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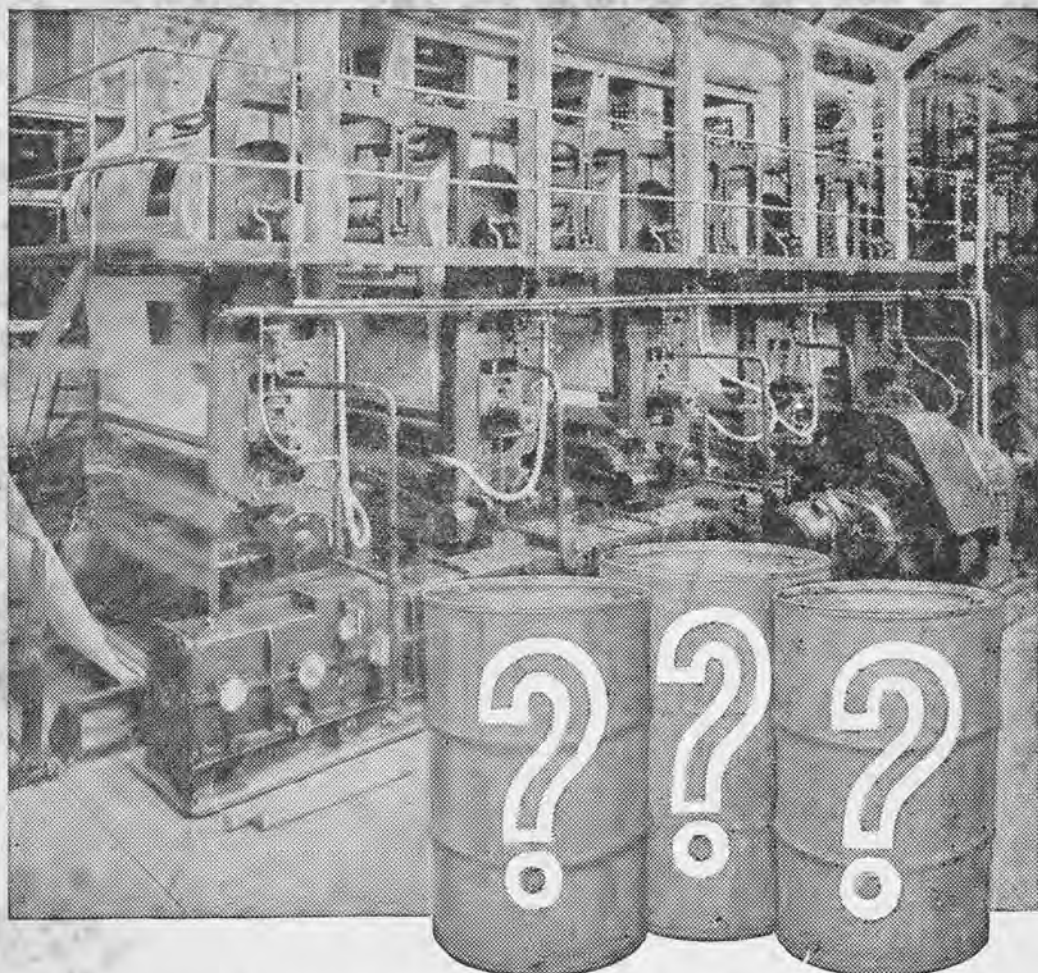
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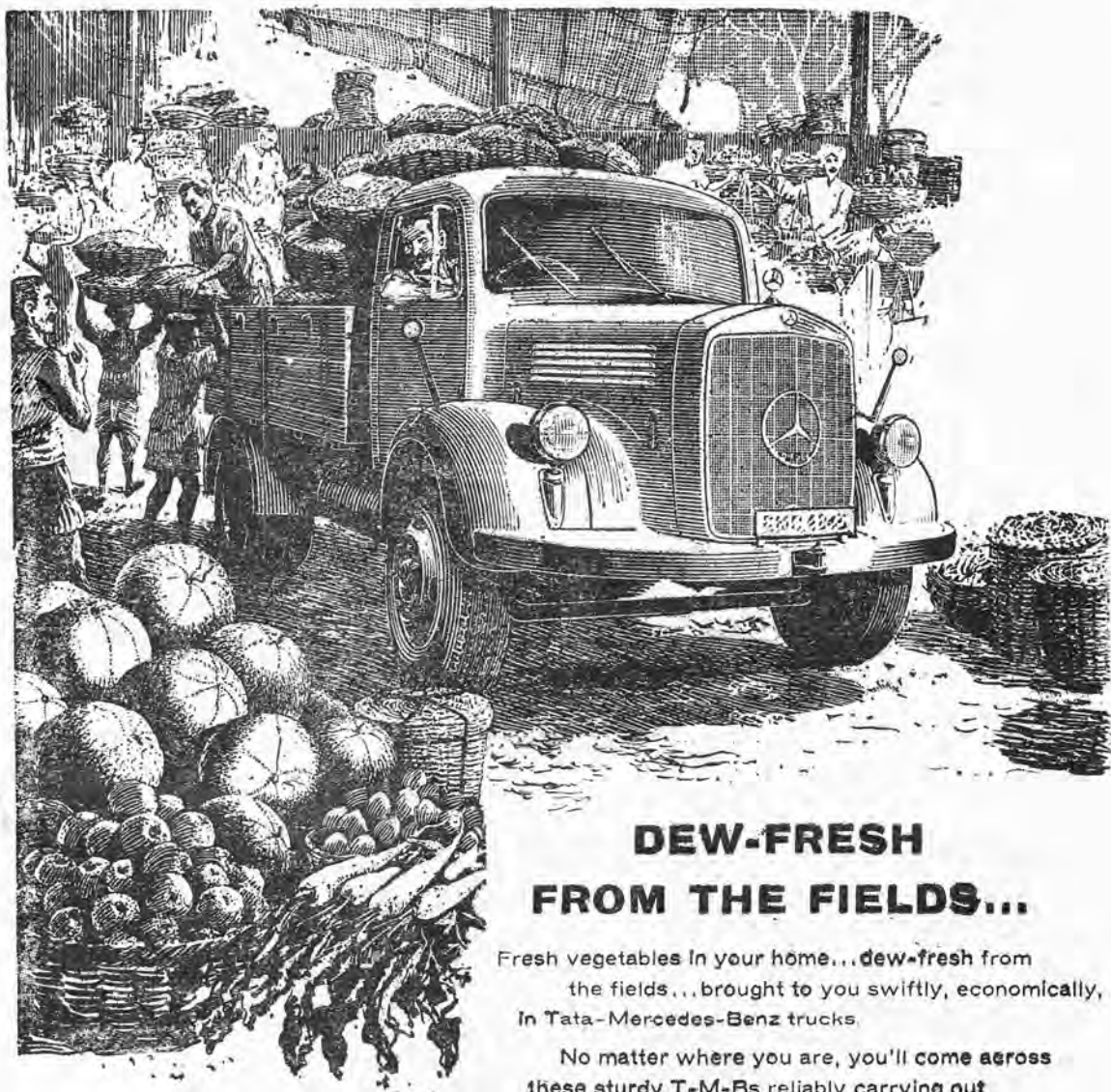


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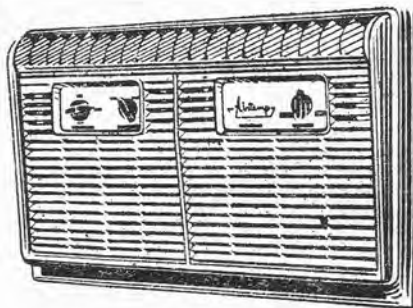


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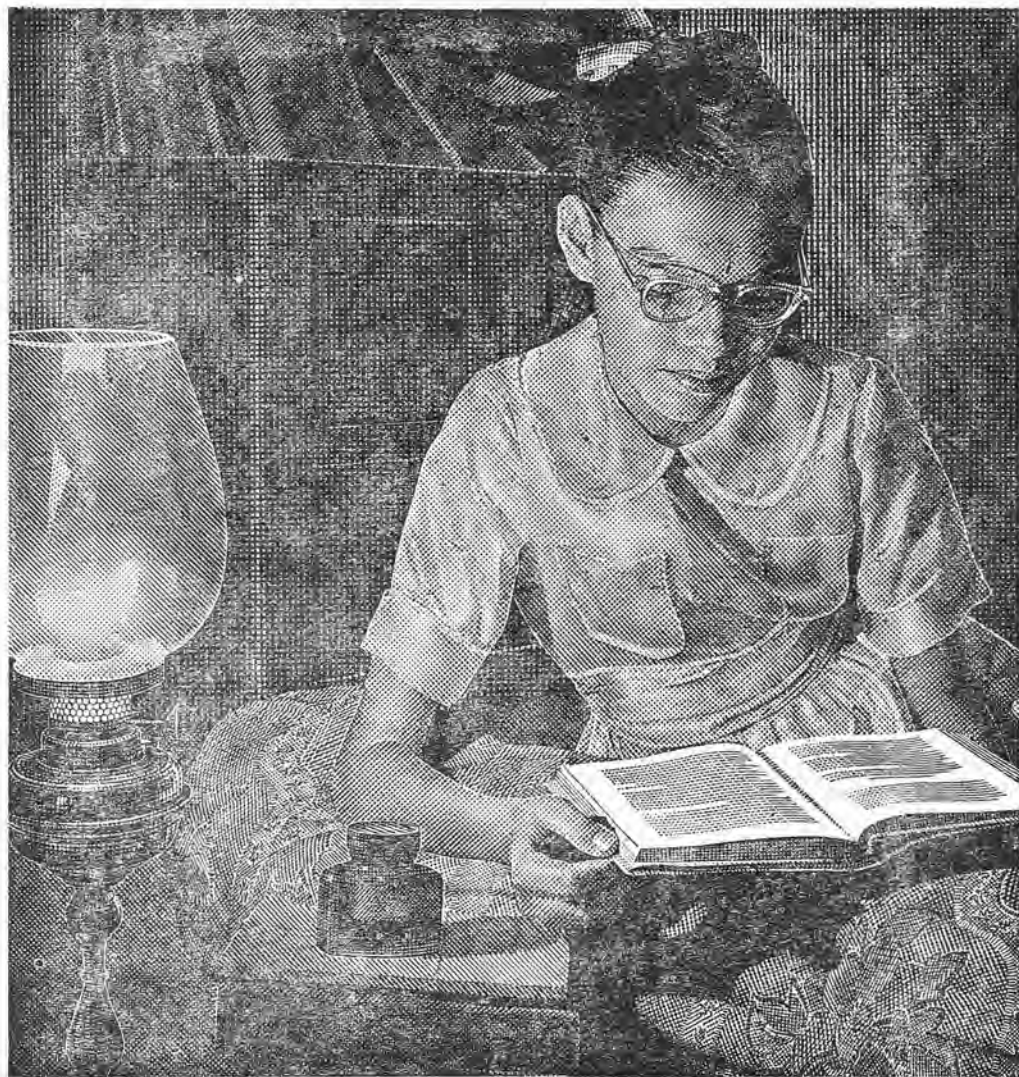


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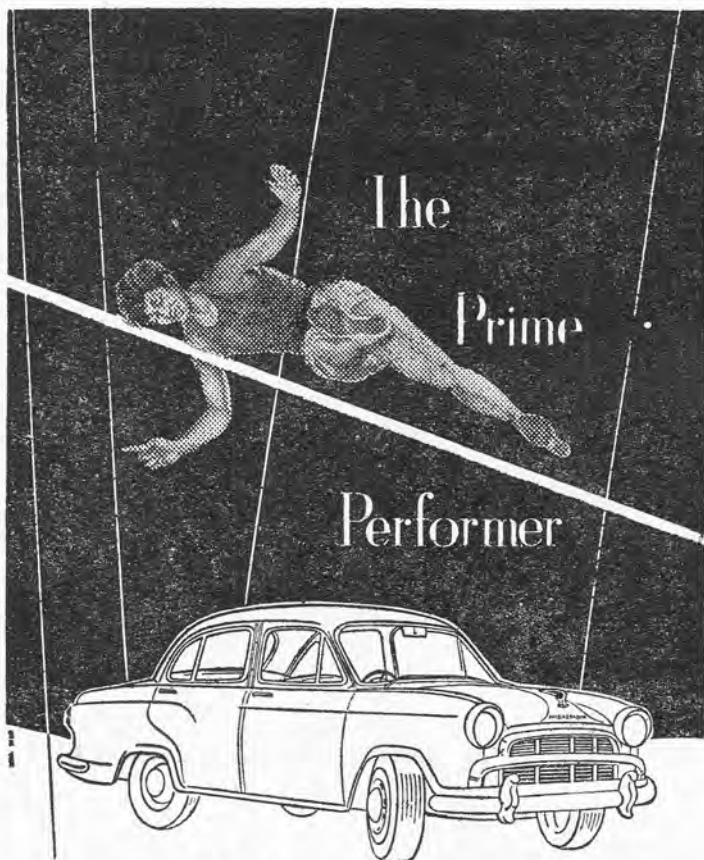
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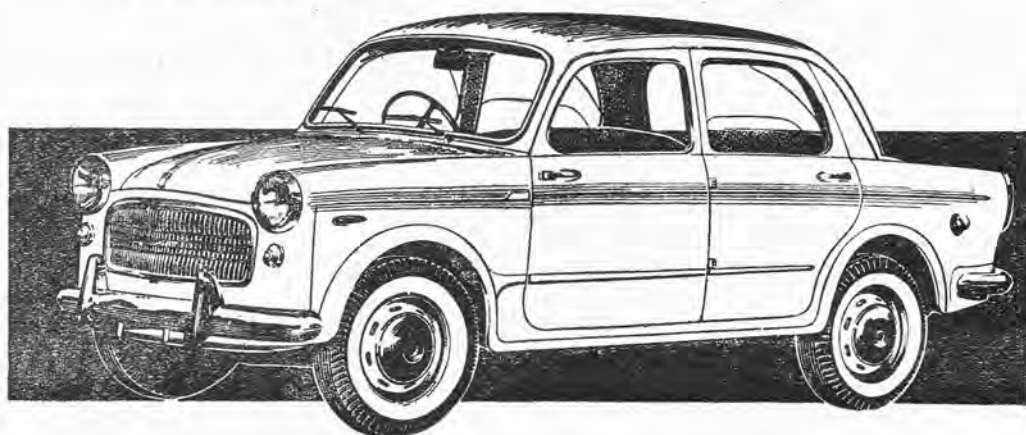
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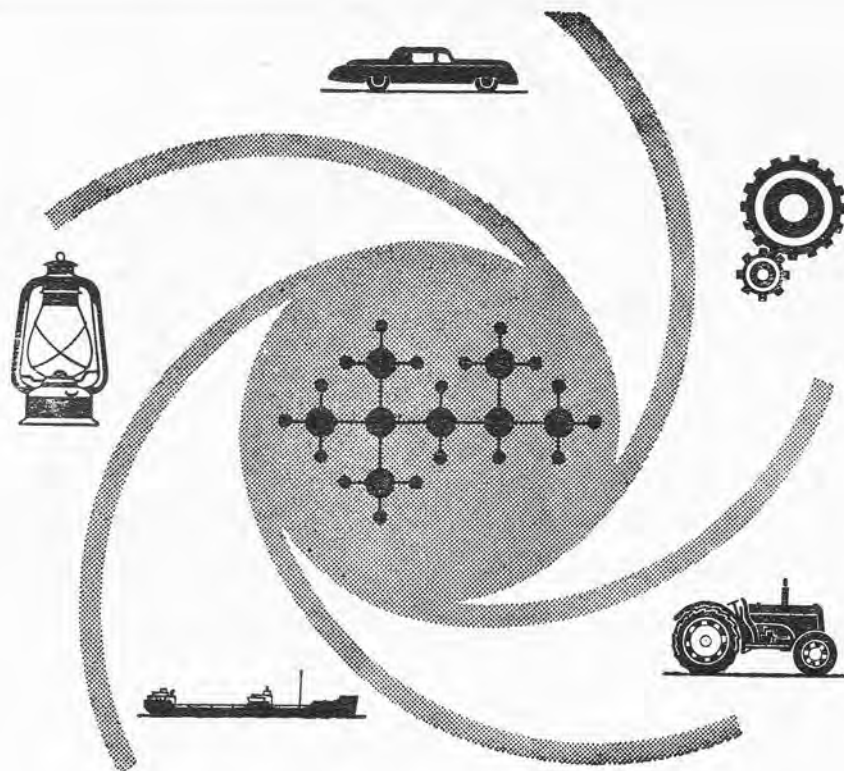
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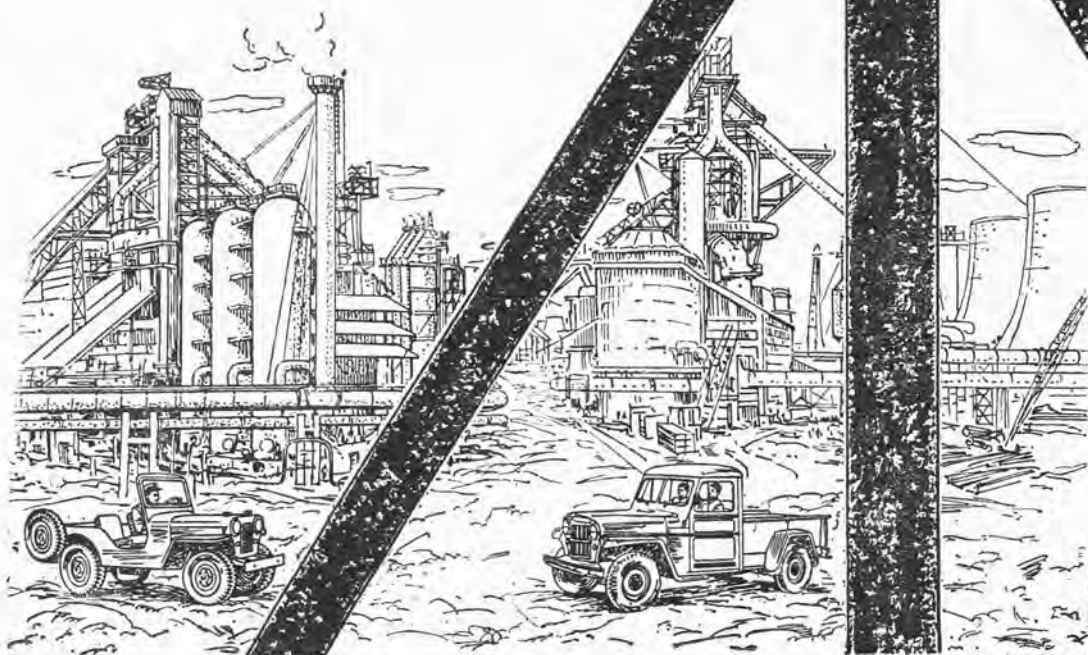
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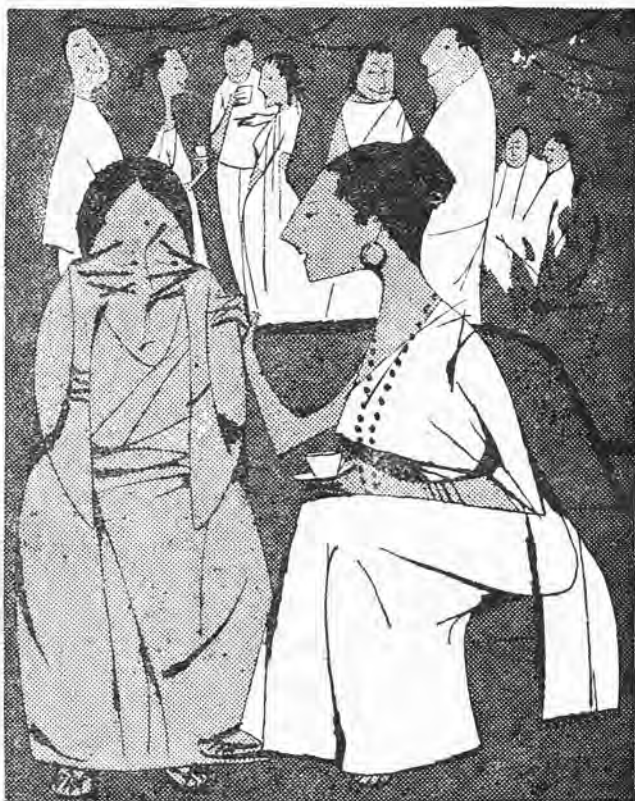
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Freedom and Growth

By M. M. POSTAN

I

OBSERVERS in the West, and some of the commentators in Asia and Africa are apt to discuss the political problems of the 'underdeveloped' world as if the latter were now faced by a clear alternative — on the one hand, the Russo-Chinese variant of economic growth in the political conditions of an authoritarian state and by the instruments of centralized authoritarian planning; on the other, the western variant of economic development with a minimum of compulsion or direction from the state. On balance public opinion is perhaps still in favour of the Western variant. The party state may have an obvious emotional and psychological attraction for that species of African and Asian intellectual who has lost his moorings in his traditional cultures and has not anchored himself in the ethics of free civilization. Yet even in Asia and Africa enough is known about life in totalitarian states to predispose many, or perhaps even most thinking men in favour of liberal variants of economic growth. Had growth been certain and secure and the choice been merely one of growth with freedom *versus* growth without it, there is no doubt that the allurements of the Russo-Chinese example would have been much weaker than they appear to be now.

Unfortunately, this is not the choice as it commonly presents itself. In comparing the Chino-Russian and western prescriptions, and in making up their own prescriptions, opinion in the underdeveloped countries, and not in them alone, will be guided not only by their political preferences but also by their economic estimates. And in current estimation, prospects of economic

growth are better and more certain in totalitarian societies than under free conditions. The communist systems are believed to possess an economic growth potential higher than the western societies; and this belief is supposed not only by a crude comparison of corresponding statistics but by political assessment. Totalitarian states have economic growth, so to speak, built into them; they have facilities for promoting and sustaining economic development which free societies are not generally expected to possess.

Some of these facilities, though much advertised, are of course of secondary importance and some are even illusory. One such reputed facility is that for instantaneous decision, so different from the democratic procrastination and from the parliamentary tendency to temporize and to compromise. But in reality this facility for decision has brought to both Russia and China as much weakness as strength. Historians of the Russian Five Year Plans and the various Chinese 'leaps' could list whole series of ruinous mistakes brought about by their rulers' fatal ability to indulge in unhesitating and wholesale acts of governance. It may well be that the true balance of these 'facilities' is well on the debit side of totalitarian planning.

Some of the other facilities of totalitarian regimes are much more real and have in fact conferred on the communist states immense advantages over liberal economies (though not necessarily over free societies) in the race for growth. One of them is that of compulsory formation of capital. The high rate of growth in communist society is mainly a function of their high rate of investment; a high rate of investment made possible by a very high rate

of saving. The high rate of saving in its turn has been made possible by state-directed allocation of national income and the accompanying reduction of popular consumption. This facility would in any circumstances, i.e., at all times and in all societies, have enabled a totalitarian government to wring from the economy a higher rate of savings than would have been possible under a liberal regime; but in underdeveloped economies and in societies in which the standards of life are very low and the most essential human needs still go unsatisfied, restriction of consumption to the prevailing misery levels or even below them is a course which only a dictator, and a ruthless one at that, is capable of.

What this means in terms of government prescription is too well known to be described in detail. In relation to industry the policy necessitates a rigid centralized control of wages, the suppression of independent trade unions and of freely negotiated wage contracts. In agriculture this means a system of taxes and levies on peasant agriculture and a policy of food prices all designed to wrest from the peasant producer a much larger share of his product than he would have parted with had he been left free to satisfy his most essential needs. It is these policies and the economic necessities underlining them that have produced the worst manifestations of totalitarian tyranny in recent years—the holocaust of Stalin's collectivization and the famine which followed it, the suppression of working-class revolts against 'production norms' and wage policies in East Germany and Hungary. But as long as the regime is capable and willing to go to the length of these and similar tyrannies, it possesses a facility for capital formation denied to other societies.

The second facility is only little less fundamental than that of compulsory capital formation. It concerns the ability to 'plan', i.e. to allocate factors of production among the different branches of the economy. It can be argued, and I shall accept

the argument here, that the ability to 'direct' productive resources (but not necessarily the other uses of direction) has conferred on the totalitarian regimes an advantage which economies wholly regulated by the price mechanism do not enjoy. Some of the greatest successes of Soviet economy and technology, like those of British and German war economies in the last war, were made possible by directing capital, labour and scientific and managerial personnel to strategic sectors of the economy. There is no doubt at all that the free and undirected distribution of factors of production among the alternative uses in accordance with the dictation of the price mechanism has enabled the western world to supply its population with an 'assortment' of goods and services ('the basket') best suited to the aggregate preferences of individuals. But this very system may have diverted some essential resources from sectors of the economy and from social activities most directly concerned with continued economic growth. The exercise of these directing powers on the present Soviet scale, especially of the powers of directing the movements of labour and the employment of individuals (which necessitated at one time the use of industrial passport and of concentration camps) would be impossible in a free society.

It is because they are armed with these two instruments, especially the first, that totalitarian societies have revealed a greater capacity for economic growth than the free world. Had the competition been confined to Soviet Russia and to the great western democracies, the advantages which the former enjoy would not in themselves have been sufficient to alarm the believer in Western democracy. Western culture is not and need not be dedicated to economic growth as its sole or even main objective. With the physical product of western economies more than sufficient to provide their entire population with the necessities and semi-luxuries of life, the blandishment of further economic

growth would not be sufficient to justify a sacrifice, indeed any sacrifice, of political liberty or of freedom of economic choice. The only reasons for which the West may and ought to worry about its relatively slower rate of growth are those of international politics and military power. It dare not fall behind in the growth race for fear that the spectator nations of the world will declare it unviable. Above all, the failure to increase national product at the same rate as, say, the Russians would affect the West's military potential and expose it to the danger of Soviet conquest. But for these not strictly economic dangers, the West could easily afford to let the Russians and the Chinese draw ahead in the race for more and better cars, refrigerators and domestic gadgetry.

But unlike the western democracies, the underdeveloped countries cannot afford to be left behind. To them, to accept a slower rate of growth means to perpetuate the want and backwardness in which they find themselves now. For most of them the question of the rates of economic growth has been predetermined by their desperate demographic situation. With the populations growing at the rate exceeding 2 per cent per annum, economic growth at the Anglo-American rate would condemn them to increasing impoverishment beyond even the present levels of misery. Is it therefore surprising that the Chinese recipe should attract them in spite of all its miseries and cruelties?

This is the argument in favour of the totalitarian regime. Its logic is persuasive, and to this extent must be depressing to believers in democracy and freedom. Yet it is not as compelling as it may at first seem. The economic and political necessities which it assumes are neither so inescapable nor so clear-cut nor so enduring as they might at first sight appear.

II

Least inescapable is the need of compulsion for saving and investment. This

necessity presented itself in Russia and China in so sharp a form merely because for political and doctrinal reasons of their own making these two countries cut themselves off from the sources of capital supply which had nourished the industrialising processes of an earlier epoch. Most of the industrial revolutions in countries other than England were in large part financed by capital imports from abroad. The foreign supplies of privately owned investment may not be available (certainly not in required quantity) to the underdeveloped countries of Africa and Asia. This is partly because the needs are too great and are telescoped into too short a period to be wholly served by the private capital market, but chiefly because the political climate in the world in general and especially in South East Asia carries with it risks too great for a private investor. But what the private capital market cannot do, economic assistance schemes can. The flow of western capital under the various capital assistance schemes, provided it is sufficiently abundant, should obviate the painful necessity of saving through hunger, or at least obviate this necessity in its extreme and most cruel forms. And provided the assistance is not only without 'political strings', but also avoids the threat of heavy and all-too-early repayments, the choice between dictatorial oppression and humane processes of growth in underdeveloped countries is a choice not one for the underdeveloped countries themselves but one for the Western countries. It is in their power to obviate the necessity of capital formation by oppression.

Much more complex and less obvious are the prospects of avoiding the necessity of state interference and direction. Here we are not, indeed must not, be presented with a simple alternative of direction versus indirection. A choice as clear as this no longer exists, and may finally disappear long before the problem of undeveloped countries has been solved. State intervention, whether totalitarian or

not, is possible at different levels of the economy and its effect on life and civilisation will largely depend on the level at which it operates. It will be least damaging to the freedom of the individual and to our humanitarian ethos at its topmost level, where it concerns itself with the general shape of the national budget of resources. At this range state direction means nothing more than the 'control of the commanding heights' of the economy which most liberal governments in the West now in fact exercise, however partially and inefficiently. Nobody, not even the most liberal of economists, would now argue that the shaping of the economy through budgetary regulations of saving, expenditure and consumption have in any way impaired the freedom of the individual or the liberal spirit of the society.

There may not be the same unanimity about the effects of 'planning' at the next level i.e. that of more detailed allocation of resources, investment, labour and skills to uses which planners deem strategically important. But here again we must discriminate between the direction of inanimate resources and those of human beings. The marshalling of inanimate resources by the State will be oppressive to free men only in so far as it will deny to some of them the rewards and the enjoyment which they might derive from a more abundant flow of capital and skill to employments they would prefer as producers or as consumers. But even in this case the penalties are purely economic and need not be as oppressive to individuals and as hurtful to good life in free society as they appear to some liberal critics.

The truth of the matter is that now, even in the West, free economy and society no longer can function smoothly and cannot serve the social needs and public purposes inherent in the liberal and democratic view of life, indeed cannot even defend themselves against totalitarian conquest, without some purposeful direction of resources to supplement their automatic deployment by market forces.

This direction resembles that of totalitarian control only in appearance. Increased expenditure on scientific and technical education, state-sponsored research projects, public investment and expenditure into socially desirable improvements, be they roads, schools, or town clearing schemes, all these are measures which look, but are not, like the totalitarian forms of direction of labour and resources. What distinguishes them from totalitarian directions is not their extent but their inspiration and methods. The direction of economic life in wartime Britain was more all-embracing and went further than state planning in either wartime Russia or wartime Hitler's Germany. Yet the weight of the system bore less crushingly on individuals and was less harmful to human personality and to the prevailing sense of freedom than the somewhat less pervasive regulations in Russia or Germany. Why? Because the planning was in the hands of a body politic dedicated to freedom and democracy. The directing action of government was subject to the rule of law; conflicts between state and individual were frequently resolved in the individual's interest; and the whole regime of regulation was administered by men who did not regard regulation as a desirable manifestation of a collective and therefore superior authority, but as an inescapable and often regrettable necessity.

Where the planning and directing activities of the State may be, and have been most oppressive, and where they have in fact required the full use of authoritarian powers, is at the lowest level of all, that of the detailed control of people's employment and occupations and of their consumption. At this level a free market economy like that of the United States and fully planned totalitarian economy like Russia's stand in obvious opposition.

Yet it is doubtful whether the opposition is in fact as real as it is obvious. In the first place, it is by no means certain that the totalitarian position is the one underdeveloped societies must take up in the

interest of economic growth. Detailed control of individual choices and preferences is not in fact essential for economic development. Its worst manifestations in the U.S.S.R. follow not from the economic necessities of the five year plans, but from the manner in which these necessities were shaped by the prevailing social philosophy. It is the Communist fear of independent peasantry and their hatred of private property that has led to collectivisation and the other processes by which the employment of labour and resources in agriculture were transformed in the U.S.S.R. It is also their unwillingness and inability to allow a free wage bargain that led to the various devices of labour mobilization and forced labour as an instrument of industrialisation. It is their psychological and moral indifference to individuals that led them to neglect the essential material needs of the industrial worker and forced upon them the use of industrial passports, production norms and other devices of industrial compulsion. And of course it is the manner in which they preferred to accumulate their capital and their chosen rate of accumulation that were responsible for their regimentation of popular consumption. But for these idiosyncracies of Soviet autocracy from which societies not wedded to communist ideology should be free, the contrast between economic life in the free world and that behind the iron curtain would have been much less real than it now appears to be.

Moreover the contrast need not be a constant and perpetual deterrent. In its pure form it exists only as long as we continue to confront the uncompromising version of liberal economy with an immature version of Soviet economy. In a society devoted to economic development the all-embracing control of employment and consumption (certainly the forced proletarianisation of society through collectivisation of agriculture) would be not only a doubtful asset but also a wasting one. Even in totalitarian societies the disregard for personal preferences of producers and

consumers may become less comprehensive than they are now and may eventually leave to individuals a far greater freedom of choice than they now possess. As income in Soviet Russia or Czechoslovakia grows and as the output of consumption goods rises, the mere requirements of efficient distribution, stock-keeping and production planning may force Soviet rulers to allow the consumer his full say in determining the distribution of resources in consumption-good industries and perhaps also in the associated branches of capital-good industries. Similarly, as the products of expanding technical and scientific education begin to flood the labour market, and as increased proportions of national income are absorbed in services, especially in services catering to 'arts' and 'amusements', the Soviet rulers may also find it more convenient to leave the distribution of skills and choice of occupations to personal preferences of men who buy services or offer them.

This particular expectation contains, of course, a great deal of wishful thinking. The communist regimes may develop in this direction, but need not do so. Being communist and totalitarian, they may go on piling up collective and super-personal forms of consumption insulated from spontaneous movements of popular demand, yet capable of absorbing the lion's share of the national product. Today this may be arms and rocketry; tomorrow, parks of physical culture on a cyclopean scale; the day after tomorrow, inter-stellar fleets. They may conceive a range of social services far beyond the limits of privately felt or humanly conceived needs of individuals. And even if they allow a much larger proportion of income to go into popular consumption, they may still insist on state-guided patterns of demand and may sacrifice to them the efficiency of distribution and the satisfaction of the consumer. In that case, economic controls, directives and detailed plans will remain as pervasive, restrictive and oppressive as they are now. But if this were to happen,

it would be due not to the necessities of Soviet economy but to the dictates of Soviet political philosophy. There is no reason why societies with different political philosophies should similarly insist on retaining the instruments of direction which they had adopted in the early and scarcity-ridden phases of their economic development. Their choice will also be determined by their political ethos.

