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Discussing concrete examples of attempted synthesis of Indian and Western cultures, Ayyub mentioned the names of Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi on the one hand, and Jawaharlal Nehru and M. N. Roy on the other. The first four (with some reservations about Ram Mohan) remained rooted to the Indian soil but did not quite succeed in striking roots in the soil of the modern West. The last two essentially 'belong' to the West, but never ceased to cast longing, lingering looks at their spiritual homeland. They are the best examples of our uprooted intellectuals. In M. N. Roy the feeling of uprootedness was weak; he was too completely alienated from the traditional culture of India to feel the pain of it. In Nehru this realisation is full of anguish, for loving his people and loved by them as hardly any other national lead-

er has been loved, he cannot but feel deeply his cultural alienation from the hundreds of millions whom he leads. Rabindranath was perhaps the most successful in synthesising the two great cultures in his own thought and feeling. But first of all, being a poet, the synthesis which he arrived at was highly individual. Secondly, though we may regard his poetry as a meeting ground of India and nineteenth century Europe and moreover a meeting of the two on equal terms, as a thinker he remained rooted to the soil of the Upanisads; contemporary movements of thought in the West created only a mild reverberation in him.

Dr. Dayakrishna of Delhi, speaking next, felt that Shils has tried to present a larger, more universal thesis in the book, not restricted to Indian intellectuals alone. He is developing a generalised theory of metropolitan culture and provincial culture and suggests that Indian intellectuals have developed a feeling of being in a provincial culture, periphery, in relation to the Western culture which is considered as metropolitan. This was true of the Roman intellectuals too of the past, of the Russians and the Americans in the 19th century in relation to Britain and France, and so also of the Japanese. The book seems to be only a case study for developing a vastly generalised theory. Shils suggests that there are centres of creative activity which have a radiational effect, and there are other centres which merely respond to and get acquainted with these creative centres. Of course, it is not a static idea. Creative centres also change; example: USA at first was provincial and now a big creative centre. Therefore, Dayakrishna felt, the real dichotomy is not between Eastern and Western cultures. This feeling of being provincial can be removed only by developing centres of creative activity. He mentioned K. C. Bhattacharyya as a creative thinker within the Indian tradition and said such persons are few today.

Dayakrishna praised Shils' book as an

excellent summary of the Indian intellectual situation presented with great intuition, perception and array of facts. There are very few even amongst Indians who have all the facts presented here by a foreigner collected in such a short time. He also pointed out that it is not a question of alienation, uprootedness, so much as of the problem of doing creative work. And in this Shils naturally cannot suggest any solution. Shils only placed some proposals for creating some new institutions and putting life into some of the older ones so that a more virile and vital intellectual life emerges. But mere institutions do not make creative centres.

Commenting on Dayakrishna's observations, Ayyub pointed out that the category 'Metropolitan-Provincial' does not quite describe the Indian situation. The difficulty with us is that we are in the backwaters or provincial fringe of not one but two cultures. We have two metropolitan centres—one situated very close to us in space but far away in time, the other contemporaneous but far away in space.

Taking the cue from Dayakrishna, Kazi Abdul Wadud asked how India can be a centre of metropolitan culture. He felt that Shils could not enter into the great creative spirits of modern India. He also questioned if 'modernity' is an adequate aim. He thought that we needed people like Ranade who, though a Maharashtrian Hindu, tried to understand the Muslims. His was a creative endeavour. But he agreed with Shils regarding his criticism of the feeling of uprootedness among some Indian intellectuals.

Prof. D. J. McCutcheon of the Dept. of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, agreed with Dayakrishna that the book was full of perceptive observations, but felt that many of these were truisms, factually well documented but evident enough to any intelligent observer. He criticised the book from a methodological angle, because it lumped all kinds of intel-

lectuals together and tried to generalise about them as a group. Like Ayyub, McCutcheon did not find the oceanic consciousness so typical a feature of many of the intellectuals he knew. His own experience did not lend support to Shils' assertion: 'Perhaps it is more in their religiosity than in any other sphere that the Indian intellectuals evince their rootedness in what is central to their culture.' It provokes the question: which intellectuals? and what kind of religiosity? Intellectuals of the Mohini Chatterjee variety or like Raja Rao of our own day cannot be classified with Meghnad Saha or Satyajit Ray. Generalisations which apply to Radha Kamal Mukherjee cannot apply to Sibnarayan Ray. The adherents of the Ramakrishna Mission are quite different from the Radical Humanists, the followers of Bhoodan from the advocates of industrialisation.

McCutcheon suggested it would be much more useful, both for describing the Indian intellectual situation and for assessing the forces operating upon it, if certain rough divisions were made, as say between the religious (those whom Prof. Shils describes as having 'broad cosmic sensitivity') and the non-religious; between the establishment intellectuals (pontificating members of academies, committees, etc.) and the young who challenge them; or between several kinds of westernised Indian intellectuals—businessmen, teachers of English, Communists, and so forth; those who are merely dazzled (Oxford-returned), and those who are working in the rationalist empirical tradition like the scientists or Royists. Thus, instead of trying to generalise about the 'Indian intellectual' feeling cut off from the people, for instance, Prof. Shils should try to define what groups have this feeling and for what (different) reasons.

Further McCutcheon felt that Prof. Shils tends to be dominated by his generalisations, and seeks confirmation of them overlooking the relative unimportance of the facts which confirm them if the total picture is taken into account. The picture

Prof. Shils draws on p. 32 of the Indian intellectual dominated by English literature and culture is true only of a minority, yet if you *hunt* for facts in confirmation you will find them in large numbers of people. A similar preconceiving affects Shils' generalisations about religion: (a) he overlooks the extent to which religious consciousness is general to mankind and may be expected in India anyway and (b) this expectation of widespread religious consciousness in India leads him to completely reverse the situation as McCutcheon has experienced it: 'The religious indifference which is so widespread in the educated classes of the West has little counterpart among Indian intellectuals.' McCutcheon said that he could only speak of England, but he found the militant rationalist far less common there than in India. Many educated Englishmen calling themselves agnostic are respectful and curious about religion—think of the religious features in the 'Manchester Guardian' and the 'Spectator'. Not only is there a general movement of tolerance and interest towards religion in England, there has been since the war a kind of religious revival—think of the under-graduate Christian proselytizing societies (C.I.C.C. U., S.C.M.). In India on the other hand, traditional Hindu religion, completely degenerate in its popular forms (Kali temple), has lost its hold on the educated, while the revivalist movements (Ramakrishna Mission, Brahmo Samaj, Aurobindo Ashram, etc.) do not attract the keen young intellects.

McCutcheon also felt that the East-West contrast Shils seems to have in his mind throughout (though no doubt he would agree with Dayakrishna that the provincial-metropolitan relationship is of much more general application), seems to be essentially India contrasted with England and America—pragmatic down-to-earth societies, the truly opposite pole to India. It might also be useful to compare the Bengali intellectual situation (incidentally, Shils makes little attempt to differentiate between the situation in the different

states) with France (custom of *adda*, wide interest in literary and intellectual matters, popular acclaim for great artists, etc.), or with Germany (emotionalism, transcendentalism—especially in its romantic form, worship of the leader, etc.).

Supporting McCutcheon's point that Shils should not have lumped together very different types of 'intellectuals', Ayyub mentioned the names of Jibanananda Das, Jamini Roy, Alauddin Khan and Faiyaz Khan, who were undoubtedly great in their fields of achievement but could hardly be described as intellectuals; intellection was not their metier.

Jyotirmoy Datta, a young critic and poet, said that our provincial attitude is proved by the discussion of the book itself. Our reputation and our thoughts are based on the feeling that the West is hearing us and most of those who attempt creative writing in English have the West as their audience in mind. Datta developed another point, namely that in the 19th century when America and Russia were undergoing a sense of inferiority, both of them produced major creative writers. This proves that the feeling of inferiority is no bar to major creative activity; rather it may be a spur. (His elaborated remarks are given as Addendum to this report).

Hirankumar Sanyal, ex-editor of *Parichay*, said that Prof. Shils' book had fascinated him so far as he had read it but unfortunately he had not had time to go through the whole of it. Referring to Ayyub's statement that the basic framework of reference for Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo Ghosh had been the culture of the East and that it was the Upanishads which had most deeply influenced Rabindranath, Sanyal said that all three of them had drunk deep of the culture of the West, and that so far as Rabindranath was concerned his poetry was essentially roman-

tic, in the Western sense of the word, and that he had given, as it were, a new lease of life to the romantic poetry of the European, particularly the English, poets. But he had integrated this romanticism with the Indian tradition which he had rediscovered and revitalised if not for all Indians, at least for Bengali intellectuals.

Rabindranath, Sanyal felt, was the first and perhaps the last Indian who had endeavoured to give his countrymen again—Bengalis, in particular—an authentic culture of their own and this, paradoxically, was due largely to the fact that he had deeply absorbed the culture of the West, more deeply perhaps than any other Indian before or since. But if Rabindranath represented the synthesis of two cultures at the highest level, there was alongside of this synthesis and sometimes swamping it, a bastard culture which led to a large number of intellectuals in India being alienated from the Indian tradition, with no roots in the soil, yet displaying symptoms of what almost amounted to cultural chauvinism (which Prof. Shils had not failed to notice). The fact was that as a result of this bastard culture a large proportion of Indian intellectuals were uprooted though the tragedy was that not many were aware of it. This uprootedness was in evidence in the case of some of the finest among modern Indian intellectuals, persons of extraordinary intelligence and perception, such as Sudhindranath Datta and Satyajit Ray—to mention two very exceptional intellectuals. That was why, Sanyal said Rabindranath had stated to him that he found Suddhin Datta's poetry not only alien to his taste but actually repellant. Again Satyajit, in his documentary film on Rabindranath—a work of great merit—had missed the essential point of Rabindranath which was that in spite of all his romanticism which he had absorbed from English poetry, he had his deepest roots in the soil of Bengal. Yet Satyajit Ray was not unaware, at least in his subconscious mind, of the contemporary tragedy.

Prof. Amlan Datta of the Dept. of Economics, Calcutta University, summarised Shils' main argument in the following way: that Indian intellectuals feel uprooted but they are not really any more uprooted than others elsewhere; that this feeling of uprootedness is to a certain extent inevitable; that rather than trying to remove this feeling of uprootedness, Indian intellectuals should concentrate on creative activity and consider themselves part of a cosmopolitan community of intellectuals. Datta said that there are three main factors which contribute to the sense of uprootedness among Indian intellectuals, only two of which they share with intellectuals in the West, while the third factor differentiates the Indian case from the Western. The first factor is that the intellectual elite everywhere develops a language of its own and this creates a gulf between it and the common people. Examples: medieval schoolmen and traditional Sanskrit scholars. The second factor is related to different stages of social evolution, and, more particularly, to the growth of the urban centres. Sudhin Datta inherited the language of the elite and also experienced the feeling and anguish peculiar to life at the urban centres. The third factor which makes Indian intellectuals feel cut off from their own people is that most of them fail to relate their ideas to the accumulated experience and culture of their community as developed in the past. In this regard, their alienation goes much deeper than the alienation of Western intellectuals from their traditional culture.

Datta suggested that in this country one way of getting away from this feeling of alienation is to relate our present experiences and the issues arising therefrom to the great issues that have been debated by Indian thinkers in the past. He gave the examples of Ram Mohan Roy and Aurobindo in this context, and commented that M. N. Roy, although he recognised the need of relating present thought to the past, did not succeed to quite the same extent. He emphasised the importance of

re-assessing such Indian classics as the Upanishads and the Gita. He explained that he was not recommending a particular line of thought but a particular form of presentation of thought, which will continuously relate new ideas to the past of the community whether by way of criticism, modification or extension of the past.

Ayyub, commenting on Amlan Datta, raised the point that the modern line of empirical and positivistic thinking had not properly developed by the time of Ram Mohan, while Aurobindo ignored this essentially Western approach. The chasm was not so deep for them, and therefore 'relating present thought to the past' not so dreadfully difficult. Datta clarified his position by giving the example of Francis Bacon in the preliminary part of *The Advancement of Learning*, where there are copious references to the Bible and Greek and Roman classics.

As it was getting late, all those who were expected to participate could not, and the Chairman, Prof. Jayantanuja Bandopadhyaya of the Dept. of International Affairs, Jadavpur University, concluded the discussion with his remarks. He expressed the opinion that an alienated intellectual could not rehabilitate himself without projecting himself into his socio-political environment. In an affluent society the intellectual could possibly have a sense of fulfilment even if he restricted himself to the field of ideas only, because in such a society there are, generally speaking, no problems of the basic human needs. But in India the current problems are as basic as those of starvation, illiteracy, casteism and unstable democracy; and in such a society the intellectual could not solve the problem of alienation without taking part in contemporary socio-political movements. As a matter of fact, it was doubtful whether a person who did not actively respond to the basic human problems of contemporary India could be called an intellectual in this country at all.

#### ADDENDUM

Jyotirmoy Datta adds: Although the other evening both Ayyub and Daya-krishna spoke at some length about the attitude of the Indian intellectual to the West, an attitude similar to that of mufassilwallas to Calcutta, Professor Shils has much more besides to tell us. His remarks on our attitude to the West appears to me to be much less interesting than his observations on, say, our attitude to books or to paintings. When Shils says we are often too awed or overwhelmed by judgments made by Westerners, I am not startled; that we are 'provincials' is a fact; it might be galling to be reminded of it by a foreigner, but we are never tired of repeating it to ourselves.

It needs no Edward Shils to tell us about it. But it requires a perceptive foreigner, preferably someone who speaks English but does not have a complex about India, to notice all those apparently trivial details which are too familiar to us to be considered remarkable. 'How true: And to think that I never bothered to notice them, 'was the exclamation I repeatedly made to myself as I read Shils' book. Reading it also made one a little irritable, for who would be not irritated by having himself treated as a zoological specimen?

True, from the welter of details no clear outline emerges. I would be greatly disappointed if it did. Even the Indian intellectual, however naive he may be, is too complex a person to be analysed, defined and done away with in a booklet of about 70 pages. What emerges is a sorry figure who sways between many worlds and epochs, who has a sneaking faith in palmistry and an open admiration for machines, who is anti-colonial and blindly admires the solid English utilitarians and yet who is woolly-minded enough to love the cosmos and continually blabber about universal peace.

The Indian intellectual is medieval, modern, superstitious, rational, idealistic, ascetic, puritanic; he thinks recognition is

not worth having unless it comes from the West and yet is bitter towards the West; he is anticolonial and yet an anglophile. How are these conflicting urges related in him? This would be an interesting question to ask. Are those who have the horoscopes of their children drawn up superstitious also in the fashion of the Marxists who believe that the horoscope of all societies had been drawn up 'scientifically' by Marx? Do the remarks of Shils apply all to any one person or to any one group? Are only some I.I.s. traditional, others rationalists, yet others idealists? Granted that some observations made by Shils do not tally with our own feelings about certain individuals, but do not most of our acquaintances act, speak and write as Shils said they do? If proof was needed of the contrary impulses that drive the Indian intellectual, it was provided by the proceedings of the evening.

In fact, that the discussion was at all held was pointer enough of our attitude towards the West. The very fact that even fat professors trudged all the way to Freedom House to discuss this book shows how greatly impressed we are by anything coming from the West. Sudhindranath Datta had written a very perceptive piece about the new generation in America and Europe; none ever bothered to organize a symposium on its contents. Buddhadeva Bose has written an interesting novel about the problems of the young Bengali writer; it passed without a ripple. Not only does the West not know about what we write or think about them, or us; even we do not take our own views seriously.

Ayyub did not dispute that this is so. But he said that we are provincials not only in relation to the West but also in relation to the Indian past. Shils himself, as I remember, said that the Rome-Greece relation was similar. And yet, I feel, the attitude of 19th century Russians to

France, or Indians to the West is not comparable to what an Indian feels about Kalidasa or to Goethe's attitude to antiquity or the Roman attitude to Greece. Our attitude to classical India is similar to that of the European poet towards the Greek and Latin classics. No Bengali poet can avoid working in the Indian tradition, however great be his dislike for Kalidasa's classicism. The Bengali poet can borrow from the past masters or he can reject their example. Their influence may change the quality of his work. He might even pretend to himself that he is their rival. But all this is one-way traffic: he can run them down or praise them but they can never say a word about his work.

But the West not only provides models to follow, it also offers rewards. All the world is there to gather example and inspiration from, but we want the West to listen to us, to praise us, to let us participate in the life of the 'metropolis'. The poignancy of our situation is due to this, for, alas, the metropolis never condescends to notice the provinces. We feel like neglected lovers when all our secret flowers blush unseen by the West.

This is not to say we are blind imitators. As Shils has noticed, our situation is similar to 19th century Russia's or America's—the Russia of the great novelists and the America of Melville and Whitman. Similarly, we in Bengal have our Manik Banerji and Jibanananda Das.

In sum, what is sad is not the influence of the West on the poets and novelists—let there be more of it—but our emotional reaction to the West and the blind faith that we have in the certificates granted us by Western reviewers and critics. 'A book is good,' says Prof. X, 'because it is published in London'. 'This man has been mentioned in an Encounter article,' says another in an awed voice about Mr. Z. Let this stop.

