would conclude that it was all a silly fuss about nothing. Some of them walked away. But others stood there because of the crowd, and looked at the dog with an affectation of sickening pity.

I was losing interest in the whole affair. It seemed to be one of those incidents that hold a promise and then hang in the air inconclusively, like the loose end of a thread. I tried to think of the story I wanted to write.

But, by now, everything was tangled and adrift. I had lost track of everything that had so tantalisingly remained beyond my reach. All I could think of was that silly incident. It had left a scratch across my consciousness — a scratch that hurt but didn't bleed.

'I want to write a story... a story... a s-t-o-r-y...' I said to myself, and the words soothingly ran over and around the scratch, like a massaging fingertip. Slowly, I got back into that state of daze. Wandering circles began to be traced again — circles

potent with the insubstantial presence of a shape, a form. It was there all the time, not caring to be seen.

Wandering circles – dully luminous!

All of a sudden, the dog stood up and started running in circles, tottering and slipping all the time. At first it moved in little circles, in a corner of the street. But, gradually, the circles grew bigger and crazier.

There was a stir in the crowd. Everybody perked up and looked intently at the dog. 'ch-ch!' 'Sit down. Sit down in a corner, you crazy dog....!'

The old auntie darted forward and tried to catch hold of the dog. That little push threw the dog off balance and it yelped.

'There, auntie! Don't you get mixed up with that dog. It seems to be looney. It might bite you.'

'Oh woman! Oh!' cried the auntie, and jumped back to the sidewalk with unsuspected agility. She barely missed having a fall and everybody laughed. The crowd decided to stay away from the dog and shuffled back a couple of steps.

The dog ran in crazy circles, seeing nothing with its queer moist eyes. It was now right in the centre of the street. Horns were honking, brakes were screeching and the cars were turning and swerving madly to avoid running over the dog.

Sometimes the dog ran in big circles, as wide as the street. Then, suddenly, it would trace a ridiculously small circle at the edge of the big one, and achieve a precarious and impossible balance between the two. Sometimes its path had a beautiful oblong shape that contrasted oddly with its ridiculous figure. At times the path wobbled like a reflection in the disturbed water of a pool.

'Stop it! Stop it!' 'Come here you crazy dog. You will get killed.' 'I wish it is run

over and everything is finished.' The people in the crowd gesticulated and talked wildly.

But the dog saw nothing, heard nothing. It wasn't bothered about getting killed. It was possessed, held in thrall and driven by some mysterious impulse that sought this odd fulfilment.

People at the wheels of cars expected the dog to behave normally and get out of the way, when they honked the horns. But the dog wouldn't budge and the cars veered at crazy angles, barely missing the dog. It almost seemed to have a charmed life.

The crowd watched tensely and in terror. They knew the dog would be run over sooner or later, and, in a way, they were resigned to it. Yet they were signalling wildly to the cars, and bursting into happy hysterical laughter when the dog had a particularly narrow escape. They were somehow deeply involved in that absurd drama of the street.

'Hey there! Somebody buy a biscuit and offer it to the dog. Tie him up with a piece of string!' the old auntie cried, unable to stand the tension any more.

'Very well, auntie! Give me a couple of pice. I will buy a biscuit for the dog,' said a man in the crowd, grinning slyly.

Dear old auntie laughed, opening wide her toothless hole of a mouth. It was a cunning laugh, and yet innocent. Everybody laughed. But the strain was getting unbearable. So somebody bought a few biscuits and offered them to the dog. The dog wagged its tail and licked its nose mechanically. But it didn't stop. It was tired and staggering at every step. Yet it went on.

Nothing could be done for that dog. It wanted no kindness and no help. So that all we could do was to play the uncomfortable role of spectators. Everybody felt very foolish about it.

'Shoot the bloody dog! kill it!' screamed a man in English. He had been sucking at his

pipe and reading his paper, trying to affect the indifference of an Englishman.

A woman on the upper storey of a house was leaning out of the window and watching. She would press her head in her palms and grimace in pain when the dog seemed to be going under the wheels of a car. When it escaped, she would scream with joy. She was gesticulating wildly and calling everybody in the house to the window to watch the fun. The lipstick on her lips made her look even more queer and frightening.

People in the crowd were all talking at the same time. 'The municipal staff must have poisoned the dog,' they were saying, which of course was not true. But the crowd wanted to get mad at somebody.

The dog was certainly being protected by some invisible deity. For it escaped death for more than ten minutes on that busy street. The absurd drama continued in the midst of a high voltage circuit of tension and jitters.

Then came a double decker bus — a huge brash red box on wheels. The driver was perched high, sealed in a glass cabin. He was sitting very erect, as if he had a steel rod for a spine. He was wearing out-sized sun-glasses that covered half his face and made it look like a fiendish mask.

The dog staggered on unconcerned and in a moment was right in front of the bus. The crowd screamed. The driver jammed the brakes with an awkward jerk. But the

bus kept rolling on. I saw the dog going under a wheel. I closed my eyes and waited for an infinitesimal fraction of time to hear the final yelp. It was a very weak yelp, conveying no pain and no unwillingness to die. It was just a motor response of the body.

The woman at the window crushed her head in her palms and screamed. She then burst into idiotic laughter. Because of the lipstick, it looked as if her lips were smeared with blood.

There were screams all around. The huge red bus hesitated for a moment on its ponderous wheels, and then moved on with a jerk that was very much like an indifferent shrug. It moved on inexorably in a straight line, gathering momentum amidst the rising roar of its engine.

The dog lay on its side with all its legs outstretched. Blood was trickling out of a corner of its mouth.

A few people gathered around the corpse. But they had already lost interest. The rest of the crowd walked away in a hurry, brushing the whole incident off their minds with little impatient gestures.

'I want to write a story... a story... a s-t-o-r-y...' 'I said stupidly to myself.

Then a bus came, in all its mechanical dignity. I had been almost praying all this time that it should come and take me away before the dog met its inevitable end. It swallowed up the waiting queue in which I stood, and then moved on.

A R T S

Cinema

Last Words and Last Chances

By MARTIN S. DWORKIN

THE last words of civilizations, like those of persons, may be a long time being said, longer being listened to, longest being unheard. The deathbed speeches may themselves become reassuring—or, at least, soporific, especially when they are heard most loudly as a gabble of entertainment. By now, for example, the voices of doom of the science fiction movies still filling home and theater screens have grown to a deadening cacophony. But then, the mad scientists are always stopped just within screen time. The challenges to earth are met and supervened. The radioactive monsters and the secret invaders are always vanquished by heroic humanists from Washington, outfitted with badges and Geiger counters, space suits and constitutional *cartes blanches*—while the local ineffectuals, and a heroine or two, look on in careful horror, but not without hope, in colour or black and white.

The moralizing of the science fiction and horror films is always clear and simple—even if the morality of their typically gratuitous violence, vulgarity, and venal contempt for intellect is cloudy indeed. Man is endlessly warned against the sin of pride, the arrogance of seeking beyond traditional human limits. The penalties are always as

explicitly frightful as the tableaux of damnation of the medieval morality plays whence the movies inherit their themes, their characters, and their essentially religious inspiration. But even as the Church grew dubious over the crowd's enjoyment of the fascinating vices of sinners, and the delicious torments of demons, so we may wonder at the complacency with which the most mortifying horrors are relished, by serious couples cuddled in cars, by limplidded alarmists in balconies, by slack-spined prophets in living rooms, visioning apocalypse from armchairs.

Yes, the dooms of fantasy are an escape from the daily imminence of disaster. The science fiction parables of sinful pride may be our most revealing expressions of popular anxieties in an age of demonic technology. But their implicit playfulness endues their imageries with an essential falsity. Not the literal falsity of the fantastic imagination, evoking unreal, but poetically credible worlds of fancy or ecstasy. It is a moral falsity, subtly denying responsibility while preaching culpability. In this pietistic fiction of science, men are to blame, but they cannot choose the future they must suffer. Science is implicitly defined as monstrous, and then established as having to be

pursued for its own sake—call it 'truth' or 'knowledge' or 'progress' or some other flag word for sublimated faith. It is not the ingenious fantasies of science fiction that are at fault, but a corroding unrealism concerning the alternatives facing us in this world that goes on before, during, and after the play of images on screen. Rather than a real wrestling with desperation using the strength of imagination, as in Orwell's *1984*, most of science fiction substitutes superstition, making homeopathic magic according to primordial rituals for keeping the demons quiet.

What chance does serious realism about the omnipresent dangers of the real world—or serious fantasy, for that matter—have on a screen so pervaded by a mystique of evasion? However realistic a film may be in itself, it has no actuality as a work of entertainment, or expression, or persuasion until it is shown to audiences. The doctrine of Bishop Berkeley's form of idealism, 'to be is to be perceived', applies absolutely to the movies, whatever one thinks of its validity in metaphysical discourse. And when speaking of a film as far outside industry categories of production as one that is serious about reality, that employs documentary, rather than fictional techniques—and that is made and sponsored by the United Nations, the Berkeleyan doctrine takes on a quality that is much more wistful than positive.

Power Among Men is the first feature-length production of the United Nations Film Board. Formed in 1947, the Board has turned out around 70 films, the longest of which, *Workshop For Peace*, runs some 40 minutes. This is about the maximum length for films designed primarily for non-theatrical exhibition—before clubs, schools and colleges, church groups, and audiences anywhere in the field, accessible to mobile projection units. *Power Among Men's* 90-

minute 'feature length', however, is not simply a matter of running time.

With this film, the Board is aiming at an audience that is not only larger, but quite different in commitment: the vast, mostly unorganized body of people who go to the movies for entertainment, and pay their way in. Not only was *Power Among Men* very expensive to produce, making the return of costs—at least—a pressing consideration. The project itself was undertaken on such an ambitious scale out of a desire to reach more and different people than heretofore. In the ways whereby the film is being presented, and in its very content, there is a sense of last-ditch urgency. And any idea that this may be just another case of well-intentioned people taking themselves and their mission too seriously has first of all to deny the seriousness of the situation of man today.

Nevertheless, there are the realities of habits of seeing movies, and conventions of promotion and exhibition, that enter into a definition of the nature of the film itself. And in this real world of theatres and audiences, the atmosphere surrounding the theme of survival is one of escape into futuristic fiction, with terror as a cathartic relief, setting off the invariable happy ending. *Power Among Men*, as any serious film, and especially one made in documentary style, has to find its way over the informal but forbidding obstructions of movie industry mechanics, and in a darkness of glittering fantasy. What was planned and produced in the hope of reaching new audiences can easily be shunted into the accustomed channels for 'information' or institutional propaganda films. There it may live an essentially frustrated life, serving not as stimulation for new thinking and resolves for action, but as an elaborate confirmation of previously assured commitments.

Power Among Men is propaganda, without question. In the words of its makers, it

is 'concerned with human survival', arguing throughout for the particular outlook upon world problems which is associated with the United Nations. The film intersperses sequences in colour and monochrome, both printed on Eastmancolor stock. This device not only allows the incorporation of older, black-and-white footage, but is deliberately used to contrast scenes of devastation with those of reconstruction.

In the first of four episodes, the villagers of war-shattered Sant' Ambrogio, not far from Monte Cassino in the area of the bloodiest fighting of the Italian campaign in World II, rebuild their homes and their lives with the help of UNRRA — one of the first service agencies of the United Nations. The town is shown today, still scarred and slowly healing. But the young men must still leave for military service, saying their age-old farewells while some of the old men prattle of the glories of war, in a place scarcely raised out of rubble.

The second episode was selected for showing on the Omnibus television program, with introductory remarks by Ralph Bunche, UN Undersecretary and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. In it, farmers in Ferme, Haiti, are laboriously trained by a UN Technical Assistance Expert in the fundamentals of modern farming and co-operative marketing—against the resistance of people who consider stony soil, blight, and feast-or-famine economics to be the order of nature.

In the third episode, the drives and benefits of modern technological transformation of nature are shown to carry with them the complex problems and anxieties of the modern relations of nations and persons. In the mountains of British Columbia, forests are felled, mountains blasted and tunnelled, and an enormous hydro-electric station is constructed, to serve first a new aluminium plant, a new town, Kitimat — and a new way of life for a population

drawn from 31 countries. But amid the vigorous pioneering, carried on with all the power, the articulated skills, and the accompanying comforts of modern technology, there are frictions among the different national groups. These erupt in violence on a soccer field, threaten to fragment the community before it is fully formed. Conscious of the relationship of their problems to those facing the world, the people of Kitimat begin to organise ways of relaxing tensions, eradicating hatreds, and moving towards communal coherence.