III

This is indeed my main reason for refusing to accept the dichotomy of freedom versus growth. We must learn to distinguish free societies from the authoritarian ones not by the smaller or larger extent of government interference within them, but by the moral and social values they pursue and the political climate in which they operate. We must rid ourselves of the crudities of *laissez-faire* whole-hogger and above all of its assumption that the various 'controls' are all the same in their bearing

on the individual, irrespective of their purpose or their political environment. The publicists who fear the 'road to serfdom' appear to think that every infringement of economic freedom signifies a corresponding infringement of personal liberty and that true democracy is the political expression of unregulated capitalism. This belief is crudely Marxist and must not be allowed to dominate thought and action in non-Marxist societies. The experience of these societies is that the ethics and political temper of an age need not be wholly rooted in the prevailing form of economic choices. The damage which free societies will suffer from economic regulation, if they suffer it at all, depends on the purpose of the regulation and the spirit in which it is conceived and administered. In short, as long as the politics and the general temper of the state remain liberal and democratic in outlook and direction, an underdeveloped society can acquire most of the truly useful facilities of the totalitarian regime without, by this very act, becoming totalitarian.

What Sangam Poetry Means to India

By HEPHZIBAH JESUDASAN

THE word 'Indian culture' is often cheaply used to denote the Varnasrama Dharma, and 'Indian literature' to denote Sanskrit and Sanskritised literature. The only good excuse that can be advanced for this is ignorance of facts. Many an Indian would stare if he were told of the existence of an ancient body of literature, in the Dravidian part of India, somewhere around the second century A. D., perfectly independent of Sanskrit vocabulary and poetics, and generally independent of Sanskrit ideals. Though there are occasional signs of Aryan influence seeking to pervade society through the presence of Brahmins, in the main, Sangam literature is an essentially secular literature, and its broad divisions are Aham or a man's private life, and Puram or a man's public life. These are further studied against conventional backgrounds. For instance, in Aham, Kurinji or the wild mountain-scenery is the accepted background for innocent and youthful romance, and Marutham or the fertile plains, where men feed well and get fat and lazy, is the usual setting for the unpleasant occurrence of marital infidelity. War itself in Puram is studied under seven stages by convention.

Sangam literature is thus the finished literature of a heroic and poetry-conscious society whose major pre-occupations were love and war. Through the variations of some of the world's most splendid love-poetry and heroic war-notes one hears the still sad music of humanity and detects values that are not merely Indian but universal and of all time.

The significance of Sangam literature has not, however, been sufficiently under-

stood. The Tamils themselves have but vague ideas about it, even though the conventions of Sangam literature are fairly well known to them. But the conventions are the least part of it. Besides, a knowledge of the conventions can hardly be expected to do the Tamils any good, while the literature itself is so unreadable! To the average Tamilian today, it is hardly easier to learn Sangam-Tamil than it would be to learn Sanskrit—both languages are so far removed from their daily life.

Yet the poetry of the early Dravidians is worth the study. Not merely are its intrinsic merits considerable—we shall come to them later—but it is priceless as a historical record. We do not know where else poets have helped historians to this extent. From the work of these poets, it is wonderful how the early centuries of the Christian era in Tamilnad emerge as a living picture. Perhaps one reason for this is that the poets are not pre-occupied, like the Sanskrit Court-poets, mostly with the sophisticated needs of aristocratic life. The poets themselves are a wonderful group. The four hundred and fifty odd poets represented in the famous Eight Anthologies and Ten Idylls range from kings to Kurava women. We can with reason expect them to cover fairly the entire range of life of the times. But even more important than this is the unfailing regard for fact which the poets, from the kings to the Kurava women, have preserved. This is a trait, the absence of which is deplorably felt in later sophisticated and Sanskritised Tamil literature. And this is the trait which saves the Sangam poets from melodrama, conceit and erotic excesses. If they

describe the young one of the wild boar to be 'finely striped', it is simply because they have observed it to be so. And this strict fidelity to observation, not less than Wordsworthian, makes the Sangam poetry very reliable evidence for the historian.

In the study of Sangam literature, the modern Tamil zealots lead us nowhere. They would take us a hundred centuries back. They would show us three Sangams graced by gods and saints. But the fact is that it is doubtful if the body of poets represented in the Eight Anthologies and the Ten Idylls belonged to any Sangam at all. The poets make absolutely no reference to a Sangam, or an Academy at Madura. And if you want to know about the Sangam world, the Sangam poets are the best authorities. But, of course, this is not the only instance of tradition getting too strong for fact and commonsense, and after all we shall lose nothing by accepting the word Sangam if the pandits insist on it. The word Sangam is itself, by the way, not Tamil, and was most likely introduced by the Jains or the Buddhists.

It is pretty clear, however, that the Tamil country was politically very advanced before and around the early centuries of the Christian era. Asoka's edicts and Greek records bear that out. And it is equally clear that the Sangam poets were bound together by a strong common understanding, or by something of the nature of an Academy. The grouping of poems in the Eight Anthologies is almost mathematically precise and it is evident that the compilers had a large body of literature to choose from, since poetry is not one of the articles that can be made to order—at least, not poetry of this quality. It is remarkable that the Sangam metres are untouched by Sanskrit influence, and the vocabulary itself is practically free from Sanskrit.

Politically we find Tamilnad in the hands of the 'Dramida Confederacy', as it is put by king Kharavela of Kalinga. The Chera-Chola-Pandyas dominate most of the scene, but often there are major chieftains like Pari holding their own against them.

The common bond of language and literature is very strong, yet bickerings and rivalries are inevitable, and the people are, therefore, very war-conscious. Says one of the poets, in praise of a king,

"The eye that looked upon the enemy,
Although it looks upon his new-born
babe,

Does not its blood-red soften."

Ferocious, yes—but not savages. Or we might as well call the participants in the Trojan war, and the Greeks and the Romans, uncivilised. Certain it is, though, that the fighting temperament was encouraged among the young men in all possible ways. They braved the elephants in battle, as they joined bull-fights in peace-time. Indeed, if Asoka's forefathers came right up to Tamilnad in their military exploits, and proceeded no further, there must have been good reason for it.

The vivid pictures of city-life and cities speak of a highly advanced civilization. Many a Tamil city would not have been known but for Sangam poetry. What was Pum-puhar in Pattina-p-palai, and what is it today? Chozhan Kari-kalan rewarded the author of Pattina-p-palai with an incredible sum of money. The beauty of Pum-puhar has long since passed into oblivion. But Pattina-p-palai will live on as long as the Tamil language exists. Musical instruments and weapons of war are described in detail. With supreme ignorance of the antiquarian value of his poem hereafter, Nakkirar describes the Greek statuettes used as lamp-stands. Nakkirar would have been shocked to find that his beautiful Nedu-nal-vadai could have found such a prosaic use as to prove the evidence of his country's contact with Greece! Trade with Burma and Ceylon is spoken of, and honesty in trade is the ideal. 'They take not more, they give not less.'

As for religion, the people are, emphatically, not religion-conscious, even though we sense the indigenous superstitions and spirit-worship. Three other religions also exist in the background, namely Brahmi-

nism, Jainism and Buddhism. A few kings encourage Brahmins to perform yagas, and the fact that the Brahmin poets in Sangam literature are so completely Tamilised proves that they must have been on the scene for some time. So also must Buddhism and Jainism, for the idea of Karma is quite commonly known, and besides, Asoka, in the third century B. C., speaks of the spreading of Buddhist influence in the Tamil country. We catch a glimpse of the different religions striving against one another in a vivid picture in *Malai-padukadam*, where the gesticulation of hands in religious controversy is caught in a typical Sangam close-up. *Tiru-muruharru-p-padai* is evidence that Saivism already exists, but there is not much means of tracing it either to Aryan or indigenous influence. Yet even in *Tiru-muruharru-p-padai*, there is far more of Sangam art than the intense ecstatic piety of the later Tamil Saivite poets, and on the whole we may safely take it that religion is not felt, in the Sangam age, as a moving force in the lives of the people. The word 'Hindu' is not found in the Sangam vocabulary, nor indeed until much later.

Most interesting, of course, is the social background. It is common for the Tamils to throw the whole blame for the development of casteism on the Brahmins and the Sanskrit Smritis. But the evil has partly originated in the social grouping of the Dravidians, according to profession. True, at the Sangam level there does not seem to be as much disparity of castes as later. A poor Panan may expect a generous serving of rice and ghee at any Brahmin's house—unthinkable even in the present day when we boast of fighting against caste-evils. And there is a poem which says that as millet, maize and rice are important factors of food, so also the Panars, Pariahs, Kadambas and Tudiyaas are important members of society. And yet social evils are beginning. *Kalattalai* speaks of the Pariahs and Pulayas as degraded people. Another poet bestows the same epithet on the Pulayas. There is no wishing it away,

The evidence is on record, an innocently truthful and undeniable record. We have also a picture, executed with Sangam vividness and Sangam economy, of a Pulaya working away in desperate haste at a cot, torn between the anxious longing to go to his wife who is expecting a baby, and his duty at a festival where his services are required. This may not show him to be degraded, but certainly he is economically oppressed. Does all this mean that the Dravidians were themselves illtreating the Pulayas, and by some force of natural justice were themselves to fall a prey to the Smritis? There is indeed the likelihood that the poets who speak of the Pulayas as degraded were Brahmins. *Kazhattalai* is mentioned with respect by *Kabilar*, and *Kabilar* was a Brahmin. Likelihoods, however, cannot be passed for certainties. It does seem probable that at least at some late stage of Sangam literature, the Pulayas, who were probably cot-makers, and the Pariahs, who were drummers, were sinking into economic wants and thence into natural degradation in the eyes of society. The fact is that regional and hereditary professional groupings lead to the development of unhealthy loyalties and the exploitation of underprivileged groups by privileged ones, particularly those favoured by the rulers. Thus, the seeds of casteism in India lay right in the Dravidian set-up of society, even though it is true that Brahminism later watered them steadily and successfully in the name of Hinduism. We are prone to throw the entire blame on religion. But economic differences and political authority were as much responsible as religion for the enforcing of the Sanskrit Smritis, so that by the time of the Vijayanagar empire the scene is completely dominated by the so-called higher castes. The preparation for it had been going on through the centuries and its beginnings are traceable in Sangam poetry. True, in the main, the ploughman, who would have been a Sudra in Aryanism, does command great respect in Sangam and Dravidian culture. Yet, as

early as the Sangam age, we find more than one king progressing with lessons in Brahministic and Aryan culture. Nedunchezhiyan, 'Conqueror of the Aryan army', says that a man belonging to the fourth and lowest strata of society will, if he is sufficiently learned, command the veneration of a Brahmin. This is not complete acceptance of the spirit of the varnasrama, but it is an initiation into its alphabet. When the Aryan varnasrama was later superimposed, through the political, economic and religious opportunities of the Brahmins, upon the Dravidian set-up of professional grouping, caste-tyranny became perfected. Here is a lesson that ancient Dravidian literature has for the whole of India.

There are more lessons. In a society brilliantly cosmopolitan in the main, that could appreciate the values of courage, generosity and chivalry, there are still grave defects which sound the note of decadence as surely as does professional grouping. Of these one is the fondness for toddy, and the other the weakness for the prostitute. Wine and women, the bane of all high life, are eating into the vitals of Tamil society. Avvai, the Sangam poetess, herself extremely fond of toddy, 'that like the Scorpion stings', bids a king give generously of toddy to the warrior, who shall shelter him as the umbrella shelters his head. Generous advice perhaps, but hardly a wise or a safe one. Drunken men with garlands on, veritable votaries of Bacchus, appear in the streets in Nedunalvadaï. And as for prostitutes, we meet them in the marudam territory, of well-watered fields and flowers, where the men are well-fed and have little to do. True, prostitutes are never honoured, and they are naturally much disliked by wives, who are shown struggling against them, often in vain. But if a man's manhood is reduced to such an extremity that a prostitute can boast that she dares to drag him by the hand before the womenfolk of his house, what must have been the aggressiveness of the prostitute of the day? Not much of a future can

be expected of any people that are a prey to moral degradation. The history of the Tamils has borne this out, as much as the history of any people who have reached the heights of material prosperity, and it is a grave lesson.

But one might also pause over other aspects of Tamil life of the time. Love before marriage is not unknown. Of course parents do not encourage it, but in spite of watchdogs and sentries and vigilant mothers, the young things somehow occasionally manage to find romance, and the parents finally smoothen out matters charitably instead of giving dire punishment to the guilty. As for the poets, early romance seems to be just what they have been dreaming about most of the time, to judge from the number of poems devoted to the subject. Absolute single-heartedness is the rule with the wife, and there is no question of widow-re-marriage. It is pleasant to observe that monogamy is, consistently, the picture of marriage. Wifehood is greatly honoured, and women have a freedom and status unthinkable in later times. It is also remarkable that wives are not shown in their relationship with their in-laws. Sati has been performed at times, but it originates rather in an exaggerated heroism on the part of the woman—in keeping with the exaggerated heroism of the men-folk—than in the will of society, which appears rather to dissuade women from sati. Very interesting is the piece by a queen, before she performs sati. She asks the wise men, who dissuade her, if they are aware that she is no tame woman who can accept tasteless rice for food, and sleep on the hard floor, as seems to have been the widow's lot. Not a bad reason certainly for performing sati, but in its disarming truthfulness and simplicity it must be an eye-opener to conservatives! It is not possible here to exhaust a study of life as it was lived in the Sangam days. We see the hunters, the fisher-folk, the traders, the quiet life of the country-side, and the bustle of the city. And then there are, of course, the kings and their queens: for the patronage of the

great, on which the poets depended, does colour their poems, with a little of snobishness, though indeed the Sangam love of truth and realism manages to preserve their work from descending into the grooves of artificial court-poetry.

Just a few words about the quality of the poetry itself. The treatment of the heroic in human nature by Kamban, the passionate spiritualism of the Siddars, the ardent lyricism of the Nayanars and Azhvars, the lofty ethics of Valluvar, the great and dynamic thinking of Pattinattar — these are some of the crests of Tamil poetry. The Sangam poets have almost nothing in common with these. They choose to speak with quiet dignity, as though they distrusted effusions. Incidentally they flash out in an illuminating simile, but they would have sternly rejected any excesses. Their worst fault is, in some of the longest poems, dullness. It has been said that dullness is the worst fault a writer can commit, but you doubt that when you read some of the later Tamil poets, Kamban not excepted. Normally, however, the Sangam poets are not even dull. The brevity of most poems rules out the possibility of dullness. At their finest the poets have moments of real vision, moments when they capture and hold up to eternity a passing image of beauty. They have divided life broadly into *Aham* or private life, and *Puram* or external activities. The *Aham* poems are little crystals of love-experience, some of them very beautiful. The *Puram* poems allow more room for the subjective mood, and tell us a good deal about the poets, their patrons and the Tamil world. The *Puram* poems are worth special study on that score; but they are much fewer in number than the *Aham* ones.

In imagery the Sangam poets range from brilliant similes to a quiet and faithful observation of nature. Here is an image from Kabilar :

"The Vengai shakes its blossoms down,
as sparks
Of fire that in the smithy fly."

Here is another from Nakkirar :

"The soft and beautiful bed, like
gathered foam."

This is from Uruttiran Kannanar :

"The firstborn of the mighty buffalo
Filled with the ripening paddy sheaves,
Dozes within the haystack's shade".

This is from Parananar :

"To eat the silver fish, the stork, as
though
Afraid its steps were audible, moves
soft
Like a burglar entering a guarded
house".

But the Sangam poets know quite as well as we do that poetry is no superficial ornament, and that it is an expressive, and not merely a decorative art; and they also believe in the perfection of art. Nakkirar's *Nedu-nal-vadai* is worth the study because it is one of the most finished little masterpieces of the world, even though its beauty is a trifle on the frigid side. Only after reading it through we realise the consummate artistry of the poet in contrasting the love-lorn anxious face of the queen in the palace with the heroically calm and smiling aspect of the King in the camp as he goes round inspecting the wounded soldiers. The poet makes no comment—he leaves the comments to us. Love in Sangam poetry is treated brilliantly from many sides, youthful, blooming love, pale, patient love, injured and betrayed love. But perhaps never does it leave so indelible an impression as in *Nedu-nal-vadai*, where the anxious Queen keeps spilling tears from her eyes with the tips of her fingers while her husband has not even a thought to spare for her as he is absorbed in his duty. In compactness and finish, the poem challenges comparison with any other poem of equal length in English literature, perhaps in the world's literature.

For all the superficial conventions of the Sangam age, they touch some of the deepest chords in life. Look at *Perunchittiran*, telling Kumanan that he has come for help because his baby, getting no milk,

looks up at its mother, and the woman turns her tearful eyes to her husband. Look at that noble passage in Siru-panarru-padaï where the woman of the house, having but a miserable meal to provide for her family, shuts the door on the world 'for fear the ignorant should see to scorn.' Look at Kaniyan Punkunran triumphantly asserting, 'Every city is my city; all people are my people.' An obscure poet, whom the compiler has rechristened with the imposing name, 'Metal-capped Walking Stick,' gives us an old man's touching recollection of his innocent boyhood, when with his chums he dived into the stream and brought out sand from the bottom to show

the girls watching agape on the bank. The themes of Sangam poetry are many of them of living interest for us today, indeed of far more modern interest than much of later Puranic literature. That is because they spring direct from life, from experiences common to men of all time. And they have been handled with much more of consummate craftsmanship and classical restraint than we find in later Tamil works. No, it is not for nothing that the Tamils are proud of their Sangam literature. It is of the best that they have to offer, out of their own distinctive culture, to the common heritage of India that is yet in the making.

Man is a little world, in which we may discern a body mingled of earthly elements, and ethereal breath, and the vegetable life of plants, and the senses of the lower animals, and reason, and the intelligence of the angels, and a likeness to God.

PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

The First Three Novels in the Tamil Language

By KA NAA SUBRAMANYAM

PROSE in Tamil can be said to have existed from a long time past—face-tiously, in the manner of Moliere's bourgeois who learnt to his surprise that he was speaking prose whenever he opened his mouth, and academically, in the works of the commentators on the ancient poetry of the Tamils. But there was no recognisable work of independent standing till the first quarter of the 18th century. It was Fr. Roberto di Nobili who in the 17th century attempted to deliver his sermons to the converted in prose. These sermons are lost, but Constantius Beschi who followed him in his methods and became a native posing as a Sanyasi with Tamil, Persian and Sanskrit names, gave the Tamil language its first prosework that is still available. His *Tales of the Guru Who was a Simpleton* is a series of tales centering round a simpleton who set up to teach others wisdom. Beschi was in other ways too a lover of the Tamil language; he is identified with a spelling reform, with the first alphabetical word-list in Tamil, with some grammars of the spoken and the written tongues, and with various selections and translations from the old classics. He was also the author of a Christian epic in Tamil and various other poems long and short. Beschi can rightly be considered the father of modern prose in Tamil for in the *Tales about the Guru* he used it for a creative purpose, independent of any poetry or other extant poetic text.

The second half of the 18th century saw the diary of Ananda Rangam Pillai, a dubash of Dupleix in Pondichery, but the Diary was not known to the Tamil public till the last decades of the 19th century and it had no conceivable literary impact though its merits are considerable. The

first decades of the nineteenth century saw various prose works in Tamil chiefly inspired by the Christian Missionaries and the newly established Education Society of Madras. The *Dharma Nool* talking of the laws of order and justice of the divine was perhaps the first work in prose by a Tamil. It was succeeded by a Tamil version of the *Panchatantra* by Thandavaraya Mudaliar. It was a translation in graded Tamil prose of a Marathi version of the old Hitopadesa tales and it is still current and studied. It was a pedantic exercise and not a creative work as against Beschi. The Education Society of Madras collected the various local legends current about the old kings and gods and goddesses of the land and though this work never reached a large public at that time it was a beginning and has to be recognised as an exercise in making Tamil prose adequate for at least a section of our modern needs. By the middle of the century, Tamil prose can be said to have come into its own with the *Vinoda Rasa Manjari* of Veerasamy Chettiar and the *Vikramaditya Tales* of the Muslim, Ibrahim Shah Rowther and many other stories by others retold from Arabian, Persian and European sources.

I detailed these evidences of the growing art of prose in Tamil as just the background to the first novel, Vedanayakam Pillai's *Prathapa Mudaliyar Charitram*. It was published in 1879. The author was a retired government servant and was well known as a friend of the famous pundits of the day as well as a lover of learning. He had a reputation as a poet and had written many songs set to music. He was an Indian Christian. I am myself inclined to think that this the first novel of the Tamils was inspired by the work of both Beschi the

Christian and the Vikramaditya Tales of the Muslim Ibrahim Shah. Like both these predecessors, Vedanayakam Pillai tries to string a series of tales on to a hero. Taking the cue probably from Beschi, Vedanayakam Pillai tries to be merry and facetious; he includes in his novel most of the jokes and anecdotal material current in his day and familiar to the learned and the not so learned. When some one comes and tells the hero in his boyhood days that a poet had stolen a verse from the celebrated epic of Kamban, the boy procures the volume, shows them that the verse is still to be found in the book and so the poet has not stolen the verse under consideration. In his attempt to make a hero of his character, the author follows the method and manner of Ibrahim Shah Rowther who, in fanciful and colloquial, homely, prose retold the heroic tales of Vikramaditya for an admiring audience. The listening qualities of Vedanayakam Pillai's prose are worth examining. (And in an aside I can add that Subramania Bharathi, in his prose, was experimenting with Tamil as a spoken language and not as a thing written and cultivated by pedants and academic men. These things could do with examination, but no one has done it to our satisfaction yet.)

The first novel in Tamil is in the form of an autobiography told by a gentleman of means and leisure and cultivated tastes. It is full of wise saws and modern instances and the author has packed it with all the things he had observed of the men and manners of his day. He tries to instruct as well as to entertain. It is a straightforward tale hingeing on a lot of coincidences; the hero's boyhood, his efforts at education, his marriage, and the mishaps connected with it before and after are detailed at length; the heroine is lost in the forest and when, for safety, she assumes a male garb, she is elected by an elephant with a garland to rule over a kingdom. She rules wisely and well and the author makes a few chapters of all his ideas on statecraft; he prefers a monarchy to a republic. (The

British hatred and fear of the ideas behind the French Revolution were communicated to him, I suppose, even at that length of time and distance.) He talks of the necessary reforms in a corrupt bureaucracy; he talks of the needs of the language and he dwells at length on the need for modern prose novels in Tamil. He calls them prose epics. He was a modern in his outlook on language reform and on social questions; his strictures on the bureaucracy can still stand but his statecraft was out of date even at the time he wrote it. The heroine rules well and wisely but a hitch occurs when the princess of the land tries to marry the woman in king's disguise and the heroine escapes and comes back to her village and lives happily ever afterwards nursing the memories of her adventures.

As illustrative of this novelist's method, I shall instance one episode even though I may not be able to do as much for the other two novelists whom we shall consider later. The grandfather of Prathapa Mudaliar was a well-to-do gentleman who is able to render some help to the Nawab of Arcot when he is in disguise and has been thrown by a horse. Because the Nawab is a Muslim others refuse to help him because Muslims are untouchable to the caste Hindu, but our hero's grandfather helps him and when the Nawab promises him some return in gratitude, he disclaims any intention of accepting the gift. The Nawab is angry at being thwarted and strikes him on his cheek and rides away, only to send for him later and to make him a Dewan. The grandfather dare not refuse now, for as he wisely observes even if he forgot it, his cheek would not forget the sting of the lusty blow that the Nawab had given him for refusing an offer of help.

Prathapa Mudaliar is an episodic and extremely readable novel. In spite of the author's preachiness in places he makes no false attempt to integrate the preaching and the story or the characters. In his ideals of womanhood, Vedanayakam Pillai was very modern and he anticipates in

large measure the later sentiments of the modern Tamil poet Subramania Bharathi. His Gnanambal the heroine and Sundarathanni the mother of the hero are ideals of Indian womanhood which we still cherish but at the same time modern and cultured in a special sense. Vedanayakam Pillai's characterisation, apart from his two women and some two or three of the boys who appear in the story, are rather exaggerated and tend to be all white or all black with no shades in between. This, together with a tendency to moralise at the least provocation, can put off a few people but I shall have to confess to a great liking for the manner and method of Vedanayakam Pillai. There are a number of unbelievable coincidence in the novel but I think they can be swallowed.

His style was peculiarly his own and he had theories of style which he has expounded for us in the course of the novel itself. The action currently of a publisher who has taken upon himself rather mischievously the task of purging the text of Vedanayakam Pillai of all alien and un-Tamil (?) elements is rather to be condemned. It is unfortunate that no voice of protest has been effectively raised against this act of vandalism. The prose of Vedanayakam Pillai is unique, personal and has a charm and movement of its own that are delightful; like Henry Fielding in *Tom Jones* where in chapter 19 we are introduced to the early morning. *Prathapa Mudaliar Charithram* is delightful and charming in its personal use of prose. It showed for us the way to work for an adequacy of Tamil which we have neglected at our peril now, but that does not belong to the present context.

Vedanayakam Pillai himself wrote another prose narrative, *Suguna Sundari*, a moral tale but it does not deserve serious consideration as a novel. I shall pass it by. There was an attempt at a novel by Guruswamy Sarma called *Premakalavathiyam* which belongs to the year 1889 and so preceded both *Kamalambal Charithram* and *Padmavathy Charithram* which we

shall proceed to consider. *Premakalavathiyam* was imitative and derivative. As a novel it will not measure up to any kind of criteria. It succeeds in giving us a picture of the games the boys and the girls of those days used to play and an insight into some of the habits and customs of a certain section of the people without being a work of art of any merit.

The second novel in Tamil belongs to the middle years of the nineties of the last century and the third was almost contemporary with it. Unlike *Prathapa Mudaliar* both novels take their titles from the heroines and are 'histories' in the sense in which *Tom Jones* is a 'history'. Rajam Iyer, the author of *Kamalambal Charithram* was a short lived genius who produced only this one work in Tamil and *the Rambles in Vedanta* in English and died at the age of twenty-six in 1896. Madhaviah wrote his first novel *Padmavathy* in the nineties, lived on till 1925 and wrote other novels and works both in English and in Tamil but by common consent it will have to be confessed that his first novel is his best. Rajam Iyer early developed into a spiritualist, a Vedantin whom Swami Vivekananda chose to edit the *Prabuddha Bharatha*, and we find his novel, especially towards the end, more and more interested in problems of vedanta and philosophy. Madhaviah on the other hand was a social reformer with a cultured outlook and he made his novel a vehicle of social protest—in parts vehement and righteously indignant.

Both novels are, in an elementary sense, love stories. In *Kamalambal*, ideal and young love as well as a troubled and middle aged love are portrayed. Rajam Iyer was a keen observer of the human scene and his delineations of characters are real. He could with impartiality depict a good man who is bad in parts and a bad man who is good in parts. His teacher of Tamil is a portrait which is familiar to every lover of Tamil. His portrayal of men as essentially good is born of a philosophical outlook. His delineations of the gossiping women of the village, the king of

dacoits, a weak man set on by a termagant of a wife, the helplessness of man in the face of onrushing misfortunes, the innocent and the guilty swept on by a sweeping and engulfing fate make the novel varied and interesting. In many respects *Kamalambal Charithram* remains the greatest novel yet produced in the Tamil language. *Padmavathy* on the other hand, portrays the manners and men and women of its times in an unforgettable manner. The author's often detached and effective fulminations set off the period in which he was writing. The problems of education, public medicine and life as lived here and now are ever present and in a sense Madhaviah wrote the novel of social protest *par excellence* in the Tamil language. His characters share to a great extent the darks and lights of Vedanayakam Pillai's characters; it is possible to remember the characters of Madhaviah when they are obviously charming but his bad characters tend to be types rather than persons.

Structurally *Kamalambal* is a great advance on the first Tamil novel; it is organically whole and well-integrated and has recognisable form as a novel. So has *Padmavathy Charithram*. Rajam Iyer claimed somewhere that he was a great admirer of Oliver Goldsmith and that he tried to model his own novel on it; though *Kamalambal* cannot be said in any sense to derive from it. Madhaviah on the other hand was familiar with the works of Charles Dickens (I am told he admired Thackeray), though I have yet found no evidence of this in his work. His is perhaps the better novel in that it shows development—the development of Padmavathy with the passing of the years into a modern educated and cultured woman. The other novel lacks this motivation of growth; it is rather static.

The first three novelists of Tamil had the

laudable aim of uplifting the Tamil public by their stories. Vedanayakam Pillai tried to do it by way of anecdotes, naively suggesting a moral and implying a lesson here and there along what might be called his meandering tale. Rajam Iyer made his spiritual lessons explicit; they form a separate section of the book and at the beginning of a particular chapter he warns his readers that they need not read it if they are not interested in spiritual things; they can skip the chapter to the next in pursuit of the interest of the action. Madhaviah, too, directly preached without any reference to his characters; he writes in one chapter on teachers and in another, on doctors and in yet another on the arts of the day. In style, too, these three writers are as different as can be. Vedanayakam Pillai wrote as he spoke—a sort of racy colloquial picturesque spoken rhythm enlivens his whole book. Rajam Iyer was a bit pedantic and ornate showing off his knowledge of the Kamba Ramayanam with odds and tags of poetry interlarded in his prose; but his prose has colour, strength and swiftness. Madhaviah attempted a golden mean but he sacrificed the swiftness of Rajam Iyer and the picturesqueness of Vedanayakam Pillai in the process.

With these three novels it can be claimed that the Tamil novel had come into its own. Though fictional activity was very great in the early years of the twentieth century, it was only towards the end of the thirties that Tamil produced yet another writer who was comparable in merit as a novelist to these three. I have in mind, S V V who began as a writer of humorous pieces but ended as one of the most serious of the novelists that Tamil has yet produced. He, along with these three, has built up the novel tradition in modern Tamil fiction.

H. G. Wells: *The Prophet and the Artist*

By GABRIEL GERSH

ONE morning in 1912, H. G. Wells, entering the London subways, found himself on the heels of his neighbour, John Galsworthy, to whom he said, 'What are you doing here so early in the morning?' Galsworthy, whose fear that he might be mistaken for a prig rendered him stiff and awkward, answered with a self-conscious laugh. 'A very strange thing, Wells! I'm visiting all the slaughter-houses in London!' He had, it then transpired, agreed to write articles on the humane killing of cattle for a daily paper. 'Do you know, Wells,' he exclaimed, 'that every sheep which is slaughtered suffers thirty seconds more agony than it need. Multiply that by the number of sheep killed, and you get an eternity of pain!'

'No, Galsworthy, you don't,' Wells answered. 'Each sheep suffers thirty seconds more pain than it need. That's all!'

In these speeches the nature and outcome of the two men may be plainly perceived.

But Wells, so realistic in conversation with the gentle-minded Galsworthy, who was always multiplying pain and discovering ages of agony where there were only seconds, was himself as sentimental in the major parts of his social and economic belief as that oversensitive author. He could not make up his mind about anything, except the need for a world State, and was the victim of his moods to the extent not only of contradicting himself but of contradicting any person who had the temerity to agree with him. His mind swayed between a belief in man's salvation by patient effort and his salvation by magic; by persistent, slow, coral-insect activities or by dramatic miracles; by the labour of select and superior persons,

Voluntary Aristocrats, as in *A Modern Utopia*, or by a green gas, as in *The Days of the Comet*, or a skid through the fourth dimension, as in *Men Like Gods*; or by a combination of passionless plodding and Mendelian evolution.

In one mood he saw mankind divided into two groups, one a small class of careless, whimsical, pretty people, playing at culture; the other, a large underground group of pithecoïd proletarians, to use an expression of his own, who preserved the pretty people for provender, human game, as in *The Time Machine* and *The First Men in the Moon*. In another mood he saw a little group of ruthless bureaucrats rigorously ruling a mob of underground — they were always underground — but intelligent and rebellious serfs, as in *The Sleeper Awakes*. In a third mood, a carefully graded society was dominated by monastically minded and seclusive persons. He had several opinions about government, holding parliaments and nations in disdain; but if there were to be parliaments they must be conducted on the principle of proportional representation and the single transferable vote. Better still would be a world State in which there were no nations, but only social chain stores run along the lines of Woolworth. His attitude towards the family is seldom the same for two books in succession. He favours an association of father, mother and infants in their own home in one book, but is all for 'free' mothers in another, each in her own domain, to which a father may be admitted as a boarder with connubial privileges. In his more idealistic or anarchic books the world is inhabited by superb and beautiful persons who run about and laugh lightly, enjoy the

pleasures of life and relieve their boredom by polygamy and polyandry. He could not decide which of two men he wished to be: a bare-minded recluse, free from all attachments, or a suburban sybarite, taking his ease in his pub, surrounded by good-natured gossips, all eating and drinking lustily and making robust male noises, like G. K. Chesterton, but, unlike him, a little careless about paternity.

These indecisions tormented his mind, and made him the victim of his whims. At one moment, he was applauding the Webbs, and at the next he was denouncing them and even contemplating the extreme step of associating with the Catholic writer, Hilaire Belloc. He cheered President Wilson and the League of Nations on Monday, but damned them both on Tuesday because he had just remembered that his pet recipe for the world's troubles was a world State in which there would not be any nations to league. Protesting that there were no great men and that all progress was made by the accumulated activities of large groups of innominate people, he ran about the earth assiduously looking for leaders, seeking one in Arthur Balfour, another in John D. Rockefeller, a third in George V, a fourth in a pair, Madame Chiang Kai-shek and her husband, and in both Roosevelts, Theodore and Franklin. But all were found wanting. Lenin disappointed him. So did Stalin. There was no satisfaction in anyone or in anything. He died in despair, although he had lived extravagantly in hope. Beginning with the belief that wilful man could achieve everything, he ended in the delusion that he could achieve nothing.

Despair deepens as he begins his last book, *Mind at the End of Its Tether*, which was published in 1945, the year when the British Labour Party, of which he was an unruly member, came into effective power for the first time. The fact roused no hope in him, nor did it diminish his despondency. "The end of everything we call life is close at hand and cannot be

evaded.' This end was to occur 'within a period to be estimated by weeks and months rather than aeons.' 'Our universe is not merely bankrupt; there remains no dividend at all; it is going clean out of existence, leaving not a wrack behind. The attempt to trace a pattern of any sort is futile.'