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# POETRY

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## AN OLD SONG

An old song

With a new twist—

This morning bird

Is a sentimentalist.

Unwraps his layers

Of sticky song

In swaddled prayers

To a love that's gone.

Poor sparrow!

Musical

Singer of sorrow

Unclassical,

Sing, little one.

We all understand.

Your love is in the sun,

The fish are on the sand.

P. LAL

## A STRANGE MEETING

I am thinking my burrowing thoughts;  
 (Thoughts that gleam and fade like automatic electric lamps,  
 Or call them radiations from the centre of nerves  
 Circling round the fuming cup.)  
 'Add sugar to your taste;  
 I may pour some milk if you like;  
 I hope it is not too strong for you.'  
 Two could make a crowd—a poet sang,  
 But I am desperately alone by her single side.  
 The tongue of my eyes licked her ornate cheeks  
 Then moved down to the resistless bust.  
 'How nice is the evening—is not she?  
 Ideal for a warm and cosy *tete a tete*  
 In this quiet corner, or, by your leave,  
 For a philosophic stroll under the showering moon.'  
 I spoke as the station master often speaks  
 Of the expected train with a tepid certainty  
 But my accent perhaps was  
 Like that of the lover in Tennyson's *Maud*.  
 'Please have another cup—please,  
 It is not yet late for you to go.'  
 And even if it is—how does it matter?  
 Who would care for Helen  
 If there were no battle of Troy?  
     How silly of me indeed to think  
     That a woman could ever be an abiding thought.  
     Even now I am thinking of the collective drive  
     For a welfare state  
     And the growing complexity of the individual mind,  
     World peace, and the fate of democracy  
     And my personal ambition in a callous globe,  
     And the old order yielding place to chaos.  
 'Just a minute, let me have the last sip from the cup.  
     Thank you so much for the tea.'  
     'No, no, the pleasure was entirely mine,  
     Let's move now, you will catch the eight-thirty bus.'

AMARESH DATTA

## THE WIND'S ABSENCE

Never again it seems  
 The rain clouds of my heart  
 Blown across the place of my love for her by the wind of her presence  
 Will break with a thunder of sighs  
 Drenching the unprotected forest of her feelings  
 Denuded with pleasure for me,  
 Made naked with delight.

Never again will the moisture of my heaven,  
 Enveloping her leaves, her vegetation,  
 Descending into all recesses,  
 Return to clothe with clouds  
 And decorate with mystery  
 The monotonous sky.

GEORGE KEYT

## THE FEAR IN THE NIGHT

Wondering, lost always, in the night of her love,  
 In the warm labyrinths of her life unclothed,  
 Voyaging upon the dark channels, the warm blood,  
     the red waters in the darkness, the warm night,  
 I feel in the flushed darkness at times with many misgivings  
 A colony as of fishes  
 The cold patches at times  
 The clammy fingers of a void, the clutching of an absence,  
 The icy patches in the circulation of her love.

GEORGE KEYT

## NARCISSUS

The ripples on the pool are gone.  
My image mirrors toward the sky,  
Transparent, of a darkling tone,  
And fixes me with watery eye.

Beneath my face I know there lies  
A murky depth of weedy lace,  
But silver surface shows the skies  
In pale blue vault behind my face.

No breeze disturbs my dreaming eyes—  
But suddenly a swirling fish,  
Perhaps in search of deeper skies,  
Has scattered me, my dream, my wish.

DAVID G. BRIGGS

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# SHORT STORY

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## *The Kite*

By ABRAHAM IVAN ERALY

THE boy was dressed in grimy brown drill shorts and a clean but frayed blue shirt, and he stood there on the doorstep, picking his nose. On his body and face there was much dirt, and the large bulging eyes were flat and unintelligent. Outside there was a sharp drizzle. The boy's father, his dark obese body stretched on the canvas chair in the veranda, was aware of the boy's presence and was irritated.

—You, what do you want? he asked, jerking away the newspaper he was reading.

The boy said nothing. He just stood there with down-cast eyes, nervously working a forefinger in his nostrils.

—You are a curse. Have you swallowed your tongue? Menon asked, his gruff voice rising.

—I read the second lesson ten times, the boy said nervously, twitching a little.

That was the condition. If he studied the lesson well he would get money for a kite.

—Well then, let's hear it, Menon said, leaning back on the chair, rubbing his thick black moustache away from his pan-stained red mouth.

The boy began to recite, speaking fast and incoherently, but soon he faltered and broke down whimpering.

Menon smiled a little. He knew.

—You damned wretch, he shouted, What have you got in your head? Pumpkins? Go and read it again ten more times.

The boy said nothing. He did not move either.

Menon got up. He threw the paper away and stood towering over the boy, his thick curled moustache quivering beneath his flaring nostrils. His moods were sudden and violent, and now he was very angry.

—Ah-ha, he shouted. You won't obey me, hey?

Kalyaniamma put her head through the dark hollow of the doorway and asked:

—You promised him, didn't you? Why don't you give it to him then?

Menon wheeled slowly to his wife.

—Woman, who called you here? he asked. He shrieked at her to get out, and his veins were bulging and taut and his face was deformed with rage like that of a lunatic. Her very sight infuriated him those days.

She was a thin hollow-eyed woman, and she stood where she was, staring at her husband with her dead eyes.

—I am a little concerned; he is my son, she said, pulling her son towards her.

—Ah-ha! I'll give you such a one, Menon said, raising his hand.

—You better kill us. That would be better. Or I'll go some other way, Kalyaniamma said.

—Yes, go some other way, he said contemptuously. He turned to his son.

—You get out of here, he said.

But the boy did not move. He stood there crying beside his mother.

—All right, Menon said softly.

That was a danger sign, the sign of his particular brand of madness, and Kalyaniamma knew it, but she no longer

cared. He jumbled the coins in his *jubha* pocket and threw an eight anna nickel coin at his son.

—There, he said. Go and damn yourself.

The boy hesitated.

—Take it, my son, take it. Today the crow will fly belly-up, the mother said.

The boy picked up the coin, and without looking at his father or mother ran out in the drizzle through the gate into the road, wiping his tears with his shirt-ends as he ran.

Menon turned to his wife.

—If you touch me again I will die, she said. There was fear in her eyes. I will die, she repeated.

Without a word he pushed her in and closed the door.

The boy ran blindly and without a thought, still crying a little, till he reached the church-gate, and then he stopped abruptly. He was going the wrong way. As he turned, the wind and drizzle struck him on the face, and so he walked close to the side of the road under the lined coconut trees, moving rapidly with jerky uncoordinated steps. He did not run; it was as though he forgot why he was running, or even that he was running at all. Then suddenly he remembered his father, and he was afraid to go past the house. The boy started to run again; but it was rather like the time he dreamt of the rogue elephant and though he ran and ran he was not moving at all, and his knees were weak and buckling under him. Finally he was past the house; but he kept on running because he was afraid to stop and his heart was beating loud and there was fear in his heart; and so he kept on—till Ramu's mother called to him from her tea shop.

Isn't this the way to get fever? she asked. Even otherwise you're never without a cold.

The boy grinned sheepishly, showing his bad teeth, standing in the drizzle.

—Come in son, I will wipe your head dry, the woman said.

The boy went in. The shop was a mud

and thatch hut huddling low beneath a spreading mango tree. Inside there were three *pulaya* labourers sitting on a bench, sipping tea.

—Where are you off to in all this rain, young feller? one of them asked without getting up.

Ramu's mother pulled out the edge of her *dhoti* and wiped the boy's head dry.

—I am going to buy china-paper; I got eight annas, the boy said proudly.

He opened his palm to flash the shiny new nickel coin at them all. The palm was empty. He would have no kite now, but he did not think of that at all; it was the horror of returning home to his father's wrath that frightened him. He began to cry. Ramu came out of the kitchen, his hand covered with rice paste he was making for *idli*.

—Why are you crying? he asked. He was about the same age as the boy. They were friends.

—Where did you drop it? Ramu's mother asked.

—Drop what mother? asked Ramu.

—The money his father gave him to buy china-paper.

His father will kill him, Ramu said.

The boy kept on crying. The drizzle crackled on the dry thatch.

—I will go and look for it, Ramu said.

—It won't be any use. Someone lucky will have got it, his mother said.

—His father will kill him, Ramu said again.

—That's true, his mother agreed.

After some time she told the boy:

—Don't cry my son. I will give you eight annas. I will take it later from your mother.

She went to the little soiled wooden box which contained her daily collection, and taking a key tied to the corner of her *dhoti*, she opened it and counted out eight annas in small coins and wrapped it in a bit of paper and gave it to the boy.

—Don't lose this, she said.

—What colour paper are you going to buy? Ramu asked. The boy had not thought of that.

The woman gave him a palm-leaf, and clutching it over his head the boy ran out of the shop.

When he turned back for home with the paper the boy was excited. He thought he could fly, if only he would let himself go, but he dared not for fear of spoiling the paper which he held tucked beneath his shirt safe from the rain.

When he reached home he found the front door shut, and that meant father was not at home. Shouting and hooting the boy ran around the corner of the house and burst into the house through the kitchen.

His mother was there, sitting in the corner of the kitchen on the floor, sobbing. The boy went up to her.

—Mother, look, look at this paper, he said.

She merely covered her face with her hands and sobbed aloud. The boy knelt beside her.

—Please mother, don't cry, he pleaded.

He stroked her hand and leaned his head against it, and she hugged him tight to her, and the boy cried with her.

At noon the father came home, and he was very drunk. He stood in the veranada with one leg on the bench and called into the kitchen:

—You Kalyani, come out here. I want to settle one or two more things with you.

There was no answer from within.

—Do you hear me? If I come in it will be your end, he spoke slowly through his clenched teeth.

—Yes, you kill me. Yes, that's better, Kalyaniamma sobbed from within.

Menon went in, stepping with slow deliberation. He pulled her up by the hair and bent her over and put her head between his thighs and beat her on the back, pounding heavily and rhythmically with his fists, like trying to beat some tune.

Out in the veranda the boy trembled over his kite. But soon the beating was over, and the father went out without even a glance at his son, and the boy forgot it all and was lost in the building of

the kite. He finished the frame and pasted the paper on it using cooked rice as gum. When he went into the kitchen for the rice he saw that his mother was not there. She was probably lying down, he thought, as she so often did after one of those quarrels with father.

It had stopped raining, and the sun was out. It was only drizzling a little, the boy thought. By evening the field would be dry, and he would fly the kite. But he needed some string for it. String was kept wound into a ball in an old grey steel trunk in the attic above the second floor of the house. There was all sorts of junk up there, all cluttered up and covered with dust and smelling of rot; there were old brown books and palm-leaf documents, and there were broken pottery and bottles and decrepit boxes and torn baskets and rusty implements, and the ceiling was so low at some places that he could touch it by stretching his hand, and there were bats hanging heads down or flying madly, and there were cockroaches and spiders, and it was so dark and silent and gloomy up there.

The boy was scared to go up alone.

He always went up with his mother; but that day he could not disturb her. Thinking about his mother he remembered that she was crying and he was crying, and as he climbed the steep attic steps he was scared and was sobbing because the house was so gloomy, and his mother was beaten and was down there crying. He cautiously put his head above the attic floor and looked around blinking through his tears. He could not see anything at first because he was scared and it was so dark and there were tears in his eyes. Then he saw her, standing there all alone in the dark, unmoving, her back to him. With a joyous shout he bounded up the last few steps; his fear was all gone now, and his heart was bursting with joy and relief, and he rushed to his mother crying, Mother, Mother, and embraced her—and she swung from the rope on which she was hanging, making him fall.

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# ARTS

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## Art and Imperfection

By EDWINA CURTIS

### I

#### PERFECTION AND NOVELTY

**P**AINTERS come to their vocation in curious ways: in some a powerful desire to make images overweighs any lack of natural talent, others are born with an instinctive or inherited manual skill in drawing. Their first descriptive gestures prove to be so visibly right that all their further artistic effort goes into perfecting and to the progress of visual consciousness. Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Picasso, Tintoretto all drew with enormous facility; this gift placed them before a pictorial space as masters of execution and thus perfectly free to create ideals. Their visual experiences, become works of art, led through observation away from realism (a critical synonym for familiar form). All of them painted or drew what had never been seen thus. There is a Rembrandt painting of an old woman paring her toe-nails, an unfamiliar sight, for the old creature is wrapped in a golden ochre glow hardly dreamed of for angels, her old clothes do not suggest cheap sentiments of home-spun poverty but are glorified by paint and painter's fancy into something strange. The cool clear light on the face of a small portrait of a Dutch gentlewoman (in the National Gallery, London) explains how far skill can go to draw without a sign of drawing the faint flicker of lips in a

pale glaze and strokes of flesh more than flesh itself.

Da Vinci pushed the frontier of pictorial vision as far as he could conceive it, to a perfection more refined than his predecessors — this something he *knew* how to do — and far more precarious, daring and *original* in compositional balance. Picasso, who regularly proves how capable he is of imitating both nature and art, early learned the fun of tormenting natural form — into signs, representative and for beauty's sake. A hand is a bunch of bananas, the bananas are a jungle, a hand, a sign; and the very hand that draws itself that way expresses (among other things) the wilfulness of the artist who will do as he wishes.

However, the remarkable ability of Picasso or Tintoretto or Raphael leaves enormous gaps of visual experience, all there is to be seen that is not perfect or perfectable, a fortune of art and raw material that, owing to the queer human streak, is more precious and appealing than the 'best'. The Siennese artists of the 13th century painted blind men's visions; Giotto was comparatively clumsy; Cezanne crude; Pollock a spatterer of raw paint; but there is no progress in perfection since Praxiteles. The word 'perfect' supposes a standard, a measure, which in European art is (like it or not) Greek sculpture. Venus is to human scale; a frieze of warriors on horseback, a portrait head, are works of art yet well within the bounds

of human consciousness. Faced with the near-impossibility of repeating that sort of perfection, artists try to see beyond the bounds to worlds of unhumanised, often individual visions. A spot or clumsy stroke spoils a clean surface or can equally offer a world of suggestion, intimation and pleasure to anyone who looks.

Signs, spots, their independence of drawn form and their suggestive potentials, were exotic elements to European art, used but not consciously until trade with China and Japan introduced highly sophisticated pictures looking quite unlike anything Roman, Spanish, Dutch or French. To a number of intense but imperfect painters, struggling to work at least as well as Velasquez or Caravaggio, this was a revelation. The possibilities were increased: not only could a painter make images in traditional European ways, he could see the freshness of the Oriental ways and beyond to syntheses, totally unthought of ways to paint.

A painter or a sculptor has a dual consciousness to develop, his own peculiar one and the total consciousness of art, whose frontiers are expanded by what is 'bad' as well as by the accepted 'good'. An artist is bound to a certain awareness of work in progress, not merely his own, and even to the changing demands of the time, as felt in studios, cafes and picture-shops. An artist tends to resist mere fashion but the form of his resistance usually becomes a part of, and a response to, the demand for change.

19th century art history in France lived on two levels — first, what it was: *salons*, recognised artists, an accepted (now despised) 'style' and sentiment; second, how it seems to us — a clear and beautiful pattern of revolt against convention. The demand for change did not come from the public voice; Cezanne, Monet, Pissarro, Van Gogh, Gauguin were desperate men who did what they wanted to do — what they could do — in face of great worldly indifference. Painters today still pass through years of obscurity and hunger, yet the late 19th century in France — loosely

called the impressionist and post-impressionist period — was a rare epoch in that the 'good' painters were all ignored by the contemporary public. Recognition later accorded helped to found the false tradition that art, to be good, must be obscure. Visual art is by nature the least prone to miscomprehension, all is open to view, but at first look an unfamiliar form or technique may be hard to 'understand'.

When the availability of cheap boughten colours increased all painter's palettes, the quantity of bright surfaces in a picture alarmed and shocked the lookers, who learned to appreciate and desire the sensation while revering the original works as art. Colour became the new excitement, then the essential 'paintness' of paint as opposed to the illusionist qualities of the medium. Subjects worn out by over-familiarity became less and less obtrusive until the style or act of painting *was* the subject and paradoxically very important.

Change, a deliberate constant effort to contradict established work, is the remarkable feature of the present day, so that concepts of painting which were, not so long ago, incitements to revolt are now appearing in the guise of a revolution. Painters infuriated by the banality of a thousand still-lives, a jug, a flower pot and six apples on a table-cloth, went home to spread scarlets and blues with exuberance, anger and vitality but no apples. The quantity of anger and exuberance displayed on every wall calls for relief, possibly in the shape of an apple.

By reappearing, I mean of course in the public eye, for the painters concerned have, on the whole, stuck by their principles. That men do resist fashion and prefer to hold with their concepts while waiting for their time is as much proof of inner vitality as is a bold technique. There is certainly an immense encouragement for the artist in finding himself in time, which affects his subsequent work. He is whipped on to extend himself and his neighbours. In purely technical terms paint surface goes from thick to thicker, reaching by multiplied paralled efforts the greatest

possible weight. This ceases to be exciting, through repetition, and is replaced slowly by thin or thinner paint, iron, plaster or pencil marks on bare canvas. The image or vision peculiar to each artist works through the matter, the matter itself a choice of 'free' will, influenced to what unknown degree by surroundings?

