

An
Adventure
of
Ideas

QUEST

Editors: Abu Sayeed Ayyub, Amlan Datta

SUDHINDRANATH DATTA

Hugo and Others

MADHAO B. ACHWAL

The Literary Aspect of Obscenity

AMLAN DATTA

Leadership in Economic Transition

N. K. DEVARAJA

Nature and Use of Criticism

SUSHIL DEY

In Search of a Future

D. B. VOHRA

Lamaism

POLISH PHILOSOPHERS DISCUSS MARXIST TRUTH
CONTROVERSY ON "THE INDIAN INTELLECTUAL"

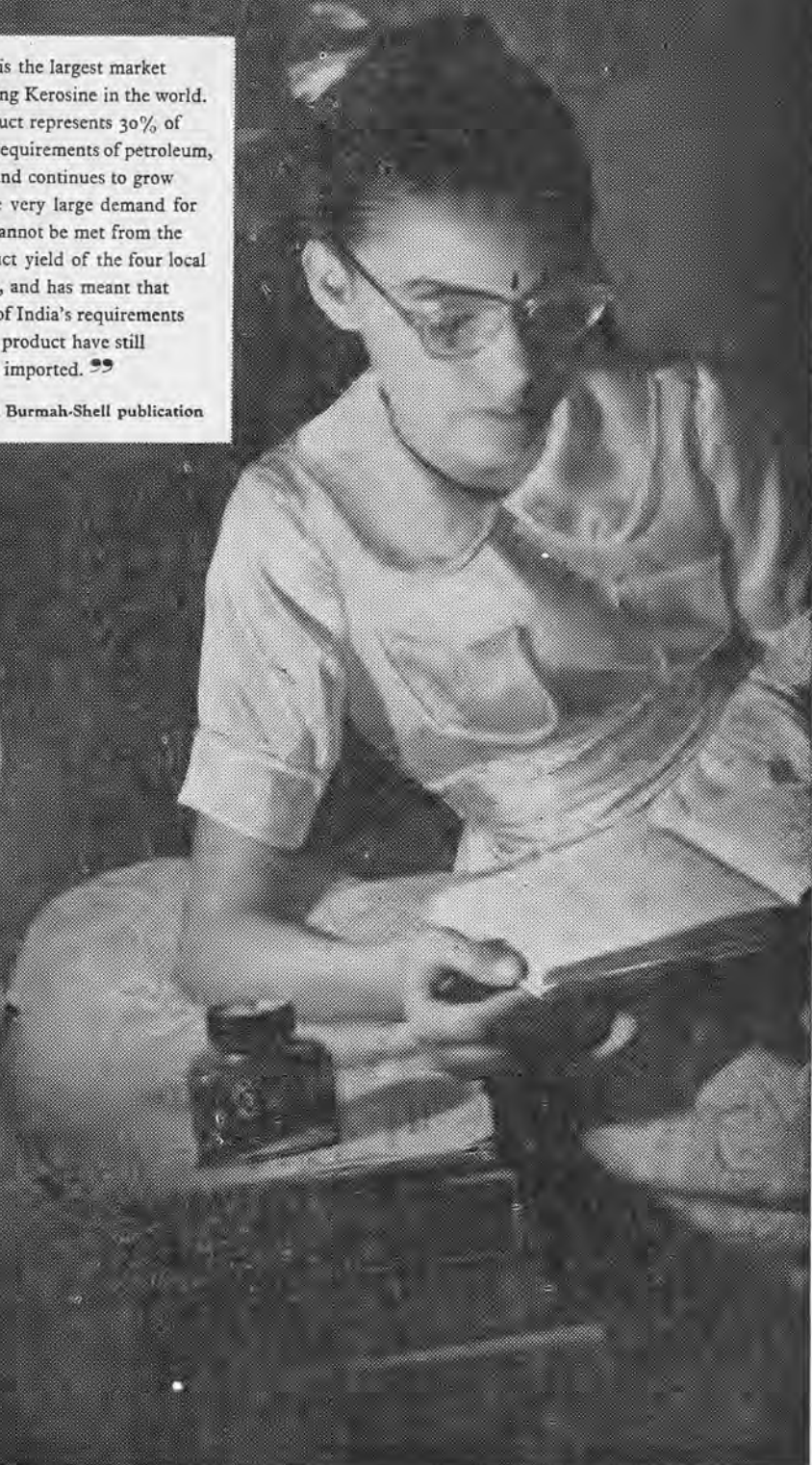
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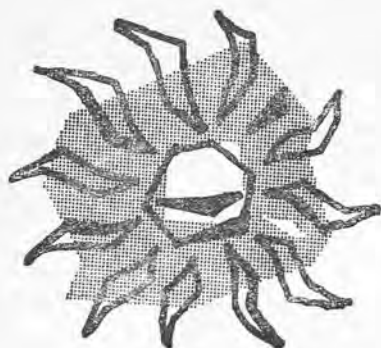
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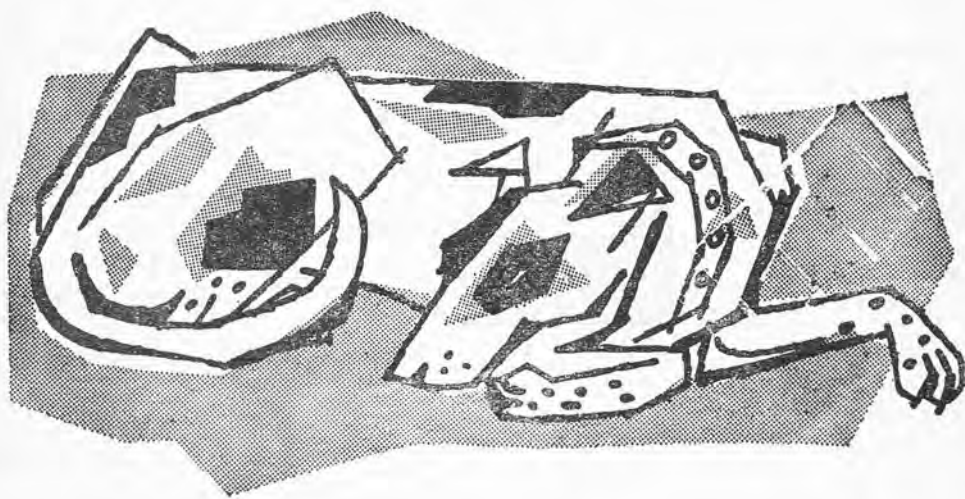
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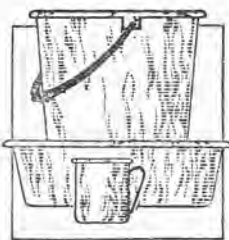
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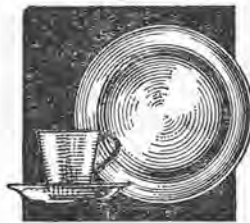
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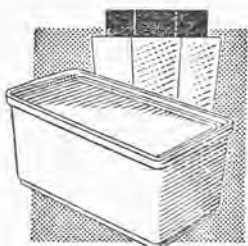
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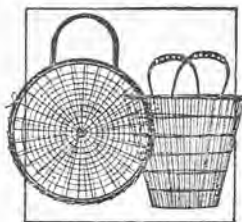
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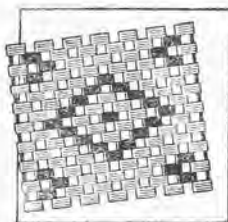
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NUTRITIONIST: There are many reasons why we need to cook our food. For one thing, cooking generally helps improve the appearance of food. For another, it develops new flavours in it. Even some animals prefer cooked foods when given a choice.

YOU: Is this why we cook our food?

NUTRITIONIST: More important, of course, is the way cooking helps to stimulate the flow of digestive juices during eating. And it destroys many dangerous germs and parasites. So cooking makes eating safer.

YOU: But doesn't all this destroy the goodness of what we eat?

NUTRITIONIST: On the contrary. Cooking is useful for practically all meats, vegetables and cereals—if only because it makes food more digestible.

YOU: How does it do this?

NUTRITIONIST: Let's start with vegetables. Raw vegetables contain indigestible starch and fibrous substances. Cooking softens the fibres and the starch, and makes them more easily digestible. This is roughly what happens when fruits ripen. Cooking, therefore, follows nature's way in vegetables.

YOU: But surely cooking also destroys some valuable substances in vegetables.

NUTRITIONIST: Yes, unfortunately. In vegetables, cooking can destroy some mineral substances and vitamins. But this can hardly be helped. On the other hand, cooking predigests foods—does not overburden the digestive system.

YOU: Do we cook meat for the same reasons?

NUTRITIONIST: Generally speaking, yes. Heat softens the protein in meat and so makes it easier for assimilation. And meat has to be cooked to destroy dangerous germs which might lurk in meat that is not fresh or hygienically stored. Cooking also brings out the flavouring ingredients in meat

—makes it taste much better.

WE: This is all very well. But sometimes, cooking makes food lose its flavour . . .

NUTRITIONIST: True. A lot depends on how you cook. The way you cook can save or destroy the flavour of food.

YOU: Well, I know that.

WE: But if the food doesn't taste as it should—does not retain its natural flavour, then it is not only because of the way it is cooked, but what it is cooked with.

YOU: What do you mean—'what it is cooked with'?

WE: You see, the cooking fat you use is very important. Certain cooking fats and oils impose their own taste on foods. Others, like DALDA Vanaspati, help foods keep their natural flavours.

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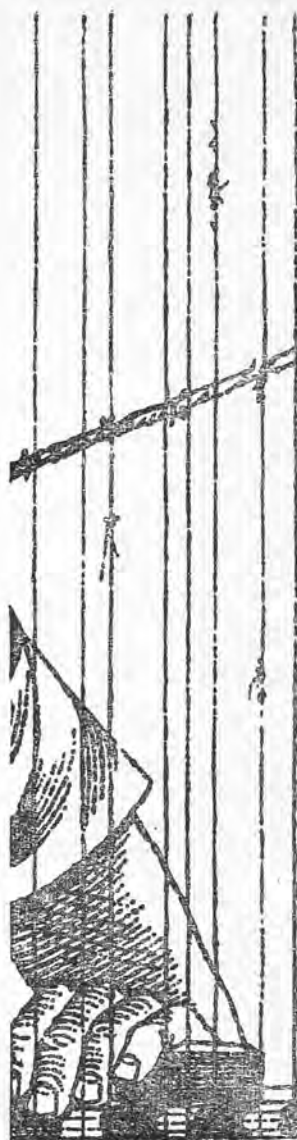


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Q U E S T

A Quarterly of Inquiry, Criticism and Ideas

Edited by ABU SAYEED AYYUB and AMLAN DATTA

Advisory Editors: NIRAD C. CHAUDHURI, SUDHIN DATTA, LAXMANSHASTRI JOSHI

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EDITORIAL

ON assuming editorial responsibility for *Quest* two years ago we laid down certain ideals and principles which were to guide us in our editorial work. In the course of this policy statement* we pointed out that *Quest* was being changed from 'a bimonthly of arts and ideas' to 'a quarterly journal of enquiry, criticism and constructive thought', and added that though it was not our intention to eschew creative literature and the other arts, 'the emphasis henceforth will be on 'ideas' rather than on 'arts.' We invited thoughtful articles on all important topics of the day but not necessarily of the day (for much that is of momentous significance is not a matter of the moment), only reminding our contributors that they would be writing not for the specialist but for the generally educated and intelligent layman.

'*Quest's* policy is to deal specifically with cultural questions and with politics by implication. . . . But on one particular cultural question even current politics has the strongest bearing—the question of cultural freedom. And our journal, sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its Indian Committee, is naturally concerned with that question in a very special way. It is sad to reflect that in this country, by and large, we are not so deeply stirred by the issue of cultural freedom as are the thinkers and writers of the West, nor are we fully aware of the threats to that freedom lumbering in the political clouds to the right and to the left.' After analysing the causes of this apathy and explaining our own notion of cultural freedom, we concluded: 'This, however, does not mean that *Quest* will

deny space to those who interpret freedom, or any other ideal for that matter, in a sense different from ours. We will treat with respect all views and attitudes, even those opposed to our own, provided they are presented with reason, tolerance and competence. As believers in the primacy of freedom we cannot naturally claim to possess any monopoly over truth or wisdom.'

The ideals and principles set forth in our first editorial statement still retain our allegiance. We feel after two years that they need to be amplified rather than altered in any essentials. Naturally it is not for us to judge how well or ill we have succeeded in living up to them so far. We have been complimented by a good few people on the intellectually high tone of the magazine and its seriousness of purpose. We have also heard complaints about the greater part of *Quest* being too heavy or not being bright enough. *Quest* was, of course, not intended to be used as a bed-time soporific or as a time-killer on tedious railway journeys. Even so, there might be a point in the complaint, and we shall make a few observations on that—which will also serve to amplify the policy statement in our first editorial.

A. Bright, crisp and neatly turned out articles are much in demand by the popular weeklies and by the Sunday magazine sections of the widely circulated dailies. We were not frightfully keen on such articles, for we thought *Quest* should have a different character. Nor were the writers of such articles too eager to send them to us, for, quite understandably, they set store by the higher rates of payment and even more

**Quest* 17, April-June 1958.

by the enormously bigger readership of the popular press.

B. If there are not many writers of English in this country who can write charmingly on matters of moment or on nothing at all, the number of those Indians who can think cogently and informedly and not superficially, and can at the same time express their thoughts in elegant and attractive English is to be counted on one's fingers. The former were not greatly sought after by us; we left it to them to find us if and when they felt the need for a change of climate from the popular press. The latter were. We made every effort to seek out the best of them, or even the second best. Our quest has not failed, but for its greater success we appeal to all writers who have something to say and all thinkers who have some love for style.

C. A certain preference for weight and substantiality was deliberate and for a special reason—for which we were prepared to resist the temptations of popularity at least for the time being. Nonetheless it was a pleasant surprise to find that in spite of the heavier fare we were providing, we gained in popularity too, as our circulation and sales figures during the last two years indicate. While the subscription figures have gone up steadily, the stall sales have more than trebled since we took up *Quest*.

This journal stands for the freedom of culture, and if that constitutes a 'front' then it would be well to remember that our 'cultural front' opposes the Communist 'cultural front' not only ideologically but also semantically. For the Communists, 'cultural front' signifies that almost all their art and thought is subservient to their political purposes—class war, stabilisation of 'proletarian' dictatorship, five-year plans, etc. For us, it only means that almost all our politics are oriented towards the free and full efflorescence of art and thought.

It was pointed out in our previous editorial that in India there is a singular and

tragic lack of realisation of the value of cultural freedom. This lack results from three main causes:

1. From our long tradition of authoritarianism, for though authoritarianism is not the same thing as regimentation, not many kilometres separate the two domains. Our authoritarian habit of mind acquired over many centuries has prepared the soil well for the cultivation of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist totalitarianism.

2. From the fact that our lack of the bare necessities of life is so egregious and widespread that we are inclined to regard freedom of culture as an expendable quantity. We have heard it said that it matters little if a few dozen thinkers and artists are gaol-ed or terrorised into silence provided such measures help us to emulate the Russian or Chinese rate of economic growth, thereby enabling the State to adequately feed, clothe and find employment for our entire population in a decade or so—an unlikely eventuality at our currently planned rate of development. This is an ominous statement and can be attacked from many sides, but we will pass on to the third point to which it naturally leads.

3. In the last analysis, we do not value freedom of culture because we have ceased to value culture itself, and that in turn is because we have ceased to possess a living culture. This is particularly true in the sphere of intellectual production. If our contemporary imaginative literature (naturally in the regional languages) does not measure up to the standards of the best literatures of the West, it is not quite negligible—at least in some of our languages. But our literature of ideas is deplorable. It would appear that we have not only ceased to think, we have lost the urge, perhaps even the capacity, to think. Again we will not enter into an examination of the causes of this paralysis, but content ourselves with pointing out its irony. For our pride in (often resulting in our boasting

of) our cultural heritage is in exact proportion to its lack of vitality today. One almost wishes we did not have such an enormous culture of the past on our backs so that we could stand erect and hold firm the plough over the barren intellectual soil of the present day.

This brings us to the role of *Quest*. The passionate Western anxiety for the preservation of cultural freedom cannot but largely transform itself into an eagerness for helping the growth (if 'rebirth' is considered too strong a word) of culture on this soil. For we can be deeply concerned with the preservation of freedom of a living culture, not of a dead culture. The dead can take care of itself, for the simple reason that there is no fear of its becoming any deader. It need hardly be said that by 'dead culture' we do not mean to suggest dead in the sense in which the ancient cultures of Egypt, Babylon or Mohenjo Daro are dead to the present inhabitants of those places. In that sense our culture of the Vedas and the Upanishads, of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, of Samkara and Ramanujam, is very much alive today. We have not lost our links with our old ancestral culture; it has profound significance for our life and thought today. By our 'dead culture'—and we have particularly in mind the intellectual side of it—we mean to emphasise the unquestionable fact that the contribution of contemporary India to the world of thought is altogether negligible. Our past lives; it is only our present which shows little signs of life. It may sound immodest or over-ambitious to say so, nevertheless the editors of *Quest* fully intend this magazine to play a role—its most important role—in the cultural revitalisation ('revival' has acquired all the wrong meanings) of our country.

Cultural vitality can manifest itself broadly in two fields: in the field of the creative arts and in that of thought. A

magazine cannot obviously be a vehicle for the expression of creativity in music or in the graphic arts. For that we must go to concert halls and picture galleries. Art criticism is possible for us, but that belongs to the sphere of thought, not of creativity. Creative literature can of course occupy a prominent place in a magazine. Here we would like to call attention to a state of affairs which is fairly obvious and yet often lost sight of. In India literary creativity must naturally find expression through the media of the Indian languages, the mother-tongues of the peoples of India. English is the mother-tongue of such a tiny minority in our country that it can hardly play any role as a creative medium. Fiction and poetry written in English by Indians cannot but be regarded as freakish or at best as highly exceptional.

As regards translation from the Indian languages, again we would point out something even more obvious and almost universally admitted in theory though often forgotten in practice. That is, that poetry cannot be translated. It is woven into the texture of a language and if you want to reweave it into another language, you must in effect write a different poem—with some resemblance to the original poem, but nothing more. Secondly, you must be a poet of some competence in the language translated into. Your poetical gifts in the language translated from do not count in this context. We are saddened to receive translations of their own works by Hindi, Marathi, Bengali and other vernacular poets, for, not being poets in English, they succeed only in mutilating their beautiful creations.

Short stories are not untranslatable in essence, and one need not be a good story-writer himself to translate a story. But it is not enough to have learned well the language translated into; one must feel it in one's blood. One must have acquired not only its grammar and vocabulary, but be

intimate with all the ways in which it is used by mothers and children, kings and cobblers, public men and public women. In short, only those who can write English as their mother tongue can translate short stories or novels successfully into that language. There is no dearth of such people in the English speaking countries, but how many of them know any Indian language sufficiently well to translate from it? On the other hand, how many Indians have the requisite mastery over the English tongue which is not their mother tongue, not even their teacher's tongue, but only the language of their reading, and, unfortunately, the medium of their instruction?

This brings us to the field of thought. It is well to remember that in this field an Indian magazine in the English language has a particularly significant role to play. The literary creativity of India must naturally flow through many separate channels—the channels of our dozen or so regional languages. The genius of the language and other regional characters cannot but put their stamp on the creative literatures of India; divergence here is natural and must be expected to grow with the growth of the various regional literatures of India. In spite of this, if our cultural unity (by which we do not mean uniformity) is to be preserved in the present day, it can be best preserved in the sphere of thought. Those who hold dear the cultural unity of India should also hold dear the English language, for it alone can help us to develop a *common* literature of ideas. English has played this role for the past hundred years or more. In fact it took up this role after the decay of Sanskrit as a living language—a gap of several centuries intervening, for Persian, in spite of being the court language of India (or of large parts of it) under the Muslim rule, never quite succeeded in assuming this important role. We believe that English should and

will continue to perform this unifying function for quite a long time to come. No doubt, in due course a literature of ideas will grow into maturity in the regional languages too. This is to be eagerly sought and welcomed—but not if that is to mean a banishment of English from our shores. For then the precious thread running through the maturing and diverging regional cultures of India will become very tenuous indeed. Common heritage from the distant past is not enough; there must be a living cultural contact in the present. Hindi may be considered to be the common Indian language of the market place; it may be made the official language of the centre; but it is difficult to envisage it (except by the minority whose mother tongue it happens to be) as the *common* language of Indian thought and culture. That role now belongs to English and, we believe, will be retained by it alongside the growing literatures of knowledge and ideas in the various regional languages of India—including Hindi. Inter-regional translations will be helpful, but they have their limitations. Only an important book of ideas in one regional language will be normally translated—and that too after the lapse of some years—into some or all of the other regional languages. But ideas change and grow from infancy to maturity and then to senility much faster than do works of creative literature. If a living, intimate, continuous, day-to-day contact of active minds is to be maintained between the different Indian regions, then English periodicals in India are without question pre-eminently fitted to serve as the instruments of such intellectual communication and cooperation.

Another point to remember is that in the field of thought alone can Indians express themselves in English with some confidence, because here the delicate shades and nuances of the language are not of overbearing importance; the value of content can over-ride the deficiencies of style.

Indians can express their thoughts in English not only with some confidence but also with some convenience, for their own languages are still, by and large, inadequately developed as language of thought. The inadequacy of the Indian languages to date in this regard is, if anything, a bigger obstacle to us when we have any complex thoughts to express than the foreignness of English.

Therefore, in the formation and execution of our editorial policy, emphasis falls, naturally and inevitably, on thought. *Quest* is, and intends to continue to be, a journal of ideas. We have used as our motto a phrase borrowed from one of the great books of this century—Whitehead's *Adventures of Ideas*. A magazine of ideas cannot but be a bit heavy, is expected to be read with some attention and with the hope that its lack of entertainment value will be excused. Nonetheless, *Quest* is not an academic journal, not a scholarly product of the universities or the academies of science or letters. It does not aspire to be so original or profound, but aims at being more living and, therefore, more lively. As such it may not be bright, but should not be drab. Above all it should provoke thought. It is

not intended to be propagandist, that is, evocative of emotion, for good taste demands that emotions when they are not purified into art should be avoided as far as possible — in writing. We are aware that *Quest* has its shortcomings on this score too, that is, as a journal of living thought. We expect to be found fault with for that, and also hope to receive help and cooperation in overcoming these deficiencies. But we do not expect to be told that *Quest* is not what we never intended it to be. That we should change our intentions is altogether a different admonition.

In the meantime, one may pause and consider whether there is not some need for a magazine of the character which *Quest* has been trying to give itself. In this country, as in other countries, there is no dearth of light and bright periodicals to which we turn when we are too tired or too bored or just for lack of anything better to do. We believe that there is a great lack of and we hope some desire for a magazine of ideas which can 'tease' us not out of thought but into more thought, and eventually, but not precipitately (that is, not before we have understood the issues properly) into action.

POSTSCRIPT:

In spite of what we have said about English not being the proper medium for creative writing in India, and about the theoretical and practical difficulties of English translation from creative writing in the Indian languages, we propose to retain and even enlarge our poetry and short story sections. This is because we do not want to deny space to the very very few Indian writers of creative English, and because we do not think it advisable to wait indefinitely until the right translations are forthcoming. Publication of inadequate translations (however unhappy we might feel about it as editors) may at least serve one good purpose: it may help to find or produce the right translators. Our most noticeable deficiency has been in the way of regular art-criticism. We

are doing our best to remove it. It may be pointed out however, that art-criticism proper is appropriate only in the local press. If an exhibition of paintings takes place in New Delhi, its detailed criticism does not convey much to Madras readers who have not seen the pictures and are not likely to see them. Similarly, the Calcutta music lover will not be greatly enlightened by a fine criticism of a classical music concert at Bombay. This is even true in literature. The Gujrati or Malayali reader is bound to miss much the bigger part of a profound critical study of some important novel or book of verse in Bengali. Therefore criticism in *Quest* should generally be of broad trends, movements and fluctuations in art and letters in India, and not detailed appraisals of local items and events.

Comments on or discussion of the points raised in this editorial would be welcome in our Correspondence columns. Letters should preferably not exceed 500 words.

Hugo and Others

By SUDHINDRANATH DATTA

THE other day I shocked a young critic by venturing to suggest that sheer merit entitles Victor Hugo to a place among the immortals; and my friend's reaction so puzzled me that I cannot let the seventy-fifth anniversary of the poet's death pass without rearranging my thoughts on the subject. For if, applied to the birthday of a living writer, the ordinal invites eulogy, in the opposite context it becomes a reminder that, of all human vanities, glory is perhaps the most ephemeral; and Hugo's case calls for special study, because when the great man ended his days only three quarters of a century ago, his prestige equalled Racine's, except that the dramatist's fame illustrated 'classic regularity', whereas the upstart of 'romantic order' considered himself peerless at the tender age of twenty-five. The funeral he received some six decades later proved that the French people accepted him at his own valuation; and though equally large crowds had crammed the streets of Paris to witness the passage of Louis XIV's coffin to Saint Denis, those who gathered to watch the procession of cobblers bring Hugo's remains to the Arc de Triomphe did not indulge in the frenzy of joy exhibited at the demise of the royal patriarch. The cobblers were there, of course, to give substance to the democratic pretensions of the departed; and conceivably, the choice of the particular catafalque indicated the government's belated concession to Hugo's reiterated demand that the name of his father—a Napoleonic general—should appear on the national monument. Nevertheless, the en-

tire country mourned its loss unreservedly; and the resultant void may be likened to Tagore's absence from the Bengali world.

Almost from the outset of his career Tagore, however, was a Triton among the minnows, whereas Hugo wrested admiration from the most creative century in modern history; and though, even after thirty years of his death, Gide, asked to name the greatest of French poets, had still replied, 'Victor Hugo, alas', the majority of those who read him today may only be students preparing for university examinations. The faults of his character must obviously bear a large part of the blame for this decline in his reputation; and whether or not I wrongly believe that his age elevated hypocrisy to a social virtue, I cannot find another parallel for the woeful inconsistency between his words and deeds. On his own behalf he claimed the romantic artist's privilege of sexual promiscuity which brought him once within an ace of the gaol; and yet, when his all-suffering wife fell in love with Sainte-Beuve, he behaved like a possessive bourgeois in keeping his spouse for fear of losing face, while visiting on her lover his implacable wrath. He consigned his life-long mistress to the meanest of harems, but never stopped running after housemaids; and at the age of seventy he felt no compunction in seducing the lovely daughter of his dead disciple Gautier. Nor did his public conduct present a more edifying spectacle: a conservative during the Bourbon restoration, he turned liberal because his loyalty went unrewarded; he forgot his progressive professions as soon as Louis Philippe made him a peer of France; and his

later republicanism derived exclusively from Louis Napoleon's refusal to appoint him minister in recognition of his assistance at the birth of the Second Empire.

I remain, of course, a stranger to the ethos of the French, with the sound of whose idiom I am even less familiar than with the speech rhythm of English; and since I grew up at a time when the leaders of my generation saw no alternative to holding the previous century responsible for the impending ruin, I resented my elders' advice to read *Hernani* for its heroism and magnanimity, or *Les Misérables* for its pity and optimism. To my rebellious eyes their author resembled my well-meaning preceptors: he too loved pompous platitudes, paid only lip-service to libertarian principles, and at the moment of decision acted with wanton duplicity; and now that nearly sixty years of contact with a decomposing world has leached away my illusion about our disenchantment, I still find that, forced to think, Hugo, like Byron in Matthew Arnold's phrase, becomes a child. Yet Valéry argues that Hugo's defects originated in his qualities; and I accept the paradox that a great writer's errors rescue him from oblivion by first whetting the critical faculty of detractors and then leading them to his ultimate virtues. For, unconcerned with the truth or falsity of beliefs, the mysterious essence of poetry consists of experience inseparable from expression; what, at any rate, induces the reader to suspend disbelief willingly is the degree of sincerity behind the poet's faith, the assurance that the latter really believes his own words, believes in them not because they sound impressive, conform to current fashion, or vindicate a temporary pose, but because the development of his personality demands their mediation; and this means that his works must end by creating a significant whole.

Such coherence of corpus implies no monotony; and, however suspect his hatred

of Louis Napoleon, the six thousand lines of variations on the theme, which Hugo collected under the title of *Les Châtiments*, show his versatile genius at its invective best. Indeed, the range of his matter and manner exceeds all records hitherto established; and if we remember that, treated by him, the stiff alexandrine became as vitally flexible as the English blank verse in the seventeenth century, that his repertory of rhymes is the largest of any ever used in France, that common and recondite terms enjoy equal rights within the amplitude of his vocabulary, we would at least understand his boast that what he did not accomplish was worth nobody's pain. Let us recall too that according to Mistral form alone exists; and one need not belong to the Platonic brotherhood to concede that Hugo, when he chose, could be a purer poet than Mallarmé. Hugo, of course, read even newspapers in search of subjects for his poetical masterpiece *La Légende des Siècles*—an epic composed of separate pieces illustrating his interpretation of human history; and his thesis, apart from its modal innovation, compares well with the lucubrations of, say, Croce, Fisher and Whitehead. Yet he differed from them, and from Pope, the author of *Essay on Man*, in depending only on the magic of a personal rhythm and the affective unity of his organic imagery to make us recognise the authenticity of his cosmological vision; and since seventy-five years of adverse winds have not eroded a single feature of that monumental achievement, we must conclude with Thomas Mann that art and life seldom coalesce.

In any case, if we choose to judge poets by the standard of total integrity, many of our idols must vacate their present pedestals; and then we would realise that Baudelaire's physical love of vice accords ill with his intellectual horror of sin. His romantic fancy luxuriated, of course, in scenes of childhood; and he abominated the prosperity of industrialised France, because it

perpetuated the rape of innocence. But infancy, however holy, did not provide him with intimations of immortality; and if this 'paradise full of furtive pleasures' caused the famous 'new thrill' for which aging Hugo so generously thanked the young author of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, an alienist of today might consider the book symptomatic of incipient schizophrenia. Since I disapprove of both the clinical and the moral approach to literature, I only ask why a stylist of classic purity should inveigh against 'Latin ashes and Greek dust'; and perhaps the answer lies in the grossness of Baudelaire's appetite for earth, 'the sweet cake', rather than in any mystical interdependence of things. For when the 'ecstatic victim' of his own clairvoyance sees through the 'backcloth of vast existence' to the 'strange worlds' of Desert Fathers and marine prophets, serpents from a Gorgon's head crawl down the nursery bookshelves to bite his dragging slippers; and though the quotations come from *La Voix*, the least arresting of evil flowers, its ascription of the loveliest thoughts to fools belies Baudelaire's dandyism and the sophistication of his taste in the arts. The poem's confusion obviously reflects a divided mind; and yet we cannot offer such a simple explanation of Baudelairean correspondences, unless we disregard as insincere his coupling of nature and damnation.

Ambivalence is certainly a psychological fact; and I, for one, need no reminder that the longer man endures on the globe, the more ambiguous life seems to grow. But I feel that apologists exaggerate when they maintain that a contemporary poet cannot express himself except through disordered images; and I reject the view that proper articulation involves improper rhetoric. At all events, Baudelaire adhered to formal conventions of the age; and, probably an outcome of sloth, his dread of experiment demanded the compensating displacement of sense impressions, which reached its logical limit in the 'long, immense and well

reasoned derangement' of Rimbaud. Mallarmé, on the other hand, surpassed the master in intellection, and came therefore to conclude that, since poetry aims at the maximal dissociation of words from their objective reference, they must fashion their own concordance by first reducing concepts to percepts and then integrating both into a symbol—a noetic figure purified of unnecessary details, although capable of holding the attention of contemplatives lost in the arcanum of existence; and if, nevertheless, he envied composers their autonomous notation, he utilised every resource of French grammar and syntax to attain his unique ends. For all that, and notwithstanding my boundless admiration for Mallarmé, I am beginning to suspect that he delineated his imagery for too sharply to suggest the equivocal nature of his percipience; and I wonder now why an ardent Hegelian and a perfect Wagnerite wrote so many static poems, leaving it to, say, Mr. Eliot to prove that a structure genuinely musical unifies divergent moods, that rhythmical passages may fulfil the function of emblems, and that development should replace violent contrast within a given context.

The last two paragraphs owe much to Mr. J. M. Cohen's recent book, *Poetry of this Age*, where he argues further that moderns often resort to a deliberate confusion of sense impressions, because they know no other remedy against the exhaustion of their linguistic heritage; and he cites as example Lorca's 'slippery blood groans its silent snake's song'. Here, when describing the soundless trickle of congealing blood shed by groaning men in the agony of death, the poet confounds the phenomenal order of epithets for fear that the normal procedure might produce a trite effect; and though the line shows considerable compression, the depicted situation, experienced all over the world during the last forty years, appears so familiar to us that we refuse to heed it, unless something more

insidious wakens our understanding to its eternal and emergent import simultaneously. Of course, Lorca tries to remember both; and thus the judge, who comes through the olive plantations to inquire into the fatal quarrel, says to his attendants, 'Gentlemen of the civil guard, this is the same old story: four Romans have been killed and five Carthaginians'. But, in spite of the foreshortening, the perspective wants depth; and if the treatment reminds one of Yeats refining away his unconsummated love affair until Maude Gonne can be equated with Helen of Troy, the Spaniard falls far short of the intensity and tension that resulted from the Irishman's fidelity to 'the book of the people'. For, unlike Hugo in the size of his vocabulary, Yeats too compelled even ordinary words to his extraordinary will; and the same terms as his juniors consider worn express a personality richer in complexity than theirs.