His meaning is obscure. If the universe is about to disappear, manifestly we can do nothing about it. We must await our extinction with what fortitude we can muster. But Wells, agreeing at last with Shaw, speaking through the lips of Caesar, seems only to think that *Homo Sapiens* 'in his present form is played out. The stars in their course have turned against him, and he has to give place to some other animal better adapted to face the fate that closes in more and more swiftly upon mankind.' The thought is still obscure. If cosmic disaster is imminent, no creature can cope with it, nor, if man has no hope beyond this earth, is there any sense in trying to cope with it, since it has no relation to any creature's activities or potential powers, good or bad. Had man been as wise as he has, in Wells' belief, been wickedly foolish, he together with all animate and inanimate things would still be subject to calamity. We may be able to face fate, or, if we cannot, some other creature may be better adapted to do so, but if the fate is inexorable and the dissolution of the globes is certain, facing it is all we can do. We cannot avert it.

Proportional representation, in which Wells had so much faith, keeps on breaking into his most dismal forecasts. There is just a chance for man if he will adopt the single transferable vote. He is doomed, but the process of doom may be protracted for an intelligent minority.

"The writer [he says] sees the world as a jaded world devoid of recuperative power. In the past he has liked to think that Man could pull out of his entanglement and start a new creative phase of human living. In the face of our universal inadequacy, that optimism has given place to a stoical cynicism... Man must go steeply up or down, and the odds seem to be

all in favour of his going down and out. If he does go up, then so great is the adaptation demanded of him that he must cease to be a man. Ordinary man is at the end of his tether. Only a small, highly adaptable minority of the species can possibly survive.'

Though why they wish to do so, he does not say. 'The rest will not trouble about it, finding such opiates and consolations as they have a mind for.' We are back in the sixth chapter of *Genesis*, when 'eight,' as Tennyson remarks in *Aylmer's Field*, 'were left to make a purer world,' and, as *Genesis* faithfully records, failed in the endeavour. Yet the world remains, and man is still here and good is somehow done. If Wells in this testament of woe means only that the whole organization of the world is about to be done over again, and that this arrangement will be the work of a small group of intensely devoted and intelligent people, he is surely stating in unduly dismal terms what has been stated often before, and been as often observed, with apprehension by some, by others with delight.

In reading Wells it must be borne in mind that his beliefs were exceptionally personal in their origin. Like Mr. de Valera, who knew what Ireland needed when he looked into his own heart, Wells knew what was essential to mankind when he saw what was essential to him. His main opinions were based on, or sprang out of, a false assumption, derived from a singular misunderstanding of his father's financial affairs, and the unwarranted sense of inferiority he felt because of his clumsily built body, his thin, unimpressive voice and his ill-health. His father, Joseph Wells, after prolonged failure as gardener, became a hopeless failure as the owner of a small hardware shop in Bromley, an occupation for which he had no training, no talent and no taste. Wells concluded, very oddly, that his father's insolvency proved that all small shopkeepers were destined to become bankrupts. This belief pervades the whole of his work, imaginative, sociological and speculative. It is the foundation of *The History of Mr. Polly*, who was

surely Joseph Wells. 'It is manifestly written out on the scroll of destiny,' he states in *New Worlds for Old*,

'that the little independent butcher's shop, buying and selling locally, must disappear... This is equally true of a milk-seller, of a small manufacturer, of a builder, of a hundred and one trades. They are bound to be incorporated in a large organization; they are bound to become salaried men where formerly they were independent men, and it is no use struggling against that.'

Sarah Wells, our author's mother, was, before her marriage, a lady's maid with a stubborn mind about religion and respectability. Her husband's inefficiency brought him eventually to financial collapse and virtual dependence on his wife's income; for she returned to the service of Miss Featherstonhaugh, this time to a more exalted position, that of housekeeper, although her youngest son, whom she was allowed to take to Midhurst, admits, with unusual candor, that she was incompetent to perform her duties. Mrs. Wells was one of the world's worst cooks. The poignant and frequent accounts of indigestion and dyspepsia, which are as common in her son's novels as vast meals and potations are in those of Dickens, derive, especially in *Mr. Polly*, from the agonies suffered by her husband and her sons eating her awful food. Wells was not content, however, to believe that, just as his father was unfit to own a hardware shop, so his mother was unfit to housekeep and cook, but must found an entirely false theory of society on these individual defects. All people of his class suffered from malnutrition and badly assembled bodies, in addition to being doomed to financial disaster, because of class division, class prejudices and a faulty system of elementary education!

The resemblance between the life of Dickens and that of Wells is extraordinary, but the supreme difference between them is all we need note. The difference made the first a man of high genius; it withheld high genius from the second. One cannot read a novel by Dickens without becoming aware of his unquenchable love of man-

kind, his infinite compassion for all suffering people, his flaming anger at oppression and wrong. This feeling pervades the work of every man of supreme genius. Wells was not devoid of compassion, as *Kipps* and *The Wheels of Chance* prove, but he was almost destitute of love. Ann Pornick, who was married to Artio Kipps, is the only character in his work whom he loves without reserve. Even Lady Harman, who comes next to Ann in his affection, does not escape without a slap or two. Ann Veronica, like Isabel in *The New Machiavelli*, is admired more than loved and the admiration is qualified by a sharp sense of her defects. He was aware of this flaw in his genius. 'For all my desire to be interested,' he says in the *Autobiography*, 'I have to confess that for most things and most people I don't care a damn.' His interest was primarily in organization, in plans and schemes. He hated the village, but adored stellar space. Life, to him, was no more than 'a tissue of births.' Individuals were specimens to be impaled on pins and kept in airtight glass-fronted cases for inspection. His utopias remarkably resembled long, white-tiled tunnels, illuminated by cold electric light: a place through which people perpetually hurry, a place infested by passionless conductors taking tickets. Keppel, in *Star Begotten*, in an outburst of Wellsian misogyny, exclaims, 'I hate common humanity. This oafish crowd which tramples the ground whence my cloud-capped pinnacles might rise. I am tired of humanity beyond measure. Take it away.' The words are Keppel's, but the voice is that of Wells.

It is when we examine his sociological and speculative works that our greatest surprise is felt. Wells is still commonly supposed to have been a remarkably shrewd forecaster of events. The fact is far otherwise. His prophecies were not only false as a rule, but their falsity was often apparent immediately after they were made. Those that were fulfilled were only such as any sharp-witted man, after long conversations with experts and inven-

tors, might safely have made. The tank, in one form or another, had long haunted men's minds before Wells became its prophet. Remington-Wells, in *The New Machiavelli*, is so often wrong that his exposure becomes tedious. His assertion that public school influence would weaken and soon cease in English political affairs is not supported by the inclusion, forty-four years after Remington-Wells had made his forecast, of numerous Oxford and Cambridge alumni in the House of Commons. He thought that 'a European war, and conceivably very humiliating to England, may occur at no distant date, but I do not think there is any such heroic quality in our governing class as will make that war catastrophic.' Remington is here suggesting that the governing class, eager to save its skin and its property, will promptly surrender. His creator lived through two such wars, both of which were humiliating, not to England, but to those who made them; and in these wars 'the governing class' showed as much heroic quality as any other, and did its fair share of the fighting.

Wells, in his own person, blundered often and badly in forecasting. His first book of speculation, *Anticipations*, is full of false prophecy. 'I must confess,' he says, 'that my imagination, in spite even of spurring, refuses to see any sort of submarine doing anything but suffocate its crew and founder at sea.' Fifteen years after that statement was made Britain came near to starvation through submarines. The Battle of the Atlantic, in the Second World War, still terrifies the imagination. In the same book Wells commits himself to this belief:

'It is improbable that ever again will any flushed, undignified man with a vast voice, a muscular face in incessant operation, collar crumpled, hair disordered, and arms in wild activity, talking copiously...rise to be the most powerful thing in any democratic state in the world. Continually the individual vocal demagogue dwindles...'

He did not 'think it at all probable that aeronautics will ever come into play as a serious modification of transport and com-

munication,' and he had an almost infantile faith in the value of balloons, which would, he felt certain, be as effective in war as airplanes would be ineffective. His conviction was that gas would render the tank obsolete in the Second World War, if it should be waged. The balloon never became effective, except as an obstacle, and gas was not used at all in the Second World War, in which the tank was a most powerful weapon. Wells did not expect that 'a successful aeroplane will have soared and come home safe and sound' much before 1950, and perhaps not until 2000! Seven years after that prophecy was published Bleriot flew the English Channel, almost in full view of Wells' home at Sandgate. Cities such as London, Leningrad and Berlin would, he foretold, increase their population 'well over 20,000,000; and New York, Philadelphia, Chicago will probably and Hankow almost certainly reach 40,000,000.' He did not foresee their vulnerability to bombs, a danger which makes us think of dispersal of people rather than of their aggregation. The fate of Hiroshima fills the shallowest mind with apprehension of depopulation. An atomic bomb dropped on a city inhabited by 20,000,000 to 40,000,000 people, a high percentage of the total population of most countries, would restore primitive conditions of life in a single afternoon.

The false prophecies of *Anticipations*, however, are almost trivial in comparison with those published in *The War That Will End War*, a title which proclaims its own puerility. There is a false forecast on almost every page of this book. 'This, the greatest of all wars,' he says, 'is not just another war—it is the last war.' 'I venture to prophesy that within three months'—the book was published in September, 1914—'the Tricolor will be over the Rhine.' The brief halt of the Germans before Liege in that month convinced him that the Germans were already defeated. 'Landings,' according to *Anticipations*, 'will be enormously easier than they have ever been before.' The Germans found them so diffi-

cult that they did not attempt one on Britain in the Second World War, and the Allies found the invasion of France in 1944 difficult enough. His mind was preoccupied with gas as a weapon of war, and he foresaw in *Washington and the Hope of Peace*, published in 1922, Japan and America choking babies in San Francisco or Tokyo.

'All the fleets in the world could not prevent a properly prepared Japan from pouncing upon some unprotected point of the California or Mexican coast, setting up a temporary air base there, and getting to work over a radius of a thousand miles. She might even keep an air base at sea.'

Japan sank many American warships at Pearl Harbor, but she never got anywhere near an invasion or even a raid on the American coast. In 1921 Wells thought that Africa was likely to become 'in the course of a dozen years or so the chief danger region of the world.' Invited by an English newspaper to forecast events in 1939, he foresaw nothing graver than an English General Election, in which the Conservatives would be displaced, not by the Labor Party, but by Radicals!

His whole theory of the effects of war was false. He held the common delusion that it will end society if society does not end it. Yet, although there has never been a period in history when the entire earth was at peace, population is greater than it ever was. The Jews have suffered every sort of persecution, including elimination in many places, yet there are twice as many of them in New York today as there were in Palestine at the time of the Crucifixion. There are perhaps 10,000,000 Jews in the world, as against 2,000,000 in Palestine in the peak period of its power and prosperity. In the century 1846-1946 there have been at least fifty conflicts, ranging from the Chitral Expedition to the two world wars and including the Crimean, the American Civil, the Indian Mutiny, the Franco-German, the South African, the Spanish-American and the Russo-Japanese, yet the population of the world is larger than before any of them was waged, and there

has been a vast increase in material progress and social amenities, following on an outburst of inventive genius surpassing that in the whole previous history of mankind.

It was not as a politician, a sociologist, a prophet or a seer that Wells was important. In these capacities he was not important at all. It was in his capacity as an artist, one he professed to despise, that he excelled and was significant. His tragedy is that, having the power to become a great comic genius, fit for the company of Dickens, he declined the potentiality, preferring rather to become a minor prophet, a more pretentious Edward Bellamy, a less credible Thomas More. If ever a man threw away the gift of genius Wells was the man.

And what a gift he had! Hampered by a pedestrian style, he succeeded in creating, apart from his speculative works, a remarkable number of vivid and diverse novels of engaging quality. The author of the macabre and powerful *Island of Dr. Moreau*, was also the author of the charming *Wheels of Chance* and of that bubbling book *Bealby*. The man who wrote *The Wonderful Visit* also wrote *Love and Mr. Lewisham* and *The Sea Lady* and *The Invisible Man*. His sense of fun was as that of Dickens, although it was not so frequently or amply displayed. The description of the belated baptism of Joan and Peter is the highest jinks, and the Battle of the Eel in *Mr. Polly* would split the sides of a mummy. There is immense entertainment in *The War in the Air*, and he will be short of humor who finds no fun in parts of *Apropos of Dolores*. Good

comedy is common in *The New Machiavelli*. *The Wheels of Chance* and *Kipps* even a debased and vicious version of *Kipps*, *You Can't Be Too Careful!* are full of that pathetic humor which has made Chaplin the chief genius of the moving picture. Wells' greatest achievements in comic characters are Mr. and Mrs. Ponderevo, in his greatest novel, *Tono-Bungay*, which for most of its course is one of the great novels in English, but Mr. Britling, who is Wells himself, is not far from their company; and Mr. Hoopdriver, Artie Kipps and Bert Smallways will take high places in the world where Sam Weller, Toots, Mr. Wemmick and Mrs. Nickleby live. The Micawbers will not disdain the Ponderevos.

There will, no doubt, be much argument about Wells' place in his country's literature, and some will deny him longevity, but will deny it in vain. There was life in this man. Most of his sociological and speculative work is already dead, and so is most of what he wrote after 1920, but it will be a queer and silly world which permits *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, *Kipps*, *The War in the Air*, *Tono-Bungay*, *The History of Mr. Polly*, *The Undying Fire* (a noble and profound religious work) and *Experiment in Autobiography* (despite its serious omissions) to perish. Our descendants will surely preserve *Ann Veronica* and *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* as period pieces, and will keep a warm place in their hearts for *Bealby* and *Wheels of Chance*; and some will assert, not without warrant, that the short stories will live as long as any. *The Outline of History*? Well, at least it has not been superseded, nor, indeed, has anyone yet attempted its supersession.

Self-Sacrifice in Politics

By M. RUTHNASWAMY

THE idea of self-sacrifice as a principle and method in politics has not died down with Mahatma Gandhi. It is being preached and practised by Vinobha Bhave. And the appeal it is still making to thousands of people in India as it did to millions in Mahatma Gandhi's time shows that it is an idea and practice native to our people and calls to something that lies deep in their consciousness or in their tradition. Sacrifice as a means not only of supplication to the Deity but of acquiring power of all kinds and for a variety of purposes has been practised in India from time immemorial — in Dravidian times, in later Aryan times and in the period of the marriage of Dravidian with Aryan India. First came sacrifice of things near and dear to the one by whom the sacrifice is offered — Soma juice, flowers, milk, ghee, food, animals, and then the sacrifice of self — for what could be dearer to one than one's self.

And this sacrifice whether of other things or oneself was used to acquire power. The magical nature of sacrifice, prevalent among the Dravidians, makes sacrifice shape the mind and will of the gods. From the Dravidian conception of the power of the sacrificial formula there developed the Aryan speculation on the creative power of sacrifice. The perfection of the religious life is reached in the identification of the Self, the Atman with the Brahman the true transcendent, substantial Reality. If man can acquire the power of being united to the Absolute by suppression of Self why should he not acquire similar power though in a lesser degree over men. And the whole theory of acquiring influence and power over men by sacrifice of self explains the power and

influence which asceticism has acquired in Hindu social life. The power and influence of the Brahmin not only in religious but in social life was due to his denying himself the creature-comforts open to other men. The political influence acquired by the Brahmin priests at the courts of kings, as ministers and advisers, was due not only to their high thinking but to their plain living. Among high and low this idea was common and deep-seated, that men who led lives of self-denial must have power and influence. They had power and influence with the gods as sacrificers much more than with men.

The idea of the social power and influence of Sacrifice is not peculiar to India—although here it has had a more continuous history and has had the remarkable revival in modern times that has arrested the attention of the world. Dean Inge has noted that the appeal to heroic self-sacrifice is one of the oldest ritual conceptions of mankind. And it did not end with the end of the heroic period of history. Ever since I began to read Acton's writings I have been struck by this passage in his lecture on the history of freedom in Christianity where he speaks of the idea of 'renovating society on the principle of self-sacrifice which had been the generous aspiration of the Essenes, the early Christians, of Fathers and Canonists and Friars, of Erasmus the most celebrated precursor of the Reformation, of Sir Thomas More its most celebrated victim, of Fenelon, the most popular of Bishops, which during the forty-years of its revival (during the French and Socialist Revolution presumably) has been associated with envy and bloodshed and

is now the most dangerous enemy lurking in our path'.

It is worth while investigating what truth there is in this dictum and this prediction of Acton for he has been proved right in his other predictions that 'power tends to corrupt and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely', that 'Prussia and Russia would represent the greatest dangers' that 'the generations after him would have to encounter', or that 'whenever a single definite object is made the supreme end of the State, be it the advantage of a class, the safety or the power of the country, the greatest happiness of the greatest number, or the support of any speculative idea, the State becomes for the time inevitably absolute.' This investigation would be at home especially in India where self-sacrifice has been used as an idea and method in politics and has been celebrated as a main factor in the winning of freedom and independence for the country.

Of the Essenes all that is known is that they were a Jewish sect which arose in the 2nd century B.C. and came to an end in 2nd century A.D. They believed in self-effacement and preferred the life of the desert. They would serve God not in sacrificing victims to him but in purity of heart, in continence, simplicity. In social life they would hold property in common, practised equality and fraternity, denounced slavery, renounced war and all war-like pursuits. They disappeared from history as they could not live like men in a world of men.

The early Christians as described in the Acts of the Apostles lived a life of communal charity and property. Followers of the Prince of Peace till they came into power the early Christians would use force and resort to war only in self-defence. A pacific people, they were called by Clement of Alexandria. Some of the early leaders like Lactantius and Tertullian and Origen denounced war and all those that took part in it. Basil equated the killing in war to murder. Other Fathers of the early Church like Ephraim, Augustine looked

upon war as a necessary evil. The social life of the then world of the Roman empire appeared to the early Christians endeavouring to live a life in accordance with the teaching of their Founder and Master, as a snare and a danger — hence to be mixed up with as little as possible. The Christian, says Clement of Alexandria 'shall live in the city as in a solitude, he will despise the agitations of political life, he will pass the forum by as a stranger.' Although marriage was not condemned, virginity was to be preferred to marriage. Asceticism and self-sacrifice were preached as the ideal life. The hermit and the monk were looked upon as the perfect Christian. This ideal operating in times and places infected with moral disease and corruption accounted for the large numbers of cenobites, hermits, and monks that distinguished the life of early Christianity in Asia Minor, Egypt and later in Europe. In monastic life the individual was sacrificed to the community, for individual property was proscribed, and community life was dominant if not predominant over the life of the individual. The vice of property, said St. Benedict, the founder of the famous order of the Benedictines, should not stain the interior of monasteries. Work in these monasteries, according to St. Basil was to be done by the individual for the community not for himself. Food, clothes, the necessities of life were found for him by the community.

Turning to the Canonists we find that the whole corpus of Canon Law was formed of authoritative pronouncements on matters of doctrine and discipline. The individual, as long as he remained in the Church, had to submit himself to the discipline of the Church as represented by Canon law in his life of action and thought. Not the whole of his life but only his religious and moral life was thus subjected. The individual was more prohibited certain things than ordered to do things. The Index Librorum Prohibitorum placed a limited ban on his reading. But the penances and punishments imposed on

him for infraction of the rules and regulations of the Church culminating in excommunication was the sanction for this subordination of the individual to the community. Sacrifice of self to the church and to the christian law was the informing principle of the whole corpus of Canon Law.

The transition from the Middle Ages to the modern era was bridged over by the Renaissance. In that age of freedom to the point of laxity, Erasmus and Sir Thomas More prescribed the subordination of self to the church and the community. Erasmus, son of the Renaissance, wrote merciless satires on the practises of the contemporary church, the monks and scholastic theology. In his *Praise of Folly* (1511) he threw the vials of his satire on the men and tendencies of his age. He contemplated retirement from a world which was everywhere rotten. He looked to the reformation of the individual rather than to the reformation of the institution, the Church. Sir Thomas More author of the *Utopia* was according to Lord Acton the first European writer to teach Communism. In the *Utopia* we find him recommending the total submission of the individual to Society and the State, the holding of property in common, the education of the young by the State. But in actual life he vindicated the rights of human personality and went to the scaffold for it.

As for Fenelon it was as an advocate of Quietism that he comes into the list of those that in Acton's view recommended sacrifice of the self. Indifference to things, detachment, self-abandonment, passiveness of the soul he taught in *Maximes des Saints*. But Fenelon renounced his doctrines when they were condemned by the Holy See. And it must be remembered that the sacrifice of self which he preached was meant for the elect, those who wanted to follow the path of the mystics. In his other works, in his *Telemaque*, in his Letters to the Duke of Burgundy, in his *Examen de conscience sur les devoirs de la Royauté*, he included the duties of the

good king, the good noblesse, and the good citizen. And in his famous letter to Louis XIV where he protested against the burdens he was laying upon his people by his expensive foreign and domestic policy and prophesied woe for France if this kind of rule continued, Fenelon cannot be considered to have run the doctrine of self-sacrifice to the ruin of the State. But putting him in the list of those who lent countenance to the doctrine of self-sacrifice in politics Acton probably thought that he relied too much for political improvement on the conscience and sense of duty of individual kings, nobles and citizens, and did not provide for the division and therefore limitation of power in institutions like the representative assembly, the independent judiciary and the organs of local self-government. He relied too much on the self-sacrifice of individuals and not enough on the protection of men through institutions.

The forty years of the revival of the doctrine of self-sacrifice must refer to the years of the French Revolution and of the Socialist movement from the middle of the 19th century when it has been 'associated with envy, and hatred and bloodshed'. The heralds and makers of the Revolution, Voltaire, Rousseau, Robespierre, St Just and Marat were men who believed in the natural goodness of men unspoilt by institutions, who believed that public good can be achieved only by the sacrifice of the individual that the deaths of a few thousand men without the processes of law were but as dust weighed in the scale of national unity and welfare. The revolutionaries were as prepared to be killed as to kill for the sake of France. Danton and Robespierre, who had been the cause of the death of the king and Queen and hundreds of noblemen, could not object when it was their turn to be sacrificed on the altar of the Revolution. Marat according to Acton 'was conducted by Rousseau's definition of the social compact as a voluntary association of equal partners by short and unavoidable stages to declare

that the powers claimed were absolved by the law of self-preservation from the conditions of a contract which awarded to them misery and death, that they were at war with society and had a right to all they could get by exterminating the rich and that this inflexible theory of equality, the chief legacy of the revolution, together with the avowed inadequacy of economic science to grapple with the problems of the time renewed the idea of renovating society on the principle of self-sacrifice¹.

To continue the tale of woe wrought by this doctrine of self-sacrifice in Europe, the present generation has had ocular and tragically spectacular demonstration of it in the theory and practise of the Nazis in Germany, the Fascists in Italy and the Communists in Russia, China *et hoc genus omne*. That man exists for the State, that the State or the country is entitled to call upon the individual to make small and big sacrifices for the progress and prosperity of the State, that his liberty and personality are nothing compared to the liberty and personality of the State, that the citizen must suffer hardship, austerities, privation *ad maiorem patriae gloriam* to promote the greatness of the State or the prosperity of the nation—these are ideas that were and are imposed on millions of human beings at the point of threats and punishments of prison, concentration camps, thuggery, harm to near and dear ones, and exile. This idea of sacrifice captured the minds and hearts of idealistic youth—ready to sacrifice themselves for the fatherland—and convinced even thousands of hard-headed men of business and affairs. Otherwise these regimes would have not been accepted so readily and lasted so long.

It is a far cry from the violence and bloodshed of the French Revolution and the Nazi and Fascist and Communist nightmare to the peace and 'non-violence'

of Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha. But the principle is the same. His Satyagraha is the idea and action with which he attempted to overthrow British rule with the method of non-cooperation which requires 'the solid and silent sacrifice of the self' by the Satyagrahi.² He exhorted every Satyagrahi and non-cooperator to humility and self-restraint.³ Satyagrahis had to observe perfect chastity, adopt poverty and cultivate fearlessness.³ Non-cooperation would fail of its purpose if it did not regenerate the individual who used it. His great cure for the crimes and misdemeanours of Governments is to withdraw support from them by non-cooperation. This non-cooperation may be passive like renunciation of favours received from Governments (titles and honours) or positive and active by breaking of laws and refund of payment of taxes. In private life Satyagraha would consist in austerities like giving up fine food and linen by men and jewels and silk sarees by women. In public life the restraint is to be shown by taking no positive action against Government for any of its acts by resort to constitutional methods of redressing grievances in legislature or courts of law. The citizen must not resent the *zoolum* of the policeman not because force (such force as consists in warding off the blows of the lathi or the baton) is useless but because it is immoral.

All this sacrifice of the self for a public cause and purpose if it is pursued without let or hindrance is bound to have the same untoward consequences in India as elsewhere. There is a limit beyond which self-sacrifice may not go—even in the cause of country, or morality of truth. It must not go to the point of total sacrifice of the individual, of his personality. Only in case of the threat to the life of his country by a war of aggression is he justified in offering sacrifice of himself. But even in the defence of country, a 'suicide squad' would be indefensible, as it desires the rights of human personality which are greater than those even of country. But even short of that, self-sacrifice may lead to loss of

¹ Freedom's Battle — ed. Ganesh and Co.

² Freedom's Battle.

³ Hind Swaraj — Tagore and Co.

individual and social liberty. The experience of the peoples under Nazism, Fascism, and Communism shows the results of self-sacrifice to nth degree. But Indian experience shows the results in lesser degree. In Mahatma Gandhi's life time, and so far he had any control over the course of events, his humility, his compassion, his sense of humour prevented the doctrine from being applied *au pied de la lettre*. But even in his lifetime, the military discipline imposed on Congressmen, the fate of nonconformists like Subhas Chandra Bose and Neriman, the intolerance of deviation even by an iota from the orthodox creed, the voluntary sacrifice of freedom by jail-going, the incursion of society into private life betokened by Khadi, prohibition, hartal, picketing, social boycott, the moral coercion of fast unto death had already come to challenge the rights of individual liberty and personality. And after his death these challenges and obstructions to individual liberty have continued—even after such justification as the war with the British had disappeared. The Congress still pays heed to threats of starvation unto death as in the famous case of Potti Sriramalu's death by fasting in support of the agitation for the formation of the Andhra State. It still recruits its Ministers and leaders from the class of *thiagis* who suffered to the point of going to jail with little regard for qualification in intellect or character. Under a democratic regime, which should be reconciled to the slow speed of the democratic process, Planning, Plans, and the desire to achieve them as early as possible 'within our lifetime' have increased the pressure of the State on the individual to the point of imperilling his liberty. The discipline and dictatorship of the Congress party which still continues unabated enforced as it is by the sanctions which a party in power has at its disposal have been imported into the offices and processes of Government. The civil services right of administering the departments of government subject to the policies laid down by the Ministry is limited and nulli-

fied by Ministers interfering in regard to promotions, transfers, discipline. The Socialist ideal of the Government issuing in restrictive economic policies with devices of controls, permits, licences, quotas, calls for sacrifice of the self in the interests of economic progress. Education tends to become more and more a monopoly of the State, with nationalization of textbooks in the offing. Economic freedom is being slowly but steadily reduced, private enterprise being allowed only 45% of new industries. Family life and law which used to be regulated by custom and judicial legislation are by forced marches being driven towards progress. Men are being made sober by Act of Parliament—with disastrous results to sobriety as well as to the Act of parliament. Population is to be controlled by administrative orders of doubtful medical and moral provenance. Cooperative farming and ceilings on holdings will make the producers of agricultural wealth 'cribbed, cabined and confined'. The logical result of all this Etatism has not yet reached the totalitarianism of Musolini's maxim 'everything by the State and in the State, nothing outside the State'—but we are on the road.

And it is all so unnecessary. Progress, even economic progress has been attained by the ways of individual freedom—as the U.S.A., England and Germany, France and Belgium and Italy have shown. It is not only unnecessary but it is injurious to the interests of progress. After all it is the individual that is the maker of progress—even in Socialist States. And it is on the building of the health and strength of the individual that the prospects of State and Society lie. It is

Not starred and spangled units
Made the State—but men, high-
minded men

It is the individual man and woman, self-confident, self-reliant, self-acting that make institutions work unto useful purposes. The reason why the cooperative movement has succeeded in England and Germany and Denmark is that the men who took to it

were active, self-reliant self-confident men. They trusted themselves and so were inclined to trust others. And the reason why the cooperative movement has relatively failed in India is that the people who were brought into it had not attained that sense of individual responsibility and trustworthiness which is necessary for its success,—they were and are still dominated by the Community or caste spirit. Far from stemming the tide of individualism, as is contemplated by the party in power, all that are concerned about the progress of India must see to the continuance and intensification of that movement. Persona-

lity and the rights and liberties of personality are the *terminus ad quem* of secular political development. Not the sacrifice of personality to the point of its extinction or even any way near it, as is contemplated in the doctrine of self-sacrifice, but the burgeoning and blossoming of personality in every sphere of life in religion, in politics, in social and economic work must be the end and object of all endeavour in India. Not sacrifice of self on the altar of progress but the dedication to service of self is the way to progress in India—as it has been everywhere else where freedom has prevailed.

The attitude of unhappiness is not only painful, it is mean and ugly. What can be more base and unworthy than the pining, puling, mumping mood, no matter by what outward ills it may have been engendered? It but fastens and perpetuates the trouble which occasioned it, and increases the total evil of the situation. At all costs then we ought to reduce the sway of that mood.

—WILLIAM JAMES

The Morality of Albert Camus

By SERGE DOUBROVSKY

TO Sartre, Mauriac and many others, the disappearance of Camus brought not only the profound shock of personal grief, but also the painful feeling that a vital work had been suddenly and brutally interrupted in mid-course. Malraux had already had Moreno say in *L'Espoir* (Man's Hope): 'The main fact about death is that it renders irreparable everything that has gone before.'

Every writer, however, in everything he writes, intends that it will escape death. The author dies, but the work lives. It cannot grow longer, but it can grow richer in meaning. It cannot be modified, but in its encounter with the perceptions of new readers, it can be reborn. 'Just what you'd expect of him' is true only of a mediocre book, which is as lifeless as its author. Campistron can be summed up in a few phrases; Racine is transformed with every new generation. An insignificant work has a certain character; a masterpiece has a life of its own. The dialogue with Camus continues.

Even when he was alive, those who wanted to neutralize his message tried to ossify his work. They tried to destroy its power by the endless repetition of one or two epithets. First of all, it was branded as 'existentialist'. Again and again, Camus protested in vain against the appellation and its association—even going so far as to attack by name the philosophy attributed to him—but this accomplished nothing. One can still turn to a number of books, especially those of Anglo-Saxon origin, and there is Camus, under the heading 'Existentialism.' But, this is nothing to be upset about, for the word has never been anything but a bugbear for imbeciles. If it is really no more than an error in classifica-

tion, no one is hurt by it. A more serious thing is the standardized, prettyfied picture—of Camus as the moralist *par excellence* of the immoral 20th Century, the austere preacher, Camus the Just, Camus the Virtuous.... For the rest, consult his obituary notices. There were those who congratulated him for all this, and there were those who detested him for it. His moral determination, his moralizing, may well be praised or denounced, but it remains a fact. Some have gone so far as to charge him with Jansenism and to consider him, like Phaedrus, as a Christian to whom grace has been denied. Others regard him as a secular figure—a kind of school teacher, instilling good deportment with the aid of two or three favourite abstract notions—as if he were teaching a course in civics. As such—and this is the capital sin for such a writer—he would have no place at all in history. Despite his disclaimers, Camus kept a close watch on his own transformation: 'Like everyone else, I have tried as well as I could to correct my own nature in accord with moral principles. Alas! This cost me very dearly.' (*L'Envers et l'endroit*.)

Moral principles? What moral principles? This is what we propose to investigate. Rereading Camus, one is struck by the frequent reiteration of terms which seem to have sprung directly from a course in ethics; justice, happiness, revolt, etc. These terms are endlessly repeated—one can almost hear the pounding on the pulpit—in his editorials in *Combat* and in polemical exchanges with other writers, as well as in his essays, where they serve as constant themes for meditation, as focal points for his thinking. Camus seems to be intensely concerned over his choice of words,

It is surprising therefore that these key words are never really subjected to a thoroughgoing examination and are never actually defined. One may argue that 'absurdity' in *The Myth of Sisyphus* and 'revolt' in *The Rebel* (*Le Mythe de Sisyphe*—*L'Homme révolté*) are analyzed masterfully and at length. This might be described however as a kind of 'horizontal' and not a 'vertical' analysis—contributing to extension rather than to comprehension of the words. The concept of 'revolt' takes us back to the original sources of value, thence to the consciousness of evil—and thence, inversely, to an affirmation of happiness and of justice. But what are happiness and justice? The content of these ideas, their immediate and long-range implications, the dialectics of their interrelation—remain unexplored. As feelings, the ideas of happiness and justice are not dealt with profoundly, in the way in which Sartre, for example, relates phenomenological descriptions of shame, fear and suffering to a total and rigorous view of man. Yet, it is precisely the character of experience, rather than thought, which gives the greatest value to Camus' approach. 'I am not a philosopher at all, and I can only speak of what I have lived through.' (*Actuelles II*.) This of course does not imply that the philosopher must necessarily speak only of what he has not lived through. But, to the extent to which he incorporates it into a system, he transforms it. Dialectic gradually takes the place of intuition.

Phenomenology must always continue to evolve, and its observed 'truths' must be classified and reclassified. In the case of Camus, however, there is no system, no general framework, no philosophy. There are a few unrelated verities to which he clings, and which cling to him. . . . 'I held this belief and the belief held me.' (*L'Etranger*). We have to reconcile our-

selves to this. One may argue the pros and cons: balance the sense for fine nuances against the sense of geometry, integrity against integralism and existence against philosophy, and inquire into all the problems of a philosophy of existence. Jaspers did so, and he was not the only one. In any event, and this is what we are concerned with, we cannot deduce a system of morality from Camus' collection of moral intuitions, nor a system of ethics from his ethical reflections. Camus has been reproached both for having thoughts without practical applications and for excessive moralizing. But it seems reasonable to inquire what kind of morality it is which has no practical application. A morality, if it means anything, has to be defined as an ensemble of rules and precepts. What finally emerges, from Camus' monotonous and powerful call for 'justice' and 'happiness', is rather a human attitude, an existential tension¹, a passion for living, instead of rules for life. Camus above all is a poet, or, more exactly, he has a poet's sensitivity and vision. But—can one just innocently be a poet in our times? So long as Camus presents his intuitions in the guise of reasoning, he makes a travesty of them.