A picture-dealer came to an artist's studio in Paris not long ago, to decide whether or not he wanted to show his work in her gallery. I stayed on to listen and watch while the painter took his pictures out of the racks and put them one by one on the easel. There were several dozen canvases to look at, all rather large, some very thickly painted in red or brilliant orange with suggestions of black or dark blue under the final scrubbings of crimson. One was the the colour of lapis-lazuli, enameled in rich paint with faint overlapping changes of tone, one a great white canvas painted with frail washes of yellow and rose-pink streaked by thin black lines. The painter put out a large, heavily painted red picture, masses of fall-coloured trees with trunk-like strokes at the bottom. 'I did this one last year', he said, 'and a whole series very like it, all done in the autumn'. The picture-dealer seemed disappointed: 'I thought I had seen that one before,' she said, 'you probably showed it to me last winter. I can't of course use it now although it is a beautiful painting, really beautiful. It is a shame you were not able to exhibit it at the time it was painted, when it was new. That sort of thing has been done since, you know, and shown in galleries, it would be ridiculous for you to show it now as you do have newer work.' She pointed to the thinly-painted white canvas, still shiny wet and dripping from the last brush-strokes. 'I like this one very much and it hasn't been seen yet. The older pictures will have to wait until you are better known, when you may want to exhibit them as early work in a retrospective. Now you must bring me some more like this new one, which ought to be shown this year'.

This particular art-dealer is considered one of the least commercial-minded in the city, happy enough to sell her artists' work but spiritually incapable of promoting spurious talents or mere *fumisterie*. However, art touches her as a visual stimulant, she needs a constant supply of fresh and varied stimuli. The demand for new sights is fairly typical, not only of dealers but also of the looking public, nor is it uniquely of this century. But the speed of obsolescence (of a new sight) is new, thanks to rapid transport and facile reproduction. What newness really is, in the realm of art, is indefinable, never just something different, rarely the result of one human and unique genius, yet the logical steps from old to new are hidden, unrecognised and only visible after the fact.

It is not difficult in retrospect to follow a true line, say, from Cezanne to Braque, Cezanne to Tal Coat, Gauguin to Matisse, Picasso to Pollock, to evaluate art by sequence regardless of the sheer beauty of the works involved. The effort, for both artist and looker, is to project — not a judgement so much as a choice into the unborn possibilities. Every choice, as it becomes an act of painting, creates its own opposition, the alternative is further defined and exists as the newer thing. A hard edge immediately suggests a soft one, illusion of deep space creates the need for tactile bulk, a bright tone reminds one of the alternative neutrals. So every stroke spawns a number of other possibilities, itself the contradiction (or extension, both are valid) of one or more previous experiences. A Cezanne water-colour in pale atmospheric tones, made of the lightest touches of colour only, influenced a later painter to recast that same atmosphere in lamp-black on shimmering white oil-paint,

## II

### THE TACHISTS

Tachism is somewhat of a dead issue, owing precisely to the need for newness which has brought on a reaction to ambi-

guity. While cubism (by which I mean not only Cubism but most painting based on square or geometric forms) is an attempt to unify images by eliminating accidents and compressing the unreasonable shapes which abound into something clear and logical, tachism is a glorification of the natural flow of things, the more haphazard the better.

The lyric suggestions of Tal Coat, soft black strokes on creamy white and beige grounds, are 'about' natural forms — trees, foot or paw prints in sand, foggy mountains — recalling Chinese ink-paintings and the signs of Lascaux. They are remembrances of historical experiences in art, a delicate way of recounting history, in the way that Van Gogh recounted his experience with Japanese colour-prints.

The real beginnings of tachism are properly obscure. It is a fact that an artist's sketches have always had a fresh spontaneous charm rarely found nor looked-for in considered work. This very appeal became a new thing, a natural stroke (regardless of skill) something valued in its own right. Scale increased, a spot or splash or quick stroke, overcrossed lines and washes such as might be found in a working drawing were enlarged to be the atmosphere and content of a large painting. The speed of execution of a stroke is important as a direct expression of action and 'vitality'.

Georges Mathieu's paintings explain speed as a virtue. The canvas in the Museum of Modern Art, Paris, is roughly four yards long, two high, the ground coloured grey and painted over with independent marks of white, blue, red and black. Long sweeps of paint circulate from the outer edges towards the center, tracing the gesture that made them and the drips and spatters emphasise the sense of haste. Jagged or rounded lines crowding the center part are made of paint squeezed directly from the tube, making a body of material as well as an urgent confusion. This and similar paintings of Mathieu are in several senses a performance; he purports to describe major scenes of French

history, battles and royal processions, assassinations and executions, by means of a personal choreography performed before the canvas. The gestures are brief in time but the marks remain, as in photography a slow exposure shows the passage of a torch waved in the dark.

Whether tachism is a subdivision of lyrical abstraction, a catch-word for gestural painting or a European form of action-painting is a scholar's question. Tachism is only a word (*tâche* means spot) applied to paintings in which the form is the gesture of a brush or is described by a natural gesture, with resultant, incidental splashes and drips. This is a deliberately wide definition, to include the technically different painters whose common point is physical attack. The similarity between the natural gestures of men has made a great many paintings look alike even though made independent of 'influence'. Willem de Kooning is thought to have 'influenced' some contemporary artists in the use of largebrush stroking and heavy, rough-edged paint. These are material elements, easy to copy, and not intangibles of the spirit; yet even there de Kooning's pictures are visibly (if not arguably) better than those of his followers, rather as the stride of a classics winner is 'better' than that of a common horse, not merely faster but also more esthetic. De Kooning's early known work (1945) is tense and tight, limited to black or black and white and the stroking (which seemed bold at the time) short and rigidly controlled. This led (by what process of contradiction?) to the *Women*, where the obtrusive subject encouraged, rather than not, a free, violent and natural stroke in a full range of colours. His next move was a performance of how to paint by including the most elements possible, the greatest variety of weight and colour of paint, a bulk of simple square forms laid one on the other to make complexes. Canvases really large in size, the scale suggesting a giant of energy (not physique) and a wealth of vital matter. These paintings were shown in 1956, they were a surfeit of that particular kind of wealth.

Sam Francis is more a true tachist although his work seems rather to create the definition than to follow it. He has always used lovely colours, clear and unmuddied. In his earlier paintings the colour is often one, greens or blues in looping, shell-shaped strokes of paint thinned to transparency, or white traced over with liquid honey. The rhythmic repetition of stroke makes a living-space without defined beginning or end: overlaps of green on green form a dark patch, fainter strokes meander down the canvas in a blurred pattern of light. These pictures are of natural phenomena out of context and somewhat arbitrary in scale. Francis' recent paintings are more precise; directed spots of thin colour (oranges, reds and brilliant blues) obtrude then disappear above eye-level, much of the canvas is left

bare and white under rectangular forms that are very descriptive as well as handsomely decorative. The true precision is the point of view, in which the painter's vision — and eventually that of the looker — is tipped to a fresh relation with the visible world, unconcerned with the usual experience of gravity. Many (not all) of his paintings concentrate on the top of the canvas like balloons clustering on a ceiling or kites tugging at their strings. The vision is a physical sensitivity peculiar to the artist, whose urge is to invade space and the air above and whose action with the brush is expansive though light in touch. Francis describes with spots of colour these unfamiliar sensations of free movement in air, a conscious disembodiment new to this world.

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.**

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## DISCUSSION

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### *Politicisation of History*

By ABU SAYEED AYYUB

DR. ASHIN DAS GUPTA begins his highly interesting and provocative article, 'The Historian in India, 1962' (*Quest* 32, Winter 1961-62), with a message for his fellow historians adapted from Nelson's famous message before the battle of Trafalgar. The message reads—India expects every Indian (for the purpose of his article, every Indian historian) to do more than his duty. What the plain, i.e., traditional duty of a historian is has been explained by the author in a sentence: 'The traditional duty of a historian is to discover the truth about the past and then to state it'. Dr. Das Gupta is sure that no historian will disagree with such a formulation of his duty. He is equally sure that 'the traditional duty of a historian is one which it is impossible to perform'. That, to say the least, is a pretty kettle of fish. And if the poor historian finds it impossible to do even the little bit that he has been taught to regard as his duty, how can he be asked to do more than that?

But probably 'more' is not used here in any additive sense. What exactly is Dr. Das Gupta asking the Indian historian of 1962 to do? To begin with, he must make every effort 'to discharge his traditional duty to the best of his ability; that is of cardinal importance'. For this he must equip himself with an appropriate methodology and an adequate knowledge of facts. But 'to claim that nothing more goes into the writing of history is foolish'. The historian's mind is caught in the grip

of his social milieu and as a result develops certain trends and predilections. In addition, he often has some personal idiosyncracies of his own. All these subjective factors affect his work—not so much in the discovery of facts about the past, as in the generalisations he makes from them and the interpretations he puts upon them. Dr. Das Gupta's point is that though a historian cannot altogether escape the sway of these subjective factors, he can choose the particular predilections which are to be active in his own historical investigation. And the main thesis which is presented in this article is that these predilections should, generally speaking, be chosen in the light of the moral and political demands of the social situation in which the historical investigation takes place. To be more specific, the Indian historian of 1962 can and should eradicate his 'pernicious point of view', his communal and regional bias; in its place he should cultivate a zeal for 'propaganda for the good cause', which today is, above all, national solidarity and the integrity of his country.

Dr. Das Gupta is evidently treating the subjective factors which affect the historian's work as bad habits of the mind, more or less analogous to Bacon's *idola*, which, even if they have a social origin, are amenable to the individual's self-therapy. He is not inclined to regard them here in the fashion of Marx as deep-rooted largely unconscious social forces

arising out of the economic situation of the thinker, over which the individual thinker has normally no control. The only way in which he can change his ideology is by changing his class affiliation—a rare social event. Be that as it may, it would occur to most of us that if the historian *can* become conscious of and *can* free his mind from the *idola* of the tribe, the theatre, etc.—or at least to the extent to which he can do so—he had better keep his mind free and detached, permitting himself only one attachment, viz., the zeal for the discovery of truth. Dr. Das Gupta, however, would not follow Bacon on this point—and that for two good reasons. The first reason is that since truth is unattainable in history, other considerations become important. Rather an odd thing to say, but I am afraid this is what he says: 'Since no history gives you "the truth about the past", it becomes of grave import to see to it that the mental atmosphere which is influenced by the writing of history, is influenced towards the better'. The second is that the detached historian, 'the purest scholar', 'distorts the past by his lack of imagination'.

It seems to me that Dr. Das Gupta's arguments are too wide for the case he wants to present, and therefore weaken instead of strengthening it. Let me explain what I mean by quoting a passage from the article under discussion in which the shortcomings of history are being pointed out—merely substituting 'physics' for 'history' and 'nature' for 'past': 'Given an appropriate methodology, granted an adequate acquaintance with the relevant facts, a physicist is still not giving "the truth about nature", he is only giving you some truths about nature. The whole truth about nature is in fact beyond redemption. Faced with this impossibility inherent in his craft, the physicist consoles himself with a segment of the truth and thus, by omission, distorts'. No physicist will, to my knowledge, regard these remarks inappropriate to his subject; yet none will regard them adequate for declaring that 'the traditional duty of a physicist is one

which it is impossible to perform'. The duty of a physicist is wrongly conceived if it is conceived as the presentation of the truth about nature: it is only the promulgation at each stage of inquiry of the least erroneous or distorted view of nature possible at that stage. This applies to history just as well—substituting 'the past' for 'nature'.

As regards Dr. Das Gupta's aversion to the detached scholar in the field of history, again the analogy of physics is helpful. The need for the play of imagination is no less in physics than in history; yet no one believes that because 'the purest scholar' may distort nature by his lack of imagination, therefore, he should deliberately cultivate impurity of purpose, albeit of the socially helpful kind.

I admit that in the possibility of error and in the play of imagination there is a difference between history and physics. But I do not believe that the difference in degree is so vast as to be mistaken for a difference in kind. I would, therefore, urge that Dr. Das Gupta has not made his point that the traditional duty of a historian is one which it is impossible to perform—in any sense which is peculiar to history. The traditional duty of all investigators of truth is in a sense, but in no significant sense, impossible to carry out. Truth in its perfection, that is, in its extensive and intensive infinity, is an unattainable ideal in every sphere of knowledge. Nonetheless, investigation of truth proceeds in all departments of human inquiry by the only way it can proceed—a continuous correction of error and an asymptotic approximation to the ideal of truth.

We have seen that for the historian 'doing more than his duty' means bringing other considerations into the writing of history besides the consideration for objective truth. Dr. Das Gupta is suggesting that these other considerations can and should act as auxiliary to the historian's traditional ideal of discovering the truth about the past. An impression is created in the mind of the reader that

books on Indian history written with the conscious motive of promoting the integrity and solidarity of India would not only be morally improving, but somehow truer (or less false) than history books written with the opposite bias. I am not sure, but if this is what he intends to imply, then there is little basis for such an assumption. Communal harmony and regional parity cannot be taken as axioms of Indian history, and historical investigations in this field have so far tended to give support to the contrary thesis. These of course are bad books written by bigoted fellows. But if subjective predilections in one direction produce distortions of one kind, subjective predilections in another direction are just as likely to produce another kind of distortion. Who or what will tell us which distortion takes us further away from the truth? Does the goodness of a purpose or predilection (other than the purpose of getting at the objective truth) act as a deterrent against the general falsifying proclivity of all such subjective factors? According to the Marxists, it does.

The Marxists of course define this goodness in their own way. But they are quite convinced that the historian who has the right interests, that is the interest of the right class (which of course is the proletariat), is by virtue of that more qualified to give us the truth about history than others who have the interest of the bourgeois or the petit-bourgeois at heart. It need hardly be said that Marxism does not admit any disinterested writing of history. But of course identifying one's interest with the class-interest of the proletariat does not alone suffice to give us historical truth (or any other kind of truth). One must investigate in accordance with the generally accepted empirical methodology of science: observation, classification, hypothesis, confirmation, etc. The Marxist theoretician, holding to a double standard of truth—the instrumentalist (*that* belief is right which serves the class-interests of the proletariat) and the more common and commonplace scientific (*that* belief is

right which corresponds to or is faithful to objective facts)—ties himself into knots whenever he attempts to present his doctrine of historical truth (and truth in general) to the uninitiated. I am afraid Dr. Das Gupta too is in difficulties with his double standard of historical truth, which he characterises as 'the traditional discipline' and 'improving the social situation' respectively.

Or is he not? Is he only saying what I would like to say, viz., that since the communalist and regionalist historians have been presenting a distorted picture of India's past, it would be good to correct the picture by reading books written by historians who have the contrary bias, that is, who are predisposed to establish communal harmony and regional equality in cultural fields as features of Indian history. And if the latter kind of books are in short supply, I agree with Dr. Das Gupta that Indian historians, at least some of them, should for the next few years engage themselves in making up this deficiency. In my opinion (is it Dr. Das Gupta's opinion too?) they should at the same time not lose sight of the fact that both kinds of motives are liable to produce distortions in the picture of India's past. If this awareness is shared by the reader who is in a position to make a comparative study of both kinds of historical investigation, he may reasonably be expected to succeed in reaching a fairly objective understanding of our history. This understanding may or may not reveal that Indian history is a history of communal harmony and synthesis, or even of a balance between concord and discord. But Dr. Das Gupta speaks in this connection of 'restoring the balance'. Unfortunately, historical accounts not seldom refuse to balance. A history of balanced accounts may be morally and politically helpful, but will it always be sound history?

It may not be out of place to say here a few words about the essential difference between a humanistic study like history and a natural science like physics. The

difference is not, as we have seen, that the former alone is subject to error and incompleteness while the latter gives us the whole and undistorted truth. The significant difference lies in the characteristic of the humanistic branches of knowledge which Karl Mannheim designated by the term 'perspective bound'. No one can escape the ideological influences of his time and age, of his national, linguistic and professional groups, even of his family. But when a man is interested in stars or atoms, these influences are, so to speak, kept on one side of his mind, they do not obtrude very effectively into the field of his research. But when man himself, his ideals, institutions and actions, are the object of study, the ideological influences coming from the social milieu get themselves involved into and mould the very processes of investigation. If the investigator could be clearly conscious of these, he could perhaps eradicate them, or chase them out of his field of work. But some of them at least lie deep in the unconscious or sub-conscious regions of the mind. And sometimes even when they emerge into consciousness, they appear to the scholar as salutary and helpful to his scholarly pursuits (as the revolutionary predilection does to the Communist and the national predilection to Dr. Das Gupta). Therefore the remedy lies not so much in the hands of the reader as of the writer. The former should not confine his reading of history to books written from one perspective only, however appealing that perspective may appear to him due to the fact of his sharing it with the writer. He should make it a point to read and compare books written from diverse perspectives and try to reach some sort of objectivity in that manner—much as one can form some notion of the objective shape of a hill by comparing descriptions from observers who have seen the hill from different points of view. The latter on his part should not forget that in spite of the indelibility of some residual marks of subjectivity, the striving against sub-

jectivity is part of the discipline necessary for all scholarly pursuits.