Yeats called himself one of the last romantics; and perhaps he meant thereby that his philosophy of history did not possess the pristine simplicity of Hugo's apocalyptic vision. But though the latter never made a cosmic principle of conflict, nor thought that creative activity would be impossible without the duality of self and antiself, he regarded progress as 'the human labyrinth', because the clash of good and evil turned the straight line into a spiral; and at the heart of the mystery he saw the 'monstrous' trumpet of the last judgment ready for 'the immense breath' of some archangel or seraphim standing on hell and crowned with stars. He performs a still greater miracle in forcing his readers to peer into the trombone's void to find that even God has vanished from there; and while communicating his abysmal horror of the timeless and the disembodied, he keeps his own and our senses functioning normally for the sole reason that he can order worlds into existence. Thanks to this divine gift, a word or a phrase from him suffices to

conjure out of nothing concrete images in subtle apposition; and thus when, lamenting the passing of Gautier, he speaks of the wild noise of oaks felled for the pyre of Hercules, we also perceive why the twilight of 'the haughty century' should resound to the joyous neighing of Death's horses which speed giants and pygmies, pagans and Christians to the same dissolution. Moreover, Hugo became the absolute master of his mother tongue in despite of competition from Lamartine, Musset and Vigny among others; and if he disdained kaleidoscopic metaphors, he knew the book of the people better than Yeats.

I can think of no other writer except Tagore whose imagination worked as visually as Hugo's; but probably because the structure of his language lacks the logic of French, the Bengali poet seldom tried to fuse his similes into a pictorial composition, subordinating each part to overall harmony; and consequently his longer poems, unless engaged in story-telling, suggest proliferation rather than development. Of course, Hugo also preferred facile analogy to the compulsion of reason; and this often led to grandiloquent generalisations devoid of substance. Even so he made his moral points unobtrusively; and to compare *Le Cimetière d'Eylau* with *The Charge of the Light Brigade* is to separate poetry from propaganda. For though both pieces exalt the unquestioning heroism of patriots, dying men loom large through the mist and smoke of Hugo's battle-scene, whereas Tennyson's ranting refrain fails to breathe life into his automata; and that may be why, in spite of seeing them on the screen many times during my receptive boyhood, I have retained no impression of their exploit, while Hugo's uncle, one of three survivors, describes his desperate adventure with an eyewitness' feeling for the heterogeneity of actual experience. I do not, however, mean to belittle Tennyson: he was, and still remains, the greatest figure in English

letters since Wordsworth; and if the extent of Browning's interests exceeded his, he possessed the richer mind and a deeper, albeit less meretricious, understanding of prosody. Hugo, his superior in command of words, produced nothing to match *In Memoriam*; and, placed against *Idyls of the King*, the Frenchman's reconstruction of medieval romances proves how unfairly Voltaire attacked the British genius for its endemic tendency towards barbarous hyperbole.

For all that, the Victorian bard leaves me cold; and if I react less unfavourably to his continental counterpart, it is because the twentieth century has broadly confirmed Hugo's gloomy prognostications. Both, however, irritate me by their 'life-enhancing' qualities; and considering that his age provided enough evidence for the Frenchman to conclude that neither revolution, nor evolution made the human condition better, his basic optimism seems as questionable as Tennyson's religious doubts were insincere. Then too the daily claims of total war vitiates our sense of possession, rendering simple enjoyment of the world's

goods difficult; and moderns must instinctively revolt against the customary worship of Nature in utter disregard of her hostility, or, in the very least, indifference, to man. Hence my personal preference for the 'decadent' poetry of Baudelaire and his progeny who know 'the whole earth' to be 'their hospital endowed by the ruined millionaire'; and, once admitted there, I submit with a certain pride to the plying steel of the wounded surgeon and the constant care of the dying nurse. But my brave new thrill will also turn stale in future; and for this reason I attach little importance to private likes and dislikes when adjudicating on the relative merits of poets. Time's revenge and vagaries of fashion cannot, on the other hand, invalidate the objective standards of literary criticism; and their only alternative requires acceptance of a writer on his own terms for analysis of his intentions and measurement of the distance between aim and achievement. Any one of these criteria should establish the absolute greatness of Hugo; and he would not disappoint us unless we expect him to pander to particular predilections.

The Literary Aspect of Obscenity

By MADHAO B. ACHWAL

OBSCEINITY, is primarily, a non-literary, or extra-literary concept. To accept an oft-quoted definition, — 'Obscenity deals with the matter charged as obscene in such a way that its tendency is to deprave or corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences by making use of words or expressions calculated to excite libidinous desire and engender a will to unholy sexual passion.' Now literature, in so far as it depicts life, is concerned with *all* that constitutes experience, including the areas of experience obscenity is supposed to deal with. All experience is the content of literature. To literature, therefore, experience cannot be 'moral' or 'immoral', but only 'a-moral'. It can deal with the content in an artistic, inartistic or non-artistic manner. The work may, consequently, be a good literary work, an inferior work, or may have no claims to be called a literary work at all. The criteria of literary work, in so far as it is an expression, cannot therefore be ethical or social, they can only be aesthetic.

Literature is expression; but it is also communication, the work of literature being the medium through which the individual creative writer communicates with his fellow beings. As such, on the level of communication, a literary piece is as much a 'social fact' as any other. The main contexts of the phenomenon of obscenity are the experience of reading a book, and the effect of this experience on a certain section of society. Obscenity is thus concerned with literature as a 'social fact', not with literature as an 'aesthetic fact.' It is an extra-literary concept.

Then how and where does the phenomenon of obscenity become relevant to the aesthetic aspect of literature? The total

impact of a literary work on any reader will be dependent upon the nature of the work as well as the nature of the individual reading it. Since the phenomenon of obscenity is a constituent of this total impact, it is partly conditioned by the nature of the literary work. Thus we can speak of a literary aspect of obscenity, or, inversely, of the consideration of literature from the standpoint of obscenity. The study of obscenity from the literary angle will include:

- a) An examination of the nature of the areas of experience the phenomenon of obscenity is supposed to deal with.
- b) The relation of these areas to other areas of experience.
- c) The consideration of the areas under reference as content of a literary work.
- d) The artistic, inartistic, and non-artistic usage of this content, with reference to our concept of what constitutes a literary work.
- e) The consideration of literature both as expression and communication from the literary angle.
- f) The border lines where the literary aspect touches the legal-sociological aspects.

II

Having stated my position in the way I have done, it is obvious that the central questions of our inquiry are: what is bad art? what makes bad art, with particular reference to the areas of experience obscenity is supposed to deal with? what kind of 'badness' may result in obscenity? For consideration of these questions it is necessary to have a frame of reference: a concept of

what constitutes a literary work. As I must be brief, I may be allowed to be a little dogmatic on this point.

A work of literature creates the illusion of life. The content of a literary work is emotional, intellectual or sensual experience — any or all of these. As content of a literary piece, this experience is cut off from the rest of human experience that constitutes life. Hence this isolated content, being a complete and defined whole, has none of the dynamism and continuity of movement which characterizes life. Yet in a good literary work we feel the same process of 'becoming', the constant 'flux' as is seen in life due to its organic quality. This is an illusion — the semblance of dynamism in a static whole—and the effort of literature is to create this illusion.

The content of a particular literary work may be certain emotions, ideas, or sensations. These may be called the elements of content. In a work of literature these elements are organised in such a way that a number of tensions are created within the work. These tensions get their quality from the qualities of the elements and the qualities of the organising relationships between them.

A literary work is that organisation in which:

- a) These internal tensions are brought to a state of dynamic equilibrium.
- b) This state is perceptible.
- c) The dynamic equilibrium has an evocative potential which sets up a contemplative and not a volitional reaction in the reader.

It is this dynamic equilibrium achieved in a work that succeeds in creating the illusion of life, and makes it a work of literature. The worth of a literary work will be determined by the qualitative complexity of its internal tensions within the framework of the whole.

This is the frame of reference on the background of which we will try to approach this problem in the stages mentioned earlier which will lead us to the core

of the inquiry—the relationship of a work of literature to the phenomenon of obscenity.

III

Our first consideration is the study of those areas of experience which obscenity is supposed to cover. Broadly speaking, they are coextensive with the relationship between human beings on the plane of sexual experience. It is this content, dealt with in a certain way, that leads to obscenity. It is with the nature of this content that we are now mainly concerned. Sex is one of the most potent of the motivating forces of human actions and emotions. It is an instinct, a fountainhead, from which springs the gamut of emotions such as love, jealousy, hatred, attachment etc. This fact makes it one of the determining influences in individual and social behaviour. Sex, in its context of procreation has an eminently social aspect. Society accepts procreation under specific conditions, it accepts sex experience, even when detached from procreation, under specific conditions—the main consideration of the attitude of society being the concept of what is beneficial to social welfare. The tensions set up between the sex-instinct and the externalisation of it by the individual on the one hand and the concept of social welfare on the other, create a very special kind of relationship between the individual and society.

The subject of sex, though one of the most important is also one of the most suppressed in a social set-up. The inhibitive influence of society is felt to a much greater extent when the writer is concerned with the sex-theme as content, than when he is concerned with any other theme. The creative writer is by necessity an explorer of the dark and unknown areas of human experience, and the moment he makes a choice of sex-experience as a theme, he automatically places himself in juxtaposition to the social attitude, which is concerned with maintaining the 'status-quo.' And because of the very importance of this area of experience as compared with others (due

to the reasons given above), a creative writer cannot avoid treating it as a theme. Thus by his choice of the sex-theme as content, a writer is necessarily concerned with the expression of content as 'aesthetic fact' as well as 'social fact'. The consideration of the latter is not present, or not present to the same extent, when he is dealing with other areas of experience, and this brings an element into the creative process which, I feel, is worth mentioning.

The inhibitive influence of the prevalent social concepts on the individual who receives the work is also seen in the nature of his reactions to the content dealing with sex. I feel that, given two similar treatments in aesthetic organisation, in two different fields of human experience, the theme dealing with sex will

1. evoke a physiological impact of a greater magnitude,
2. evoke a tendency towards involvement to a greater degree, and
3. tax the aesthetic attitude to a much greater measure.

These statements are conjectural, and therefore disputable. They have, however, been made with a view to showing the environmental influence on the individual (as a writer, as well as a reader) due to the special nature of this field of human experience, as compared to other fields.

IV

How does this field of experience become aesthetic material? As a part of the total field of human experience it can have one, two or all three of its correlates—namely, the intellectual, the emotional, and the sensual. The different elements of experience could be so organised and related that the outcome is truth arrived at in a logical manner. In our present context this would take the shape of scientific treatises written from the psychological, biological or philosophical angle. The

elements of experience can be organised with a view to creating beauty out of a dynamic equilibrium of these. This is aesthetic organisation, and the content handled in this manner becomes aesthetic material.

Could the concept of obscenity be raised purely with reference to aesthetic organisation? It would be interesting to diverge a little and go to the fields of allied arts to find what light they can throw on the problem. Could a painting, a piece of sculpture or a tonal composition be obscene? And if it is, could the 'obscenity' felt in it be related directly to the aesthetic organisation of lines and colours, or volumes, or tonal compositions, without referring to anything else? The answer to the first question is 'yes'. I have felt that some of the paintings of Fernand Leger, the 'UBU' sculptures of Le Corbusier and certain rhythms of decadent Rock and Roll music are distinctly obscene. But when I try to find out what made me think of them as obscene, I find that it was not the aesthetic impact of one colour or line against another, or the play of volumes as volumes, or tones as tones that was the cause, but the impact of a distinct suggestion of the sex-act in a particularly crude manner that those works gave me. A discordant note might create a 'jarring' effect, an oversimplified organisation of colour values might be felt as 'cheap', an element which introduces a note diametrically opposed to the predominant mood of a theme might strike one as 'vulgar' (again, it must be remembered that all these could be used in an artistic way to enrich the work), but no work of art could be called obscene in terms of the purely aesthetic effect. When we do get this impact, it is, I feel, necessarily due to the sense stimulation caused by the direct or implied suggestion of the sex-act. This is not an aesthetic consideration. The aesthetic and, coming back to literary creation, the literary aspect can only deal with the artistic and the inartistic, and suggest the

directions in the inartistic handling of the content which might lead to obscenity.

This brings us to the core of the inquiry.

V

a) The first consideration is the use of the content in a literary work. This content, as we have seen earlier, is important to the creative writer as aesthetic material out of which he builds an organisation which has dynamic equilibrium as an essential quality. In other words, he is primarily concerned with the 'aesthetic weight' of the elements, with the help of which balance among such elements of varied 'aesthetic weights' is to be achieved. In terms of emphasis, his concern is not with the emotion in its sense-stimulating potential, but in its 'aesthetic potential' – its place and co-relation with other emotions. When he succeeds in achieving the dynamic equilibrium, we have a feeling that nothing could be added or removed without disturbing the entire balance. In lesser works, where this concern with the content as aesthetic material is not found, the elements are used for their sense-stimulating capacities, and hence the inevitability of the 'part-whole' relationship does not exist. With reference to the areas of experience under discussion, this results in unresolved tensions which seek their counter-point in the reader, as it is not provided for by the work itself. This might lead to obscenity.

b) In a well-balanced equilibrium the immediate sense-stimulating quality of the parts is counter-balanced by the sense of the whole – the predominant mood of the work, which is making itself felt even while reading any part. To give an example, the several passages dealing with the portrayal of the sex act (including the 'Sir John – Lady Jane' passage) in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by D.H. Lawrence have been saved from being obscene by the undercurrent of the predominant mood of the work, which is of a strong protest against a culture grown impotent, and the wild joy of existence itself against the cowardly, pitiful

and slow death of the Industrial man. This mood runs through the whole work and completely organises all the elements into an aesthetic whole. In lesser works there is no such organising element, or it is too weak to be able to act as an organising element. This makes for bad art and in the present context may lead to obscenity, as would probably the impact of the same passages referred to above, if taken separately and out of context.

c) In its 'self-containedness' a dynamic equilibrium has, in a literary work, the capacity to create a sense of a complete inner world. Any part in such a work belongs completely to the world that the work creates and justifies its existence as an element of an aesthetic whole. If one did not feel that the behaviour of Madame Bovary as revealed in the book is inevitable, in the inner world that Flaubert has created in the book, the book would be obscene. But reading the book, the reader is completely held in the sway of this world and is therefore concerned with the entire personality of the heroine, which counteracts any other consideration of sense stimulation. This is true not only in the case of parts of a book but also in the use of words and expressions. In James Jones' *From Here to Eternity* some of the expressions the soldiers use in the war camp so completely belong to their world that they are aesthetically inevitable and therefore not obscene. They would probably be obscene if used in a ladies' sewing circle. Inappropriateness of this nature creates bad art and in the present context leads to obscenity.

(d) Truth in its complete and frank revelation leaves nothing to suggestion and allows the mind to concentrate on the form fully. The entire lack of inhibition in the *Songs of Bilitis* of Pierre Louis so disarms one's resistance, moral or social, that one can appreciate it as art. The nude is not obscene; the nude with socks on is. It is half truth in its sly suggestion that gives rise to obscenity. In lesser art there is lack of an overall unity of attitude, where the details are at cross-purposes with

the whole. In such a context, the implied suggestions may cause sense stimulation and lead to obscenity.

e) The essential problem of literature and indeed of all arts is the creation of the illusion of dynamism in a static whole. The artist tries to solve it by distributing his colour values in such a way that every part of the picture is exerted upon by a pull from other parts around it, which makes it impossible for any part to be visually 'static', or 'fixed'. The sculptor does it by introducing a suggestion of arrested motion. The creative writer's way, as we have seen, is to introduce a series of tensions around any element by placing it in several kinds of relationships with other elements. These tensions help to rub out the hard lines, diffuse the effect, and avoid the 'static' feeling which would otherwise be felt. In lesser works one does not find this happening due to the absence or weaker quality of the tensions around. This has the effect of focussing the attention in too concentrated a manner on certain parts, and the result is an impact of crudeness, of hard lines, of a static residue which refuses to be integrated into the whole. In Albert Moravia's *Time of Indifference*, the passage dealing with Leo's unsuccessful attempt at seducing Clara, where the whole episode ends in her vomiting in the garden house, is a case in point. The peculiarly revolting experience has so much concentrated attention focused on it that the effect borders on the obscene.

f) We have mentioned earlier that the worth of a literary work will be judged by its qualitative complexity within the framework of the whole. In lesser works, two factors are usually observed: 1) the existence of elements which are too few, and 2) the relationships that are qualitatively of an inferior nature, resulting in a weaker whole. Pertaining to areas dealing with sexual experience this would mean: a choice of only one of the three correlates, usually the sensual, to the exclusion of the other two; and within that one, the use of elements which deal with a particular aspect

of it—namely that dealing with the sex act; and finally, the use of relationships which have an identical aesthetic weight. This results in a qualitatively inferior whole, which might lead to obscenity.

g) The effect of a good work of literature, is, as has been said earlier, to put the reader in a contemplative state of mind. Here, however, a distinction between the continuous effect as we read a work and the final effect of the whole must be made. The process of appreciation involves both identification and detachment. We experience the impact of the emotions portrayed, as well as observe the slow evolution of the pattern of emotions as we go through the book. The work is as great in our estimate as the pressure it brings to bear on both these aspects of our personality. A good literary work has the impact of bringing in a new and valuable experience, and makes it necessary for us to readjust our personality to incorporate this experience. This process of readjustment is necessarily a disturbance in the existing order, and brings with it, sometimes feeble, sometimes intense, but always an unavoidable search. This search may or may not be conscious, more often it is not; it may also be not immediate. But the point to note is that the nature of this search is necessarily contemplative. It is not volitional. It certainly is not, ought not to be, of immediate action which is directly inspired by or related to the work.

This point is particularly relevant with reference to literary works dealing with areas of sexual experience. The themes which deal with sex bring about a larger involvement on the part of the reader than most other themes. But this is quite in order, and we cannot logically deny to this area what we allow in the case of others. But if a dynamic equilibrium has been achieved in the work, this state would create a state of contemplation in the reader's mind. It is only when this is not achieved that the state of identification continues, and this

has a tendency to sense-stimulation leading to desire.

h) The last consideration is regarding the role of language in literature. Up till now we have been discussing the 'content' of a literary work. This content is actualised both by the writer and by the reader through the medium of language. The purpose of literature—the creation of an illusion of life—has an important effect on the use of language in literature. Words in ordinary usage tend to have static and fixed connotations. But the writer cannot build up an organisation which has dynamism through units of meaning which are static. The use of words in literature is, therefore, essentially different from their use in non-literary fields. The difference lies in the fact that at one and the same time words and expressions are made to serve the double purpose of building up the 'whole' and acting as a 'part' (of the whole); that is to say, they have a literal as well as a symbolic significance. This double function introduces a tension within the word, which makes its meaning fluid. And it is in this capacity that the word serves as a medium for literary creation.

This aspect of language has particular relevance in the context of areas dealing with sex-experience. A proper understanding of a literary work will be quite impossible without realising this important difference between language as ordinarily used and as a medium of literature. Any judgment regarding the obscenity or otherwise of a work would be unfair without a consideration of the role of language in it. The layer of symbolical meaning does not primarily give rise to sense stimulation, and this factor becomes an important one particularly in considerations of literary works which are considered obscene.

In non-literary works, and in the present context, pornographic works, the content is used exclusively for its sense-stimulating potential. They show a tendency in their themes to draw a rising graph of sense-stimulating elements; introduce more and more unusual, exotic, and complex situa-

tions, involving the use of violence, coarseness, and unnatural sex acts, for these are the things that can keep the curve of the graph rising; make use of half-revealed truths which have a larger evocative capacity; explore only the 'surface' of experience without making any attempt to see its deeper nature etc.

VI

In the discussion we had up till now presumed a sensitive reader acquainted with the nature of literary creation, and responding to it appropriately and adequately. If such a person felt that a certain work was obscene then the work could be, from the literary point of view, an inferior work in a certain direction. We tried to examine literary creation from these aspects in an objective manner, though, as we were talking about literature, a certain amount of subjective consideration was implicit in every statement made. This was, in a way, unavoidable. Any discussion of literature necessarily presumes a relationship between the work and a sensitive reader. But by definition, the effect of obscenity is not to be judged with reference to such readers, but to those 'whose minds are open to immoral influences'. Here a very peculiar position arises as there is no saying what might give sexual stimulation to anybody. A hundred years ago, in Persia, where the women moved draped from top to toe in a 'Gosha', the sight of a female toe-nail might have been exceedingly sense-stimulating. This, therefore, becomes an entirely subjective consideration, and taken in this context, a work can be an excellent literary piece, by whatever standards of literary judgment one takes, and yet be obscene. Any judgment on the quality of a work as a work of literature is simply not valid in this context, as the two fields of thought have nothing in common. One examines the work as an 'aesthetic fact', the other looks at it purely as a 'social fact.'

This is the borderline where the literary aspect meets the 'sociological-legal' aspects,

and any further consideration of this subject, in terms of the relationship between the work and the reader 'whose mind is open to immoral influences', lies, strictly speaking, in the latter fields, to which emphasis has now shifted. But there are certain border problems which have a bearing on the creation and appreciation of literature; a mention of these may not be out of place here.

Who should judge the worth of a literary piece and its effect on society? Could its effect on the fourteen year old girl be the only consideration? Do obscene readers make obscene works? Or are 'books', as Professor Raleigh once remarked, 'meant to be read by those who are qualified to understand them'? If the adolescent mind is taken as a criterion, could any major literary work, including the Bible, have a right to exist today? Have not the concepts of what is obscene been changing constantly, along with the changes in the two variables, the individual and society? And have not the literary works of every time themselves been a very important factor in bringing about this change? Has the concept of 'Freedom of Expression' any meaning whatever, if this freedom is to be entirely at the mercy of the lowest common denominator of the receptive level?

All these problems really revolve round the concept of the relationship between the individual and society, and are necessarily part of a much wider problem. The detailed consideration of these should be left to those who are qualified to deal with them. Our concern is to look at this problem in so far as it affects literary creation.

The creative writer's concern is to make us conscious of the patterns of beauty in our experience, which we were not conscious of before. For doing this he has to explore regions of consciousness which are

necessarily new and unknown. His contribution to society, in this respect, is to widen the regions of consciousness. This is an important contribution, which no society can afford to resist or neglect. On the other hand, the moment a writer wishes to communicate, he accepts the role of his expression as a social fact. He accepts that the limit of his freedom is the freedom of others. But society must necessarily acknowledge his freedom to hold his views and to express them, in so far as he is not intolerant of the views of others. It is only on this basis that an individual-social relationship is possible.

Literature is one of the several influences which affect and mould our personality. The effect of our environment as a whole is much greater than that of literature. It must be remembered that this environmental impact in terms of 'immoral influences' is so powerful that literature cannot give anything that life has not already given. In the society in which we are living, the influences of ugly, inartistic environment, of vulgarity and corruption of taste, are the factors that are creating obscene minds. Four letter words are not learnt from literature; they are learnt from life. The attitude of society, as expressed through its laws, has up till now been entirely negative. The decrease in obscenity is directly proportionate to the increase in the consciousness of the beautiful—as obscenity is primarily ugliness. The efforts of society should be concentrated on the formation of positive attitudes to counteract the vulgarising forces by encouraging artistic activity in every field of human endeavour, till the consciousness of the beautiful becomes a part of individual and social consciousness. All arts, and literature, can be important factors in the creation of this consciousness. Let the consciousness of the beautiful increase; obscenity will then take care of itself.

Leadership in Economic Transition and The Concept of Property

By AMLAN DATTA

I

ALTHOUGH in the Marxian interpretation of history economic factors are considered primary, there is a rather interesting difference between the Marxist conception of the main stages of the development of human society and what corresponds to it in the writings of the general run of economic historians. Looking at social evolution from the point of view of changing relations of production, Marxists have generally distinguished between certain fairly clearly demarcated stages of development, such as primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism in its two phases, mercantile and industrial, and, finally, socialism and communism. Non-Marxist historians, on the other hand, less preoccupied with ideological considerations, but interested nonetheless in the wider question of the development of technology and civilisation, have usually adopted a somewhat different view of stages of economic development. Here hunting and the pastoral stage are followed by agriculture and handicraft, and then by increasing importance of trade, and, finally, of industry-and-trade. The Marxist is sure that in his account of historical development he is, at one and the same time, indicating the successive stages of development of property relations in history as also of technology or, speaking more broadly, the forces of production. Indeed, this is a central point

in Marxist sociology, that the forces of production create corresponding property relations, and when the latter fall out of step with the development of the former, the resulting unbalance ensues in social turmoil and revolution till harmony is restored at a higher level, and so on from stage to stage.

One has only to confront these two pictures of development to see that correspondence between them is significantly imperfect. Thus, to take the agricultural stage of society, for instance, the actual status of 'serfs' is different in different countries and at different times, so that it approximates to slavery in some cases and comes close to free contractual relations in some others, but it is not always obvious that such differences are indicative of levels of development of the forces of production. Political and cultural factors are here evidently important. Again, countries at comparable stages of industrial development exhibit, not infrequently, interesting differences in the ideas of ownership which their social systems express and uphold. Thus, if one is asked to name the leading industrial nations of today, without taking any account of their ideologies, countries with widely different social systems will have to be named. The classification which we usually adopt when we are thinking in terms of productive relations, social systems, legal forms is quite different from the commonsense classification which we adopt

when we are thinking in terms of development of the forces of production, levels of productivity of labour, industrial progress.

This is not to deny an element of truth in what Marx had to say on this subject. There does obtain a rough correlation between the level of material development of a country and the degree of justice, and, for that matter, of freedom, that can or is likely to be effectively embodied in social institutions at that level. But this relationship is disturbed and modified by so many and varied factors that it will be extremely hazardous for any one to try to guess back from the second to the first. Even within the same country, or what came later to be constituted into a single country (e.g., Germany), comparing one part with another at a pre-industrial stage, it is not unusual to find that the extent of individual liberty and social justice achieved was smaller in that part where agricultural practice was more advanced rather than less. And a similar conclusion holds good, even more unmistakably, for industrial societies. The extent to which justice and freedom are embodied in the spirit and institutions of a given society is determined not merely by the level of material development attained in that society, but, to an important degree, by the historical path by which this level has been reached. Thus, for instance, the difference between the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and England and the Scandinavian countries on the other, is not explained so much by contemporary differences in their technological levels as by the respective histories of these countries.

II

The general conclusion from the above reasoning is simple: there is no definite and invariable set of institutions, or system of ownership of the means of production,

which accompanies the transition from any given stage of economic performance to a higher stage. On looking more closely at the 'capitalist' and 'socialist' countries as we actually find them today, there is a further point that strikes us in this connection. In opposing 'socialism' to 'capitalism', Marx was opposing one abstract concept to another: either you have private property or you have it not. Now, in actual life we have, of course, many intermediate situations. I do not mean simply that private property in some industries or types of resources may co-exist with national ownership in other industries or other types of resources. I mean, rather, that a thing may be neither quite privately owned, nor quite nationally owned, but individuals, groups, such as municipalities, and the State, may, at one and the same time, have certain more or less clearly understood rights in relation to a particular thing or resource. Thus, in place of ownership, properly so-called, we may have a bundle of finely adjusted rights, and corresponding obligations, on the part of a number of bodies, private and public. Indeed, this is true even of such intimate possessions as children, over whom parents generally have certain rights, but not absolutely unrestricted rights. They may not keep their children uneducated, and the State may conscript them and order them to go to the front.

Children, it may be objected, are a special case; they are nobody's property and are not considered as such in most civilised societies. But land is so considered and it is, indeed, the classic example of private property. Yet in the case of land, even if we consider such a normal relation as that of tenancy, the concept of property seems to dissolve within our grasp as we try to analyse it. Tenants have often certain very clearly specified rights in relation to the property which they hold in tenancy. The owner is not free to evict tenants when-

ever he likes. And just as children must be educated, so terms are or can be laid down that land must be properly cultivated or existing rights would cease. Finally, there is the reserve power of the State which makes itself felt in special circumstances; just as people can be conscripted so property can be commandeered. Absolute proprietary rights exist only as a legal fiction.

This analysis has obvious relevance to modern capitalism as well as to twentieth century socialism. The communist commissar or manager is not any the less powerful than his capitalist counterpart because he lacks ownership rights. An increasing number of labour economists in England are veering round to the view that 'it is the physical problem of control which is of the essence, rather than the metaphysical problem of ownership'. More and more of them now realise that the insistence on 'common ownership of the means of production' in clause IV of the Party Constitution is a hangover from an older and unnecessarily rigid way of thinking. In 'revisionist' Yugoslavia, State ownership is no longer the issue; the practical problem is rather the manner and extent of control over enterprise to be exercised by various bodies, such as the workers' council, the local authority and the State. In a different way, and with a more pronounced ethical accent, the Gandhian idea of trusteeship tries to effect a not dissimilar change in attitude towards property.

The problem, then, is not one of simply preserving or extinguishing proprietary rights, but of effecting a careful adjustment among a plurality of competing and complementary rights. The habit of thinking in terms of a dichotomy of 'capitalism' versus 'socialism' has contributed to unnecessary rigidity of thought on questions of choice of new institutions for the future. If, on the other hand, one accepts the view

presented above, alternatives are seen to be less sharp, and the curve of evolution of proprietary relations appears to be smoother and less beset with jumps. This last point may now be discussed further.

III

The idea that society is divided into two irreconcilably hostile classes, that the property-owning class has vested interests in the existing order and is bound to oppose the movement for a higher social order, in short, the theory that revolution is essential to social change, is strengthened by the belief that the real issue is proprietorship versus expropriation. But this dangerously oversimplifies the issue. And it is as un-historical as it has been shown earlier to be analytically faulty. There are, indeed, instances in history of conflict, of people fighting for their vested interests, and perhaps even more for their wonted ways of life and images to which they have been long and fondly attached. But, on the other hand, there is a not insignificant number of instances of people high up in the social order being deeply influenced by new ideals, sometimes acquiescing in change and, at other times, even taking initiative in introducing the new order.* By the time the French Revolution came, a large section of the aristocracy had already lost the strength of conviction to defend resolutely the old order and had been more or less won over in favour of change. In Germany, unlike France, the crucial period of the industrial transformation of the country followed in the wake of a defeated bourgeois revolution, and the administration almost throughout this period was heavily under the control of the aristocracy. An English

* Cf. 'No revolution, whether peaceful or violent, has ever taken place without the new ideals having deeply penetrated into the very class itself whose economic and political privileges had to be assailed.' (P. Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*).

House of Lords presided over the industrial development of England and the Tories carried through as many reforms as the Whigs. The initiative for the Meiji Restoration came from a section of the higher caste in feudal Japan, and although, as in other similar cases, there were rich merchants to support them, it is to these people enjoying high prestige and traditionally accustomed to a role of leadership in society that Japan owes the vision and energy that marked her development after 1868. It is they who proclaimed the abolition of feudalism, raised the 'hinin' to the status of common people, introduced a system of compulsory education for every child, and preserved social cohesion through the strains and stresses of rapid economic development. Thus, people marked out as leaders in a society characterised by feudal particularism, with production chiefly organised for barter, can subsequently take on a new role and actively assist in building up a higher and more round-about system of production for large and interrelated markets.

It is necessary to be explicit on one point. A class, as a concept, has all the rigidity of an intellectual construction; but individuals belonging to a class are capable of fulfilling themselves in many ways. People, even when they have a privileged position in terms of the old relations of production, may not only be inspired by a vision of new possibilities, but come genuinely to believe that in the society of the future they themselves will have new functions more satisfying than any that they ever had in the past. In acting on this conviction, they will, in a sense, be sacrificing 'vested' interests only to create new and higher interests. There is no reason, objectively speaking, why a whole class, or a major part of it, cannot be so transformed, like the Japanese *samurai*, partly by wise decision and partly by force of circumstances.

When people behave inflexibly in defence of their vested interests, they often act against their best interests. The Russian aristocracy did not defend their interests any better for being more inflexible, nor the English aristocracy any worse for being a little more adaptable. In acting as they do, die-hards are not guided by rational calculations or economic motives, but by instincts which are deeper-seated and pre-date the emergence of the rational spirit in man.

Against the main drift of the above argument, there is one point which we ought in fairness to set out. Leadership in a new age cannot come wholly and exclusively from an old class, however transformed. People from different strata must have opportunity to climb up the social ladder. For, in the context of the new tasks of the age, the old restrictions, if continued, would look infinitely more arbitrary and intolerable than they ever did before. If leadership is made a monopoly, this is likely to provoke a combination of those excluded from privilege who would now oppose even those efforts of the powers that be which, under normal circumstances, they would themselves have upheld and advanced. It is not enough, then, for leaders of an old society to take account of the future and address themselves to new tasks, but it is equally important that they make those appropriate gestures which appear to guarantee that talent everywhere, even outside the old ranks, will be recognised and valued. It is this that an old leadership, frozen into a caste, often finds difficult to achieve, even when it has otherwise resolved to pioneer progress.

IV

The transition to a new stage of economic performance, the development of productive forces from a lower to a higher level, is never altogether smooth and frictionless.

But under certain circumstances the attendant strains and stresses are greater than usual. Common sense would suggest, and historical evidence seems to bear out, that a society in which the old leadership is rigid and incapable of evolving or evolving fast enough, and has to be replaced by a new leadership, more or less unrelated to the main tradition of the community, and lacking, therefore, the lustre and appeal that such tradition lends by association, has to pass through greater disorganisation, bitterness, and physical and spiritual destruction, in the process of economic growth.

It is a little difficult to illustrate the point with decisive examples, since in any actual case the quality of leadership is not the only factor, but only one among a number of factors determining the nature of a community's experience of economic growth. But an attempt may still be made to make some comparison. It is instructive to consider, for instance, the contrast between the respective experiences of Japan and Russia. Both these countries have achieved quick industrial development, beginning approximately with the 'eighties of the last century. Both found it necessary, at one time or another, to depend chiefly on 'surplus' from the agricultural sector to sustain rapid growth of the economy as a whole. Yet in the manner in which this basic task was accomplished, the experience of the two countries differed profoundly.

Japan, in the crucial period of her economic transformation, had a leadership which was not as dissociated from the tradition of the country and as alien to the peasantry as the Russian leadership after the October Revolution. In the early period of modernisation of Japan, this apparently made it easier for the government to collect surplus from the agricultural sector. The peasantry, long used to surrendering an appreciable fraction of its produce to the feudal nobility, could be easily induced

to make a similar contribution in favour of a new government which inherited traditional prestige. On the other hand, the Bolshevik leadership, with its militant atheistic ideology, and lacking roots in the countryside, never succeeded, in spite of the decree for abolition of landlordism, in winning the allegiance of the mass of the peasantry. While in Japan new institutions grew out of the old with a minimum of social dislocation (some dislocation is inevitable), in Russia forms of collective farming came to be introduced, which never found favour with the majority of rural people, nor were justified by their productivity, and yet were deemed necessary to establish over the peasantry the control of a State which found it impossible to make its will effective in more normal ways. Twice within a generation after the October Revolution, the Bolshevik government was involved in a bitter and long-drawn-out conflict with the rural population in which millions perished and a reign of terror was established throughout the land.