The last episode points up the peril and the promise in the vast power made available to man in nuclear energy. A beekeeper in Norway, worried about the mysterious death of hundreds of his bees, goes to complain to the Atomic Energy Institute at Kjeller, whose experiments he considers responsible. Radioactivity, he is assured, is not to blame in this case. But as he is shown through the Institute, where scientists from many countries work without secrecy on peaceful applications of nuclear energy, all the questions and fears of men everywhere are blurted out. The eminent scientist, Odd Dahl, who designed and built the Kjeller reactor, describes the desperate need for new sources of energy that necessitates the utmost scientific effort. And yet, in a world in which distances are rapidly constricting as the population grows explosively, all the potential of nuclear energy, and human survival itself, depends upon maintaining peace and learning to live with the constant dangers of radioactivity. There are no easy answers to the questions, no cheap palliatives for our fears. Man's situation is desperate, but 'today, only the dead can afford not to care.'

The four episodes of *Power Among Men* thus move in a deliberate progression from problems of rehabilitation after war, to the need to raise the economic level of depressed peoples, to the urgency of peacefully

resolving the conflicts of men, to the dilemma of the potentiality of nuclear energy for productivity and for destruction. In the plan of its writers and producers, Thorold Dickinson and J.C. Sheers, the episodes are joined by expressive transitions. These contrast man's works of art that have survived the ages, with the wreckages of whole civilizations that were submerged; the rich bounty of the earth's resources with the waste and terrible vengeance of nature violated; the primal, vital force in the minutest particles of matter, with the destructiveness of one single thermonuclear explosion, releasing twice the energy of the total amount of explosives used by all sides in all of World War II.

The separate sequences of the film, under the direction of Alexander Hammid, G. L. Polidoro, and V. R. Sarma, maintain simplicity of visual expression, with frequent passages of cinematic eloquence and concision. A poetic commentary that plays repeatedly upon the poignant irony of Hamlet's 'What a piece of work is man!...' is designed to be spoken in many languages and accents — in British English, for example, by Laurence Harvey, and in American by Marlon Brando. A musical score by Vir-

gil Thomson, played by members of the New York Philharmonic, makes creative use of local idioms in evoking changes of mood and geography.

By any measure, *Power Among Men* is one of the most ambitious documentary projects ever undertaken. As a work of propaganda, the film does go very far in coordinating the ideology of the United Nations with a truly universal humanism. Where it fails most signally is in what appears to be a consistent appreciation of groups and collectivities generally, to the depreciation and even disparagement of individuals. In recognizing evils of individual and national selfishness, the film may reach too far towards a superficially admirable, but subtly dangerous elevation of a concept of Man, at the expense of the flesh-and-spirit actuality of men. What *Power Among Men* has to say about the survival of abstract Man and sovereign, particular men in any case must be voiced amid a clamour of artificial concern. Instead of the superstitious incantations of science fiction, it offers a sermon of fundamentally serious, rational appeal. This is a deadly, demanding sound, just before silence.

In order to avoid unnecessary delay all contributions submitted to *QUEST* (except book-reviews) and correspondence in regard to them must be addressed to The Editors, 5 Pearl Road, Calcutta 17, and not to our Bombay Office.

DISCUSSION

*A Closer Look at the Swatantra Party**

By ELLEN ROY

THE SWATANTRA PARTY was welcomed by many who felt that the country needed a counter-balancing, responsible, democratic opposition to the Indian National Congress, either to check and control and keep it on an even keel, or to replace it in some future election. None of the existing political parties had been able to supply that kind of opposition, in the absence of which India had become practically a one-party State. For this no blame could rightly attach to the Congress. Every party in office tries to remain in office; but the Congress remained in office largely in spite of itself. The organisation had become loose and divorced from the people; the policies of its government, often wrong and unsuccessful, were, even when right and promising at least future improvements, never explained and propagated among the people. Under these circumstances, any opposition party with a plausible reason for existence should have been able to oust and replace the Congress. But the opposition parties were in many respects as bad as the ruling party: neither cared to enlighten the people and explain the issues at stake between elections, and at election times when politicians did go to the electorate, demagogic vote-catching eclipsed the informative and educative con-

tents of political propaganda and public discussion. An opposition party which would compel public discussion of political issues and ideas would be an asset irrespective of the merits of its arguments, although this is not in itself a sufficient reason for the existence of a political party.

Opposition for the sake of opposition serves no purpose; and politics is eminently a purposive pursuit. The other opposition parties had their purposes and programmes and pursued them with varying degrees of enthusiasm, earnestness and responsibility. They all failed to fulfil the needs of an effective democratic opposition, for various reasons. In the case of the Praja Socialist Party, its programme and purposes were insufficiently differentiated from those of the Congress. The R.S.S., Jan Sangh and other orthodox communal groups and parties have no convincing reason of existence because, by and large, all other parties also observe communal orthodoxy in varying degrees, in spite of skin-deep secularism; that is true even for Socialists and Communists, who are known to rely on communal and tribal consciousness as much as any other political party for what electoral successes they have. And if the Congress has at least some brave legislation to show for its claim to secularism and unorthodoxy, like the bills on Hindu marriage reform, anti-untouchability and some others, it is also a fact that these remain largely on paper because of the lack of conviction on the part of their party mem-

* A fairly complete statement of the ideals and policies of the Swatantra Party appeared in *Quest*, 23, Oct.-Dec. 1959, in the article 'The Swatantra Party' by S. Y. Krishnaswamy. —Editors

bers themselves, which is why they either never tried or did not succeed in carrying the conviction to the people at large that these legislations are good and right and necessary.

The Swatantra Party promised to be a party with a difference. It disdained to compete with all the others in the claim to Socialism, secularism and the other labels conventionally associated with progress. The most outstanding difference, apart from the much spread issue of cooperative agriculture and private *versus* public sector, was that it consistently refused to express any opinion at all on the outstanding controversial problems of the contemporary world in general and of India in particular, on which all other parties are so vociferously outspoken. Mum is the word on Tibet, on linguistic States, on India's foreign policy, neutralist or otherwise. Most probably that, together with its opposition to the Congress from the Right, is the reason why the Swatantra Party has had such a good start and good press. It was given a polite reception even by the Prime Minister who said any opposition should be welcomed because 'it puts us on our mettle'. And a party founded by C. Rajagopalachari and led by him and M. R. Masani as the guiding brains, is not just 'any opposition', but a portentous challenge to the ruling party. To Pandit Nehru personally, it must have been quite a blow; but politically C. R. is less of a challenge to him as leader of such an opposition party than he might have been if he remained in the Congress. Inside the Congress, C. R. might have been a crystallising centre of those who don't see eye to eye with Nehru's politics, and might have carried the organisation with him some day, joined by all those who have now with him formed the Swatantra Party, and driven Pandit Nehru to break with the Congress and start a new, left-of-centre party, in his turn. As it is, with all the qualities of its top leaders, divorced from the main stream of popular politics, the Swatantra Party is not likely to cut much ice, and its leaders will remain in

splendid isolation among themselves with others like them of the local gentry in most places.

But that way does not lead to the kind of success for which political parties are formed. They are all leaders and consequential citizens. Who will be the workers of that party? One cannot see these eminent persons on the soap boxes and canvassing votes. Anyway, the kind of policy they advocate is not the type that appeals to the mass of voters. The best it can achieve is to compel some people to think a little more incisively in order to meet the arguments of the new party and sharpen their wits; because in the battle of words, C. R. and Masani are good fencers, and because of their personal prestige as well as because at least some of the owners of the big press agree with them, whatever they say is widely publicised and carried much farther than their own influence and that of their party would otherwise reach. This publicity, however, is no indication of the actual strength and influence of the party. The only issues on which they have expressed strong opinions — though even these not clearly and unambiguously, as we shall see—are opposition to cooperative farming and emphasis on the private as against the public sector in national economy. Apart from their merit, these are not popular issues. But they indicate the social character of the new party, and in consequence the response to their appeal comes primarily from the bigger landowners and industrialists. These being a small minority in the country, the party is not likely to attract a large membership, much less a massive vote in any coming elections. It may be an advantage for this minority to have a party of its own, firstly because they have every right to defend their interests, and secondly because by their opposition they compel those who don't agree with them to think out why they don't, and what they have to say in defense of their own views, thereby leading to a clarification of issues and a more clear-cut alignment of forces. It may also draw away from the

Congress some of its more conservative members and patrons and thereby make Congress politics less ambiguous and more effective in its execution, which will then no longer be obstructed by members who do not agree with it.

However, the Congress is not nearly so revolutionary as it presents itself to the people at election times. The social and economic changes which it advocates are no more revolutionary than have been introduced by every self-respecting capitalist country in the world a hundred and more years ago, and which were the root and basis of modern Democracy. In India, the issues are only obscured and complicated by the fact that the changes, long overdue, are occurring at a time when the liberal capitalism which they ushered in elsewhere a century ago is historically already on the way out, and two sets of social changes are telescoped into each other. The Congress was the party of national democratic revolution, to be accomplished upon the advent of independence. Its leadership, not particularly trained in the social and political sciences, conceived that national democratic revolution vaguely on the lines of the industrial revolution and early rise of Capitalism in Europe, expecting that it would create in India a wealthy class of *entrepreneurs* as happened with their social counterparts in England for example. But they ignored the differences of the situation — in time, place, history and circumstances. That old leadership of the Congress has nearly died out. The younger leadership, incorporated largely in the septuagenarian Jawaharlal Nehru and a few even older survivors, might have gladly followed the historical pattern if it could have been done, although Pandit Nehru, due to his early contact with Marxism, Socialism and Communism in Europe, had realised the impossibility long ago. In power, he was faced with the practical proof of that impossibility.

Thinking in terms of re-enacting in India in the mid-twentieth century the age of merry old free private enterprise and *lais-*

ser-faire Capitalism, where was the prosperous peasant class from whose surpluses modern education spread and industrial investment waxed into entrepreneurial empires in the heydays of industrial and trade capitalism? And how could it be created, when there was not even enough land for the already existing peasant class (by far the overwhelming majority of the population) to feed itself and its progeny on barely economic holdings? On the contrary, what might have been in the past prosperous and self-supporting family farms were progressively further fragmented. And with the majority increasingly pauperised, where was the market for the rising capitalist industries to flourish, multiply and increase production and national wealth? The radical sounding language of Congress politics and the uncertain and often contradictory political measures and methods proposed to solve the conundrum, are an attempt to react to a new situation to which the policies of the past had no application, and for which there existed no precedent and no blueprint. A new theory and practice of politics and economics had obviously become an imperative need. But apart from the backward socio-economic relations, it was the absence of a new philosophical inspiration, a suitable ideology of progress in the given situation, which frustrated precisely the best of Congress policies, measures and legislations. The modern age of industrialism and democracy had been preceded elsewhere by a philosophical revolution which laid the basis for the self-reliant, free, tolerant and liberal individualism which was its most outstanding positive feature. Such a philosophical revolution, in addition to new methods of socio-economic progress, are the needs of the moment in India. The controversial legislations on social and agrarian reform are the attempt of the Congress, or of some of its leaders, to react creatively and adequately to these needs. This reaction is vague and tentative and without clear and conscious ideological direction, and no doubt the tentative reactions often

take the form of steps and measures that have to be retraced again in a process of trial and error. But it has the merit of being conscious that something new is required which must be different from anything done in the past, and different also from all the old solutions and panaceas so far proposed to improve on the past.

The Swatantra Party rose as a response or reaction, not so much to the unprecedented and challenging actual and historical situation in the country, but to these tentative and no doubt often blundering attempts of the Congress to meet that challenge. The Swatantra Party stands foursquare against the experiments of the Congress in a synthesis of Capitalism and Socialism in which both would be either metamorphosed into something new, or at least co-exist in mutual competition for best results and as mutual balance and stimulation for greater production and efficiency. It advocates against this the outworn shibboleths of free enterprise and profit-motivated private initiative in industry as well as agriculture. In place of the philosophical revolution which alone could usher in those ideals when they were not yet shibboleths, it pleads for Dharma and social relations based on the archaic concept of trusteeship. While all forward-looking and realistic social thinkers and politicians think in terms of innovations which would radically change the pattern of Indian society and more particularly the system of production which has led to the abject poverty and backwardness that characterise the Indian situation, those elder statesmen of the Swatantra Party — incongruously joined by a Minoo Masani — consider that situation and that past as the 'good old times', and affirm that their object is to preserve these to the utmost possible extent.