There is no justification in fact or theory for the assumption that historical truth about the past will always serve the moral or political needs of the present. When it does not, there are three alternative courses which we may, and do, pursue. First, we may distort history to *make* it serve our present needs. India remained a colonial country after 1947, there was only a shift in the pattern of imperialist power—a major share of it having passed from Whitehall to Wall Street; the Hungarian uprising in 1956 was the work of American paid agents, and Soviet mechanised divisions marched in only to restore people's democracy in the land; Hindus and Muslims have lived in India in perfect accord (barring a few untoward incidents) down the centuries; Assam played as great a role in the cultural renaissance of modern India as Bengal; et al. Full-blooded Marxists do this sort of thing without twitching an eyelash. Dr. Das Gupta has had too thorough a training in the traditional school to plumb straight for such heretical historiography. So he permits himself to suffer from divided loyalty—divided between tradition and revolution, objectivity and 'propaganda for the good cause.' The Marxists, as we know, divide their allegiance to the double standard in an uneven fashion. In the positive sciences the criterion of objectivity prevails over the class theory of truth; in the sphere of humanities the class theory unmistakably dominates, though lip service still continues to be paid to the other standard. In fairness to Dr. Das Gupta it must be acknowledged that as a conscientious petit bourgeois he is not at all happy about his double standard. "This task ("pleading for the good society through the writing of history") must never be attempted at variance with the traditional discipline", he insists. But alas, 'the traditional discipline affords only limited help,' and therefore 'has to be transcended.' As a petit bour-

geois reader, I share Dr. Das Gupta's unhappiness, but am I alone in feeling a shade confused by all this vacillation?

The second alternative is to let historical investigation continue in its old course but to distort our present morals and politics in the light of history. Since there is indubitable historical evidence for a balance of atrocity and vandalism committed by members of one community on another during the former's period of imperialist domination, let us 'restore the balance' by action. A tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye, or, better still, let us crush the historically guilty community completely so that the communal problem may be solved once and for all in the simplest possible way. Since regions A and O have been somewhat lagging behind in modern cultural developments, the Bs should continue to pose as their natural leaders for all time and continue to constitute their administrative and business personnel. And so on and so forth.

The third alternative—I need make no bones about recording that my own preferences lie this way—is to unfasten, at any rate to loosen, the chains with which the past (I am not speaking here of the immediate past) binds the present. Let us pay homage to the past in the way we pay homage to the stars. Both present to our view magnificent spectacles; but let us not forget the distances that separate us from them. To turn the study of astronomy into astrology is one way of forgetting the distance, and a foolish way. To turn the study of history into a guide for action is a dangerous way of forgetting the distance. Action at the present moment must be determined by the moral and political needs of the present, not by the deeds of the past. The past should of course continue to fascinate the historical scholar, but the lay Indian's attitude towards his past can only be described as a fixation. The way we parade our past before the world is perhaps merely ridiculous; but the way we have let ourselves become its slave is

undoubtedly pathological. Something has got to be done about it.

Today India is a State as it never was before in history; the making or breaking of it lies in the hands of its people, not of its autocratic rulers as was the case in the past. It is imperative for us to learn to live as citizens of a State, irrespective of how well or ill our ancestors learnt the lesson. History has not taught the French and German peoples to live in peace and amity, far less as citizens of one State. But today they and four other nations of Western Europe have formed an economic community (known by the very modest sobriquet of 'European Common Market'), and it seems extremely probable that a political community with a federal parliament will emerge in another decade or so. As I write, news comes that a parliament of six nations (with very limited functions of course) has already been set up. I believe European historians of 1962 or 1972 will not deem it necessary to dismiss the histories of German atrocities on the French and the Belgians (committed in the course of three German invasions during the past century) as bigoted, nor resolve to rewrite the history of Western Europe during the last hundred years with the laudable purpose of 'restoring the balance'. History and politics must not be allowed to bedevil each other.

Dr. Das Gupta might reply that it is all very well but highly metaphysical to say *must not*, when the fact is that our historical beliefs *are* exercising a powerful and terrible influence on our actions today, so much so that to him 'it appears probable that in some years from now the Republic of India will break down in confusion.' Granting this, what is the remedy? The remedy, I suggest, is not to stimulate further historical research but with an opposite bias, leaving unchanged the vampire-like hold that the past generations have over the present. For all that we know, it might make the situation worse by provoking communalist and regionalist historians to greater zeal in their investiga-

tions. And what is the guarantee that they will not succeed better in piling up further support from history for their line of propaganda? A necessary corollary of demanding political succour from historians (or philosophers or poets for that matter) is to put a gag on historians and other intellectual workers who do not toe your political line.

Towards the close of his article Dr. Das Gupta has somewhat modified his position to suggest that moral considerations should prevail not so much in determining the truth or falsity of historical theses as in 'reorienting the direction of historical enquiry'. I wonder if further rethinking will not induce him to make another concession and acknowledge that even in reorienting the direction of historical enquiry, the prime consideration should remain elimination of error in the field of knowledge, not alleviation of evil in the arena of politics or morals. The first duty of a historian (as of any other enquirer) is to the cause of truth; no other cause is as good a cause for him. A keener desire to be of service in the political exigencies of the day will turn the historian into a politician. He can always

exercise his choice, but he should do so with deliberation and with full awareness of what he is opting for. What I am protesting against is the *varnasamkara* which Dr. Das Gupta's advocacy involves. In an emergency, no doubt, the historian may be called to, or may choose to go to, the trenches—as may the scientist. I am, moreover, ready to admit that what they will be doing in the trenches could be regarded as nobler (and of course more essential) than what they were doing in their studies and laboratories. But one task should not be confused with the other.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasise that investigation of truth is itself one of the great (moral?) imperatives of man. A life dedicated to the fulfilment of this and this alone need not lack high worth. Some people may well be content with such a vocation. There are other imperatives more or less urgent. Unfortunately, these various ways of spiritual fulfilment are not too closely interlinked. Occasionally one clashes with the other. The conflict of value with value is one of the tragedies of the human situation.

## Talking About Books

By SADHAN KUMAR GHOSH

MEMORIES of a lunch with M. R. Ridley at Bedford College for Women — the other guests were Kathleen Tillotson and Agnes Latham — crowded in my mind as I leafed through M. R. Ridley's delectable *Studies in Three Literatures* published by Dent. The idea that different languages have their own shaping power, that there is in each language a core of expression which cannot be wholly translated, goes back to Vico and Herder. It is part of the romantic stress on the singularity of nations and imaginative traditions. The corollary is that certain things can be said only in a particular language. The full effect of a Pindaric Ode, in other words, cannot be felt in an English translation. I am disposed to agree. I have always felt that 'tears in things' was an inadequate rendering of the Virgilian *Lacrimae Rerum*. But it is one thing to have this feeling about stray examples (most of my examples are from Horace or Virgil) and it is another thing to make a general statement with the authority, charm and insouciance of Professor M. R. Ridley.

Professor Ridley is a very learned man, with a knack of disseminating his scholarship in a pleasant, agreeable manner which recalls Gilbert Highet. But I am frankly surprised by his suggestion that Latin, while admirably adapted for letter-writing and rhetoric, was less suitable as a poetic medium. 'Lucretius never learned that master-spell which comes with an ease apparently so effortless from the lips which Apollo has touched. There was indeed only one Roman poet who learned it. Virgil alone of his race raised Latin to the rank of a great poetic language, and even he not completely. But under his hands the hexameter takes on a subtler and mellow harmony'. He rightly condemns those who disparage Virgil as an unoriginal poet (Let it be remembered that Tennyson in the last century and A. E. Housman in the twentieth have been condemned on similar grounds, with the same churlishness and pointlessness). It is at least true of Virgil and his Roman language that in all literature that unembittered melancholy, that

temperate hope and that sorrowful majesty of cadence have been heard once only.

Professor Ridley then considers different literary forms — the primitive epic, the literary epic, lyric and drama. The distinction between the primitive epic like *Iliad*, and the literary epic like *Paradise Lost* has been classically treated in Professor C. M. Bowra's *From Virgil to Milton*. I like best Professor Ridley's essay on *Lyric*. Professor Bowra, in his magnificent *Greek Lyric Poetry*, points out that the two main classes of Greek lyric poetry were the choral song and the monody. The choral song, of course, was largely religious. Three main features which may be seen in every surviving ode of Pindar and Bacchylides are developments from ancient usage. First, there is a story or myth; then, there is a maxim; there are also personal references, plentiful in a poet like Alcman. Ridley points out — Sir Harold Nicolson, too, has done this, but rather scrappily — that though the Greeks were lovers of beauty, they had little affection for Nature as we understand the term (The Sicilian, Theocritus, is an exception). Nor had the Greeks a real sense of personality in Nature. The Greek saw the fountain or the hill as one thing, the naiad or the oread as quite another thing. It seems to me that Professor Ridley has not dealt with the Greek drinking-songs — he barely mentions Anacreon — at all adequately. Cavalier poetry, particularly that of Herrick, is not fully intelligible without a reference to and memories of Anacreon. But Ridley's treatment of the love lyric is thoroughly exhaustive. He suggests that in the English love lyric, one finds two distinct ways of regarding love, not antagonistic but complementary. One is the purely sensuous and physical which may lead to exquisite lyric or to the frank coarseness of the Elizabethans. The other is a conception of a spiritual relation which raises and transmutes the passion into something finer. When he comes to drama, Professor Ridley rather deviates from his main theme, the peculiar genius of each literature. It is interesting to learn that he considers *Atalanta in Calydon* thoroughly un-

Greek. He is not very consistent on this point and cites passages — of which Meleager's dying speech is one — which seem to him 'to come straight from a Greek Tragedy'. I think George Steiner's disparaging remarks on *Studies in Three Literatures* very unfair: 'A book relating a body of great literature to the individual *daimon* or defects of a given tongue would be a rare and important venture. It still needs doing.' That is a brash and churlish statement about a mellow, graceful, humane work.

Professor Masterman, more than any one else is the Oxford symbol, or the Oxford image — a compost of Verdant Green, Zuleika Dobson, Sir Richard Livingston, Michael Innes, the punts on the Cherwell and Blackwell's on an autumn afternoon. His *Bits and Pieces* published by Hodder and Stoughton is truly representative of his best. Here is the browser at his best and scholarliest. This is that vintage prose of which Oxford only has the secret and which the whole world envies. The book is a miscellany, consisting of a few biographical and autobiographical sketches, a few articles and jeux d'esprit. The autobiographical sketches are delectable and shot with that peculiar Oxford nostalgia which is not an awareness of irretrievable loss, but rather of the march of time. The crime stories are reminiscent of 'An Oxford Tragedy' and 'The Case of the Four Friends'. One is a spoof. Spoof-writing is dear to Sir Sydney Roberts, too, I remember.

'*Bits and Pieces*', says Masterman, 'is what it professes to be — a collection of short articles, stories and essays and a play written at different times, without unity and without any obvious connecting link or central theme... It is an irritating experience to be offered a box of chocolates and to be unable to guess which shape conceals the desired core. Only those persons who are gifted with the flair for success in life seem able to choose correctly or infallibly a soft cream when they wish for it or a hard centre when that is their desire. Ordinary mortals have to eat two or three unwanted specimens before they strike lucky'. It is safe to say that Masterman's misgivings are unjustified. There are no unwanted specimens. The book will, among other things, satisfy a vicarious nostalgia for Oxford. All men with memories of their own youth, a little passion for wine and silver and good food, and at least some inclination for tiring the Sun with talking and sending him down the sky will find it delightful and evocative.

Simon Raven's *The English Gentleman* published by Blond is a stimulating book. The

myth of the English gentleman is a persistent one and satirists like Maughan (*The Lion's Skin*) have had only limited success in trying to deflate it. Simon Raven is not, however, trying to resurrect it. He is trying to analyse it, while informing everybody with needless reiteration and disarming candour that he himself is not a gentleman. I, for one, disbelieve him, for the repudiation of this status symbol is the unfailing mark of the English gentleman.

In the first part of the book, the author assembles and discusses the elements which have gone to form the traditional English notion of what constitutes a gentleman. Was it necessary, one wonders, to drag in the Virgilian Pietas, and the duties of the medieval Knight? No one can dispute, though, the contributions made by Lord Chesterfield and Arnold of Rugby. In the days of his ascendancy, Raven argues, the English gentleman was an agent of justice and effective action. He was prim, but not purse-proud, and his life was centred on one purpose — to recognise and to honour his obligation and his trust.

The hard core of the remainder of the book is devoted to proving that the ideal has either declined or become obsolete in the last fifty years. Personal excellence is distrusted to-day. People do not so much mind other people's possessions, if only because they might at any time 'come up on the pools' themselves. But what does arouse envy is the idea that someone might be, in himself and for his own qualities, superior to the *hoi polloi*. And so we have the degrading spectacle of everybody proclaiming that he is a gentleman. Everyone apes him, too. 'One man has been a temporary officer during the war and now joins the territorials for the prestige of the Commission; another can just manage a B.B.C. accent; a third runs a tired hack in the local Point-to-Point'. Thus, face is saved, or rather lifted. After all — it is said wryly — everybody now-a-days is addressed as 'esq' on his letters and goes through a door marked 'Gents'. Simon Raven has handled a ticklish subject with sympathy, becoming modesty and a lot of horse-sense. He is not an Angry taking it out on the world.

C. S. Lewis's *They asked for a Paper* published by Geoffrey Bles contains some splendid prose, reminiscent of his *Surprised by Joy* but not in the least resembling his heavier criticism such as one finds in *The Allegory of Love* and *Preface to Paradise Lost*. The prose of *They asked for a Paper* is a sheer delight. It is the kind of prose which Professor F. L. Lucas would endorse and approve — and I can think of no higher praise. Here and there, C. S. Lewis reveals traces of

Lucas's influence, *De Descriptione Temporem* — the inaugural lecture at Cambridge — for example. One has the impression that one is reading Trevelyan's Clark Lectures. Another essay — 'The Literary Impact of the Authorised Version' recalls a well-known essay by John Livingstone Lowes but is much more scholarly, urbane and humane. He does not conceal or minimise the difficulty of reading the Bible solely as literature. The Greek tragedians are religious, but we have only religious speculation in Aeschylus or Sophocles, not dogma. That is why we can join in. Not even Virgil tacitly prefaces his party with the formula 'Thus say the Gods'. But in most parts of the Bible everything is introduced with 'Thus saith the Lord'. One shares not only Lewis's regret but also his conviction, that the Bible in future will be read exclusively by Christians.

The same scintillating brilliance and the same easy assurance characterise the other essays. The best of these are *Hamlet*; *The Prince or the Poem*, *Kipling's World* and *Walter Scott*. I am happy to find that his reading of *Hamlet* has been influenced by Wilson Knight, whose single-minded humanism has transmuted Shakespeare criticism in this century. Here is a sample of C. S. Lewis's *Hamlet* criticism: 'The sense in which death is the subject of *Hamlet* will become apparent if we compare it with other plays. Macbeth has commerce with Hell, but at the very outset of his career dismisses all thought of the life to come. For Brutus and Othello, suicide in the high tragic manner is escape and climax. For Lear death is deliverance. For Romeo and Antony, poignant loss'. He asks us to suspend our anti-Imperialism while reading Kipling. This is sound advice, for Kipling was a tremendously fine writer and if we remember him only as an imperialist, we do so to our detriment. I wish the essay on Walter Scott had been a little more John Buchan-ish but that is only in passing. We are glad they asked for a paper and were rewarded with so much wit, elegance and sane morality.

E. H. Carr's *What is History?*<sup>2</sup> published by Macmillan consists of the G. M. Trevelyan lectures delivered last year in Cambridge. Mr. Carr is internationally known as the author of *History of Soviet Russia*. He is that rare thing, a distinguished historian who has original remarks to make about historical theory. *What is History?*<sup>2</sup> I am sure has delighted G. M. Trevelyan. It is the kind of history envisaged in Trevelyan's *History and the Reader*. Mr. Carr is a radical and it is fascinating to watch his onslaughts on the academic bastions.

'The function of the historian', he writes 'is

neither to love the past nor to emancipate himself from the past, but to master and understand it as the key to the understanding of the present'. Trevelyan, it is true, would stress more the poetic value of history. But he, too, in more Landorian language, would have endorsed the view that the present like a note in music is nothing but as it appertains to the past. Mr. Carr's notion of progress is reminiscent of H.A.L. Fisher's. In fact, it is the only sane and civilised notion. Western historians, Mr. Carr implies, lost their belief in progress when the capitalist-democratic system began to surrender its position of dominance. His view of the Great Man in history resembles Carlyle's and Hegel's.

His style is attractive, gentle and persuasive. Christian historians like Niebuhr and Maritain remind him of Polybius: 'Wherever it is possible to find out the cause of what is happening, one should not have recourse to the Gods'. Nor does he spare the views of Professor Popper and Sir Isaiah Berlin on 'determinism'. Professor Berlin condemns individuals, Mr. Carr prefers to condemn institutions. A brilliant, stimulating book.