'A writer's work after all is only a long expedition through the by-ways of art in an attempt to rediscover the two or three simple and bold images which first opened the heart'. (Preface to *L'Envers et l'endroit*) The whole thought of Camus is therefore derived from a few basic experiences of his childhood, when his heart was first opened up to the world. The famous 'Mediterranean wisdom' of which he has so often been accused is not at all the luxurious attribute of a bourgeois upbringing, as has been said so many times, so wrongly. As a child, and the child of illiterate parents, Camus underwent his formative experiences before culture made an impression on him. What faced him was the need to make a conscious and sometimes awkward attempt to rediscover the vital pre-cultural sources which affected

¹ For example, the end of *L'Homme révolté*: 'The bow is bent, the wood cries out. At the moment of the most extreme tension, the arrow springs forth, straight, from the hardest and the freest effort.'

his life. What Camus tries to express through the lyrical descriptions in his early work—to which we must always go back, because he never completely departed from them—what he tries to say in his myths of the 'Algerian race' and the 'cities without a past' (for every writer creates myths)—and what he is trying to express in the final chapters of *L'Homme révolté*—come down to the same thing, the essential experience which haunts him, life interpreted in terms of heat and light from the sun.

Sartre's analyses in the last part of *l'Être et le néant* have sufficiently stressed the importance of sensory perception in offering an immediate symbolism for relating consciousness to the outside world. One is reminded of what Bachelard called the 'psychoanalysis' of snow, of slime, etc. No one should be surprised at failing to find in Sartre any theoretical analysis of the sun, since the sun seems to be absent from his personal universe. More precisely, it plays a negative role. 'I will never do anything worthwhile, except perhaps after dark. That is because of the sun.' (*La Nausée*). Yet, it is in relation to the despised sun, in terms of an 'anti-sun', that the saving virtues of the night are expressed, enabling Roquentin momentarily to escape from nausea. There is of course the disappearance of light ('Nausea remained there, in the yellow light,') but what matters most is the disappearance of heat—'I am happy, the cold is so pure and the night is so pure.' The night brings cold, and cold brings purity. One can see the trend and the meaning of this existential revery: 'Perhaps I am no more than a passing wave of icy air. To have no blood, no lymph, no flesh—to be nothing but cold itself!' The sun is no longer the expression of 'high noon' as it is in *Cimetière marin*—the fullness of *being* against which it is essential to assert the revolt of life. It is the vital element itself. This is the way Camus understands it, in existential opposition to Sartre and to Valéry. Unlike Valéry, the sun is not for him a self-

contained mode of spherical existence, a sun which one can define for oneself. It is always the sun *on* the ruins of Tipasa, the sandy beach or the sea of *L'Etranger*. Its light is not a distant and pure essence, but a second bath. It is the unifying force in the cosmos: 'From the earth to the sun, from every part of the world, there is a heady alcohol rising, to stagger the heavens.' (*Noces*). The sun which touches everything, penetrates everything, so overpowering in its presence, is the perfect symbol of the vital link between the natural and human domains. 'Apart from the sun, kissing and savage odors, everything seemed useless to us.' (*Noces*).

The theme of 'the sun' therefore defines the fundamental category in the ontology of Camus—participation. It may be useful to recall the keen interest that Camus had in Plotinus in his youth. Camus' experience is the inverse of the 'nausea' of Sartre, which results from the two-fold feeling of an extreme dualism between subject and object, an absolute separation between consciousness and nature—and the impotent negation of *being* by man, who attempts symbolically to 'reject' a world by which he has himself been rejected. In Sartre we may see a Cartesianism without God; in Camus a Bergsonism without teleology. If life no longer has a reassuring upward movement, it still has impetus; if it has lost its finality, it has, so to speak, retained its vitality. The body is the meeting place for the happy encounter, the 'honeymoon' of man and nature. If the union of body and spirit presented the problem of a disturbing promiscuity—a question which had already troubled Descartes—who had to have recourse to God to explain it—we shall not be surprised if, for Sartre, deprived of this means of superseding contradictions, incarnation is 'compromising' and the body 'soft', 'lukewarm' and 'viscous.' This body—which a philosophic operation had attempted to cut in half and then reconstitute—the 'my body' to the consciousness and 'another body' in fact—resists the operation and its living unity

is an ontological scandal.² In descriptions by Sartre, sexual intercourse always has a dirty and ambiguous character, because it confronts us with the fact of communication and of vital communion, an interpenetration between the consciousness and the outside world which philosophy reveals to be impossible. Literature must then fly to the rescue of philosophy, then the 'vital essence' will find its expression in obscenity, an effort at linguistic transcendence, emphasizing the fact of incarnation in order the better to discredit it. Beyond this, a character of Sartre will attempt to go beyond the bounds of nature in an 'anti-nature', and to deny sexuality by homosexuality—hence his fascination with homosexual themes. Sometimes, as in the case of the liaison between Roquentin and the woman who runs the Railwayman's saloon, the emotional force of their coupling fizzles out in boredom.

In the solar universe of Camus, on the contrary, the muscular indolence and physical harmony of the body reigns unchallenged. Animal spirits are assumed in all their fullness. This is far from constituting a retreat into oneself and into hedonistic self-enjoyment. ('Pleasure with oneself alone is impossible'—*L'Envers et l'endroit*, preface). If the body is the privileged location for joy, it is because it is the place of harmony; it is because union consists also of unison. Physical love brings beings together, on the very ground of *being*; amorous intercourse stands as the symbol for a still deeper intercourse. It is while he is swimming that Meursault realizes his love for Marie: 'The water was cold and I was happy to be swimming. We swam a long way out, Marie and I, side by side, and it was pleasant feeling how our movements matched, hers and mine, and how we were both in the same mood, enjoying every moment.' It is no accident either that

Meursault's love for his mother, far from being an inherent and permanent emotion, as required by those psychological myths which are only masked forms of morality, always arises on the occasion of a sudden perception: 'I looked at the countryside, and the long lines of cypresses sloping up towards the skyline and the hills, the hot red soil dappled with vivid green—and I could understand mother's feelings'. This spontaneous identification of the earth and his mother defines Meursault's Cybelian mode of existence, as he plunges down into the tellurian sources of his being, Meursault for whom all love, in the phrase of the poet Claude Vigée, is 'a happy incest'.

It is easy to see the effect upon ethics of such an ontology. Vital participation constitutes both a fact and a value. We can disguise the fact from others and from ourselves; the advent of value consists precisely in unmasking it. In this connection we should note that Meursault's famous 'awakening' at the end of *L'Etranger* and his adherence to a moral life do not at all consist of a rejection of his past 'animality' or his physical mode of existence. It is a momentary adherence and adhesion to the world as it exists and to a succession of sensations, faithful to the here and now, opposed to all efforts of society to establish a continuous time and a logical world. On the contrary, the imminence of death serves to make explicit the values which had hitherto only been implied. A life which is arbitrarily limited and abruptly terminated is not retrospectively stricken with absurdity as it is for Pablo in *Le Mur* ('Death brought disillusion with everything... if someone had come to tell me that I could peacefully go back home again, it would have left me cold. A few hours or a few years of waiting is all the same when one has lost the illusion of being immortal. I no longer cared about anything. In a sense, I was calm'). Meursault on the other hand has this to say: 'I was always the one who was dying, either now or twenty years from now. At this moment what disturbed me a little in my thinking

² The philosophy of Merleau-Ponty proposes to set up housekeeping in the very heart of this scandal. His philosophy consists essentially in the reintroduction of the 'vital essence', in the context of existentialist categories.

was the terrible start I felt within myself at the thought of the twenty years of life to come.' Life, threatened with annihilation, tends to grow more concentrated, achieves an awareness of itself and proclaims itself as the unique value. 'I was ready to live everything over again.' Far from making life absurd, death is what gives it its full meaning. Thus it is that life recovers and incorporates death into itself and achieves a triumph even in its defeat, since the denial is only a further form of affirmation. In Cybele, Apollo and Hades are reconciled. 'Presently, when I throw myself down to commune with the *green goddess* (absinthe) and let her essence infiltrate my body, I shall have the sense of achieving a truth which is that of the sun and will also be that of my death.' (*Noces*). This of course suppresses neither the reality nor the horror of death, for it does not manifest itself only at the end of life but even in its prime, when it is known as suffering. In one sense the problem for Meursault was presented too simply, too sharply. His splendid animality will be destroyed, but its integrity will not be impaired. He is a husky fellow, and he will die, but he will not suffer.

In *The Plague* (*La Peste*) we proceed from death in good health to death in sickness. A great deal of pus will be mixed with the 'absinthe' of *Noces*, which is also found at the end of *L'Etranger* ('the odors of the night, of the earth were refreshing to me, the wonderful peace of this drowsy summer entered into me like a flood tide ...'). The flesh does not only perish, it decomposes. It does not only decompose after death, but during one's life. Life and death are not simply opposed, they interpenetrate one another. The problem thus becomes more painful and complex, but it remains fundamentally unchanged. This is revealed in the significant episode in *The Plague*, towards the end of the book, at the conclusion of the long fight against the Plague and the long conversation between Rieux and Tarrou which is summed up as follows: 'Do you know,' he asked, 'what

we ought to do for the sake of friendship?' 'Whatever you like,' said Rieux. 'We ought to go swimming. That's a worthy pleasure, even for a future saint.' Like the love of Meursault and Marie, the friendship between the two men rediscovers its basic truth on contact with the water, as they swim 'to the same rhythm'. '...for a few minutes they went along at the same cadence and with the same vigor, alone, far from the world, freed at last from the city and from the Plague.' Even at the beginning of his story, the narrator was already speaking of 'that outside world which can always save everything.' It is in this, rather than in some of his outbursts of stoicism, that the basic intuition of Camus' ethical system resides.

If this analysis is correct it should help us remove a double burden which is now imposed both on the work and the personality of Camus. The first aspect of this is the famous 'heroism' in which it is sometimes claimed that his message can be summed up. Like every error, this contains a degree of truth. A certain rejection of emotion, a certain stiffening in the face of destiny, often expressed in severity of style and a constant quest for the lapidary phrase, discloses what amounts to the temptation of heroism. It might be called the "Tarrou" side of Camus. "'On the whole,' said Tarrou simply, 'what interests me is to know how to become a saint.'" This was also obviously interesting to Camus as well. But only in his moments of weakness, when his standards let down Rieux, who after all is the narrator in the book and who survives while Tarrou dies, replies to his friend, his alter ego, 'I don't believe I have a taste for heroism and saintliness. What interests me is just to be a man. We are after the same thing, but I'm less ambitious.' It is easy enough to understand why heroism is a relatively easy solution, calling for the least effort. As all the characters in *La Condition Humaine* (Man's Fate) have very well demonstrated, heroism is essentially a retreat into oneself, an attempt

to pull oneself together and recover self-possession in the face of death. The disdain which Kyo attributes to Chen, 'for everything that did not lead to the moment that would join him to himself in a dizzy embrace' is true of all the other characters. The vertigo resulting from this self possession is that of omnipotence, of a symbolic effort to 'be God' while still being oneself. The hero, classic or modern, always stands in a circle gazing at himself, and his only concern is to close the circle in an attempt to achieve absolute integrity. Camus' approach is exactly the opposite. At the end of *L'Homme révolté* he writes that 'in order to be a man one must refuse to be God.' If he thus breaks with the ultimate aim of heroism, it is because his thought is not a morality of closed circles, but is aimed at defining a morality of openness to the world and to other people, a morality of participation.

There is a certain form of participation which goes under the name of enjoyment. People speaking of Camus have often referred to Gide, and have reproached him for his supposed kinship with the apostle of hedonism in a period of engagement. This again is a question of one of the temptations confronting Camus—for who is without temptation?—but it is incompatible with the basic direction of his thinking, with his 'existential purpose.' 'Solitary pleasure is impossible, I know it, despite the great gifts I have in this direction.' (Preface to *L'Envers et l'endroit*). If it is impossible, it is not due to any abstract morality but because the very nature of the body is to turn toward the outside world and accommodate to it. Similarities with Gide in language or in thought—sensation, the present moment, light, the sun, countrysides, etc.,—are only superficial. In the case of Gide, these only constitute various forms of 'the fruits of the earth' in the plural. This plural is important. 'Nathanael, I shall speak to you of moments... I expect many things from you! Desires have their value...' The travels of Ménalque take him to many countries, and he at-

tempts to visit all cities and all climates, from the Sahara to Normandy, from Florence to the Hague. When he turns to the world of knowledge he must know everything, all the sciences, history, biology, languages, literatures, etc.

If we insist on availing ourselves of the catch-all categories of our time, this amounts to a 'bourgeois' enjoyment, the enjoyment of appropriation, of accumulation. Mobility ('Fortunate the one who is held down by nothing on earth and who carries with him an everlasting fervor in all his continuous moving about') independence ('Every new thing should find us completely footloose') which in Gide would seem to indicate a desire to preserve an absolute and autonomous attitude in the face of the world—detached in a way by the very number of its attachments—are only optical illusions. Gide's whole approach is really aimed exclusively at possession of the world. 'Hence there comes over me a little of that aversion for any earthly possession, the fear that presently I may possess nothing else.' In *Les Nourritures terrestres*, it is only a question of 'enjoying', of satisfying one's desires. Of the three existential categories of *doing*, *having* and *being*, *having* is the one which defines Gide's purpose in dealing with the world. The various 'precepts,' moral or otherwise, merely represent a variety of techniques, all directed towards the same end.

There is none of this in Camus. In contrast to a variety of experiences, we find a fidelity to the same experience, endlessly repeated. In contrast to Gide's varied backgrounds, and his numerous amatory peregrinations, 'from flower to flower, from object to object' as La Fontaine would have put it, stands the essential poverty of Camus' natural imagery. Forever and again we have the ruins of Tipasa, the sun on the rocks or on the sea, always the Mediterranean. When he leaves these scenes, for Prague or various Nordic cities, Camus seems bewildered and lost. While Gide's world is plural, that of Camus is singular,

His experience with the sun is an experience of deprivation and destitution. His relation to the world, one might say, is 'proletarian'—that of one who owns nothing, and one whose relation to objects is never presented in terms of *having*. Camus' category is that of *being*, and this brings us back again by another route to our earlier analysis of the vital essence. The only pleasure is in rejoicing in common, in other words, in participation.

With heroism and hedonism rejected, rather for the sake of ontology than of morality, or, if one prefers, with the category of *having* eliminated, either in the sense of possessing oneself or the world, a fundamental problem remains to be solved in Camus' ethical system: the relation between *being* and *doing*. This is the very heart of the dispute between Camus and existentialism, over which so much ink has flowed during the past decade. It is easy to follow the evolution of Sartre from *La Nausée* to *Mains sales*. All ontological solutions are barred. If consciousness is the malady of *being* and if the *for oneself* ('Pour-soi') exists only as a negation endlessly repeated of the *in oneself* ('en-soi') and if the human undertaking which underlies all the others is to achieve the contradictory category of the *in oneself—for oneself*—in other words, if, as Malraux had already stated in *La Condition Humaine*, the dream of man is to be God, any attitude which seeks safety in *being* is necessarily doomed to defeat. Bad faith, which the whole body of Sartre's work exists to ferret out and track down in all its forms is nothing more nor less than man's despairing effort to give his existence the consistency of *being*, to force himself into *being*—through the symbolic possession of the world, through the eyes of other people, etc. It follows from this that man is an 'idle passion.' The authentic category of *doing* is opposed to that of *being* and offers the only possible chance for safety, the only real means for transcending absurdity. 'Life has no meaning, *a priori*... but it is up to you to give it a meaning.'

(*L'Existentialisme est un humanisme*.) The important word here is *give*. Bad faith has the chance of insinuating itself into the manner in which one 'gives meaning' just as long as this meaning remains a matter of intent, of symbolism. One can only give meaning to one's life by one's acts or, more precisely by one's actions, that is to say, but a manner of acting which does not presume to be an end in itself (otherwise one would collapse again into the heroism denounced in *Les Mouches*).

This manner of acting must be directed toward an objective transformation of the world. Since the specific arena in which man encounters the world is history, the existentialist morality of *doing* must be a morality of historic action, directed entirely toward the future. As Sartre puts it, 'the existentialist will never take man as an end, for man must always be created' (*Les Mouches*). Simone De Beauvoir has this to say, 'It is in the light of the future which is the meaning and the very substance of action, that a choice becomes possible' (*Pour un morale de l'ambiguïté*). The author herself states the consequences of such an attitude: 'One will sacrifice the men of today for those of tomorrow because the present appears like a sham which must be transcended to achieve liberty.' In this connection, every word and every effort in Camus' morality is aimed to slam shut this door so dangerously opened upon the sacrifice of living men for men to come; to rehabilitate the inalienable value of the present, in the face of the future.

'This reasoning regards life as the only necessary possession...' (*L'Homme révolté*). The ethical systems of Sartre and Camus are both what might be called 'one-dimensional systems, the former resting entirely on the idea of liberty and the latter on the concept of life. It is certainly no accident that we have pursued this parallel throughout the present article, or rather that we have been pursued by it. This perpetual confrontation—which we encounter in all of our thoughts and in all of our

actions—is only one more illustration of the need for our epoch to redefine itself completely. 'The era of fundamentals is beginning again,' as Malraux said even earlier, and despite the complexity of our problems, the fundamental choices are simple ones. An ethics of freedom, oriented exclusively toward *doing* is an ethics of dereliction, of a radical separation between man and the world, one in which the world becomes acceptable only to the degree that it is transformed by man. Hence the value attached by Sartre to man-made objects, to his detailed analyses of utensils and tools and the relations between such objects, whereas the bare sight and the handling of a pulley at the seashore gives Rocquentin a fit of 'nausea.' It is easy to see the dangers in such an existentialist position: By refusing all communion with what is here and now, one abolishes the present for the sake of a world transformed, a world that has been 'acted upon,' the world of the future. Cutting off man from *being*, imprisoning him within humanity and refusing humanity the status of *being*, tends to put existence on a see-saw, and, so to speak, to throw it off balance.

Such philosophers as Merleau-Ponty have proposed to rescue man from this impasse and reestablish him on his ontological pedestal. This is what Camus does for morality. To make salvation depend only upon the category of *doing* means postponing indefinitely the justification of the action and putting man at the mercy of history. In her systematic attempt to define an existentialist morality, Simone de Beauvoir recognized the danger of confusion in dealing with these long-deferred objectives: 'The end only justifies the means if it exists in the present, if it is completely disclosed in the course of the undertaking.' (*Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté*). Yet, in the absence of any land-

mark, of any permanent criterion, or an absolute value, or, more exactly, in the absence of any other absolute value than freedom, existential philosophy finds itself in a state of oscillation, forever swinging back and forth between ends and means. 'It is no more possible to judge the means without the end which gives it meaning than it is to separate the end from the means which define it.' But—what is the source of the meaning and of the definition? The world, beneath its humanized surface, is meaningless. We are told that man cannot be regarded as an end, for man is always to be created. So long as both literary research and theoretical analysis of conduct towards others disclose that 'hell consists of other people' and that 'man is man's enemy number one,' and so long as we are unable to blame this on any particular political regime, since it derives from an irreparable ontological situation, a veritable axiom of the condition of man, a condition which cannot progress, we can understand all the better the refusal to accept man as an end in himself.

Freedom would then remain as the supreme end. But, since freedom is a fact (it is impossible not to be free; we are condemned to be free) and since it is consequently different from a value which has to be brought into being, we can suppose that there are objectives *for* freedom to achieve but that freedom itself cannot be an objective. We must not, in all honesty, confuse freedom with liberation. The chained slave is free, as the theoretician of *l'Etre et le néant* and Orestes in *Les Mouches*³ understand perfectly well. If he wishes to be liberated, this is because he wants to restore his status in the world's activities, because he wants to *live*.

Another value is discernible which freedom is no better able to define. It is not sufficient to enclose man within his own being and to say, along with Simone de Beauvoir, that man's problem is 'to pursue the expansion of his being, and to accept as an absolute the effort of doing so.' In another form, we fall again into the vicious

³ Jupiter: If you dare to claim that you are free, then you will have to boast of the freedom of the prisoner, laden with chains and lying in a dungeon, of the freedom of the crucified slave.

Orestes: Why not?

circle of heroism. Human activity requires man to open himself up to the world, to give himself to the world, to rediscover his origins, to live in the sunlight. Simone de Beauvoir expresses this admirably herself when she writes: 'Wishing to see man free means wanting him to *be* wanting to see the development of his being in the joy of living... It is only by filling itself in and taking solid form, in terms of pleasure, in terms of happiness, that the movement toward freedom acquires reality in the world... If we do not love life for ourselves, in harmony with others, it is useless to attempt to justify life.'

All of Camus' work has the same thing to say. Yet, we may still wonder how compatible such an existential attitude is with the existentialist attitude; how the development of man can take place joyfully if the basic experience of man is defined in terms of nausea; how it is possible to wish that he *be* while presenting consciousness as the very negation of being. To move in the direction of happiness, toward an unconditional love of life, is the solid basis for any system of morality, but in this case we must change our ontological scheme. This morality of ambiguity has almost surreptitiously been passed on from Sartre to Camus. In our desire to provide a sound foundation for this system of morality, we must go back to the assertion of Camus that freedom opens out upon life, and the morality of existence upon the morality of being.

At this point we have one of the most interesting of Camus' verities. The affirmative triumphs over the negative: 'I realized that at the very core of my revolt, acceptance was implicit... How was it possible to reconcile this harmony between love and revolt?' (*Noces*). It is at this very moment that a reverse movement begins. Revolt is contemporaneous with consent, and the two affirm one another, in a contradictory equilibrium. In other words, we have certainly not arrived at one of those philosophical 'principles' which would enable us in all tranquility to 'deduce' an ethical sys-

tem, an axiom from which laws and precepts would flow naturally, as in the good old days of rationalism. No sooner does the 'yes' present itself, than the 'no' arises to dispute it. 'Man is the only creature who refuses to be what he is.' (*L'Homme révolté*). There is horror and injustice, in the world, among others, and in ourselves. So it is that we find, in a simultaneous 'yes' and 'no', a dialectic of opposition, of lacerating contradiction, which it is impossible to avoid. The well known 'idea of limits' has only this purpose: to provide for the affirmation of life, without arriving at a total negation of the world. Recognition of the vital essence has its dangers, and Camus was well aware of them. Nietzsche recognized the same problem and fell into the trap of his 'Superman' and the theory of biological expansionism, which fell into other hands, with results which are familiar to us. Life may be mortal and the sun may kill, as Meursault found out when he fired, without reason, at the Arab: 'My eyes were blind behind that curtain of salty tears. I could feel nothing any longer but the beating of the sun on my brow.' The pure and simple submission to vital values, without the counterbalance of moral revolt, leads to the destruction of those values. This is why Celine found it impossible to escape from nihilism solely through his attachment to life. Vitalism escapes from nihilism only on the condition that life consents to sacrifice itself—that is to say that it does not confuse itself with the individual but transcends itself towards the universal. 'In the absurdity of experience, suffering is individual. Beginning with the movement of revolt, it is conscious of being collective and it becomes the common adventure for everyone... I revolt, therefore we are.' (*L'Homme révolté*). It is the same progression, from Celine to Camus, and from *L'Etranger* to *La Peste*.

One may venture to say that an ethic of action is superimposed upon the morality of *being*. In our time, this is the delicate point, the touchstone of the doctrine itself. Camus' action must remain true to

its double origin, the austere 'no' and the 'yes', ready to 'change life, but not the world.' Divided in its origin, it is necessarily tortured. Since it renounces the attainment of an absolute, which can only be found on the level of *being*, it is necessarily imperfect. 'Misery forbade me to believe that everything under the sun, and everything in history is good; the sun taught me that history is not everything.' Critics have often complained that Camus rejects history, simply because he does not accept it as an exclusive thing in itself. The fact that he placed it in a larger ontological context does not mean that he replaced it. However, at a time when history has become the only dimension for the human drama to so many people, Camus restored another dimension, underlying history, a dimension without which there would be no history.

In the course of their polemic, Sartre reproached Camus for engaging human values in 'the struggle of man against heaven' and thus forgetting the concrete historic conditions for action. It is indeed true that *La Peste* presents a situation which is in one sense idyllic, in which men are united in fighting an inhuman force. This book, on the other hand, is an allegory and must be understood as such. It does not deny history but derives from history its ultimate meaning. In ordinary circumstances, if man can and must also—and even primarily—fight against man, he does so only to the extent that man makes himself a scourge and assumes the role of plague. The oppressed says to the oppressor, 'Get out of my light.' Action for Camus can never be a merely pragmatic operation; it never offers salvation in itself and it is at no time a circular movement. However necessary, it is always deceptive and indeed mystifying, if it is not firmly rooted in the present, in life itself. This idea was well expressed by Simone de Beauvoir when she wrote, 'If the pleasure that an old man has in drinking a glass of wine counts for nothing, then all production and

all wealth are only empty myths.' To use the words of the poet Francis Ponge often quoted by existentialists, man is not 'the future of man,' for he lives in the present.

From this Camusian morality, often presented to us as being so ethereal, flow practical and immediate consequences: 'I would have begged that the terrible pain of men be alleviated *right now*'. (*Actuelles*) No recourse to the realm of ultimate ends, of the future, could justify the present onslaught against life, the inalienable value. It is in this respect that a morality of *being* is irreconcilably opposed to moralities of *doing*, and it is here that Camus parts company with existentialism and with Marxism. Camus never denied that under certain exceptional circumstances violence should be a weapon, but he has always refused to grant that it be a policy. Perhaps this is a simple distinction, but for millions of human beings it is a vital one. This is undoubtedly the sense in which Camus has been the conscience of our time, crying in the desert what Ionesco made plain in *Tueur sans gages*—that we cannot build the 'radiant city' and remodel man contrary to nature, without immediately calling forth The Killer.

One may object that it's all very easy to be a conscience, and this is obviously the problem of clean hands and of dirty hands. On a theoretical level, this problem is insoluble, since both clean and dirty hands may be equally acceptable. But one may ask, how is the progression from *l'Etranger* to *La Peste*, from subjective vegetating to the 'we are,' expressed in practical terms? Camus offers us an ontology. It remains for us to define a practical morality, in other words, a policy. It would be completely useless to set up an "Algerian" morality, for example, which would not begin by concerning itself with Algeria. How will the 'yes' and 'no' be balanced in this field? 'This is a matter, on the whole, of defining the conditions for a modest policy, that is to say, one which is free of all messianism and of any nostalgia for an earthly paradise.' (*Actuelles*) It appears then that

the morality of moderation will lead to a policy of moderation. When Camus writes, 'There is only one more thing to try, the simple, middle-of-the-way course of honesty without illusions, of wise loyalty,' we are a little surprised to find Alceste suddenly beginning to express himself like Philinte. This kind of wisdom may seem limited and rather disappointing, but we have to realize that there is no moral or political attitude which has no dangers. If the dangers of absolutism in action and in history are only too obvious in our time; if what Camus calls the nihilism of efficiency at all costs clearly shows its inhuman consequences, the inverse dangers are those of abstention and inaction. This is a real danger, and there is no ready-made formula for escaping it. The middle way, as well as the royal road, may lead to disaster, but it offers our civilization better chances for survival, for we know well enough where the other course leads.

This is not the place to discuss either the engagements or the disengagements of Camus as an individual, but it is right to note that he was ready to risk his own skin whenever the occasion required. We may also note that his reserve verged closely upon withdrawal. On the other hand he never pretended to provide living examples of his ideas nor to set himself up as a model. However passionately he sought for a morality, he never posed as a moralist, and he was always conscious of his own weaknesses as his preface to *L'Invers et l'endroit* sufficiently demonstrates. In *La Chute* he gives short shrift to those teachers of virtue who set themselves up as judges. To those who insist upon a completely coherent, satisfying and clearly formulated ethical and political doctrine—to systematic souls, organizers and administrators—we can only say that Camus, like the prettiest girl in the world, can only give what he has to give.

He has had a certain happy experience of being, in contradiction to that reported by contemporary philosophies, an experience which appears to him to be funda-

mental. He communicates it to us. He sees around him and he sees in history the consequences of drastic upheaval—and reports them to us. This thinker, who is not a philosopher, sees certain verities as if by instinct. These verities had escaped the attention of minds which were dialectically better trained than his, but which could not or did not wish to draw all the necessary conclusions. Inexorably, monotonously he reminds us of these consequences. He rediscovers the values of life and happiness, lost in the tumult and terror of our times. At one and the same time, he places happiness, in other words the reconciliation of man with nature, on a higher plane than morality and chastises the apathy of his own nature in the name of morality, shattering the solitude which separates man from his kind. 'Rieux straightened up and said firmly that he was not at all ashamed of choosing happiness. 'Yes,' said Rambert, 'but it is possible to be ashamed of being happy all alone.'

There is an existential tension in this which no theoretical formulation and no dialectical process can possibly resolve; all we have are the two ends of a chain pulling in opposite directions to which we must cling with all our strength. Camus' sense of 'measure' is the exact opposite of a comfortable, mediocre 'moderation.' It is composed of everlasting and painful effort. Real contact between man and his fellows is not granted, but must be gained in a conquest of banality and routine. Obstinate determination to hang on to the present is no easy trick for those who realize how easy it is to seek their justification in the future or in the past. It is the only way to live and to remain in full contact with life. Basically, these disconnected but powerfully stated and reiterated intuitions of Camus, once they have been understood, reveal less of what one ought to do than they of what one cannot do. One simply cannot be a hero, a sensualist, or a judge—and this is the meaning of his opposition to Malraux, Gide and Sartre.

Camus' work does not constitute a system

of morality, but it does, in a sense constitute a kind of 'preface for all future morality.' And for all future politics, we may add. This is what Claude Bourdet realized in the conclusion of his article entitled, 'Camus, Or Clean Hands.': 'Let the time come when France, despite the spirits from another world which haunt it today takes the path toward socialism...then perhaps the warnings by Camus against the debasement of the revolution will be useful to those who have to face these threats....' Let us leave at least some connection between man and a sombre existence. These are the warnings, so often despairing, the cries of 'danger ahead!' which he addressed to our age, the cries of a poet which resound in the ivory towers of the philosophers and in the meeting places of the chatterboxes. Even if they lack logical coherence, a quality so often illusory and superficial, such warning cries have their own internal cohesion, born of an unshakeable certitude. The analyst prospecting this ground does not discover a mine of ideas but a live gusher bursting forth. This is the source to which we must return to refresh our minds. I believe it

is this which constitutes all of morality for Camus. It is an *existential* morality in the full sense of the term if it is anything at all, or it is an anti-morality, pledged to the destruction of man. There is no formula, no discursive mental effort which can relieve us of the need to undergo experience ourselves, within ourselves. The human being, even though he is inter-dependent, is a solitary creature. In our time, *there* is a truth which it is hard to justify. Camus is neither the man in the street nor the faceless man in the crowd. He is the man in the sunshine on the bare and deserted rock, but a man who knows that he must go back into the city when the plague strikes. He is the man who was able to say, 'my passions have never been directed *'against'...*'; who never forgets in the midst of the struggle and apart from the struggle that he has reason to love his fellow beings. This kind of sun, this kind of understanding is not such a great thing in the eyes of empire builders and the designers of philosophic systems. Yet, if this is neglected, our epoch is racing to destruction, and man is done for if he ever forgets, in the face of all evil and suffering, to love this creation without a creator.

One Among Many - The Homosexual

By NEELA D'SOUZA

ONE in every twenty-five men is a homosexual. Surprised? Of course; for this means that there are 16 million of them in India alone. Think of it! Four or five cities like Bombay containing only homosexuals. One can hardly believe it. If you are sceptical, look up Dr. Kinsey's report in which he cites these figures. Although they relate to the U.S.A. they are true of other countries also. In a recent debate in the House of Commons, similar figures were quoted in relation to Great Britain. Studies of homosexuality carried out in other countries like Germany all point to approximately the same proportion. So that nearly all of us, whether we realize it or not, have one or more homosexuals among our acquaintances.

How well do we know ourselves? Deep within us lie attitudes and urges which would surprise us if we knew of their existence. According to the psycho-analytic school the tendency toward homosexuality is universal. Every one of us passes through a homosexual phase, varying of course in degree and intensity from person to person.

What exactly is homosexuality? In simple terms, it is a sexual preference for one's own sex. How is it caused? This is a question to which there is no clear or definite answer yet. One theory claims that in the course of our adolescence there is a period in which attraction to both sexes is about equal; it is during this time that one's sexual preference is decided by chance.

Donald West, an authority on this subject, believes that homosexual tendencies are part of our natural, biological make-up. We are not born with an instinctive preference for the opposite sex. This is a trait that we acquire and it involves the repres-

sion of a certain amount of homosexual feeling which is natural to the human being. Freud wrote: 'Freedom to range equally over male and female objects—as is found in childhood, in primitive states of society and early periods of history—is the original basis from which as a result of restriction in one direction or another, both the normal and inverted types develop.'

The conditions under which a child grows up may also influence its sex preferences. A boy who moulds himself more after his mother or a girl who turns excessively to her father may grow into a homosexual. This is not an established cause—just a *possibility*. But studies of male homosexuality have repeatedly found a dominant, possessive mother and an intense mother-son attachment in the background. Combined with this may be factors like timidity, shyness and fears of the opposite sex, an inferiority complex and social awkwardness. In fact, Clifford Allen, another authority in this field, says decisively on the basis of his clinical experience that an abnormal childhood and upbringing 'is the one sure fact we know about homosexuality.'

Many people believe that homosexuality results from childhood or adolescent experiences in which a young person is seduced by an older person of the same sex. This, at any rate, is often the excuse given by persons accused of homosexual offences. This is perhaps as valid as a plea that a person fell into the habit of theft from having his school books stolen as a child.