This is not to suggest that what was achieved in Japan can be repeated elsewhere, or even that the lessons of the Japanese experience are all positive. Japan remained a private enterprise economy in the period of her industrial transition. It is likely that a new leadership in other countries and at this time of the day will have to follow a different course. Perhaps a change in the concept and content of ownership will be necessary to gain and retain the willing allegiance of the people. But this, as we have argued earlier, should not be beyond achievement by peaceful means.

The Japanese experiment is open to criticism from yet another point of view. Although technology is built on science, a community can make great strides technologically, without experiencing a rationalist revolution to match its material progress.

The conclusion is not that the political leaders of a people in a period of industrialisation should themselves be the leaders of a rationalist revolution. This second task they are unlikely to achieve at all well, while in attempting it they may lose much of their cohesive influence in society. Indeed, it might be much better if political leaders tolerated the rationalist radicals, the critical intellectuals, the *philosophes*, while they themselves remained closer to the central tradition of the community and were only indirectly affected by the philosophic revolution, which they only gently encouraged instead of proclaiming Robespierre-like a militant adherence to it.

Economic development can never be achieved without a people making substantial sacrifice for it. But there is a great difference between a sacrifice that is more or less willingly made and one that is forced upon a people. Where the new leadership evolves out of the old with a minimum of that fanaticism and bitterness, that spirit of religious war which passionate ideological opposition to tradition by men newly in power produces in a period of change, the transition to a higher economic level is likely to be made with a minimum of waste of spiritual energy and physical resources. Success in such venture has been best attained when the economic, political and intellectual leaderships of a society have acted in unison. But this idea of concerted action should not be too mechanically interpreted. The proper roles of these leaderships are not only quite different, but, at certain levels, seem to be almost

conflicting. We may stay briefly to note this point.

The economic leadership in the modern industrial era has generally evolved out of a class or caste which was accorded a low social status in the older order. But in those countries where this economic leadership has functioned to best advantage, it has been protected, supported and, at the same time, held within wise limits, by a political leadership of more aristocratic descent. While the intellectual leadership best fulfils its role by moving rather ahead of the times and helping to change current ideas, the peculiar contribution of a wise State consists not in this that it innovates, but rather in that it translates into law and common practice the social consensus as it evolves, functions as a centre of social cohesion, and serves and appears to serve as a source of justice in a society which continually threatens to disintegrate into factions. From one point of view, economic, political and intellectual leaderships of a society are mutually reinforcing; but, from another, they serve as checks and balances on the excesses of one another. This is why it is dangerous to concentrate all effective power in any one of them. The factors which help such concentration of power are many and varied. Property relations are not the only determining factor here. But in the complex society of our times, an absolutist concept of property, which can only distinguish between unlimited private ownership and state ownership, serves to strengthen the tendency towards an excessive concentration of power.

The Nature and Use of Criticism

By N. K. DEVARAJA

THE function of criticism is to analyse, interpret and evaluate the experience embodied in a work of art; its aim is to make the enjoyment of that work an articulate and conscious process.

All analysis is controlled by a purpose. The object of the critical analysis of a work of art (henceforth to be called a 'poem') is to disclose or bring before the critical attention the factors which make it significant or valuable to us. The being of the poem consists in the 'enjoyed experience' it embodies. What makes this experience valuable to the readers? And how valuable is that experience? These are the two pivotal questions to which the critic may and should seek the answer.

The 'experience' may please or intrigue us by many types of qualities: by its vividness and imagery, its energy and intensity, its high seriousness and depth, its (power to induce) calm and tranquillity, its insight into the character of man, an age, or life in general, its beauty, its pathos, etc. How does the critic bring home one or more of these qualities to us? Not by just mentioning them but by analysing the 'poem' or 'experience' in respect of the quality under reference. The analysis consists in separating the constituent factors which make up or illustrate that quality. There may be a quality which characterizes the whole poem; another which is characteristic only of some part or parts in it. Thus there may be humour here and there in a play which is not necessarily a humorous work. On the contrary, the perusal and analysis of the entire *Hamlet* alone can impress on us the success with which his reflective and feigned madness has been depicted.

Theorists of art have fought endless battles over the issue whether this or that

quality constitutes the essential secret of the greatness of art. Vividness of imagery; energy; nobility and loftiness of tone; realism (naturalistic and socialist); organic unity; capacity to give pleasure; normality—all these characteristics of art-works have pressed through their respective votaries the claim to be regarded as the exclusive cause of artistic greatness. And those votaries have tended to understand and interpret the beauty and greatness of 'poems' each in his own way. What should be our attitude towards these conflicting claims and counter-claims?

Before taking up this question I should like to define 'interpretation', and show how it is pertinent for the assessment or evaluation of the poem. Interpretation consists in relating the analysed elements to the wider wholes in the historical-cultural environment. To interpret a poem (a lyric, a play, a novel) is to place it within the context of the cultural-historical milieu wherein it has made its appearance. Interpretation may also mean the tracing of the influences, contemporary and historical, that have determined the selection of materials (imagery, allusions, situations, etc.) and mode of emphasis involved in the fashioning of the work under scrutiny. Briefly, by the interpretation of a poem is meant the attempt to connect it, both as an effect and as a cause, to the culture, age and environment of the artist. For artistic creations are both the products of their cultural environment and also the moulders or modifiers of that environment.

Evidently the influence exerted by a poem on other poetic or literary creations, and on the tastes, morals, etc. of a people may be better assessed after the lapse of some years than at the time when it made

its first appearance. However, a penetrating critic may be able to foresee some of its likely influences in the light of his knowledge of poems written in the past. And a critic or reader with historical experience may be able to give a juster estimate of a literary movement or vogue than one whose information is confined to only contemporary literature.

A masterpiece belonging to the past can seldom be appraised apart from the influence it has had historically on the tastes of the people and on the practice of other artists. There is a weightier reason why no poem can be properly assessed by the reader who has not known other poems. An evaluative judgement in every case is a relative if not a comparative judgement. It is relative to the 'taste and maturity' of the reader, which have inevitable reference to the type of productions he has been studying and enjoying. No person can attain any significant degree of competence, not to speak of expertness, for judging a new poem without having read and enjoyed some other poems before. This implies that the critic *has* to go outside the given work of art in order to be able to judge it. Ultimately, I can judge a poem only by temporarily living and enjoying the experience it embodies, and I can assess this experience only in the light of other kindred experiences, which I might have felt to be higher or lower in richness and quality than, or of the same standard as, the experience realised in the given poem. Ultimately, the standard or standards which important critics should and do employ consist in the overall feelings or impressions which acknowledged masterpieces of various types leave on their responsive and trained sensibilities. All generalisations as to the nature and criteria of great art are but imperfect echoes or partial formulations of these feelings and impressions.

A poem, then, needs both to be analysed and interpreted, in the sense indicated

above, if it is to be properly assessed. The greatness of the poem has *something* to do with the age whose experience and sensibility it attempts to fashion and represent; it has *something* to do with the history, previous and subsequent, of the art of which it is an example: with the history of its techniques, its themes and its varied moral and emotional influences. Above all, it has *something* to do with the 'involvements' in terms of attitudes of evaluation, action and enjoyment which are reflected in the creative social and spiritual history of the artist's country or community, and probably also of mankind.

This 'involvement' is a continual and advancing process, depending on the progressive discovery and definition of the environment, socio-technological and cosmic, on the one hand, and the vision of the possibilities of life in that environment on the other. The involvement has as many sides as our experience has dimensions, and its level and quality is a correlate of the breadth and vitality of the vision that inspires our relations with the world-environment. Ultimately, the involvement is an expression of the creative restlessness which characterizes our apprehension of values, or of the possibilities of the realization of values.

It is not possible to adequately define and delineate these involvements in terms of the subjective attitudes such as materialism, idealism, optimism, pessimism, etc., for the quality, say of the pessimism, of one writer may be very different from that of another. The quality depends on the degree of the maturity of the artist's vision, which is definable by the supporting evidence of significant or expressive details incorporated by the artist in his work. These details and their arrangements change from one work of art to another, and from the productions of one age to another. They change according to the changing views of life and the world characteristic of different artists and

of different ages. The variety and richness of experiential material makes even writers and artists of the same period different in the expression of attitudes peculiar to their times. The expressions of attitudes are more or less mature and thorough, more or less inclusive, and more or less representative of the age, depending ultimately no less on the subtlety and sweep of the artist's imagination than on his inventiveness in respect of techniques which enable him to achieve individuality.

However, it is wrong to suppose that the individuality of a poem or a writer is purely a matter of technique, style, language, etc. Recently great emphasis has been laid by both poets and critics on language. There can be no doubt that poets tend to devote great attention to language and they enjoy exploring its possibilities. Nevertheless, it seems that language serves rather to distinguish the poetry of one age or epoch from that of another than to mark off one poet from another contemporary poet. The distinctive individuality of writers and poets of the same period is constituted chiefly by traits other than their language: by their differing predilections as to imagery, areas of experience, problems, ideologies, etc. It is these traits which define the more important aspects of a writer's work, by virtue of which it attains or fails to attain permanence.

Even the poem with the quality of endurance may fail to appeal to all types of readers. In general, we tend to like a poem which enables us to put to creative use our own more or less chaotic impressions and experiences. Only the greatest works of art and literature have the power to appeal to observers and readers with widely different experiential capacities and histories.

This explains why different works of art may have varying appeals to different classes of readers. Some may have innate preference for lyrics, others for dramatic or fictional writings. There is another reason why even men of taste should tend to

patronise different works of art. Like personalities, those works may be significant or great for different reasons. Men tend to admire and adore different types of heroes; they may similarly tend to admire different kinds of greatness in art. Some may prefer intensity, others depth; some vividness of imagery, others seriousness of tone and meaning. In these respects different ages may differ as much as different individuals. It follows that only a critic with a catholic taste and wide experience of classical works may be able to do justice to different kinds of artistic greatness. Meanwhile, we should be content to recognise a plurality of qualities or values which bestow greatness on art, even as we recognise a variety of qualities which constitute greatness of such different historical personages as the Buddha and Jesus Christ, Plato and Sankara, Beethoven and Shakespeare.

In conclusion it may be pointed out that while short literary pieces, individual poems, etc., may be understandable without elaborate interpretations, the total achievement of an artist cannot possibly be assessed without reference not only to the work of other artists, antecedent and contemporary, but also to the problems and ideas peculiar to the age and culture of the artist and to problems and questionings characteristic of civilized minds in all ages and climes. It is the business of criticism to separate the elements of a particular artistic experience by analysis, to classify those elements, and to describe them in general, comparable terms. By finally submitting the whole composed of those elements to evaluative judgement, criticism contributes to the qualitative improvement and progress of human experience and sensibility. These functions of criticism are essentially philosophic and criticism is in the main a philosophical activity; it differs from aesthetics (which is a branch of philosophy) in this that while the latter concerns itself with *general* forms of the significant experience called art, the former concentrates its attention on *particular* examples of those forms.

In Search of a Future

By SUSHIL DEY

ASPIRATIONS, by their very nature, must soar. Yet, if they are to be reached, they must not soar away. They must shape and influence day to day living and conduct and, to do so, must be brought into direct relation to the crude facts of immediate experience. Is the way in which we work and live at the moment, capable of leading us to what we desire? Only an affirmative answer to this question can give meaning and purpose to the present and the future.

Living abroad, one has a chance to meet the pick of our young generation. More than ever before, far more than it used to be in one's student days in England thirty years ago, young people are now picked for overseas training because of their merit of performance and promise rather than family status and financial means. If personal pull is still suspected to play a part in selection, it usually does so within a narrow range, after prescribed standards are satisfied. The outflow for overseas training and study travel has also greatly increased through ampler provision of national and foreign resources for fellowships, scholarships and inter-country student exchange. It is thus possible to take soundings of the thinking of a representative sample of our young intellectuals. What is their picture of the future? What roles do they expect to play in shaping that future?

There is always some hazard in generalisation, even when it is based on a well-designed sociological study. What value then should one attach to the impressions gleaned at random by one observer?

The position needs to be made clear. It is not claimed that such impressions would amount to conclusive findings. But, depending on the nature and number of encounters, the impressions gathered can provide significant clues and pointers. To this observer they give food for thought, which may be of interest to place on record for parents, educators and administrators at home. They have certainly provided occasions for earnest debate with young friends studying in or visiting the continents of North America and Europe.

Young people do not lose their heads as often as they used to on coming abroad. Overseas trips have become relatively common and have lost much of their old prestige and glamour. The change of environment is no longer strikingly novel and has less power to dazzle, bewilder and overwhelm. Newcomers, even those of a tender age, take things in their stride with an ease which would have surprised their fathers in the same circumstances. In some ways they are more mature when they arrive. They do not have to struggle with the sense of political inferiority which so often lent a touch of awkwardness to the conduct and deportment of their fathers. They are cool and sober in appraising their situation and, in general, admirably capable of looking after themselves. Many of them come with high academic records from home. They hold their own against the best of foreign students, win great distinction and high praise, and sometimes receive tempting offers to settle down to long-term research or specialised jobs in private

industry for which they have proved their competence.

These people are serious-minded and display a lively sense of responsibility towards their country. They come with great hopes of equipping themselves to the best of their ability to serve the cause of national development. They are aware that their country is poor and are prepared for the sacrifices which they realise will be needed to build it up. They therefore expect to go back and work for much less than their qualifications can command outside. Most of them do return home. Even the few who stay on do so after a struggle with their conscience and in almost all cases with great reluctance. Almost without exception they are unhappy, because they feel cheated of the opportunity to make their contribution to the country's progress. They feel unwanted at home, because they have no assurance of even a minimal reward for the services which they have qualified themselves to render. They see their fears justified as they find some of their stronger-willed friends, who went home, drifting back again to seek foreign positions after a period of frustration and disappointment. They also hear of the bitterness and anger of some others who are stubbornly sticking it out at home against all odds.

There is a national register of scientific personnel maintained in India which shows a considerable loss of our skilled manpower abroad. There is another category of the same loss which is less easily accounted for, although it is infinitely more formidable in magnitude. This is the wastage that occurs inside the country through unsuitable placement. It arises when a person is grossly overqualified for his job and his excess competence cannot be brought into use. It happens again when someone trained in one field is compelled to seek his livelihood in a different field. The commonest occurrence is when the conditions of work are

so uncongenial and discouraging that they inhibit a person from giving his best. Such conditions are bred by a variety of causes ranging from unintelligent direction and bad personnel management to practices amounting to deliberate corruption. Every case of wastage of skill represents a double tragedy. It is a personal tragedy for him who had stunted and laboured to acquire the skill. It also represents the social tragedy of abortive investment. These tragedies are writ large all over the country. The case of the young hopeful lost abroad is the external manifestation of a widespread, deep-seated malaise.

The non-use and misuse of skills which characterise this malaise set a major problem in economic planning to which we shall need to pay attention. Our immediate concern must, however, be with the moral consequences for some of the most talented of our younger generation. One has seen the eager gleam in their eyes turn to glazed cynicism, their faith tarnished, suspicion and distrust colouring their reaction to every plan and performance by those in authority. It is easy to chide them and exclaim that they should have been less childish and naive. But it cannot be wrong for the young to be idealists. It is normal for them to believe that the talents they have been exhorted to develop with many years of diligence will receive their due recognition and reward. It is natural for them to hope that their learning and skills will open out widening horizons of creative self-expression for the benefit of the community at large. After all, it is the values inculcated by the social teaching to which they were exposed which led them to nourish these hopes and beliefs. Faced with a betrayal, they can either repudiate the values in which they were brought up, or charge the custodians of established authority with imposture and worse. They are inclined to do both, and are they to be blamed more

than their elders who guided them to blind alleys and dead ends?

Those who have spirit find it hard to reconcile themselves to what they regard as a world of narrowing opportunities generating a climate of sycophancy and intrigue. They begin to cherish vague, utopian dreams of subverting the established order. But their heads are full of their scientific specialisations and they have little taste or aptitude for political action. They are pathetically immature in their thinking about social change. Their attitude is mostly negative. They know what they do not want, but are not at all clear about what system should replace the present and how. They were not trained to figure all this out, they say, why can't others do that and leave them in peace to get on with the real jobs that need doing and which they know how to accomplish? They seem ready to back anybody who promises this deliverance. They make easy targets for the charlatan. Some of them are beginning to be wishful about the clean sweep of a dictator's broom. There is something in their heritage which makes them hasten to acknowledge that this would be an evil, but they can conceive of nothing else which can shake what in England they call the Establishment, and in their innocence they hope that, having destroyed the evils of the present, it will make room in the end for good to prevail.

These portents are disturbing in themselves, yet how seriously should one take them? It is true they refer to a tiny segment of our younger generation, the very few of the fortunate who can come abroad for higher education or special training. But the group is small because, on the whole, it is highly select in quality. It has also special significance, because it is to this group one must look most to provide the intellectual and managerial, if not the political leadership of the future. There is a further consideration of importance. It is

clear that manifestations of disaffection and distrust are not peculiar to this group and cannot for the most part be ascribed to the thwarting of pampered and unwarranted expectations of high status and comfortable living. They are widely paralleled among the student fraternity in the home country, where they find frequent expression in outbursts of disorder and indiscipline. Again, these cannot be set down to adolescent irresponsibility, because the same attitudes of scepticism and disappointment can be discerned in adult behaviour in an increasing number of circles at all levels.

What we see, then, is not the distemper of the disoriented intellectual, which has always enjoyed a vogue, does little harm to the country at large and, in moderate doses, does even some good by introducing a leaven of unconventional thought and posture. The current symptoms are of a much graver disorder. They are not confined to the intellectual. In fact, the average student abroad is less of an intellectual now than he used to be. He may have better brains and is frequently found to have applied them to good purpose in specific technical and scientific disciplines; but he has a poor background of humanistic studies, has little sophistication of intellect and has no pretensions to a philosophy of his own or a well-rounded view of the social order in which he lives. This does not make his frustration any less real, but its quality is helpless, instinctive and animal, rather than intellectual. It also stems from the same frustration which prevails at home. There is only a slight time lag in his personal experience of it, because he has a little farther to go before he comes up against the final block. But he is not cut off from his compatriots in his thinking and feeling. He is not disoriented from the rest.

What we are looking at is the pointed overseas thrust of a deep and countrywide problem. For this reason, it will not yield to the obvious measures which come to

mind. One of them would be to discourage narrow specialisations of extreme refinement, which can find little or no scope for fruitful application in an underdeveloped economy. A research worker in nuclear theory, whose brilliance is recognised by experts of international renown and whose services are coveted by some of the best known Universities of the world, insisted on returning home to teach on a salary incomparably lower than what he had been already receiving and was again offered in the United States and England. At home he was starved of facilities; and even when funds were available, they would not be released for his work unless he was prepared to curry favour with all those who were in the hierarchy of formal control. He was raising students of great promise, whose only future, he said, was to teach other students on the poorest pittance of a pay, who, in their turn, could only teach still others, and so on, *ad infinitum*, because, unlike in the advanced countries, there was no market for the practical application of what they taught. So far as India is concerned, his talents might have been more usefully directed to some other, less rarified sphere, although, from a larger point of view, he may have equipped himself to make an original contribution to the advancement of human knowledge. But to fulfil that promise he has to take himself away from his country now, and is liable to be written off as a national loss.

It is possible to control facilities for overseas education so that our young scientist is denied a chance to follow his bent. Similarly, students can be sent abroad to learn only such skills and in only such numbers as would be needed in ready jobs at home. These measures, presumably already in view or under way, would save scarce foreign exchange and take care of the attenuated external end of the problem. But its vaster internal dimensions will remain. Also, because such a policy can be

only enforced by central direction, it will encounter resentment and resistance and will be open to suspicion of manipulation for special favours. To tackle the problem at its root will call for an overhaul of the entire educational system, and this can be effectively accomplished only when backed by the understanding of the people at large. The object of the overhaul would be to promote such learning and skills as would serve the requirements of the country's progress. A sound determination of these requirements is therefore the first step in the exercise; and the people must be involved in taking even that first step, as there is no other way in which their understanding can be engaged.

Educational reform is a favourite theme for convocation addresses in Indian universities every cold weather. They are too often replete with generalities which have lost their appeal through overuse. Some of them could provide opportune occasions for outlining proposals for action which are clearly related to the recognisable aspirations of the people for progress. It can be demonstrated that these aspirations will demand a balanced advance on many fronts, ruling out a disproportionate concentration of our meagre resources in any one direction. If vocational training, technical education and the applied sciences have been neglected in the past, they must now receive the share of attention which is their due, taking care, however, to avoid a precipitate and extreme swing, which would leave other essentials uncovered. We may need foremen, mechanics, engineers, chemists and agronomists; but we also need pure scientists, philosophers and artists. Most of all, we need a common ground of understanding among them and others for an appreciation of their mutual complementarity for progress. It is this understanding which it is the function of a basic education in the liberal arts and humanities to provide. This is indispensable equipment

for people to play a creative part in planning their collective advance. Without it, the technicians would be pawns on the chess-board of the elite, and the philosophers and artists would be either gagged or bought off to applaud.

Planning for development is not an esoteric enterprise open to only statisticians, economists and top statesmen. It can be practised by ordinary, humble, even illiterate people and, indeed, must be allowed to be so practised, if the plan is to be meaningful to them and evolve in harmony with the growth of their own sensibilities and needs. Planning is natural to every human being, and Aristotle's dictum can be phrased in modern terms by saying that man is a planning animal. He plans his personal life and that of his family. With a little encouragement, he can join the members of his immediate social group in planning the improvement of their collective condition. It has been this observer's privilege to witness this directly among village folk in countries as far apart as Greece and Mexico, Lebanon and Yugoslavia, Pakistan and Ecuador and, of course, most of all, in India.

A brief account of what actually happened in the initial phase of a typical case will illustrate the point made here. The villagers were told it was their responsibility to decide what they wished to do to improve their situation. They did not take long to produce an agreed list of items which needed attention. These included facilities for irrigation, roads, veterinary service and new constructions for a school and a health clinic. These demands seemed reasonable enough, but to supply them would involve a great deal of money, what were they going to do about meeting the costs? Nothing, they said, these were completely beyond their means, and they expected the government to make all the provision. But where would the government get the extra money from, did they know

how the government raised its funds? Yes, from taxes levied on people like themselves. Were they, then, prepared to pay some more in taxes than they were doing? No, indeed not; but maybe the government could do something with all their talk about building up the country and the aid which the country was receiving from foreigners; maybe they, the villagers, could wait for some of the things they wanted; after all, who expected everything to be done all at once? Maybe they could do a little themselves. And so, the process was started. Priorities were set after some debate among themselves as to what was more urgent. Initial ambitions were lowered to match targets to available capacity. Committees were formed to allot tasks, to mobilise local resources, a little in cash, in land for the sites of the school and the clinic, in skills, and in unskilled manpower for the earthwork needed for the roads and the irrigation ditches.

This was full of tremendous promise, and though admittedly very far from national planning, was nevertheless the most worthwhile starting point for the long and devious journey on that road. It would be worth noticing some of the further stages that would lie ahead. The local plans would have to be pieced together. This would call for changes in individual plans for mutual adjustment. Each contiguous group would not need a separate school or a clinic for itself. Other services could be shared and resources could be pooled with those of surrounding areas, sometimes for economy, sometimes for expanding the facilities initially planned. Roads and canals would have to be aligned to take account of major routes of communication and water-flow lying beyond the local boundary. Local production plans would need adjustments to marketing prospects. All these would demand repeated consultations with the villagers by those charged with the formulation of the national plan. Out of

these discussions a shape would begin to emerge, a structure with many gaps and many loose ends, which would represent the supplies and services needed to support the local plans. It would be the task of national planning to fill these gaps and tie these ends with the overall resources of the national economy. This task would determine the pattern of investment of these resources, involving the setting up of targets in different fields of enterprise, both private and public. Thus would arise projects for dam construction and steel plants, targets for transport and power, production estimates for cement and textiles, chemicals and sugar. The same process of calculation would give the requirements of administrative cadres and different categories of professional personnel, to which the educational system would need to be geared. It could be that the overall resources, despite fiscal stretching and external aid, would prove insufficient to finance the total bill. A running check could detect the signs in time and would lead to further consultations all down the line to persuade the people to cut down and stagger their plans.

Rural development is an important preoccupation in India, as in most other countries struggling to come out of economic backwaters. It is now generally acknowledged that this can be sustained only by the active participation of the rural communities themselves. But nowhere is the logic carried to its conclusion by establishing an organic nexus between local self-help and the larger development effort of the nation. The framework of external support needed for action in the rural areas becomes disjointed for this reason. There is also disruption of the unity of purpose which should be a continuously running thread holding together all parts of the nation's endeavour. In a country where the regeneration of the agrarian sector holds the key to all other development, there can be no doubt that this must be the focus of interest in all

planning. In meeting the demands of village planning through successive stages the rest of the economy would then come to conform to this basic requirement and, in its turn, gain the accession of strength for which it is waiting.

What is the point of this long digression? There are at least two. It shows, first, that the core of our problem is the disorientation of the entire country, led by the planning elite. This occurs notwithstanding protestations of concern for rural uplift with community participation, because the targets of village effort represent only arithmetical breakdowns of overall ambitions of modernisation in the quickest time, instead of being allowed to express the patiently awakened, authentic urge of the people and then treated with respect as the primary determinants for building up the aggregative, nation-wide goals.

Let it be clear that it is not logically necessary for planning to be village oriented, even when excessive pressure upon current resources condemns the majority of the people to subsistence agriculture. The economy can be conceivably geared to maximum acceleration for technological advance. Indeed, the prevailing situation of backwardness and poverty will itself provide a powerful temptation for setting such a course. But this will demand massive and high-pressure changes entailing tremendous hardships which the people at large will not comprehend and will bitterly resist. No administration with a regard for human values will contemplate the Draconian regime which could overcome this resistance. Certainly, our existing administration has neither taste nor capacity for such a regime. Our current disorientation does not imply any commitment to this ruthless course. It only means that our faces are not set to any clear purpose at all. Our stand is ambiguous and uncertain, arising from ambivalence in regard to incompatible ends,

and leading to incoherence and waste, to the detriment of both ends.

This apparent digression has also a more direct and positive relevance to our theme. It indicates what we need to do to provide the image of an open future for our children. This would be a plan of development which is constructed upwards from the village base, comprehending in a network of reciprocal support all sectors, functions and enterprise, from the pettiest and lowliest to the biggest and most exalted, enabling each to evolve in harmony with the rest with the aid of a quickened flow of energy released at the source. Such a plan would carry people in every status and profession, from the humblest to the most eminent, in a conscious, convergent surge of

effort to a goal which everybody can perceive. Everyone will have a place, no-one will feel unwanted; and the lack of room at the top will no longer frustrate, but act as a spur to our young to strengthen the base to take the needed weight.

The peril which members of the new generation face does not lie in the uncertainty or meagreness of their material reward but in the lack of a large and liberating cause to which they can joyously respond. Privations can exhilarate and not embitter or benumb if one is battling for a cause that inspires. Such a cause exists and awaits the espousal of the young. There is need for political education in the classical sense to help them discover it.

In the name of religion deeds have been done that would exhaust all the resources of hell itself for punishment, because with its creeds and dogmas it has applied an extensive plaster of anaesthetic over a large surface of feeling humanity.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Lamaism

By D. B. VOHRA

XANADU, the capital of Kublai Khan immortalised by the poet Coleridge, was, towards the end of the 13th century, the scene of a most remarkable religious assembly. Anxious to assess the relative merits of the great religions that were then spreading across Central Asia, Kublai Khan invited Muslim, Christian, Buddhist and Taoist savants to his capital (the correct name of which, incidentally, was Chang-du) to prove the truth of their respective creeds. The response is reported to have been most enthusiastic and Kublai appointed a committee of eminent Confucians to adjudge the victor. The honour fell to a noted Tibetan Lama by the name of Phags-pa. Deeply impressed by his saintliness and scholarship, Kublai, who till then had been an adherent of the ancient Shamanist faith of the Mongols, not only made him his spiritual adviser but conferred on him the Viceroyalty of his Tibetan dominions and appointed him head of the Tibetan Buddhist Church.

The Beginnings

The roots of Lamaism, the religion so worthily championed by Phags-pa at Xanadu, went deep into the past. Padma Sambhava, the great Indian Buddhist missionary is, of course, regarded as its founder, but the creed he carried to Tibet in the 8th century had taken centuries to evolve; besides, in the process of dissemination in Tibet, it acquired a strong local flavour deriving from Bon-po, the ancient animistic faith of that land.

Padma Sambhava was an outstanding exponent of Tantrik Buddhism. Tantrik

practices in India are of very ancient origin, considerably ante-dating Buddhism itself. Opposed though he was to occultism, Buddha is known to have said that supernatural powers could be acquired by the appropriate cultivation of *chittam* (thought), *chanda* (will), *viriyam* (effort) and *vimamsā* (the spirit of inquiry). Further more, the Vinaya Pitaka records a feat of levitation performed by one of Buddha's disciples, Bharadvaja. Of course, Buddha severely discouraged such practices and insisted that purity of thought and conduct were the only means to salvation. Nevertheless, it appears that many of his followers were unable to live up to his lofty teachings and were attracted by the possibility of attaining *Nirvana* by invoking the occult. These dissidents started meeting secretly to work out their theories and soon evolved a scripture of their own, which came to be called the Guhya-samaja Tantra, the Scripture of the Secretly-meeting Sect.

The Secret Scripture

The Guhya-samaja Tantra, which is believed to have taken final shape by the third century, propounded two revolutionary doctrines which later formed the core of the Vajrayana creed. The first was that asceticism and repeated incarnations were not necessary for achieving *Nirvana*, which could, through appropriate Yogic practices, be attained in one's lifetime without foregoing any sensual pleasure. The second doctrine was based on the thesis of the Yogachara philosophers that reality is pure consciousness. The phenomenal world was pronounced by the Guhya-samaja

Tantra to be the result of an inter-action between two opposite but basically complementary principles—one active or male, representing love and energy and the other passive or female, representing wisdom and knowledge. The fusion of these two principles produced pure consciousness. Translated into human terms this meant that every individual is a compound of male and female principles and that by completely merging the one in the other, one can obtain perfect enlightenment and supreme bliss (*maha-sukha*). The female principle, the means of obtaining enlightenment, was given the name of Prajna, and *maha-sukha* was visualised as resulting from a mystic union with Prajna. This sexual symbology was carried to the realm of the gods themselves and the concept was introduced of the five Dhyani Buddhas and their Prajnas. Each Dhyani Buddha (Buddha in eternal meditation) was the presiding deity of one of the five basic elements of the phenomenal world and was represented in divine coitus with his Prajna. This coitus had a physical as well as a spiritual significance because each Dhyani Buddha was deemed the sire of a number of Bodhisattavas and Taras (female Bodhisattavas). Thus arose an almost endless pantheon of gods and goddesses.

Buddhism and Bon-Po

These teachings had gained considerable currency amongst the Buddhists of India by the 8th century, when Padma Sambhava visited Tibet. The Tibetan obsession with evil spirits and magic obliged this great missionary to admit some of the demons and deities of Bon-po into the fold of Buddhist mythology and to give a place in Tantrik Buddhist ritual to some of the magical practices of this primitive faith. The resultant amalgam of asceticism and animism, of sublime thought and superstition, was the form that Lamaism first assumed.

That the worship of Prajna was the dominant element in this hybrid creed seems, however, to explain the fact that the word Lama is derived from the Tibetan Lha-mo, meaning Devi.

After Padma Sambhava's death, Lamaism degenerated steadily despite the missionary zeal of his converts and the scholarly labours of the monks of Tibet's first monastery of Sam-ye founded early in the ninth century. The need for reform became increasingly urgent and in the eleventh century, Atisa Dipankara, the great Tantrik divine from India, was prevailed upon to come and purge Lamaism of its animistic predilections. He travelled across the length and breadth of Tibet and put in motion a vigorous campaign against clerical corruption. He advocated celibacy for the monks and taught them to disdain magical practices. By expounding afresh the true doctrines of Tantrik Buddhism and encouraging the study of original Tantrik scriptures, he saved Lamaism from sinking into the slough of superstition and finally laid the ghost of Bon-po.

Red Caps and Yellow Caps

Atisa's teachings led to the rise of two reformed Buddhist sects. One of them, the Kagdamspa, owed itself entirely to his inspiration. The other, called the Kargyutpa, which came into existence somewhat later, was strongly influenced by the great mystics Mar-pa and Mila-rapa. Starting life as a magician's apprentice, Mila-rapa went through the vigorous discipline associated with true Tantrik Buddhism, completing his probation in inaccessible caves where nettles and berries were the only available food. Conceiving a lyrical love for the faith thus acquired, he spent the rest of his life as a wandering minstrel. His 'Hundred Thousand Songs' made Lamaism a living religion for the millions and have always

been looked upon as a priceless religious heritage.

In the meantime, the unreformed Buddhists were also flourishing. They came to be called the Red Caps since their monks could be easily distinguished from those of the newer sects by the colour of their caps. A great monastery was built for them at Sakya in Southern Tibet by a Tibetan noble shortly after Atisa's death and they made this monastery their principal headquarters. Thanks to the scholarly leanings of Red Cap monks, Sakya monastery soon became the foremost centre of learning in Tibet. One of its greatest scholars, Bu-ston, performed the herculean task of collecting all the available Tibetan translations of Buddhist texts and compiling the Tibetan Buddhist Canon. This is in two parts known respectively as the Kanjur and Tanjur. The Kanjur, consisting of 108 volumes, represents the word of the Buddha, while the Tanjur, covering 225 volumes, incorporates various treatises on Buddhism and allied subjects.