Sir Richard Rees's *George Orwell* published by Secker and Warburg is an honest, but not particularly well-written book. Writers on Orwell tend to put chips on their own shoulders — this is certainly true of Christopher Hollis and John Morris. Sir Richard Rees, who seems to have known Orwell very intimately, does not go that far but I miss the point of his constantly harping on Orwell's 'occasional inconsiderateness to others'. Particularly so, since corroborative evidence is lacking. There is only one man in England, with the necessary attitude to Power and the Establishment, and the precise, pin-pointed prose who could write a useful book on Orwell. Pity that Malcolm Muggeridge, who was reported to have begun a book on Orwell years ago, has not continued it. That book should be a marriage of true minds — one great and large-minded man writing on another.

It is hard to endorse Sir Richard Rees's specific judgments. He fails to realise the transitory nature — relatively speaking — of *Animal Farm* or *1984* or the true greatness or Orwell's essays. He is unaware that Orwell's *metier* was the essay and not fiction. He is unaware that significance of so deeply moving and Gissing-like a book as *Keep the Aspidochelone flying*. And a sentence like this is unnecessary, pointless and does little credit to its author: 'Although entirely without personal malice, he was capable sometimes of surprisingly penetrating personal criticisms; and yet I could

never feel that he was at all a reliable judge of character'. The final impression left by Rees is that of a man nursing a life-long grievance, (arising from a sense of inferiority) against Orwell and now taking it out on him. It is a painstaking book but unworthy of its great subject. It is packed with irrelevancies. His comparison of George Orwell with Joseph Conrad, Simone Weil and Arthur Koestler, for example. In the last two cases, the comparison is unjust to and defamatory of Orwell. In Conrad's case, it is right off the rails.

One must not expect too much consistency in contemporary history and when the history is of so bloodstained an episode as the partition of India fairness is enough. That is my impression of Penderel Moon's *Divide and Quit* published by Chatto and Windus. Moon was in Bahawalpur when the clash came and one may say that he had a ringside view of the onesided massacres. He largely blames the leaders on both sides for their ill-timed utterances. It is not clear, though, whether he supports or condemns the Cripps proposals. All Tragedy presupposes a *hamartia*. Moon implies that the Cripps proposals were bad but still Mahatma Gandhi should have accepted them and that Rajaji showed 'statesmanship' in supporting the Cripps proposals and the principle of Pakistan as well as in opposing the Quit India demand. History is unlikely to endorse this view.

But the value of a book like this does not depend on stray judgements. It lies in the human aspects of the indescribable atrocities committed in West Punjab, particularly Bahawalpur. One gets an uncomfortable impression that Moon rather overestimated his importance and played into the hands of Gurmani. We feel at the same time that the Boundary Force just looked on while Muslims murdered the Hindus. This is reiterated and emphasised by Moon: 'He thought that the number killed must run to several hundred, I asked how many of these were Muslims, for since it was the Muslims who were murdering and looting, the armed forces, if they had seriously attempted to restore order, must have shot a few of them. Leghari thought that only one or two Muslims had been killed. This

was what I had expected, but it was really quite ridiculous. Marden alone with his tommy-gun could surely have done better. Riotous mobs provides quite easy targets'. It is sad, even after fifteen years, to think of the holocaust. Memories, like summer days, are long in the East.

Professor Wilson Knight's main contention in his great works of Shakespearean criticism is that that the meanings of Shakespeare's plays are symbolic and metaphysical, not moral. In his monumental book *The Christian Renaissance* published by Methuen he extends his interpretation to the New Testament and to writers as miscellaneous as Dante, Goethe and Oscar Wilde. His contention always has been that a Shakespearean play should be regarded 'spatially' as well as 'temporally'. Put more simply, each imaginative suggestion has a part to play in the story and a duty to fulfil to the 'atmosphere' as well. Both story and atmosphere are abstractions from the one unity and fully to possess the play we must contain both in a single view. The poet is a seer because he 'sees' something in the space-time world. That explains the importance of imagery, but images must be interrelated.

How does all this apply to the New Testament? *The Acts of the Apostles* describes some marvellous events. A new power had entered the world and all were filled with the holy spirit. The miracles done by Peter are striking. St. Paul's creed is sublimely humanistic. He was a necessary link in the service of Christianity. In the Epistles he appears as a powerful organiser and a phrase-maker. He asks us to feel the poetry of Jesus Christ — in this matter anticipating Oscar Wilde nineteen hundred years ago — and to realise that immortality is the monopoly of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

The same impression can be gleaned from the Gospels. Jesus speaks in parables, so that men may not deceive themselves. Jesus speaks in poetry for he is calling mankind to creative life and telling us to blend our life with the life of harvest and tree and human marriage. It is right that Professor Knight relegates Sean O'Casey to an appendix, for that appendix is the one dispensable item in a magnificent book.

## *Some Suggestions for Revolutionizing Indian Education*

By N. K. DEVARAJA

THE newspapers recently reported the Government's decision to appoint some committees "to advise it on the formulation of educational policies and their implementation". The present article aims at indicating, in terms of the historical needs of the country, some of the principles on which those policies should be based.

Education is probably the most important single factor in the life of the individual which moulds his mind, his attitudes and his tastes; it should be a major force or factor in the life of a nation. Nothing divides two persons more radically than the differences of level in their educational attainments; and the differences engendered by the varying systems of beliefs, attitudes and values transmitted through education by different communities and cultures are the most radical ones which tend to divide one nation or community from another.

The importance of education as a sovereign force in a nation's life has been clearly recognized by thinkers like Plato and by the totalitarian regimes; it needs to be better appreciated and realised by educationists, reformers and revolutionary leaders in India, which suffers from various "lags" material, intellectual and moral and from the legacy of large-scale social evils, and which aspires to forge ahead not only on economic, industrial and diplomatic planes but also in the spheres of science, culture and social organisation.

Speaking broadly and generally, education aims, or should aim, at equipping the nation with the consciousness which would enable it to live a rich, noble and

effective life. Education in our country should help us to catch up with the more advanced nations in the arts of civilization; it should also enable us to attain world standards in the spheres of scientific thinking and reflective and creative writing. Negatively, our educational policy should aim at preventing the emergence of those forms of consciousness and behaviour which interfere with the pursuit of the aforesaid aims.

Having stated in general terms what the aims of education should be, I shall now proceed to deduce from these the principles that should govern our educational policy. In so doing I shall also be amplifying the statement of aims given above. It has also to be remembered that, India being a democracy, our Government can exercise only a general sort of control over the educational processes.

(1) I shall first lay down a negative principle, which follows from the negative statement of the educational objective given before. Education consists largely in the transmission of the heritage of beliefs and values. Part of this heritage, particularly in a country like India, may be very old indeed, and part of it very recent. The transmission of this heritage has of necessity to be a selective process. What I want to emphasize is this: the elements in our heritage selected for transmission to the students at different stages of education should not be such as clash with the values universally cherished in modern democratic societies (I should like to underline in the preceding sentence the two words "modern" and

"democratic"). This seemingly innocent point, when properly elaborated, will be seen to have revolutionary implications. Let us ask a blunt question: What have our educationists and the Government done so far to prevent the emergence of caste-consciousness in the younger generation? That consciousness, it may be pointed out, is bound up with certain beliefs, partly religious and partly mythological; and its grip cannot be loosened, much less removed, until the propagation of these beliefs is stopped at all levels of education. Here it may be recalled that even such widely influential teachers and reformers in Indian history as the Buddha, Kabir and Guru Nanak, failed to rid our society of caste-divisions. This indicates the stupendous nature of the task awaiting those who would fight this age-long evil. The Indian masses are highly conservative; they are still very much under the influence of the traditionally minded Brahmins and Pundits. It may be safely asserted that the majority of the Brahmins and Pundits are born propagators of the caste ideology; they also have a vested interest in the continuance of the caste-system. The democratic Indian Government can do little to prevent the Brahmins from acting as moral and religious teachers of the masses in general. However, it can and ought to do something to keep the student community away from their conservative outlook and influence. And here I want to put forward a highly revolutionary suggestion: the pundit who has been educated purely on the orthodox lines, should not be permitted (or at any rate, encouraged) to have pupils to teach. The orthodox or pure pundit (as such a person may be called) may or may not enjoy social prestige, but he should not be employed in a teaching institution and thus have the benefit of state patronage. It follows from this that institutions imparting education of a purely orthodox type, e.g., those devoted to the teaching of religio-philosophic texts in Sanskrit and

Arabic, should either be closed down or deprived of State aid and recognition.

Such a suggestion which amounts to the recommendation to close down such important institutions as the Varanaseya Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya may seem to some to be preposterous, if not downright absurd. It may be taken to imply that the present writer is opposed to the study of the Sanskrit language, or at any rate, of the religio-philosophical literature enshrined in that language (or in such other languages as Arabic). Nothing can be farther from my intentions. I hasten to add that I attach the greatest importance to the study of Sanskrit. But my suggestion is that Sanskrit studies of all kinds should be transferred completely to the schools and colleges of the modern type. The teaching of Sanskrit and Sanskrit Texts should be conducted in a modern spirit, alongside subjects taught in a modern school, college or university. *All research work relating to Sanskrit studies should be carried on in the modern colleges and universities*, under the guidance of teachers and professors educated on modern lines.

A proper use may still be found for eminent pundits educated in the oriental fashion. Such pundits or scholars may be attached to a college or university, to be consulted by teachers and researchers working on different aspects of Indian thought and culture. The Government or the universities may also provide facilities for those who want to make specialised studies of Sanskrit texts under the pundits. It may be added here that a number of Sanskrit texts in literature, philosophy, etc., can be taught and are already being taught by teachers in the university departments of Sanskrit and Philosophy in various Indian universities. All I contend for is that the pundits should not be permitted to teach and influence the minds of the younger students, with no other force to counteract that influence. The purely oriental institutions, teaching Sanskrit texts to young students through the medium of Sanskrit or the vernaculars,

it may be remembered by all concerned, are the breeding-grounds of the conservative mentality and the backward-looking reactionary leadership.

(2) The educational authorities should bestow the greatest attention on vernacular text-books taught in the schools, particularly at the secondary stage. For that stage is the period when the students imbibe ideals of heroic life and the conceptions of various virtues and their relative importance.

I shall not elaborate this most important point, but only illustrate it. High School students in the Hindi speaking States get a good dose of the poetry of Tulsi Das and Suradas. To these poets, the highest virtue that a man can cultivate is the disposition of complete dependence on God. They also lay stress on the innate wickedness or sinfulness of man and laud the virtues of humility and self-abnegation. Contrary to this, Kalidasa, the author of the *Raghuvamsam*, extols in his favourite heroes such virtues as self-dependence, proper pride, perseverance in undertakings, learning, etc., etc. While I am second to none in my admiration for Tulsi Das and Suradas as poets, I plead that the work of preparing text-books out of selections from these and other medieval (and modern) writers should be entrusted only to those who, in addition to having knowledge of the writers in question, have a sense of history and the awareness of the needs in knowledge and character of the present day Indians.

(3) I shall now enunciate the third important principle which should govern the educational policy of this country. By and large the Indian people today live either on their past tradition or on ideas and values prevailing in the West. While secretly resenting the restrictions imposed by a pre-scientific, parochial tradition, and cherishing the values whose vision has been evoked by science and technology on the one

hand and the growing intercourse among nations on the other, educated Indians are yet unable to accord those values recognition and assent in terms of a national philosophy. We have, e.g., a democratic form of Government, but our people are largely without the ideological equipment which supports and nourishes the democratic mentality. On the one hand, the Indian Government are making heroic efforts to improve the material living conditions of the people through science and industry, on the other, our intellectual leaders have at their disposal no better philosophy than the Vedanta, wedded to the doctrine of illusionism, by which to exhort those people to be cooperative, just and reasonable. We refuse to see, what is clear as a summer day to simple common sense, that excessive respect for such ancient texts as the *Purushasukta* and the *Laws of Manu* is inconsistent with our denunciations of the caste-system; and that we cannot at the same time be reasonably permitted both to idealise the tradition which enjoined the four stages of life and to have elderly presidents, vice-presidents and cabinet ministers as elected rulers and administrators.

A culture, in order to be vital and effective, must maintain a certain harmony between its ideas and institutions, its thoughts and practices. It is relatively easy to borrow from external sources methods and techniques in administration and industry; it is much more difficult to evolve forms of consciousness adapted to the maintenance and growth of those methods and techniques. No nation can borrow from another the latter's mental habits and moral and spiritual attitudes. These habits and attitudes can be developed by a nation only through the insights and persuasive efforts of its own thinkers, writers and teachers; they can be developed, further, only through interaction with its traditional aptitudes, taste and convictions.

The current system of university education in India puts a premium on what may be called 'reproductive scholarship'. Our teachers are engaged mainly in imparting textual knowledge to the students; and we

honour scholars for their knowledge of the Vedas, the Dharmasastras, the philosophical sutras and bhasyas, etc., on the one hand, and for their acquaintance with Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Rousseau, Adam Smith, etc., on the other. As a consequence this system has failed to produce in this country any thinker comparable in originality and stature to a Darwin, an Einstein, a Freud, a Marx, or even a Russell, Sartre or Wittgenstein. India, indeed, produced the great Mahatma Gandhi and several other religious leaders of a lesser stature, but the credit for producing these could not be exclusively, or even mainly, claimed by our universities. It may be noted that while Gandhi and Aurobindo received whole or part of their higher education abroad, Tagore was largely a self-educated writer and thinker. The innumerable vicissitudes suffered by India in her history have failed to give her, even in modern times, a historian of the stature of a Toynbee who would seriously investigate the causes of the rise and fall of the nations and of the growth and deterioration in national cultures, with special reference to the history and culture of the Indian people.

University education in India should be reoriented in a way that would ensure the following results: it should develop in the young scholars the capacity for independent yet responsible thinking, at once critical, creative and purposeful. It should lead them to look at India's great past in the perspective of history, feel proud of it, and be inspired with the ambition or mission to see her attain greatness in different spheres consonant with the glorious heritage from that past. In fine, the universities should aim at producing intellectuals and scholars who are deeply patriotic and forward-looking, both critical and constructive in outlook, and determined to push the national mind to the highest plane of significant awareness. Such intellectuals and scholars will be our best bulwark against the forces of disruption that threaten the unity and integrity of our land from time to time.

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## 16 MODERN MARATHI SHORT STORIES (*Kutub-Popular*, 236 pp. Rs. 6)

THERE has been recently a growing demand for really competent English translations of the more enduring achievements of our literatures. That is the only way Indian work could reach the foreign reader; what is more, for numerous Indian readers too that must be the only channel through which they can gain acquaintance with an Indian literature which is not their own. If the need is real and important the damage an incompetent translation might do is proportionately large. It is natural to ask, firstly, how far is the translation successful? Does the English version reflect the distinctive quality of the original at least to a reasonable extent? The common failing here is that the English of the translation often suffers from a kind of rigidity which seems to result from too great a regard for correctness; it is the fruit of labour, something acquired through academic experience. This academic connection appears to be rather strong in this particular instance.

A very large number of the authors represented here are University teachers and the translation is done by the author himself or by one of those who figure as contributors, Bal Gadgil, Hatkanagalekar, Mangesh Padki and others, all College teachers. (The Publisher has obligingly supplied this information in brief notes which are neither in good taste nor good English.)

As one reads through this anthology of short stories one becomes aware of the difficulty of finding lucid English equivalents to convey the force and flavour of some wellworn Marathi expressions. This is particularly evident when the story happens to

have a good deal of the conversational element in it. The translator does his best, of course, but one cannot say that he achieves that ease of expression which could have prevented us from becoming painfully aware of the difficulties of translation. The English is rarely free from jars. To take a sample at random, the first page has the following paragraph:

'Well, prince, it is just not enough that this lovely place of yours serves the purpose of a marriage-pandal for the relatives. It's where your marriage ceremony would eventually come off, we imagine. And what was that you said? "Taking the B.A. exam this year"... No, no and no. Examination! So what? Even the great men of the past were married, when they were just children in fact. They got through their exams all right, eh!'

The 'prince' and the 'No, no and no' have an unEnglish ring about them and might put you in mind of their Marathi origins. The joviality of the final 'eh' and indeed of the whole passage is apt to appear strangely forced. This general impression of a sort of a linguistic *gaucherie* is enhanced by the presence of some downright Indianisms which are in their way quite delightful to those who know Marathi but must prove somewhat perplexing to the others, as in the case of a sentence like 'I folded my hands to her metaphorically in complete surrender.' or 'This girl is a flaming torch.' Such infelicities are naturally more prominent in the rendering of conversation rather than in the purely narrative parts. Something awkward seems to enter the field as soon as conversation starts, particularly when slang is attempted ('O boy!', 'O my!', 'Heh!' or the ubiquitous 'Well' for in-

stance). For this reason, a story like Shantaram's *Rain in Summer* where the whole effect depends on the tone and modulation of the dialogue between the husband and the wife loses in the translation because the English garb fails to bring out that quality. And one is troubled by a sharp sense of betrayal somewhere.