That is the crucial fact. And this fact is responsible for the fatal pre-natal defect of the Swatantra Party. Because, before the party was formed, in the preliminary pub-

licity, references to the new party were invariably made under the name of the 'Conservative Party'. Certainly that was only a tentative name. There had been no resolution naming it so. But neither had there been any voice from among the sponsors that this name was wrong and its contents objectionable. They thought of themselves as Conservatives. Against the need of radical changes in the socio-economic relations and the philosophical revolution of an Indian Renaissance which alone can give sanction to those changes, the Swatantra Party presents itself as the champion of the 'good old times' of Western Capitalism mixed with a massive dose of Dharma of an Indian spiritual Golden Age — both equally super-annuated and chimeric notions. But these are what its conservatism endeavours to conserve. Whether they call themselves a Conservative Party or the Swatantra Party, this is conservatism *par excellence*. It is also reactionary.

What is there in the Indian socio-economic situation worth 'conserving', to make conservatism the basic programme of a new political party? The programme of the Congress is in parts objectively revolutionary in the sense that it aims at certain radical changes in the social and economic structure of the country. But subjectively it is anything but revolutionary, its own conservative traditions and leading cadres obstructing the execution of any deeper changes. The more impetuous among Congress protagonists of rapid change may have gone further in words than they ever meant to go in deeds, and further than Congress policy declarations and resolutions entitle them to go. On some such over-statements rests the whole existence and propaganda of the Swatantra Party. Their propaganda is therefore as unreal as Congress over-statements, for which Pandit Nehru himself is more responsible than others. But he also knows better than others that he cannot enforce the changes and improvements he wants so urgently for the people without the collaboration of the people, and much less against their resist-

ance. At the same time, the Swatantra Party leaders, shadow-boxing against these verbal extravagances, know that their bogey of red-hot Congress Radicalism is no more than a pale shade of luke-warm, pink, stick-in-the-mud reformism. They also know that in spite of their emphasis on conservatism, they themselves could not win a single seat in any election, much less run the government of the country, unless they too adopt the major and realistic parts of the Congress programme and policies, just as the British Conservative Party has barely undone any measures of the Labour Government which was its predecessor, and is carrying on most nationalised enterprises and the Welfare State as a whole without any intention of denationalising or undoing them. The differences between the Tory and the Labour Parties, if not merely in name, are certainly no longer on fundamentals, not even in basic approach, since nobody can accuse Labour of being particularly revolutionary. The difference is mainly in emphasis. This is so, more or less, but increasingly, with most political parties (excepting the Communists), and this is one of the positive achievements of civilisation, characterised by an increasing prevalence of reason and tolerance: the reasonable acceptance of what is valuable in the other party and the greater toleration of what differences remain even then.

On this basis, the two-party system in Britain and elsewhere persists. The reason for this persistence of the opposing parties is no longer fundamental differences so much as merely the conveniences of the parliamentary system, which works mechanically by the electorate being able to play out the one against the other and thereby keeping both to some extent amenable to its needs. This rather formalised procedure and restricted choice allows of much demagoguery on the part of the parties, and encourages apathy and over-reliance on leaders, on the part of the people. But it is no doubt a sort of Democracy, in the sense of a check on one-party rule and dictatorship, and vastly preferable to the latter,

In this sense, but in this sense alone, the Swatantra Party might have played a positive role in the political life of India under ordinary circumstances. But under the extraordinary circumstances of the contemporary world, to which India also is subjected, tending towards polarisation between communist totalitarianism and an anti-communism which is not always also anti-totalitarian, the role of the Swatantra Party, assuming that it survives with sufficient vigour to play any role at all, may turn out to be negative instead of positive by dividing the anti-totalitarian forces in any future elections.

Now, that argument could have been used against any new party in political history, even in the days when political parties still had a vital function to perform by advocating interests which would otherwise have gone by default and been neglected and suppressed. But this function lost significance in proportion as education spread and the electorate matured to exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities more intelligently. Although the latter condition for the obliteration of the party system exists in India less than in most countries of the West, the former condition does exist: there still persist distinct and crassly divergent class interests in this country. But there is no party which could get up on the public platform and advocate a policy that would go directly against the democratic trends prevalent in the world as a whole, and which have become integral parts of the Indian social conscience also. This is another aspect of the telescoped phases of historical evolution in India: that the social conscience is sensitive to changes in social relations which have not yet actually taken place nor are yet even quite on the order of the day, but whose necessary advent is anticipated. And while India is still in the early stages of industrialism, social conscience, aware of the inequities which this phase had brought in its wake elsewhere in the world, insists on synchronising the rise of a capitalist bourgeoisie with the supposedly socialistic Welfare

State. The Congress represents this tendency and this explains its attempts at introducing a mixed economy in which a public and a private sector are both encouraged to spur each other on to heightened production, and sponsoring, as a corollary, corresponding new social and economic institutions. These attempts may be faltering and tentative and not always successful in the first instance, but they do appear to be in the right direction. As against *laissez-faire* Capitalism and collectivist Socialism, with their centralisation of power and regimentation, a system of cooperative economy appears to be the best, if not the only, answer and way out.

The Swatantra Party does not believe in the effort of such pioneering innovations and reforms. It not only holds that it cannot be made, but also that it is not desirable. It frankly emphasises the priority of the demands of the rising class of industrial entrepreneurs, and tries, paradoxically, to reconcile these demands with those of a still feudal or semi-feudal landowning class which has not the remotest resemblance to that 'self-employed peasant proprietor and his family economy' of whom the Swatantra Party's literature abounds, but who in reality is gradually dwindling out of existence in the country — not because of Congress or government policies, but because the peasant holdings have been becoming increasingly fragmented and uneconomic. Consequently, the Swatantra Party stresses most what unites these two classes, which are historically at least as antagonistic as workers and industrialists. The only thing that unites them is free and unfettered private possession and control of all forms of property, and opposition to 'crippling taxes' as harmful to the production of wealth. And, of course, every encroachment on profit is 'crippling' when initiative depends almost totally on the profit motive, because without taxes there would be more profit and more reinvestment, more gain and still more private property, and the

blissful spiral would go on like the screw without end. In an interview with a *Hindustan Times* correspondent, C.R. said that, if the profit motive was given full play, the only limitation being to prevent it going mad, national wealth could be most rapidly increased. If it was all as simple as that, it might have struck some of the leaders of the country and they could have spared themselves the trouble of thinking in terms of drastic and difficult changes. And if they had not thought of it themselves, maybe the foreign donors of financial aid might have mentioned it and saved their money instead of investing it in those changes, which rather worry them too.

Experts in the dismal science may better deal with the technical economic arguments and propositions of the Swatantra Party. The observant layman only wonders how these clever political doctors insist on treating new diseases with old remedies which have already long proved ineffective. Thus, Mr. S.Y. Krishnaswamy, considered as one of the ablest interpreters of the Swatantra Party, writes: 'Large schemes of distributive justice lead to a diminution of capital and, secondly, to a greater spread not of wealth but of poverty. . . . There is for example, no equity or justice in industrial labour asking for 5 or 6 rupees a day as wage when 70 p.c. of the labour force represented by agriculture, do not go up even to a rupee and a half a day.' Again, in another place, he says: 'Increased production can be achieved only by introducing and maintaining a cycle of less taxation, more saving, more investment, more production and more employment.' That would of course be the capitalist's paradise, but unfortunately ever since Adam Smith, modern man has been driven out of that paradise. Mr. Krishnaswamy continues: 'That cycle has to start at the point of less taxation, more saving and more private investment. . . . Increasing the number of industries managed by the State is a direct hindrance. . . . Giving every incentive and facilities to private enterprise will be helpful. The fear of accumulation of large wealth in a few hands is

an outmoded 19th century apprehension.¹⁰ It was time some economist analysed these sweeping contentions. The most advanced among them, especially in the United States of America, seem to share the 'outmoded 19th century apprehension' and write a great deal about the problems and dangers of too much wealth accumulating in too few hands, if not of individual private owners, but of corporations which are not socialist but capitalist, and which are regarded by them as a standing threat to the very structure of Democracy.

But that does not worry the Swatantra leaders, because they are not worried about Democracy. Their panacea is trusteeship, and trusteeship is not Democracy. It was equally time that some matter-of-fact economic enquiry was made to explode the interested myth that the wealthy in India had always acted on the principle of trusteeship and shared their wealth so as to mitigate poverty and re-establish an element of equality. They never did, and if taxation was lifted from them to-day, they would not do so now. The building of gilded temples may be a form of distribution of wealth, but it does nothing to remove poverty and is intended primarily to secure for the privileged of this earth a privileged seat in the next world also. Barring a few outstanding institutions endowed by a few of the very biggest and most modern among Indian capitalists, there are few countries in the world with so few charitable hospitals, dispensaries or places providing for the incurably sick and the old. Even the cows here are often better looked after than infirm and destitute human beings. One may agree with the Swatantra Party in holding, though for different reasons, that the Welfare State is not the solution, because it taxes the small man more than the rich, both relatively and absolutely, and gives to him in security only what it takes from him in cash. But profits 'uncrippled' by taxes and other forms of control have

not solved the problems of modern economy anywhere in the world, and much less the problems of the small man, for whom the Swatantra Party has so many words to spare, though not much else. Yet, while combating effective taxation, the Swatantra Party naturally promises certain benefits to other sections of the people also which, as its leaders know very well, cannot be provided except if paid for by taxing the producers of wealth, and they also know that no regime in India can maintain itself for a day if it does not make and fulfil at least some of these promises. In trying to do so, the Congress regime has run into many of its practical dilemmas, and in trying to avoid these, the Swatantra Party runs into many of its theoretical contradictions contained in the pronouncements of its several and strangely ill-assorted leaders.

It is not intended here to compare notes on all the points of the Swatantra Party's programme, so ably and persuasively detailed by persons like Mr. S. Y. Krishnaswamy, M. R. Masani and others. On the ground selected by them for their arguments, we should only get bogged down in isolated facts and problems on which there is no real difference. Because, who wants the private sector to be choked out of existence or be deprived of all incentives to creative initiative and increased investments and production? Who wants the peasants to be herded like dumb-driven cattle into co-operative farms which would reduce food production? Who wants to break up modern, mechanised, efficient and highly productive farming units even if they are privately owned and well managed? But how many of these exist compared with the prevalence even now of absentee landlordism which leaves cultivation to landless peasants with little or no proprietary incentives? Whoever wants a corrupt, inefficient, indolent bureaucracy to man a public sector which not only does not prove useful, but even impedes the private sector also? There is no difference on all these matters between

¹⁰ S. Y. Krishnaswamy — "The Swatantra Party", *Quest* 23, Oct.-Dec. 1959.

any parties, persons or government. Yet, they are the heavy artillery of the Swatantra Party. The point is how to avoid these evils, and the Swatantra Party's panacea of virgin free enterprise is not the answer. On the other hand, there is indeed serious difference between the Swatantra Party and those concerned in a more fundamental sense with freedom and democracy. And that is a basic difference in the over-all approach, both economic and moral, to the problems of production and of social justice: production viewed not from the angle of theoretical economics concerned with the abstract notion of national wealth, but of the producing and consuming human beings; and social justice conceived not as trusteeship of a semi-religious inspiration, but as the rights and responsibilities of free and equal citizens.

This basic conflict goes through all the pronouncements, principles and resolutions of the Swatantra Party. They swear at the same time by modern sociological ideals and classical economic theories. They protest, in the name of all that is worth conserving in the history and tradition of India, against high taxation as stultifying enterprise and production, but they have to concede that there has to be some taxation to curb unreasonable prices, profits and dividends, admitting thereby that these may be 'unreasonable' (C. R. conceded that they may even be 'mad'), which leaves it wide open, however, what prices, profits and dividends are reasonable and which are not. They protest against the public sector competing with, and exercising certain controls and checks on, the private sector, but the protest is invariably followed by showing the public sector its place, thereby conceding that there has to be some public sector. It need not be denied that the public sector, as M. R. Masani said, has the double distinction of being both expensive and inefficient. But neither can he deny that a deplorably large part of the private sector has displayed unreasonable and immoral business ethics, which may improve in response to the challenge and

competition of the public sector even if the latter were not entirely to be restricted to 'heavy industries and the starting of those pioneer enterprises which are difficult for private initiative', which is the place they themselves concede to it.

Lastly, and most vociferously, the Swatantra Party protests against cooperative agriculture, specially cooperative farming as such, which is of course practically nonexistent in India except in the futurist musings of utopian visionaries. But even on this issue, in which the Swatantra Party is most aggressively assertive, it gets involved into innumerable contradictions. Firstly, at least some of its leaders start from the assumption that cooperative farming is Socialism, and there we have the contradictory statements of Rajagopalachari that, on the one hand, 'cooperative farming is inconsistent with the socialistic pattern, as it might lead to jealousies among the farming families' and on the other hand that Socialism is even worse than cooperative farming. Mr. Ranga, wanting the best of both worlds, claimed both Gandhism and Socialism for his Swatantra Party when he said at Hyderabad on July 26th that his party 'aimed at achieving Socialism as conceived by Mahatma Gandhi'; he said: 'Socialism as understood by the Congress followed the western pattern and cut at the roots of individual freedom, whereas the socialism of the Mahatma's conception aimed at protecting individual freedom.' But C. R. wants none of it even in this formulation. On October 31st, at Madras, he 'recalled the formation of the socialist group within the Congress in the thirties and how Gandhiji used to give a patient hearing to them. But, he said, Gandhiji had not accepted Socialism, not until his very last moment.' All this leaves rather too much scope for interpretations of what it is that the Swatantra Party is against, and even more, what it stands for.