To one of Bu-ston's disciples, Tsang-Khapa, belongs the credit of ushering in the most drastic reform movement Tibetan Buddhism has ever known. For about 25 years from 1390 A.D. onwards he devoted himself single-mindedly to the task of raising the standard of monastic morality. He enforced strict celibacy on monks, forbade them the use of liquor and banned rituals savouring of sorcery. He revived the practice of open fortnightly confessions by monks and introduced an annual week of prayer and fasting for monks and laymen alike. The sect that came into existence as a result of these reforms was called the Gelugpa—the School of the Virtuous—but was popularly referred to as the Yellow Caps.

Lamaism and Catholicism

The reformed Lamaism of Tsang-Khapa, which subsequently became the official reli-

gion of Tibet, bears a number of striking resemblances to Catholicism in the matter of ritual and organization. The French missionaries, Huc and Gabet, who visited Lhasa in 1842, recorded the following observations:

'The crozier, the mitre, and chasuble, the cardinal's robe... the double choir at the Divine Office, the chants, the exorcism, the censer with five chains, the blessing which the Lhamas impart by extending the right hand over the heads of the faithful, the rosary, the celibacy of the clergy, their separation from the world, the worship of saints, the fasts, processions, litanies, holy water—these are the points of contact which the Buddhists have with us.'

Some scholars have ventured the opinion that these features of Lamaism were due to the influence on Tsang-Khapa of a Catholic missionary. It is a fact that Nestorian Christianity had established itself in Central Asia several centuries before Tsang-Khapa's time and that contacts existed between Tibetan and Nestorian monks. But whether it was Catholicism that influenced Lamaism or vice versa is a moot point.

Lamas and Mongols

During Tsang-Khapa's lifetime, the Yellow Caps built the great Ganden monastery near Lhasa. Within a few years of his death, two more Yellow Cap monasteries sprang up near Lhasa. Since Tibetan monasteries subsisted on land owned by them, and maintained armed guards for the protection of these lands, the appearance of these three monasteries was viewed with distaste and even alarm by the Red Caps. Notwithstanding the fact that their Chief Lama had, since the days of Phags-pa, been the formal repository of supreme temporal authority, the Red Caps were conscious of the comparative weakness of their armed strength in and around the capital. Thus the stage was set for a long

era of bitter warfare between the Red Caps and the Yellow Caps.

The course taken by this struggle, and therefore the fate of Lamaism itself, was to a large extent determined by the Mongols. Already Kublai Khan had been responsible for giving a crucial turn to Lamaism by investing the Chief Lama of Sakya with temporal authority. This step inaugurated theocratic rule in Tibet and helped to make Lamaism the most potent factor in the nation's life.

The vigorous missionary activities of the Yellow Caps in Mongolia and Siberia nurtured a tradition of warm friendliness between them and the Mongols. In 1578 A.D. the powerful Mongol Chief, Altan Khan, invited the third head of the order to his capital and conferred on him the title of Tā-le Lama. The word Tā-le, which stands for Ocean (in this context Ocean of Wisdom), was in the course of time corrupted to the form Dalai. The Chief Lamas of the Yellow Caps have ever since been known as Dalai Lamas.

It was a Mongol Chief again who came to the rescue of the Yellow Caps when, towards the middle of the seventeenth century, they were in danger of being overwhelmed by their traditional enemies, the Red Caps. Having entrenched themselves strongly in the southern province of Tsang, the Red Caps launched a violent offensive against the Yellow Cap monasteries. Finding himself in dire straits, Lo-zang, the Chief Abbot of the Yellow Caps and the fifth Dalai Lama, appealed for help to the Mongol, Gusri Khan. Gusri Khan seems to have held Lo-zang in very high regard, for he not only cleared Tsang province of the marauding Red Caps but made a present of it to the Dalai Lama, leaving him master of practically the whole of Tibet. Thus was the supremacy of the Yellow Caps finally

established and the whole of Tibet brought under unified theocratic control.

Incarnated Lamas

Lo-zang's regime is noteworthy also as the period when the doctrine of incarnated Lamas, an essential ingredient of present-day Lamaism, came into its own. Perhaps because of his remarkable success, Lo-zang was recognized as the incarnation of the Bodhisattava Avilokitesvara. At the same time, the Lama of the Tashil-humpo monastery in Southern Tibet, traditionally the Deputy Chief Lama of the Yellow Caps, was declared to be the incarnation of the Dhyani Buddha, Amitabha, and several Lamas lower down in the priestly hierarchy were associated with the lesser gods of the Buddhist pantheon.

The doctrine of incarnated Lamas naturally entailed difficulties in the matter of locating a dead Lama's successor. But a suitable technique was soon evolved. According to Tibetan belief, the souls of the dead remain in a state of *bardo* or disembodiment for a period of 49 days or so before being incarnated afresh. Moreover, a re-incarnated Lama is believed to have the ability to recognize persons and objects connected with his previous incarnation. When a Dalai Lama dies, a conclave of senior Lamas, presided over by the Panchen Lama, begins the search for his successor. A number of children born at the appropriate time and satisfying certain omens are selected and confronted with articles belonging to the erstwhile Dalai Lama. The child who recognizes these articles is declared to be the new Dalai Lama and removed to a monastery for training in his future duties.

The Magic Formula

Such are the strands that have gone into the making of the fabric of Lamaism. As in the case of almost all other religions, a considerable gulf has developed in the

course of centuries between the basic teachings and the popular practice of this faith. While the monk in his cell carries on his great tradition of scholarship and the hermit in his cave strives for salvation through amazingly difficult yogic practices, the man in the street bows low before the image of Bodhisattava or Dhyani Buddha and repeats the magic formula '*Om Mani Padme Hum*'. Literally this formula means 'Hail, the jewel is in the lotus' and refers, in all probability, to the mystic union resulting in *maha-sukha*. Be that as it may, the average Tibetan has an unbounded faith in its efficacy as a prayer. As if not content with

chanting it himself at every conceivable opportunity, he harnesses the wind and the water to utter it for him. The countryside is speckled with silken flags inscribed with the magic words and every flap of every flag is regarded as a prayer. Pieces of paper carrying the inscription are enclosed in drums to form prayer wheels, which are exposed to the wind or to flowing water, so that with every rotation they may cast up a silent prayer. Whatever one may think of this unique custom of vicarious praying, it certainly constitutes impressive evidence of the prevalence of piety in the land of the Lamas.

When an organisation which is a machine becomes a central force, political, commercial, educational or religious, it obstructs the free flow of inner life of the people and waylays and exploits it for the augmentation of its own power. Today, such concentration of power is fast multiplying on the outside and the cry of the oppressed spirit of man is in the air which struggles to free itself from the grip of the screws and bolts of unmeaning obsessions.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Historical Re-thinking in and out of Classrooms

By KIRTI N. CHAUDHURI

I

HISTORIANS, whether ancient or modern, have always felt the need for a consistent outlook or some underlying principle in writing history. We all know what a brilliant historian Thucydides was; his penetrating analyses, vivid descriptions, the judicious restraint of his narrative, exaggerated almost to the point of baldness, are held up as a model to the would-be historian. But a close study of his work would reveal puzzling problems, and F. M. Cornford has shown in a monograph that Thucydides was strongly influenced (in the choice of his materials) by the conception of tragic forces governing human destiny, such as is to be found in Greek drama. I do not know if Cornford's views are accepted by other Hellenists, but it is an undoubted fact that Thucydides's presentation of the events of the Peloponnesian War leading to the downfall of Athens has a very great resemblance to the sequence of events in the Attic tragedies. After historical facts have been gathered and their accuracy established from the sources at the disposal of the historian, his next task is selecting them and arranging them in a historical narrative, explained and made intelligible according to any particular pattern that he might choose to adopt. Just as all political action requires a self-conscious programme, some theoretical basis of operation, so the writing of history involves the discovery of patterns visible in or merely implied by the past events.

As a Cambridge historian—R. W. K. Hinton—pointed out in a broadcast talk, patterns that involve cause and effect may be called models, which are the devices for

showing how things work, whatever they might be, an election, a rebellion, or the whole process of changes in the past. The highest point in historical art is perhaps the invention and use of effective models. But models and patterns of historical writing change along with the current of political and social activities of a certain age; or, to put it in another way, the prejudices, the dominant ideas, the propagandist predilections of a particular period do not remain the same. It is at such points of transition that historians begin to look for new models and new patterns. During the post-war period a major shift in historical thinking has been taking place among British and American historians, and I suppose among those of other countries as well, and they have been asking themselves whether or not the old presentation of historical facts did not obscure the truth. The facts remain the same, it is only a question of looking at them in another way.

II

The chief characteristic of the present trend is a continuous urge to find not only fresh approaches but also new aspects of historical treatment. Although it had become visible much earlier, it is in recent years that its widespread application has radically altered the channels of historical thought, calling for an ever-widening frame of reference, capable of containing within itself various institutional aspects of human society in their historical evolution. Ever since Ranke and his disciples established the critical school or the so-called objective methods of history, historians have been busy mastering the essential technique of

historical research, and during the last one hundred years it has been successfully applied to political and military history; to the study of governments, and to constitutional and legal institutions. But even after historical research had reached this stage, historians remained mainly occupied with the outward manifestation of power, seeking its origin in the political structure. In this they were still following the example of the first modern political thinker of Europe, Machiavelli, who attempted to build up a systematic and self-conscious mode of statecraft on the basis of his theory that unchanging human nature leads to the recurrence of historical situations in perpetuity. He held the cyclical view of political progress; but it was the first attempt, if a somewhat crude one, to find the basis of power on a purely secular level.

With the present-day emphasis on economic institutions we have reached a further stage, and are moving from a kind of constitutional and political determinism to economic determinism. Not all historians would accept the Marxist view of history; but whether or not economic forces play such a decisive part as some historians assign to them, it is no longer possible to ignore them. It is easy to understand this change over. For in the last fifty years or less there has taken place an overwhelming transformation in the conception of the state's functions in relation to the activities of society as a whole, and this has been brought about by changes in the methods of production leading to a redistribution of power among the various social classes in the Western countries. The type of economy that has been evolving in Europe for the last four hundred years is being modified by new forms of political control, and in countries like Britain where it was associated with a limited parliamentary democracy it has taken certain distinct forms to suit the new political climate. In its totalitarian form, on the other hand, the Russian Revolution and the triumph of the Soviet system as a successful political experiment has created a level of managerial dominance in

the State that is unique in its institutional character in the history of mankind.

There have been other factors operating also. The sudden emergence of the United States to global leadership and the intense political rivalry with the Soviet Union, accentuated as it is by ideological and institutional differences, have given rise to a passionate interplay of ideas such as has not been seen since the days of the reformation controversy in Europe. Just as, on the one hand, the new patterns of international relationship between new types of societies provoke considerable rethinking as to the basis of power within the State and power-politics outside, so, on the other, it has involved a revision of the whole nature of the contact between Asia and Europe and of British and European imperialism as the manifestation and result of the fundamental creative urge of the Western world. This has been put very clearly by the American historian Karl A. Wittfogel whose recently published book *The Oriental Despotism* has caused some flutter in the academic world. 'The systematic campaign of the leading Soviet ideologists, headed by Stalin himself,' he comments, 'against the concept of Oriental society as a specific structural and operational system re-emphasizes the desirability of investigating this concept which is rooted in the thought of such pioneer institutional analysts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as Adam Smith, Malthus, Richard Jones, James and John Stuart Mill and—closely approaching them in this respect—Marx and Engels.'

But the writing of history requires other ingredients besides the science of analysis. If a particular age, its spirit and aspirations, are to be understood from the point of view of another age, it is essential to have recourse to what Hugh Trevor-Roper, the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, calls the historical imagination. In the past certain institutions were neglected or given less importance by the historians and hence pioneer work is needed in certain cases to establish the fact of their true importance in human history. The sociologi-

cal analysis of phenomena like the Renaissance, the Reformation, or the English constitutional struggle of the seventeenth century is absolutely essential to explain the cross-currents of political events. This is recognized by everybody, and Van Martin's *The Sociology of the Renaissance*, Pascal's *The Social Basis of the German Reformation*, and the works of Tawney and Max Weber belong to this category.

III

When, however, this has been done and the facts of history, whether they relate to institutions or to political events, are clearly established, it is the purpose of the historian to recreate the past in such a way as to show the mechanics of a particular age from inside. In the spring term of 1958, the distinguished Tudor scholar, Dr. G. R. Elton of Oxford, came and spoke before our History Society in London, and the first thing he warned us against was the mistake of judging the past in the light of the present. The Tudor society, he pointed out, was very different from ours, and added that it would indeed be dreadful if it were not. Macaulay, and those who carried on his traditions like Trevelyan or C. V. Wedgwood, recognized the use of imagination in re-creating historical scenes. Macaulay went on travel to visit the places he was writing about and ransacked the archives of the countries concerned. But the power of description and vividness of narration do not constitute the whole of historical imagination. It is also important to guard against the projection of ideas belonging to the present into the past. Motley's *Revolt of the Netherlands* is one of the monumental historical works in the English language. Yet, Professor Trevor-Roper wonders if it is much better than dismal tushery-novels like *Ivanhoe* or *Quentin Durward*. 'His facts are good enough,' says Professor Trevor-Roper, 'but his characters are not sixteenth century characters at all: they are Victorian dummies, with Victorian pre-

judices, made bogusly picturesque with ruffs and doublets'.

It is now possible to review the nineteenth century developments in the whole historical context of the modern age and trace the emergence of the industrial society from the preceding period, which itself was a revolutionary one in contrast to the medieval society it had superseded. The greater resources of the historian has made it possible to apply the same methods of study to the history of the 16th and 17th centuries as has been used for the more recent period. From the student's point of view any radical re-thinking in the history of political institutions and East-West relations must necessarily start with the period that saw the genesis of modern society, the creation of the geographical pattern of its political states and the evolution of the present economic system. Professor Denys Hay's book, *The Emergence of an Idea*, is the latest contribution to this absorbing and fascinating subject. The word Europe, standing for a particular kind of civilization with all its subtle psychological characteristics contained in its spiritual and moral values, as well as in its specific technological and scientific system, has played such a vital part in the thoughts of all past historians, and also of politicians who were in a position to shape the destinies of their nations, that an examination of the origin of this concept is an essential factor in the understanding of the political behaviour of the European nations. Professor Hay reveals in his analysis the complicated process through which the conception of universal Christendom tending to be equated with geographical Europe under the threat of militant Islam was replaced by that of Europe in the modern sense.

IV

Apart from these studies of general historical movements, there are others of a more specific nature. For example, the whole phenomenon of the Renaissance is now being re-examined, though much of

the efforts of scholars is merely directed to the consideration of the implications suggested by the term *renaissance* or *re-birth*, first given systematic currency by Michelet in the early 19th century. Fifty years ago it was quite easy to define what the nature and significance of the movement was, as the ideas and interpretations of Jacob Burckhardt and J. A. Symonds were still influential then. Today, progress in medieval studies and greater knowledge of the transition from the middle ages to the modern age have revealed such complexities and variations in the conception of what has been traditionally known as the 'Renaissance' that some scholars would like to write the term off the board altogether.

Much more interesting from a general point of view is, perhaps, the re-interpretation of the origin of English parliamentary government and the struggle between the King and parliament in the 17th century. The principles of constitutional issues have lost a great deal of their urgency and vitality as the political systems in the various parts of the world have more or less shaken down to a period of stability. But the English parliamentary institutions have had such immense influence in Europe and elsewhere that the question of their origin still interests the historians in all the freshness of the problem, even though it has been worked over and over again for three centuries. Moreover, the virtual overthrow in France of the Fourth Republic and her democratic constitution under military pressure has once again rippled the calm waters of constitutional developments; and almost all English writers of political columns have been referring to the period when their own constitution was last disturbed, dwelling with pride on its stability, the same behaviour of the men in charge of it, and on the principle of complete subordination of the military to the civil authorities which has been in force ever since Englishmen discovered under Cromwell's Protectorship how intolerable any

meddling by the army in the government of the country could be.

General Monk, that enigmatical personality in an age of turmoil and conflict, was the man of the hour: he put back the clock and restored Charles II to the throne from which the Republicans had thrown down his father. The turning point in the struggle, however, was neither 1649 nor 1660 but the bloodless Revolution of 1688 which established the rules of the game once and for all. Politically, it was a triumph for the Whigs or the party that had opposed the Tory doctrine of non-resistance to the absolutism of the King and stood for constitutionalism. The Whig victory and their view of the constitution was taken up and interpreted as a theory of positive political progress by a group of historians known as the Whig historians. Henry Hallam, who wrote his constitutional history at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was the great exponent of this interpretation of English history, and his traditions were carried forward by generations of historians well into our century. The Whig view postulates that the essential character of English government has been a continuous progress towards liberty and self-government culminating in the limited monarchy of the present day and punctuated by occasional periods when kings have tried to impose tyrannical rule on their subjects.

V

The Whig interpretation held the field for over a hundred years; it was taught in schools and universities and was the life-line of the English historians in the formative period of historical studies. The success of the Whig model was due to the fact that it revealed the pattern of English history and at the same time provided the underlying motive—that of restoring and guarding the true constitution which the people never forgot. In its brevity, lucidity, and consistency with the general line of political development the principle was wonderfully efficacious. But modern research

ches and ideas arising out of it have at last reversed the Whig trend, and it would seem that the decisions of the judges who consistently upheld the legality of Charles I's actions have in the end triumphed. It was not so long ago that Mr. J. Hurstfield, Reader in modern history in the University College of London, thought it necessary to remind us at a tutorial meeting that it was not the king but the parliament which sabotaged the government and made co-operation impossible.

With the constitutional model on the decline, another type of pattern is now being sought in the economic changes in the standing of the social classes leading to political changes. This is to be found in the well-known controversy carried on in the pages of the *Economic History Review* between Professor Tawney and his disciple Mr. Laurence Stone on one hand, and Professor Trevor-Roper on the other, over the question of the significance of the social classes and their relative economic strength on the English Civil War. It is an established fact that the class known as the 'Gentry', composed of the squires and small land-owners, with a certain amount of switching backwards and forwards from the professional classes played a vital role in the struggle that demanded for the parliament a share in the government. It was this class that was best represented in the House of Commons, and it was they who stood to benefit most from any immediate change in the constitution in favour of the parliament.

In 1941 Professor Tawney first published a paper in which he put forward the view that in the second half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth, the Gentry class captured the economic ascendancy in England and their rise was accompanied by a parallel movement in the opposite direction in the fortunes of the aristocracy. This argument was further carried forward in two more articles by Mr Laurence Stone in which he proved the economic and moral bankruptcy of the aristocracy and the consequent loss of their

political power in the late Elizabethan and Jacobean age.

To this Professor Trevor-Roper replied in two articles with some startling ideas about the interpretation of the age in question. He does not deny the political role of the gentry but for him the explanation was not the rising economic strength of the class. On the contrary, it was the very opposite, the decline of the gentry, that led them to make a bid for seizing political power. He has tried to show that very far from declining, the aristocracy was stronger than ever, and that it was really the gentry that was declining. We can see that the main difference of opinion in the historical interpretation of the age arises from a fundamentally different view of the source of power. Professor Tawney believed that power followed wealth, while Professor Trevor-Roper believed that wealth followed power. Hence for one, the constitutional struggle between the Crown and Parliament is to be explained by the economic rise of the gentry; for the other, by their decline.

Tawney's view, to which Trevor-Roper pays a somewhat cynical tribute by calling the period he had interpreted 'Tawney's age', has exercised great influence. I think his thesis is of some interest to the student of Indian history, for it has peculiar relevance to the Indian situation. If we examine the social basis of the element that showed itself politically conscious during the last seventy years or so in India, it would at once become apparent that it consisted almost entirely of the professional middle-class which was itself created out of the landed gentry class by the changing needs of society under the influence of British rule. Independence brought power to this class of people, and the former ruling element in the country, the Princes, who were supported by the alien and despotic government, lost heavily by comparison. But if the parallel between the late Elizabethan and Stuart age and the twentieth century India is valid in the control of political power by a particular class, it must also be admitted that the economic factors are

decidedly obscure. The Princes lost because they had clung too close to the foreign Power, whether by choice or compulsion. The Rajput chief, who delighted his English masters by exclaiming in broken English that he would go out with his lancers and kill the babus of Calcutta, did not have the foresight to see that his power depended on the support of the British and that with their withdrawal the babus could effectively clip his wings. It may be that the Gentry controversy could be made a little more realistic by comparison with a recent and similar development elsewhere.

VI

I have gone into this question in some detail, because it illustrates so well the kind of change that has been taking place in historical interpretation. The case of East and West relationship is no less striking, though the diversity of opinion here is necessarily much greater since the ideas that are being dispelled had nothing like the consistency, unity, or the strength of the Whig model. Nevertheless, Seeley and Lyle are now as out of fashion as the pioneer work of the Dutch scholar Van Leur and the writings of C. R. Boxer are popular among the historians. No one, perhaps, has done more or knows more about the early Asian and European relations in this country than Charles Boxer, Camoens Professor of Portuguese at the University of London. He is something of a legend in academic circles. With long silvery hair brushed back across his head, he looks like a diplomat, and it is said that his Portuguese assistant does all the humdrum teaching for him at the university while he himself remains immersed in research in his immense and valuable library. I was lucky enough to hear the one lecture he gave in the university in 1957: it was as interesting as his writings are inspiring to all students of early Eurasian history.

In his great work *Japan's Christian Century* Professor Boxer has made not only the most complete and an extremely reada-

ble study of the European missionary organization in Asia under the influence of the Counter-Reformation, but also of the general nature of the Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean and the Far East. The result of Professor Boxer's research has been to dispel the notions current in works like those of his predecessor, Prestage, who, when looking for the causes of the Portuguese military and naval success, was writing in the twenties that the answer was to be found in the moral superiority of the White Man, in the self-confidence and reckless valour of the conquistadors. Professor Boxer showed instead that far from being superior and blood-thirsty conquerors depending on the sword for the maintenance of their power, the Portuguese after some initial clashes quickly fell in harmony with the existing pattern of Asian power-politics and their trading-system, and this came to be the mainstay of their strength. Neither was the Portuguese hold on the East-West trade so strong, nor did their arrival have such dynamic effects on the Asian inter-port trade as had been generally assumed. Any superiority that might have existed in their military equipment was soon levelled down by the interchange of ideas, and the Portuguese in the East served a useful purpose rather by acting as peaceful traders.

These general conclusions are also substantially true of the Dutch and English activities in the East, and their importance lies in the criticism of the attitude of the European historians of Asia with their minds centred on Europe. In this respect Van Leur's thesis on Indonesian trade and society published in 1934 was the first major revolutionary interpretation of the nature of the contact between the northern maritime Powers and the Asian societies. He was killed in the battle of the Java Sea at the age of thirty-four, and his ideas remained unnoticed for a long time. But since the war their influence can be found practically in everything that has appeared on the subject. The main contention in Van Leur's thesis, in which he attempted to apply the sociological doctrines and methods

of Max Weber to early Asian society and trading system with special reference to Indonesia, was to prove the equality of the Asian cultural forms and trading techniques (which, he believed, survived till the full effects of Western industrial revolution and modern capitalism could make themselves felt) with those of the Western countries. 'Again and again we encounter Asian historical traits standing beside European', he says, 'as of equal value in the process of contact between "East" and "West".' The pattern of the seventeenth century, he poin-

ted out, belongs in another configuration as far as economics is concerned, and the modern idea that political domination in colonial lands is based on the preponderance of a more highly developed economic system needs here to be discarded. These ideas may now appear familiar and almost elementary, but it is their emphasis on the institutional studies that has led the study of European activity in Asia from being the history of stuffy forts, trading factories, and meaningless rounds of battles to a truer understanding of the events.

In order to avoid unnecessary delay all contributions (except book-reviews) and correspondence regarding these should be addressed to **The Editors, 5, Pearl Road, Calcutta 17.** Book-reviews, books for review and all correspondence concerning business matters are to be addressed to **The Business Manager, Quest, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 1.**

The Party and the Truth

Polemics in Poland

We give below in translation extracts from two articles: the first, under the title 'Karl Marx and the Classical Definition of Truth', by L. Kolakowski, appeared in *Studia Filozoficzne* (1959, 2), and was an expanded version of a lecture given in the University of Tübingen in December 1958. Kolakowski is Professor of Philosophy in the University of Warsaw; the second article is a reply to the first, and was written by Adam Schaff, also a Professor of Philosophy in the University of Warsaw and a member of the Central Committee of the Polish Communist Party; it appeared in *Nowe Drogi* (1959, 13) under the title 'Studies of the Young Marx: Marginalia to Kolakowski's article'. Since the articles were too long to reproduce in full, we have given extracts, and where necessary summarised the passages not given in translation; these are printed in italics.

I

THE end of the 19th century gave birth to two different though as a rule not clearly distinguished theories which attempted to represent man's practical activity as one of the primary categories of epistemological reflection. One of them—which we may call Marxism with a positivist orientation, and which is expounded in the philosophical writings of Engels—appeals to the *success* of human action as the criterion by which it is possible and right to *verify* the knowledge taken to be true when any activity was initiated. The other, which found its classical though extremely careless and imprecise expression in the works of William James, introduces the concept of practical *utility* as an element in the *definition* of truth, understanding utility not as an instrument to establish a truth in human knowledge independent of man himself, but as that which itself *creates* truth. Truth therefore is relative, varying according to its application in everyday life.

Let me stress a few points which show the contradiction between the two doctrines. One of them treats truth as a relation between judgment or opinion and the reality to which they refer, a relation which is independent of the knowledge which man has of it. Man's practical activity most certainly does not create truth, but only determines its realisation.

The role of practical human activity as a criterion, as a method of verification, consists in the practical application of our knowledge in the hope of obtaining a specific result; success confirms the truth of our knowledge, failure compels us to abandon or modify it, but these procedures do not in the least affect the fact that a judgment is either false or true. If, for example, we are today uncertain whether there are rational beings living

in the solar system elsewhere than on our planet, it is none the less certain that the statement: 'there are other rational beings besides those on earth' is, here and now, either true or false; for judgments have the property of being true or false independently of whether we know that property or are capable of proving its existence. From this point of view the classical definition of truth remains fully in force, taking into account that a statement is true or false in itself on the necessary and sufficient condition that the circumstances and processes are as it says in the reality which it is describing, and irrespective of whether anyone has succeeded or indeed ever will succeed in establishing this congruity by the criterion of practice or by any other. In this sense the relativity of knowledge can be accepted without difficulty; this concept is used with reference to the progress of human knowledge, inasmuch as human knowledge will never succeed in formulating scientific generalisations in a manner which precisely defines their validity or applicability.

This doctrine, universally accepted in Marxist circles, was popularised in Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*—but it was also generalised; for Lenin considered it possible to apply the doctrine not only to judgments, but also to sense impressions which, he said, 'copy', 'photograph', 'reflect,' etc., the objects of the external world. These expressions, it is true, were not favourably received by positivists; their content was too heavily charged with troublesome ambiguities. It seems to me, however, that with certain stipulations they can be accommodated, without detriment to Lenin's thought, within the framework of that classical definition of truth to which the Marxist tradition, since Engels, has appealed. It is obvious in any case that both authors mentioned understood the development of man's conceptual apparatus as an effort

aimed at a continually more exact copying of the external world which is considered as a pre-existing model; that according to them human cognition, though incapable of absolutely and finally mastering its object, approaches it in a constant and progressive evolution, and that its unlimited improvement tends to make it more and more *like* reality; that it imitates more and more faithfully all the time the properties and relations of the world, which are themselves independent of this effort and exist in themselves outside human thought.

In the other theory mentioned, man's practical activity was raised to the level of an epistemological category in such a way that its functions are not confined to the verification of the congruity of human knowledge with a previously existing model, but are extended to the definition of the very concept of truth, falsehood, and nonsense.

Kolakowski notes that he is concerning himself here only with the central distinctive concept of Pragmatism in its first modern version.

In this version of Pragmatism—not the only one, as we know—the truth of a judgment is defined as a function of the practical advantage which its acceptance or rejection gives a man. . . . According to this doctrine the truth or falsity of an assertion is made to depend on the individual and the sum of the needs which determine his aspirations at a given moment. To be true means to satisfy the criterion of utility. Truth is not a relation independent of its confirmation: it comes into being at the moment of its confirmation. This can be regarded as a variant of idealism, insofar as that doctrine holds no judgment is meaningful unless there is given a certain consciousness in relation to which the judgment is or is not valid.

In contrast to the theory described above as Marxism with a positivist orientation, the Pragmatist concept can obviously not be reconciled with the classical definition of truth. According to the first theory human cognition, limited as it is in its main lines by man's biological and social needs, nonetheless strives in a gradual and infinite approximation towards an absolute copy of a reality existing beforehand and always primary in relation to cognition, although subject to changes; cognition is equally a means of satisfying human needs and at the same time an instrument which allows us to describe the world as it is 'in itself'. According to the other doctrine, cognition is a form of biologi-

cal reaction facilitating the optimum adaptation of particular organisms to their medium. The classical Pragmatist conception of cognition is in reality purely biological; you can say meaningfully that the reaction of an organism to the stimuli of its medium is or is not adequate, that is to say useful or harmful for the preservation of the organism. Such evaluations are applied also to cognition; it can be qualified from the same point of view and assessed as true or false according to its results. But to ask whether a judgment is true or false in the ordinary sense, i.e., whether its content corresponds to the world 'in itself', would be as fruitless an operation as to ask whether a patellar reflex is true or false. It is not known what 'resemblance' between the content of cognition and objects is supposed to mean. But it is easy to understand the question whether the sum of biological reactions called cognition effectively helps the organism to orient itself in its medium, whether it satisfies the needs or instincts of the organism. . . .

Kolakowski finds in Spinoza's view of the world what he has hypothetically indicated as the basis of the young Marx's epistemology: the idea that nature made up of particular parts and categories is an 'artificial' creation, arising from man's practical needs and his effort to master nature. The analogy holds, however, only up to this point. Spinoza believed that the conditioning of the intellect by its everyday practical activity made it incapable of authentic knowledge of reality, but that there existed a higher cognitive instrument—the power of intuition—free from the distortions which theoretical reason could not escape. Spinoza's intuition, in one version at least, like Kant's practical reason, made possible the penetration of reality 'in itself', which is concealed by the distorting images of imagination and the empirical sciences. Marx rejects this enigmatic world, consigning it to the category of questions which are not susceptible of meaningful formulation. For Marx the creation of an object 'for use' is identical with the act of destroying the object 'in itself'.

If the rejection of illusory images of knowledge which copies nature 'in itself' separates the epistemology of Marx from ideas of positivistic or scientific inspiration, the rejection of knowledge which could assimilate reality by intuitive integration weakens possible analogies with Bergsonian thought. In this system, which it would be superfluous to expound here, we find the same Spinozan tendency to overcome the limitations and distortions

inevitably imposed on us by discursive knowledge; to deprive discursive knowledge, precisely in view of its practical origin, of the validity at which the disinterested contemplation of truth aims. But Marx rejects the contrast between a world made in the image of man and a world pre-existing 'in itself', which you may try to grasp by the hopeless effort to transcend yourself as a human being. For the same reason, from Marx's viewpoint, it would be wrong to stigmatise discursive knowledge as 'distorted', since distortion, even if the word is relieved of its pejorative aura, could be confirmed only if we possessed a model with which the distorted image could be compared; an impossible operation since the world, as it is given to human kind, cannot be transcended. We have no right to suppose that pre-existing reality carries in itself qualities of human reality, nor have we any tools to explore the nature and kind of the distortions which it undergoes when it abandons its transcendental to reveal itself to our eyes. Without denying its existence, or declaring it to be unknowable, we reject it as a possible object of investigation...

If it would be true, from Marx's point of view, to say consciousness is things thought of, his idea can be even more correctly generalised in the statement that things are consciousness reified. The first assertion concerns only the origin of consciousness in the contacts of the human species with the resistance of its medium considered generally as a totality or a pre-existing 'chaos'; the second takes into account the world of things already formed and differentiated amongst themselves; the first of the two worlds is the primal *universum* 'in itself', the Spinozan substance, while the second consists of objects with various qualities organised into categories, into groups preserved in human thought and language.

The existence of this 'chaos' is, however, by no means unimportant to epistemology; it is this precisely which defines the contrast between the Marxian and the Pragmatist theories of truth. Truth understood as a relation of 'resemblance' between human judgments and an absolutely independent reality is not indeed acceptable in the Marxian image of the world, but at least it does not consist exclusively in a relationship of biological correspondence, i.e., a relation between the judgment and its practical utility to the individual who makes it. On this basis we are forced to admit that reality is not only produced entirely *ex nihilo* for each particular individual, but also that this creation must be remade for the individual at every moment; for it is possible and probable that a judgment ac-

cepted as true at one moment on the strength of the criterion of utility will become a moment later useless, so devoid of sense or harmful, and therefore false. Pragmatist relativism—of which these formulations, though extreme, are none the less an unavoidable consequence if we take the 'classical' statements of James seriously and literally—cannot be reconciled with Marx's thought, and this for two main reasons. The first is the impossibility of creation *ex nihilo*; the second, the conception of human consciousness as a social instrument which cannot be reduced to the behaviour of particular organisms. Therefore reality is not the sum of the phenomena whose existence some individual finds it advantageous to affirm at a certain moment, or which constitute the momentary response of his consciousness to the promptings of his vital needs. There exists a reality common to all people, which remains constantly in its original state, a reality where the phenomenon of creation certainly takes place, but where a certain constant is also preserved, corresponding to what may be called human nature or the sum of human characteristics, biological needs, and social relationships which can properly be considered invariable. The concept of human nature retains its validity to the extent that the concept of a reality which is permanent as an epistemological category (a reality accessible to man, and so the only reality worth taking into account), is justified. The Aristotelean concept of truth applies also to this reality. The congruity of judgment and reality is no longer a relation of 'resemblance' between that judgment and the world 'in itself'; it applies to that world on which man has already imposed 'substantial forms'...

Kolakowski expands this 'not altogether classical' variant of the classical theory of truth, concluding that the replacement of God by man in Feuerbach leads Marx to the discovery of the world as a human product. Kolakowski then turns to the important consequences of this embryonic Marxian epistemology—which he thinks worthy of further development—in the field of the criticism of historical knowledge.