To the question, then, whether the translation does justice to the original, it is not easy to give an unqualified answer. At the same time one recognises that this is an earnest effort deserving credit, and goes a certain way in achieving the necessary ease and grace of expression in English without harming the force of the original.

In the matter of choice, as the Publisher, claims, these 16 Short Stories are fairly representative of the sixteen authors presented here. Each one, if not the very best of the author — which, in any case, is largely a question of personal taste — is certainly typical of the author's work as a whole. Thus, to mention only a few, Gangadhar Gadgil's *The Dog That Ran in Circles* has that strained and somewhat spurious 'modernity' about it which seems to be a feature of all his stories. It is pretentious though actually more of a personal essay than a story. Vyankatesh Madgulkar's *Planning the Feast* presents what is his *forte*, the authentic rural experience which is intensely mirthful but has quite a serious total effect. Mangesh Padki's *Just a Story* displays the same kind of coarse interest in sex as is seen in his other work. Similarly, Mahadev Shastri Joshi's *The Fugitive* is the same good old Marathi stock — and none of your modern namby pamby about it — as is the rest of his work. It is frankly reformistic in intention and the preaching is not sought to be concealed.

There is a broader question which one must ask. When one comes out in English one must expect to be judged in a wider context. What impression would this anthology of stories make on an outsider? What is their intrinsic value as literature? How high is their claim as art? There can

be little doubt that this makes an interesting bunch of stories; it is a fair sample of successful art which just misses that distinction which makes art great. Where an author seems to have attempted the modern vogue or technique the story tends to become merely pointless; some others descend into great depths of sentimentalism. On the whole, these short stories of the last decade seem to demonstrate that the so-called traditionalists get away with it and the modernists have little to show except their acquaintance with foreign literature.

At its best the Marathi short story of the last decade displays the same social concern and social idealism as has always distinguished the literature of the Marathi-speaking people. Their ancient pre-occupation with the home and with problems of family relationships is still a dominant interest. And the most impressive stories of this collection are those which present delightful studies of the child mind and of the 'firstlings' of adolescence. Story after story adds some facet or other to this basic theme: Pargaonkar's *The Bride Arrives*, Mokashi's *Do Write a Story on Me*, even Bhavé's *The Mystery* and Mahadevshastri Joshi's *The Fugitive* have something of this interest. But for a pure gem in this kind as nearly perfect as any you find in any language, you must turn to Vasundhara Patwardhan's *The First Sprout*. This, surely, is a great little classic and there is nothing particularly modern about it.

V. Y. KANTAK

### *Thinking of India*

**CONSIDER INDIA: AN ESSAY IN VALUES**  
by Horace Alexander (Asia Publishing House,  
155 pp. Rs. 10)

I MUST confess straightaway that the thought of a whole book about Values seemed at first a little fearful: it is so easy in a work of this kind to become over-emphatic in order to make a point, to sound dogmatic and somewhat hysterical

instead of reasonable, or to get lost in words which don't really yield a fair crop of clear ideas. Horace Alexander does none of these things. *Consider India* is full of pleasant surprises; there is scarcely a pedantic thought to be found anywhere in it. It is also remarkably free of self-consciousness. With understanding and sensibility and a frequent delightful wisdom the author entices the reader into his particular, metaphysical country, there to 'explore for himself, to use his imagination, and discarding any prejudices he may have, to think and ponder.' To say, however, that this book is 'a bit of all right', that it merely avoids the pitfalls that a less skilful writer might fall into, and to let it go at that, is not enough.

Addressing himself to those people, mostly Westerners, who consider India, if indeed they consider it at all, either as a country swarming with hungry, multiplying masses who have to be provided with economic crutches and to be regarded with an uneasy conscience, or as the exotic basis of 'a cult of sentimental eccentrics, or of elderly women who dabble in the esoteric', Mr. Alexander suggests that India may, perhaps, have something rich and comforting to offer to our competition and tension-ridden world. For he believes that the old roots of Indian philosophy which seemed for so many years to produce nothing but, in the words of Edmund Wilson, 'theosophy and Schopenhauer and many other horrors', and which served as an excuse to indulge 'that deeply ingrained instinct: do-goodism' have, at last, sprouted with a new life. How the Gita, the Vedas and the Dhammapada affect the lives of Indians today and may one day affect that of the world form the thesis of this book. Hinduism and Buddhism with their emphasis on wholeness of life and the importance of training not only the intellect and the body but also 'the inner mind of the subconscious' have a very real contribution to make to the fragmented, specialised society of our time.

Contrary to popular notions, Mr.

Alexander tells us, the tenets of Hinduism and Buddhism are neither annihilistic nor negative, but positive just as *nirvana* is tranquillity not negation, a state not of indifference but of understanding and acceptance. In the morass of metaphysical speculation, dogmatic religious practices and gross superstition that form a large part of Hinduism, are to be found the key to the sort of maturity which conquers the need for selfish conduct. There can be no proper socialisation while people accept slick statements such as 'cupidity is deeply ingrained in human nature' to explain away stupid devices like economic empires, national self-sufficiency and nuclear deterrents.

After more than thirty years of close association with them, Horace Alexander knows his Indians. And because he is still staunchly on our side, the more reason to attend the criticisms he proffers on those aspects of our national life where we fall short. However, despite the humiliating succession of catastrophes that we seem to be prone to and the tremendous inertia which seems to bog us down, he is sure that forces of healing are at work building a country which is neither a fossilised replica of the Vedas nor a pale reflection of the West.

LINA MAYADAS

### *Remembered Fiction?*

*A RUSSIAN CHILDHOOD* by Elisaveta Fen  
(Methuen, 285 pp. 21s.)

TO take up the story of a childhood which was singular only for its 'exceptional restrictiveness' might seem to be a feat of nerve: but to have made it a story of dramatic discoveries is nothing but a feat of skill and vivid imagination. In fact, so detailed is the remembrance and so marvellously coherent the line of emotional growth in the autobiography of her childhood days that one wonders whether Miss Fen has recaptured fact or written fiction. How many of us would

know for instance, at any time before the age of eleven (where this autobiography ends, mind you,) that on a particular occasion 'it was a brilliant winter day with snow sparkling in the sunshine and the sky delicately blue above the tracery of bare branches overhead. There were spidery, shallow footprints of magpies on the snow, and the sharper and deeper imprints of the pig's feet...'; specially when the occasion is your first ride on a pig?

A mere series of such episodes would have made the book tedious. Miss Fen imbues them with significance by relating them to her discovery of herself and those nearest her. Her brother emerges not as a friend but just as a brother, her mother as a source of all security and as a touch of the hand on the forehead at night which dispelled nightmares, but also as a compulsive figure whose love had to be tested again and again. There is an incident when her mother rebukes her for annoying an older girl, Zena, with her demonstrations of affection. The young Elisaveta, described in the book as Leda or Ledochaka, feels so humiliated and hurt that she spends 'the next two hours in the currant bushes, raging and grieving for my shattered innocence'. Her resolve to be less demonstrative in future is the first painful step to growing up.

Ledochaka herself is seen to be an observant but impressionable little girl who makes, at each stage of her growth, a momentous discovery. Or rather, the discovery marks the growth. For instance, after having yielded to the perilous suggestion of a small guest, to whom as host nothing could be denied, to go on a fruit hunting expedition, there comes the realization that 'the reward of generosity might often be a bruised body or a wounded heart', or, in relation to the first boy who 'loved' her and whom she didn't, that 'compassion made me deeply vulnerable; then, the discovery of scepticism, when the faith which was supposed to move mountains didn't even help move a

door in her case though she prayed as sincerely as any miracle man.'

In fact, in the lucid and unegotistical tone of the whole, it is the author's self-conscious comments on 'us creative beings' which strike the only false note. Surely there is a creative (!) priggishness about: 'Perhaps the unusual thing about people like myself, people who feel themselves to be born writers and poets, is our insatiable curiosity....' She could have very easily said, 'Perhaps the unusual thing about me was my insatiable curiosity' and left it to the reader to include her among the 'born writers and poets'. This is offset, however, by clear and sympathetic observations which are part of the professional insights provided no doubt by Miss Fen's training as a child psychotherapist. Her humour remains quiet, nonetheless, and details of her accounts are always enlivened by a twist of personal fancy at the end.

The book is set against the background of Miss Fen's well-to-do family in pre-Revolution Russia: the days are caught as it were in rich Christian feasts and a web of quaint superstitions. Place this with the author's teeming, luxuriant descriptions of places and people and customs, and you get an invaluable clue to life as it was lived at a certain period, in a province where even the rumblings of revolt never reached, though they were to rock the country only a few years later.

Though a naturalised British subject since 1929, Miss Fen has had the opportunity of visiting her parent country from time to time and her sharp evocative images of its moods and landscape received breath again no doubt from this periodic renewal of contact. She became known to the English reading world with her translations of Chekov, Michael Zoshchenko and other Soviet writers. Her first work in English, a novel, 'Rising Tide', earned her the comment that her English was 'so beautiful that it could only have been written by a foreigner'. This may well be applied to 'A Russian Childhood' also. But, as she says in it somewhere, with reference to her childhood dis-

satisfaction with the usual run of fairy stories, 'I hankered after much fuller descriptions of their (the princes' and princesses') carriages, horses and castles, of foods that they ate at their feasts, of dances they danced at their balls, I was a glutton for detail and as I could not get it from these stories, I decided to supply it myself by writing a fairy tale myself.'

The gluttony has apparently outlasted the years, though she may no longer be preoccupied with fairy tales.

UMA VASUDEV

### *Failure in Interpretation*

*UMRAO JAN ADA (Courtesan of Lucknow)* by Mirza Mohammad Ruswa. Translated by Khushwant Singh and M. A. Husaini (Orient Longmans, 187 pp. Rs. 3.12)

I STARTED this book full of hope. It had been specially translated for the Indian series of the UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. And there is little we need so much today as good translators and translations for Indian thought to be able to project itself—to establish contact with world writing. Our own writers too have to depend largely on translations to find out what is going on elsewhere in the country. But, circumstances being what they are, Marathi writers are likely to know all about contemporary trends in English, American, French German and Russian and practically nothing about Bengali or Tamil literature. In spite of a widespread awareness of the urgent need to bridge this gap, so far we have had much better success in organising conferences on the subject than in getting reasonably good translations.

Naturally one felt that, if ever, an effort such as the present one—where the Indian Government and UNESCO have joined hands—where the sponsors had been able to secure the services of Mr. Husaini and Mr. Khushwant Singh—whose extensive knowledge of the English language would make him particularly well-fitted to ex-

cute this task—was itself an auspicious omen. And yet...

To begin with, the choice of the book to be translated is a very unhappy one. It has only its fame to commend it. In another place, at another time, in another language, perhaps, but right now it is hard to work up any excitement about another bout of confessions from an oriental prostitute. In a sense, possibly, *Umrao Jan Ada* serves a purpose as a tame documentary of the loves, lives and times that formed the soil from which Urdu drew a large measure of its nourishment and its poetry. But by itself it certainly cannot be classed as literature. A large part of Mirza Ruswa's prolific output consisted of penny dreadfuls with titles like *The Murderous Dame*, *The Bleeding Lover*, and so on.

*Umrao Jan Ada* may not be in quite the same category, but it is obvious that its writer was totally unblessed with that finesse which enabled Urdu poets to make the most mundane words suddenly large and luminous, coaxing them with feathery softness to continually yield an infinitely attractive and intangible variety of meanings. Brought up in an atmosphere of courts and courtesans, there is a lush, romantic quality about Urdu which makes it much better suited for poetry than for prose. It is perhaps this that has made prose-writers pad their work heavily with verse, often of an extremely indifferent quality, as in the case of *Umrao Jan Ada*. Fortunately Urdu prose was able to divest itself very early of the pomposity which so often makes oriental literature move with the swing of parade elephants; as a consequence there is the saving grace that Mirza Ruswa's language has a directness that might have been penetratingly employed had the book attempted more than merely showing a close-up of the mechanics of commercialised love and a melodramatic prostitute's-eye view of the men who buy romance. How sad that when at last the elements combined to give English language readers a 'representative' work from Urdu, the opportunity

should have been wasted on so naive a book. Who would guess from this the beauty of the language in which Ghalib and Iqbal wrote?

Then of course there is the translation itself. True, for some reason or other every translation fails to satisfy one who knows the original: even when a translation is meticulously faithful to the meaning, there is the difficulty that the same words in different languages evoke very different associations and reflect profoundly different emotional values. But none of these difficulties is of a nature that would require the jettisoning of taste and style. In this instance the translators seem to be using both hands to keep a firm hold on the size and shape, while allowing the colour and the creative view-point to slip by. The language they have summoned to the task is flat and worn out; moreover the persistent use of modern slang phrases (such as, 'I don't care a fig for his life') ensures that the resulting hodge-podge is lifeless merchandise. Chapter I opens with:

*'What story will more absorbing be  
How fared the world in which I lived  
Or what Fate hath held in store for me?*

Mirza Ruswa, why do you provoke me and try to wheedle out of me the facts of my life? What interest can you possibly have in the life-story of a woman like me? . . .

But even before he has had an opportunity to reply she continues: 'However, if you insist, I will tell you.' Then starts a dreary tale of the abduction and training of a courtesan, of 'Deflowering ceremonies' at which 'Besides prostitutes, singers, musicians and Kashmiri mimics from Lucknow, there were parties of famous courtesans and singers from cities as far distant as Delhi'. In the meanwhile the interviewer—the writer of the book—and the interviewed spend the time:

"Why deny yourself when there is:

*A clouded sky, a bleak wind blowing.  
And the blessed vision of rich wine flowing'*

'Keep a hold on yourself, Mirza Ruswa!  
You are making me thirst for the nectar.  
For God's sake, let's change the subject:

*What if wine comes to my mind again  
No more the cup my lips will stain.'*

'An admirable couplet, Umrao Jan.'

'Thank you:

*She sees the field where her lovers bled  
It reminds her of gardens and roses red.'*

'Allah be praised! You are in great form. It comes from the intoxicating memory of the days of your youth.'

The exchange finally concludes with:

"'You are in brilliant form, Umrao. Listen to one more couplet and then resume your narrative!'

*A clouded sky, a gentle breeze, a garden and  
some wine*

*Give me these, but also let youth once more  
be mine.*

'Oh, Mirza Ruswa, you have dampened all my enthusiasm by reminding me of the lost days of youth. Now let's get back to our story.'

By this time the reader is longing to get back to his own story.

The effort on the whole has, I am afraid, met with the same fate as the film version of the book that was made a few years ago: it has flopped.

IQBAL LUKMANI

### *Leonard Woolf in Ceylon*

*GROWING. An autobiography of the years 1904 to 1911, by Leonard Woolf (The Hogarth Press, 256 pp. 25s.)*

**G**ROWING belongs to that class of autobiography which is completely free of rhetoric and drama, where there is no flaunting of exceptional personal gifts and no weighty summings-up of life in general; a class which, in the first instance, even gives one the impression of being dull and prosaic. There are no passages which sweep one off one's feet in memoirs of such a kind; no slick turns of phrase, no massive building-up of a theme. But as one goes through this autobiography, as the

pages are turned one after the other, slowly, line by line, a cumulative picture of the man behind the scenes emerges and leaves one enthralled and captivated by at least one thing—the sheer honesty of the man; honesty of purpose.

Those of us who have heard of Virginia Woolf have surely heard of Leonard Woolf, her husband. Being married to a woman of genius, he suffered from the common enough fate of any person involved in a similar situation: during her life-time and after, his own personality was often merged into, and even subordinated, to that of his wife; he suffered from neglect. But he has led a colourful existence in his own right and his extended autobiographies on which he is now busy, give us some idea of the diverse interests that have occupied his mind.

*Growing* is the second volume of these memoirs, and he describes here the years, from 1904 to 1911, which he spent as a Civil Servant in Ceylon. Like the earlier volume, *Sowing*, it is devoid of affectation and is based on his day to day record of those days, the ordinary daily routine of a British officer in his *kachcheri*. But if titles have any significance to the subject in hand, the book clearly brings out the intricate workings of a sensitive mind caught in the network of nasty officialdom, the stress and the suffering of such a mind, the thousands of adjustments one has to make while one is engaged in a profession for which one is temperamentally not suited, and in the end certainly registers a feeling of 'growth' that comes to pass in the protagonist. *Growing* thus is in the true sense of the term, a story of metabolism, of evolution.

Leonard Woolf landed in Ceylon in 1904 at the height of Imperial glory; Britannia then really 'ruled' as the song has it, and the British king was 'glorious' and 'victorious' everywhere. There is not a single mention in these pages of any political turmoil and unrest (there never was much unrest in Ceylon, in any case). Instead one reads of cooperative tribesmen and submissive natives. Leonard

Woolf is their *sahib* and they are his subjects. The chapters are chronologically arranged, and are headed Jaffna, Kandy and Hambantota: names of the districts where he served until his resignation from the service. On the face of it Woolf proved himself to be a good administrator, as he was a strict disciplinarian. Wherever he goes, success and reward meet him. His subordinates fear and obey him; his superiors respect and acknowledge his merit.