For a most authoritative presentation of what moved Rajagopalachari to start the new party, there is the already quoted interview with the Special Representative

of the *Hindustan Times*. And there it is said that 'Rajaji named the Nagpur resolution of the Congress as the specific cause. The agricultural, the land policies of ceilings and the drive towards collectivism which have been taken up by the government, that is the provocative cause for the formation of the party.' Asked why he did not feel the same impulse when the Congress adopted the 'socialistic pattern' resolution at Avadi, he replied: 'That remained more or less an ideal and did not take shape. Socialistic ideals have been off and on incorporated in Congress resolutions. But that is very different from the steps taken to interfere with land ownership of peasants and others.' So, as a sop to Pandit Nehru and to deceive the radical elements in the country, Socialism was tolerated in Congress resolutions on the understanding that it would remain on paper; and that would apply to the Mahatma also, because according to C. R., he did not accept Socialism till his dying day, in spite of all Congress resolutions. In the same interview, C. R. was asked what was the basic objection to the principle of cooperation in farming when Mr. Nehru had repeatedly stated that such cooperation would be entirely voluntary? And in reply to this question, he said that, while he was not opposed to the principle of cooperation as such (*sic!*), he was opposed to cooperative or joint farming. Although the government may start with service cooperatives, cooperative farming had not been given up. 'Cooperative farming to my mind means definitely collectivisation. "Voluntary" is a good word; but when government pressure and subsidies come from public funds, the word "voluntary" means practically enforcement through government pressure.'

As against C. R. considering the Nagpur resolution as the decisively new step of the Congress that called him back to arms in the arena of political fight, it is interesting to compare what Pandit Nehru said at a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party in Delhi on the very day when the Preparatory Convention of the Swatantra

Party took place in Bombay. Objecting to the Swatantra Party dragging Dr. Rajendra Prasad into the controversy and attributing to the Nagpur resolution any departure from traditional Congress politics, he revealed that 'it was Dr. Rajendra Prasad who as Congress President in 1947 set up an Agrarian Reform Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. J. C. Kumarappa, Mr. Ranga being one of its members; and that Committee, whose report appeared in 1949, favoured joint farming, citing in support of this recommendation the findings of the Royal Commission on Agriculture which had expressed the view that cooperative joint farming in India would be essential where holdings were uneconomic.' It is still more interesting to note in Pandit Nehru's statement that the Commission considered joint farming so essential that it even suggested compulsion to achieve the end, and that Mr. Ranga, in a minute attached to the Commission's report, while objecting to the suggestion of compulsion, expressly approved the principle of joint cultivation.

After him, on the same occasion, came Mr. K. M. Munshi and laid down the law: 'The claim that cooperative farming would produce more food was nonsense. Ninety-five percent of the cooperative societies in some places were fakes. In no country in the world, with one or two exceptions, had cooperative farming produced more food. Eight years ago, the country produced 48 million tons of food. Today it produced 73 million tons.' From the way he argued, one would have expected him to say: eight years ago the country produced 48 million tons of food, and now perhaps only half of that; but no: now we produce 73 million tons, which is fifty percent more, in spite of land ceilings, land reform and cooperatives, 95 percent of which, according to him, are fakes — but that too only in some places. So, they must be alright in some other places. To escape such doubts in the soundness of his arguments, he switches demagogically over and asks back: Is this increase due to the Planning Commission? Is it due to tractors? No. Was it because of

cooperatives? No. So he says. But how does he know that the five percent of cooperatives which even he concedes are not fakes may not have something to do with this increase? Is it so much easier to explain the increase *in spite* of all these sins of omission and commission than perhaps *because* of some of them? But then comes Mr. Munshi's crowning *non sequitur*: The increase is entirely due to family farming by the agriculturist, his wife and children working on the little land they own.' Now, they have owned that little land through the ages and have always been poor, and the little land became littler and littler with fragmentation for many generations, and productivity actually fell in consequence, in many cases absolutely and in all cases relative to the rapidly increasing population. It was this steadily deteriorating state of Indian agriculture which made even a Royal Commission contemplate land reforms including cooperative cultivation as the only remedy; and it was because the self-employed peasant proprietor could no longer subsist on his uneconomic family holding, much less feed the whole of the country with his surplus, that the Congress Government had to think in terms of implementing the Royal Commission's recommendation and experiment with new methods of rural organisation.

The Swatantra Party is leading conservatism *ad absurdum* when, in the face of India's basic and desperate and steadily aggravating agrarian problems, it disparages reforms and extols the very system that has brought India so near economic disaster. Nobody denies that the self-employed, self-supporting and surplus producing peasant proprietor with his family economy and without any State interference is an ideal state. But where is it in India? (Where, for that matter, is it anywhere in the world in our time?) And since such an ideal peasant economy does not exist, how to 'conserve' it? And if it were possible and desirable to create it, where is the land to create it with? Mr. Ranga, the old peasant leader, realises the absurdity of the

proposition. So he tries to make his position clear in this respect. In a meeting in Bombay on July 5th, he referred to the Yugoslav system of cooperative agriculture which is a marked departure from their previous communist collective agriculture, and said: 'This system was not suited to Indian economy. We want to join together groups of peasant families and we want to organise cooperative societies without the encumbrance of officialdom. We would even like to have service cooperatives wherein officialdom would be absent.' Leaving aside Yugoslavia, what is the difference between the Swatantra Party wanting to 'join groups of peasant families' and organising cooperative societies, and the present Congress policy? The Swatantra Party may assume that the Congress Government will force the groups of peasant families to join in cooperatives; but as against this we have the most emphatic assurance of the Congress and government leaders that under no circumstances will peasants be compelled to enter cooperatives; and on the other side, if the Swatantra Party wants the same thing, namely 'to join groups of peasant families', where is the guarantee that they will not use compulsion to achieve what *they* want? If however, economic advantages will induce the peasants to 'join in groups of families', which after all is the essence of cooperation, why should the democratic Swatantra leaders object? In the last analysis, it is all a matter of more food production, without which no advantages can accrue to peasants, cooperating or otherwise, and without which no party and no government can succeed. The government has indeed already learned from experience that compulsion defeats the end of greater production, and also that bureaucratic officials in cooperative societies are the surest way to discourage the actual cooperation of the cultivators. Addressing the Rajasthan State Cooperative Union in the second half of November, Mr. K.D. Malaviya, a Union Minister and President of the All-India Co-operative Union, stressed the need to make

the cooperative movement completely non-official and went to the extent of saying that 'the success of the movement would depend on how far it was dissociated from Government. The more it was dissociated from government, the more would be the success of the movement.'

But apart from the actual experience and practical achievements of cooperation in the various processes of agriculture, the ultimate success of cooperative economic institutions in the villages depends on the maturity and self-reliance of the people concerned and the preparatory work put in locally to make them cooperative-minded. C.R. is quite illogical and wrong when he says, in his interview on 'What the Swatantra Party Stands For', that the policy of land ceilings and cooperatives would not help landless peasants: 'I know already that the landless peasants are convinced that this plan of ceilings on land will not give them land to cultivate, but that it will be taken over by the so-called cooperatives, which will be worked by government machinery'. It is precisely because all the land of the landlords would not be enough to transform landless peasants into self-employed proprietors of economic holdings, that the idea of cooperative farming had arisen at all. And the Swatantra Party has still to produce a different solution to the problem. The wishful unrealism of extolling (or conserving!) the largely non-existent self-employed and self-supporting peasant proprietor is no solution. If we had such a wonderfully productive, free and prosperous class of farmers, India would not be in her present economic plight. To come out of it, new forms of agricultural organisation have to be introduced. Whether service cooperatives will serve the purpose, or the principle of co-operation will have to be experimented in wider spheres of agricultural production, only experience will show. All concerned should keep an open mind in this matter and not drag into the arena of party politics for power what is a problem of survival for the Indian people. Because, unless India, a predominantly

agrarian country, can feed her people, she is doomed. Relying on, and 'conserving', her glorified but largely imaginary self-employed peasant proprietors in their present state, India would forever have to count on foreign aid and regular imports of vast quantities of food, (paradoxically enough, from the most highly industrialised countries), and it would then be only a matter of time to forfeit once again her only so recently won national independence.

The Swatantra Party is of course not thinking merely in terms of more production and economic problems. Its main concern is said to be with higher spiritual values. C.R. is perhaps sincere when he stresses again and again that the main reason for the existence of the Swatantra Party and its opposition to the supposedly collectivist policies of the Congress Government is to preserve the freedom of the individual. But trusteeship is the very antithesis of freedom of the individual, making of the majority of mankind wards under the perpetual tutelage and guardianship of trustees who may or may not be trusted. In practice, Conservatism's fight for freedom of the individual takes the form of a fight against taxes on private industries and against ceilings on the property of the big landowners. Most of the small peasant proprietors of whom the Swatantra Party talks so much have not enough land for the policy of ceilings to apply to them, and therefore it is not they who swell the ranks of the Swatantra Party. But the Swatantra leaders won't have it said that they represent the big industrialists and landlords. No: they stand foursquare for the small man. All their fight against Socialism, taxes and land ceilings is for the small man. All these things are bad for the people. They mean change, and change is anti-conservative. Though things as they are are also bad, still they must be conserved, because that is our tradition.

What is it then that the Swatantra Party thinks is good for the people? It is said in a report on the conclusions arrived at in

the original meeting of the fifty persons who decided on the formation of the new party in Madras on June 4th: 'We are of the opinion that social justice and welfare can be reached more certainly and properly in other ways than through techniques of so-called Socialism. . . . Social justice and welfare should not be brought about by violence or State compulsion. . . but must be brought into being by the spread of the doctrine of trusteeship as suggested by Gandhiji. . . . The educational activities of government, direct and indirect, should be such as to emphasise the moral obligations of those who possess wealth to hold it in trust for society, and a doctrine of life based on that moral obligation as distinguished from seeking to establish a socialistic structure based on legislative sanctions involving expropriation and loss of incentive for the individual to work and increasing dependence on the State and its officials in every walk of life.'

Although C.R. rechristened his then proposed Conservative Opposition Party within hours of drafting its manifesto because 'some people did not like the word conservative,' he said, whatever its name, 'the new party would stand for the conservation of all that was good in the country's life and heritage.' That is nothing very original. Nobody wants to change or undo what is good in the country's life and heritage. But what is C.R. and his party going to do about the things which are *not* good in the country, but very bad indeed? The whole programme of the Swatantra Party is against the moderate and halting reforms of the Congress and its governments, and all the rest is either special pleading of industrialists and landlords or pious wishes and platitudinous generalities, such as that the Swatantra Party is pledged to social justice and equality of opportunity for all, holding that the progress, welfare and happiness of the people depend on individual incentive, enterprise and energy; that it stands for the principle of maximum freedom for the individual and minimum interference of the State consistent with the

obligation to prevent and punish anti-social activities; that it aims to protect the weaker elements of society and create conditions in which individual initiative will thrive and be fruitful; and lastly, 'the party stands for every effort being made to foster and maintain spiritual values and preserve what is good in our culture and tradition and avoid dominance of a purely materialist philosophy of life which thinks in terms only of the standard of living without any reference to its contents or quality.' As if advancing standards of living had nothing to do with the quality and contents of life! Not that the advanced standard of living in the West has produced uniformly high cultural advancement; but whatever cultural advancement beyond a severely restricted elite has been achieved anywhere has always been due to improving standards of living.

Opposition to the moderate reforms of the Congress and, on the affirmative side, trusteeship and Dharma: these are the main planks of the Swatantra Party. In a programmatic declaration, on winding up the preparatory convention of the Party in Bombay, C.R. described himself as 'belonging to the centuries before Christ,' and declared that 'he would not give up the old and take to the new.' The Prime Minister, he said, was labouring under the delusion that what was old was wrong. 'I want Dharma to be restored in India and I want young men to fight for Dharma. The material enemy was an insidious and dangerous enemy. We want to raise Dharma in life and lower material values.' On the same occasion, he charged the Congress Party with 'lowering the value of Dharma and heightening the value of material progress.' 'The Congress', he said, 'roused man's greed by prodding people to work for material things in life.' His worst enemy could not have put it better to damage the case of the Swatantra Party. But he does not leave things vague: The spiritual values are for one section of humanity and the material things in life for the others, the latter having in return the obligation and moral res-

possibility to share out what they feel they can spare of the material things in life, and the rest of mankind is to be satisfied in a truly spiritual manner with whatever falls from the tables of the trustees.