It is impossible to imagine that the human character of the world can ever be transcended in the cognition of man, who gave it this form. But the opinion is sometimes held that we are capable of liberating ourselves from everything in our image of the world which is imposed on us by changing historical conditions, or that an objective view of the world is possible within the

limits determined by unchanging 'human nature'. This question has been much discussed with reference to man's knowledge of historical truth.

It seems possible here to adopt the standpoint from which Marx views the question of cognition in general, and regard historical knowledge as a function of tasks imposed on the investigator by his epoch. He analyses historical material and chooses his conceptual tools according to criteria of validity supplied by his own time and his particular milieu. In the history of ideas different interpretations of the same set of facts can give, each of them, a satisfactory explanation of all the phenomena observed. The historian of ideas often attributes to a thinker answers to questions which he had certainly never asked, but which the historian regards as valid from the standpoint of his own epoch. There is nothing surprising in this, and nothing from which we can free ourselves if the historical sciences are to exist. The historian of ideas is interested in understanding and interpreting known facts at least as much as in discovering facts previously hidden, and conflicting interpretations of the same facts can be defended, so that there is little hope that an absolutely definitive interpretation can ever be established once and for all. Technical criteria help us to choose between interpretations only to a limited extent. They make it possible to eliminate fantastic and grotesque interpretations but do not abolish the wide range of conflicting and tenable interpretations. It is rather unlikely that any new Platonic texts will be discovered, but certain that Plato's thought will never cease to be interpreted in the most various ways, and that no final version will ever establish itself permanently. It is the same with all historical work which makes advances without relying on new data. This situation is understandable if we take into account that we ask the thinkers of the past questions which our own situation imposes on us and which they did not ask themselves, because the sum of concepts which we use to investigate a problem took shape in our epoch....

Kolakowski goes on to argue that there is a limit to this similarity between scientific historical creation and the creative action of the human race as a whole upon its material 'substance'. The historian's use of a particular conceptual apparatus is conditioned by differences not only between historical epochs, but also between the world views which different social classes and groups create in one and the same epoch. When distinct representations of the same set of facts co-exist, and

when each of them stands up to technical scrutiny, the choice between them is determined by a more general choice—the choice of a particular world-view, which forms an integral part of historical interpretation. In different world-views there are always and inevitably unverifiable elements, so that at a certain stage of analysis it is difficult to describe further decisions as choices between truth and falsehood.

It follows from our previous observations that from Marx's point of view the choice of values or rather—since it is not a question of deliberate and voluntary acts—of preferences determined by practical considerations, forms an indispensable part of human cognition. To put it differently, the things of which our world is made up are chosen since they are created (in the meaning which we have here given to that word). It might seem then that the acceptance of certain values is implicit in every act of cognition, which could give grounds for supposing that the previously mentioned difference between the two possible forms of intellectual assimilation is baseless. This is not really so, if we take into account that the evaluations or rather the practical principles inextricably bound up with human cognition, understood generally, must not only be unconscious if they are to exercise their influence, but have taken on the form of a constant *habitus* peculiar to man as such, and so historically invariable. Hence there is no need to remember them or take account of them at all in intellectual work. These principles, common to the whole human species, have made our external world what it is, constant in its basic divisions; the values and preferences which we have put into this world are now latent in it, and the world has lost, in our eyes, the stamp we have given it and its constant human coefficient; the stamp is born and dies with man: there is no reason for man to retain a separate consciousness of it. This world can be regarded as a given thing, since no other exists and since everything we have added to it or fashioned in it has undergone, as far as we are concerned, a process of fossilisation into reality quasi—"in itself". It is different in the case of those principles and practical preferences which change in the course of human history, the variations of which are clearly visible to man, and which divide the species into classes, peoples, professions, sexes, generations, character types, specific life situations—in short, everything which somehow influences the sum of the values which each of us is inclined to put above others. It is obvious that this world of values

is not automatically created by the world of things, which is common to almost everyone and in which habits common to the whole species are implicit; the description of this first world, or rather these many different worlds (of value judgments) cannot be deduced from the description of the other (from judgments about facts, if we accept this clumsy term). In this sense the Positivist objection is justified.

This attempted exposition of what I believe to be the basis of Marx's epistemology leads to a simple conclusion: Marxism at its inception formulated an embryonic project for a theory of knowledge which, later on in the evolution of the school of thought identified by Marx's name, was replaced by the radically different conception of Engels, and more particularly of Lenin. (I say more particularly because of the extreme formulations which Lenin used to describe his theory of reflection and of a consciousness which copies and imitates reality.) Let us dispense with analysis of the reasons which contributed to this peculiar development. There are certainly more than one (in the case of Engels we can hardly omit the simple influence of Positivist scientism, which was widespread in his day, and in Lenin's case the influence of the Russian materialist tradition; but this is only part of the explanation).

When we study Marx's manuscripts we also find obvious connections, which he himself made, between his conception of knowledge, his 'denaturalisation' of the world, and the idea of the abolition of human alienation by a communist society. And although there is nowadays nothing easier than to point out how very utopian was Marx's conviction that 'communism as the positive abolition of private property' is identical with the abolition of human alienation in general, we may believe that his epistemological point of departure has not for that reason become philosophically unproductive. We know of other, analogous ideas—entangled in different contexts and so taking on different meanings—which appeared quite independently of the Marxist tradition in the work of many philosophers.

It is in any case probable that a certain method for the analysis of human knowledge, both for everyday experience and for the arts and sciences, could be worked out on the basis of this fundamental idea of Marx: man the cognitive creature is only a part of the whole man; this part is continually involved in the process of progressive autonomisation, in spite of which it can only be

understood as a function of the continuous dialogue between human needs and their objects; this dialogue, which is called work, creates both the human species and its external world, which for this reason is accessible to man only in its humanised form. In this sense it can be said that nowhere in the whole universe could man find a well so deep that he would not see his own face at the bottom of it.

L. KOLAKOWSKI

II

What should we say of attempts to detach the young Marx from the mature Marx, or to set them against each other?

Such a procedure is possible in the case of an individual who abandons fully developed views for others quite different. This is not the case with Marx. Neither his youthful idealism, nor his changes of opinion in the years 1843-1847, can be looked at as though they were a stable and fully formed system of views.

Such enemies of Marxism as Calvez and Bigot do not stop at contrasting the young Marx's views with the mature system of scientific socialism. To a historian of ideas this is nonsense, but at least they go the whole hog. But the revisionists usually leave Marx himself in peace, and contrast him with Engels, who is regarded as mainly responsible for the corruption of Marxism in the spirit of positivism according to some, or of dogmatism and schematism according to others. . . .

From the moment that Marx started work on *Capital* there was an agreed division of labour between them, and Engels' share included polemics in the philosophical field. Their correspondence shows that every step which either of the partners took was submitted to the other and criticised or approved. Marx not only had no objections to Engels' published philosophical views but unreservedly associated himself with them, in later years just as in the Young Hegelian period. . . .

Seen in this light, Kolakowski's article looks rather pathetic. If he is opposing Marx to Engels, this is mere nonsense, and shows that he is insufficiently acquainted with the history of Marxism. If he is opposing the young Marx to the mature Engels, this means opposing the young Marx to the mature Marx, which is no less nonsensical from the point of view of the historian of ideas.

The article has two themes. First, there are the deductions about the theory of truth, supposedly implicit in the epistemological views of the young

Marx, reconstructed, or rather constructed, by the author on the basis of quotations from the *Manuscripts*. Then there are the arguments about the supposed contrast between Marx on the one hand, and Engels and Lenin on the other, in their views on the theory of truth, and hence in a number of other basic epistemological and ontological questions. This second theme, though it takes up much less space than the first, is the central polemical question. If the article did not raise it I should not rise to the first theme. Not because I do not see, or do not take seriously, Kolakowski's errors. But because, when we have representatives of bourgeois, Catholic, and revisionist thought amongst us, Marxists cannot waste their time replying to every nonsensical utterance in an esoteric article which a hundred people in Poland will read and twenty understand. Especially as the reply only awakens interest in the original article, and makes a sensation of it. But the political implications of the subject demand a polemical reply to Kolakowski's statements on the alleged antithesis between the views of Marx and Engels.

Kolakowski puts forward two theses:

(1) that the epistemological views allegedly reconstructed on the basis of statements in the *Manuscripts* are Marx's real epistemology;

(2) that Marx's epistemological views are opposed to those of Engels and Lenin.

I consider both these theses utterly false. But to simplify things, let us suppose to begin with that the first of them is correct. What follows?

In 1844, when Marx wrote his *Manuscripts*, he was 26. Let us suppose that he did then express the epistemological views which Kolakowski, quite groundlessly, attributes to him. After 1844 Marx lived almost forty years longer, and these were the years of his mature creative work. True, because of the division of labour between him and Engels, he wrote little about philosophy in later years. But it is known that he kept up his interest in it to the end, that he left behind extracts from philosophical works copied out in the last year of his life, that he always hoped to write a concise exposition of the dialectic, that there are sporadic philosophical observations in his later works, and finally that he very diligently watched Engels' creative work in philosophy and entirely shared his views. If, as Kolakowski claims, Engels was influenced by Positivist scientism (and it is true that some of the stimuli which affected positivism also influenced the development of Marx and Engels) then so was Marx. If it is true that in 1844 Marx still occupied the idealistic positions in epistemology, close to

Jamesian Pragmatism, which Kolakowski wrongly attributes to him, the same Marx in later years voiced different views. For instance, his formulations in the preface to the second German edition of *Capital* are expressly based on the materialist theory of reflection, and so on the classical theory of truth. Should this not be mentioned when we are talking about Marxist epistemology, or the embryo of a Marxist epistemology? If the 'embryo' of 1844 really were incompatible with mature Marxism, then it would not be the real embryo of Marxist epistemology but a potential embryo, later rejected. Is it not nonsense to isolate some early stage in Marx's thought, when he was still an idealist (this is not true in respect of the *Manuscripts* of 1844, but is true for instance of 1841), and to assert that the philosophy of Marxism is idealism; just as it would be nonsense to assert that Marxism in politics is identical with bourgeois radicalism, because in some early period the young Marx did in fact pay homage to that creed? Is this not a typical attempt to oppose the young Marx to the mature Marx, based on the tacit premise that the young Marx, up to about 1844, is the 'true' Marx, whom the later Marx of the *Communist Manifesto* 'betrayed'?...

Turning to Kolakowski's observations on the relation of Marxism to the classical theory of truth, let us begin with a general outline of the problem.

The theory of truth is concerned above all with solving the following problem: when is our knowledge true and what do we mean by such a statement? Answers to this question follow one of two main lines.

According to one of them true knowledge exists when we say that something is so and it is in reality as we say. The truth of knowledge depends on its agreement with a reality existing independently of ourselves. Materialists subscribe to this classical theory of truth.

According to the second type of answer, true knowledge occurs when it corresponds to certain norms and principles which we accept. Examples are the theory of coherence, theory of evidence, theory of general agreement, theory of utility (first version of Pragmatism), and the theory of the economy of thought. Such definitions are known as non-classical, and are accepted by the idealistic schools of philosophy.

So then truth in the materialist acceptance consists in the agreement of knowledge with objective reality, which is reflected by human conscious-

ness, while in the subjective idealistic acceptance it consists in the agreement of knowledge with rules dictated by consciousness.

Thus the position of a philosopher on the problem of truth provides a simple test to ascertain his position in the struggle between materialism and idealism—even if like the neo-positivists he proclaims himself neutral.

It is impossible to deny the classical theory of truth without denying materialism. Kolakowski, however, set out to show that the young Marx negated the classical definition of truth and at the same time to promote the epistemology of which this negation was the result to the status of 'true' Marxism, in contrast to the subsequent falsification by Engels. The only way to achieve this was to show that the author of the *Manuscripts* was not a materialist, but in one way or another an idealist. And Kolakowski makes an obviously strained attempt to represent the young Marx as such an idealist. . . .

Even if the young Marx had evolved an idealistic epistemology there would be no need for us to defend ourselves against it. It would only mean that we had to do with immature views, views in the formative stage, as opposed to the finalised epistemology of Marx in his maturity. But the nub of the matter is that there is no idealistic epistemology where Kolakowski discerns it with the eyes of his imagination.

Delusive phantasy, as usual, hides a methodological error. Kolakowski, as a historian of philosophy, should know that the analysis of a thinker's views, especially those which he held at a period of furious development, cannot abstract from their revolutionary context. It can truly be said with reference to philosophical statements taken out of context that there is nothing new under the sun, in the sense that the same or similar words will have been used by somebody else. But did they have the same meaning? The answer to that must be given by the scholar who studies them in the context of a system, and knows that the meaning of statements formally identical is determined by their context. This is a banal truth for all historians of thought, not just for Marxists. If Marx, James, and Bergson speak of the 'humanisation of nature' they are making statements which sound the same but do not mean the same thing.

We know that Marx became a materialist, and with reservations a Feuerbachian, in 1841, and was certainly affected by Feuerbach's anthropological conceptions. We know also that the *Theses on Feuerbach* followed shortly after the *Manuscripts*

(in the spring of 1845). They give us the key to the understanding of the often obscure *Manuscripts*, show the direction of Marx's evolution, and decipher various concepts and terms. Soon after came the *German Ideology*, with its materialist interpretation of history. Anyone who reads the *Manuscripts* outside this context is in fact reading only his own thoughts.

Kolakowski bases his crazy construction (not reconstruction) on the fact that Marx introduces *practice* into his theory of knowledge, and asserts not only that man is the creation of nature but that nature is the creation of man. Agreed. The whole question comes down to this: what is understood by the word 'practice', and how do you define the 'humanisation of nature'?

Epistemology poses two distinct but interconnected questions concerning the objectivity of knowledge:

(i) whether the object which we know exists objectively, i.e. independently of all consciousness, and

(ii) whether and to what extent knowledge which reflects objective reality is connected with man's practical activity, and how as a result the subjective factor enters into the objective process of cognition.

All materialists acknowledge not only the objective but also the material existence of the object of which we have cognition, but this does not predetermine our attitude to the question of the connection between cognition and man's practical activity.

Marx, unlike mechanistic materialists, and unlike Feuerbach, sees the active aspect of human consciousness, and the practical activity of man engaged in transforming nature as a basic category in his theory of knowledge. In the *Theses on Feuerbach* he stresses that idealism, not materialism, has so far developed the active aspect. As a materialist he postulates the development of the active aspect, not abstractly, after the manner of the idealists, but in the form of practice, of human sensory activity, as he says. If the active aspect is understood in this way it becomes understandable, as Marx says, that not only is man the creation of circumstances, but that circumstances are created by man.

Man, according to this conception, obtains knowledge by acting, by changing the world. Practice understood as human sensory activity is the basis, the source of knowledge. In this sense

Marx gives a materialistic interpretation of empiricism.

The *Theses on Feuerbach* are a recapitulation, and a logical conclusion from, the *Manuscripts*. They are devoted to the role of practice in human cognition and social life. But there is not a grain of idealism in them; they are thoroughly materialistic. Whence then did Kolakowski get his construction? Let us see how it is done.

Kolakowski writes: 'The view of the world presented in the *Manuscripts*, in my opinion, originates in attempts to assess man's practical activities as a factor determining his behaviour as a cognitive being'.

Can we agree with this? We can. But here is the next sentence:

'This attempt, from the viewpoint of historical tradition, makes Marx's reflections resemble certain ideas in the doctrine of Spinoza; analogous ideas were to appear later in the analyses of Bergson'.

Here the cat is out of the bag. The author, to put it politely, simply understands his text in a very peculiar way. Anyone who confuses the Marxist with the Pragmatist category of practice, or mixes it up with Bergson's philosophy of creativity, simply does not understand what he has read in the young Marx. . . .

There is a basic confusion here. Kolakowski reasons like this: since man obtains knowledge in the process of practice, he introduces into know-

ledge a subjective element connected with his perceptual apparatus and his social needs and conditions. So far so good. But here is the unexpected conclusion: because of this we cannot even ask about 'absolutely independent' reality, or being 'in itself'. Here we have a typical non sequitur. When we speak of 'absolutely independent' reality or of being 'in itself' we do so in a very definite sense: we are concerned to underline the materialistic thesis that reality is not the creation of consciousness, but exists independently of and outside it. From the assertion that a subjective factor affects our knowledge it does not follow that the object which we know is a subjective creation. The distinction between these two questions is elementary. To blur this distinction is to blur what is basic to materialism—the recognition of the objective existence of material objects. Kolakowski carries this to its logical conclusion, and what is more as Marx's plenipotentiary:

'If it would be correct to say, from Marx's point of view, that consciousness is things thought of, it would be even more accurate to generalise his thought by saying that things are consciousness reified'.

Here Marx has been made into a pure subjective idealist. This in spite of the author's earlier assurances that being 'in itself' cannot, in the light of Marx's doctrine, be deduced from consciousness. Apparently, after all, it can.

ADAM SCHAFF

POETRY

LINES FOR STANLEY KEVELSON

*And over Orpheus' head
Birds without number are flying. Fishes leap around
Out of the deep blue waters won by the tuneful sound.*

—SIMONIDES

There you go again
Splitting your hairs
About either/or
Nursing twenty creeds
In the crucible within
Making the doubt
Something to talk
About.
Between volition
And execution
Creeps the unrooted idea:
A phantom flower
Beautiful sea-flower
Of pale uncertainty
Steaming like ice
Of crystal purity
Which is ever so nice.
But you dare not
Have a positive mind
About this or that
Lest you too lag
Like something fat
Behind.

II

There is a riddle
 In the voice of thunder
 In the idiot's grin
 In the eagle's eye
 In the windswept tree
 In my brother's face
 And in me.
 Should I then dissect
 The siren-song of mystery
 And ravish it
 With the probing intellect?
 Must I seek again
 The glory of the hour
 The feeling of power
 Of man become God
 In the high jinks
 Of chill cerebration
 And put to death
 The Sphinx?

III

How decorous to cheer
 In a reverent vein
 Then to jape and jeer
 The unfathomable skein!
 Nothing and the positive mind
 Chase each other
 Baring their teeth
 Like a cat and a dog
 Seeking penetration
 Not obliteration
 In a bloodless congeries
 Overcast with a fog.
 Amen.

R. DE L. FURTADO

THESE GIRLS

These girls are broken waters on the edge,
 They wash thin the rock's granite walls
 Of poise and calm. They leap into time's ocean
 For they are always beyond the reach of hands.

They are pleasant and meaningless songs of birds,
 They fall as secret drops of dew and
 Before the morning comes look lush with fun,
 Then vanish in time's sky sucked by the sun.

In the tenebrous gloom of the past,
 They were green eyes of the prey
 Alluring beyond the subtle traps of the mind,
 And when they ran their steps were
 Echoes of death on virgin land.

They die, for the girls are born to die
 Into mothers or when they live
 They lap round and nibble at the edge
 And forget to vanish in the dreams of men.

Someday the world will lie
 Buried under another world of rocks and seas,
 And they will rise first as flowers for the bees
 Through quakes of the earth, and then seek
 Their small islands of rocks
 To lap in embraces or fall from,
 Into time's ocean in endless zest and fun.

AMARESH DATTA

NOTHING SECURES HIM

Nothing secures him,
 Each reassurance further flames
 Of unrest claim: too often he launches
 On similar schemes and retreats
 In confusions condemnations or shames.

He peers behind, and reprepares
 To churn his motions
 Of their secret pearls, but tastes the stray
 Tears off salt-sea surfaces, or
 Hears the bare pulse of the silences.

He stops for breath, feels he fails;
 Then, fearing his music in him dying
 Unborn, commands, 'show your face now or never:
 Now, or let me go for ever;
 O emerge full-bodied from my prayers
 Or lie still upon the cold heart pyre.
 No, no, do not push through bones
 Or veins in futile pain. Come now,
 Or be off till dry death severs.'

Thus, he prolongs debate
 Towards song-strength or, spent, slakes thirst
 On sere suspense: slowly, glacier-wise,
 He will meet the warm seas
 And melt to waves of milk.

THE BIRTH OF A BUTTERFLY

Like a headache the chrysalis split
Above the green and silent pit.
Unclasped and comfortless
To the husk of its home
The newborn butterfly clung
Above the drop, the dizzy fall.

Beneath the fluttering leaf it swung;
Small and soft and sodden it hung
Fighting the downward drag
Of limp and heavy wings,
Still wet with the waters of birth;
Intense its desperate suspense.

The wings unfolded slowly
Stretching themselves out wholly.
Aligned, they stiffened and dried.
On the tiderace of space
The butterfly found its buoyancy,
In a floppy poppy-petal swing airborne.

Floating lightly into the sunlight
Out of perilous seclusion,
Upheld by a fragile tautness,
It took its frilled flight.

LILA RAY

SHORT STORY

The Angel of Vengeance

By JEREMY NELSON

A young man, aged thirty, vomited blood and pus all over his hands and died. His body was chucked into an oven and burnt. There were none to mourn him except an angel with a flaming sword and a face white with anger.

Two weeks antecedent to the young man's death and in a respectable suburb a few miles away, Mrs. Guggenheim, the President of The Women's Charitable League, smeared lipstick over her face and scowled at her bearer.

'These people are all the same,' she muttered to herself, condemning in one fell swoop the whole of the Muslim world. Exasperated, she straightened the lounge covers, lit a cigarette and sat on the sofa. She smoothed her dress over her knees and irritably thumbed through a woman's magazine. The doorbell rang and Mrs. Guggenheim raised her eyebrows authoritatively:

'Bearer. . . . door,' she called.

Within an hour all the members of the League were present and the room reeked with perfume and rattled with chatter. Coffee cups clattered while a few idiotic husbands, very much superfluous in the circumstances, huffed like walruses in a corner. Mr. Staunch, promoter of charitable works and executive member of the R. Club, came in later with Guggenheim him-

self. Staunch was not embarrassed in such an atmosphere. He enjoyed it and gloried in it as a maggot in carrion.

'The poor,' he oozed at the end of a highly edifying little speech, 'are indeed fortunate to be helped by such charming ladies.'

The applause was decorous and fitting, and there was an air of moral nicety about it.

Guggenheim took Staunch by the arm and guided him towards the cocktail cabinet.

'Good show,' he said, 'What'll it be?'

'Gin and tonic, if it's no trouble,' Staunch replied.

It was no trouble at all, for Guggenheim was a host par excellence. He prided himself on his beverages and loved the homeliness of a well-stocked cellar. They were all there. . . . whisky, brandy, the better wines, liqueurs, etc. . . . all in buxom bottles and shining decanters. Bottles were a kind of hobby with Guggenheim. He loved their varied shapes and caressed them with his squat fingers. He was a man who knew his drinks. Name it, and Guggenheim had it. Drank the best Scotch himself, no matter what the price. Bloated businessman Guggenheim; Guggenheim with the bulbous nose; Guggenheim the jolly fellow; mustachioed Guggenheim whose boy was a fine

type... of course a gin and tonic was no trouble.

'One gin and tonic coming up,' said Guggenheim.

And Staunch sucked his drink like a vampire.

Mrs. Guggenheim glowed all that night, and Joe, for that was her husband's name, after taking the necessary precautions shared in her warmth beneath the marital sheets. It had been a most satisfactory evening. The idea had been hers. She remembered it all in bed. A barbecue... how lovely to help the poor. How comforting to do good... the sweet burden, the light yoke, and somewhere a repayment in hundredfold.

'Joe, darling,' she whispered, 'I'm so happy!'

And Joe grunted from his belly with a deep satisfaction. Few of Joe's nights were so peaceful and he slept tenderly like a child and there was none of the usual terror in his dreams.

Joe looked fine in his chef's hat. That had been his idea. He loved to supervise, and as he expressed it:

'To show 'em how to cook a real steak!'

So Guggenheim, the jolly fellow, was the guardian of the flames, the keeper of the fire and the cooker of the flesh. Joe was pleased, and he stabbed the steaks above the coals, and his face glowed with whisky in the firelight. Joe was drinking heavily. The band played a rhumba beat and the whisky began to go to his head. Whisky sometimes did strange things to Joe.

Normally, Joe was a well-balanced person, as befitted a man in his position. He knew how to say ENOUGH to most things. There were the occasional slips however... for instance, the night he went out with the boys to 'Isaia's' because, as he vociferously insisted: 'One ought to see places like that.'

He woke up the following morning with

a shaky feeling of guilt in the pit of his stomach and the body odour of a prostitute in his nostrils. His head and loins ached for hours. He was badly frightened, for he thought he might have contracted a socially scandalous disease; his tongue tasted like excrement. He examined himself secretly every evening for two weeks afterwards. He had found it difficult to explain his night-long absence to his wife, but that was fixed up in a matter of days by a small purchase from the jewellers and the true tenderness of his penitent efforts to humour his wife's whims with particular care.

'It taught me a lesson,' he thought humbly to himself. He hated prostitutes from that day and was very bitter against them.

And then there was the time he fell down drunk at a cocktail party and gashed himself on the edge of a chair. He lay moaning with blood all over his hands and face and over his finely tailored dinner jacket. He vomited on his wife's dress as she lugged him home and she hated him for it. That was the first night Joe dreamed of blood... blood flowing from the moon and the stars, from the mountains and filling up the seas, and over the faces of his friends who were grinning and licking at it and washing their bodies in it. And the volume of blood increased until the skies were scarlet and the world was blotted out by it, and no one moved nor spoke but only a salty wind shrieked mournfully like Rachel bewailing her children and the death of innocents.

He was in a fever and delirium for days.

'Horrible, horrible,' he sobbed.

Joe recovered, however, and went back to his bottles. The incident was soon forgotten but Joe still has the scar on his cheek and often rubs it unconsciously as a man rubs a pimple.

After this, Guggenheim mentioned his nightmares to no one. But they came to him relentlessly nevertheless, and they brought terror into his sleep and exhaustion into his rest. They all had the same pattern,

were dark with the image of blood and filled with the sobbing of millions of voices. There was always a presence, vague in form, whose shape Joe could not distinguish. This presence made his flesh tremble and his bones grow cold with fear. And so he surrounded himself with friends and threw himself wildly into enjoyment and activity. To everyone he was still Guggenheim the jolly fellow.

It was on the occasion of his appointment as a director of the firm when he was laughing and drinking with his associates that his head began to ache strangely and the red darkness came before his eyes and his hands trembled and he felt a burning on his skin and a weight like white hot lead came into his bowels. He began clutching at his tie and in the red darkness he felt a wind, hot and bitter, on his face, and far off he heard a voice which chilled him:

'Though they be forced into the valley of death they shall find comfort,' it sighed.

And Joe knew that the voice was not for him nor those of his kind. The sky grew scarlet and the world was blotted out and he felt himself falling and screaming:

'Blood — blood!'

This all happened in a flash of Joe's mind and it was only Staunch who noticed anything amiss. He shook Joe by the shoulder.

'Are you alright, Joe?' he asked.

Guggenheim blinked his eyes and rubbed his brows with the back of his hand and answered:

'It's nothing.'

And to prove it he threw himself into the whisky and laughter with gusto. The shade of worry left Staunch's face.

'Nothing wrong with good old Joe,' he thought to himself and left it at that.

Later on, Staunch had reason to remember this occasion. But that was when Joe was locked away.

It was well known that Mrs. Guggenheim had secluded herself in a room for weeks after Joe's collapse, and so Staunch became

the centre of interest for a long time. Being an intimate of Joe's, he was immediately accepted as an authority on the subject and was treated with appropriate reverence. He always commenced with:

'Poor old Joe. A tragic thing....'

and confessed that only he had seen it coming during the last few months.

So Guggenheim supervised the steaks and poked the fire into a red glow. Staunch stood at his elbow and made sure that Joe's glass was continually full. The music strummed sensuously and the guests devoured the flesh with a savagery permissible only at barbecues. The Chinese lamps cast grotesque shapes across the dance floor and couples rocked erotically amongst the fornications of the shadows.

Joe was drunk. He had burnt himself several times on the grill trying to rescue chunks of meat which had fallen irretrievably into the fire. He glowered irritably. The sweat dripped off the end of his nose and he wiped it awkwardly with his sleeve. Staunch was making him sick.

'Staunch and his bloody advice,' he muttered viciously.

Joe could hear his wife's high-pitched voice somewhere behind him and he stirred the fire angrily with his poker until it glowed menacingly. The music throbbed and throbbed and his head began to ache. The dancing figures became dim and Joe rocked with the rhythm of the throb. The Chinese lamps thrust a bowl of redness up against the night sky and hid the stars. He gazed into the coals and watched the blue tongues lick around the edges. He gazed into the fire losing himself in it and saw the lips of the flames whispering in anguish to each other. The fire sank on its ashes like someone suddenly breathing out and Joe smashed it down with his poker.

Faces! He hated faces. He hated the fire in which all these faces came together and

whispered. He hated the dance and the limbs waving in excitement through the shadows. Flame and blood leaped in frenzy from the coals and he smashed it down with his poker. The sparks hurtled out onto the lawn and fell amongst the dancers like stars of blood. And there was a salty wind and a wailing somewhere and all was consumed in the red of flame and blood. Joe's lips tasted of ash and his nostrils were full of the smell of burning hair. He saw blood seeping through the pores of the earth. Those who were dancing were grinning and licking at it and washing their bodies in it.

'Horrible, horrible,' he sobbed.

He hunched up and rocked his body to and fro in front of the fire. His stomach grew light and then heavy and turned sickeningly, and then suddenly it heaved and he retched all over his trousers, and then again and again into the fire. The coals spluttered and an acrid vapour hissed out of the ashes. Joe staggered and turned clutching the poker. He saw the red glow all around him, and the faces, the hated

faces, grinned in the all consuming flames of the night.

Someone shook him by the shoulder and Joe wrenched himself away in horror and ran amongst the dancers shrieking like one possessed:

'I am the angel of vengeance!' and he slashed right and left with his poker.

A woman screamed and fell and they all rushed away in confusion, knocking tables over and smashing glasses in their panic. It took four men to overpower Joe and they had to beat him into insensibility. He lay as one dead with blood fluting through the corners of his mouth. Joe was carried away and is still locked up in an asylum for the incurably insane. As Staunch remarked later, he had seen it coming for months. 'Poor old Joe.'

On the same night, a few miles away, a young man, aged thirty, vomited blood and pus all over his hands and died, and there were none to mourn him except an angel.

Metamorphosis

By JAI NIMBKAR

WHY is it, he thought, that our forefathers had staircases which were tucked away into dark corners as if they were something to be ashamed of? Staircases hedged in on both sides by solid walls so that there was no light to see by, only the kinesthetic knowledge of upward or downward motion.

At the head of the stairs he knocked, as the landlord had asked him to do, on the first door on his left. The passage, like the staircase, smelled of damp, dirt and cooking oil.

'Come in.' There was an irritated note in the response which made him hesitate for a second. Then he resolutely pushed open the door and stepped across the threshold.

She sat on a mattress, half-reclining, supported on all sides by fat cushions. She indicated a chair, the only one in the room, and he sat down. The student who had been pressing her legs, got up and without a glance at him, left. The slight disgust he had felt at the sight of the young hands on the wrinkled, disfigured legs, subsided. It was funny, while the rest of her body had grown fleshy, her legs remained thin and wrinkled, atrophied, signposts of what might have been. It struck him as strange that she should have her legs pressed. Did they still have some feeling in them, he wondered. Then, like a conditioned reflex, the sight of them brought a familiar wench of pity.

He remembered — he did not really have to make an effort, it was always there, just beneath the surface — that evening in her

father's garden when he had asked her to marry him.

'And what will you do with a cripple like me?' she had asked. Even now the memory made him wince. He had been angry because of her constant joking about her deformity. It seemed to him she deliberately flaunted it at the world.

All his protestations of love had been in vain. The worst of it was that through it all he had the uneasy impression that she was enjoying some secret joke. There were slight dimples at the corners of her mouth and her eyes gleamed. Over the years he had preserved the memory of this scene, glorious with its romance and heroic self-sacrifice, pushing away the overtones that did not fit in.

She showed her ugly teeth in a smile. They were yellowed by betel leaves. There were gaps in them, gaps made by age, through which her dull red tongue could be seen writhing like an imprisoned snake.

'May I know your name?' she asked.

Of course she had not recognized him. He had only recognized her from her name. It had been so many years, but at the concert he only had to close his eyes, and he imagined the huskysweet voice issuing out of a frail, ethereal body. He had known a slight, fair girl with liquid brown eyes who had a voice like that. A voice which had now more than fulfilled the promise it had given. Seeing her again, he was disappointed, as if memory should have wrapped youth and beauty around her.

He looked around the room. The plaster

was falling off the walls, the woodwork was overornamental, now dim and dusty with the years. Even this temporary abode bore a resemblance to her — the shabby, tasteless remains of a bygone splendour. The curtain made of multicoloured glass-rods and beads tinkled and flaunted itself with all the vulgarity of its shining cheapness in the sombre room.

There was a twinkle of recognition in her eyes when he told her his name.

'Oh,' she said. 'So now you've settled here. What do you do?'

'I'm a clerk in the post office.' A post-office clerk. How he wished he could say 'a lawyer' or 'a doctor' or anything else more dignified and successful sounding. He imagined how she would tell her vocation.

'I'm a classical singer.'

'The Tarabai Kharkar?' The article underscored, from the inquirer.

'The Tarabai Kharkar,' with quiet confidence and amusement.

But his provincial tongue, so used to telling the bare, unadorned truth, could not lie — could not utter even a magnificent lie.

'You are married, of course.' The droll expression broke her face into irregular conical shapes. Her eyes were smaller now. The fat eclipsed them. But that peculiar mixture of polite attentiveness and secret amusement still played in them, creating yellow-brown pinpoints of light.

'Yes, of course,' he said, as if it were a confession of a guilty secret.

'Any children?'

'Two.'

Her tone made all these details seem like undesirable warts which he should have striven to hide.

'Did you come to my concert last night?'

'Yes.'

'How did you like it?'

'You don't need me to tell you it was wonderful.'

He felt fiercely envious of her. Success was part of her. It was almost like a physi-

cal mutation. She laughed and lightly slapped her thigh. It was not a form of vanity. It was an old gesture of hers meant to deride her own talent after inviting praise for it.

'Have you got a programme scheduled after you're through here?' he asked.

'In Bombay,' she said.

The night before, lying beside his wife in the dark, he had imagined a conversation sweet with nostalgia, woven through with tears. Now the nostalgia turned sour in his mouth. He passed his tongue over his lips and plunged ahead with a last desperate effort to establish contact with her.