Really, medical science today knows just enough to say what homosexuality is—a deviation from the usual. I would not use the word 'normal', still less refer to the

condition as one of abnormality, because of the suggestions of approval or disapproval that these words convey.

One of the children I knew in school liked castor-oil spread on toast instead of jam, which the rest of us loved. We regarded him with horror, but didn't dub him a 'pervert' or a 'queer' because of that. Nobody thought of ostracizing him; in fact he was one of the most popular boys in the school. The homosexual is no more nor less than a person with an unusual taste. Perhaps you could call it an adolescent taste, for one school of psychology believes that homosexuality is essentially a failure to grow up. Let me put it this way. The fact that a person has homosexual impulses may only show that he has failed to develop the strong inhibitions that we, the majority, have.

Some external factors are also responsible for homosexuality. When the sexes are segregated and boys find themselves practically cut off from feminine company—in boarding schools, for example—they sometimes turn to homosexuality. In societies where young men do not have very many opportunities for social contact with girls of similar background they often seek an outlet in homosexual activities. The Union of South Africa uses black labour to work its mines and herds the workers together in compounds. As these workers are not allowed to bring their families here, the compounds prove a fertile ground for homosexual behaviour.

Is the practice of homosexuality a symptom of the decadence of modern civilization? Let me answer the second part of this question first. Homosexuality is not peculiar to modern civilization—far from it. It is as old as mankind and has been known from the earliest times. The Old Testament relates how the wrath of God fell upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their practice of sex perversions.

Anthropology tells us that homosexuality was practiced in various tribes and communities. In certain tribes in New Guinea and Australia, young men have to go

through a period of homosexual relations before they are accepted as full-fledged members of their society. Some communities (several American Indian tribes, for instance) have a recognized class of men, variously called *berdaches* or *alyhas*, who are intermediate between men and women in social status. Ruth Benedict in *Patterns of Culture* says that they are often regarded as exceptionally able.

In Africa there are tribes that encourage their young people to indulge in homosexual relations so as to gain experience in love-making. Others, like the Basutos of South Africa, have 'circumcision schools' where young boys are sent at puberty and are initiated by an older man into the 'art of love.'

Not all communities, however, tolerate homosexuality. Malinowski records that the Trobriand Islanders are contemptuous of these practices. In ancient India it was considered a dreadful sin, and a man who practiced homosexuality would lose his caste. Punishments like whipping and mutilation were also prescribed. The Incas were ferocious in their vengeance, and punished not only the offender but also his family and destroyed his home and property.

In advanced civilizations homosexuality assumed a different light. Classical Greece idealized homosexuality as the highest and noblest of passions. This love, however, existed on an emotional and spiritual plane, was elevating and refining in its influence and expressed itself in fine sentiments rather than physical passion. But in Roman times homosexuality degenerated into a 'luxurious vice' to be practised with other orgies.

The Arabs of North Africa are well-known for their homosexual tendencies. Gide writes of his adventures with Muslim youths in Algiers in his autobiography. Gunther in *Inside Africa* describes homosexuality as 'one of the worst Arab traits.' He reasons that this may be due to the shortage of women—polygamy allowing four wives for a man—and also because

they observe purdah, Arab youths seldom have an opportunity to meet girls socially and so turn to homosexual activities.

In Elizabethan literature homosexual allusions are frequent. And nearer our times we find these practices were widespread in England. During the 1890s in the city of London alone, over 20,000 people were known to the police for this reason.

So homosexuality has quite a history behind it. And attitudes toward it have varied from indifference and encouragement to aversion and contempt.

But we have still to answer the question whether homosexuality is a sign of decadence. It can be—if it is dragged down to the level of debauchery, and that too on a large scale. But this would apply equally to fornication, alcoholism and the like. In ancient times the primary need of a society was to multiply. Man's most important duty was to breed and this was a responsibility that could not be taken lightly. In this perhaps we can find the reason behind the fierce and repressive attitude toward homosexuality in early history—from which we derive our own attitudes of horror and aversion. We shall have to free ourselves from these deep-rooted prejudices and inform ourselves thoroughly and intelligently before we pass any judgment on homosexuality.



In the late '20s Radclyff Hall published a book that immediately raised a controversy in England. It was hailed by some, condemned as immoral and bad by others. This book, *The Well of Loneliness*, is a fine and courageous piece of work and tells with understanding and perception the story of a homosexual girl. Here you read—and this is not fiction, for the book is partly autobiographical—of the social pressures these people are subjected to by a cruel society.

Radclyff Hall's experience with her book bears this out. A campaign was conducted against it and although one writer describes

it as 'one of the most austere moral works ever written', it was banished from the shelves of the respectable and degraded to the level of shady, pornographic bookshops. At the request of the Home Secretary, *The Well of Loneliness* was withdrawn from circulation and a magistrate ordered copies of it to be burnt.

Havelock Ellis in his introduction to *The Well of Loneliness* writes: 'The relation of certain people—who, while different from their fellow human beings, are sometimes of the highest character and finest aptitudes—to the often hostile society in which they move, presents difficult and still unsolved problems.'

The tragic sequel to Oscar Wilde's brilliant career shows how far society can go in its cruelty and hostility to the homosexual. He was tried and imprisoned for this 'crime' and the scandal had far-reaching effects. Nearly everyone who had known him took fright. His children had to be withdrawn from school. When he was released on bail no hotel would put him up for the night. Hesketh Pearson in his biography of Wilde writes: 'He was punished by his spiritual and intellectual inferiors for what was itself a punishment, a mental malady that hurt no one but himself, and he was treated as a moral leper to the day of his death. At a word from some American or Englishman, bar-men would refuse to serve him drinks, restaurant proprietors would ask him to leave, hotel managers would turn him out, barbers would decline to shave him, respectable fathers would clutch their children to their sides as he passed by. Many men who had known all about his sexual oddity in the days of his success, and had been proud of his acquaintance then, now disowned him and either cut or avoided him...vicious little paragraphs about him appeared in the French press, and only the younger and more rebellious spirits were to be seen in his company.'

The righteous would maintain that homosexual practices degrade a person.

This is a narrow-minded and unfair view based, perhaps, on an observance of the few who fall into the hands of the police. The only aspect degrading about homosexuality is the furtiveness that accompanies it due to the fear of society and the law. If there were something degrading in it, would it have been possible for so many homosexuals, from the poetess Sappho in ancient Greece down to writers like Gide in modern times, to attain eminence in art and literature? Let me quote Beverly Nichols on Radclyffe Hall: '(She) was a very virtuous woman. She was brave, honourable and deeply religious, and had it not been for that unfortunate accident of nature she might have ended up as a bishop or field marshal'.

Listen to Wilde defending homosexual love during his cross-examination: 'The "love that dare not speak its name" in this country is such a great affection of an elder for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan, such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare. It is that deep, spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect. It dictates and pervades great works of art like those of Shakespeare and Michelangelo and those two letters of mine, such as they are. It is in this century misunderstood, so much misunderstood that it may be described as the 'love that dare not speak its name', and on account of it I am placed where I am now. It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it. It is intellectual, and it repeatedly exists between an elder and a younger man, when the elder man has intellect, and the younger man has all the joy, hope and glamour of life before him. That it should be so the world does not understand. The world mocks at it, and sometimes puts one in the pillory for it'.

Society generally looks upon the homosexual as a criminal or dangerous monster. He is shunned by all 'right-minded' people. The very subject is taboo, a topic that

newspapers avoid and nice circles do not discuss. One American judge, while trying a man charged with these practices described homosexuals as 'wanton, all of them, young or old'.

What are homosexuals like? Do they conform to a type? They are ordinary human beings and are found everywhere, in all manner of occupations, in every level of society. The popular image of a male homosexual is a rather effeminate person, while a lesbian, we think, is a masculine, aggressive woman with a striding gait and deep voice. Neither view is wholly correct. There are homosexuals and homosexuals. There are some who do have feminine or masculine affectations, as the case may be, but the great majority of them are quite ordinary and live quietly and unobtrusively. Some of them show a temperamental leaning toward features generally associated with the opposite sex. And there are others who are 'normal' in every respect and display no distinguishing marks whatsoever.

Some of them drift into a society of their own composed of like-minded people. These groups meet together and afford some kind of protection against the disapproval of society, as they give the homosexual a sense of 'belonging'. Again, homosexual couples who live together like any married couple are not uncommon. But men, naturally promiscuous, often break up such partnerships. Women are prone to form lasting relationships.

It is a popular fallacy that homosexuality is particularly rampant among writers and in other 'arty' circles. This is not so. The reason why it is more evident among such people is that they are less inhibited than the rest of us and do not mind making it known that they practice homosexuality.

Plato wrote of homosexual love as a lofty sentiment that brought out the best in man:

'And if there were only some way of contriving that a state or army should be made up of lovers and their loves, they

would be the very best governors of their own city, abstaining from all dishonour, and emulating one another in honour, and when fighting at each other's side, although a mere handful, they would overcome the world. For what lover would not choose rather to be seen by all mankind than by his beloved, either when abandoning his post or throwing away his arms? He would be ready to die a thousand deaths rather than endure this. Or who would desert his beloved or fail him in the hour of dangers? The veriest coward would become an inspired hero, equal to the bravest, at such a time; Love would inspire him.*

(*Symposium*. Jowett translation.)

In ancient Greece it was a common practice for an older man to take a youth under his tutelage and act as his special friend and guide. This 'Platonic love', that experienced by a grown-up man toward a younger man is described in more modern times by Thomas Mann in his novel, *Death in Venice*.

Shakespeare's sonnets addressed to the mysterious Mr. W. H. have long been the subject of speculation for their apparent homosexual allusions. Oscar Wilde in his *Portrait of Mr. W. H.* puts forward a theory that the 'master-mistress' of Shakespeare's sonnets was a young actor named Willie Hughes who had inspired the poet to create some of his most beautiful female characters. 'In Wilde's opinion Plato dominated the Renaissance, and Shakespeare's sonnets expressed Platonic thought in modern form.'*

Gide, to whom I have already referred, writes frankly of his homosexual experiences in *If It Die*. His memoirs have achieved a certain amount of notoriety because of these passages, but *If It Die* is nevertheless looked upon as 'a profitable and revealing book' and recommended as indispensable for a study of this distinguished author.



Are homosexuals a menace to children?
This is a fairly common belief and leads people to urge their imprisonment. Authorities on the subject believe that there is no definite evidence to show that homosexuals are more prone than heterosexuals to molest children. In fact, West says decisively that the great majority of them have no interest in children at all. 'The homosexual who has accepted his condition philosophically and found an outlet with other adults is most unlikely either to interest himself in young boys or be tempted to interfere with them'. Homosexuals are interested in boys of 17 and 18, but this is no more amazing than the interest most men show in girls of that age.

Once we accept and understand that homosexuality is not something to be regarded with horror or aversion then we realize that it is unreasonable to look upon the homosexual as separate from the rest of us. He or she is just another human being, but living under a terrific strain because of social prejudices and ostracism.

All of us pass through a phase of homosexuality in the course of our adolescence. Most of us outgrow this stage — and proceed to persecute the minority who do not.

The legal attitude toward homosexuality varies from country to country. In Italy there are no provisions for the punishment of homosexual behaviour unless such acts are brought about by violence. France does not punish homosexual behaviour between consenting adult (over 21) partners if it does not offend public decency. Homosexuality is a social crime in Russia and is subject to severe punishment. In our country it is treated on a par with rape.

In England all homosexual offences are punishable by law. A few years ago Parliament set up a committee to look into this problem. In its report the committee made an important recommendation — that homosexual behaviour between consenting adult partners in private be placed outside the sphere of the law.

In arguing for this change in the law the Wolfenden Committee stresses the import-

**The Life of Oscar Wilde* by Hesketh Pearson.

ance that society and the law should give individual freedom of choice in matters of private morality. 'Unless a deliberate attempt is to be made by society, acting through the agency of the law, to equate the sphere of crime with that of sin, there must remain a realm of private morality and immorality which is, in brief and crude terms, not the law's business. To say this is not to condone or encourage private immorality. On the contrary, to emphasize the personal and private responsibility of the individual for his own actions, and that is a responsibility which a mature agent can properly be expected to carry for himself without the threat of punishment from the law'.

In relation to the law the Wolfenden Committee saw no distinction between homosexual behaviour and other illicit acts between persons of opposite sexes. However one might frown upon promiscuous love-making one does not seek to visit dire legal penalties on those who indulge in it. Why then single out homosexual acts for such severe censure? Of course, when sexual acts involve violence or force and the abuse of minors, they should be punishable — whether they be between persons of the same sex or of opposite sexes.

Although no legislation has resulted from the report, the Wolfenden Committee's work has not been in vain. It focused public attention on an important problem and won support from several quarters. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, several church groups, a large section of the press and the Oxford and Cambridge Unions all supported the Wolfenden proposals.

The views of Christian churches on this subject are interesting. They agree that homosexuality is a matter of morals but not of law, 'a sin perhaps, but not in itself a crime.' In its publication, *The Problem of Homosexuality*, the Church of England declares that homosexual indulgence is not usually as devastating in its third-party consequences as ordinary relations before

marriage or adultery. So the State, which does not interfere with private acts between consenting adults in the latter cases, should also refrain from doing so in the case of homosexuals.

And, historically at least, one prime reason for the punishment of crime is the reform of the criminal. Which brings us to an important point—

Can homosexuality be cured? This too is a question that cannot be answered absolutely. We shall have to wait for further research to throw more light on it. In discussing the problem of curing homosexuality we make the assumption, wrongly, that this is a disease. Imagine, trying to cure 4 lakhs of people in London, or 2 lakhs in Bombay of this 'disease'! It is like wanting to make all left-handed persons right-handed. Carrying the analogy a little further we might also recall that in earlier times — and to some extent in certain societies today — left-handedness was regarded with disfavour. The word sinister is derived from the Latin word for "left" (*sinistra*) and it is quite possible that a left-handed person was regarded as sinister. Probably mothers then made desperate efforts to correct a left-handed child. Now, of course, we recognize this as a whim of nature and do not bother to interfere with it.

Freud believed that the chances of curing the confirmed homosexual are slight. Clifford Allen is of the view that homosexuality is a neurosis and can be treated successfully. Psycho-analysts who follow his reasoning hold that it is possible to effect cures; but psycho-analysis is a long and costly process and may yield satisfactory results in only a few cases. For only certain types of homosexuals will respond to treatment — those who have irrational fears of the opposite sex, or who suffer from feelings of guilt and are disturbed over this trait. In their cases the psychiatrist can help them overcome their fears. On the other hand, a person who has practised homosexuality over a period of years, is happy in his love relations and

does not see anything abnormal in it, would be a very difficult case — one that the psycho-analyst would, perhaps, find impossible to convert.

Dr. Desmond Curran, a psychiatrist who served on the Wolfenden Committee, states that the chances of cure in confirmed cases are negligible and that the psychiatrist should concentrate on making the patient a better adjusted homosexual and not try to convert him to heterosexuality.

Treatment by hormones is possible and may have some value in that it reduces a man's sexual desires. But this is by no means a cure, for the patient will not be converted to heterosexuality — only his impulses will be less intense.

Here we must not overlook an important factor. The homosexual may not *want* to be cured. If he is a well-adjusted person, satisfied with his mode of life, he may see no reason why he should change. It is, of course, obvious that compulsion cannot be used to make the homosexual conform. All of which brings us to the conclusion that homosexuality cannot be eradicated entirely.

Throughout history the many have persecuted the few. Conformity has been enforced by rigorous social sanctions, frequently enacted into law. The deviant has always been regarded with suspicion, in matters ranging from religion to social conduct. He has been persecuted cruelly and without mercy.

Slowly these prejudices have been destroyed, often at the price of great human suffering. We have freed ourselves from many of our unreasonable attitudes and become more liberal in our outlook — this is inevitable with the progress of civilization. As one writer has put it; 'In the final analysis a society is civilized to the extent that it is tolerant. It is in the treatment of the awkward minority group that tolerance finds its yardstick.'

The homosexuals form one such an "awkward minority group". A group that we continue to persecute and punish because in matters of sex we are particularly intolerant of those who do not conform. Perhaps, as research and learning throw more and more light on the causes of homosexuality, we shall grow in understanding.

A Quick Look at South African Literature: Afrikaans

By JACK COPE

IT is 50 years since the Union of South Africa was established from the two British colonies and two former Boer republics, and whatever has become of the aspirations of the founders of the country, probably the least expected has been the rise and direction of an autonomous and often mature literature reaching out to world-wide validity and interest.

For various reasons creative South African writing has been, with few exceptions, in Afrikaans and English. At least eight other clearly defined languages are spoken and written in the country, including African and Indian tongues, but it is too early to speak of their literature in the larger sense. The African languages in written form, have hardly evolved beyond the class-room and churches and are still intricately attached to their oral traditions, while in the case of the Indians, most of the younger generation have adopted either English or Afrikaans, or both.

Afrikaans literature has closely followed the destiny of the Afrikaner nationality in defeat, subjection and eventual liberation and even triumph. Evolved by a people of Dutch, French and German origin, isolated among overwhelming numbers of black and coloured people and living a pastoral life, Afrikaans was largely despised and not recognised as a language 50 years ago. Efforts to establish written forms of Afrikaans had been going on for a generation, but it was only with the Second Language Movement after the Boer War (1899-1902) that it came into its own and in the hands of its first brilliant constellation of writers began to show its strength, adaptability and expressiveness as a modern language.

The publication in 1905 of 'Winternag' (Winter Night) a pure and startlingly ori-

ginal poem by Eugene Marais, is usually regarded as the dawn of a new era, heralding Afrikaans into the 20th Century world with its special needs and intensities and its emphasis on the individual man.

It must be remembered that the Afrikaners were at that time a defeated nationality, their pride, independence and sense of identity trampled upon by the British conqueror. Except for the ironical fact that their skins were white, their position was not much better than that of innumerable other national groups enjoying the doubtful benefits of the Pax Britannica.

In addition to Marais, the outstanding poets of the time were Leipoldt, Jan Celliers and Totius. In the three-years struggle of the Boer War the Afrikaners had undoubtedly impressed the world with their dour courage and fibre and such a passion for freedom that they had earned the sympathy of practically every people, including large sections of the British themselves. The new phase of persevering as a nation in the unheroic everyday life of politics and earning a living required new weapons, and these were provided by the early writers, mainly poets.

Their work is strongly romantic and lyrical, imbued with the virtues of bravery, endurance, intense faith and also humour. It is a sudden outburst in the humanist tradition and could be understood in any country. It gave the Afrikaners the first idealized picture of themselves and reflected in clear colours the unending variations of the country in which they lived. The identity denied to them by their conquerors they found in poetry.

By 1924 the Afrikaner national groups had achieved political power and the Afrikaans language was officially recognised.

Many things remained to be done to assert the fullness of national life. But the next broad period of Afrikaans literature from the 1930's until today is associated with the evolution of a ruling minority.

The prose of the earlier period is usually romantic or sentimental presenting scenes of country life or hunting without much attempt at insight or realism. Realistic prose writing is usually slow to develop in any young literature, the novel and short story being essentially the literary forms of the city, of the industrial community and the spread of literacy.

The transition of the Afrikaners from a farming community to the cities is to this day only partly accomplished. To most of them, the cities are still alien, dominated by British, Jewish, Indian and other interests in commerce, industry and finance. There is, perhaps, an unreality about a national group wielding almost unlimited political power and yet taking a minor place in the economic scene and with a culture continually under pressure from the powerful international currents conveyed in the English language through books, newspapers, films, plays, the radio and every other medium.

Basically for this reason, and from a complexity of other causes arising from the social scene, realistic prose has lagged far behind and even now, in 1960, is hardly at its beginning. To an outsider learning Afrikaans and studying its literature for the first time it would appear as if the writers deliberately shrank away from facing the truth of their own challenging situation. There are no outstanding social novels depicting life critically and faithfully and reflecting the enormously fascinating, tense and vital South African scene.

Instead, one finds the earlier efforts at romanticism carried forward into nostalgic stories contrasting the trials of city life with an idyllic and unreal countryside. Side by side with these are occasional 'problem' novels dealing with specific subjects such as poor-whitism or the social and sexual

mixing of the races, the so-called 'colour-problem.'

The best of these books, 'Ampie' by Joggem van Bruggen, drew attention to the impoverishment of a class of dispossessed Afrikaners. In its narrow scope it has force and actuality. Yet with the virtual disappearance of poor-whitism the novel is left stranded as a curious period-piece. It has insufficient creative power to carry it much beyond the validity of its own limited circumstances.

So far, the Afrikaner communities in the cities have not established to any important extent an autonomous urban life and hence a vigorous, inquiring and independent demand for books reflecting their interests and environment. It is usually the case even in great cities like Johannesburg and Cape Town that the Afrikaans communities group in outer suburbs, feeling a little uncomfortable and hankering after the veld. These suburbs have an atmosphere of the village; the church, politics, schools and business affairs are parochial. The demand for books and the pressure on publishers comes largely through the schools and the politically aligned Press. A critical social novel or short story has very little chance of success.

In the absence of a realistic school of writing two baffling phenomena have arisen. On the one hand, the serious and educated classes more and more turn to books in English. On the other, there has been a burgeoning of salacious and semi-pornographic books and magazines eagerly lapped up by the class of city workers in factories and offices.

Surveys by the library services in the Transvaal have shown that in typical country areas up to 95 per cent of Afrikaans readers take out books in English. The Cape Town Afrikaans publisher J. Human says: 'It is my contention that few Afrikaners read Afrikaans books today because the quality does not satisfy them.'

Alan Paton, outstanding English South African novelist, describes Afrikaans fiction as 'an infant that never grew up.' Search-

ing for reasons, he suggests that 'the policy of our rulers is killing the novel by dividing up life into unknowable segments.' To the question: 'Is there a psychological blockage of some sort?' Paton says: 'The repressed fear of hostile literary criticism is said to be a powerful inhibitory factor. Is it not possible that fear of hostile social criticism is equally inhibitory?'

The indications at present are that these social and literary pressures may be translated into law. Under the guise of meeting the threat of pornographic and indecent literature, a Bill is before Parliament to set up a censorship so drastic that any other system east or west of the Iron Curtain seems mild in comparison.

Several Afrikaans novels have attempted to approach the social scene objectively. 'Die Held' (The Hero) by C. M. van den Heever is a study of an Afrikaner's deterioration under the city influences of Johannesburg, and Willem van der Berg's 'Reisigers na Nêrens' (Travellers to Nowhere) tackles fairly realistically a similar theme set in Cape Town. Neither of these novels can be said to be an artistic success. Though less ambitious in scope and purpose Hettie Smit's 'Sy Kom met die Sekelmaan' (She comes with the Sicklemoon) is a love story of poetic intensity. Frans Venter is considered one of the best prose stylists and his 'Swart Pelgrim' (Black Pilgrim) takes the theme of an African's fate under the impact of work in a city.

None of these books contains a challenge or a protest. But the protest and the discontent can be sensed among the younger writers sometimes in an anarchic spirit as in 'Die Mugu' (The Spiv) by Etienne le Roux, a fantasy built round the lives of juvenile delinquents.

Jan van Melle who died in 1953 is considered one of the finest prose writers in the language. He had several novels to his credit but is at his best with the short story where his spare and severe tone and his economy of language produce telling effects.

The first conscious revolt by a fiction

writer against the accepted myths of Afrikanerdom is contained in the work of Jan Rabie whose 'Ons die Afgod' (We the Idol) is a story of disillusionment and the rejection by a young Afrikaner of the ideas of race superiority based on colour. The book remains thematic in the sense that its subject and special plea are too dominant. But, to quote Paton again: 'Mr. Rabie's novel has a literary significance quite apart from this, in that it is implicitly calling for a reintegration of the Afrikaans novel and the reality in which it is placed.'

Rabie is a writer of distinction and striking style, especially in his short stories and prose poems. Recently his energetic response to the pressures of the situation turned him away from his creative work to write a short treatise on the evolution of nationalism in which he concludes that 'a nation rather exists by virtue of its spiritual fulfilment and incontrovertible will to moral standards than by the lash and the sword.' He sees the future of the world as 'one plurality of nations, not as many entities of states.'

If the most important things are left out of Afrikaans prose fiction, can one find them in its poetry? The language of poetry is less explicit, more can be said in it and more concealed—provided there is an audience. Poetry has been always the one literary medium almost impossible to control and its main limitation in modern times has been the withering of interest; in the clamour of a thousand other voices, that of the poet is likely to be lost.

From the 1930's to the present day Afrikaans poetry has taken a sharp turn away from the ebullient, sometimes naive and often romantic verse of the pioneers. Its content has changed radically. From a lively outwardness and optimism, it has become more subjective. The older direct affirmation and generosity, the popular appeal, is replaced by a more querulous note. It is a voice on the defensive. The national ideal becomes less convincing

and more a myth, the religious poetry continues but it is permeated with doubt.

Side by side with this shrinking from a new reality there has been an extraordinary advance in literary technique. The poets of today, at their best, achieve a felicity of speech and a command of their finely supple young language that place them as equals with any in the world. It almost seems as if Afrikaans was made for poetry, whether in the hands of a skilful university don like Opperman or a coloured peasant son such as Philander.

Another feature of the Afrikaans literary scene, distinguishing it sharply from that, say, in England is that poetry remains widely read. Although there are fewer than two million Afrikaners their favourite poets are snapped up in large editions. New poems are read on the radio and printed in magazines and keenly discussed. The poet himself is still an honoured and even loved figure and while this adulation may be mixed with less worthy motives such as national pride, at the same time he retains a status and a closeness to his people that are remarkable.

Generalizations are misleading and there is always the important exception to upset a preconceived picture. This will be seen by a glance at some of the leading poets of today.

Outstanding names include Uys Krige, Van Wyk Louw, Opperman, Elizabeth Eybers, Du Plessis, Olga Kirsch, Watermeyer and W. E. G. Louw. Of them Krige has the widest and most versatile talent. He is a lyrical and highly subjective poet, dramatist and short story writer and is, incidentally, almost as fluent in English as in his own tongue. His poetry has a largeness and musical quality and is close to everyday speech.

Probably of key importance in his development is the division in his own creative personality which makes him the first important writer to reject the national myths. For years he has stood outside the camp. With a powerful critical background and a command of four European languages

besides English and Afrikaans, he is an uncomfortably big figure to fit into the local scene of a small 'volk' dedicated to its exclusive national aims.

Krige does not carry his rejection to the point of outspoken revolt. His gift for lucid prose is not used for an objective analysis of his countrymen's character and situation. It may be significant that his most powerful stories were written in English while for his most striking plays he turns to foreign scenes. Continually, he seems torn between love of his people and his devotion to a greater humanity. He sees the tragic incongruity between the aspirations of a single group and the greatness of a vast country where there are many races with its own rights, and in his despair he calls to the people of his race:

O mense van my ras, ondanks alles wat ons skei,
steeds aan my gees, my siel, my hart verwant,
wees groot en ruim en sterk, wees vry,
vol lig en stilte, soos die suiderland!

(O people of my race, for all the rifts
dividing us/ bound ever to my spirit, my
soul, my heart/ be great and wide and
strong, be free/ full of light and calm as
this southern land.)

In his latest collection of poems he turns entirely for subject matter to the life of the coloured people, their moods, distress and hopes. The theme recurs in an encounter with a battered but gay flower-seller and the grandeur of the scene is compared with the pettiness of South African life:

Waarom ons boot vol tweedrag steeds en stuur-
loos, sonder loods?

Waarom so weinig weerglans van die glorie in
ons lewe?

(Why is our ship ever so full of strife,
and rudderless and with no pilot/ why so
few flashes of glory in our lives?)

Van Wyk Louw is fine poet, sensitive and a perfect craftsman. He is at his best in the shorter lyric but has also attempted

longer poems and verse drama, though not with the same striking accomplishment. When he goes beyond his own subjective experience into larger themes there is a static quality in his work and a mystique not entirely convincing. He is far nearer to the national myths, but like Krige he also suffers from an agonized sense as if of impending disaster, though he cannot bring himself to reject the ideals against which his instincts seem to warn him. At times this gives rise to a profound pessimism which seems to be missed or ignored by his wide following.

Moet ek vir iemand iets nog sê
in hierdie land
wat luid van alle stemme is
en blink en brand?

of, waar die goue lug al lank
die aasvoel dra,
koud 'n gedoemde waarheid weet
wat niemand vra?

(Must I still say something to someone/
in this country/ that is loud with all voices/
and bright and burning? Or, where the
golden air long since/ bears up to the vul-
ture/know a cold and doomed truth/ that
no-one asks?)

Again, dealing with the myth of 'think-
ing with one's blood', he says

Ek ken die lasste groot droom van my ras
-my oë kan die sterreplas nie peil,
en meer as Bloed, ja, is Betekenis -
maar bloed is sigbaar, en die woord is yl.

(I know the final great dream of my
race/ -my eyes cannot fathom the pool of
stars/ and more than Blood, yes, is the
Meaning/ but blood is manifest, and the
word is thin.)

In his collection of critical essays 'Loyal
Opposition' and 'Liberal Nationalism' he
attempts to reconcile these contradictions.

Opperman is a more academic writer
than either of these two and often achieves
in his verse a polished and brilliant effect.
In his shorter poems he reaches his most
accomplished lyricism. In verse dramas,

however, and in his use of popular idiom
and natural speech rhythms he is less
spontaneous. The dramas retreat, for
theme, into antiquity but if this is a criti-
cism a more serious one is that they are,
on the whole, immobile. The poet's
ventures into every day events of strikes
and upheavals produce a peculiarly unreal
effect and his symbolism suggests more of
fantasy.

Opperman is also troubled about the
narrowness and isolation of his people in
their political direction and in a recent
essay critically studying the destiny of the
Afrikaners from present trends he concludes
with the utmost seriousness and forebod-
ing: 'What fills one with dread about our
own future is the view of this cold spiri-
tual hell.'

Elizabeth Eybers has to her credit a
range of lyrics on such subjects as mother-
hood and children of an intensity that
make them universal. Critics in this
country and in Holland and Belgium
where her work is known place her on a
level with any woman poet writing today.

Olga Kirsch, born into an English-speak-
ing Jewish family has yet attained to such
a command of Afrikaans that her work
marks her as a pure poet. An example is
'The Blockhouse', a poem in four lines:

Die fondamente van die fort was vrees,
haat het die deure een vir een gesluit.
nou loer die bouer deur 'n skietgat uit
en durf die muurskrif agter hom nie lees.

(The foundations of the fort were fear/
hate closed the doors up one by one/The
builder peers now through a fire-slot/ and
dares not read the writing on the wall
behind him.)

Unfortunately Olga Kirsch has been dis-
couraged by heavy-handed critical attacks
and for years has been silent, living now
in Israel.

Two coloured men who have achieved
fame as Afrikaans poets are S. V. Petersen
and P. J. Philander, both school teachers.
Both have won national prizes for their
poetry. Philander has a strong talent and

is imbued with the optimism and endurance of his people. He is still heavily influenced by more established writers and tends to obscurity, yet in overcoming such obstacles to full expression he may, like Peterson, win his place in the country's literature.

Obscurity and formalism have in recent times and among the younger group of writers become an important phenomenon. Surrealism and other fashions long since worked through elsewhere now seem, in Afrikaans writers, to be another line of retreat from reality. New forms of expression, of course, are unexceptionable, and

new poets may arise in time, like Hebrew prophets, to ask the fatal questions Louw hints at — and answer them. Among the many gifted younger poets can be mentioned Bartho Smit, Peter Blum, Ingrid Jonker, Ina Rousseau and George Louw.

Afrikaans literature is certainly poised in a peculiarly electric situation. Its achievements are astonishing and its possibilities, arising from the traditions already established, the vitality and courage of the people from which it arises and the high degree of literary skill evident on all sides, are incalculable.

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.**

POETRY

MEMORY

Many things have I left behind —
amongst those a face sculpted in sorrow,
eyebrows lifted in puzzlement;
a reproach suppressed in love;
and a few sheets of paper
with the letters made into stars by shed tears.

Many things have I brought with me —
amongst those a cover with faded petals;
a photo I ought to have returned,
but could not,
and this emptiness.

S. PADMANABH

ON THE ROOF

Now sinks our dignitary the sun,
 Dust-slandered, unlamented. One
 Indomitable donkey brays
 And rival neighbours' radios raise
 False agonies and falser morals.
 Their own preposterous loves and quarrels
 With well-bred phrase and mincing feet
 Pigeons incessantly repeat
 Round my parapet, and all
 Heaven throbs with cuckoo-call.

At apathetic ease I drink
 Tepid lemonade, and think
 What infatuate vagrant dance
 To the fiddle-notes of chance
 Whirled me through the years to this
 Fantastic metamorphosis,
 This burial place of soul and sense
 And the free mind, where I dispense
 A prophylactic vaccination
 Known as higher education
 Daily with pontific air
 To students too well-trained to care
 For honest thought or depth of learning
 Not expressed in rate of earning.

With disconcerting comradeship
 A gaunt sardonic crow lets slip
 His cynic comment. I have heard,
 In ancient texts, the soul's a bird:
 And maybe if I ponder so
 Mine will pass to that old crow,
 And find the journey straight and clear
 Compared with that which brought me here.

POETRY WITHOUT SPLIT

(FOR PAUL ELUARD)

I have heard that in olden times certain poets
 In the seclusion of their hearts' homes, in safe song
 Had held, it is said, this one of the lily-garden
 Or that one — some Lady Muse.
 Now-a-days even the dream of such private heaven
 Comes no more easily to poets.

To-day the housewalls are breached; the wailing
 Of all the homeless of the world blows in and out.
 Private conversation with laughter is also a chorus.
 The days are now on fire with many sorts of sunlight,
 The evenings now-a-days are thicker with darkness,
 Sleep also is torn in the destitute night of poets.

Cloudpale are the beloved of the Yakshas, the dear Malavikas
 They are to-day swords in the sharp light
 Or perhaps evenings at the cloud-torn end of an Age,
 There is summer lightning in their arms,
 In their eyes the high waters that ripen the grain.
 On to the crest of the swift tide speed the songs of poets.