That is how Communists are made. And this is not an infamous distortion or insinuation. In the interview mentioned before, C.R. said that the Swatantra Party 'laid great stress on the principle of trusteeship of Gandhiji which is to foster and utilise the sense of moral obligation, the pride and satisfaction and sense of fulfilment felt by individuals in serving others instead of legislative and other forms of compulsion.' It does not strike him that self-respecting people might prefer rights conferred by legislation to charity arbitrarily bestowed on them by self-righteous trustees of the wealth to the production of which the under-privileged majority contributes the major part. He went on to say: The party also stands for every effort being made to foster and maintain spiritual values and avoid the dominance of a purely materialist philosophy of life which thinks only in terms of the standards of life... Its economic formula for increasing national wealth is to give full play to the profit motive. Here the interviewer observes: 'Critics of the Swatantra Party have pointed this out as a contradiction in terms, if not something worse—advocating material rewards for those who have the resources and enterprise to earn them, and spiritual values for others who have not.' He goes on to ask: 'How can these seeming contradictions be solved?' and C.R. gave in reply the following exposition of the concept of trusteeship: 'Our concerted efforts should be to increase the incentive for private enterprise so that national wealth may be increased. It is premature to think of equitable distribution now. But in the process of making wealth, people should be made aware of their duty to the community. This should be done not by compulsion (of legislation?), but by a moral drive... It is time to consider all the steps we should take to *enforce the doctrine of trusteeship*.' So, the

enforcement of legislation is compulsion, but trusteeship may be enforced—one wonders, how.

Developing further how the trusteeship idea can fight hatred, etc., C.R. said in the same interview: 'The rich people do not deserve to be hated because they help produce more wealth in which everybody will share. We want the doctrine of trusteeship to be practised so as to reduce hatred and jealousy. Government regulations to transfer wealth and property will only increase hatred and jealousy and not reduce them. The essential principle of trusteeship is its voluntary character. (Did he not elsewhere say that 'voluntary' was but a nice word?) In addition, he emphasised the importance of building society on Dharma, a concept adopted by the Swatantra Party as one of its principles. On this he said: 'The Dharma that I refer to is common to all religions—truthfulness in behaviour as well as in conduct, compassion and fellow-feeling. This is Dharma. Unless people are made to believe in and follow Dharma, that is to say, people as a whole, including bad characters, we cannot have prosperity or happiness.' Which means, of course, that we shall never have it if the Swatantra Party has its way.

One of the most non-controversial points of the Swatantra Party's programme is its criticism of the Congress; worse has been heard from Congressmen themselves. C.R. said in his inaugural address at the party convention in Bombay that he criticised the Congress policies and tendencies because it made promises on the basis of false conceptions which were necessarily incapable of fulfilment. As an example, he said, Congress had promised a ceiling on land holdings in the hope of achieving by compulsion what Bhoodan was trying to achieve by willing surrender. When it was pointed out that there was not sufficient land to meet the land hunger of the landless, the Congress substituted cooperative farming for individual cultivation. When it met with objections to this, it announced that it would all be voluntary and there would not be enforced collectivisation. To

overcome popular objections to cooperative farming, you plan subsidies and other inducements at the cost of the nation and build up a case for successful cooperative farming. Again it is left open what new remedy the Swatantra Party proposes to substitute for this unsatisfactory state of affairs. Obviously it would rather leave the land hunger of the landless unstilled than have either ceilings on land holdings or cooperative farming. What the Congress proposes may succeed or not. But what the Swatantra Party wishes to conserve has already failed. The Congress probably deserves every word of the criticism that the Swatantra Party levels against it. It has the saving grace that it admits much of this criticism itself, though in the effort to remain

in power, it has of course to cover up much more than it can possibly admit. On the other hand, the Swatantra Party, while failing to offer any convincing new remedies, is cleverly using some enticing slogans that are apt to mislead unwary Liberals, Democrats and Humanists — such as, individual freedom and initiative, no State interference, social justice, equality of opportunity, etc. etc. None of these ideals are attainable and compatible with the vague old shibboleths of Dharma and trusteeship nor even with that of sacrosanct free private enterprise based on a sainted profit motive. These cannot be the pillars of a political party which means to be what its name conveys — a party of freedom.

ANNOUNCING THE

SILVER JUBILEE NUMBER OF THE VISVABHARATI QUARTERLY

With its present issue (Spring 1959 Number 4 of Volume 24) the *Visvabharati Quarterly* completes the twentyfourth year of its continuous publication in the New Series.

It is planned to celebrate the SILVER JUBILEE of the *Quarterly* by bringing out a Special Number containing the best that has appeared in all its past issues ending with the present number. The contents will include written contributions, and illustrations as well. The Jubilee Number will combine the last two issues of Volume 25.

It can well be expected that this special number will live up to the high standard set by such of its predecessors as the Tagore Birthday Number 1941 and Gandhi Memorial Number 1949. Anticipating its reader-demand we propose to publish a larger than the usual number of copies of this special issue. The exact figure will depend on the number of renewals or new subscriptions registered up to October 31, 1959. After that date, the Jubilee Number will not form any part of a subscription order—only a limited number being left available for sale at Rs. 6 a copy.

To avoid disappointment our readers and subscribers are requested to ensure that their names are registered betimes.

MANAGER,

VISVABHARATI QUARTERLY,
SANTINIKETAN POST, WEST BENGAL, INDIA

Talking About Books

By SADHAN KUMAR GHOSH

NOSTALGIA is very much modish, though it is not, at the moment, the vogue-word. One can see this from a spate of autobiographies trying to resurrect the lost days. First, E. M. Butler's *Paper Boats* published by Collins. E. M. Butler is a scholar known to the cognoscenti for her study of ritual magic and her standard work on Rainer Maria Rilke. In this book she describes the formative influences—persons, places and books—in her life. One is reminded often of the author of *Elizabeth and her German Garden*. Cheltenham gave her a distaste for English collegiate life and in her time women were considered generally unsuitable for higher education. Nonetheless, she went to Cambridge where she remained an eclectic and undisciplined reader. But she felt the civilising influence of Cambridge and as she watched the Cam flow quietly along she felt that modern and mediaeval had joined hands. She had all the Bloomsbury instincts, though she never belonged to the group.

With one thing and another, she has remained an 'outsider', one outside the pale. Partly this has been due to her German upbringing and her equal infatuation for Hellas and Holderlin. In 1934 she visited India and came 'under the all-pervading influence of Hinduism'. She declares that her close study of Goethe had drawn her towards Hinduism. It is significant that in spite of her life-long preoccupation with the occult, she sought nothing esoteric in Hinduism. Only an honest answer to life's principal problems, and like a well-known Somerset Maugham character, she seems to have found it. The idea of *Paper Boats* flashed into her mind when she felt that 'so much that we never dream of lies hidden in every object we see and touch'.

Of the making of books about India there is no end, but K. Codrington's *Cricket in the Grass* published by Faber and Faber is something quite out of the common run. Quite unlike John Master's *Bugles and Tigers* and quite outside the Kipling tradition. This is the story of the years between a boy's childhood in India and his return to that

country during the 1914-18 war. The nostalgia is Edwardian and Rupert Brooke-ish. The memory of England is naturally of tea (with honey, raisin cake and raspberry jams) under the elms. It is also of the last of the honeysuckle flowers and the first of the blackberry clusters, and the pale winter sun warming the sticky buds of the horse-chestnuts. But the true and aching nostalgia is for India, for the family of Dad Shah and Miriam and the regiment of Light Horse. And, of course, for the smell of mango blossoms, the sparrows in the thorn bushes and Father Gregory's lichis and loquats. When he returned to Bombay he first went to the Crawford fruit market to smell the mangoes and guavas. Dad Shah was dead but Miriam and her sons were living near Mardan. The pathos and haunting quality of the book is derived partly from an awareness that the party is over and partly from the author's realisation that he stood between two worlds and belonged to neither. There is an elegiac tenderness in one's first awareness that one is an outsider.

Shakespearean exegesis is mounting up and there is a persistent cold war between the textual critics and the interpreters. I consider it a great pity that T. S. Eliot should have lent the weight of his great name to the textual critics. A pity because much textual criticism is verbiage and recalls Holofernes in *Love's Labour Lost*. Shakespeare would certainly have tilted against the 'plodders', deriving base authority from others' books. A pity, because I would far rather have one unpublished essay of A. C. Bradley, one new book from Wilson Knight, than all the accumulated work of the pseudo-Pollards, Greys and McKerrows.

I am on the side of the interpreters. My beliefs have been buttressed by two recent books, *More Talking of Shakespeare*, edited by John Garrett and published by Longmans; and John Vyvyan's *The Shakespearean Ethic* published by Chatto and Windus. Vyvyan's case is that Shakespeare is never ethically neutral. The tragedies present a constant pattern of damnation. After all, why do we enjoy tragedy? Partly as Aristotle suggests, because it helps us to gather the meaning of things.

A modern audience seeing *Macbeth* is unlikely to be much stirred by pity or terror. But we may feel that something from the deeps has been revealed. Tragedy helps us to understand ourselves better.

A pertinent case, says Vyvyan, is *Julius Caesar*. It has sometimes been argued that Shakespeare takes no sides here. That is not so. The fatal flaw in the soul of Brutus is that he puts politics before humanity, doctrines before friendship, and has more faith in the power of death than in the power of love. The inner conflict is presented in the soliloquy 'It must be by his death.' The outcome of the inner warfare which always follows the yielding to temptation is that the ruler within is overthrown. The tragic act is never consummated in the physical world until the lordship of the inner world has been lost.

John Garrett's book is a collection of illuminating essays. Helen Gardner in a brilliant essay on *As You Like It* makes the percipient comment that while Tragedy is presided over by time, the comedies are dominated rather by a sense of place. Also that tragic plots have a relentless logic while comic plots are made up of changes, chances, and surprises. She finds it significant that the one solitary figure and outsider of the play, Jacques, is happy in his melancholy and harms no one. L. C. Knights in an essay on the question of character admits that recent Shakespearean criticism has swung too far from character. Character-presentation must be beyond the bounds of naturalism but the notion of character is not going to disappear from Shakespeare criticism. Mary Lascelles, in a poetic essay on Shakespeare's pastoral comedy, reminds us that the essence of pastoral romance is a liberation from the 'here' and the 'now'. The happy endings are not flattering fantasies but tokens of a fulfilment to be imagined only, not hoped for. John Wain's essay on the mind of Shakespeare re-affirms Edwin Muir's contention that Shakespeare was preoccupied with the theme of 'Pietas', King Lear is unintelligible on any other basis. Inclusiveness in argument, inclusiveness in symbolic structure, inclusiveness within the individual world: this was the quest of which Shakespeare never tired. J. I. M. Stewart invites one to study Shakespeare's silences and avoidances and the things he dropped as he worked from his sources. These are only a few random nuggets from a scholarly, delectable work the close study of which should be equally rewarding to the dilettante and the connoisseur.

Edmund Blunden and Robert Graves are the only two contemporary poets who convey a sense

of timelessness in a time-haunted age. And, therefore, the publication of Robert Graves's *Collected Poems*, 1959 by Cassell is of special interest to poetry-lovers. Blunden's *Poems of Many Years* appeared in 1957. Blunden was in Calcutta when I happened to be reviewing his book. After an exchange of the usual courtesies he wanted to know whether there was a large Indian public for the sort of poetry he wrote. I had not the heart to tell him about the sham poetry-addict who would prefer Dylan Thomas to Edmund Blunden or Edith Sitwell to Robert Graves.

The poetic career of Graves has paralleled that of Roy Campbell. Like Campbell Graves is vigorous and pugnacious and his excellent autobiography *Goodbye to All That* makes a dead set at all that is spurious in the English tradition. He has been, on the whole, a traditionalist in his metres and diction. Like Campbell, he began as a poet mainly of the outer world. His subject was the English country scene and then he became one of the most typical poets of the First World War. He shed his Georgian characteristics very soon and since then he has been searching for the proper poetic theme. This theme has gradually revealed itself as that of a sense of complex mal-adjustment between the mind and the body, between the sexual appetites and romantic love, between the joy of romantic love itself and the vague forebodings that accompany it. Graves believes that behind all true poetry there must be primitive feelings of adoration and awe. His freedom from ideologies is truly remarkable and he remains the poet as much of the winter solstice, as of the seagulls wheeling near Valetta; as much of Orphic tablets or the worship of Isis as of the blue-fly and the window-sill. There is in his poetry a rare intellectual distinction that has created the anodyne tradition.