'Do you remember that holiday I spent at your house in Bombay?'

'Oh yes. Ha-ha.' Her laugh had always had this rasping, mannish quality.

'What a silly boy you were.' This seemed to amuse her vastly and she laughed on and on, her body shaking and wobbling, the soft flesh rippling, tears streaming down the furrows made in her cheeks by laughter.

He gave a wan smile.

She finally stopped laughing, and wiping her eyes on the end of her sari, she said, 'Well, it was nice to see you after all these years.' Polite, impersonal. He recognized his cue. He got up and left, wondering about the change in her which had changed the girl he had known out of recognition.

Then out of dejection a thought rose unbidden to the surface of his mind that the change was superficial. She really was the same as she always was, only he had failed to know her before. Crippled or not, she looked upon the world as her oyster — an oyster which yielded an unlimited number of pearls. It was he who was the blunderer into the world. At fifty, fat, physically unattractive, without the use of her legs, she sat on top of the world, while he wandered about seeking out a dream of the past and trying to give it substance.

DISCUSSION

The Dilemmas of the Indian Intellectual A Counter-Statement

By VINOD SENA

I

A SOCIETY like ours which exacts of its members strict conformity to its outer codes, but makes no demands on their views, allowing them to think as they like, is not very likely to take much note of its intellectuals, more so when they continue to adjust themselves to its demands without seeking actively to revolutionise it. It is not surprising therefore that the first really systematic and comprehensive study of the Indian intellectual, his characteristics and predicaments, should come to us from abroad. To begin with, we must be grateful to Prof. Edward Shils for a service we Indians might never have rendered ourselves.

All that Prof. Shils has to say still remains to be seen: his full-length book is in the press. Nevertheless, he has acquainted us with the central thread of his argument in a comprehensive essay on 'The Culture of the Indian Intellectual' (*Quest* 24 and 25). Shils has taken as his focal point the charge generally levelled by foreign observers, and often confirmed by Indians themselves, that the Indian intellectual is 'neurotic, schizophrenic, ambivalent, suspended between two worlds, and rooted in neither.' It is around this that his study primarily turns; and the conclusions at which, after viewing the subject from various angles, he arrives is that, 'This common contention... (is) superficial. It is a romantic distortion of a partial, very fragmentary truth.' His reasons for maintaining such a position are three-fold: he finds the childhood of the Indian intellectual spent almost entirely in traditional surroundings, his adult life continuing largely in the same environment, and his mature

attitudes to life in its various aspects displaying the indisputable mark of the religious sensibility that has characterised India through the ages.

If the 'Indian intellectual is neither "un-Indian" nor "rootless"', if he 'is as Indian as any... Indian can be', then wherefore his sense of alienation from his people? For the fact is that his 'subjective experience is real' even though 'the facts which it alleges to mirror are not.' Once again Prof. Shils' explanation is threefold:

1. '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 exclusive and pervasive sensitivity to caste and community.'

2. '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.'

3. '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.'

Shils has not only performed for us a valuable pioneering service, but has performed it with unusual competence and conscientiousness. He scrupulously avoids any tone of superiority and attempts to approach his material in a spirit of dispassionate enquiry and detached sympathy. The various characteristics and peculiarities of the Indian intellectual are observed with acuteness and stated with precision. Besides, Shils has seen

India for himself, interviewing as many as 500 leading men from various walks of life, and can speak with some authority. Nevertheless, one must be critical in approaching Shils' study, if only because it is a pioneering work, and the insights which it offers are likely to have a much wider and more persistent currency than might otherwise have been expected. And to confess the truth, the more closely one examines Shils, after the exhilaration of the first reading is over, the more numerous are the doubts that crowd one's mind.

If culture be what anthropologists and Jungian psychologists alike tell us it is, if it is indeed more than the sum of its outer manifestations, its individual representatives, more than the sum of men's conscious thought, then one seriously wonders whether Shils has adopted the most fruitful approach. A 'sample' survey may yield much valuable data, but can it provide us with an integrated knowledge of the subject? An interview may acquaint us with the thought patterns on the surface, but can it adequately tell us what lies beneath and determine their direction? And the fact that one is being interviewed by a foreigner planning to publish a book is a further obstacle. One cannot really let oneself go. One is, consciously or unconsciously, tempted to suppress, exaggerate or self-dramatize, compelling the interviewer to see one not as one really is, but as one wishes to be seen. Nor is it possible for one, even in the most intimate atmosphere, to formulate what is deepest in oneself for the very fact that one is not even oneself wholly conscious of such inmost layers of being. An expert psychiatrist might perhaps be able to break through the facade, but even he could not do so in a single interview, and even he would find it rather difficult to get behind the individual idiosyncrasies to the common cultural core.

There can be no short-cut to the living knowledge of a complex culture. It is something alive and organic. The only way to know it, to feel its pulse as it were, is to *live it* or *live with* it over some period of time. A casual observer may thereby gather a lot of information about the outer characteristics but the inner spirit will always elude his grasp: for men, unlike other objects of scientific study, reveal themselves most intimately only in an atmosphere of kinship, when they have the least suspicion of being objectively observed and assessed. The study of any highly developed culture must therefore require a life-time's labour of love if it is to do justice to its task; and the study of the elite (the point where a society is at its most complex) of a nation as ancient and as

varied as ours would, one thinks, have demanded more than a bare twelve-months first-hand observation. Little wonder, then, that Shils' analysis, for all its brilliant exposition of the outward characteristics of its subject and its apparent 'sympathy', leaves us, finally, with a sense of coldness, of 'otherness,' of being observed from outside, hardly ever from within.

II

A foreigner visiting India for the first time is apt to be overwhelmed by its distinctness, its continuation of ancient traditions in a manner now little known to the West. He is likely, too, to be impressed by the way in which religious ritual punctuates every phase of human existence, and the manner in which the family still continues to regulate beforehand every step of its individual members' lives down to their very marriage. He naturally begins thinking that life in India continues in its ancient grooves; and, seeing that the intellectual tends normally to conform to the general pattern, he is led to conclude that even if his 'subjective experience' of 'rootlessness' be 'real', in any case, 'the facts which it alleges to mirror are not.'

But one who has lived in India for long will soon see through this simplification. For the life of the Indian intellectual, in spite of its traditional surface, has been steadily changing over the past century. Industrialisation and commerce are increasingly drawing him into the cities and, by breaking through the joint family and the older close-knit local community, are encouraging him to evolve a more individually oriented code. He may be still party to an arranged marriage, but the final choice is his, and he is no longer a slave of his family's decisions. Nor is he always a lone figure among a family of non-intellectuals, as Shils would suggest. That may be so in many cases (and I do not doubt that you could find them in other countries too), but there are others, by no means negligible in number, where his father and uncle, though respectable pillars of convention now, were something of rebels once—a fact that may have had no insignificant influence on their children, who often reproduce the pattern in their turn. Such a process repeated over successive generations is bound to have far-reaching effects, for it tends to make culture a matter of deliberate choice and self-cultivation rather than one of family inheritance and unconscious assimilation. Moreover, the young city-wife is no longer able to direct the various religious ceremonies and prayers that her

mother once conducted, nor is she able to bequeath to her children the rich treasure of Indian mythology that has passed from mother to child since times immemorial. One also observes a corresponding decline in men's store of traditional wisdom, crystallised into innumerable proverbs, fables and couplets, with which even the commonest seem to have been richly stocked in former times.

All this points to a single conclusion: Indian society is passing through a phase of transition from one kind of social organisation to another. The old pattern may be still intact in rural India; but it is fast breaking up in the cities. And the very speed with which city life is changing and growing, is making it increasingly difficult for a new and integrated order of a like magnitude to emerge and take its place. The intellectual, who is often a by-product of such changes and who dwells largely in the town, being more sensitive than the rest, must bear psychologically the brunt of the upheaval. Others may continue untroubled in the old grooves, but he feels himself being irrevocably dislodged from the past for the sake of a future that has yet to reveal its identity and name. He may manage to 'shore' away some of the 'ruins', but the culture he thus preserves is a self-conscious one and lacks its older integral relationship to the family, community and society. At best it is a mechanical assembly of separable components which can never take the place of a genuine and organic culture. The man depending upon it cannot consequently be wholly satisfied with the make-believe, and is inevitably plagued by a sense of 'uprooting', of 'alienation' which he cannot easily explain. And to dismiss this experience by saying that even if it be subjectively 'real', nevertheless 'the facts which it alleges to mirror are not', is only to display one's own failure to appreciate the full situation.

III

Such a sense of uprooting is the inescapable consequence of a basic upheaval in society. We confront it in European thought in the early 17th as well as the mid 19th centuries. But what makes it especially acute in India today is the over-accelerated pace of change, for, as Dr. Radhakrishnan once aptly observed, 'attempts at a very rapid progress... do not lead to advance but abrogation.' This turnover was unavoidable, and had India been left to its own fate it would, sooner or later, have had to face what, since the European Renaissance, has become the logic of history: the civilisation born of technology. But would the up-

heaval in that situation have been as tortuous as it is? Has not the coming of the British (or, for that matter, any other European power) further complicated and tragically aggravated the problems? Left to his own devices, one seriously wonders if the Indian intellectual would have been a victim of all the complexes with which he finds himself encumbered today. In other words, is not his situation quite distinct and far less enviable than that of the Japanese intellectual at the turn of this century, since he has to face not only the challenge of modern technology, but, with it, that of an alien culture imposed on him on a fairly extensive scale from school to university, and through the radio, the press, the movies and popular fiction?

When a people living within a particular culture are faced by a new social challenge, they, sooner or later, make the necessary adjustments, howsoever difficult, and overcome it. But when, along with this challenge, they are confronted by an alien and radically different way of life which enters into their own, so that the two cannot be distinguished from each other, and which appears in a position not only of physical dominance but of unquestionable inherent superiority, the situation is fundamentally altered. In the first case, one may find the existing state of one's traditions outdated, inflexible, even putrescent; but one never questions their basic validity; and what is required is a process, not of abrogation and substitution, but of extension and transfiguration. But in the second case, through the unfortunate confusion of the new challenge with an alien culture, what is put into question is not merely the *shortcomings* of one's native tradition, but *tradition* itself: and what greater trial could life devise than this: for what torment can exceed the torment of negating one's substance, of denying one's very *identity*!

Now it was precisely this latter situation that was wittingly or unwittingly created by the British conquest of and prolonged rule over India, and by the peculiar conditions under which these were effected.

Had the British come like Chingez Khan or Timur Lane, such a situation would have been avoided, for they would either have spent their force in no time, or, by assaulting native tradition directly like Aurangzeb, proved unwitting agents for its overwhelming resurgence: outraged and insulted it would, after the first paralysing shock was over, have risen with renewed vigour, integrated itself and, assimilating the best from its opponents, met them on their own footing and resolved the challenge. It would have been avoid-

ed, too, if the British, after conquering the country, had continued mainly as a power of military occupation discountenancing any cultural traffic with the conquered, or if they had decided to settle down in their new conquests, mixing and intermingling with their subjects, enriching the native culture in the process and being enriched by it.

But it was not to destroy or to settle down that the British conquered India. They came to its shores as harmless merchants in the pursuit of honest trade. In order to maintain and extend their industrial prosperity, its products had to be exported and others brought in return—and, luckily for the European powers, the discoveries of Columbus and Vasco da Gama found for them the markets that they needed.

If after coming to India the British turned to politics, their object was to protect and safeguard their commercial interests. It is natural for every ruling power to seek to protect its position and interests. There was nothing abnormal, as such, in the motives that inspired British policies; what was new and unnatural was the completeness of their success. A conquering people, even in the past, were chary of sharing with the conquered their secret of success. But they could never wholly prevent it, for their new weapons and skills (cross bows, crude cannon, use of elephants or the horse saddle, etc.), being not too complicated and readily displayed on the battlefield, could be imitated and mastered by their opponents, who would then meet them on an equal footing even after previous defeats. Besides, travel in the past was so slow and arduous that a foreign people coming from afar was compelled to settle down in their new surroundings, bringing their crafts and industries with them. As time passed, they began to mingle with the conquered, learning their language and customs and teaching them their own. With each successive generation the gulf between them narrowed, until a day arrived when the newcomers were closer to the home of their adoption than to that of their origin. And when the central control at the distant imperial capital fell slack (as so often happened under old monarchies), both they and those below, united by common interests, joined hands to throw off the yoke.

But modern conditions, through the development of technology and communications, made all this irrelevant. The British with regular and safer travel and communications, had no call to carry their skills with them and settle down. The manufacturing, training and planning could be done at home and only the end-product of these processes (growing increasingly complex and diffi-

cult to master) need be displayed at the distant market or battlefield. Thus their opponents were in no position to understand their secrets and meet effectively their challenge. Once they had been defeated and conquered, modern technology created *la machine infernale* from which they could not escape. As science progressed at an ever-accelerating pace, it placed more power in the hands of their foreign rulers, but became for the ruled progressively more difficult to master. In short, modern conditions made possible an empire where Time could no longer bridge the gap between the Conqueror and the Conquered as it had done in the past.

As if this were not enough, the British refused to content themselves with being merely a power of military occupation and commercial exploitation. They were not just merchants, soldiers and technicians, but a race of fervently patriotic humanitarians inspired by missionary zeal, who, being acutely conscious of their own superiority in every field, saw it as their prime moral duty to carry the torch of superior culture and knowledge to those over whom they ruled.

There is in all men an egoistic tendency; and what is true of individuals, is true also of a people, their collective ego being termed by anthropologists as 'ethno-centricity.' Just as in individual human relationships healthy relations become possible only when the parties concerned keep their self-assertive tendencies in check and respect each other's individuality, so too, in larger cultural exchanges: 'acculturation' proves most fruitful and lasting when both peoples meet on a footing of equality at some level or the other (and this can happen even between master and slave, as Aesop's example shows), and desist from attempting to force their pattern on each other.

Now the British, when they came to India, experienced no proper check on their natural ethnocentricity. The global nature of their success had made all self-questioning virtually impossible. Their faith taught them to regard all non-believers as unredeemed heathens; and the fact that they found themselves amidst a people hopelessly divided, given to magic practices and superstitious rituals, could hardly be expected to help matters. Not caring to settle down (the virgin and temperate lands of America, Australia and Africa were enough for such purposes, and far more convenient), they came, wave upon wave, with every fresh generation, receding, individually, too soon to understand or be affected by what they touched, but staying, collectively, too long not to leave a deep mark on those over whom they flowed. There

may have been a few exceptions, but, speaking generally, the British were in no position to break through the chaotic surface of Indian culture and appreciate its inner vitality and meaning. How could they, then, help what Arnold called their 'bland assumption' that their own culture 'was the best in the whole world', and how could they, with their strong moral susceptibilities, desist from the dogma of the 'White Man's Burden'?

Under this dogma the British conceived it their duty to bring the benefits of their superior knowledge and culture to those whom they ruled. Schools were established and universities set up. Of course, because of political reasons, technology and science in their higher reaches were to be withheld, but the natives could have the rest. Thus was devised, with the best of intentions and the most humanitarian of ideas, a vicious system of education under which the children of the unsuspecting conquered were taken up in their most formative years and made to learn English language, literature, etiquette, thought, arts and sciences (the harmless ones like medicine), not alongside their own, but in their place – the tacit assumption always being that everything native was inferior and everything British superior.

The British by such a policy may not have touched the mass of the Indian people or changed observably the general pattern of their lives. Nevertheless, for the intellectual at least, by their inadvertent educational system and the false social values it generated, they revolutionised completely the nature of his cultural experience. For by withholding from him the real source of their strength, and displaying in its place, with all kindness and sincerity, their own particular way of life, they created in him an unfortunate dualism. He saw the opposition not as one between a superior and inferior *technology*, but as one between a superior and inferior *culture*.

The consequences of such a dualism (become deeply rooted since it had been so sedulously nurtured from early childhood) could be only of the most uncreative kind. Determined to equal his masters, the Indian intellectual set out upon the vain pursuit of the shadow of a foreign culture. He gave himself up to the mastery of the English language and the refinements of English culture, hoping that if he could live and move like the English he could be as strong as they. When the intellectual did succeed in faking his master's culture, he discovered that it was only chaff that he had gathered. It never gave him the power he wanted, but only separated him from his people (who regarded him as a turncoat) or won him

the scorn of his models who looked upon him as no more than an apish imitator, at best a useful tool.¹

Since, in this situation, everything modern was equated to everything British, and everything outdated to everything native, it was natural for the educated Indian when he sought to be modern, to be intellectual, to attempt to disengage himself from his own traditions and adopt alien ones in their place. Under such conditions the Western impact, instead of proving one of the most powerful stimulants for developing native tradition in new directions and giving it renewed strength, served only to check its growth. How many of the most valuable paintings in traditional Indian style were not stripped off the walls of princely palaces under the first shock to be substituted by the vulgarities of British naturalism! How could native crafts and sciences flourish when they were no longer respected? How could popular Indian literature, till then chiefly an aural art, be expected to have an efflorescence when the most sensitive members of the new reading public created by urbanisation were led to disregard their own and slake their thirst at the idolised fountain of English literature?

This fatal dualism ('Indian' and 'English') also prevented the Indian intellectual from establishing firmly in his own country those modern fields of intellectual activity that he diligently pursued. Culture is something organic – you may graft new elements on it but you cannot change it like a suit of clothes – and in identifying these 'modern' avenues with a foreign way of life, the intellectual made it increasingly difficult for them to take native root. Try as he might to be as like the English as possible, he always remained an Indian at his core – denial of his identity itself constituting a more tortured assertion of it, since it revealed his culture's latest dilemma, its most excruciating trial. His rich accretions of British culture never added to anything more than a colourful veneer that could hardly penetrate the skin. And since the new fields of knowledge were identified with these cultural encrustations, how could they hope to sink any deeper? Modern intellectual activity, under such circumstances, could at best be a specialised acquisition that had lost its organic connection with everyday human existence; and to be an intellectual was no longer to be a natural extension of one's society, its emotional and spiritual antenna, but to be somehow alienated from it. The Indian intellectual, even if he was fluent in one or more of his native languages, had, since he had failed to develop them in new

directions, to rely inescapably on English for his modern intellectual needs. But a language is more than a mere medium; it is a mode of cultural experience, a living embodiment of a people's life and history; and in depending for his intellectual activity on a language that had no organic relationship to Indian life², the intellectual was inevitably creating a rift. How could he help being subconsciously aware of this situation, and how could he desist from chafing under it?³

One could go on in this fashion, but the pernicious pervasiveness and sterilising consequences of such a cultural dualism are a matter to be experienced rather than described. A few — men like Vivekananda, Tagore or Gandhi — who had delved too deep into their own traditions ever to doubt them, and travelled abroad, seeing Western civilisation not only in parts but in its whole, may have broken through the dualism.⁴ But the rest, the overwhelming majority, lacked the necessary equipment and could not escape the duality. They either identified every departure from convention with a betrayal to the enemy, retreating behind an orthodoxy self-destroying in its nature, or they gave themselves up to a blind imitation of their rulers in a vain attempt to equal them, hoping to become the lion by merely donning its skin. At best they could only strike a *compromise* that was never a *synthesis*.

IV

Anthropology is daily putting on record overwhelming evidence of the far-reaching consequences of such processes, especially of the destructive results of an 'acculturation' that robs a people of their faith in themselves. The problems that it unleashes may seem so irresolvable, so beyond man's power of solution, that the death-wish may be generated to a degree where a whole tribe or group may (as happened in Tasmania) become rapidly extinct. For what is at stake here is not merely the fate of the Indian intellectual—who at least has behind him a highly developed spiritual tradition in terms of which he can assert his equality and resolve his dilemmas—but of tribe upon tribe of aborigines in Africa, Australia and the Americas, who, lacking any sophisticated tradition through which they could justify their existence, lost, when they came in contact with the white peoples, the incentive to live: more of them dying, perhaps, by the mere presence of the outsiders than by their bullets.⁵

If Prof. Shils been more circumspect, viewing his subject not merely in its present context but

also in its relationship to the past, he would not have failed to grasp this situation.⁶ He would not then have been surprised by the Indian intellectual's reluctance to give up English and his irritation at its use, or by the fact that in India 'certain standards were espoused', not because they were considered right and absolute, but 'because they were British standards, and, conversely and far less frequently, because they were *Indian* standards.' Nor would he then have involved himself in a self-contradictory hypothesis, which on the one hand asserts that the Indian intellectual is 'as Indian as any... Indian can be', disavowing any seriously disbalancing impact from the West, and on the other attributes his 'unhappy sense of alienation' 'from his people' to his social, economic and political frustrations. For he would have known that social conformity, poverty and oligarchy (a term that I use for lack of a better) are no new tyrants in this land, and that in the past they never created in the intellectual any feeling of separation, being often voluntarily embraced to bring him nearer to common humanity (as in Buddha's case). If today his environment affects him very differently from the manner in which it did once, it only goes to prove the far-reaching nature of the Western impact, which, by undermining traditional attitudes, has robbed the Indian intellectual of his former immunity to his social, material and political ambitions—his disturbance at their frustrations being rather a *sign* of his malady than its *cause*.

Nor would Shils then have been led by the seemingly unruffled surface of Indian traditions to dismiss the Indian intellectual's sense of alienation as no more than a malingerer's projection of his private frustrations. The kind of acculturation to which the educated Indian has been subjected does not really transform the native culture (since the new elements are swallowed in an indigestible form) or dislodge it (a culture cannot be so easily dislocated). What it however does do is to dislodge one's spontaneous allegiance to it and thereby steadily undermines it. The ritual is, of course, preserved, but it has lost its former potency, leaving in its stead a disturbing sense of vacancy which spells its ultimate decay. The Indian intellectual may go to the temple on a Tuesday, he may even give up meat and drink, but, in general, he has lost irrevocably his capacity for full psychological participation; and the attempt to follow the traditional practices of the common people in order to become one with them only makes him more painfully aware of the gulf of separation. He is, of course, not 'un-Indian' in the sense of

being other than of his own country and society—he is very much 'Indian'—but he is 'Indian' in a manner very different from that of his ancestors, for his is a tortured, self-conscious identity, not a spontaneous one.

Had Prof. Shils got to the heart of his subject and not remained at its surface, would he not then have known that though 'the Indian intellectual,' like his Western counterparts, 'is a member of a species which seeks universality while living in the grasp of a particularistic existence', his problems are nevertheless much more than just 'variants of a universal experience'? Would he not then have realised that statements like Mr. Nehru's, 'I have become a queer mixture of East and West, out of place everywhere, at home no where,' even if they fail to formulate the situation as correctly or as precisely as might be wished, point nonetheless to something far more than a mere 'romantic distortion of a partial, very fragmentary truth'?

V

It was in 1947 that the British departed. A dozen years have passed since then, but, despite his initial sense of release at the first moments of independence, the Indian intellectual's dilemmas continue unmitigated. New India has had to face more major problems in a single decade (refugee rehabilitation, integration of princely states, state reorganisation, land redistribution, Kashmir, Tibet, and, now, China) than a well-established nation would have wished to encounter even in five. Besides, although the British have left, the system they created continues. Countless basic schools on Indian lines may have been opened, but the evil has yet to be touched. Public and missionary schools and colleges, and the universities, which cater to the most influential sections of society and produce the men who man the key commercial and administrative positions in the country, still await reformation and Indianisation. It is they that ultimately set the social values, and they continue to perpetuate the disruptive pseudo-Western tendencies with even less restraint than before, since the great wave of nationalism—which earlier kept them in check—has gradually ebbed after 1947.⁷

When he was engaged in the immediate task of liberation it was natural for the Indian intellectual not to be too concerned with his subsequent social responsibilities. But the path he chose, demanding that the whole nation first learn to act as one man before success could be gained, was heavy on time. And while he was busy creating this moral integration, his ultimate task of a successful social

revolution was rapidly becoming more difficult. The British, by unifying the country, building roads and railways, and extending many of the benefits of modern medicine, had undercut war, famine and epidemics, and reduced the death rate. This change had to be balanced and the remedies were to provide universal education, encouraging family planning, and set up a network of new industries to provide employment for the surplus population. But both steps conflicted with British interests—the first would have directly intensified the freedom movement, the second prejudiced their own commerce and loosened their political hold—and were never adopted except in a very limited way, barely enough to keep the country going (since a dead India would have been of little use to its masters). While things were being thus postponed, the task of large-scale industrialisation was progressively becoming more difficult and exacting. The strain of a technological revolution is in direct proportion to the point of scientific development; and as technology during the last century has developed at a staggering pace, the effort needed for its successful adoption (if it is not to lead to utter chaos) has become likewise staggering and stupendous.

Something must be done, and done immediately, else disaster will be upon us. The first impulse is to follow in the footsteps of the West, for the West has triumphed precisely where we ourselves have grievously failed. It has provided employment for the overwhelming majority of its surplus population; it has assured its people amenities and living standards that we cannot dream of providing ours for a century. It has further succeeded in giving a fairly high minimum of universal education, sweeping away the cobwebs of superstitious ignorance that still entangle our people, and releasing a kind of organised restless activity at whose achievements we stand amazed.

But on second thoughts this impulse tends to waver and collapse. However appreciative of the West the Indian intellectual may be and however conscious of his pressing need to learn from it, he recoils from any serious proposition of modelling his country completely on the Western pattern. 'Life to the West,' he says, remembering Keats, 'would be death to us.' Historians will perhaps explain this reaction as a hang-over of the Indian's pre-independence opposition to the West, while anthropologists will probably dismiss it as yet another example of the phenomenon of 'contra-acculturation' so familiar to them. But what must not be forgotten is the fact that the Indian intel-

lectual is opposed not to industrialisation as such but to the conditions with which it has been attended in the West, his grounds for opposition being more than emotional.

The spiritual traditions that have shaped the Indian mind through the ages seem to have made it allergic to any whole-hearted and single-minded pursuit of material advancement. It is not, as Albert Schweitzer would say, that it is dominated by a powerful strain of 'life-negation'—even a casual glance at ancient Indian art would expose the misleading nature of this hypothesis. It is not that the Indian spirit is averse to all thought of economic progress or physical comforts. Thinkers in India, as elsewhere, have felt the need for such things, and without material plenitude the ideal of the *Four Ashramas*, central to Indian thought, would reduce itself to nonsense.⁸ India has had her epochs of economic prosperity and is proud of them, but unlike the modern West they have, whether under Ashoka, Harsha or Akbar, come invariably in the wake of a religious and spiritual resurgence. The pursuit of physical well-being is essential, says the Indian sage, but if it is to bring real fulfilment, it must be undertaken not for itself but for a higher goal. So long as man remembers this he never loses, even amidst the greatest abundance, the secret of inner simplicity and joy; but the moment this truth is obscured, he sets out on the search for happiness in the wrong direction; the more he strives and acquires, the less he attains and the farther he is from his goal.

It is this insight deeply engrained by tradition that makes the Indian intellectual chary of blindly following the West. He knows that in order to gain the Western kind of prosperity he must strive for it incessantly; to strive for it incessantly he must feel himself unhappily situated; to feel thus situated he must regard as hostile the surroundings in which he finds himself, and against which he must continuously contend if he desires victory. To make rapid material progress possible in the Western style he must transform his attitude to existence itself, departing from a life of harmony and reconciliation to one of opposition and strife, from a life of self-realisation through self-effacement to one of self-assertion and self-destruction. It is the prospect of this change, which in the long run may create more problems than it can solve, that fills the Indian intellectual with fear. And the experience of the West—where religion has tended to become a matter of passive toleration instead of one of active living, where men are no longer able to limit their wants but have become their slaves, where peace depends on a precarious

balance of power whose slightest tilt may lead to a global conflagration—has done little to allay it. He realises that, as Gandhiji said, we cannot be 'wise, temperate and furious in a moment', that 'we cannot have American wealth' and yet 'avoid American methods'. If he wishes to create the kind of ever-expanding economy that he so admires in American life, he must also be prepared to surrender himself and his people to its multifold evils—of which the best American thinkers themselves are not unaware.

But the West in industrialising itself has evolved more patterns than the one to be met with in countries like the U.S. The flags of Communism fly today over a respectable section of the globe; it lays as much emphasis on technology as any of the Atlantic nations, and its achievements have been even more spectacular. May it not solve the problems that baffle the Indian intellectual? May it not bring in the desired prosperity without exposing him to the spiritual neurosis he meets with in the West? For some time it did seem as though his solution was in sight. When the British still ruled, he often, while struggling for freedom, dreamed of a future of actualised Marxian ideals (Mr. Nehru himself not excepted). But this faith was more a projection of his own hopes and desires for a free, just and independent life than the result of a serious study of Marxian principles and practice. The Soviet Union was then its only practitioner (drawn snail-like within herself, not casting covetous glances at others or desiring others to cast them at her) and the British discountenanced any traffic with her. Being under his oppressors' fire it was natural for the Indian intellectual to sympathise with her and champion her cause. To advocate Communism for him was not to be really Communist, but to be anti-British: it was a whip with which to get at his masters and proclaim his defiance.

Independence, however, has radically changed the situation. It has accomplished what the British controls failed to achieve. The Indian intellectual has had ample opportunity of studying firsthand at home and abroad (in its internal modes of operation and its external relations with friendly as well as tributary nations) what he earlier accepted only on hearsay. As a result of this experience (Hungary, Tibet, Chinese encroachments, Kerala) his former pro-Marxist bias has begun to seem naive indeed. He is fast realising that Communism may be as little compatible with his indigenous modes of thought as that for which he sought to substitute it. It may rid him of the evils of personal acquisitiveness and devil-take-the-hindmost

kind of competition; it may ensure a more rapid and equitable distribution of material benefits. But to do this it has to generate among the entire people an attitude which may be ultimately even more spiritually dwarfing than that encouraged by the commercialised democracies of the West. It dispenses with one kind of heresy to substitute it by another and more pernicious one: the individual ego yields its place to the collective ego, and the self-centred universe gives way to the state-centred one. Communism once again deprives man of what Tagore called 'the vitalising and purifying touch of the infinite', making physical well-being the end of life; though it does so now in different terms, imposing collectively on man the same kind of neurosis which Western society arrives at only through an aggregation of individual ones. It is this that makes it so much more potent and dangerous, for whereas some individuals may through personal effort resist the general spiritual decay inherent in the Western system, Communism imposes its spiritual genocide relentlessly on all, leaving no possibility of escape.

It is this that makes the Indian intellectual so disillusioned with Communism today and suspicious even of the more recent apparently innocuous doctrines of the Welfare State founded on social humanism. For he knows that an all-powerful state, created to better the lot of individuals, may turn Frankenstein and destroy individuality itself—defeating the object of its founders. Taught from times immemorial that the end of life is the transcendence of life, he can submit himself to the most exacting exigencies of circumstance, the most tyrannous social convention; but he can never reconcile himself to a compromise of his individuality at the spiritual plane. Hence, any form of organisation under which the state may begin to enter and control in a large way the private lives and beliefs of its subjects, fills him with anxiety and distrust.⁹

VI

What then is the Indian intellectual to do? On the one hand he is faced with a set of conditions that he cannot accept, that he knows hold latent death; on the other, he is unable to find any acceptable means to bring about the desired transformation. Once again, as with the psychological concomitants of an unnatural 'acculturation', he is a victim not so much of 'conflict' as of a *stalemate*, not so much of 'ambivalence' as of *indifference*. It is not that he is torn between mutually opposed sympathies, but that he cannot channel

his sympathies at all.¹⁰ He sees the decadent old, disintegrating under its own pressure, being challenged and yielding place to the modern West. But the conflict is not within him, only without, for he can sympathise with neither the one nor the other. It is as though he sat in a driverless train rushing from one darkness to another along a crumbling mountain track: to stop it would be instant disaster, to let it proceed would be only a slightly delayed calamity.

And while he continues thus *involved* and *indifferent*, he must continue to be uncreative. He must continue as though, like Hamlet, he had lost his way in the world—for Hamlet, too, by being denied his faith in the world (by his mother's actions) was denied the meaning he could give to action (revenge), and he too was unable to find the means whereby he could reconcile his inherited values with his sordid present and give his life a direction. Unable to accept life as he found it or to transform it to conform with his values, he moved in a world of brooding indifference and cynicism: sensitive to life's beauty, yet questioning its meaning and purpose; rueing his fate in being born in such times, yet conscious of his responsibility for remedying the same; accusing himself of 'unpacking' his 'heart' with 'words', whipping himself on to activity, yet never discovering any palpable mode of action—his only escape, bursts of reckless activity, or a cynicism that mocked at everything (most of all at itself), or a fatalism that relieved him of all responsibility, 'if it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come....'

So brief a study cannot do justice even to the more important 'facts' of its subject, and no one could be more conscious than myself of the 'gaps' in what I have had to say. Nevertheless one may suggest the general pattern, the most fruitful points of approach; and I do hope that my analysis makes more comprehensible the more characteristic traits of the Indian intellectual, the traits that Prof. Shils has so well recorded but failed adequately to interpret. It explains his deep immersion in tradition, yet his alienation from it; his genuine appreciation of the West, yet his reluctance to follow it. It explains, too, his habit of viewing matters in terms of the categories of 'English' and 'Indian' rather than 'right' and 'wrong'; as well as his characteristic self-accusations of garrulity and inaction, and his equally characteristic inability to do anything about them—a state that leads him to regard himself as a coward, a despised good-for-nothing, from which uncomfortable feeling he at times seeks escape in

the mob hysteria of the language dispute, state reorganisation, rumours of high-power corruption, or something of a like nature. Further, we begin to see that his 'distance' from the 'reigning authorities' is not so much the cause of his frustrations as their sign, for 'the charismatic inclination that shows itself in the politics of the Indian intellectual' is not, as Shils supposes, so much the result of his 'religiosity' as of his distaste for the current political situation, his failure to discover any recognisable mode of action through which he could relate his past to the future and thereby give a direction to the present.¹¹

Is there, indeed, we may now ask ourselves, no way out of the modern Indian intellectual's predicaments? Is there no means whereby he could steer clear of what Vivekananda described as 'the two great obstacles in his path... the Scylla of old orthodoxy and the Charybdis of modern European civilisation'? Perhaps such problems never really 'find their solution'. Perhaps the only way in which they get mitigated is through the softening action of time and the emergence of new and more pressing ones—a war of self-defence or some other national calamity—where the difficulty lies not in choice but in execution. Perhaps Prof. Shils is right in speculating that 'If the Indian intellectual can come into (such) a situation where he perceives real

tasks, then he will draw on whatever resources are within himself and his cultures, traditional and modern, to solve them', and so overcome his dilemmas.