Therefore accept the admission of a poet:
 The home and the world are one, and you are the housewife;
 Make your home, beloved, in the barracks which span the earth;
 The gallows of Greece form the back-cloth of your embrace,
 And the eyes of the people of my own country deepen.
 I am one of those oncoming poets.

Oh those dreams turn one out on the roving road.
 To-day the night is midday fire.
 All the time, in dreams, night's laws
 Are torn away and whirl about — no, not in any shy veil —
 Only on the lean naked crushed roads
 Only on the public thoroughfares.

People on the roads,
 Men of the roads, women, children.
 From road to road walk helpless eyes
 On dead faces burn white and black eyes
 Fading eyes, raging eyes on fiery faces, eyes of the desperate
 Eyes of dreams, creators' eyes.

Beggars' eyes, eyes of the aged who have left the red
 foot-paths running beyond the village
 Eyes of young wives, widows, eyes of children looking into
 triad Time.
 Crowds of the homeless, the deprived, of young men and women,
 Like rushing fire-raining mountains in millions of eyes.
 Crowds from the Drought, the Flood, the riots, the Division
 of Bengal, the trademark crowds of free India
 And the crowds of protesting students, of the retrenched,
 of strikers,
 Crowds in protest against traffic in piety, crowds of
 the ill, the hard-hit,
 In the crowd of dreams all the roads all the hundred waves
 surf down on the eyes
 Some to-day or yesterday or some the other day
 Pull down the dense blue of hills
 Into the bottomless blue of dreams
 In the blood and the bones of the bloodless flesh the city roads
 Across oceans and mountains.
 In Dante's hell our life is a flaming tongue
 With the moonfire of dreams in many eyes.



Do you think they'll throttle your voice?
 Churn up the poison through hostilities?
 What tricks they resort to, what a noise
 They raise, now cajolings and now threats,
 Such cheap melodrama hot-and-cold and crude.

They don't know whose puppets they are
 They think they can trapeze over three worlds now,
 What pious talks from the agile politicians
 What confusion in the truths and untruths of the Pilates!
 Don't they know we are not impressed?

Whispering into these ears against those,
 Telling those that these will cut their throats,
 They are not prahlags in their clans,
 They are in search of hangmen all over the land
 Oh in vain in vain these clever speeches, these diplomacies.

They have no more a place on this sea,
 The blue is over this land, in this Blue-Throat.



He never gets lost, He
Knows no defeat
Duststorms darken the sky
— Where is the son gone!

Ogres and demons shout,
The branch of Pomegranate seems to break;
— will they obey mere verbal rage?
Death must be fought by Life.

Where is the son? When will he
Rouse life back in the land of sleep
With the neigh of the winged horse; can't you hear
The echo of that cry across the winds?

Is that why the Farthing-hill collapses,
The bony highland turns wet with green,
The sky reddens with a thousand clouds?
We know indeed the son remembers.

He does not get lost we know,
He knows no defeat.
Ogres attack the land of sleep
perhaps they think the son too sleeps.



Do you bend down your face? Why cloud your eyes?
Your pain is my life too, on razor's edge
Day and night; the sleepless anger, the humiliation
the futility
Burns at my forehead; why do you hide the lightning flash?
The poetry of the world, the consciousness of man's
Long civilisation burns all the time, hence this rage,
Hence in your eyes in the daily routine this resistance
In our honourless paleface wall-less crushed everyday.

And so the past is aflame, and the Future is the Banyan
In full foliage. You know that this is no game
On a tower, no mere habit or infatuation, this also
Is history, is power that creates,
Is life that wins over livelihood — a protest to live, to love,
No aggrieved sentiment of mere loveplay; so we snap
fingers — we weep, we laugh

To build life-in-love — this life that is love's long May
 To build the base on level earth. That is why the fire inspires,
 Kailas is on fire.



The Conscious and Unconscious I will rhyme.
 Life-mind and body-mind have split
 And darken today the whole world.
 Dreams no more obey censors,
 Dreams would merge the day of first love
 With an epoch's end.

The Conscious and Unconscious now I bind in rhyme,
 The mind and life division, one and the many,
 Yet my world shrieks in pain,
 The concrete and the symbol stand apart,
 The peace that creates yet howls in the blood,
 Therefore the old rules break down to-day,
 The devotee leaves home to worship the Crisis.

The Conscious and Unconscious to-day
 Join hands in the Dream, yet the mind-life split
 Blooms in the blood into the thorny blue-rose.
 Dreams no longer follow their laws
 But sow crisis in garden and wasteland;
 And the rhythm of the moment dances into
 triad Time
 Holding stormy peace in uplifted hands.

BISHNU DEY

Translated from the original Bengali by the author

SHORT STORY

*She had Told Me**

By CHANDRA DHAR SHARMA GULERI

I SHALL request all those who are fed up and disgusted with the filthy and obscure language of the *ekka* and *tonga-walas* to soothe their ears with the polished language of the bamboo cart drivers of Amritsar. The *ekka* and *tonga* drivers of the bigger cities, while mercilessly beating their horses, establish close relationships with these animals by abusing them, pity the pedestrians for not having proper eyesight or trampling their toes go straight on their roads, while at the same time pitying themselves and appearing like pictures of frustration, disappointment and suffering.

Their counterparts in Amritsar are just the opposite. They guide their carriages through the narrow winding lanes by addressing everyone in the most polished and polite language and showing the utmost patience. 'Give way Khalsajee!' 'Kindly let me come through, Lalajee.' 'Please allow us to pass.' And shouting like this, they carefully drive their carriages past mule cart drivers and vendors of various kinds. It is impossible for them not to add a polite suffix like 'ji' and 'Sahib' to the various people who come in their way. It is not that these drivers are incapable of using their tongues. They, however, use polite ironical language which hurts quietly like a sharp knife. Supposing an old woman does not leave the road inspite of repeated

warnings, then the old bamboo-cart drivers will say, 'Oh! you long-aged one! O, you beloved of your sons, leave the path!' The real meaning of which is: as you are fit to live long, why do you want to come under the wheels of my carriage?

A young boy and girl passing by such bamboo cart drivers met at the *chowk*. Both of them appeared to be Sikhs because of their loose pyjamas and long hair. The boy had come to buy curd for washing the beard of his maternal-uncle and the girl had come to buy some lentil cakes for making vegetable curry. The shopkeeper was engaged with a client who was busy counting a seer of wet *papads* which he had bought.

'Where is your home?'

'In the Magra—and where is your home?'

'In the Majha—and where are you staying here?'

'In the house of Attar Singh, my uncle.'

'I have also come to my uncle's house in the Guru Bazar.'

Meanwhile the shopkeeper freed himself from the first client and turned his attention to these two persons. They both left the shop after buying their requirements and walked together for some distance, and the boy smilingly asked the girl: 'Are you engaged?' On this the girl eyed the boy angrily and said, 'Tut!' and ran away. The boy kept on looking out for her.

They kept on meeting accidentally at

* *Usne Kaha Tha*

the vegetable seller's or the milk vendor's every second or third day. This continued for a month. The boy again asked two or three times: 'Are you engaged?' In reply the girl again said, 'Tut.' One day the boy, hoping to irritate the girl, asked if she was engaged and, contrary to his expectations, the girl replied: 'Yes, I am engaged.'

'When?'

'Yesterday. Don't you see my new silk shawl?' the girl ran away. The boy went home. But he pushed a boy into the drain and a vendor lost his day's earnings. He hit a dog and threw water into a green grocer's wares. He was also called a blind-man when he collided against a Vaishnava widow who was returning from a sacred dip in the Ganges. After all these adventures, he reached home.

(2)

'Oh God! Oh God! Do you call this a war? My bones are all aching with sitting for days together in the trenches. It is ten times colder than Ludhiana and on top of that we have rain and snow. We have mud upto our ankles. The sun cannot be seen. The roar of the big guns is enough to tear our ear-drums and the whole trench shakes with the noise and the earth jumps up hundred yards from where the shells fall. I have heard of the earthquake at Nagarkot, but here we have twentyfive earthquakes a day. If ever our turban or hand shows outside the trench, immediately a bullet hits it. We don't know if the enemy is hidden in the trees or lying on the ground.'

'Lehna Singh, there are three more days. We have spent four days in the trenches. The day after tomorrow the relief party will arrive and then we will have a week's rest. We will slaughter an animal with our own hands and eat to our hearts' content and sleep. In that feringhee woman's garden, the grass is like velvet. She really squanders a lot of milk and fruit on us. She accepts no payment inspite of our repeated requests. She says, 'You are our

lord and you have come to save our country.'

'For the last four days we have not slept a wink. It is said that a horse without grooming and a soldier without fighting are useless. I wish I got the command to attack with my bayonet then I would not return alive until I had killed seven Germans all by myself. They are villainous rogues and slaves of the machine. As soon as they see our bayonets they beg for pardon, but otherwise they attack us with their thirty maund cannons in the dark. That day we attacked, we did not leave a single German alive in a radius of four miles. The General ordered us to return, otherwise . . .'

'Otherwise you would have got straight through to Berlin, is that it?' said Subedar Hazara Singh, smiling. 'Military operations cannot be conducted by Jemadars and Corporals. Big Officers act with the whole picture in their mind. The battlefield is spread over 300 miles and it's no use if we move ahead in one place only.'

Lehna Singh said, 'True enough, Subedar Sahib, but what are we to do? I am shivering with cold. The sun does not come out and the water trickles into the trench from both sides of the valley. If we make one attack then we will all get warmed up.'

'Udim, get up and put some coal in the brazier. Wazira with four men will scoop out the water from the trench with buckets. Mahasingh, change the guards at the trench gates!' Ordering this the Subedar Sahib began to inspect the trench.

Wazira Singh was the clown of the regiment. Throwing the dirty water outside he said, 'I am the regiment priest. Pray for the salvation of the German King.' At this everyone laughed.

Giving him the bucketful of water Lehna Singh said, 'Water for your melon fields. Such good fertile water you won't get even in the Punjab.'

Yes certainly this land really is a heaven. I will request the Government after the war to give me a piece of land here and

I will grow a beautiful orchard. I will call my womenfolk and children or I will have that feringhee woman who gives us milk.

'Shut up. Women here have no modesty.'

'No. It is the custom of different countries. I could not explain to her that Sikhs do not smoke. She insists on my smoking and when I decline, she thinks I am annoyed and the lord will not fight for her country.'

'Well, how is Bodha Singh?'

'He's all right.'

'Don't I know it! You give him both your blankets and manage yourself with that *Angethi*. You do guard duties for him and give him dry wooden planks to sleep on and you sleep in mud. This cold is really killing. Death by pneumonia is no pleasure.'

'Don't worry about me. I shall die by the side of Bulal and my head will be in the lap of Kirat Singh and I will be lying in the shadow of the mango tree which I have planted.'

Wazira Singh said angrily: 'What's all this talk of dying? Let the Germans and Turks die. Let us sing something fellows.'

No body knew that the married old bearded Sikhs could sing such bawdy obscene songs; the whole trench echoed and the soldiers felt refreshed as if they had been sleeping and merry-making for the last four days.

(3)

Half the night has passed. It is pitch dark and quiet all around. Bodha Singh is sleeping on three empty biscuit tins by spreading both his blankets over them and covering himself with the two blankets of Lehna Singh and his big overcoat. Lehna Singh keeps an eye on the door and another on the weak body of Bodha. Bodha Singh groans.

'What's the matter, brother Bodha?'

'Give me some water.'

Lehna Singh held the bowl to his lips and asked 'How are you?'

After drinking, Bodha Singh said: 'I am leaving the Company. I am feeling cold in each and every part of my body. My teeth are chattering.'

'Well, then, put on my jersey.'

'What about you?'

'No, I have got the brazier and I am feeling hot; as a matter of fact I am perspiring due to heat.'

'No, I am not going to take it. For four days now, you are doing this . . .'

'Oh! I remember now. I have got another jersey which I received this morning. Mem Sahibs in England are knitting them for us. God bless them.' After saying this, Lehna Singh forced on him the jersey and he himself put on Khaki coat and began to do his sentry duty. The story of Mem Sahib's knitting jerseys was simply moonshine.

After half an hour somebody shouted from the entrance of the trench: 'Subedar Hazara Singh!'

'Who is that? Leptun (Lieutenant) Sahib? What orders, Sir?' said the Subedar Sahib after smartly saluting him.

'Listen. You have to attack the enemy just now. At a distance of about a mile on the Eastern flank there is a German trench in which there are hardly fifty Germans. There is a way to the trench, underneath these trees, beyond those two fields. There are three turns also. I have stationed fifteen soldiers at the turn. You leave behind ten soldiers and take the rest of these men and join them. You take possession of that trench from the enemy and remain there till you get further orders. I will stay here.'

'Yes, Sir!'

Everyone got ready very quietly. Bodha made a move after removing his blankets, Lehna Singh stopped him. When Lehna Singh started Subedar Sahib, father of Bodha, made a gesture pointing towards Bodha. Lehna Singh understood. There was a lot of argument about which ten persons should stay behind but the Subedar somehow managed to persuade ten, and then marched ahead. Leptun stood

and began to light a cigarette. After ten minutes he extended his hand towards Lehna and said—'Have a fag too?'

Everything became clear to Lehna Singh in the twinkling of an eye. Hiding his feelings, he said 'O! let me have it, and while taking the cigarette he looked into the face of the officer. He saw his hair. He was simply astounded. The beautiful long hair of his Leptun Sahib had disappeared in one day and in its place was short hair like a convict's.

Perhaps the Sahib had drunk too much and had no time to have a proper hair cut. Lehna Singh wanted to verify this. Leptun Sahib had been in his regiment for these last five years.

'Well Sahib! When shall we return to India?'

'After the end of the war. Don't you like this country?'

'No! Sahib where is the fun we had hunting here? Do you remember that after military exercises we went hunting in the jungles of Jogadhari. The time when you rode on a monkey and your Muslim bearer Abdulla stayed behind to offer some water in a temple.'

'Yes. He was a great rogue.'

'A big blue bull, the like of which I had never seen before, passed before our eyes and you hit it on the shoulders. Has the head of the bull come from the taxidermist's in Simla? You said you would fix it in the mess of the regiment.'

'Yes! I have sent it to England.'

'Yes Sir, it had very beautiful horns — at least two feet long.'

'Yes Lehna Singh they were two feet four inches. Oh, you are not smoking?'

'Yes Sir. I will smoke. I will get a match.' —saying which he entered the trench. Now he had no doubt. He immediately decided his course of action. In the darkness he stumbled against some one who was sleeping.

'Who is it? Wazira Singh?'

'Yes, what is it Lehna, what's the damned hurry? You might have let me sleep for a while.

(4)

'Get up. Death has come in the uniform of our Leptun Sahib.'

'What?'

'Leptun Sahib has been either taken prisoner or killed and some German has come in his uniform. Subedar Sahib did not look at his face. I have seen it and have talked to him as well. The rogue speaks fluent bookish Urdu and he gave me a cigarette to smoke.'

'What now?'

'Now we shall be killed. We have been tricked. The Subedar will roam about in mud and the trench will be attacked and they too will be attacked in the open. Get up and do one thing. Run after the soldiers, following their footprints. They can not have gone far. Ask the Subedar to return immediately. This talk of the enemy trench is false. Go from the back of our trench. Don't make any noise and don't waste any time.'

'But the orders are . . .'

'To hell with the orders! These are my orders, Jemadar Lehna Singh's, who is the senior most officer in the trench at the moment. I shall look after this Leptun Sahib.'

'But you are only eight people here.'

'No, really we are ten lakhs. Each Akali Sikh is equal to one and a quarter lakh of men. So go at once.'

On returning Lehna Singh stood quietly by and saw Leptun Sahib take out three pomegranate type of balls which he hid in the walls of the trench and connected them all with a wire which had a piece of string attached to it which he kept near the brazier. He was about to put a match to this thread. . .

Like a flash of lightning Lehna Singh hit the Leptun Sahib with his rifle and the match fell from his hand and he hit him again at his neck and Leptun Sahib fell down with a cry, 'Oh God!' He threw all the three balls outside the trench and dragged the Sahib near the brazier. He searched all his pockets and took posses-

sion of three or four envelopes and a diary.

The Sahib regained consciousness after some time. Lehna Singh said with a smile: 'Hello Sahib! How are you? I have learnt many things today — that the Sikhs smoke and that there are blue bulls in Jogadhari which have horns two feet long. I have also learnt that the Muslims offer water to earthen Gods. But tell me, where did you learn this beautiful Urdu? Our Sahib could not speak five words, without using 'damn'.'

Lehna Singh had not searched the trouser pockets. The Sahib put his hands into the pockets as if to warm them. Lehna Singh went on speaking. 'You are very clever but at Majha I lived with the Leptun Sahib for so many years. You have to be extra smart to deceive me. About three months back a Turkish monk came to my village. He used to distribute medicine to women and children and also amulets to barren women. He used to enjoy himself smoking a hubble bubble under the Banyan tree of the chowdhari and used to say that the Germans were very learned people. They had learnt flying by reading the Vedas. If they came to India they would stop cow slaughter. He used to egg on the merchants to withdraw their savings deposits from the Post Office as the British Government was going to fall. Even the postmaster Polhuraam was frightened. I shaved off the Mulajee and turned him out of the village after severe lesson!

There was a shot from the pistol in the pocket of the Sahib which hit the thigh of Lehna Singh. The two shots from Lehna Singh's Heavy Martin killed the Sahib instantaneously. Everybody rushed to the spot hearing the shots.

Bodha cried, 'What happened?'

Lehna Singh put him to sleep by saying that a mad dog had come into the trench and he had killed it. But he told the whole story to his other companions. Everyone got ready with their rifles. Lehna Singh tied his turban tightly round his gunshot

wound. The bleeding stopped after this bandaging.

In the meantime about a hundred Germans attacked the trench. The firing of the Sikhs stopped the first attack. But there were only eight on this side. Lehna Singh was hitting them carefully one by one. He was standing and all the others were lying down on the ground. After some time the cry rose: 'All glory to the Guru! Wah Guru we have conquered all — Oh great Khalsa!'

The Germans were being fired at from the back. They were caught between two lines of fire. Subedar Hazara Singh's men were firing from the back and in front Lehna Singh's group were attacking with their bayonets. On coming nearer the men of Hazara Singh also began to use their bayonets.

There were again cries of 'Long live the Regiment of Sikhs — the Guru has conquered all. Well done Khalsa — Sat Sree Akal! Oh brave ones!' And the fighting came to an end. Sixty three Germans had been killed or wounded and fifteen Sikhs had died on this side. A bullet had gone through the right hand of Subedar. Lehna Singh had received a gunshot wound in his ribs.

He filled up the wound with a bit of wet earth and tied it tightly. No body knew that he was severely wounded.

The moon had come out when the fighting began. It was a very delicate moon which justified its poetical appellation 'Kshayi — the declining one' in Sanskrit. There was a biting cold wind such as is described by Banbhata. Wazira Singh was saying that when he was running after the Subedar it seemed as if his boots weighed at least one maund. The Subedar heard all the details of the incident from Lehna Singh and was praising his presence of mind on seeing all the papers and saying that all the lives had been saved because of him.

The noise of this fighting had been heard three miles away to the left of this group. They had phoned Headquarters. From there two doctors and two ambul-

ances arrived at this trench after about one hour. The field hospital was very close and they hoped to reach there early in the morning. So the wounded men were put in one ambulance and the dead men in the other. The Subedar wanted to get the wound in the thigh of Lehna Singh bandaged. But he ignored it saying that it was just a minor injury which could be attended to in the morning. Bodha Singh was murmuring something in his fever. He was put in the ambulance. The Subedar did not want to go without Lehna Singh. Seeing this, Lehna Singh said: 'By your Sardarniji and Bodha I request you to go by this ambulance.'

'What about you?'

'Send an ambulance for me from there. Another ambulance must be coming for the Germans. I am quite all right. Don't you see — I can stand and Wazira Singh is near me.'

'All right, Bodha has got into the ambulance. Even now you come in.'

'Listen when you write to your Subedarniji please send her my respects and when you go home please tell her that I have done what she told me.'

The ambulance began to move. While climbing into the ambulance the Subedar told Lehna Singh that he had saved their life: 'What shall I write? We shall go home together — you can speak to the Subedarni yourself. What did she tell you?'

'Everything is ready now. Get into the vehicle and write and tell her what I told you.'

After the departure of the vehicle Lehna Singh lay down. 'Give me water Wazira—please loosen my pyjama string. I am all wet with blood.'

(5)

A few minutes before death memory becomes sharp and all the old incidents of life come clearly before our eyes without the haze and glow of time.

Lehna Singh is twelve years old. He has

come to his uncle's house. He meets an eight year old girl at the sweetmeat sellers, vegetable shop and everywhere. When he asks her if she is engaged, she runs away saying: 'Tut!' One day when he asked her she said: 'Yes! I was engaged yesterday. Don't you see this silk embroidered shawl?' On hearing this, Lehna Singh felt sorry, he felt angry too — but why?

'Wazira Singh, give me some water!'

Twenty-five years passed. Now Lehna Singh has become a Jemadar in 73 Rifles. He has forgotten all about that eight year old girl. He does not remember he ever met her. One day he went home on a week's leave to see about some litigation. Here he got his C.O.'s letter to say that the Regiment was proceeding overseas. He was to return immediately. He also got Subedar Hazara Singh's and Bodha Singh's letters saying that they too were going overseas. He should come to their house and they would all proceed together.

The Subedar's village was on his way and he was very fond of him. Lehna Singh reached the Subedar's place. When they started to leave the Subedar came out of the house and said: 'The Subedarni knows you and she wants to meet you. Go and meet her.' Lehna Singh went in wondering how the Subedarni could know him. His people had never lived in the family quarters of the regiment. He paid his respects from the door and he was blessed. Lehna Singh was silent.

'Have you recognised me?'

'No.'

'Are you engaged? Tut! Yes—I was engaged yesterday. Don't you see this embroidered shawl? At Amritsar . . .'

He regained consciousness and changed his side and the wound in his chest began to flow.

'Wazira, give me water. She told me.'

His dream continued.

The Subedarni is saying, 'I recognised you on your arrival here. I request you to do one thing. I am very unlucky. The Government has honoured us by a title and they have given us land in Lyallpur

and this is the time for proving our worth to the Government. Why has the Government not made a regiment of women so that I could also go with your Subedar. I have only one son. He also joined the Army a year back.

There were four other sons after him but they have all died. Now both of them are going overseas — all my wealth. Do you remember once the horse of the tonga-wala was out of control? You saved my life that day. You went underneath the hooves of the horse, took me out and put me firm on the plank of the shop. Please save these people in the same way. This is my request. I am entreating you.

The Subedarni went weeping into the courtyard. Lehna Singh too came out weeping.

'Wazira Singh! Give me water. She told me.'

Wazira Singh is sitting with the head of Lehna Singh in his lap. He gives him water

whenever he asks for it. Lehna Singh kept quiet for half an hour and then he said:

'Who is it? Kirat Singh?'

Wazira Singh very understandingly said: 'Yes.'

'Please raise me a little higher.'

Wazira did so.

'Yes, now it is all right. Give me some water. This Asarh we will have a good mango crop. Both uncle and nephew eat mangoes here. The mango tree is as old as your nephew. I planted this tree the very month he was born.'

Big tears were rolling down from the eyes of Wazira Singh.

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After some days people read in the newspapers:

France and Belgium—68th Casualty List — No. 77 Sikh Rifles — Jemadar Lehna Singh succumbs to wounds in the battle-field.

(Translated from Hindi by N. N. Banerji)

In our progress through life we are forced to abate much of our demands, and to take friends such as we find them and not as we would make them.

—Dr. JOHNSON

*The Musk Deer**

By SANTOSH KUMAR GHOSH

NIRMALA had just switched on the light and sat down with her sewing when she heard the news. Her face became white as chalk and she involuntarily drove the needle into her finger. Holding her breath, she said, 'What are you talking about? I saw him go up the stairs a moment ago.'

Boudi replied, 'Well, I suppose I can believe my own eyes. The servant has gone for the doctor. Ajoy Babu couldn't even change. He is lying in bed in the clothes he had gone out on. Poor Karabi, she is...'

Nirmala did not wait to listen any further. Dropping her sewing she started running up the stairs. But even as she reached the top of the stairs she simply couldn't take another step. Her feet started shaking so. She could hear the low buzz of suppressed voices from the room inside. Has Karabi already started crying? Gripping firmly the railing for support, Nirmala waited for a second and then took one step, and then another.

The shaded lamp appeared to have been further dimmed. Karabi, all dishevelled, was sitting at the foot of the bed. How deep and, considering the situation, how uncomfortably red the border of her sari seemed. The doctor was standing at the head of the bed.

Nirmala stood at the threshold, unable to move in. The long helpless fingers of the dying man were moving uncertainly near the pillow, as if looking for something. How painfully the abdomen rose and fell.

The doctor gave an injection for the last time and Nirmala, rooted on the threshold, heard the sound of agonised breathing. Slowly the sound became fainter. This is

the last time, Nirmala thought,—the abdomen will not rise again. But no, slowly it rose again. The sound became fainter still. This must be the last time. No, it is coming up again. With fascinated horror Nirmala started counting. What a heartless game this, as tho' one were back at the village tank counting the number of times swimmers bob up from below the water. Yes, there again, for the seventh time. This must surely be the last. No, eight and then nine. Like counting the turns the blades of a switched off fan will take, Nirmala went on with benumbed curiosity. Ten. Now the sound of breathing had become inaudible; there was no movement at all. It finally stopped at eleven.

Nirmala held herself firmly by the door. The doctor rose to go. Talking partly to himself and partly to others he said half-apologetically, 'Cerebral haemorrhage. There was really nothing one could do. Please send somebody to my clinic to collect the death certificate. No, please don't. There is no question of fees.'

The aged aunt who has been waving a hand fan all the while, now stopped and wiped a tear off her eyes with the end of her sari. In a gesture of sympathy she touched Karabi—now lying, face downwards, beside her dead husband. Karabi's back swelled and shook with barely controlled sobs, ready to break into a flood of tears.

The room was getting crowded. People next door and neighbours down the lane started arriving. From the groundfloor Nirmala's Boudi came up again.

'Has his parents been informed?' somebody asked.

'A wire has been sent. Probably they will

* *Kastoorimriga*

be here to-morrow morning; but what good will it do?', the aged aunt sighed.

Quietly Nirmala left the room and came down. She couldn't very well join the chorus of sympathy coming from the seemingly overwhelmed crowd. Karabi's wail was becoming louder every moment. In fits of uncontrollable grief she started trying to break her head on the floor. Three of the women present were finding it hard to keep her under control. The aged aunt's drawling whine had now joined Karabi's. So had the sepulchral drone of the relatives who had arrived meanwhile, from Belgachia and Shyambazar, from Pataldanga and Sovabazar. The soloist, naturally, was Karabi.

This was Karabi's day, of course. What, after all, have the others lost? A brother, may be, or an uncle. Karabi had lost all.

And in the midst of this avalanche of tears, Nirmala stood transfixed as if turned into stone. Tears kept on seeping through and wetting her eyelashes. If only she could throw herself down on the floor and cry! But no, to-day it was Karabi's exclusive right to grieve. Perhaps a few relatives could aspire to a small share. But Nirmala had no claim at all.

How desparate the effort to keep calm was becoming! Widowhood, Nirmala thought bitterly, could not possibly be harder than this.

There was no escape even here, in her own room downstairs. The din in the floor above was getting louder. Nirmala stood for a long time holding the bars of the window opening out on the road. There were things to do but she had no thought for them or for anything else.

By now the students had started coming in. They will see their dear professor for the last time. Floral wreaths started arriving. A bier was brought in. Is this the thing on which they will carry Ajoy away? Will they cover his body with those wreaths and garlands? Bury him in flowers before consigning him to the flames? Nirmala, thank God, will not be there to see.

A few friends now arrived. Ajoy's col-

leagues, their heads bent, started pacing up and down the road, discussing in low tones the dead man's virtues — dissecting them expertly as they dissect the body in post-mortems. But above all this, drowning everything else, rose Karabi's lachrymose threnody of ululation. It was unrestrained, obtrusive, even a little indecent.

Nirmala was not following what Karabi was saying. Nor indeed was she in a mood to try. But she could guess all right. Karabi was, perhaps, recalling at the top of her voice, for all the world to hear, those incidents in their married life which went to prove how devoted a husband Ajoy was. Shamelessly she was relating intimacies which she would have blushed to recollect even in solitude, let alone speak out. Words spoken through uncontrolled fits of sobs, words incoherent and broken, and the ever-recurring refrain—"Oh God! How shall I carry on now."

Nirmala's self-control was fast reaching the breaking point. The turbulence in her mind threatened to break out in a flood of tears any moment.

Nirmala heard someone approaching. Turning, she found it was Boudi just come down. In her squeaky voice Boudi asked, 'Have you prepared any food?' Nirmala found that her voice had choked. She merely shook her head.

'But why? Your dada will be back any moment now. And the children will be wanting their food. What am I to tell them? What's that? Why are your eyes so red? You were not crying, were you?' Boudi stopped to recover her breath and then started again, 'You do behave oddly. All of us are sorry for what has happened: Who wouldn't be? But to start shedding tears, now really!'

Nirmala did not utter a word in reply. It was useless. They will never understand. And, come to think of it, you couldn't blame them either. A neighbour who lived in the flat above has died. It is all right for you to feel sorry and mumble a few words

of sympathy but you don't go without food because of that.

Slowly Nirmala went into the kitchen. Pouring a little kerosene over the coke, she applied a match and lit the stove. She sat there gazing steadily at the shooting flames. Soon her eyes were full of tears, but she did not wipe them away. No one would come into the kitchen to notice them. And even if they did they would not suspect anything. Does not kitchen smoke hurt the eyes and bring out tears?

There was a loud chant from the mourners signalling the moment the bier started on its way. Now it was being brought down the stairs. Should she run out just for once, just to see him for the last time? The shrill note of Karabi's wail reached a new high. Mingled with it could be heard thuds and stamping on the floor above, as if a fight was going on. Karabi was trying to free herself from those who held her back. 'Let go, please let go. I will go with him,' she was shouting.

Suddenly Nirmala became terribly angry with Karabi. The girl is merely advertising herself by yammering so loudly. There is no depth in her feeling. What does she mean by going on repeating 'what will I do now? how shall I carry on?' She merely wants to inform the world that Ajoy belonged to her and to her only.

Surely not all the tears that she has shed by now is for Ajoy—the Ajoy who is no more and who already belongs to the past. Some of it is for Karabi herself, for her burning present and burnt up future. In this tragic playlet Karabi is unquestionably the heroine. At the moment at least everyone, by the very warmth of their condolences, has helped to create a halo round her. She is there at the very centre of things resplendent in her newly acquired glory, the glory of losing everything.

But what about her? Nirmala's whole body shook with bitter violence at the question. Yes, what about her? she thought again staring at the pot over the glowing stove. Nobody knows about her, nobody will ever know. She will go on

bearing the burden alone even if the weight crushes her.

How transient life was. How quickly it goes out at the merest whiff — a flame that was burning a moment ago with such brightness and vigour. Why, only a few hours ago Ajoy had smiled at her. He had returned from his college much as usual. While going up the stairs to his flat their eyes had met and he had smiled. Who could have known then that within an hour that very person will fall ill and die?

With her forefinger Nirmala started writing on the dust covered floor. 'Ajoy..

* * *

She could clearly remember the day when she was first introduced to Ajoy. They had moved in that very morning and in the evening, she had gone up to call on the people living upstairs. It is always better to get to know the neighbours. She found that Karabi was not a complete stranger after all. She noticed that on the wall hung a photograph of Ajoy. She recollected having met him before while she had been living with her husband's people, before she became a widow. Yes, she remembered the face. Karabi, she found out now, was Ajoy's wife.

She was talking with Karabi with her back towards the door. She still remembers how she had pulled up her sari to cover her bare head when she heard the approaching footsteps behind. Karabi looked towards the door and said, 'Come in, dear.' And then to Nirmala, 'Why are you feeling so shy? Didn't you say a moment ago you had met my husband before? One doesn't put a veil on before a person one knows.'

'Even when it was all ages ago?' Nirmala had replied pleasantly, baring part of her head.

Karabi completed the introduction. 'She was married to one of the Duttas of Saltikri; thereby becoming your Boudi, in a

way. Aren't the Duttas your distant cousins?"

Nirmala said softly. 'Probably you don't remember me. You had seen me while you were a student. Later you never visited your cousins. And then; well, this happened to me and I came away from my husband's people.'

Following Nirmala's hand, Ajoy noticed for the first time the tell-tale marks of Nirmala's widowhood — the white borderless sari, the unspotted forehead, the thin single pair of bangles. With a look soft with understanding Ajoy noticed the faint whiteness of the line where her unkempt hair parted.

Addressing Karabi, Nirmala said, 'You know, he was fond of cards and the drawing room of our house used to be their card-room. The eastern portion of the ancestral house of my father-in-law belonged to his mother's people. We had the western portion. We used to hear the boisterous laughter from the drawingroom till late at night. We had also to attend to the frequent orders for tea. I used to hear others talk about him quite often.'

Ajoy was taking off his coat. He asked, 'Quite often? Why?'

'Oh! you were quite famous, you know, what with your academic achievements and so forth. We may not have had much education ourselves but we certainly respect it.' Looking at Ajoy's pleasant face Nirmala continued, 'You got scholarships in your Matriculation and I.A., First Class in your B.A. and M.A. I also heard that you had become a college professor. But I don't remember your visiting your uncle's place, then or later.' Addressing his wife, Ajoy had jokingly said, 'Mark her words. It will help to increase your devotion to your husband.'

Nirmala had got up. 'I will be getting along. I have still a lot of unpacking and arranging to do. Good bye.'

'Good bye,' Ajoy replied. 'But I haven't asked you one thing.

How...

'How we are here? Well, you may say we

have just drifted into. Haven't you seen the hordes of refugees streaming in from across the border?

Karabi had then said by way of explaining, 'They are the new tenants in the rooms ground-floor.'

'Rooms ground-floor? You don't call them rooms — they are godowns. The heat there will make even the packing boxes sweat.' Nirmala had smiled and said in reply, 'They are good enough for refugees from Pakistan. After I became a widow I went to live with my parents. But not for long. First my father and then, a few years ago, my mother died. On the move once again, I found some sort of a home at my cousin's. Since then I have been with them, moving from place to place. Fetched up here in Calcutta at last. Why not come over sometime and meet my cousin?'