It is somewhere in the inner recesses of his own soul that the voice of protest against the alien rule imposed on a foreign race begins. The voice deepens the more he sees of the local landscape and the people. There are some infinitely beautiful references to the tropical evenings, the tropical sea and the sand, and to the hot humid land. Or rather, references to the communion established between the lonely heart of the young Woolf and the wide, lonely earth stretched around him. One can see the artist in him when he is all the time comparing the visible scene to this or that classic work stored in his mind. Such allusions are very brief: Voltaire and Kipling merely touch off the emotional tone of the author; they don't dominate his mood. The mood all along is of sharp alertness, which is peculiarly his own. The result is a rare synthesis of objective reporting and psychic reactions. And Leonard Woolf and Ceylon are both laid bare in the process.

Woolf comments in the course of the narrative: 'The only point in an autobiography is to give, as far as one can, in the most simple, clear, and truthful way, a picture, first of one's own personality and of the people whom one has known, and secondly of the society and age in which one lived. To do this entails revealing as simply as possible one's own simplicity, absurdity, trivialities, nastiness.' There is no dearth of autobiographies which depict the climacteric moments of an author's life and his age, but there are very few which succeed in making the 'simplicity, absurdity, trivialities, nastiness'

a source of joy as well (the two exceptions I can think of at the moment being Attlee's *As It Happened* and Nirad Chaudhuri's *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*). This one does. One cannot but wait eagerly for the next volume in which the author will perhaps speak of Virginia Woolf, the Hogarth Press and the Bloomsbury group, the three names which became the very centre of London's literary life for a time.

The book has some pungent pen portraits of the usual figures of an imperialistic machinery—the government agents, the superintendents of police, and the magistrates. Woolf bases most of his criticism on the contemporary letters he wrote to Lytton Strachey and on his state diaries of the time. But the publication has little value as a documentary tract in this respect. Its interest lies in the man who, fresh from Cambridge, comes to the East, sees, and is conquered; the man who gradually falls in love with the East.

C. L. NAHAL

### *Punjab Holocaust*

**CRUEL INTERLUDE** by B. S. Anand (Asia Publishing House, 228 pp. Rs. 10.00)

**C**RUEL Interlude is the story of the experiences which the author, at that time Principal of the Khalsa College, Lyallpur, went through during the days of the partition of the Punjab.

He writes with great restraint and objectivity, and is the first to acknowledge that there was nothing to choose between the atrocities committed by frenzied gangs of fanatics on one side or the other. As he remarks, 'In spite of the blinding fog of religious fanaticism and political bigotry that clouded their vision and poisoned their minds, the innate goodness of them asserted itself. Often men risked the displeasure of their coreligionists and even their lives to help the afflicted in the other camp.'

Many accounts and reports of the

happenings during this period have been published on this side of the border. But I am not aware of any published record of happenings on the Pakistan side. The interesting point about Mr. Anand's narrative is that he describes from first hand knowledge what was happening to the Hindus and Sikhs in the Refugee Camp which had been established in his college, and to those who passed through it on their perilous journey to India.

The aim of his book is not to nurse any feeling of revenge to keep the fires of hatred burning; but, by pointing out the degradation and bestiality of such events so to rouse the conscience of humanity, and more specially of the participants on both sides of this tragic drama, as to make its recurrence an impossibility. I am not sure that such a hope is justified in view of the overwhelming evidence of history. Man is incapable of learning from his past mistakes and follies. Such things have happened from time immemorial. They happened on a vast scale within our own generation as the prelude or the aftermath of two World Wars. They are happening today in little corners of the world, which appear to be remote at the moment, but which may come nearer to us at any time.

Leaving aside such speculations, it must be said that Anand has done well to add his testimony to that of millions who were the silent victims of this holocaust of human depravity and mass intoxication. It is our common fate to suffer pain and be victims of oppression, or, still worse, to watch helplessly the agony of our loved ones who are victims of the same. It is only a few of us who have the capacity to give utterance to this in words or music or drama, so as to make it significant for those who have not been through these soul-searing experiences, but who may any day without any forewarning be subjected to the same things.

It is to Anand's credit that he has done this in 'Cruel Interlude' through which he, along with millions of others, passed during the days of the partition of the

Punjab. But perhaps of still greater value is the insight which his narrative provides into the character and personality of the author himself. Modest and sincere to the core, Anand does not build himself up into an embodiment of perfection. Instead of exaggerating the importance of the part he played during this period of terrific stress and strain, he is inclined to under-rate it. Delicately formed, of moderate height, soft in speech, he is the embodiment of what I would call a 'civilized' Sikh. Yet in this man there is a moral grit which outshines just physical courage. He is quickly moved by compassion and when his moral indignation is roused, he is capable of facing any danger without a single thought of his own safety.

The author is depicted in his borrowed army shirt, by the side of the redoubtable Col. Flinch, who having arrived at the spot where the Sargodah Kafia was encamped and being informed refugees were firing at the soldiery, ordered that the entire camp be surrounded by mortars and blown off into oblivion, with the courage to shake him by the arm and shout, 'Do you know what you are doing?'

'Yes, I know. And I don't want your interference'. But Anand continued—'You will be held responsible for the murder of thousands of innocent people.' 'I will not permit anyone to kill my soldiers,' he replied doggedly. Anand yelled back, 'You forget there are women and children in that camp. How can you be a party to their murder?'

This reference to women and children penetrated the thick skull of the British Colonel, who at last agreed to let Anand and his assistant go into the camp and stop the refugees from uselessly firing at the soldiery. Luckily their efforts succeeded and a major tragedy was averted.

It is a sad, a painful tale which Anand has to tell us. It is a tale of human bestiality on one side, and of courage and endurance occasionally relieved by some act of heroism and generosity on the other. But it is good for us who may have been at a safe distance from this scene

of turmoil, to be reminded of what injuries man is capable of inflicting on brother man.

Though the tale is told simply and without artifice, the author shows a mastery of the English language, which makes the narrative flow smoothly and at times rise to heights of lyrical rhythm which is deeply moving.

A book of great promise, which I hope will be followed by others of still greater merit.

G. C. CHATTERJI

### *A New Caste?*

**THE INDIAN MIDDLE CLASSES: THEIR GROWTH IN MODERN TIMES** by B. R. Misra (Oxford University Press, 438 pp. Rs. 25.00)

**T**HE study of the middle class of any society presupposes a good knowledge of several disciplines because the composition and the attitude towards life of a group of people depends upon several historical, economic, social, psychological, religious and cultural factors. Unfortunately we haven't yet developed an interdisciplinary approach where two or three scholars specializing in their different fields could sit together and analyse a given problem. Such an approach would be immensely useful in a study like this.

The author, who is a student of history, has produced an excellent social history of the Indian middle class. The composition, character and role of the Indian middle class has been beautifully analysed and an interesting comparison drawn with its Western counterpart. His work is not comprehensive but how can it be? In the modern world it is humanly impossible for a historian to be an economist, sociologist and psychologist at the same time.

This work is a pioneering project and opens up a vast field for research for scholars of social sciences. Mr. Misra modestly calls this study 'merely an introductory survey of the Indian middle classes'.

The distinction between the Indian middle class and the Western middle class drawn by the author is interesting. Capi-

talism made the middle class an integral part of the Western society and that class promoted a new social order which emphasised intellectual freedom, greater social mobility and political democracy. It also emphasised greater respect for the individual. The middle class in the West, therefore, gave rise to a new standard of values and acted as a vital balancing force between the rich and the poor. It did not and will not fully harmonise its interests with the proletarian class as Marx had predicted it would, but it has in fact attained such a stature in the advanced democratic countries that the proletarian as well as the capitalist class has to woo the middle class to gain its goodwill and sympathy.

The Indian middle class owes its origin to the Hindu social system. The Indian merchants though financially powerful were socially inferior. The Brahmins and the knights regarded trade and industry as 'inferior callings'. The Brahmins pursued only intellectual professions and considered crafts to be inferior. The class of artisans, therefore, received no education and remained socially backward. The immobility of the caste system precluded the development of this class and therefore its potentiality as a source of dynamic progress was lost.

The British rule brought certain radical changes in the social set-up of the country. Macaulay's philosophy produced a new class which was 'Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect'. The Brahmins lost their monopoly and those Indians who acquired higher education and professional skill gradually gained money, power and social status which they had never dreamed of enjoying before. But the new Indian middle class was too self-centered to care for mass education and economic development. Why was it so? The reader would

have been happy if the author had examined the economic, social and psychological cross-currents of the day. Macaulay was of course successful in the beginning in fulfilling his objective but wasn't it the same system of education that promoted a lot of thinking and self-searching among some middle class intellectuals at the end of the 19th century?

The Indian middle class has gained a definite shape in the post-independence period. But it lacks vigour and dynamism. It has failed to provide leadership to the country in transition. The result is that the future of democracy in India is in jeopardy. The bulk of the masses is illiterate. They are 'profoundly suspicious' of the educated people and find it difficult to integrate emotionally with them. Because the intellectual middle class is confused about its own values and therefore keeps aloof, the opportunist middle class has come to the forefront to exploit the situation in the name of the masses. If Mr. Misra had dissected the role of the Indian middle class today, a little subjective element would have perhaps entered his study but it would have sparked some much needed thought. A scholastic work need not always be noncontroversial. Perhaps a little controversy would stimulate thinking in a nation that is so used to delegate its faculty of thinking to only a few individuals!

History is a post-mortem study. Its usefulness does not lie merely in recalling facts and developments. The skill of a historian lies in interpreting data and drawing lessons for the future. Mr. Misra has laboured hard to collect data but has not laboured at all to interpret it. This pioneering study is, however, a good beginning. Let us hope that some scholars will finish the task that Mr. Misra has left incomplete.

RAMU PANDIT

## SHORTER REVIEWS

*Lack of space prevents us giving full-length reviews to all the books we receive. Those we think are likely to have some interest for our readers are briefly noticed in these columns.*

BY NISSIM EZEKIEL

**SHAKESPEARE'S COMIC IDEA** by Sitansu Maitra. (Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya, 100 pp. Rs. 8)

THE AUTHOR is Professor of English Literature in Bangalasi College which is described by the publishers as being 'under the Calcutta University'. He is joint secretary of the Shakespeare Society of Bengal. The usual claim is made that there is something new in the author's standpoint, though he adds modestly that he is 'not sure none of the innumerable critics of Shakespeare has anticipated me'. The book is said to be 'a preparation for a comprehensive study of psychological realism in Shakespeare's comedy'. Actually it is nothing more than a rehash of well-known opinions by well-known critics, who are copiously quoted. The argument develops incoherently from chapters on the Renaissance, and the New Individual, and The Renaissance and the Individual In Shakespearean Comedy to a study of the last plays as indicative of 'Advance on the Path of Symbolism'. This last chapter opens as follows: 'It is not pertinent to ask Shakespeare the dramatist whether he personally believed in the factual fruition of this dream of the New Individual. Really it is rather fatuous to formulate at all and ask such a question. Whether society, as it naturally evolves, will ever produce conditions conducive to the fulfilment of such a value or whether man will have to bring about revolutionary changes in society in a planned and deliberate manner before this new value of love is realised, is a question for the practical reformer and political worker, not for an artist.'

The failure of tone and discretion in such writing is too blatant to need pointing out. Prof. Maitra's conventional apparatus of scholarship cheapens even the commonplaces of Shakespeare appreciation. Of *Rosalind and Orlando*, for instance, he tells us that their love is 'a many-splendoured thing and light scintillates from it as the prism of their dual personality turns this way or that.' The comparisons and contrasts that are made *ad infinitum* between one character and another in Shakespeare's comedies are stale, and the author's ventures into social history and

thought are entirely misconceived. 'Today a middle class teacher never knows how a labourer in a factory passes his life.' Etc.

**SYNGE AND ANGLO-IRISH DRAMA** by Alan Price. (Methuen, London. 236 pp. 25s.)

NOT ALL STUDENTS OF SYNGE will be prepared to admit the author's and publisher's claim that this is the first 'full treatment of Synge which gives an adequate appreciation and evaluation of his writings'. Mr. Price himself devotes the greater part of his introductory chapter to a survey of all the significant books and articles on Synge which appeared after his death. It is true that he does not find them 'adequate'; his own study is comprehensive and detailed, but after all, these qualities do not necessarily add up to 'adequacy' which is a critical and not a quantitative category. The author admires Synge almost to the point of idolatry and consider him in the same class as Euripides, Shakespeare and Moliere. He is not alone in this opinion, but he is certainly in a minority.

Mr. Price declares at the outset that his book covers 'one aspect of Synge's work... the tension between dream and actuality... (which) is central in Synge'. Each play is treated separately. There are also chapters on the prose works and on the poems and translations. The relation of Yeats to Synge is described fully. There are some valuable pages on Synge's notions about literature and his relation to the European dramatic tradition. All views are heavily documented, so that the book includes a sort of anthology of source selections. A chronological table, a bibliography and an index are provided but there are no photographs, not even a frontispiece portrait of Synge.

**MERCHANT IN A MIRROR** by Wilfred Russell. (Thacker and Co., Bombay. 264 pp. Rs. 11.50)

MR. RUSSELL is no mere merchant, but the title of his autobiography is characteristic in its modesty. He spent twenty-one years in India, married an Indian, and loved many things Indian without surrendering his Occidental critical outlook. Eventually he decided to leave India and settle in England with his wife and children. The last four chapters of his book deal with the reasons for this choice and describe a final visit to India in 1960 with reflections on all the changes he observed. 'Is it possible that a vast country can change its direction in so short a time? Is it not

more likely that this particular observer, a foreigner at that, overestimated the debits four years ago and has made a similar error of emphasis with the credits today? Scrutinising those questions two years after they were posed, we feel that it is very likely indeed. Our national mood of expansionist confidence has already been replaced by despondent defeatism. We hope that foreign lovers of India, particularly those with Indian wives, who have settled down here and made a career for themselves, are not induced by the present national mood to return 'Home'. Here, they have a contribution to make, if they don't isolate themselves. There, what can they do which is not being already done adequately?

Mr. Russell tells an off-told tale of East-West differences and points of contact, though the personal details are interesting enough. A more sharply intellectual development of his social and political ideas was necessary to make his flow of comment and reported conversations rise above the banal level. 'What is really at the bottom of your opposition to British rule?' he naively asks a Westernised Muslim. When exploitation is mentioned, he finds it 'an exaggerated picture' and thinks of the 'other side of the story—the boon to India of our mills and cement factories, power stations and railway lines'.

These are the weaker parts of *Merchant In A Mirror*, but even here an attractive and friendly personality emerges, at its best in the pages on Mr. Russell's experiences as an R.A.F. officer during the war, and in all the stories of his human relations for which he seems to have a gift.

**TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF TAMIL LITERATURE.** *An Anthology with studies and translations by J. M. Somasundaram Pillai. Published by the author. Sales Agency: The South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society (Tinnevely) Ltd., Madras-1. 378 pp. Rs. 8.25*

INTEREST IN TRANSLATIONS from the Indian languages into English is now growing rapidly, both in this country and abroad. Unfortunately, almost all attempts to feed it have been inadequate, and Mr. Somasundaram's Tamil anthology fares no better. He has collected work that appeared originally in Indian and foreign periodicals during the nineties of the last century onwards, and added items by himself and his friends. The translators of a bygone era used the English of their day, which makes Sangam classics sound like the worst Georgian verse:

'To us all towns are one, all men are kin.

Life's good comes not from other's gift, nor ill.

Man's pain and pain's relief are from within.

Death's no new thing; nor do our bosom's thrill  
When joyous life seems like a luscious draught'.

This is by Dr. G. U. Pope. He translated it from a poem by Kanyan in a collection made in the 3rd century, the well-known *Kural*. We are told that it was sent by Dr. Pope as a New Year's Greeting to his friends in India in 1906. Is there any point in 'immortalising' this translation? Mr. Somasundaram apparently takes it as a model and his own versions are on the same lines.

'Thou scion of the C'ola Lord who saved  
The dove from woe, Chief of the wrathful hosts,  
Armed with the gleaming darts that ruin work,  
As when a fiery dragon . . . . . etc.

It is all very pathetic. Most of the translators write a faulty, archaic and quaint English. In the fourth verse, the imagery is even much deeper. The boiled rice is fried and jumps out of the fire.' This is from J. M. N.'s interpretative note on some rare Kalit-Tokai verses of which his translations appeared in the *Siddhanta Deepika* in 1912. And this is T. B. K.'s translation of verses from *Nalvazhi* (The Good Path) of Auvai, who wrote in the ninth century:

'Milk, clear honey, treacle and dhal, these mixed together I shall offer to thee, O spotless Gem with the lofty elephant's face.'

Mr. Somasundaram's Tamil anthology is full of such Gems with lofty elephants' faces. Fortunately, this is not the fault of Tamil literature but of those who attempt to make it available to the English speaking public.

By LAEEQ FUTEHALLY

**BETWEEN OXUS AND JUMNA** by Arnold J. Toynbee (Oxford University Press, 198 pp. 21s.)

DR TOYNBEE'S TRIP to Afghanistan was something in the nature of a pilgrimage. It was a journey performed once in a lifetime, to the physical source of all the thoughts and beliefs with which a man has lived and which he has made his own. For thousands of years, Afghanistan has been the connecting link between Eurasia and the Sub-continent. 'It is,' says Dr. Toynbee, 'intensely interesting today for a student of contemporary international affairs. It is of equal interest for a student of the history of civilizations in the Old World during these last five thousand years — Afghanistan has been a highway for migrating peoples and for expanding civilizations and

religions and it has been a key-point in the structure of empires.'