But if the Indian intellectual's spiritual problems be *real*, not merely figments of a malingering imagination, then one wonders if time by itself could heal the wound—though it might deaden its pain by accustoming him to it. Is substitution the only way to overcome a conflict; and a steady decay of tradition the best way for mastering the agony of a break with it? Is there not another and a different answer—albeit, initially, open only to the few? May not the road to a secure and fruitful future lie through the past? May not the revival and reinterpretation of the unageing values of a people's culture give them direction in an age of change and enable them to effect a smooth transition without too great a loss? And is not India fortunate in that her spiritual traditions, never bound to any creed or dogma, uniting mysticism, reason and humanism, are of a kind that, if revitalised and developed, can come to terms with modern science and technology without breaking themselves in the process? Did not Vivekananda, Tagore and Gandhi shed their 'provinciality and self-derogation', and did they not feel themselves 'to be at a creative centre, one of the world's creative centres'?—and may not the modern Indian intellectual's road to freedom lie the same way?

¹ After the 1857 debacle, progressive Indians seem to have given themselves up to the process of Anglicisation. It was only when they had succeeded in the attempt and discovered their error, that the Indian National Movement was born. This pattern is reproduced in the individual lives of most of India's great modern leaders whose early devotion to the West is shown in their later years by their remarkable mastery of written and spoken English.

² Had the British settled down in large numbers some living relationship between English and Indian life might eventually have been established as in the case of Persian, which, through the birth of Urdu as a result of Indo-Afghan and Turk fusion, acquired native roots.

³ It is rather puzzling that a trained sociologist like Shils should have missed the unnaturalness of a situation where men chat and gossip in their own language but the moment they undertake any specialised activity or enter an intellectual discussion, resort to a foreign one. The Indian intellectual, in any case, cannot help sensing the abnormality. But now that he can at last throw off the yoke of English he is reluctant to do so, for to relinquish it at the present stage of local linguistic development would be to engender a certain crudity in his intellectual experience. This reluctance in turn must retard the growth of his own languages—a fact which creates one of his worst present-day cultural predicaments.

⁴ Vivekananda, on returning from England, put the matter very clearly indeed: "No man ever landed on English soil with more hatred in his heart for a race than I did for the English... but the more I lived among them,... mixed with them... the more I loved them! ... the difficulties that arise between us and the English people, are really due to ignorance;

we do not know them, and they do not know us." *Selections from Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta, 1957), p. 229-30.

⁵ "An ideology, however remote from obvious biological needs, is found in practice to be biologically useful—that is, favourable to the species' survival. Without such spiritual equipment not only do societies tend to disintegrate, but the individuals composing them may just stop bothering to keep alive. The 'destruction of religion' among primitive peoples is always cited by experts as a major cause in their extinction in contact with white civilisation." Gordon Childe, *What Happened in History* (Penguin, London, 1957), p. 16.

⁶ Shils' case is only symptomatic: other Western writers tend to fail in a like manner. Thus C. H. Phillips, while discussing "India's Deeper Problems," fails to take into account the cultural problems that I have mentioned (*India*, London, 1948, pp. 151-67). Even in personal discussions I have found it difficult to get across to Western visitors the full extent of what is involved.

⁷ That things should be thus makes one realise afresh new India's loss in Gandhiji. Even where reform is attempted, it is pursued in a wrong manner. The student learning English literature still disregards his own, while one specialising in the native one still fights shy of seriously studying English literature—the dualism continues, only the proportion of those mastering English and those Hindi is reversed. The only way out at this historical juncture is to create a situation where things "English" and things "Indian" are studied simultaneously and with equal mastery (in a spirit of kinship without any prejudice); for then alone will native tradition begin assimilating new elements and grow to a point where it is adequate for contemporary purposes.

⁸ The doctrine of the Four Ashramas, by placing the burden of maintaining the *brahmachari* and the *sannyasin* on the *grahasti*, presumes a state of surplus and plenitude.

⁹ The 2 ghosts that have haunted Indian political thought from the writings of Mahatma Gandhi down to Mr. J. P. Narain's *A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity* (now in private circulation) have been: (a) a system in which man becomes a victim of his wants, and (b) a state whose power is over-centralised. The ideal upheld is that of a "democracy of limited wants," but how this is to be achieved in present-day terms remains to be seen.

¹⁰ I would like here to distinguish the position of the Indian intellectual from that of the French as described by M. Raymond Aron (*The Opium of the Intellectuals*, London, 1957, p. 302). He is unable to choose between Communism and Western democracy not because each represents only a half of his desires (i.e., for a rapidly achieved social justice, and for the use of just and peaceful means), but because neither seems to ensure the free-play and fulfilment of his religious sensibility.

¹¹ Perhaps no other statement of Shils' reveals so clearly the "historical blindness" and failure to enter deeply the Indian mind that underlie his study. The Indian National Movement was shaped largely by the religious revival that began with Swami Dayanand and Sri Ramakrishna, and most of its outstanding leaders (Tilak, Gokhale, Aurobindo, Bose, Gandhi) were fervently religious and turned to politics not in spite of their "religiosity" but because of it. And to show that this pattern is not gratuitous one has only to recall the parallel role played by religion in the rise to political power of the Marathas and the Sikhs.

Report on the Seminar on "Obscenity in Literature"

By GANGADHAR GADGIL

"OBSCENITY IN LITERATURE" is a much discussed theme yet it always arouses fresh interest when it comes up for discussion. This was confirmed by the seminar organized under the joint auspices of the I.C.C.F. and the P.E.N. All India Centre on the 6th and 7th of February. Writers both old and young actively participated in it. Inevitably in the discussion there emerged two divergent viewpoints. Yet they were not rigid and the gulf that separated them was not too wide. Moreover, while the viewpoints were two, the arguments were varied. As a result the discussion was fruitful. It certainly was not bitter.

The Saturday session of the Seminar was devoted to a discussion of the ethical, sociological and legal aspects of the problem. Smt. Bhagwat started off by shattering quite a few illusions. She pointed out that Victorian prudery was never until recently a part of our tradition. Ours is an inclusive culture and the obscene has always had a place in our customs and songs and sculpture. She drew a distinction between the 'obscene and the pornographic' and argued that the obscene is not socially harmful. In fact it ought to have a place in the culture of a people. This was somewhat of a bombshell to quite a few participants and they reacted strongly to it.

Prof. A. R. Wadia took up a middle position. He was not too sure that obscene literature would not prove harmful to the adolescent and the common man. At the same time he recognized that great artists have at times found it necessary to write things that are obscene. Society should be tolerant towards these great artists, yet it cannot ignore the harmful effects of obscene writing. He candidly admitted that he could not find a way out of this dilemma and expected the writers to throw light on the issue.

Mr. C. C. Shah, a distinguished lawyer explained the nature of law relating to obscenity in various countries. American law takes the most liberal approach towards obscenity, and jealously guards against any inroads on the freedom of expression in the name of decency. The attitude of English

law is more conservative and was until recently distressingly vague. It has now been more clearly defined and somewhat liberalized as a result of new legislation. Japanese law takes a very conservative stand and frowns on any violence being done to the innate sense of modesty. Law courts in India have been influenced largely by the British and to some extent by the American attitude towards obscenity. Mr. C. C. Shah pointed out that he himself had a repugnance to obscene writing and felt that society should discourage it. At the same time he was not too sure that legal restrictions could be the best or the most desirable means of attaining that objective.

Litterateurs had a field day during the Sunday session of the Seminar. Mr. Jyotindra Dave, the veteran Gujarati writer, read a paper studded with Sanskrit quotations and outlined the approach of Sanskrit scholars towards the issue of obscenity. *Auchitya* or a sense of propriety is the guiding principle of Sanskrit literary thought in this context. Mr. Dave said that *auchitya* continues to be a valid guiding principle to writers although ideas regarding propriety have changed considerably since ancient times.

Mr. Madhao Achwal, whose paper is being published in this issue, based his analysis on modern aesthetic theory. He pointed out that obscenity is an extra-literary category. Thus from the purely artistic point of view a good literary work cannot in the very nature of things be obscene. Literary works dealing with sexual themes may, however, suffer from certain types of defects, which might make it obscene.

The discussion that followed the presentation of papers on both the days raised many interesting issues. Some of the younger participants pointed out that the undesirable effects of so-called 'obscene' writing on adolescents were being exaggerated and they quoted passages from the reports of British and American psychologists and educationists in support of their view. Others drew on their own personal experiences. The elderly participants were sceptical of the value of psychologists'

reports on matters such as these and drew on their own personal experiences to justify their fears of the undesirable social effect of obscene writing.

One of the participants pointed out that different societies have different ideas regarding what is obscene. These ideas change over time, so that it is not possible to lay down any universally acceptable ideas of what is obscene. Another participant suggested that a writer should be guided by the conception of obscenity accepted by the society in which he lives. Quite a few participants, however, felt that this was more of an evasion than a solution of the problem. Another problem raised was what kind of a reader should society have in mind when

formulating laws relating to obscenity? The question gave rise to a very illuminating discussion.

The participants found it impossible to formulate a generally acceptable definition of obscenity, although they were agreed that it is easy to detect literature that is purely pornographic and that society should discourage its publication.

Most of the participants were keenly aware of the necessity of giving the artist maximum freedom. They were also aware of the blundering stupidity with which laws relating to obscenity have been and are even today enforced. In fact many of them were sceptical of the usefulness of law as a means of preventing obscene writing.

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Talking About Books

By SADHAN KUMAR GHOSH

THERE is some substance in J. B. Priestley's frequent complaint that his generation has had the worst of both worlds. When he was young, and grumbling his way through Fleet Street, the elders in literature were, ipso facto, the betters. And now that he is in his sixties, he finds the Angry young men throwing their weight about, telling him there is no room at the top. Also that 'Age is unnecessary'. The second of these is a sad-denying reflection. Particularly in the England of to-day, when Injurious time, with a robber's haste crams his rich thievery up.' But Priestley does not look back in anger or get into tantrums.

And why should he? A man who can write the magnificent *Literature and the Western Man* published by Heinemann might very well remember and be glad. One thinks of only two other books—by Ford Madox Ford and John Drinkwater—with a comparable theme. Priestley's book is much greater than these, because it is much more than a literary history of Europe and the United States. There is no gassing on the greatness of Cervantes or Dostoevsky. Comparative literature, which the quasi-reader can make barren or profitless, is seen here as a liberation of the human mind. That is the message of that great humanist, Sir Charles Maurice Bowra, too—in his *Heritage of Symbolism* and *The Creative Experiment*.

Literature and the Western Man is a great book because it is inspired by great beliefs. Belief in man's unconquerable mind. Belief in the essential unity of all literature. Belief that the Renaissance was a real opener of golden horizons. Belief that Western man is frustrated and schizophrenic and needs the buttress of religion. Belief that the writer must humanise his own society or invite a holocaust. And, finally, belief that the writer's chief adversary is the machine.

Some special interest attaches to Priestley's estimates of his contemporaries. His assessments of the prose writers are more illuminating than those of the poets, though he shows that Rupert Brooke's earlier poetry was much better than his war poetry and has been most unfairly neglected. Even more to the point is his deflation of C. E. Montague's *Disenchantment* (an overpraised book with a

meretricious style) and his tribute to the prose of Edmund Blunden and H. M. Tomlinson. Tomlinson wrote some of the best prose in this century and should be carefully studied and savoured. In another context, he declares that Sean O'Casey, though a born dramatist, is not quite the genius that Synge was. It is interesting also to note his view that some of E. M. Forster's novels—despite Forster's anxiety to stress the conflict between pot and Pan (alas that the pun which is all the fun should be missed by half the world)—have dated more than Wells, Bennett or Galsworthy.

Equally just is his view that Stefan George, Hofmannsthal and Rainer Maria Rilke all created poetry of great beauty but just miss greatness. It is obvious that Priestley's sympathies are with the symbolists. He endorses Prof. Bowra's estimate of Blok. He claims that though Yeats broke away from the Symbolist tradition he never ceased to be a symbolist. Priestley's own experiments with the drama—Dame Sybil Thorndike once told me that *The Linden Tree* was one of her happiest memories—lend weight to his regret that the modern dramatist cannot give the intellectual what he asks from contemporary writing. *Literature and the Western Man* is a rich and generous book, packed with wise, witty, sententious, sensible things.

The study of Shakespeare the poet or of Shakespeare's imagination, as revealed through the patterns of recurrent imagery in his plays, led at first either to the discovery of dominant images which related the plays to primitive myths and rituals or to the discovery in them of symbols of the conflicts of the individual psyche in its attempts to come to terms with its environment. We tend to be pre-occupied with myth and meaning. L. C. Knights once felt that nothing could be more fatuous, than the query, 'How many children had Lady Macbeth?' and that the really purposive criticism would be an exploration of themes. He has revised those opinions now and evidently sees character and the approach of A. C. Bradley in a truer perspective. Contemporary Shakespearean criticism shows a better awareness of the place of character-studies. Arthur Sewall puts it in memorable form: The poetry of poetic drama is the poetry of "As

if" and the dramatist's "As if", is made possible by the characters, and realises itself in the situation.'

L.C. Knights's *Some Shakespearean Themes* published by Chatto and Windus is based on the belief that Shakespeare's plays reveal a coherent outlook on life. Gradually the themes become more and more closely associated with the characters and situations. Thus, in *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar* and later in *Coriolanus* Shakespeare continued his exploration of the tragic contradictions of the public world. In the *Sonnets*, the 'essential Shakespeare' is hypnotised by the flux and the general instability of things. The chief impression left by *King Lear* is that without love, life is a meaningless chaos of competing egotisms. This is the great central masterpiece—but why should it be an 'exploratory allegory'?—to which the earlier plays lead. Ripeness, indeed, is all.

The second issue of the *International Literary Annual* edited by John Wain and published by John Calder has appeared. The cultural climate of England is well described by Richard Hoggart in his book *The Uses of Literacy*. Hoggart describes the effect of admiss on working-class culture. Another useful book is Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society*, the English of which unfortunately is poor, pulpy and gelatinous. Williams is anxious to develop a common culture. In these circumstances, it is difficult to understand why there should be so much hankering in England for what one may call 'News of the World literature'. John Wain explains that the absence of any survey of the Bengali epic does not mean that 'I am plotting to reinstate the British Raj'. Of course, it does not. But why the Bengali epic should be surveyed at all for readers who have no time to pick up the lingo is a question that remains unanswered. Some of this internationalism is spontaneous, if mistaken. Most of it, I am afraid, is spurious. Marc Slonim's piece on Pasternak and Nabokov has some special interest. *Dr. Zhivago* has disappointed those readers who expected a sensational attack on Soviet Russia. It has also confused those who compared it with *War and Peace*. Quite apart from the fact that Pasternak is not a Tolstoy, *Dr. Zhivago* is a fragmentary composition, totally alien to the stream-like quality of a *War and Peace*. Except for a beautiful love affair between Yuri and Lara there is little plot in *Dr. Zhivago*. What gives *Dr. Zhivago* significance is that he affirms the priority of life over dogma and the pointlessness of political theories which sacrifice the joy of being to schemes and formulas. I like to recall that Pasternak was discovered not by the Nobel Prize Committee but

a long time ago by that percipient savant, C. M. Bowra. *Lolita*, Marc Slonim notes, has also disappointed readers who were looking for a salacious book.

International Theatre Annual edited by Harold Hobson and published by Calder is very much more than a survey of the year's plays in the leading capitals. Some of the most pressing problems of the theatre are squarely faced. Politics is one of these. Why, one wonders, do English dramatists—the Osbornes and the Becketts not excepted—fight shy of politics. Only two playwrights—Doris Lessing in her *Mr. Dollinger* and Alfred Noyes in his *Roger Casement*—attempted political themes. Frankly, I do not think Brendan Behan's *The Hothouse* a political play. It is not motivated by any belief and can well be described as a nihilistic comedy. Yet the most hopeful work in the theatre during the last few years—Graham Greene and Arnold Wesker notwithstanding—has come from the Left. But Joan Littlewood has not quite revived the Vedrenne-Barker era.

Neither from Stratford East nor from Sloane Square—the two rebel outposts—has there been any onslaught on the teddy boys, Hola or the Devlin report. Instead, John Arden's *Live like Pigs* tries to persuade people that the Welfare State is not a bad thing after all. I am happy to note that J. W. Lambert has nice things to say about Graham Greene's *The Complainant Lover*. I saw this play last October with John Hampden and William Sansom. Ralph Richardson's superb acting in it is one of my lasting memories. I also liked Barbara Jefford at the Old Vic and Beatrix Lehmann in *The Aspern Papers*. Mention of these two actresses and some account of the Shakespeare performances at Stratford (the Oxford Players are frequently mentioned) would not have been amiss.

A number of persons in England—Frank Swinnerton, John Hampden and Lord David Cecil among them—said it was a pity I had arrived too late to meet Walter de la Mare. 'You two would have got on famously,' said Frank Swinnerton at the Reform Club. Lord David Cecil told me that he considered Walter de la Mare and W. B. Yeats the most significant poets of the century. 'I do not say the greatest poets, I do not believe in marking and grading poets.' Walter de la Mare died only a few months before I reached England as a literary pilgrim. If I had been able to tear myself from India a little earlier, I could have met the dream-peddler and the magician. But life would lose much of its relish without these might-have-beens.

Walter de la Mare's *Collected Poems* published

by Faber revives these memories. I find it hard to forget one of the most devoted de la Mare addicts I have known—Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas, wife of Mr. L. G. Thomas of the British Council—who is now in Jamaica. I have often wondered why de la Mare addicts are all quiet, gentle, almost angelic. De la Mare, said Priestley somewhere, was one of those artists who remembered Eden. He did, and the memory haunted him all the time, giving him a peculiar familiarity with the 'other world' of spectres, brockens, 'listeners' and echoes. His poetry is pre-eminently the poetry of undertones and a tremulous despairing recognition of life's loveliness. The elusive magic, the faint music, the peculiar aroma of his poetry are not for the hurrying reader. Phantoms in deserted houses, trysts in evening light, glow-worms studding the leaves, the westering sun faltering and failing across green meadows—these are a few of his random themes. He felt strangely drawn to empty and desolate houses and they had secrets to impart to him. He did not have Hardy's compassion but he made up for this by identifying himself with the 'riddlers' (a blackbird and a wren), rooks in October, the rabbit in his burrow. 'Look thy last on all things lovely every hour'—this was his message and his friendly hint. The miracle of life is to be treasured in the memory which must always aspire to be a mansion for lovely forms. Life is a constant passing of the torch; the torch of beauty, of love, and of ecstasy. Behold this dreamer, peddling his memories of life's enchantments. The stream remains, as Robert Lynd notes—the stream of lovely things that change, watched by loving eyes that change.

The death of Gilbert Murray now leaves only two classical humanists in England—Sir Richard Livingstone and Sir Charles Maurice Bowra. Sir Ernest Barker, whom I had the privilege of meeting a few months before his death, was not, I regret to say, a real classical humanist. When the abolition of compulsory Greek was mooted in 1919, Sir Ernest Barker and Dr. Norwood were among the abolitionists.

Two of Prof. Bowra's recent pamphlets call for special attention. *The Meaning of a Heroic Age* is a reprint of his Earl Grey Memorial lecture. *The Prophetic Element* is the Presidential address, for 1959, at the English Association. *The Prophetic Element* reminds me of the fear expressed by Alan Pryce-Jones that vatic poetry will probably not be seen again. Should that happen—Prof. Bowra implies—the loss will be ours. The prophetic poet, Prof. Bowra points out, deals with universals and

abstractions as if they were special cases seen through the poet's own vision and illuminated by his special insight. Blake was the first of these poets. Shelley, Hardy, Yeats, Tennyson and Swinburne are practically the only other poets who can be described as vatic or prophetic. The prophetic poet, we learn, faces the world with an insight beyond that of ordinary men, and, just because he is a poet, his forecasts strike home as no others do. A brilliant, illuminating and prophetic essay.

The Meaning of a Heroic Age gives more scope to Prof. Bowra's encyclopaedic scholarship and his easy familiarity with the poetic literatures of many countries. His analysis of heroic poetry goes far beyond Chadwick, and to him the essence of a heroic age is that it fosters a whole generation which is unusually equipped by nature for war and finds its satisfaction and its reward in it. But, of course, heroic ages are presented differently in legend and history. The Homeric picture of the Greek world does not tally with our decipherment of the Mycenaean records. This discrepancy is as apparent in the old High German *Hildebrand* as in the Russian *Tale of Igor's raid*. There is a scholarly assessment of the significance of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and an explanation of the manner in which an unfriendly priesthood preserved the traditions of a heroic age. The chief use of heroic poetry, says Prof. Bowra, has been to discredit superstition and to show that man can do more by his own efforts than by pretensions to magic or dependence on the gods.

Sir Richard Livingstone's *The Rainbow Bridge* published by Pall Mall Press is a passionate championship of the classics. 'The poet says "Dear City of Cecrops". And wilt thou not say "Dear City of Zeus"?' The Greek (and, to a lesser extent, Latin) classics are still the infallible guides to the first-rate and still provide us with a philosophy of life. The emotion evoked by Greek poetry—the plays of Euripides as much as the wine songs of Anacreon—is in fact religious in so far as it is an acknowledgment of other and wider worlds, both within us and without, rather than the workaday world which meets the ordinary eye. Sir Richard Livingstone makes the generous plea that the classics should not be confined to the elite but should form part of the education of the majority. He recalls that Mark Pattison's idea of *literae humaniores* was that it must develop judgment and avoid the evils of specialism. The great Victorian teachers—Jowett, Green and Nettleship—were fully aware of the Greek ideal of training men to live well. But one may detect a new note about the study of the

classics towards the end of the nineteenth century. There is a new sense of urgency. The new awareness of the indispensability of Greek literature, of Hellenism being a way of life was preluded by S. H. Butcher and C. Lowes Dickinson. But the prophet of the new idea was Gilbert Murray. To-day, the evils of fragmentation and specialism are more dangerous than ever—and not least in Oxford—and both Greece and Gilbert Murray compel a new attention. The rainbow bridge, incidentally, in Norse mythology, was a link between earth and heaven. The test of human greatness is furnished by admirations and aspirations. The attitude of wonder in the presence of the world is a continuous quantity of Greek thought.

Gilbert Murray's *An Unfinished Autobiography* published by Allen and Unwin will be greeted and welcomed all over the world. It revives a few memories. I picked up at Blackwell's last October a Memorial Volume to Gilbert Murray. I feel that there is much in that book—particularly H. A. L. Fisher's moving tribute—which the publishers could have usefully incorporated in this. The autobiographical portion is confessedly fragmentary and some of his Australian memories are second-hand. An Australian High Commissioner once confessed to me that he was unaware that Gilbert Murray was an Australian. Maybe, it was not just a case of the prophet not receiving his dues at home. Perhaps we could modify Pericles a bit. The whole world is the birth-place as well as the burial place of men like Gilbert Murray.

His memories of the Oxford of the eighteenthies range from Arthur (a misprint here) Sidgwick, Robinson Ellis and D. S. Margoliuth to boating on the Cherwell. Sidgwick must have initiated him into the beauty of Greek poetry, the fun of Aristophanes as well as the tragic power of Aeschylus. Robinson Ellis was a remote kind-hearted and very effectual Don, although a little indifferent to the amenities of life. After a year's teaching at Oxford, Gilbert Murray became Professor of Greek at Glasgow. A. C. Bradley had just become Professor of English. These two great humanists provoked all the petty and mean-minded of the day into open hostility. Incidentally, this hostility has not quite died down. Gilbert Murray was hardly the man to nurse any rancour and he recalls humorously that 'to be condemned together with Bradley was a great distinction'.

Murray's humanism found expression not merely in his passionate love of Greek but in his equally passionate interest in the League of Nations. His interest in the modern theatre has been attested

by Sybil Thorndike, Sir Lewis Casson and Granville-Barker. But it is as a humanist that he will be remembered. 'The scholar's special duty', he said, 'is to turn the written signs in which old poetry or philosophy is now enshrined back into living thought or feeling. He must so understand as to relieve.' An ingenious and subtle textual critic, he had a very proper (and to-day, much-needed) contempt for the textual critics of his day, men like Ingram Bywater or T. W. Allen. He had no faith in a Europe denuded of the legacy of Greece, nor in Greek studies shrunk into a specialist's corner where they might dwell apart from *humanitas* or from the love of literature itself.

The Wolfenden Report has made Peter Wildeblood and a few queers respectable but Rupert Croft-Cooke should not be lumped with them. Rupert Croft-Cooke is a hypersensitive introvert. The sheer number of his autobiographies suggests this. *The Altar in the Loft* published by Putnam is the eleventh of these books and he hints that the total might reach twenty. Personally, I prefer this form to the autobiographical novel, but I do not know whether I reflect the consensus.

Like Graves and Somerset Maugham, Rupert Croft-Cooke prefers the Mediterranean to England and lives in Tangier. *The Altar in the Loft*, however, is an evocation of his boyhood memories of the Kentish countryside. 'Those were the days' as Siegfried Sassoon also recalls in his three autobiographies. The days were the halcyon ones before 1914 when the author was a day boy at Tonbridge. Christmas was Dickensian. The author's memories are not only of holly and evergreens, but of silver, tinsel, Norfolk turkey and the singing of 'The First Noel' and 'While Shepherds Watched'.

Readers of E. M. Forster's embittered caricature of Tonbridge in *The Longest Journey* must read Croft-Cooke's hauntingly nostalgic account of the same place. He may have formed a taste for passionate friendships there but the clearest memories are of a battered copy of *Lyra Heroica*, evensongs in the school chapel, the surreptitious eating of apples and Kentish cobnuts and the cedar tree in front of Cage House. 'For all homes and familiar places there is a season and a time of day in which they live most vividly in memory and I see Cage House itself on a summer evening.' There may be something faintly Newboltian in his evocations of the blazers, the cricket caps and the roll calls under the chestnut trees, but not to see the Kentish hopfields, as he remembers them and recalls the drowsy smell, is to miss a great deal.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Art and Indianness

AGAIN, throughout the East there has been a development of culture in some respects more important than that of the modern West. Under culture I include religion, literature and art. And I regard these, not as being in themselves, the purpose of human life, but rather as signs that that purpose is being fulfilled. . . .

So wrote Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson some thirty years ago in an essay¹ that is as keenly penetrating about the nature of Indian temperament as it is grossly unsympathetic to the forms of Indian Art. In being unable to appreciate beauty expressed by the Indian psyche which he was sensitive to, Dickinson's reaction is typical of the generation of British influence in the 19th century described so well by Mr. Archer in the first chapters of his book. These first three chapters by themselves merit inclusion in every college syllabus that purports to deal with India's contemporary background.

Mr. Archer writes cogently and comes quickly to his point. 'In 1894, painting in India was still existent, but only by a distortion of terms could it be described as *Indian*.' What he very successfully outlines is the succession of stages whereby he sees certain Indian artists — Rabindranath Tagore, Sher-Gil, Jamini Roy and George Keyt — as forces in the regeneration of a tradition of Indian painting.

The British had a lot to answer for in Indian education, but the 19th century attitude of British superiority was 'equivo-

cal' to Indian art, which, if moribund, was all the less worth encouraging. Mr. Archer traces with clarity and a narrative suspense worthy of a detective story the parts played by a few perceptive Englishmen in this cultural doldrum, described trenchantly by C. R. Das in 1917 as being 'hybrid in dress, thought, in sentiment and culture, and . . . making frantic attempts even to be hybrid (s) in blood'. It is E.B. Havell, the Englishman who became principal of the Calcutta School of Art, who emerges as the force behind a counter-attack to make Indian art *Indian*. Havel had his sights trained on the essential quality of classical Indian painting and sculpture and even though most of his ideas and evaluations might seem wrong to us today, his articulate efforts to understand Indian art and its 'spiritual and ethical purpose' provided a favourable change of climate in India. He made the 'modern' movement of the 1920s possible. It was Havell who started to turn 'educated' India's back on the 'laborious and rather painful process of eye-training to develop . . . imitative powers' that characterised formal art training in Europe at the time. He got near the core of artistic creativity when he wrote, 'The Oriental artist develops his imitative skill mainly by the exercise of his creative powers', referring to a process of composition based on memory and imagination rather than the photographic possibilities of the eye.

Though his intuitions were correct, Havell does not seem to have seen clearly enough to isolate these qualities that he admired and help to pass them on within a system of art education divorced from historic and social continuity. Recommending the study

INDIAN and MODERN ART by W. G. Archer (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 35s.)

¹ 'An Essay on the civilizations of India, China and Japan'

of Mughul Art 'for its perfect sincerity and high technical distinction' and taking Abanindranath Tagore as his *chela*, the result was the 'feebly British' pastel fantasies of Abanindranath, a concoction of 'Mughul art plus emotion.' Thus the first stream lost its way in the desert.

Mr. Archer rightly analyses this false start of the wishy washy 'School of Bengal' as the product of Havell's insistence on taking Mughal Art as a starting point in guiding the sensibility of young Indian artists; he points out as well the psychological climate for Indians at that time, conducive to escapism into India's 'glorious' past as a reaction to the uncomfortable present symbolised in the social aloofness of British personnel in India.

The next step was the substitution of Ajanta as a source of inspiration and the efforts of the neo-Bengal School resulted in 'a languid dream expressed in a manner half-miniature, half-monumental.'

So much for the 19th century background. Mr. Archer makes it clear that there was no conflict between modern Western art and the distortions of Indian miniature technique. With the impact of the 1900-1925 revolution in Indian awareness of the problems of creative spontaneity being grappled with by contemporary European artists, came Gogonendranath Tagore's experiments in cubism. Another set-back, because these seemed 'frigidly indifferent to Indian feelings, interests or sensibility.'

The first successful efforts in closing the gap between the healthy sensibility of India's past miniature painters and that of contemporary Indian painters came with the intellectualised approach that Rabindranath Tagore brought to his rather late dabblings. Rabindranath seems to have appreciated very clearly the essentials of unity, form and rhythm common to the arts, and he tore the mask of beauty off the muse.

For Mr. Archer, Rabindranath Tagore's significance is twofold. He was contemporary in spirit and his paintings expressed his own style — more importantly, an Indian one. The concept of 'Indianness' in art is

tricky and has been the recipient of every shade of banality and misinformed prejudice that the human mind can fantasize. Here too Tagore was clear-headed in insisting that Indian artists should feel at liberty to start from whatever historic point they liked. His manifesto is worth quoting for its 'Indian' authority:

'I love India but my India is an idea and not a geographical expression. Therefore I am *not* a patriot — I shall seek my compatriots all over the world'. Tagore could afford to feel this freedom because, as Mr. Archer tells us, he made 'instinctive recourse to vital modes of Indian expression' — the bold outlines, distortions and vigorous rhythm characteristic of both the rural painters of 19th century Bengal and of Central Indian and Rajasthani painting of the 16th and 17th centuries.

I feel that Mr. Archer has overdone the psychological approach in his treatment of Tagore: overdone its significance outside the context of the medical profession; his chapter on Tagore seems to be too easy an excursion along unconscious probings into the special case that Tagore undoubtedly was. He is more objective in his treatment of the remaining artists in the pantheon — Jamini Roy, Amrita Sher-Gil and George Keyt. Jamini Roy took up the idiom of Kalighat and Bankura to give it 'serious' artistic status. It is worth quoting Mr. Archer again: 'His style is once again the clue to an emotional attitude — an attitude in which two elements, repugnance at city life and repugnance at British rule, coalesce in arrogant defiance.'

With Amrita Sher-Gil our path is again strewn with the thorns of 'Indianness.' Mr. Archer's dispassionate treatment carpets the way with good sense, for though Sher-Gil was 'avid to be Indian', she realised that 'Indianness of feeling... was the clue to Indianness of style', and it is this quality of feeling combined with a certain standard of craftsmanship that makes her contribution remarkable in this context.

With Mr. Archer's last example — the work of George Keyt — we come nearest to

a visible form of Indianness. The chapter on Keyt is again copiously documented to show the trend of literary and social influences behind Keyt's development as a painter. Mr. Archer draws on the West equally in his comparisons — the paintings of Palmer, Blake, Gauguin, Klee, Munch and Picasso are all adduced as reagents in their relation to the Indian painters discussed. Perhaps the very broadness of scope inherent in Mr. Archer's thesis prevented the more meticulous detailing of the qualities he has isolated in the work of the Indian artists he studies. This brings us round again to the concept of Indianness. For an Englishman (however sympathetic) to tackle this subject must be like attempting to climb over a wall studded with bottle-glass. It is to Mr. Archer's credit that he hoists himself across with barely a scratch. In achieving this I think he has fulfilled an urgent need in plugging various lacunae that gape through the artistic small-talk of the contemporary Indian scene, and as such, rendered a valuable service in laying a scholarly foundation to the study of modern Indian art. But again, as with Indianness, this is a scholastic approach in the best sense. It cannot be substituted for the accuracy of observation and feeling that goes to make up the process of growth and visual self-education that the young artist of promise inevitably gives himself. It is surely within this process and its healthy nurture than we can hope for the flowering of 'Indianness' — an elusive but recognisable quality that resides not only in the subject matter, emotive context or emotional centres of origin that Mr. Archer puts his finger on, but also in the way sensitivity is expressed in a line (cf. Keyt's line in relation to Havell's dictum quoted above). A little more particular analysis of this kind might have made Mr. Archer's book more of a handbook than it can at present be. Perhaps to expect this would be unfair to Mr. Archer's limits of obligation as an excellent and stable guide-post.

FOY NISSEN



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TAGORE TRANSLATIONS

THE RUNAWAY AND OTHER STORIES

—Viswa-Bharati—Rs. 5/-

BINODINI tr. by K. R. Kripalani—Sahitya
Akademi, Rs. 5.50, Rs. 3.50.