Courteous and social as ever, Ajoy called the very next morning on his way to his college. The cousin said, 'My name is Paresh Chandra Chattopadhyay. I had some property in Pakistan. I had also a restaurant next to the judge's court. Had to leave everything behind. What with a sick wife and children to bring up — there's no end to my troubles, sir. On the top of it all a widowed cousin round my neck. It's more than flesh and blood can bear.'

'Quite,' Ajoy had said sympathetically.

'I have been getting a nominal grant from the government. Now I am told even that will stop. Let me see if I can start an eating house here. Do you know of any vacant shop-room?'

Nirmala had been overhearing the conversation from the other room. She smiled to herself. Karabi had told her how busy Ajoy was these days. He had evening classes to lecture to, besides the regular ones. There was also the weekly lecture at the University. To ask him, of all persons, to look out for a shop-room!

She was not able to remember things in a chronological order. Memories came in odd bits, in ones and twos, unconnected and irrelevant. They seemed to be floating

about, like little bits of paper, in the void of her bewildered mind.

She remembered that long afterwards Ajoy had told her conversationally that he had liked her the very first day he saw her. He had liked, he said, her penance-pure widowhood, her natural grace, her measured and restrained speech. But above all, he said, he had liked the distant sadness of her eyes. Ajoy, Nirmala remembered, never could speak so many things together with ease. How he had blushed!

Often, during the way, Nirmala used to go up to Karabi just to gossip. The day used to wear on and Ajoy would come back from work. As soon as he came Nirmala would get up in a hurry; but most days Ajoy would insist on her staying on and sharing a cup of tea.

And that gradually became a daily routine. Before long Nirmala started preparing the tea herself. To prepare tea, serve it to those one liked and then take a cup — oh, how deeply satisfying the whole thing could be. No sooner the clock struck three than she felt an invisible urge to go upstairs. But for what? Thirst for a cup of tea? But she had her lunch only a little while ago. Surely it was too early to feel thirsty. And yet...and yet... She felt herself in the grip of a restless longing which was, seemingly, without an object.

Or was there an object? Was it male companionship that she hankered after? But in her husband she had it for six years. Was it, then, Ajoy's good looks, his refinement or was it his learning? But her husband was handsome too and in every-way as attractive. And how deeply he had loved her! Then what?

Well, there is no answer to this. How can anyone explain why, knowing full well the consequences, a man and a woman fall in love.

As for her, it was a long time before she knew she had fallen in love. She might even never have known it but for the ugly incident that day.

She had quarrelled with her cousin rather badly that morning. It was nothing

unusual, to be sure, in a family beset with want. But it was unseemly all the same. Nirmala was a poor relation and a dependent. The others saw to it that she never forgot it. That particular morning Nirmala's Boudi had held forth on how much Nirmala was costing them, and had made a particularly nasty hint. Nirmala, who had just sat down to her lunch, had replied with some heat. Didn't she pay for her keep by the hard work she put in, day in day out? 'What right have you, anyway, to talk in this fashion,' she had said. Most of the time you are in bed, and except to order people about in that squeaky voice of yours, have you ever done a spot of work yourself? The whole thing might have ended there. After all women do say such things to each other and forget about them. But why did her cousin have to join in?

Nirmala got up without taking a morsel.

She spent the whole day lying on the floor. For the first time in many days she was absent from the tea-table upstairs. Soon it became dark but still she did not feel like getting up. Her eyes had become reddish — not entirely from weeping. She had lied on a damp floor and her limbs ached now. She was also feverish.

It was evening now. Nirmala felt she could not go on lying on the floor any longer. But what will she do getting up? She was feeling so unwell and heavy in the head that work was out of the question. Thinking that a breath of fresh air might relieve her headache she went up to the terrace.

How could she know that Ajoy would then be there strolling alone? As soon as she saw him, she hurried back to come down but by that time Ajoy was right in front of her.

'Please don't go away.'

Rooted to the spot, Nirmala trembled all over. A mixture of fear and shyness gripped her. Traces of tears were still there all over her face. But still she made an effort to smile.

'Yes?'

'Why weren't you there at tea-time to-day? Do you know we had to boil the water twice and twice it got cold?'

'I wasn't well.'

'A cup of tea was just the thing then. In any case, you could have come up at least, couldn't you?'

'I didn't feel like climbing up the stairs.'

'Now, now. You must think up your excuses more carefully.'

Is it less of a climb to the terrace here? Are you sure it is not your mind which is ill?' Ajoy paused a little and then added, 'I know what happened. You quarrelled to-day.'

To be accused that it was she who had quarrelled and that by Ajoy! Nirmala could restrain herself no longer. There, in the deepening darkness of the still evening, Nirmala started crying and tears ran down her cheeks.

And in that dissolving moment Ajoy had touched her. Even now Nirmala felt something like an electric shock in recollecting it. Nirmala could never have imagined that Ajoy — so timid and shy, who till the other day found it difficult even to talk to her freely — would suddenly become so bold. Ajoy had taken one of her hands into his own. She could, of course, easily have forced it free. But whether it was because she had fasted or because she had wept so bitterly the whole day, she had no strength left at all. Besides, the hand that was holding hers was trembling too. Perhaps it would have been cruel to push it away.

'What's this? You are running a temperature?' By then Nirmala's nerves had started ringing wildly. All her senses, repressed by long widowhood into a forgotten, grey deadness, had suddenly sprung to life by the magic touch.

Ajoy had lifted her face up and had said, 'Nirmala, you are crying?'

Nirmala could not remember now what she did then, whether she cried meaning to laugh or whether she laughed meaning to cry.

There was nothing left in Nirmala, not

even the memory, of the pleasure she had tasted in her early youth. She had forgotten everything. Why, oh! why, did Ajoy rekindle the dangerous desire and rake up the thirst? Or was it that the desire and the thirst had been rekindled already? The intimacy at the tea-table, the small talk and the jokes, the eagerness to go up and join them at tea — these, perhaps, meant only that. It is just that she had not had the courage to acknowledge it so far.

'You have got to put up with what people say, you know. You can't start crying on that score.' Ajoy's fingers were still trembling, hesitant and overeager at the same time. He started wiping away the tears from Nirmala's eyes, Nirmala stood there as if turned to stone and went on scratching the cement of the terrace floor with the nail of her toe.

What is this you are doing Ajoy, here under the windy, open sky?

But hadn't Nirmala also thrown all shame to the winds? How otherwise could anyone melt away at a mere touch and hide one's face in another's chest and cry?

Sobbing, Nirmala had said so many things. 'I cannot carry on with this life any more. Oh, the indignity of it all. The food turns to ashes in my mouth. Widowhood I can bear but not this nameless existence. A hanger on!' And Ajoy, removing, with infinite tenderness, the unkempt locks from her forehead, had reassured her. 'You must not break down like that. You may think life has no meaning for you, everything is over and done with. But it is not so. One can always begin again. There is always time to realise one's worth. These days it's not difficult for women to stand on their legs. There are schools and institutions teaching useful crafts. In fact I am connected with a few. All you require is a little patience, courage and willingness, and you become independent in no time. You are so intelligent, you are sure to make it. Won't you try?'

Earning and independent! This parasitic life will be over! There will be a dawn to this night! Nirmala listened to Ajoy's

words as in a dream. In a barely audible voice she could only reply, 'Yes, I will; if you are there by my side.'

A few moments passed in silence. Then Nirmala said, 'Let's go down.'

While climbing up the stairs how heavy her body had seemed. Now, coming down, Nirmala felt light as a bird. It was long since she had felt so happy. The ugly quarrel earlier in the day was swept clean off her mind. Even her body seemed cured of its malaise.

Back in her room, Nirmala wound the end of her sari round her neck and prostrated herself in deep obeisance before the framed picture of her god. She then went to light the oven, humming to herself snatches from her favourite tune.

Boudi peeped in from outside the door. In her usual raucous voice she piped in.

'What's the matter with you? Why this rapture?'

'Rapture? Where did you find any rapture?'

'Well, you were humming a tune and smiling to yourself all right.'

'Oh, that's nothing.' Nirmala poured out a measure of oil in the pan over the stove and added, 'That was because I had cried so much during the day. I thought I would make amends by laughing a bit.'

Even after Boudi had left Nirmala went on smiling to herself for sometime. No, she could not tell Boudi where—from all this joy came. Why Boudi, she could not tell it to anyone — ever. It was like a truth gained through infinite devotion and pain. She will have to nurse it, like some delicate hot house creeper, in careful privacy. Even if the creeper flowers she will be not be able to give it a name. How can she, in the face of the stern visage of social custom, tell anyone the relationship between Ajoy and herself?

Hearing the sound of footsteps in the stairs Nirmala peeped out. There was a faint moonlight and she saw Ajoy and Karabi coming down. How gorgeously Karabi was dressed! It looked as if her sari was dyed scarlet with the very con-

cupiscence of her desire. As they passed out into the street Nirmala heard her chuckle in a suppressed voice.

Nirmala silently admired Ajoy's good sense. He might have fallen in love with her but he has not forgotten his husbandly duties. It was clever of him to have taken Karabi out to-night. No one will have any reason to suspect.

Boudi came again and stood by the door. She whispered, 'They are probably going to a late show.' Not getting any response from Nirmala, Boudi continued, half to herself, 'Happy, aren't they? Plenty of money, no kids to worry over. Can afford to gad about like love-birds any time they like.'

Instantaneously Nirmala's face turned ashen, and her heart started pounding like a hammer. Till then she hadn't thought about it that way at all. She was also happy in Ajoy's love, but still what a difference! Karabi's happiness was so demonstrably overflowing; there was no need to hide it. Karabi could taste it, if she liked, with the whole world looking on.

Nirmala heaved a deep sigh. She felt so empty within. She will never taste it that way. Her happiness will never be enriched by social consent. For each of their meetings they will have to wait. Their meetings can only be in the darkness of secrecy, only by cheating the thousand wakeful eyes of people around. Will Ajoy ever be able to take her out as he took out Karabi to-night?

Nirmala tossed in her lonely bed till late that night. The clock struck eleven, then half-past and then twelve. It was quiet all around. After a while she heard Ajoy and Karabi return. They were laughing in low tones as they went up.

The whole town was now sleeping, as if it were dead. Yet, Nirmala could not sleep. She kept awake the whole night with her face buried in the pillow, and, with her bare finger, went on writing on the bed sheet—

'Ajoy, I thank you. You have charted out a new world for me—a world of free-

dom and self-reliance. You have also loved me. No one will know about it. I will not speak about it to anyone. This happiness and this pain—they will be mine and mine only.'

But it is all over now.

Ajoy had kept his word. He had helped Nirmala to earn a livelihood. She was now teaching sewing in an institution. She had also started learning some crafts. She was not earning enough yet to be wholly self-supporting but she was no longer wholly dependent on her cousin either. She had started contributing towards expenses. She could justly feel proud of herself, couldn't she?

How long Nirmala sat there, wrapped in her thoughts, she had no idea. She was startled out of her reverie by a fresh chorus of wailing. Apparently Karabi had returned after the ceremonial bath at the river, where she had to take off her ornaments one by one, dress herself in a coarse borderless sari and rub out the vermilion mark on her forehead.

Karabi's voice, Nirmala noticed, had grown hoarse with crying. She was hardly able to cry any more. Only a sort of an animal groan came out of her now. She was trying to break her head on the threshold of her bed-room.

No longer need Nirmala envy Karabi.

She was now in the same position as Nirmala. She had even to wear the same sort of dress and eat the same sort of food. Yet, the thought came to Nirmala, Karabi had the consolation of being able to cry out aloud. Nirmala dare not even drop a tear.

From to-morrow morning, Nirmala sadly thought, Karabi will be receiving hundreds of letters of condolence. They will pass resolutions at the college, and at the local institutions Ajoy was associated with. Those will be conveyed to Karabi in solemn formality.

The fire in the oven had gone out long ago. The cooking was over. Nirmala took out a piece of burnt coal from the oven. With it she started writing on the floor.

'Ajoy, for the last time I bow to you. When they carried you away I had to watch you from afar. I did not have the courage to come forward and take your dear feet into my hands. I was even denied the opportunity of crying. There is no one I could tell what I have lost to-day.

But I don't complain. Ever since the tremulous evening when you first touched me under the open sky I have borne alone my unbearable happiness. Equally alone will I bear this crushing burden of my sorrow.'

A shadow moved in the passage outside the room. Was that Boudi again?

Quickly Nirmala took a piece of wet cloth and rubbed out the writing. No one should see, no one should know, no one.

(Translated from Bengali by Kironmoy Raha)

DISCUSSION

Tagore's Message to the World

In *Soviet Land*, No. 18 (September 1960), V. Romanov commented critically on Stephen Hay's paper on Tagore's Message to the World, published in the Special May issue of *Quest*. We reproduce below V. Romanov's comment along with Stephen Hay's reply.

—SOVIET COLLEAGUES ARE RIGHT—

'At one of the sessions of the subsection on Indian philology and art the American scholar Stephen Hay of Chicago read a paper on the world outlook of Rabindranath Tagore. Hay's views boiled down to the assertion that the great Indian poet and philosopher had been a proponent of a deep and insurmountable distinction between the ideology of the East and the West. Rabindranath Tagore is highly appreciated and widely studied in the Soviet Union. It is quite natural that Hay's assertions, backed up by some quotations taken out of context from Tagore's works, provoked objections from Soviet indologists. Yevgeni Chelyshev, Vera Novikova and Nikolai Goldberg came out with objections during the debates on the paper. They contended that the great Indian humanist was never an adherent nor the founder of the actually reactionary theory of national exclusiveness. The Soviet scientists stated that Tagore, both in his practical activities and in his published works, always defended the principles of the all-round development and progress of the national cultures in their closest interrelations. A dispute arose. Its outcome was settled by the speeches of the Indian delegates, who supported the points of view of their Soviet colleagues. Hay was unable to refute their convincing arguments.'

—V. ROMANOV

Reply

By STEPHEN HAY

SEVERAL friends in India have called my attention to the above report by Mr. V. Romanov and have asked me to comment on it. As a historian I am naturally interested in straightening out confused reports of past events, one example of which this is. It also seems in keeping with Rabindranath's life-long

efforts to foster mutual understanding among nations that a fuller and more accurate account should be published of this important session of the 25th International Congress of Orientalists, held at Moscow on August 11, 1960.

Quest readers will already have noticed in the preceding issue the verbatim text of

the paper which I presented to that Congress, on the origins of Rabindranath's concept of the complementary character of Eastern and Western civilizations. On the first page of that paper I cited the statement of purpose of his Visva-Bhārati University, one of whose aims is 'to seek to realize in a common fellowship of study the meeting of the East and the West, and thus ultimately to strengthen the fundamental conditions of world peace...'. When Mr. Romanov wrote that I had presented Rabindranath as 'a proponent of a deep and insurmountable distinction between the ideology of the East and the West,' he must have overlooked this and similar statements by Rabindranath quoted in my paper. While it is true, as I tried to show, that Rabindranath did believe that 'Eastern' and 'Western' civilizations were fundamentally different in character, it is not correct to say that he believed these differences to be insurmountable, for he devoted a great deal of effort in his travels, his lectures, and his writings, to bringing about a reconciliation, a harmony, and even a synthesis between them.

The discussion which followed my paper has also not been reported accurately by Mr. Romanov. As far as my notes and my memory enable me to recall, no one objected that I had used 'quotations taken out of context from Tagore's works.' It would have been unreasonable for either Mr. Chelishev or Mr. Goldberg to have made such an objection, because neither of them (as they told me the following day at a very friendly informal gathering) reads Bengali. Mme. Novikova, who knows Bengali quite well, did not take part in the discussion of my papers.

It is also not true that Tagore's belief in Eastern and Western civilizations was the main subject of the discussion. Only Mr. Goldberg, who had unfortunately missed the opening pages of my paper, criti-

cized me for giving as my opinion the belief that there existed a difference between Eastern and Western civilizations, or between the social and the economic bases of these civilizations. I replied that he had misunderstood me, and that the statements he had thought were my own were actually statements made by Rabindranath himself.

The one issue which engendered some controversy in the discussion was raised by Mr. Chelishev, who said that my paper had not stressed Rabindranath's role in the Indian struggle for independence and against colonialism. Perhaps Mr. Chelishev raised this point because he was thinking of Rabindranath's *influence on the nationalist movement* (which was certainly considerable), whereas I was interested in his *attitude toward India and Indian nationalism*. To further illustrate this attitude, I quoted a passage from a letter which Rabindranath wrote in 1908, shortly after his withdrawal from participation in nationalist politics:

'I have embraced Humanity—I will not buy glass at the price of diamonds—I will not permit patriotism to take precedence over humanity in my life—I took two steps down this path and saw that I could go no further—if I cannot see religion and all mankind as superior to my country, if God is obscured by attachment to the country, then I am deprived of the food of my soul.'¹

I am surprised that Mr. Romanov did not report this part of the discussion, for it touched on a very important aspect of Rabindranath's thought.

This was the main substance of the discussion, as far as I can recollect it. Mr. Romanov's assertion that the Indian delegates supported the Soviet speakers is curious, since no Indian scholar took part in this particular discussion. Later in this same session, Dr. Kalidas Nag delivered a paper on 'Tagore and South-East Asia,' and at the conclusion of the session Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee and Sri Gopal

¹ Letter in Bengali from Rabindranath Thakur to Arabindamohan Basu of no date [c. 1908], 'Chithipatra' (Letters), *Visva-Bharati Patrika*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (July-September, 1955), p. 2.

Halдар spoke on preparations for the celebration of the Tagore Centenary. To the best of my knowledge, none of them criticized my paper, and if they had done so, the chairman of the session, Prof. Ruben of Humboldt University, East Berlin, would as a matter of course have asked me if I wished to reply, as he did after the criticisms of the two Soviet Indologists. I presume therefore that the concluding sentence of Mr. Romanov's account, 'Hay was unable to refute their convincing arguments,' is merely a polemical phrase rather than a description of the actual discussion.

Readers of *Quest* should not conclude from the many corrections I have had to

make in Mr. Romanov's account that the Soviet Indologists at the session were in any way responsible for the errors made by a careless reporter. As conscientious scholars, they would reject, I am sure, the claim implied in the heading of Mr. Romanov's paragraph that they are, as a group, any more 'right' than the scholars of any other country. The atmosphere at the 25th International Congress of Orientalists was generally quite cordial and I am grateful to my Soviet colleagues for their hospitality and for many interesting conversations. I look forward with pleasure to seeing both them and my Indian colleagues again at the 26th Congress, which is to be held in 1963 at New Delhi.

The essential advantage for a poet is not, to have a beautiful world with which to deal: it is to be able to see beneath both beauty and ugliness.

—T. S. ELIOT

Talking About Books

By SADHAN KUMAR GHOSH

THE scarcity of Good English should be, but is not, a matter for general concern. A recent debunking monograph made the telling point that academic V.I.P.s are committing scandalous solecisms—and, alas, getting away with them. Probably readers—and pupils—get the English they deserve. Still, one is grateful for chunks of good English, such as are provided by the 'Bedside Guardian' and 'Pick of Punch'. *Pick of Punch*, edited by Bernard Hollowood and published by Arthur Barker represents a great tradition maintained by successful experiments. The great tradition links it with Mark Lemon, R. C. Lehmann, Owen Seaman, E. V. Knox, Kenneth Bird—and, of course, Malcolm Muggeridge. Of the contributors, I like Tom Girtin best, though H. F. Ellis, whose *25 years' Hard* published by Max Parrish is a 'Pick of Punch' of another kind, has many devoted readers. H. F. Ellis always forms the hard core of any 'Pick of Punch'. But Tom Girtin is the nearest thing we have to Thackeray (the essayist, part of him)—at once mellow and mordant, offering 'mild and bitter' and a very saloon bar feeling. I miss, though, the more astringent humour of the Muggeridge period—and I wonder whether beatniks, who have been cluttering the shopwindows so long should not now be shown the door. And no one need pull his punches.

The Bedside Guardian 9 published by Collins seems to contain the usual proportion of Neville Cardus, Alistair Cooke, James Morris—but alas, also, Taya Zankin. The mixture as before, when it needn't have been. But it is enough for me that James Morris and Neville Cardus are here. Unfortunately both Cardus and Morris have only a piece each. James Morris, I think is a writer who ought to have received more critical acclaim and popular attention than he has so far received. For sheer good prose, his 'Marches of Seleukia' will take some beating. And the Cardus piece is not about cricket at all. Perhaps the springy, Howard Springy prose of Alistair Cooke is some compensation, but not enough. Why one wonders, so fine a writer as David Low is represented only by his Cartoons? Almost as bad as to reproduce

Max's Cartoons and ignore 'Seven Men' or 'And Even Now'. But perhaps one should accept Alastair Hetherington's assurance that like Quince they 'Come not to offend but with goodwill'.

Julian Symons's *The Thirties* published by Cresset Press is not just a fascinating source book or key document or literary history. He brings a decade to life. Christopher Isherwood conveys the savour of the Twenties in *Lions and Shadows* published by Methuen but the 'third decade' has proved more elusive. John Lehmann has signally failed to convey its mood either when he was describing it or when he was 'looking backwards' in wartime London. I am not forgetting Malcolm Muggeridge's *The Thirties*. But Muggeridge was a chronicler and, in the 'Thirties' context a less 'engaged' person than Julian Symons.

The great merit of Symons is that he seems to be aware of the pointlessness of constantly defending the bad against the worse. Those who play the Generations game find this situation getting in their hair all the time. In the Thirties context both Lehmann and Leavis, for example, are highly prejudiced writers, though Lehmann is usually mellow and urbane. Symons conveys but does not exaggerate the significance of Auden, Day Lewis and Spender. Their poetry marked a real break with the Twenties. Not in mere pre-occupation with pylons and pitworks. They set out to be 'unpoetical'. They eschewed titles (Very appropriately, Symons concedes the significance of *Lions and Shadows*, the best autobiography of the period). They evolved a private, conspiratorial language. *The Ascent of F6*, for example, is an obvious attempt to reconcile private jokes and public events.

The Thirties was also the decade of the little Reviews, of Group Theatres and Surrealism. And of the Left Book Club. It is unkind and unfair, in retrospect, to say that the Left Book Club's chief function was to serve as a propaganda machine for communism (But, of course, Julian Symons is an ex-Marxian). I entirely endorse George Orwell's caricature of a Left Book Club meeting in *Coming up for Air*, but that is a

different standpoint. It was also the era of Mass-observation and of the Oxford Collective Poem.

With equal fairness, Symons emphasises the significance of the heretics of the Thirties — Wyndham Lewis, George Orwell and Robert Graves. He admits — what Christopher Hollis, John Morris and John Lehmann have tried to conceal — that both Lewis and Orwell were actually persecuted for their heterodox and inconvenient opinions. Orwell had been shocked and embarrassed by the behaviour of the Communists in Catalonia. Robert Graves who has just become Professor of Poetry at Oxford rightly distrusted the manifestation of political feeling in art and he also argued that Auden's poetry was wholly imitative. I believe men so different as Anthony Powell and Sir C. P. Snow supported Graves. The decade started literary slanging matches and Geoffrey Grigson the talented poet who has just brought out a very evocative book, *English Excursions* rendered a great service by exposing some of Edith Sitwell's plagiarisms. She had been helping herself, liberally, to Sir Herbert Read's writings on Hopkins. But then came Munich and anti-Romanticism had spent itself. The Dylan Thomases and their followers might well adapt Sir William Harcourt and say 'We are all romantics now.' And so, Julian Symons is bang on target in claiming that the Thirties movement died silently without a bang or a whimper, for by the end of 1939 the great tide of left-wing feeling had receded beyond the bounds of vision.

After they have tired of the brilliance and the messianism of the Thirties, they might do worse than look at the *Fearful Fifties* by David Low and published by Bodley Head. The Cartoonist is an alpha plus chronicler. Never has potted history been so delectably told and the savour of unsavoury things so surely captured. Makarios at Seychelles counting sea-shells on the sea-shore; summit conferences deadlocked between the extremely unlikely and the highly improbable; Anthony Eden proving by his mistake in Suez that the go-it-alone policy was played out in the modern world; young hooligans beating up West Indians at Notting Hill; eleven Africans being clubbed to death in Hola prison camp in Kenya — these are some of the cameos. Speculating upon the future a la Orwell or a la Aldous Huxley is not in his line or up his street. At the moment, four unpredictables Dr. Adenauer, President De Gaulle, Chiang Kai Shek and Pandit Nehru 'aged monuments of dedicated personal rule each the personification of a disputed but stubbornly held idea' are blocking all change. But the threads of

the Fifties continue into the Sixties and the Seventies and life is unlikely to be without peril. A very Housmannish sentiment.

Henry Miller is a significant writer but like D. H. Lawrence his reputation tends to be inflated and vamped up. The fact that many of his books are banned may also be an explanation. He has been more fortunate than D. H. Lawrence in his impresarios and *The Best of Henry Miller* published by Heinemann is a very fine and representative anthology. Miller has tortured, honest mind and his impulse to tell the truth is similar to Rousseau's. His accounts of persons and landscapes derive their effectiveness from this uninhibited honesty. It is interesting to recall his portrait of the French writer Blaise Cendrars. Like Miller, Cendrars, too, felt that D. H. Lawrence was an overrated writer and his characters 'mouth-pieces of the philosophy he wishes to depose'. The excerpts from 'The World of Sex' as well as 'The Tropic of Cancer' partially reveal the hypnotic honesty of this remarkable man. But I do not think that Lawrence Durrell's introduction is the best guide to Henry Miller. The best introduction to Henry Miller is Orwell's famous essay 'Inside the Whale'.

Had Gilbert Murray been living to-day, he would have welcomed A. R. Burn's *The Lyric Age of Greece* published by Edward Arnold. Like Fisher's *History of Europe* or the books of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, it is a great humanist document. It used to be said of the historian, Warde Fowler, that he could describe ancient Romans as intimately and vividly as if they were his friends and neighbours and A. R. Burn has this very rare gift, denied, alas to scholars like Trevor-Roper or Classicists like T. S. Eliot.

A. R. Burn gives a moving brilliant account of the Greek world in the sixth and seventh centuries B. C. The history of ancient Greece is largely a history of man's efforts to come to terms with the Gods. Without the social disintegration and fall of the Bronze Age, the cult of the Hero could not have come into being. Maybe, this very individualism proved the nemesis of the City-States. About 700 B.C., the maritime cities of Greece started on the paths of political experiment and expansion. This colonial culture produced Stesichoros, whom the great Pindar acknowledged as a master and who has been bracketed by Simonides with Homer as an authority on the ancient myths.

Burn's account of the transition from the 'oral' society to literacy is a real achievement. The first poet who is more than 'aiodos' or 'rhapsode' is

Archilochos. Then there were Kallinos of Ephesos and Mimnermus of Kolophon. The second of these poets, thanks to W. J. Cory, is not quite unknown to English-speaking readers. The melancholy of his sweet and melodious verse foreshadows poetry of the Hellenistic age. Youth is fleeting, and after that there is nothing to look forward to except death and old age. The *Cri de Coeur* of all great poetry.

Burn is just and fair to the tyrants, particularly Polycrates and Miltiades but he does not make the mistake of describing them as democrats. (Though, maybe, the tyrants did practise a sort of basic democracy). Anacreon could not have flourished without the support of the tyrants. Burn's account of the lyric age of Lesbos is of special interest. The world remembers Sappho's passionate love for her girl friends. Just how erotic some of Sappho's poems were is only imperfectly known. The absence of shame is a characteristic of Sappho. It is, however fair to remember that the popular tradition of Sappho is distorted and literary-dependent on the Middle Comedy of Aristophanes. But the world will find it hard to forget or to be churlish about those lines of Sappho, heavy with the scent of apples and springtime flowers. She was the poet of the groves, not of the city temples.

Hesperie panta pheron hosa phainolis eskedas Auos — 'Hesperus, thou bringest all that the bright Dawn parted asunder; thou bringest the goat, thou bringest the child to its mother'.

She is, too, the poet of the moonlight and the poignancy of this fragment — 'The moon has set and the Pleiades; it is midnight; the time is passing; and I lie alone' — has not been healed by the centuries.

A number of striking and significant books on tragedy have appeared recently. These would include Irving Ribner's *Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy* published by Methuen and D. D. Raphael's *Paradox of Tragedy* published by Allen and Unwin. John Lawlor's *The Tragic Sense in Shakespeare* published by Chatto and Windus is a welcome addition to this Company. Like D. D. Raphael (and of course Prof. F. L. Lucas and McNeill Dixon), he explores the nature of Tragedy. Like Irving Ribner, Lily Campbell and A. C. Bradley, he limits his analysis to Shakespearean Tragedy. There are four references to Willard Farnham, but the medieval heritage of Shakespearean Tragedy is treated, on the whole, in an incidental way.

Like D. D. Raphael and Prof. Peter Alexander, Prof. Lawlor stresses the paradoxical and my-

sterious nature of the tragic experience. He finds the centre of Shakespearean Tragedy in a co-existence of opposites, antinomies or conflicts. The point is that the conflicts are different — between appearance and reality in *Henry IV* and *Henry V*; between man as agent and patient, in *Hamlet*; between accident and design in *Othello*; between natural and supernatural in *Macbeth*; between imaginative sympathy and justice in *King Lear*. The variations lead him to endorse Kenneth Muir's remark: 'There is no such thing as Shakespearean Tragedy: there are only Shakespearean Tragedies'. Unfortunately, Kenneth Muir was being obviously facetious and paraphrasing M. R. Ridley. Prof. Ridley himself would recant his opinion now, as he told me at Bedford College when I met him in 1959. Kathleen Tillotson who was present reiterated that Shakespearean Tragedy represented a real and coherent idea.

I find no evidence that Prof. Lawlor has seen Miss Helen Gardner's brilliant analysis of *Hamlet* in her *The Business of Criticism*. Miss Gardner explains why the waiting role is thrust on Hamlet and why he has to be sometimes an agent and sometimes a patient. Prof. Lawlor's analysis is quite independent of L. C. Knights' highly valuable work 'An approach to *Hamlet*', though some overlapping is unavoidable. The tragic conflict in Hamlet arises from the hero's uncertainty about the nature of revenge. Revenge is not Justice and it is not Honour. The Tragic conflict arises because the hero shies away from the deed that is required of him but never realises the cause of his own aversion. He is unlike the heroes of Tourneur and Chapman.

The role of accident in Tragedy was stressed in the Middle Ages and the concept of Fortune is not otherwise explicable. The Renaissance, however stressed Nemesis and the two concepts come to a head-on clash — in Prof. Lawlor's view — in *Othello*. The quotations from Dante, which refer the actions of Fortune to the unsearchable wisdom of Providence, are very apt, but it would have been just as well, to state the fallacies of Stoll, Leavis and T. S. Eliot. This expectation is not fulfilled but Prof. Lawlor's findings would really rehabilitate Bradley. He finds the centre of the tragedy in the accident that brings together an Othello and an Iago.

D. G. James, in *The Dream of Learning* claims that Shakespeare in the end 'saw evil still, and suffering; but he also saw a certain power in human nature to overcome the world and to make the world fade in our imaginations and leave not a rack behind'. Prof. Lawlor seeks to modify that

and chooses *King Lear*, the greatest of the plays, for his text. In tragic experience, he argues, we cannot intervene; and in the last action of the play, Edgar is wrong in attempting a kindness. Evil, in Prof. Lawlor's view, is a dreadful simplicity that plots unwittingly its own destruction — 'Shakespeare's greatest single gift is an unwearied sense of the natural tie — the utter punishment of separate existence, on the one hand; on the other, the endlessly fruitful possibilities once the human circle holds'. In Shakespearean Tragedy, *pace* Danby, the power of the natural bond is the only final reality. Only that and what Albert Schweitzer's phrase, 'a reverence for life.'

John Bayley's *The Romantic Survival* completed a quartet of familiar recent books on Romanticism — Prof. Bowra's great book *The Romantic Imagination* and the books of Foakes and Kermode being the others. Now in *The Characters of Love* — also published by Constable he is back to the romantic theme of all time. The romantic vision of love is characterised by single-mindedness and is unconcerned with whatever may be the 'whole truth'. The romantic message is essentially forthright and not mysterious. Maybe, this unites such disparate works as *Prelude* and *Sorrows of Werther* and gives point of Proust's endorsement of a remark on love by Le Bruyere. The whole point of *The Characters of Love* is the antinomy between sex and love. In modern literature Sex represents the Establishment; love is the outsider.

Mr. Bayley's profound, but tortuous analysis rests on three examples, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Shakespeare's *Othello* and Henry James's *The Golden Bowl*. *Troilus* typifies Boethian man, not heroic man and his sense of love and death is deeply and conventionally medieval. Chaucer misses no opportunity of showing how helpless the courtly lover is in face of the inflexible requirements of love. In *Othello* the tragic idea of love clashes with the social idea. The hero's tragedy in love is linked with a simple, unsophisticated primitive world. That is why there is no formal communion in sorrow as there is in *King Lear*. *Othello's* tragedy is personal, culminating in isolation and total loneliness of spirit and our responses must be correspondingly solitary.

The great Romantics, Mr. Bayley points out, are confident and despotic creators. They have an excellent ear, for what is about to happen to us emotionally. The key word, in his analysis, is 'depersonalisation'. The idea of free, unmanipulated character apprehended by love and what Mr. Bayley calls the delight in the existence of another person has gone out and we can no longer

say of the modern novelist's characters what Henry James said of Balzac's men and women: 'It was by loving them that he knew them, not by knowing them that he loved'.

The Greeks did not approve of romantic love and regarded it as an unalloyed misfortune, the interference of an arbitrary god. The chorus of Corinthian women in Euripides's *Medea* cry out that love as an obsession brings neither glory nor greatness. This note of terror runs throughout Greek literature. The idylls of Theocritus derive their poignancy from the sense that love as a flashpoint between men and women is a visitation at once arbitrary and inexorable.

One may claim that Mr. Bayley has salvaged and delimited the glory of Love. Love, he says, is the condition of personality and taking other people's reality for granted is the first requirement of love. Maybe, also the first requirement of character creation. This book is a memory of these miracles.