Henry Charles Duffin's *Amphibian* published by Bowes and Bowes is a reconsideration of Browning's poetry. Duffin's theme is expressed in his title, his case being that Browning's poetry is amphibious in the sense that it has a double life comprising both passion and thought. Browning was profoundly religious, though he accepted Christianity with reservations. But he was not a true mystic. A true mystic has direct contact with spiritual reality. Browning's contact was with that lesser or derivative spiritual reality, the human soul. He knew the cosmic spirit at one remove, through the microcosm. His favourite passage from Dante, quoted in his correspondence with Julia Wedgwood, was: 'Thus I believe, thus I affirm,

thus I am certain it is and that from this life I shall pass to another better, there where that Lady lives of whom my soul was enamoured.' Browning's optimism expressed his religious and philosophical outlook. He was not unduly worried by the problem of human suffering, because he emphasised the wide extent of human happiness.

I believe Oscar Wilde was the first to note the duality in Browning's poetry. In that penetrating passage in *Intentions*, Gilbert is made to say 'Meredith is a prose Browning and so is Browning.' The theories of art expressed by Fra Lippo Lippi or Andrea del Sarto could be equally effectively expressed in a good prose rendering. Browning was primarily a thinker, and would not have understood Keats's prayer for a world of sensations rather than of thoughts. He chose poetry because he felt his thought was valuable, requisite to be given to the world, and given more arrestingly in verse, for which he had a special gift. Browning created the quasi-lyric which stands in his poetry between the genuine lyric like *By the Fireside* and some of his downright didactic verse. This is the poetry of ideas (practically synonymous with Langbaum's poetry of experience) and the ideas have not been transmuted into music and feeling. The thought is analytical not creative. It remains a mental product deeply interesting but without the sanction of the imaginative vision. In more than one sense though, Browning is the first and the greatest of the modern poets, the forerunner of Hopkins, Hardy, the later Yeats, Owen, Eliot, Muir, Church, Auden, Spender, Day Lewis and Thomas.

The modern travel-book seems to be moving away from Freya Stark. The best travel-books tend to be discursive rather than *outré*. The dominant tradition seems to be that of Somerset Maugham's *Gentleman in the Parlour*. That, at any rate, is my impression of Michael Swan (*Marches of El Dorado*) or James Morris (*The Market of Seleukia*). And now of Norman Lewis's *The Changing Sky* published by Jonathan Cape. Norman Lewis was a traveller before he turned novelist. 'There was a time', he writes, 'when I felt that all I wanted from life was to be allowed to remain a perpetual spectator of changing scenes. I managed my meagre supply of money so as to be able to surrender myself as much as possible to this addiction and charged with a wonderful ignorance I went abroad by third-class train, country bus, on foot, by canoe, by tramp steamer and Arab dhow. Later I found that the discipline of writing compelled me to see more, to penetrate more deeply, to

increase my understanding and to discard a little of my ignorance'. The smell of the trade winds reminds one of Negley Farson.

The Changing Sky is mostly about places to escape to when one has had a surfeit of the amenities of the modern world. One gets glimpses of high-life in Accra where decrepit shacks style themselves 'Ye olde chop bar' and one may find a drinking saloon called 'Honesty and Decency'. Memories of flame trees in full blossom are as vivid as those of portable gramophones playing 'Ghana land of Freedom'. One is reminded of macabre practices like medicine murders, snake people and trial by ordeal still surviving in Liberia. Lewis seems to have been particularly successful in absorbing some of the atmosphere of life in seedy banana ports of the Caribbean. Here are people who have been touched only by the outward forms of Christianity but are consoled in secret by the ancient gods and who have rejected all the overtures of Western civilisation. One such place is Huehuetenango in Guatemala. Lewis found Red Indians dressed in the frozen fashions of the early sixteenth century. The parakeets were screeching over the plaza. It was a place of apathetic beauty, built out of the ruin of a devastated Indian city. There was a sadness, a sense of forgotten tragedy in the air; and here it seemed that silence was a part of the natural condition. His taxi-driver explained to him: 'We Indians are a reserved people. Even in our fiestas. Our joys and our weepings are hidden away inside; for us only, you understand—not for the world'. And then there was Goa, a horizon of purplish rocks and palms, where a flock of mynahs settled on the ship's rigging. Arabs pull at their hookah, and drink *quishr*, humming old and forgotten tunes. Dhows are anchored in mid-stream, with the silhouettes of ancient ships on decorative maps. It is of some interest that in Lewis's opinion Goa would not return to India in the event of a plebiscite being held.

G. S. Fraser's *Vision and Rhetoric* published by Faber is a vast improvement on his *The Modern Writer and his World*. It is gratifying to find that Fraser has discarded the Leavisian attitudes. His new book has something of the downright Augustan manner. It consists of essays on modern poetry. There is nothing more abominable than cocksure, smart and sleek writing on poetry—especially contemporary poetry. Fraser, in this book, is anything but that.

In his first essay he considers the theory, stated in recent years in three successive books by

Sir Herbert Read, Mr. John Bayley and Mr. Frank Kermode that what we call the modern movement in poetry (the movement associated with T. E. Hulme, the Imagists, Pound and Eliot) is not a breakaway from the romantic tradition but a continuation and completion of it. There is a strong and plausible case, if we accept John Bayley's claim that the great Romantics were not notable innovators in style. Their slangs were old, their slants were new.

One has, of course, to face the fact that the leading 'modern' poets claim affinities with the metaphysicals and not with the Romantics. Nonetheless, W. B. Yeats can be seen as coming out of the Romantic Revival. He comes immediately out of its decadent development, out of Pater and the Pre-Raphaelites; and as far as he comes out of its roots he comes out of Blake and Shelley, out of their mythomania, and out of the conscious stylishness of that Romantic classic, Landor. And there is much substance in Bayley's claim that Auden has obvious affinities with Byron.

Kermode's central theme is the contrast between the poem as an image made of images and the world of discourse. Incidentally, this brings us to the supposedly central theme of Fraser's book, which was suggested by Hopkin's view that the English poetic tradition was strong in visionary insight but weak in rhetoric or the 'common teachable element in poetry.' An image is a sudden revelation while a discourse conveys information. Three concepts are central to the notion of Romanticism. One is the concept of the poet as an alienated and isolated man; the second concept is that of the poetic imagination as giving access to an uncommon world; the third concept is that of a poem being like a plant having its own dumb principles of growth. For the Romantic, the poet's vocation is a tragic one. The theme of the fate of the Romantic is perfectly stated in one of Yeats's greatest poems, 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory'. 'Gregory alone of them all found a definitive joy in abandoning the pain and delight of the dream for self-destructive action.' This concept affected Yeats's symbol of art. The poet is divided and the poem must be undivided. For the rest, Fraser follows Kermode in regarding many of the gimmicks of modern criticism (Hulme's 'intensive manifold', Lehmann's 'aesthetic monad', Eliot's

'dissociation of sensibility') as ultimately derived from Romanticism.

Fraser's essay on Ezra Pound is a brilliant one. It is a fine thing to have stressed that Pound is fanatical on one point only — stability in society. *The Cantos* — more than *The Waste Land* — convey a sense of total waste, bitterness and loss, which it is not within human power to compensate or repair. Like Langland, Pound has written a Vision. And it is a much more personal vision than Langland's.

The pathos of *The Waste Land*, Fraser notes in another essay, is derived partly from contrast. It expresses a radical attitude towards the disorders of modern society. It is a vivid awareness of a broken world but in the fifth section it seems to progress towards very definite moral and religious aspirations.

Fraser finds 'evasive honesty' the keynote to Macneice's poetry. What he means, I suppose, is that Macneice's attitude to life has been more consistent and coherent than that of Auden or Day Lewis. Politically, it has been that of the left-of-centre liberal, and, morally, that of the man who is out at once to enjoy life and to shoulder his social responsibilities. The typical attitude is one of a sane and humorous social concern. It is a pity he does not like the eighteenth century, with which he has many affinities. In his poem on Bath he attacks an Austin Dobson view of the eighteenth century which nobody now holds.

In an essay on very recent English poetry, Fraser notes that a few of the poets writing to-day have been infected with the anti-romantic idea. This applies, of course, only to the poets of the nineteen-fifties — poets like Philip Larkin, Seymour-Smith or Geoffrey Moore. The anti-romantic idea has been most clearly stated recently by Professor Yvor Winters. 'Where romantic criticism usually starts with putting the main emphasis on the notion of the image, anti-romantic criticism tends to start with the notion of the statement.' Even so, these poets are reacting not against romanticism in general but only against certain romantic attitudes which give an impression of pose or stridency. This neo-conservatism seems to be sincere and spontaneous, but Fraser is the first critic to have spotted and docketed it.

BOOK REVIEWS

Wisdom of Despair

And I as before
Do without light
And in the darkness
I write verse about this.

Noiseless verses,
Not for the newspapers,
But the day will come –
And they will see the light.

KRIVOSHCHIEV (Russia) 1957

ISAAC BABEL, looked upon as his successor by Gorky, made a significant speech at the Writers' Congress held in 1934. He said to the writers in Russia, 'We are deprived of only one right, the right to write badly. Let us not fool ourselves, comrades, this is a very important right and to take it away from us is no small thing.' Babel could elude the pressure of Soviet Literary Inquisition because of his somewhat privileged position, but from that time onwards, he remained what he termed with such classic bitterness, 'the master of the genre of silence.' Those that were less privileged and less strong than Babel chose to snuff out the candle of their life rather than strangle the muse within them. While the recruits to the regiments of writers sweated at turning out literary commodities and producing poetry that was a socially responsible labour, the Russian literary scene was enveloped in bleak, frosty winter. This winter extended over a quarter of a century.

BACK TO LIFE: (Poems From Behind The Iron Curtain: Edited by Robert Conquest, Published by Hutchinson of London, Pages 107, Price 15s. net.)

Then all of a sudden around 1955, for various political reasons, a thaw was ordered. Writers who had managed to keep their souls suppressed and their bodies alive came out with pieces that exposed the fallacy of the Party line and condemned the detestable bureaucracy of socialism. This was a breath of fresh air and all avidly drank into it. But that the thaw was not to be the prelude to a cheerful spring has been made all too plain by the storm over Pasternak's 'Dr. Zivago'. Some of the writers were reprimanded for having dared to speak out their mind. In the meanwhile, 'Back to Life' could be put together.

The poems are from Russia and from satellite countries of Eastern Europe. The editor is aware of the a-poetical motive behind the publication of this collection. He admits that 'it is not presented as literature' but has extra-ordinary value as documents of courage and love of truth. It is too much to expect that the poems should provide a full documentation of the sorrow and suppression under a totalitarian regime. The sores and ills of such a regime are too numerous to be counted. The poems provide fitful glimpses and bare outlines, but these gaunt pieces become all the more painful for being sheer bones of expression. As Adam Wazyk writes in his 'Poem for Adults'—

This is a naked poem,
before it is clothed
with vexations, colours and the smells
of this earth.

The poems therefore, are mostly half-articulate utterances, sometimes forthright,

sometimes oblique, of persons who had been reduced to the ultimate wisdom of despair—

Because there is tyranny
all is in vain
even the song.

The silent, restless grief of men in subtle bondage, the air charged with fear and suspicion with nobody left alone even in his dreams, the din of slogans and the cries of smug leaders, the nightmare in the brain created by the cruel magic of dialectical thinking, the sudden capture and the journey through the unending night, all this the poems reflect. Semyon Kirsanov's 'Seven Days of the Week' powerfully etches the entire misery of this existence as also the intense ache for a new one.

The poems may not be much as literature but they certainly are touching documents of courage. One hopes that more such 'noiseless verses' see 'the light' and more of such creativity is won 'back to life'.

M. D. HATKANGALEKAR

CHARVAKA—History and Philosophy (in Marathi) by S. N. Athavale. (Pradnya Patha Shala Mandal, Wai — pp. 118 Rs. 3.00)

THE philosophy prevalent among the 'people' which is one plausible rendering of the term the *Lokayata Darshana* seems to get popularity once again in this country. The People's Publishing House, Delhi have brought out in July 1959 a voluminous work, 'LOKAYATA', by Shri Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. It is a peculiarly Marxist analysis not only of the Lokayata system, but of hundreds of other things, connected and not connected with that system. Another is 'Charvaka: History and Philosophy' written in Marathi by Professor S. N. Athavale of the Elphinstone College and published by the 'Pradnya Pathashala', Wai. It is a small book. Nevertheless it is fully exhaustive of its subject

matter. So far no single author in any language has collected together as many references to Charvaka and Charvakism as Athavale has done. On the basis of these references he has given a neat and persuasive exposition of the Lokayata system, preceded by a historical account of the system and followed by a critical evaluation of its historical role in determining thought and life in this ancient land. He arrives at the conclusion that if the Lokayata philosophers had been more active and had shown missionary zeal in propagating their views, Indian Philosophy could have been rid of 'ignorance, hypocrisy and idle speculation.'