IT seems that one of the ways of celebrating Rabindranath Tagore's contribution to literature at his centenary is to present more and more of his work to those who do not know Bengali through good translations in other languages. In this, of course, English has been specially favoured, and there are many translations of poems, plays, novels and stories in existence. So it is not just the mere *fact* of translation that is important, but the attempt to aim at a very high standard in the process. As is well-known, there are peculiar difficulties in every kind of translation but they become outstanding in the case of Tagore, round whom a veritable wall of admiration and devotion has been erected. The defenders of this bastion regard any creative or constructive approach as an attack by envious philistines on an enshrined deity; whereas, in this case, the poet's own translations have tended to act as an unfortunate model for other translators. What is clear and precise in the original (and here I rely for my opinion on Bengali literary authorities of my acquaintance) comes through a sort of Celtic twilight in translation. What has happened can be best phrased in this sentence from Tagore's translation of *Gitanjali*:—

'I take pride in this great wall, and I plaster it with dust and sand lest a least hole should be left in this name; and for all the care I take I lose sight of my true being.'

Viswa-Bharati's publication contains nine stories translated by different hands which have appeared before in journals but not in book form. They cover a wide span of forty years in the poet's life and thus also offer a study of his development in this genre.

The best qualities of the stories — their intimate and loving knowledge of Bengali life at different levels, in village and town; their humanity and tolerance and sympathy — come through the web of language and

cannot fail to move and charm the reader. Some of the translations are by friends of the poet such as W. W. Pearson and C. F. Andrews, others by relations and followers. Unfortunately, they are not equally good. It would be unjust, no doubt, to criticise the language as being old-fashioned and cumbersome since Tagore himself began writing in the late 19th century and some of the translators were his contemporaries, but nevertheless five have been translated after 1930. Words and phrases occur which have become stale with much use, whereas Tagore's realistic description and delicate irony require careful handling. Here, for example, are some sentences picked out at random from the book which illustrate what I mean: 'A stern sense of duty forced his elders to make a heroic effort to administer a mild corrective, but overcome by the reaction they lavished their repentant fondness on him worse than ever.' (*The Runaway*); '... surrounded by this illimitable vagueness, it (sound of a woman crying) somehow seemed to me to voice the very plaint of the world that had been obliterated, and I could not treat it cavalierly.' (*False Hopes*); 'From her distance, the young widow did not know that a heartless cruelty, with its evil leer and seeking victims, lay behind the sleepless glare of lights.' (*The Judge*). On the other hand, in 'Cloud and Sun' and 'Trespass' Tagore's mastery of irony—one of his most effective ways of criticising human nature and social injustice—are finely rendered by the translator, and one can overlook such minor blemishes as 'prayerful aunt' and 'religiously-endowed'. My plea is: why not commission young writers for fresh translations in a modern idiom? After all, every age needs its own translations of the classics.

The development that can be noticed in the short stories in the poet's handling of human problems from an unsatisfactory escapism to a mature acceptance of real life, can be seen in 'Binodini', the title given by the translator to Tagore's novel 'Chokher Bali' originally published in 1902. As a novel

it has one outstanding quality—it is both a faithful description and a telling criticism of upper-class Hindu society of the day. The story is set in a single household and the ever-changing, subtle and complicated inter-relationships of six people form the theme of a most absorbing novel. The translator is modest. In his forward he admits that much of the literary flavour of the original is lost in the translation, and where unfamiliar values, habits and names stubbornly resist transplantation he has attempted a literal rendering rather than sought equivalents. I think he has done well, and on the whole the translation is good. It is alive, and precise rather than vague.

One word with regard to the get-up. The short stories are well-bound but there are misprints; the novel has fewer misprints but the binding (at least of the paper-back edition) is poor. Would it not be worthwhile to attend to these small matters—as part of our centenary effort?

LOLA CHATTERJI

ASURAGANAM — Ka. Naa. Subramanyam: Tamil Puthakalayam, Madras 5 — Rs.2

THE slim novel of Sri Ka. Naa. Subramanyam entitled "Asuraganam" running to 119 pages is a signal contribution to Tamil fiction. It is a novel of profound depth and deep insight; but to me it fails at page 115. The final transformation effected in the central character does not come off. Hence despite its manifold excellence it leaves a sense of disappointment on the mind of the reader. But one has to confess that compared to its range and depth, all the other novels produced recently pale into insignificance despite their virtue of 'consummate Greek modelling'. I have in mind Sri Janakiraman's much-praised novel 'Moha Mul'.

'Asuraganam' describes how the central character named Raman dreads the experience of sex, which waylays him in the person of his fiancée's mother, a middle aged Delilah! As the author remarks this is a compulsion of his, from which he achieves

liberation through an act of imagination. Indeed, he kills in imagination his prospective mother-in-law, recovers his 'sanity', and achieves normalcy through marrying the daughter. At the end he sadly confesses that far from killing and blotting out Delilah (he calls her Surpanagai) he has adopted her as his mother.

Now a repeated perusal of the novel only confirms the impression that while the author has brought off the hero's dread of sex, of his distaste for a dull life of conformity and normality, his mental state bordering on a state of hysteria and ecstasy crying out for expression—the final transformation of his recovered sanity, of his willed acceptance of normal life through the bond of sexual union are not artistically worked out. Moreover, while the author acknowledges that the spirits of Kafka, Proust and Sterne have left their impress on his work, when I read it I myself am reminded of Gide's 'Lafcadio's Adventures'. There the hero's experiment in freedom is not stated but is artistically worked out to its logical conclusion by a process of fine implication. Compared to it, Sri Ka. Naa. Subramanyam's experiment is not an artistic success in point of construction or, to quote Pater's phrase again, 'consummate Greek modelling'.

But this is not to gainsay the fact that it still remains the pre-eminent novel in Tamil produced recently. The skilful reader by shifting the focus of emphasis can derive profound satisfaction from a repeated perusal of the novel. To me the hero, who is depicted as only 18 years old, reveals a world of thought, which is to say the least quite impressive and amazing. He moves in a world of ideas where the major figures are Dante, Confucius, Lao-Tse, Valmiki, Freud and others. The ideas of Freud are artistically worked out and critically examined. Similarly the entire novel can be read as an essay at depicting the working of the creative process. The relation between the artist and society, the question of illusion and reality, the final problem of philosophy, the nature of language, reflections on

human nature are all given extended treatment. The literary techniques of the modern West like the skilful weaving in of the motif—the repetition of the names of Rama, Lakshmana and Surpanagai which gives an over-all unity to the whole work—are also exploited skilfully. The uninitiated may exclaim sceptically how the author has unified this diverse world. But he has done it. Here no wind of propaganda, no wail over the disappearance of the joint family and the emergence of the individual are heard, even though there is a suggestion of it. The novel portrays the deeper currents that still give depth and meaning to Indian life. The acceptance of the normal life with the implied duties to the family, the necessity of the regulation of relations between the sexes, the curbing of romantic excesses, all these are adequately mirrored.

But as I have earlier pointed out, this vision of the novel can be got at only if the reader can change the focus. To me it is the most significant Tamil novel of the century and despite its flaws, the world revealed by it reminds me of the poet's lines:

Art is not life and cannot be
A midwife to society,
For art is a *fait accompli*.

Yes, 'Asuraganam' is a *fait accompli* and the Tamil reader can never be sufficiently grateful to the author for having given him such a fine work. T. K. DORAISWAMY

AFRICA SEEN BY AMERICAN NEGROES:

Edited by John A. Davis. Published by Présence Africaine; Pp. 418.

THE French writers since before the revolution had some of the unkindest things to say about the Negro. Montesquieu doubted whether God in his wisdom could have bestowed a soul on the black Negro. Voltaire made one of his characters say: 'what a beautiful climate these southern coasts enjoy! But what ugly inhabitants. . . . No art is known by any of these people. It is a great question among them as to whether they descended from monkeys or whether monkeys descended from them.'

Dumas, Mérimée, Balzac, Maupassant etc., made fun of the Negro in their writings. Today, the words of Voltaire 'no art is known by any of these people' jars on the ears. It is now the turn of the Negro to say that European art had reached a point of exhaustion and that its contact with Negro art has given it a new lease of life.

Politically too the Negro is on the threshold of a great era. A few years ago one could mention only Ethiopia and Liberia as the free countries of Africa. Now there are Ghana, Sudan and Guinea. Very soon they would be followed by Nigeria, the French Cameroons, Italian Somaliland, Tanganyika, Belgian Congo etc., The whole continent seems to be on the march and the colonial powers know that they can do nothing about it excepting to get out of it.

This vast continent with its population of 200,000,000 people divided into nearly five hundred ethnic groups, occupying an area of about 11,500,00 square miles and likely to play an important part in world events has been understood the least. There has been far too much of distorted thinking and writing about it ever since the colonizers set their feet on it. While the early European travellers were quite impressed by the diversity of cultural patterns of the African societies, the precursors of the colonizers had about the worst things to say about them. At the hands of the latter the kingdoms of Benin, Ashanti and Dahomey became the source of horror stories and slogans like 'save Africa for Christianity' came to be heard frequently on the eve of colonization. A false image of Africa was created by them by saying that 'it is a country of wild animals and wild people'. Such an image still persists in the minds of many people. The book *Africa seen by American Negroes* throws light on the various aspects of African society and culture and therefore is very welcome.

The book is an interesting collection of scholarly papers written by American Negro intellectuals. They have a good deal to say about the complexities of African social structures, politics, art, dancing, music and

above all the attitude of the American Negro towards Africa.

The contributors to this volume firmly believe that African societies of the past had civilizations of their own which were comparable to the civilizations of non-literate and non-industrialized societies. While the grand African empires of Mali, Massina and Songhoi produced pretty advanced civilizations, the average African society did not lack in a well-organized economy, an effective system of administration, an intricate system of religious beliefs and highly sophisticated aesthetic standards. What made them vulnerable to the industrially superior European powers was their social stagnation and the slave-trade. The societies of Africa stagnated within their self-arresting systems while the slave-traders took away healthy men and women. Then came the invasion of Africa by the seven European powers which were armed with money, guns and Christianity. Their advent accelerated the pace of disintegration of African societies which had already started under the impact of the slave-trade.

The shape and character of African societies which have come in close contact with European powers cannot be precisely stated. Nevertheless what is most noticeable in these societies is the coming into existence of new classes of wage-earners, traders, money-lenders, bankers, doctors, lawyers, journalists etc. They have given expression to their own economic and political aspirations. They have forced the hands of their rulers to give them a greater share in civil service and legislatures. And now they are eagerly looking forward to the termination of the foreign rule.

So far as Negro art is concerned it has displayed remarkable vitality. It went with the Negro to whichever place he was transported. It not only survived in a hostile environment but also vitally influenced the art of the master. In the field of modern painting and sculpture the influence of Negro art has been almost incalculable. Picasso and Braque assimilated into European painting one of the many facets

of Negro art and called it cubism. In sculpture Negro works came to be regarded as highly sophisticated because of their 'integral dignity and sculptural self-sufficiency.' Not even the worst critic can deny today the variety of techniques and symbols along with the depth of spiritual appeal to be found in Negro art.

The Negro dance and poetry have evoked a good deal of admiration and even emulation in recent years. The Negro dance has a wide range of movements and speed. It ranges from the simplest to the most sophisticated. In matters of speed it can be slow and stately as well as quicker than what the eye can register.

Most Negro poetry is written in French, a language which is least suited to their unanalytical and highly emotional temperament. Negro poetry finds its fund of tragedy from the racial humiliations of the Negro. It cannot help being obsessed with race. It invariably mourns the destruction of the ancestral way of life and tends to idealise it. It has developed a concept of *negritude* which aims at restoring racial self-respect among the Negroes.

This brings us to the complex problem of the attitude of the American Negro towards his brethren in Africa. The attitude of the average American Negro ranges from a feeling of utter shame because of his African origin and consequent attempts on his part to deny it to the most militant declaration of solidarity with the Africans. His attitude on the whole is oriented and given expression to by the economic, social and psychological problems which arise in his relationship with the white man in America.

There seems to be little agreement among the writers of this volume on the question of moral and material assistance which American Negroes can give to the Africans. A section of them believes that the American Negroes have helped the Africans with funds for schools and hospitals and scholarships in the past and now they should give large-scale financial and technical assistance. The other section, represented by the

famous Negro sociologist, E. Franklin Frazier, believes that the American Negro has nothing to give to the Africans. The Negroes in America, he maintains, are not the captains of industry and the managers of big industrial and financial corporations. Even their technical know-how is very limited because till recently they were not entrusted with important jobs in industry and transport. The net result is that the skilled African Negro has surpassed the American Negro in his technical knowledge.

The political experience of the American Negro is equally limited. In the South, for a long period, the American Negro has had many political disadvantages. Whatever political experience he possesses is confined to the artificial limits of his own racial community.

Finally, the American Negro élite is neither psychologically nor morally in a position to help the Africans. This is because centuries of the white man's contempt has made him believe in his congenital inferiority. What he therefore prizes most at this stage is the recognition of his worth by the white man. His subordinate partnership in his coexistence with the white man has deeply affected his outlook. Whereas, 'Africa is demanding an intellectual and spiritual leadership that has caught a vision of a new world — a world freed from racism, colonialism and human exploitation.' (p. 276)

Most of the papers in this book have been written with considerable emotion without losing scholarly depth or treatment. One of its chief defects is that by 'Africa' it merely means the countries of West Africa. Very little information is given in it about the other parts of this vast continent.

A. H. SOMJEE

POEMS AND EPIGRAMS: by Emily Polk,
(Rupa, Calcutta, Rs. 12.00 nP.)

WHICHEVER way one looks at them (and I intend to examine their form, their impression of unity, their vision), these poems represent a considerable achievement. This, in spite of the fact that review-

ers in India seem pretty much to have ignored them, or, when noticing, given them cursory attention. In any case, painstaking reviews of English poetry in India are rare; even a paper whose literary columns normally deserve study boggled at the contents of this volume, and satisfied itself with an offhand comment against which a number of readers lodged protest. I think it is necessary to remember that *Poems and Epigrams* is just the kind of book which reviewers here will fight shy of, or write off tongue-in-cheekily, or evade with the well-known deadpan last sentence: 'This is the type of book which will be highly appreciated by all those for whom it is intended,' or just sit tight on and keep mum.

For one thing, it is fastidiously printed, as a book of poems should be. It has run off with a State Award for excellence of production. The jacket — a shadow flower motif, white on grey, the title in bold blue italics — is Mrs Polk's idea, and leaves no doubt that she has 'developed a technique of line drawing and ornamental design.' The pages are uncut, the binding is grey-green with gold spine, the type face sensitively selected: everywhere, indeed, evidence of carefulness amounting to fussiness. Pity, therefore, that the opening word 'Sky' on page 48 should be all awry, the 'i' not dotted and the apostrophe wrong-footed on page 78. Such lovely artwork, I dare say, puts off reviewers accustomed to hash; the price certainly puts many off, and it might have been a prudent idea to have brought out an equally attractive paperback (in the style of Evergreen, Grove, and Meridian) simultaneously with the hardcover edition.

One aspect of these poems which I am sure baffled many would-be reviewers is their curious American flavour. We still prefer the Shelley steak, the Cummings hamburger surprises us; or, putting it differently (without, I hope, descending into flippancy), we admire the mineral waters of Byron, Milton and Spencer, but a Coke! — that's an acquired taste. Taste for these poems has certainly to be cultivated if any

deep appreciation is intended. Mrs Polk loves playing with words; spikes them over into cunning combinations; misspells to create effects. Onomatopoeia abounds; inversions, reversions; assonance, internal rhyme. . . 'Silver slivers' (page 10), 'Informed, / the pendant person' (the pedant person?), 'The rumble bumble banble talk / of fatted thinks. . . ' (page 14), 'circumscribed floating circles' (page 18), 'the low greenelling world lie wet' (page 41), 'That's gonned-balloon, my flossie' (page 55), 'Say, sigh, come lolligagging home' (page 72), 'With curicrasiosity' (page 81). To carpers who complain that this is not poetry, the only answer is: 'It was not meant to be. But no good poet stops juggling with language. Only he should not take it too seriously.' I recall bringing the word 'grapp' to Mrs Polk's notice, saying that while I got some sense out of 'rangging song' and 'chingg on dreamer's ear', I couldn't get the hang of:

We'll hist the grapp and dawning talk
of minion birds. . . .

She said that was the sound early morning birds make. I must be a queer bird myself, but that's not the sound *my* early morning birds make. Perhaps American birds do; in any case, it does not matter if a sense of humour is preserved:

Oh my, I'm funny. How I laugh
and laugh
at thinks I think of. *You* can't know
a half
the things I think of
or you'd be (oh my, I'm funny) *me*.

These poems are all lyrics, capturing of evanescent feeling, often having a wise riddle quality. 'They are not "sweet" poems,' Mrs Polk told me; 'bitter, metallic.' That is a strong way of putting it, but there is an astringent insight in many of them. Mr. Rosenthal, in 'The New Republic' recently, was at pains to discover the 'darkness' in Frost's poems; behind Emily Brontë's lyrical façade lurks much pain and sharpness.

The ape of intellexity
Ambles to complexity,

says Mrs Polk.

Do poets keep the words they say,
or are the words
the part that's thrown away.

*

'Oh-No' had little to regret,
no long excursions to forget,
but spent its well-rewarded best
on trinkets gathered by 'Oh-Yes'.

*

When summer comes
I'll lie me down
beside a drying tree
and turn me summer brown.
My hair grow like the grass
and in my eyes
as days go past
will burn the skies.

*

Don't pull the jewelled leash so tight,
Woman of property.
When he grows to doghood
poverty's puppy may bite.

Am I wrong in suggesting that the lyrical variety prevalent here indicates very great talent? that the compassion for things, even when they are exposed, indicates possibilities of development along greater-than-lyrical lines? that the structural strictness suggests we are dealing with a poet who has at least one (I suspect there are more) of the virtues of Emily Dickinson? If that is high praise, so be it; this is an exciting book.

P. LAL

CHURCHILL: THE WALK WITH DESTINY. Compiled & Designed by H. Tatlock Miller & Loudon Sainthill (Hutchinson of London. Pp. Royal Quarto 257 Price 45/net)

NO man today has gone through such a rich variety of distinctions as Winston Churchill. Statesman and parliamentarian under six sovereigns, he was in the forefront not only in politics but also in journalism and authorship, in painting and brick-laying, leading a very full life all his eighty-six years so far, so that the story of his life is all-absorbing throughout. But a volume

of reproductions of biographical pictures and paintings will be worth even more than a score of biographies, and that is what *Walk With Destiny* gives.

In his War memoirs of May 1940 Churchill has written, 'I felt as if I were walking with destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation.' Hence the title of this richly produced volume. Details from the arms of Sir Winston on the covers and details from the Battle of Blenheim in the end-papers serve as an aristocratic and historical background for the personal story pictures inside. A portrait of Churchill by Karsh of Ottawa bringing out the power and strength of personality of the great man forms the frontispiece. Other portraits supplement the first general impression. Then follow portraits of the ancestral Marlboroughs, father and mother, Lord and Lady Randolph Churchill, and pictures of Blenheim Palace, the room in which Winston was born being given in colour. So also the curls of the infant, still preserved at Blenheim. It is followed by the facsimile of his first letter to his mother, who he had said, 'shone for me like the evening star'. The letter reads: 'My dear mama, I am so glad you are coming to see us. I had such a nice bathe in the sea today.' Pictures of the pupil at Harrow ('where I do not want to go again'), of the subaltern at Sandhurst (which it took him three tries to enter), of the Hussar in India, the war correspondent in Africa and young member of Parliament follow one after another.

One of the interesting things in a volume of this kind is to note the gradual change, as the years go by, of the physical appearance and still more of the maturing and developing of personality. Many historical personages appear in the course of Sir Winston's story, and they appear all the more interesting as they are presented against the background of some event or other of long ago. Queen Victoria, King Edward, Lloyd George and dozens of others appear in interesting settings.

Although the letter press is almost absent in this volume some of the most important passages from the historic speeches of Churchill are here. Thus there are: I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat; The long night of barbarism will descend unbroken even by a star of hope, unless we conquer, as conquer we must, as conquer we shall; We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall never surrender; Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few; and many more, accompanied by connected pictures.

Some of the domestic pictures are extremely charming as the Family portrait of 1951, Mr. and Mrs. Churchill at home, birthday photograph and others. Turning the pages of this volume one feels like accompanying Churchill through his life and through the history of the world.

P. L. STEPHEN

OUR REVIEWERS

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CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Ayyub,

Thank you for sending the two discussion retorts on my 'Closer Look at the Swatantra Party'. I take it that you sent them only for my information. Because I don't feel like having 'a still closer look' at it, nor do I feel called upon to keep the controversy going in the columns of *Quest*. Politics is bad not only for literature but also for character. And with the scant respect Mr. Mody has for my 'thought processes' it would, I suppose, be an unfairly uneven passage of arms. I could only repeat what I have said because Mr. Mody is so unconvincing.

Strangely, he emphasises that the fundamental difference between us is in the approach towards human beings. That was precisely my point when I wrote that 'self-respecting people might prefer rights conferred by legislation to charity arbitrarily bestowed on them by self-righteous trustees'. This being a mere expression of opinion, and that too in the subjunctive, I don't see why he calls it an 'uncharitable interpretation', nor how it displays my 'confusion of thought'. I do not care for this level of political discussion, and would be quite content to let your readers compare my thought processes with those of Mr. Mody, gladly leaving him the last word.

This is not because I consider the subject of discussion unimportant, but because my respect and confidence in the judgment of your readers gives me this reassurance. It is based on such statements of Mr. Mody: 'Whereas the power of the (anti-social) cartels and monopolies was *purely economic*, socialistic governments today command a greater economic power combined with their already omnipotent political power.' Radical Humanists, as you know, have been arguing and fighting against the encroachment of the State in the political, economic and cultural life of the country long before the Swatantra Party was

thought of, and when most of its leaders were still Congressmen or Socialists. To say that the power of the cartels and monopolies was 'purely economic' flies so blatantly in the face of recognised facts that I don't know what to say about it without being discourteous. Liberal Americans, no less anti-socialist than Mr. Mody, are increasingly alarmed about the political danger of cartels and corporations and they probably know what they are talking about. These cartels and corporations have always made and unmade governments.

If the Swatantra Party can act as a corrective to Congress policies, we welcome it for this reason alone. But my faith in human beings tells me that the only effective corrective is an enlightened and self-reliant citizenry, which, if it were to assert itself in time, could alone check Congress extravagances and errors of judgment; but it is unlikely that this assertion would go in favour of the Swatantra Party. Because the doctrines of Dharma and Trusteeship, unfortunately, do not make people more enlightened and self-reliant. Again, a mere expression of my humble opinion. The Swatantra Party is welcome to prove it *wrong*—not in wordy warfare, but in deeds and facts. We have no axe to grind and no stake in the matter of which party wins or fails, and it is cold comfort to us if all parties make a mess of things, confirming our opinion of party politics but leaving us to suffer with the rest of the party-less majority.

It is not much of a comfort either that we are doing what we think is the right thing to do, that is, contributing to the spread of an enlightened public opinion which will ultimately assert itself even on the political parties, because we cannot do enough of it. So, knowing our (I should say 'my') limitations, let the controversy go on without my further intervening in it. . . .

Sincerely,
ELLEN ROY

Dear Sir,

I have read with interest Edward Shils' article on the Indian Intellectual, and especially the part about the influence of England over Indian intellectuals. Mr. Shils finds it hard to explain and also seems to think it a pity. 'The British took partial possession of the Indian mind.' But surely it is not as sinister as this. Mr. Shils himself draws a convincing picture of the influence of English literature taught by sincere teachers here, and also of why many Indians look back to their student days in London with a certain nostalgia. As a matter of fact those who have been educated in the States have the same feeling, only up to now they have always been so few. As to its being a pity, I should have thought that in a country with such dismally parochial tendencies as India any broadening influence was good; and I cannot see that this respect for English culture can really be blamed for the Indian intellectual's alleged malaise.

In his search for the causes of this malaise Mr. Shils also finds a conflict in the minds of Indian intellectuals between forward-looking tendencies and the institution of caste, about which he has hard things to say. It 'deadens the imagination to the state of mind of other human beings,' and makes upper caste Hindus insensible to the sufferings of lower castes. Surely this is gross exaggeration. Caste may have discouraged a social conscience in the past, but then it is not very long since a social conscience emerged in the West either. Surely nowadays there is no deeply harmful

conflict between caste obligations and wider sympathies.

The real trouble with Indian intellectuals is that there aren't any — or so few as hardly to count. Or rather it should be put differently: the trouble is that so few people in India have intellectual interests. It seems to me that Mr. Shils' approach is slightly unreal because he sought out intellectuals and studied them as a separate species. He does not define an intellectual — perhaps readers of *Quest* are supposed to know. Would a simple test be somebody who regularly reads books? If so, the trouble is obviously that there are so many in the West and so few in India. (My personal theory is that the weather is responsible: people are too tired after the day's work for anything but idle chatter.)

Anyhow the fact is that top politicians, business men, and the successful generally (and even unfortunately most university teachers) have no intellectual interests, nor do they respect those who have. May not this account for the frustration of intellectuals for which Mr. Shils seeks such deep causes?

Mr. Shils himself says a solution will be found only when intellectuals exert themselves 'to solve real scientific problems, to discover something true and important through scholarship, to write poems and novels about what one sees with one's own eyes. . .'. This will happen when society as a whole respects scientists and poets, and even archeologists and architects and engineers. Perhaps better education is the only hope.

Yours etc.,

RHONA GHATE

Bombay

CONTRIBUTORS

SUDHINDRANATH DATTA is a leading poet and critic in Bengali and lectures on Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University. The quarterly *Parichaya* edited by him in the thirties was mainly responsible for introducing new trends in poetry and criticism into Bengali literature.

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SECOND PHASE



On October 1, 1958, Metric weights were introduced in selected areas and regulated markets in all States and Union Territories with a two-year time-limit for complete change-over.

THIS TWO-YEAR PERIOD WILL END ON SEPTEMBER 30, 1960, AFTER WHICH USE OF METRIC WEIGHTS WILL BE COMPULSORY IN THESE AREAS.

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DA 59/541

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Again, it is the language of numbers based on the zero that enables us to convey the fact that, during the year, Standard-Vacuum expended Rs. 89 lakhs in new additions to plants and equipment of its Marketing Operations, Rs. 102 lakhs on its Refining Operations and Rs. 106 lakhs for search of oil in West Bengal.



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Life will take on a different purpose. A spade
will be a spade, and care will be part of living.

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a little less of the care, a little more of the joy.

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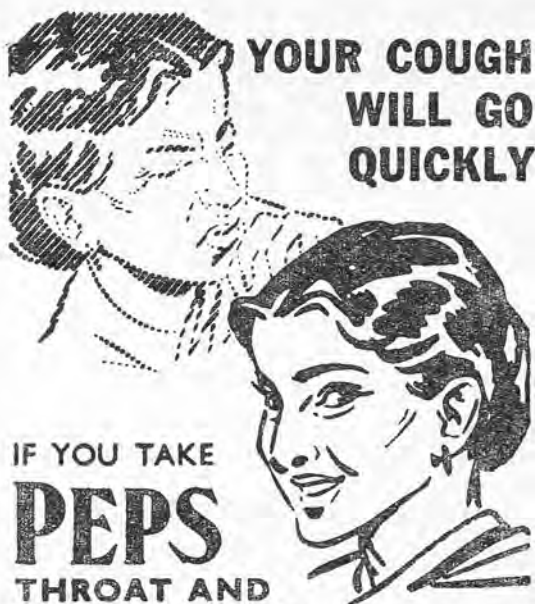
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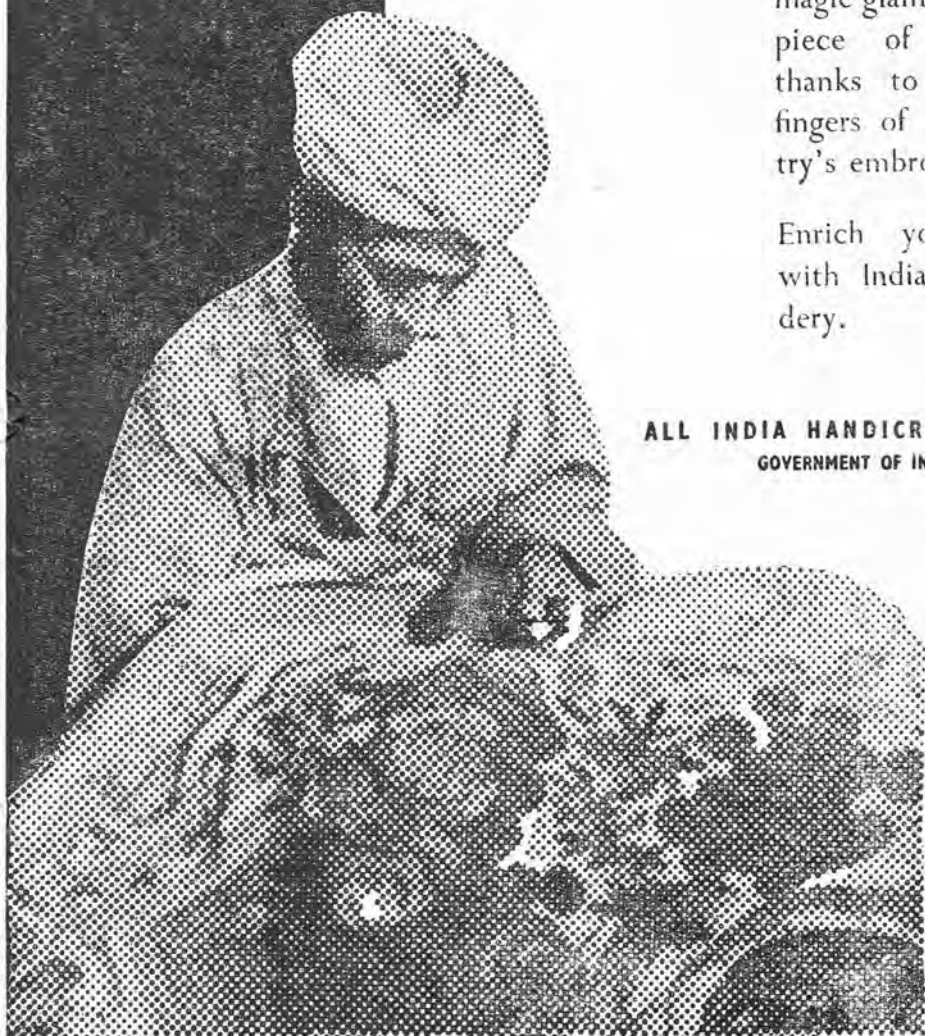
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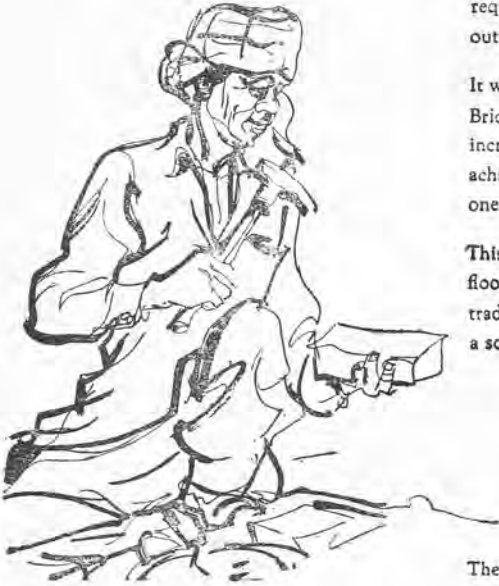
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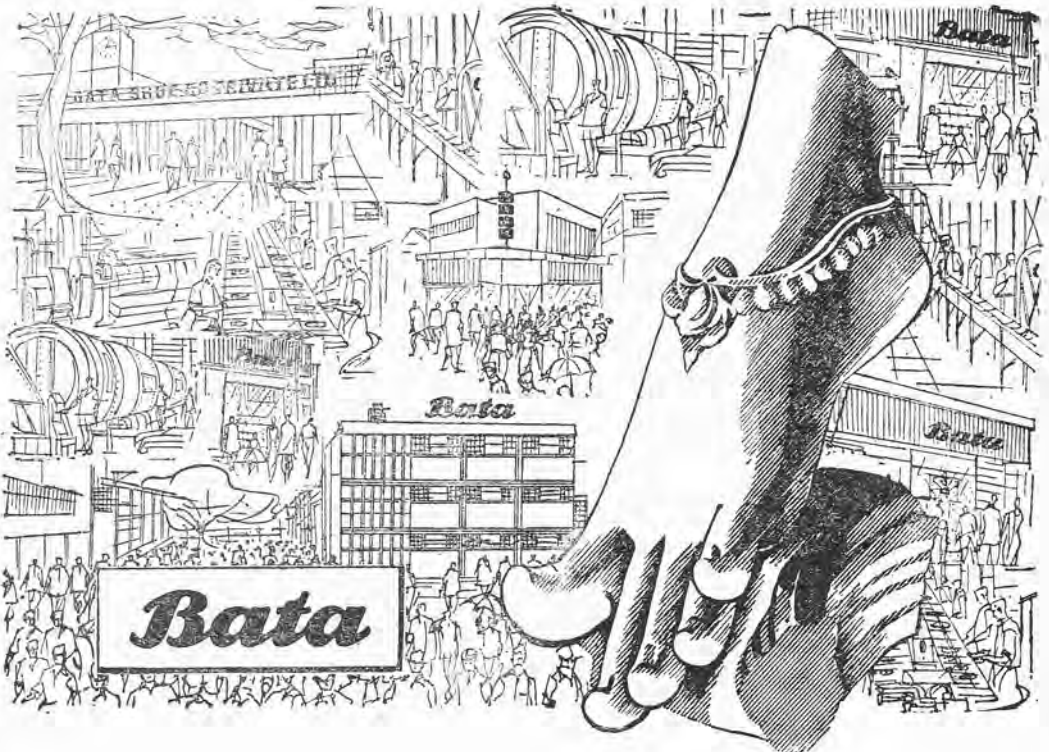
This is one of the many examples of initiative from the shop floor benefiting the whole enterprise—another industrial tradition being laid in Jamshedpur, where industry is not merely a source of livelihood but a way of life.

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