Nicholas Bentley has inherited his father's — his father was the famous E. C. Bentley — precise, meticulous prose. His *A Choice of Ornaments* published by Andre Deutsch is the kind of delectable book that one can no longer expect. Many years ago, Alan Pryce-Jones attempted something similar in 'Private Opinions' and of course there are the books of Logan Pearsall Smith. This enchanting book is, therefore, a miscellany which is also an autobiography. Bentley's admirers and addicts must have enjoyed his *A Version of the Truth*. This is another Version of the truth.

And so, the nostalgia for his early years is recorded partly by himself, but aided by judicious quotations from Southey, Robert Byron, Somerset Maugham and Laurie Lee. When he recalls his favourite books and his distrust of the quasi-reader he is not ashamed of his ignorance of Dante or his familiarity with Raymond Chandler. His reading has been indiscriminate — the best readers in the world have always been browsers — and it is natural that he should commend Maurice Baring whose great erudition did not prevent him from being an eager rather than an expectant reader.

Mr. Bentley's topics are various and include art and philosophic doubt but do not exclude cookery. He has been a bit of a Kibitzer, an onlooker. With eager, indiscriminate curiosity he has been watching the pageantry of life — roadmenders at work, housebreakers, processions, parades and presumably the marchers to Aldermaston. He is fascinated by the glow, rather than hypnotised by the glory of life. And whether one regards his

book as an anthology or as an autobiography, one must commend his unique choice of ornaments. The most delectable things are the digressions. For him, as for Tristram Shandy, 'digressions incontestably, are the sunshine—they are the life, the soul of reading'.

Shakespeare Survey 13 published by Cambridge University Press is devoted almost exclusively to *King Lear*. Stampfer's essay on the Catharsis is a stimulating treatment of a difficult subject. No real conclusion however is reached and all one is told that it is not the tragedy of hubris but the tragedy of penance. Kenneth Muir thinks that Shakespeare shared the sceptical views of Reginald Scott and Samuel Harsnett on demonology and witchcraft. Ergo, Lear's madness has nothing supernatural about it. The most satisfactory essay is not about Lear but about the influence of *King Lear* on Keats. D. G. James thinks that it was a formative influence and enabled Keats to perceive the beauty which is suffused with sorrow and which overcomes what is disagreeable and repulsive.

Saturday book 20 edited by John Hadfield and published by Hutchinson continues to maintain the high standard of luxury production. Robert Drake's charming, connoisseurish essay on 'Saki'

is something one does not expect in *Saturday Book*. There are Michael Sadleirish evocations of the Victorian age, including Belton Cobb's raking up of the Rookery. Ivor Brown's reminiscences of great actors are enchanting. There are two men in England who would always be worth hearing on this subject—Ivor Brown and Sir Compton Mackenzie. Paul Einzigs *In the Centre of Things* published by Hutchinson is a very competent and readable autobiography. There is profound wisdom in his remark, that in the long run, success and failure do not matter. *Poems I remember* by Christmas Humphreys and published by Michael Joseph is a delightful anthology which has only a remote ancestor in *Texts and Pretexts*. It has more in common with an anthology once compiled by John Masefield of poems he liked particularly. There is nothing pretentious or pedantic but much occasional wisdom in this book. An example is his high praise and inclusion of Gibson's moving elegy on Rupert Brooke. Another is his remark 'Many foreigners to whom English is an acquired tongue not only speak it perfectly but write firm English prose. Few, however, acquire such mastery that they can use it for the far subtler medium of verse'. He considers Sarojini Nayudu an exception.



BOOKS

THOUGHT REFORM OF THE CHINESE INTELLECTUALS by Theodore H. E. Chen, (Oxford University Press — Hong Kong University Press) — Rs. 27.50.

THE most ominous part of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* is the appendix on the principles of Newspeak, the official language of Oceania. Newspeak had been devised to meet the ideological needs of the State. In a brilliant approach to linguistics Orwell constructed a political vocabulary whose words necessarily implied desirable mental attitudes. In consequence, it was possible in Oceania to eliminate political ideas and concepts hostile to the state because it was just not possible to express them. A transliteration of old political literature into Newspeak involved ideological translation, alteration in sense as well as language.

The language of politics in China reminds one of Newspeak. The phrases ('the Five-Anti Campaign'), the slogans ('counter offensive to repel the ferocious attacks of the bourgeoisie') and the classifications ('intellectuals and semi-intellectuals') that litter political writing make for a turgidity and debasement of language which slowly becomes too inflexible for fundamental heresies or independent thought. Language becomes a weapon to enforce orthodoxy and to impose conformity of ideas. In his report to the First National People's Congress in June 1957 Chou En-lai described 'the ideological remoulding to change the outlook, the thought patterns and the basic loyalties of the people' as one of the five major campaigns for consolidation of state power.

That such a situation should arise in

China is a matter of historical irony. In the thirties and the forties it was the consensus of opinion of writers on the Chinese political situation that a country of the size of China with its ancient history and ethos, its Confucian traditions of family life and respect for learning could not become communist. When events confounded this prognosis the new opinion was that communism in China would be a mild and tolerant form of communism. But any communist revolution is a total revolution. It tries to recast the political, social and economic structure within the state and enforces conformity of thought as well as of action. 'Correct thought' and approved responses are of vital importance in a communist country to sustain the total state. In the words of Mao Tse-tung 'thought reform, especially the thought reform of the intellectuals, is one of the most important prerequisites for the realization of democratic reform and industrialization.'

Dr. Theodore H. E. Chen, Professor of Asiatic studies in the University of Southern California has written an interesting account of the indoctrination and thought reform in China. The historical narrative brings out the nuances in the communist policy towards the intellectuals.

By 1942 the communists of China who were concentrated at Yen-an had inaugurated an 'ideological remoulding campaign' to combat 'unproletarian ideology', 'idealism' and similar unhealthy thoughts. It was at their conference in May that Mao Tse-tung explained in a famous speech his thesis that literature and art must essentially serve political purposes. 'Ideological warfare and the warfare in art and litera-

ture, especially revolutionary ideological warfare and revolutionary warfare in art and literature, must be subordinate to political warfare'. And in a sanitary approach to communist hierarchy he declared, 'whenever I compare unreformed intellectuals with workers, peasants and soldiers, I feel that not only are there many unclean things in the minds of the intellectuals but their bodies are also unclean. The cleanest people are the workers and peasants, even though their hands may be soiled and their feet smeared with animal excreta. Anyway they are still cleaner than the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie.'

The early approach of the state in 1949 and 1950 was relatively mild. Intellectuals were exhorted to join the mass study movement for 'self remoulding' or the revolutionary universities for 're-education.' Special campaigns of 'the thought-struggle' were launched against specific errors like individualism (for instance excessive love of one's family) or bourgeois ideology (like appreciation of European concepts of art and architecture). By 1951 the communists had consolidated their power and the Korean war provided them with an opportunity to extend their control and to demand uncritical acceptance in the name of national emergency. The 'Regulations for the Suppression of Counter-Revolutionary Activities' of February 1951 set off a wave of terrorism by 'public trials' and a system of mutual spying. Prominent public and literary figures of 'pre-liberation' period were denigrated. Hu Shih one of the representative figures of the Chinese Renaissance who symbolised the ancient cultural heritage of China was denounced by his son as 'an enemy of the people,' and reviled in a country wide campaign. But the particular method of humiliating intellectuals and making them submissive to the dictates of the state was the emphasis on confessions. Scholars, intellectuals and professional men, after soul searching and what was euphemistically called 'self-criticism' suddenly revealed their past inadequacies and failings which they declar-

ed to their fellow workers by self denunciations coupled with admiration for Chairman Mao's apocalyptic teachings. Hu Fong, a communist literary figure against whom a campaign was waged in 1955 capitulated with 'My Self Criticism' in which after expressing his penitence he admired Chairman Mao's policy on art and literature and thanked the pack of comrades who had hounded him for their constructive criticism.

The discontent generated by the terror was an impediment to scientific and technological progress on which the state was very keen. A new approach was adopted in May 1956 with a secret address by Chairman Mao to the Supreme State Conference to which is attributed the slogan 'Let a hundred schools contend together'. The immediate reaction of the people was timid and cautious. In February 1957 to alleviate the misgiving of the intellectuals whose restlessness was causing concern to the regime, Mao Tse-tung argued that his thesis of tolerating contradictions within a communist society was in accordance with Marxist dialectics providing that the contradictions were 'non-antagonistic.' The response of the intellectuals was a little hesitant and slow at first but it soon astonished the communists in its magnitude and violence. The tentative remarks of the 'democratic parties' (allowed to exist in China as antediluvian curiosities) gave way to harsh criticism by scholars on party control of education, by journalists on identification of the state with the communist party and by artists and writers on the Party's directives on art and literature. May 1957 was a month of resplendent blossoming in Mao's garden. But the outburst was alarming to the communists and Chairman Mao's speeches were now found to contain subtle distinction between 'fragrant flowers' and 'poisonous weeds.' Any criticism that challenged communist dogma was obviously reactionary, unpatriotic and poisonous. The weeds were ruthlessly uprooted in the severe rectification campaign in which the leading

apostates confessed their errors before the National People's Congress in July 1957 in ludicrous speeches of self-degradation. ('My whole life history is wicked and ugly'. 'My ugly face as...an opponent of the party and socialism has been completely unmasked' and similar confessions in the manner of tabloid weeklies).

Dr. Chen's narrative does not compare the Chinese approach with its Soviet prototype. But it seems clear that the Chinese have been more thorough in their attempts to deprive citizens of all independent thought. In view of 'the unusual spring' of 1957, Dr. Chen ends on a note of cautious optimism. But the manner in which all critics have been declared as 'counter revolutionary enemies of the democratic dictatorship' and wiped out without mercy suggests that communists may resort to slogans of toleration in order to expose latent critics of the Party.

The Chinese insistence on their interpretation of the Gospel of Marx and Engels has been so keen that they now claim to follow Marxism in its pristine form whereas the Soviet Union grows soft and talks of coexistence with 'the West'. In support of their Byzantine tradition the people of the Great Russia used to refer to Moscow as the 'third Rome'. It may well be that before long the Chinese will claim that Peking is 'the second Moscow' and that the mantle of Stalin as the high priest of Marxism now rests on Chairman Mao.

ASHOK N. DESAI

BRITAIN IN INDIA by R. P. Masani (Oxford University Press, Rs 15.00)

THE British rule in India has been more than a mere foreign rule. Its impact on our culture, politics, administration, education, legal system and thinking in general has been so very profound and varied that it is difficult to assess it satisfactorily. The task of assessment becomes all the more difficult for a generation of Indians, like our own, which has lived through the intensity of its impact on all walks of our



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lives. It is therefore devoid of the necessary perspective.

There is, however, another way of looking at the contact between Britain and India. That is in terms of problems and dilemmas which the situations at different times in this country created for the people of Britain. In his *Britain in India*, Sir R. P. Masani has analysed some of them in a masterly fashion. He points out how some of these dilemmas were faced with a great deal of sincerity and courage and others were callously neglected by the ruling country. These dilemmas were confronted while administering the conquered territories, while introducing social and educational reforms, while gradually conceding a greater and greater measure of self-government and finally, while transferring the power to the two nations on the Indian sub-continent.

Sir Rustom has written a fascinating book. With a disarming note of modesty he has prefaced his narrative with the follow-

ing words: 'The author of this retrospect is not a historian nor an active politician; but has been an eye-witness of many stirring incidents in the country's history.... During the two decades preceding the declaration of independence and the country's partition he had the privilege of interpreting the best mind in the Indian National Congress to successive representatives of the British Crown and of striving to make rough places smooth.' He therefore felt that he had something to say which had escaped the attention of the student of Indian contemporary affairs. Consequently, he undertook to review Britain in India with all 'its romance, its glory, its tragedy, and its pathos.'

The book begins with the evidence of the familiarity of British sailors and adventurers who visited India and carried stories about her splendours as recorded in English literature. From there it comes right upto the Mountbatten Plan for the partition and the transfer of power.

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From the conquest of India to the withdrawal of the British authority the basic problem for Britain had been that of *justifying* either the British rule in India or its withdrawal. The justification during the period of her prolonged rule in India was that Britain alone could give India an efficient and just administration; and the justification for withdrawing British rule was that Indian political manhood had come of age and that Britain had fulfilled her mission of preparing the Indians for the art of self-government.

— It was the feeling of the completion of such a mission, as it were, that made Britain feel reluctant to stay any longer in this country. But of all the problems and dilemmas which she confronted in this country, the last one, namely, that of getting the Congress and the League together before the transfer of power was the most difficult one. On behalf of Britain the man who played the most important part in resolving it was the soldier-statesman Lord Wavell. The failure of the Congress and the League to come to an agreement gave Wavell a sense of personal failure. In trying to consider the role of Wavell sympathetically, Sir Rustom, I believe, has overestimated the efforts of the soldier-statesman with 'transparent sincerity'. No doubt he was the man who tried to help Britain in his own way in getting over the predicament in which she was placed.

Britain in India is a charming narrative coming from a scholarly and highly cultured person who saw the shaping of history before his very eyes. He has seen the British rule in India with the degree of respect and affection all through which most Indians do *after* independence. Nor did he fail to criticise it for its faults. Like some of his other writings this book is full of rare insights into one of the most important phases of Indian history. Sir Rustom deserves our congratulations on having produced such an interesting book.

A. H. SOMJEE

LETTERS TO MY TEACHER by Dagobert D. Runes (Philosophical Library, New York, \$2.75)

HE had a few opinions, which he called 'my ideas'. Dr Dagobert Runes has a few prejudices which he presents as his philosophy. His philosophy, indeed, has the merit of being easy to understand. All that is bad should be changed. All that is wrong should be put right. *What* the right is, is so obvious that it does not need to be explained. In this book Dr. Runes's philosophy is applied to the field of education — in the form of short, petulant letters to his old school teacher.

Quite a few (I am borrowing his favourite expression) well, quite a few of his statements are very true. They are so true that they are truisms. Occasionally, though, his arguments become deep and subtle as for instance when he says:

'And instead of trying to cram their minds with a Greek vocabulary which perhaps not one in ten thousand would ever come back to after school, had this teacher sat down and read with them the magnificent poetry and philosophy of ancient Greece, they would have acquired a wealth of lasting wisdom and a sense for true beauty, and felt the touch of the magic words of literature'.

This is a highly original thought. No one has yet thought of enjoying the magnificent poetry of Greece without first acquiring a Greek vocabulary.

Dr. Runes has no faith at all in modern education, nor, perhaps in any education at all. Every aspect, every method of education is bad — especially school education, where all the more successful students 'learn to be self-centred, success-greedy, prize-snatching, and merit-hogging'. At the same time he seems to have more than ordinary respect for the native wit and intelligence of the young. 'A sixteen-year old' he says 'could reduce many of the so-called theorems in Darwinism to weak-legged hypotheses'. Just as he himself has brought all educational theorists to their knees.

I am sorry this review is written on the

same frivolous level as the book. But at least it was fun writing the review. I do not think that writing the book could have been much fun. LAEEQ FUTEHALLY

A SILENCE OF DESIRE by Kamala Markandaya (Putnam, 15s.)

THIS novel is about a clerk, who has had a happy home life. Then his wife develops a growth in her womb and, without telling him of it, she starts visiting a *swami* who is said to be able to cure these things without an operation. Her movements lead him to think she is having an affair with another man. He becomes suspicious, she becomes silent, there is a rift between them. Then he finds out about the *swami* and the tumour. Now he cannot decide whether the man is genuine or a fake, and the unhappiness persists until, at last the *swami* leaves town and the wife has an operation.

The reason I have outlined the plot is to point out the holes in it. We are carefully assured that the growth is not malignant. If the husband and wife are as devoted to each other as they are alleged to be, is it likely that she would conceal this innocuous fact from him, and not tell him that she wished to be treated by a *swami* instead of a doctor? She says that she could not confide in her husband because he does not believe in faith healers. He has Westernized scientific notions. And yet there is hardly any Indian who is so obsessively scientific that he would not let his wife try out a *swami*-cure if it meant very much to her. While it is just possible to conceive such a situation among the top level of our intelligentsia, it seems difficult to visualize it among the matric-passed level. The mental calibre of the mild man who by years of hard work has risen to the position of head clerk, is not the mental calibre which could make a very strong stand in such a case. And we have no reason for thinking that Dandekar does not conform to type. Besides, there is a *tulsi* plant in his house before which his wife

does puja every day. On the emotional plane too the story is improbable. A non-malignant growth is an inadequate excuse for causing so much misery between husband and wife.

It is possible that a writer with outstanding talent could have given credence and depth to even this story. It is possible that a writer with a greater ability to create an Indian climate of thought and speech might have overlaid this thin tale with greater plausibility. Miss Markandaya writes with competence but competence, like patriotism, is not enough. Drama is not created by treating insignificant episodes in thrilling dramatic tones. Nor is it possible to build up tension by giving indiscriminating weight and emphasis to the trivia of daily life. In short only genius could make a good novel out of such slight and unlikely happenings.

LAEEQ FUTEHALLY

THE SERPENT AND THE ROPE: by Raja Rao (John Murray, Rs. 20.)

WHAT is the true purpose of a novel? Somerset Maugham says that the answer is given in a nutshell by the Encyclopædia Britannica when it says: 'The novel has been made a vehicle for satire, for instruction, for political or religious exhortation, for technical information; but these are side issues. The plain and direct purpose of the novel is to amuse by a succession of scenes painted from nature, and by a thread of emotional narrative.' In novels with elaborately constructed plots presenting many incidents, though this view may be discerned to be right, it will not be quite so obvious. But in novels where incidents closely knit do not catch the reader's attention this aspect will be more evident. A contrast between Scott and Dumas and Tolstoy on one side, and Conrad and Virginia Woolf and even Dostoyevsky on the other side, will make this clearer. Raja Rao's new novel is also of the latter class, revealing the novel's purpose as

approved by Somerset Maugham, to paint a succession of scenes from nature, with a thread of emotional narrative.

But *"The Serpent and the Rope"* goes still further. It is what Indian writers are reported to demand of a truly Indian novel reflecting "the flavour and wholeness of the traditional Indian way of life, where fact and fable, philosophy and the matter-of-fact blend into one." It goes even further still, because Raja Rao, born into a very old Brahmin family of Mysore shows the rich blending of the culture of East and West and of education at the Madras University and research at Montpellier and the Sorbonne under Prof. Cazamian. Sanskrit, French and English literatures have contributed to the rare, unhurrying style of writing of the novel which keeps the reader enthralled from beginning to end.

There is no well constructed plot to lure the reader on from page to page. Rama, the Brahmin hero, meets Madeleine at a French university. They marry and have a child, which later dies. Rama leaves for India on account of his father's illness, and he goes about in search of spiritual traditions. He meets Savitri, and that stirs up deep reactions. Back in Europe he finds that Madeleine has gone through spiritual revolutions, and Buddhism has got its hold on her. Rama feels the urge to find a guru; he decides to go to Travancore. "Travancore, Travancore, there's magic in that name."

That is all there is of the story. But as in all truly great books there is very much more than the story in it. It is a life's pilgrimage, or more correctly the life's pilgrimage of a number of people. Rama and Madeleine occupy the centre. They represent the East and the West, and it is the East that wins. But what a rich experience they, and with them the readers, go through. The deep lore that enriches every page is wonderful. The Brahmin Rama is well up, not only in the Hindu scriptures and eastern literature in general, but also in the western. Only one who had spent the best years at Montpellier and the Sor-

bonne could have such full and living knowledge of Christianity, and especially of Catholicism. But it is never dry knowledge. Pleasant and lively conversation of delightful persons is the vehicle of all the knowledge in the book. In fact, the book is an example of giving life and wings to philosophical and spiritual facts and views.

At the same time the strangely true characters evoke a great deal of interest. Besides Rama and Madeleine there are Savitri to whom life was a game, a song, who bore such sorrow that she sang just to cover it up; Georges who was so elegant in his thought "as though life were a series of genuflexions", Uncle Charles and Tante Zoubie who would enjoy even hell-fire; Father Zenobias so utterly spiritual that heaven seems to lie around him; grandfather Kittanna so wise and at the same time simple in his ways; and many more. The characters of all these take on a special quality on account of the way in which the author writes about them. Thus, "Savitri spoke as though she were covering her head with her sari, and throwing her palow more amply over her breast." She was shy of no one, she was shy of herself. Again, of Satyakama, "Moonbeams had been melted and made solid as silver for the hands and feet."

Almost a mystical way of writing is found all along. When Madeleine is with child Rama says: 'I just did not know where I was and what I meant. . . . She might then have taken me into herself as never before, not with the knowledge she knew me, but with the conviction that she would make me know myself in the shine of annihilation.' Again, 'The body of woman is so like a wood, with herbs and marjoram and creepers that fall from the top; and bees that hum, while the tiger calls for his mate. The cubs are all about; and you lick the head first, and then the neck, and then the back, and when you slip over the breasts, you feel the navel shake as with oxyaphic anguish. . . . You know the still wonder is already within her, the wonder that makes

the sun shine, or the moon speak; you know the world will be, for it is.'

Undoubtedly this is a novel apart from the ordinary run of novels. In some ways this is a spiritual saga. Deep knowledge of a rich variety of books is used to probe into the passions and agonies of the human heart and mind. But there is such a poise on account of the depth of thought and feeling that the reader finds himself on a different plane from ordinary life. And yet, the basic experiences are the ordinary ones: love and marriage, friendly associations, discussions at tea drinking, long walks alone and in company, visits to holy places in India and Europe, also visits to Bangalore, Madura, Bombay, and many a place in Europe. It is just pictures of life with some significance tied together by the personality of the hero, Rama.

And life is full of the true and the false. Hence the title of the book. Rama explains to Madeleine, 'The world is either unreal or real — the serpent or the rope. There is no in-between-the-two — and all that is in-between is poetry, is sainthood.' And thus the novel proceeds, reminding one, with, of course, a vast difference, of the great novel of Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*.

P. L. STEPHEN

SHORT NOTICES

THE SOUL OF MODERN INDIA by John Correia Afonso (*Institute of Indian History and Cultural*, Rs. 2.75)

IN this essay on the spiritual and cultural values in India today, John Correia Afonso does not drive himself to produce a closely argued thesis about the exact place of religion in the life of Indians. Since 85% of the population of India are Hindus, it is with the effect of the Hindu religion as it is practised and understood — not by the spiritual elite, but by the 85% of the people — that the author concerns himself.

Mr. Correia Afonso's analysis of the spiritual emptiness which has overtaken the lives of young people is particularly forceful. His analysis answers the question—

what ails the college students of today? The strength of Hinduism, he says "has lain in the family and the caste and its influence has waned with the declining power of the institutions." And of young people he says "they respect a spiritual outlook, they respect religious ideas, but as far as religious practice is concerned they look upon it as a thing of the past, left to retired gentlemen and the ladies of the house".

It is ironical indeed that his final comment on Indian youth should be that their great malaise is "their lack of prayer". It is a strange verdict for the heirs to a country which prides itself on its spirituality.

THE OWL OF MINERVA by Gustav Regler (*Rupert Hart Davis* 30s).

THIS is an autobiography translated from the German, of a man who, in spite of himself seemed to get mixed up in all the political activities of his time. He became a communist at the time when communism was attracting the most idealistic young writers. He fought in Spain, he fought against the Nazis, and he would have fought in World War II for the French except that the French army refused to accept him.

The book has probably lost a great deal in the translation.

HOW THOU SINGEST, MY MASTER by Hiranmay Banerjee (*Orient Longmans* — Rs. 5.00)

MR. BANNERJEE joined the Indian Civil Service in 1929 and he is at present Development Commissioner in West Bengal. His great interest has always been philosophy. Tagore's philosophy as well as his poetry has been a subject of study for him and he has for many years lectured and written about it. The present slender volume is sub-titled 'A Study of Tagore's Poetry.' Here Mr. Bannerjee collects his thoughts on the different aspects of Tagore's poetry. The present centennial year is a highly suitable occasion to publish this book.

CORRESPONDENCE

"SOVIET DEPORTATION OF NATIONALITIES"

Dear Sir,

I found Mr. Siddhartha Sen's review of my book *The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities* rather surprising. But it may prove helpful because it does, I think, show an important division which exists in the world about the standards to be adopted on moral and political issues.

Mr. Sen takes it that my 'thesis' is that 'Soviet imperialism is worse than Western imperialism.' I believe this to be so and I suggest it once or twice in the book. But the book's main intention is to present what seem to me to be certain important facts, which have not previously been assembled. It is perfectly possible to read such a book for the fresh and significant information it provides while disagreeing with the author's conclusions.

Yet my opinion of the matter is based on the facts. And here is where I part company with Mr. Sen. I have established, as Mr. Sen seems to agree, that the Soviet authorities have treated subject races with an inhumanity both greater and more systematic than anything which has been even alleged against Western imperialism, at least in this century. Like most people, I judge regimes by their behaviour and cannot follow the argument whereby the Soviet regime may *behave* badly but *be* good.

It was this thesis that an amoral humanism is possible which produced the Stalin dictatorship. For, in fact, it is not possible. The idea of the tender-minded humanist reluctantly accepting the responsibility for massacre and torture because logic has told him that such is the only way to peace and freedom is a shallow one. In any state based on such a principle the terrorist rises to the top. The tyrant may enjoy the ancillary luxury of thinking of himself as a humanist, but the essential is that he likes tyranny. Stalin and Rakosi, rulers of doubtful sanity creating a society in the image of their own delusions, are the natural end product of a fallacy. The social surgeon who

offers to get to the root of our troubles with his expert knife turns out to be Jack the Ripper: sublimation has failed to take place.

Such is what actually happens, the moral failure. But a perfectly straightforward logical failure is also involved. Put at its very simplest the Soviet line is that such restraints, sufferings and distortions of truth as the regime may inflict upon the people are necessary in the long run for constructing a society where everyone will be happy. The criticism is equally simple. The present is real: the future is hypothetical. Theory must always be fallible and individual interpreters of it even more so. But even as to the present it was common practice for the Stalinists to attempt to equate their particular tyrannies with the economic and social system itself: 'If you are against deportations you are against socialism.' But it is easy to make a distinction, and many Communists have found it possible to do so.

Such are my basic objections to the standards of judgement which Mr. Sen recommends. But it is also the case that these mass deportations cannot even be justified under his own standards. The Soviet state was not 'nascent' at the time, nor even 'battling for survival.' As Khrushchev himself has told us, 'this deportation action was not dictated by any military considerations' since it took place at a time when the German defeat was already assured. Mr. Sen's quotation from Maurice Dobb (who is by no means the un-biased economist Mr. Sen makes him out to be) refers to a different set of atrocities—the great purges of the middle thirties, now officially referred to in Russia as 'the period of mass repression.' Since it is now officially admitted that these purges too were unnecessary, gravely harmed the State and Party, and severely lowered the country's military capacity, perhaps Mr. Sen will agree that those who came to power on the basis of the idea that 'this was no time for timid, half-hearted moves, but for direct action' were by nature too inclined to this euphemistically phrased 'direct action' more for its own sake than for any benefits it might bring. In fact to kill or deport large numbers of people is a bad thing anyway in my

view and can never be 'necessary'. But it seems odd that Mr. Sen should think it right to praise Mr. Dobb as a 'realist' for justifying what was unnecessary and harmful even by sub-human standards. Is 'realistic' simply a code word for 'unethical'?

I am not in the least concerned to justify errors or crimes of the British or anyone else. It is simply that the particular actions I wrote about were on a different scale altogether from anything that any subject races had been submitted to in modern times. What exactly is it that the facts show? That a majority of the small nations the German's reached, or nearly reached, in the USSR, were later denounced for mass treachery and deported en masse to distant parts of Siberia and Central Asia, from which, after fourteen years total silence, rather more than half of them have now been allowed to return. If the Soviet regime is so good why were they disaffected at all? How is it that their modern literatures contain so much adulation of Stalin? How did they happen to vote 99% for the Government in elections shortly preceding their revolts? How was it possible for their names to be omitted from all new editions of Soviet books, and even histories of their old home areas, as if they had never existed? Who decides whether or not to deport, and on what grounds?

This latter is important because there is some reason to believe that the rehabilitation and restoration of five of these nations in 1957-60 may partly be due to the pressure of opinion in non-Communist Asia. I wrote the book because of the extreme lack of information on the subject which the Soviet authorities have contrived to impose. I would argue that the forming of a sound opinion about the USSR, as about anything else, is conditional on having as many of the relevant facts available as possible. If the news of Sharpeville had been suppressed we would not be concerned about it. It seems to me to be the duty of all humanists to make sure that, in all spheres where information of the sort is hard to come by, they do what they can to bring it to the public consciousness. Only then can the public conscience operate.

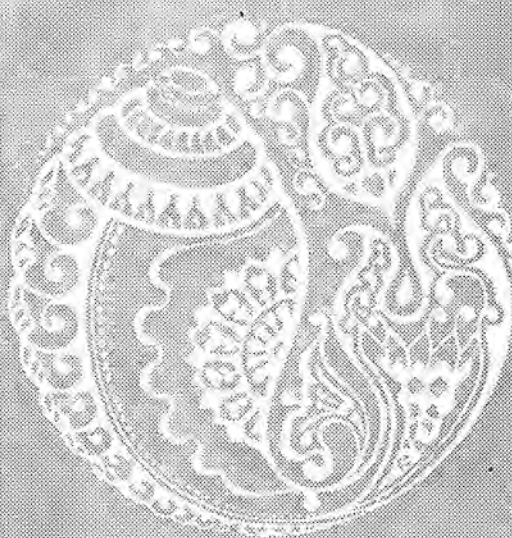
In conclusion, it is perhaps hardly necessary to say that of course I never made the slightest suggestion that 'all Russians were a bestial race' either under Stalin or at any other time. The Russians, who have no say in the matter, cannot be blamed for the actions of their rulers.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT CONQUEST

1961 the centenary year of TWO GREAT INDIANS

For it was in Agra on the sixth of May 1861 that my father was born... A curious and interesting coincidence: The poet Rabindranath Tagore was also born on this very day, month and year."

—Jawaharlal Nehru



This design is based on the cover-leaf of Indian Oxygen Limited's 1961 calendar which has been produced to commemorate the centenary of Rabindranath Tagore and Motilal Nehru.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

M. M. POSTAN, a recognized authority on Economic History, teaches at Cambridge.

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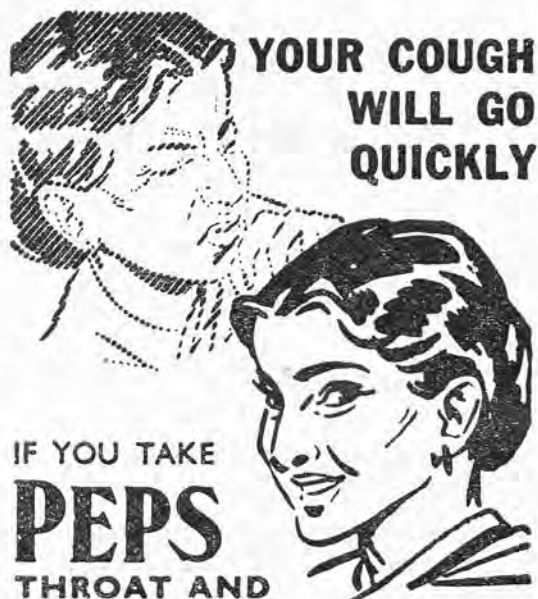
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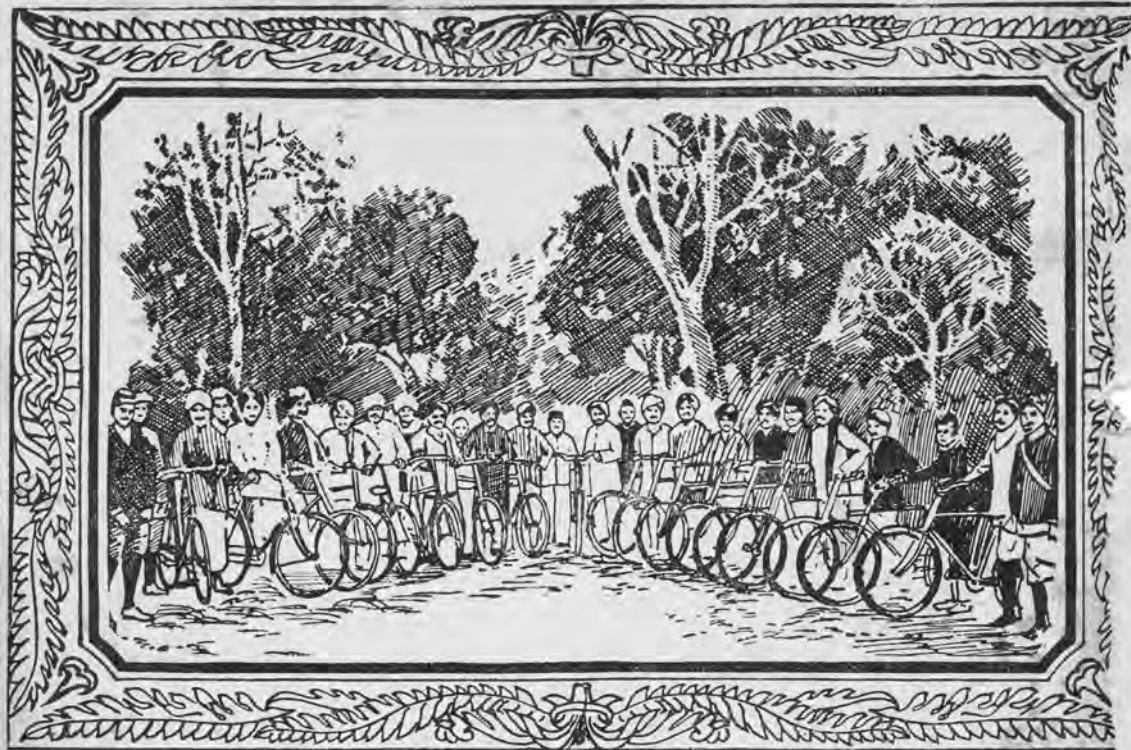
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