One may disagree with this characterization of Indian philosophy as a whole, but one nevertheless learns to appreciate better the Charvaka philosophy after reading Athavale's book.

It is generally thought that Charvakism is a philosophy of 'eat, drink and be merry — and think not of tomorrow.' It goes to Athavale's credit to have shown that though merriment is not taboo in the Lokayata system, it is not its essence nor is the vulgarity epitomised in the above saying a corollary of it.

The essence of the Charvaka system is a certain epistemological approach. The Charvakas hold that sense perception is the only authoritative and ultimate source of knowledge—whatever is worth the name knowledge must be traceable to and fully analysable into sense perception. Validity is denied even to inference, for inference has got to be regarding the unperceived (otherwise it is no inference but merely a restatement of what is already known). More technically the argument is: An inference always requires the knowledge of a universal concomitance between two attributes. Now, the inferred conclusion is either included in this knowledge, in which case it is nothing new and therefore no genuine inference or it is not so included, in which case we have not a reliable premise from which to draw the inference. This looks very much like a quotation from Mill's *Logic*, but actually it is an anticipation of

Mill by the Lokayatikas, some fifteen hundred years earlier.

Much ridicule is poured on Charvakism for having rejected inference as a means of knowledge. It is pointed out that we cannot live from one moment to another without inferring the consequences of our actions on the basis of our past experience. When thirsty, one cannot decide to drink water without inferring that water in this glass will quench one's thirst as some other quantity of water did before. Athavale has, however, shown that the Lokayata attack on inference in general is followed by their acceptance of inference of a particular kind. Inference is to be trusted if it is grounded in sense experience. Inference not based on sense experience and relating to things beyond the range of sense experience is not to be relied upon. This, indeed, is the standpoint of Hume and the modern Logical Positivists. The writer of the book under review would have done well to quote Hume for comparison at this point. Hume ends his 'Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding' with the following words: 'Run over your libraries and take up a book of Divinity or School metaphysics and ask 'Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?' No. 'Does it contain any experimental reasoning?' No. Commit it then to the flames; for it contains nothing but sophistry and illusion.'

The Charvakas had pitted themselves against 'sophistry and illusion' which was supported by the authority of the Vedic scriptures. They took it on themselves to undermine Vedic authority, which was firmly entrenched.

Why was it so firmly rooted? The author gives an explanation. He contends that philosophers of the Orthodox Schools had no social philosophy at all. They could not think of an alternative social arrangement. Whatever type of social life was historically evolved was taken by them as the only possible social order. Anything else, in their opinion, could only be chaos. With a view to stabilizing that order those philosophers

thought it convenient to base it on the solid foundation of Vedic authority. Hence the Vedas were declared to be uncreated and eternal. The sole underlying motive was to justify and to maintain the *status quo*.

The Charvakas, however, had no axe to grind in maintaining the *status quo*. They could think of replacing the existing social order by something better. Hence they shattered to pieces the authority of the Vedas. They exposed them as a creation of of 'the shrewed, the wicked and the voluptuous.' For the Charvakas, authority of any kind was not a means of valid knowledge.

They could, therefore, think of a social order based entirely on secular and empirical considerations. They were the only persons who taught that caste distinctions were illusory. The Buddhists and the Buddha himself, the writer tells us, believed in the caste hierarchy. The Charvakas alone rebelled against all such dogmas springing from tradition and authority. The Charvakas preached that men should make a living by honest, productive labour such as agriculture, cattle-breeding, commerce and administrative services. They taught that life is not pure suffering nor pure enjoyment. It is mixed. But we can change the proportion. We should try to pursue the maximum amount of happiness. Some element of suffering, however, would remain in life. That should be faced calmly as the price of happiness which can be ever increased by human ingenuity.

On the whole, this social philosophy seems to be unobjectionable. But there is a small difficulty. The Charvakas make a distinction between a good way of living and a bad way of living. The good way is not the one which brings more happiness to the individual but the one which makes social life happier. But why should the individual care for the society? You cannot show that in every single case the interests of the individual and of the society coincide. To say that the individual naturally has a social impulse is not true to facts. Sheer naturalism cannot give a satisfactory account of the distinction between good

and evil. But Lokayata is committed to naturalism and materialism. Consciousness is declared to be a product of unconscious matter. It is implied in this that the conscious processes are mechanically determined. It is not realised that this cuts at the root of such distinctions as good and bad, right and wrong.

This result is ultimately due to their epistemology. It is correct to say that knowledge must be grounded in experience. But is it correct to say that the whole field of experience is exhausted by sense perception? Had the Charvakas realized that below and above and interspersed through our sense perception there are other elements of being such as the ethical and the aesthetic, they would have probably given us a philosophy of life with more of 'Sweetness and Light'.

S. H. DIXIT

CHINA'S POPULATION: S. Chandrashekar. Hong Kong University Press; Oxford University Press: (Hong Kong 1959) pp. 69. Hong Kong \$4, Indian price Rs. 4.50.)

THIS is the text of two lectures delivered by the author at the University of Hong Kong in June 1959. The figures quoted in the text 'are factual in the sense they are official'. Some of the data used were given to the author on his request and are not available in publications.

This book mainly deals with the census procedures, census results, and the vital statistics in China. There is little discussion regarding the Government's policies nor has the author offered any comments, comparisons, evaluations and over-all conclusions. The reader will therefore eagerly await his forthcoming book on China's population problem.

The first comprehensive Chinese census was taken in 1953. There were some attempts made to count the population in China during the Manchu rule and also once during the Kuomintang regime. These attempts, however, did not cover the whole country and were not accurate.



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Before the census in 1953 was taken the Chinese population was taken to be near about four hundred million. The census of 1953 revealed the figure to be nearby six hundred million. Some people have tried to question the accuracy of this latter figure also, saying that the Chinese Government has deliberately inflated the true figure. As the author points out, there is very little reason to believe that any such attempt has been made.

This study of the Chinese population problem is commendable for its objective and realistic approach. In a few places such as where the author discusses the suicides committed by the intellectuals under the communist regime this objectivity is slightly vitiated. Otherwise, however, the author has given the Communist Government its due, while at the same time offering a fair criticism of its relevant policies.

The census of 1953 was undertaken at short notice and was completed within the course of a few months. It collected information only with reference to a few basic facts—namely, the relation to head of family name and address, sex, age, nationality or 'race'. There was little time for training the staff. In order to meet this difficulty of the shortage of trained personnel, the census was taken on the basis of a *de jure* population count, instead of a *de facto* count. Under the *de jure* method, the people are counted on the basis of their permanent, legal and habitual residence, while the *de facto* method counts them on a single day at a particular hour. The choice of the *de jure* method was also indicated by the need to relate this census to the preparation of electoral rolls. For the collection of information the people were expected to come and provide information to the registration official. A small punishment was to be imposed for failure to do so.

The census was carried out within these limits and under these limitations. The final figure includes Chinese all over the world including the overseas Chinese who are citizens of various other countries. This follows the traditional but unacceptable

Chinese custom of maintaining that everyone of Chinese ethnic origin is a citizen of China. The number of such Chinese is between eleven and twelve million. The Chinese population is too huge to be affected one way or the other by the addition or removal of a few million people. It would, however, have a sobering effect to remember that the total number of the 'enemies of the people' done away with by the people's Government ranged between three and twenty million. These figures, however much we may like to disbelieve them, have unfortunately the support of official statements.

The point of interest in the present study is to consider whether conditions have improved under the People's Government as compared with the previous times. The People's Government has now been in power for nearly ten years, and was in power for nearly four years when the census was taken.

An attempt has been made to show that there has been a distinct improvement regarding health conditions and mortality rates (general and infant). It is found that the sex ratio of male children to female children between the ages 0 to 6 has also improved in favour of females indicating that under the People's Government all children including females are well cared for and that the practice of female infanticide has been discontinued. It is to be hoped that the beliefs are true, but it would be more fair to say that it is not possible to make any definite statement in view of the lack of correct information for the pre-Revolution era and the shortness of the period of the communist rule till 1953.

The Chinese population according to Sandbaerg's classification is of the progressive type. This type is considered to be a youthful and propitious population. As the author properly points out, whether propitious or not, Chinese population, if the age record is correct, is certainly a youthful one. This makes us expect a rapid growth in numbers in the future. The effects of such a growth on the Chinese economy as

also on the world's economy and politics can be very important. This unchecked growth may in future serve as a pretext for a demand for *Lebensraum*. The People's Government for a while had thought it advisable to check the growth of this population and had undertaken an intensive campaign to teach the people the methods of family planning. It is unfortunate, however, as the author points out, that out of blind loyalty to Marx the birth control campaign was called off in the middle of 1958. It would be well, however, if the People's Government realizes that the size of the population even in a communist country can pose an economic problem. Blindness to this fact creates difficulties regarding the presentation and interpretation of figures. As the author points out: 'In 1957 there was no unemployment. But in 1958 the State found employment for eight million surplus people on various State undertakings, and *again* solved the unemployment problem.' (Italics added)

In any case, China has started taking heed of its numbers one way or the other. We must be thankful to Dr. Chandrashekhar for this informative study and the quiet yet caustic views with which he intersperses his comments. We look forward to his forthcoming bigger and comprehensive study of the problem.

D. A. DABHOLKAR

AMERICAN-ASIAN TENSIONS: Edited by Robert Strausz-Hupe and others; (Frederic A. Praeger, New York; pp; 239.)

THIS book is a collection of essays prepared under the auspices of the Foreign Policy Research Institute of the University of Pennsylvania, on America's relationship with five prominent countries of Asia, namely, India, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines and Egypt. They have been written and edited by a group of writers.

The authors of *American-Asian Tensions* have focussed their attention on what they call 'tensions' in the American-Asian relationship. The term 'tension' in this context

has been defined by them as 'the pursuit of incompatible foreign policy objectives'. 'Tensions' are, therefore, not of the nature of 'specific misunderstandings' between the countries which may be removed by means of diplomatic activity. They, on the other hand, have their source in the *basic* difference in the foreign policy objectives.

The authors have tried to bring within the focus of their inquiry 'tensions' resulting from India's and Indonesia's claim to neutrality, Japan's and Philippine's effort at cooperation and Egypt's tactical non-cooperation in the problems and areas of American interest.

The chapter on Indo-American relationship has been written by Bidyut Sarkar. It clearly brings out the difference in the approach of India and America towards the international events of the post-war world. From the point of view of India most of what America does in the international field can be interpreted in terms of 'contest of power' between herself and Russia. India considers herself to be the champion of anti-colonialism, anti-racialism and anti-militarism. She is firmly convinced that communism can spread in Asia only under the guise of national movement. Once colonies are given freedom they would strengthen the forces of democracy in Asia. In the words of Nehru:

'We talk about the crisis of our time and many people view it in different ways. Probably in the U.S.A., the crisis of the time is supposed to be communism *vs.* anti-communism. It may be so to some extent. But the crisis of the time in Asia is Colonialism *vs.* anti-Colonialism. Let us be quite clear about it.'

From the American point of view, however, India fails to view international problems in the world perspective. When the freedom of the Western world is in danger she raises the question of little Goa. When democracy and civilization are facing the prospect of total annihilation, she is busy raising the issue of equality of races in Africa. Her professed neutrality, from the American standpoint, is nothing but an

opportunity to denounce the West for colonialism, racialism and militarism. In short she not only retains a false sense of security against communism in Asia but also brings about by her foreign policy statements some sort of 'psychological alienation of the Asian and African people from the U.S.'

While not going into the impossible question of who is right and who is wrong the author very clearly presents the specific 'tensions' in the Indo-American relationship.

Like the Indians, the Indonesians are also anti-colonial in their outlook and neutral in their foreign policy. They, however, do not subscribe to the alleged Indian attempt to form the 'third force' nor prefer to express their neutralism through a strong moral idiom. Their dislike of the Americans is largely due to the arms aid given by the Americans to the Dutch together with an attempt to interfere in their domestic problems. They have also not forgiven the Americans for having abstained from voting when the Irian issue was being discussed at the U.N. The Americans fail to understand the Indonesian approach to communism. Practically all the political parties in Indonesia regard communism as a mere domestic problem. They also appear to the Americans a little naïve on account of their fantastic political equation: colonialism leads to capitalism and nationalism leads to socialism.

The relationship of Japan and Philippines with America has its own 'tensions'. Japan is caught in a tragic dilemma of wanting to be more and more independent of the U.S. in political and economic matters without giving up the protection which the U.S. troops give against Russia. She does not share with India and Indonesia their views on communism and colonialism. Nor does she welcome the restrictions in trade with the communist countries. 'Tensions' in her relationship with America arise as a result of this ambivalence.

Philippines was alarmed when Eisenhower gave the slogan of 'Let the Asians fight the Asians'. She felt that America ought not

to hand over the responsibility of containing communism in Asia to Asian countries. Her other differences with America arise as a result of occasional American interference in her domestic affairs and also because of the favourable treatment given by her to Japan.

Finally, the relationship of Egypt with America. These two countries do not have any ideological difference between them. Their differences centre round their respective approaches to Israel, Suez Canal, Sudan, Aswan Dam etc... In the East-West cold war, Egypt has tried to remain neutral purely out of tactical reasons :

'The explanation for Cairo's policy is to be sought primarily in concrete circumstances, needs and aspirations rather than in any over-reaching philosophy of anti-Westernism or of a sublime refusal to conceive the 'international situation in terms of bipolar politics.'

To conclude, *American-Asian Tensions* contains a very valuable analysis of problems facing the countries of Asia in their relationship with America. The weakest and the most unpleasant part of the book is the way in which the editors have tried to conclude this book. They have converted this academic study into some sort of a brief to the American diplomat and army personnel. To quote only one instance :

'Greater care must be taken in the future not to provoke emotional outbursts against the United States by committing unnecessary blunders such as using the slopes of the venerated Mount Fujiyama as an artillery range.'

Nevertheless, the book remains an indispensable work for the students of contemporary Asian affairs.

A. H. SOMJEE

THE AMERICAN NOVEL AND ITS TRADITION by Richard Chase (G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 16s.)

SOMEWHERE deep in every American heart lies a rebellion against the old parenthood of Europe. Yet no American feels he has completely escaped its mastery'

—so observed D. H. Lawrence in 1924. Professor Chase's recent study of the American novel is almost an unconscious variation on this constant theme. His main purpose is, 'to assess the significance of the fact that since the earliest days the American novel, in its most original and characteristic form, has worked out its destiny and defined itself by incorporating an element of romance.' This purpose has led Professor Chase 'to propose a native tradition of the novel.' He understands 'this tradition, inevitably, as springing from England, but as differing from the English tradition by its perpetual reassessment and reconstitution of romance within the novel form.' This leads him to the conclusion that, 'the tradition of romance is major in the history of the American novel but minor in the history of the English novel.' The author then attempts individual studies of some typical novels by Fenimore Cooper,

Hawthorne, Melville, Faulkner and others in the light of his theory.

It is difficult to agree with Professor Chase's central thesis in the book. Has not 'romance element' — using the term, after Professor Chase in its broader sense — always been the distinguishing mark of the most characteristic English fiction, as opposed to the French? It is possible to maintain — even at the risk of one's being dubbed 'old-fashioned' — that the 'Great Tradition' of Dr. Leavis, which excludes Scott and Dickens, Hardy, and Meredith altogether, and which Professor Chase quotes with approval on this point, is *not* the central tradition of the English novel. The English 'Realists', even at their best, are no match for their French counterparts; whereas the strength of the English novel has always been in its free and imaginative presentation of life and its disregard of rigid form — in both of which it differs

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radically from the central stream of French fiction. Would it not therefore be better to say that on the whole, and with inevitable individual variations, the English novel and the American have both shown marks of a kindred spirit which makes for certain similar tendencies? This is not to deny individuality to the American novel. It came of age more than a century ago, and since then has had to its credit many a signal achievement typical of the soil from which it has sprung. But whether the secret of this individuality can be unravelled through Professor Chase's line of argument is questionable. An attempt to interpret this individuality in the light of the changing patterns of American life and thought through the last three centuries is likely to yield better results.

Even when Professor Chase's claim for an independent 'romantic' tradition of American fiction is conceded, one is surprised to find that in his book Hemingway, whose

work makes a highly successful use of the 'romance' element, has been comparatively neglected. Surely, if Brockden Brown's melodramas deserve one whole chapter, passing references hardly do justice to a major novelist like Hemingway.

Tradition implies a past, but suggests a future also. Another surprising lacuna in the book is the omission of any suggestion of future developments in American fiction.

There are, however, compensations in Professor Chase's book. His thesis, whether one agrees with it or not, is set forth in a remarkably lucid and cogent manner; and his analysis of individual novels is both sensitive and balanced. The chapters on Melville and Faulkner deserve special mention in this connection. *The American Novel and its Tradition* will repay study for this reason, even though the validity of its main thesis is problematic.

M. K. NAIK

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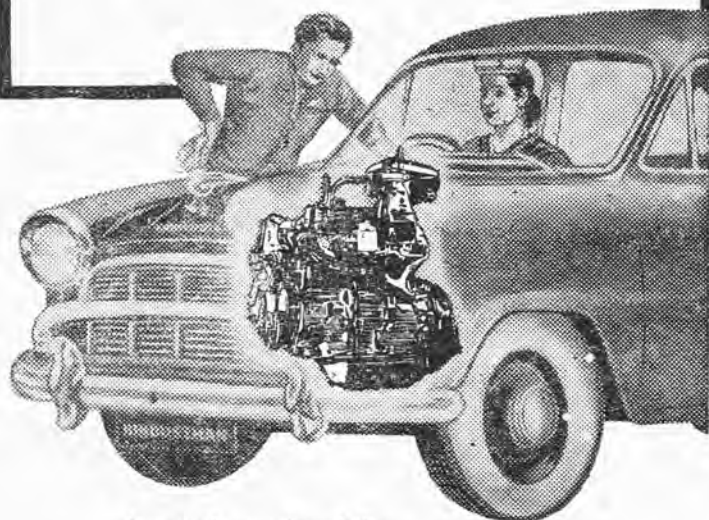
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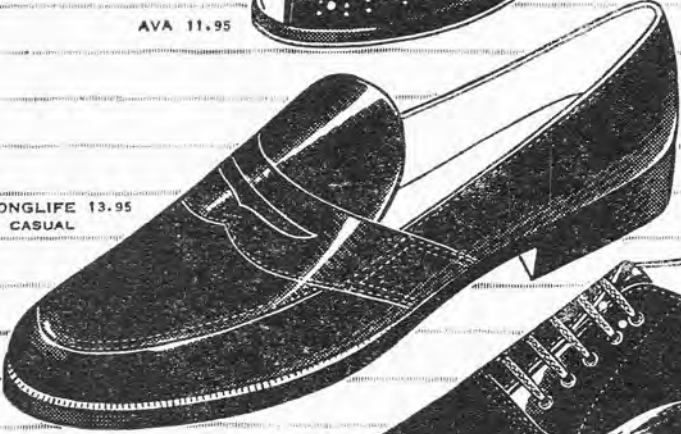
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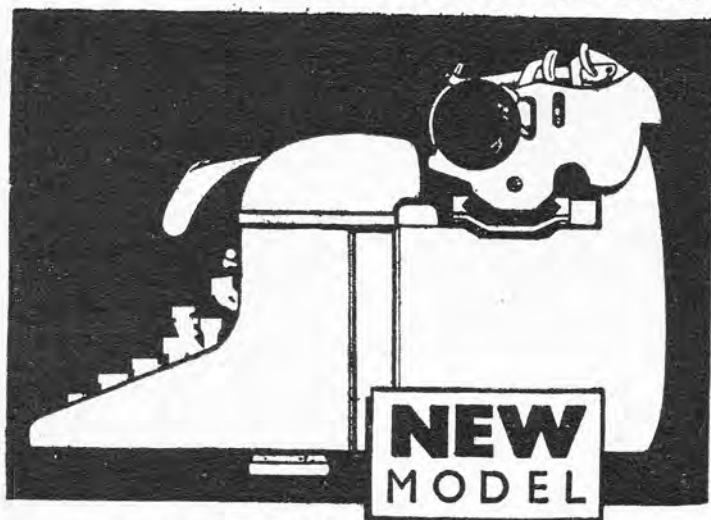
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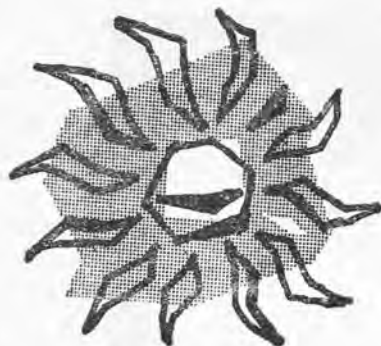
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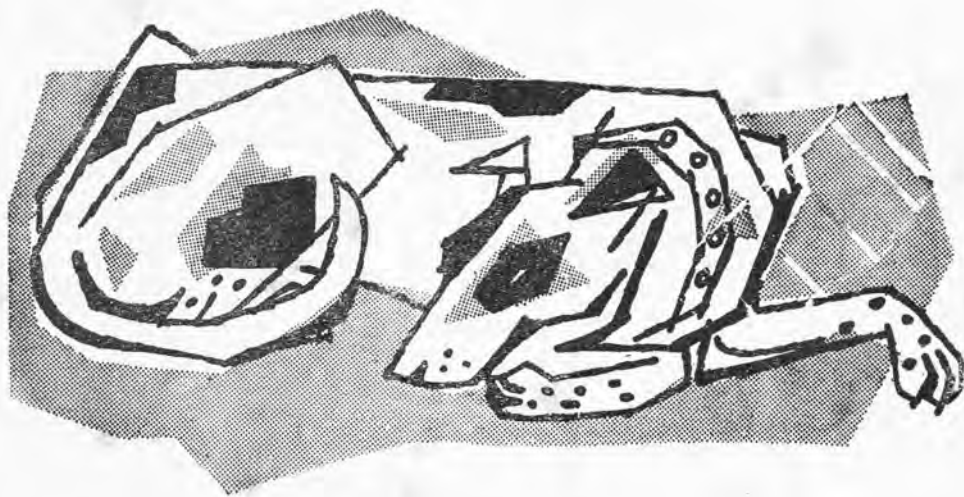
Nor a show dog perhaps. But Moti doesn't worry about that. Nor about anything else, as long as he has enough to eat and the sun to bask in. Certainly he neither knows nor cares that he lives in Jamshedpur—a city devoted to producing one of today's most precious metals...steel.

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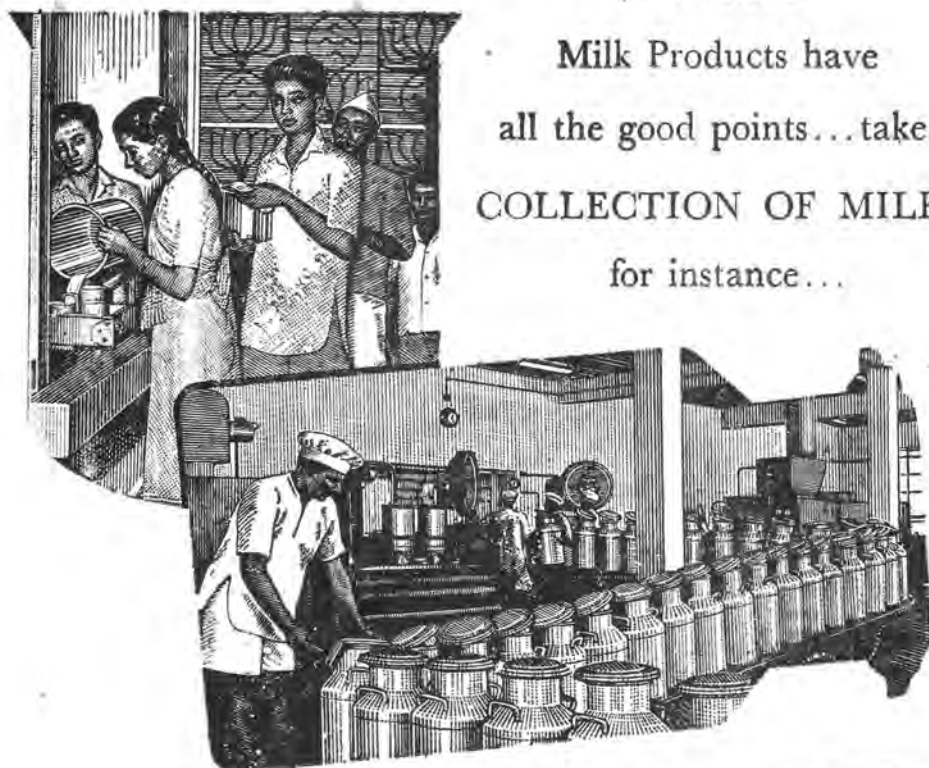
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