The fact that, in undertaking to travel round Afghanistan to see the sites of the one-time settlements of civilizations, he was committing himself to a physical feat which a man half his age might have been glad to leave alone, does not seem to have occurred to Dr. Toynbee. He only once remembers his age. Seized with a desire to climb the remaining few miles up to the snow line of a mountain at the end of a long day, he admits sadly, '...but Common Sense showed her hand. I was seventy-one, it was 6 p.m., and the total climb within the next ten miles must be 4,000 ft.'

*Between Oxus and Jumna*, then, is the travel diary of this trip — a trip which covered most of West Pakistan, most of Afghanistan, and also Rajasthan in India. As with any travel diary, a great part of the book describes, albeit in an impersonal manner, the actual journeys. The jeep trips through Afghanistan at a time of unexpectedly heavy rains would have given plenty of scope to any writer of adventure stories. Dr. Toynbee's driver obviously did credit to even that group of unlettered drivers of whom it has been said that they can coax more out of a vehicle than any trained mechanic in the West. It must be added that in Dr. Toynbee and his companions, this driver found passengers of his own mettle.

The places which were thus sought out, Balkh, Herat, Ghazni, to mention a few, are described with the expected insight of great erudition. Of Lashkari Bazar, for instance, 'What brought the Ghazavids to Lashkari Bazar? Not their women folks' wish to evade the rigours of the Ghazni winter... It was not their women who brought them to Lashkari Bazar, it was their elephants. A park of war elephants was just as necessary for the Ghaznavids as Dr. Lali's park of bulldozers is for the Helmand Valley Authority'.

To those who might regret missing a touristic account of the places visited by Dr. Toynbee, the magnificent photographs of Mr. Michael Gillett will more than make up for it. Mr. Gillett's camera seems to be capable of recording a deeper tone of blue than any camera before or since. Or is the sky of Afghanistan bluer than the sky in other places?

**CHARITRAHEEN** by Sarat Chandra Chatterjee.  
Translated by Benoy Lal Chatterjee (Jaico Publishing House, 391 pp. Rs. 3.75)

THIS IS BOUND TO BE a review of the present translation rather than of the book itself.

*Charitraheen* is a famous novel by a famous writer and one assumes that it deserves the accolade of the Bengali-speaking people. Translated into unsure English, the edition becomes difficult to read or to understand. Every page is littered with phrases which make one distrust one's eyes. 'But nothing went to Sabitri's ears' is an attempt to say that Sabitri heard nothing. 'I will eat out of your hand' is not a colloquialism implying that one is devotedly obedient, but only a literal rendering of, 'I will eat whatever you cook.' 'Replied him back' might mean either 'answered him' or 'answered back' whichever the reader chooses. On the other hand, 'said plainly' clearly stands for 'said simply.' Compared to these imaginative howlers, to 'take bath' or to 'take food' is a highly literate piece of Indianism. Perhaps we should now ask the publishers to give us a translation of the translation.

**THE UNKNOWN LOVER** by Usha John (Orient Longmans, 192 pp. Rs. 7)

IT IS EASY TO BE CRUEL about these naive, youthful and often embarrassing short stories. They have all appeared in little-known magazines, and it would have been kinder, for the sake of the author's future, to have allowed them to be forgotten. The publishers tell us that some of the stories were written when Miss John was still at school. Just so; and they might have added that it was impossible to guess which. While it would be dishonest to commend either the judgment or the sense of responsibility of the publishers, one can at least acknowledge their reckless courage.

Several of the stories are set in the easy-to-fictionalize Moghul courts. Nur Jehan wears a 'lacy mantilla' and courtesans 'throw pieces of wheaten bread to the dearlings' (deer?). Hackneyed legends are made cheaper by being retold in common terms. Mr. Malcolm Macdonald, who contributes a foreword of cautious encouragement, might have done the author a greater service if he had, instead, persuaded her to defer bringing out a book until she had written something worth printing.

**TALES FROM THE INDIAN CLASSICS** by O. K. Ghosh (Jaico Publishing House, 198 pp. Rs. 2.50)

THE IDEA OF PUBLISHING, in paperback, those stories which have become a part of our national consciousness was a worthy if not very original one. Like many other worthy ideas, this one, too,

wrecked itself in incompetent execution; and what was meant to be sublime succeeded in becoming merely ridiculous. Here, as an example, are a few sentences from the last dramatic page of the immortal story of Shakuntala. 'Mother,' said the boy... 'See who is this stranger. He is calling me son.' 'Dear,' said the king, 'I have been so unkind to you... even after so many years you have not rebuked me away.'

Even if the reader sets his teeth and reads on he is likely to be left with the impression that all the stories are tawdry and meaningless. The Tales from the Indian Classics have been ill served, indeed.

*OF MEN, MATTER, AND ME* by R. V. M. G. Ramarau (Asia Publishing House, 80 pp. Rs. 700)

Briefly, this is a kind of reminiscence composed of the staccato, disjointed comments and exclamations by the one-time Yuvaraja of Pithapuram.

Brought up and schooled to fill a position of impotent wealth, he claims to have had many serious interests and hobbies: tennis, women, politics, expensive cars, and 'last but not least', Literary Leanings, to which this book is a witness. Another art which he gives evidence of having practiced well is the gentle one of name dropping, while there is a frank refusal to resist the engaging human weakness of self praise. It is pathetic, in a man who must have been surrounded by flatterers for most of his life, that he should be so pleased with small accomplishments. ('We have so far three graduates in my family') An almost compulsively self-laudatory tone is kept up throughout the book, and yet the cheerful stoicism with which he gave up his lands and his title show him to be a man of some character. Unfortunately, as far this book is concerned, his ambitions are his undoing. The reader cannot be blamed if, after reading the brash and phoney style of this book, he is left with the impression that Mr. Ramarau himself is a...

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## OUR REVIEWERS

**V. Y. Kantak** is Professor of English Literature and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Baroda University.

**Lina Mayadas** does free lance writing from Bombay.

**Uma Vasudev** was at one time editor of *SURGE*, now contributes regularly to various Indian periodicals.

**Iqbal Lukmani** writes poetry and criticism, has contributed frequently to *Quest*.

**C. L. Nahal** teaches English literature in Delhi University.

**G. C. Chatterji** is at present Chairman of the National Book Trust, Delhi.

**Ramu Pandit** is principal of the Shri M. P. Shah Municipal College of Commerce in Jamnagar.

## CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sirs:

Mr. H. R. Pasricha may well consider this note as 'blatant evidence' of 'a general attitude of irresponsibility and hostility' on the part of a 'half-educated, uncouth, and unpolished agitator' toward one who is obviously 'enlightened' and my 'better'. However, his survey of 'Our Stuporous Society' (QUEST 33, pp. 23-33) reads so much like a lament for 'the old upper class, which through long usage had become less predatory' that I shall risk making an enquiry.

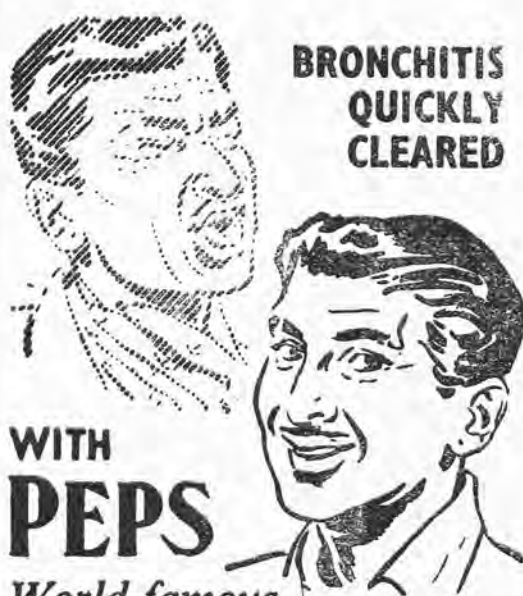
Mr. Pasricha says:

"Taking into consideration the existing population of the country and the rapid rate of increase, *it could be established* that no government, no matter how powerful, could provide jobs or work for more than a small minority. In fact, the self-employed peasantry and unfettered trade and commerce would do so better than any socialist planning." (p. 29; italics mine.)

I have only a fleeting acquaintance with the methods of economics and sociology; may I, most humbly and respectfully, seek enlightenment from Mr. Pasricha as to the procedure for 'establishing' the validity and factuality of propositions of this type?

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## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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**PUNYA SLOKA RAY** holds a doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Tubingen and is attached to the Philosophy department of Utkal University. At present he is preparing a book on the theory of language standardisation at Yale University.

**ROBERT GILKEY**, who has just terminated his post as Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Calcutta, took his doctorate in comparative literature from the University of Paris and taught courses in American Civilization at the Universities of Paris and Bordeaux. He was for several years South East Asia correspondent for *Manchester Guardian*.

**KA NAA SUBRAMANYAM**, the distinguished Tamil writer of short stories and novels, is known to readers of *Quest*.

**RAMGOPAL AGARWALA** teaches Economics at Calcutta University.

**MARIE SETON**'s critical biography of Eisenstein is the best known of all her books. She has been living in India, mostly at Calcutta, for nearly a year now and has completed a biography of Satyajit Ray.

**PRATIMA BOWES'** doctoral dissertation, *The Concept of Morality*, was published by Allen and Unwin in 1959. Early this year she resigned her post as principal of Shrishikshayatan College and joined Calcutta University as a research fellow to complete her next book, *Is Metaphysics Possible*.

**SHIVANATH** is an officer of the Indian Postal Service on deputation to the Indian Army. He writes: 'Dogri being my mother tongue, I have been keenly interested in Dogri literature.'

**DAYA KRISHNA** has already made his mark as a philosopher in India and abroad.

**P. LAL** teaches English at St. Xavier's College, Calcutta, and edits *Writers Workshop Miscellany*.

**AMARESH DATTA** is Reader in English literature at the University of Gauhati.

**GEORGE KEYT** is the eminent Ceylonese painter. His literary works include *Poetry from the Sinhalese*.

**ABRAHAM IVAN ERALY** is a lecturer in History at Madras Christian College, Tambaram.

**EDWINA CURTIS** studied at the Boston School of Art. She and her husband the painter Barney Rubenstein have been living in France since 1952. Exhibitions in Paris and New York.

**N. K. DEVARAJA** is Sayaji Rao Gaekwad Professor of Indian Civilisation and Culture and Head of the Department of Indian Philosophy at Banaras Hindu University.



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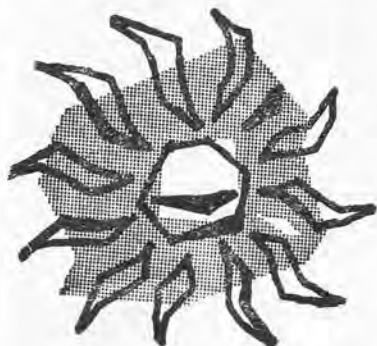
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## Moti of Jamshedpur

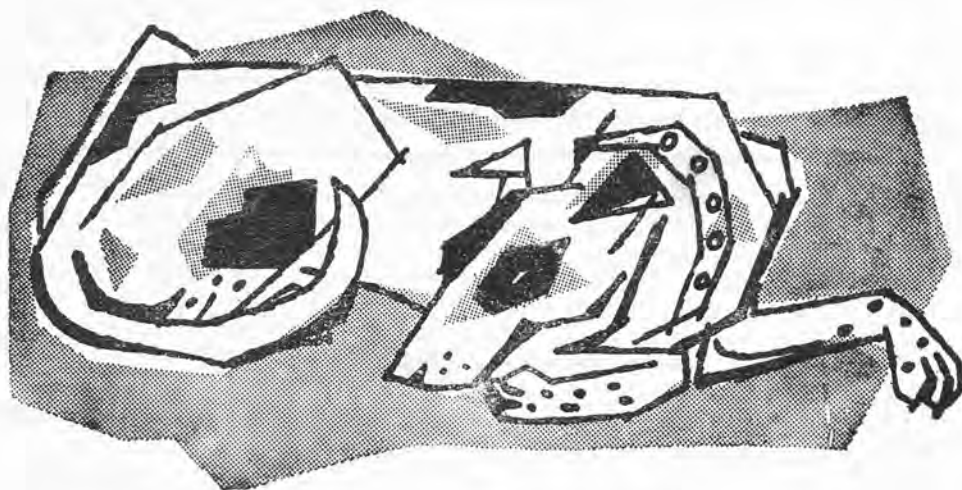
Not a show dog perhaps. But Moti doesn't worry about that. Nor about anything else, as long as he has enough to eat and the sun to bask in. Certainly he neither knows nor cares that he lives in Jamshedpur—a city devoted to producing one of today's most precious metals...steel.

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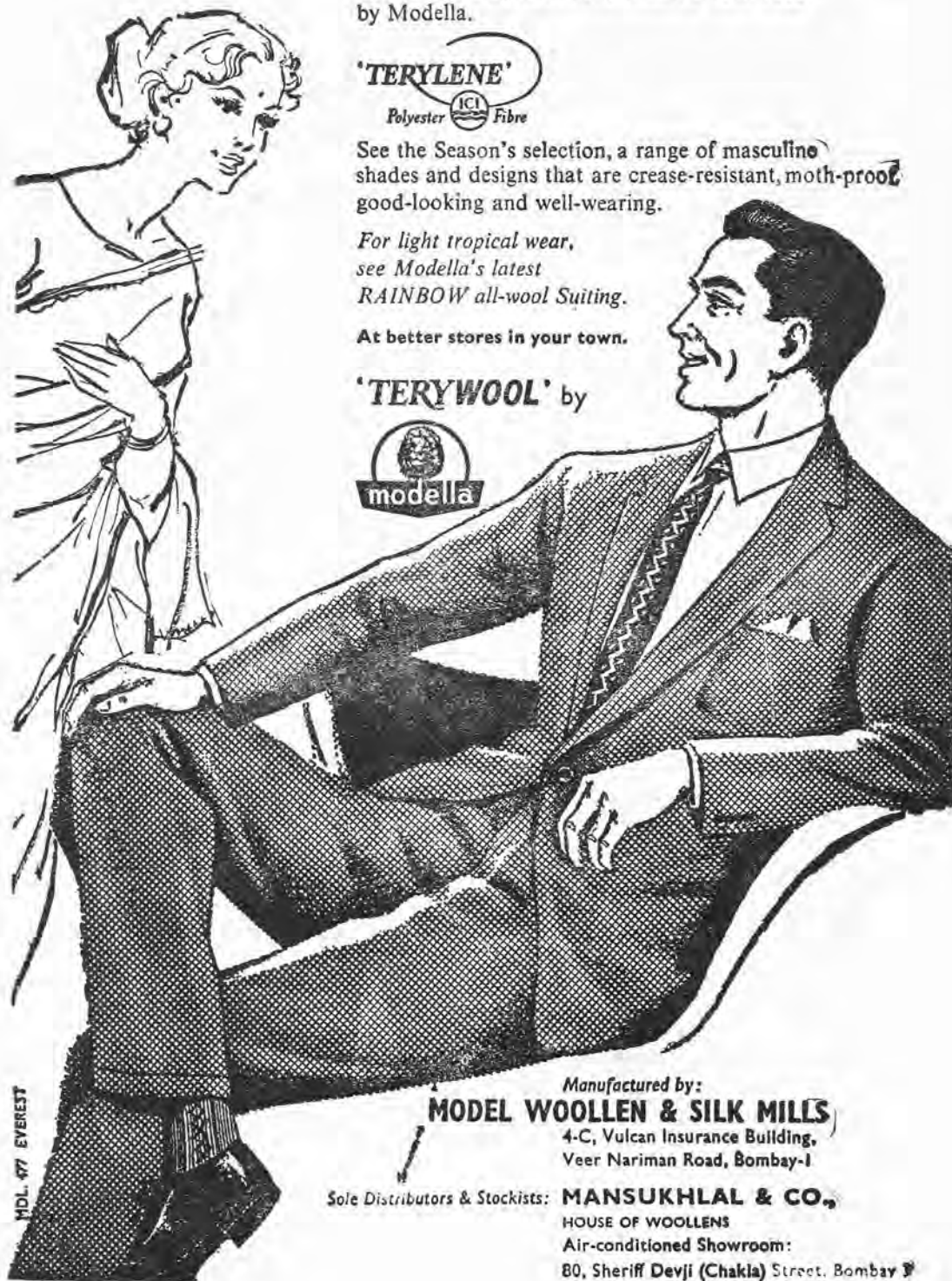
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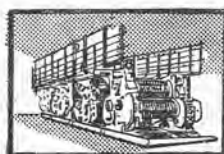
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HAS  
COME TO  
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Brought together on their pages are reports of important developments at various Dunlop factories. What has Kobe done to reduce tyre abrasion? How is Hanau strengthening tyre casings? Or an idea from Sahaganj to reduce cord friction in tyres.

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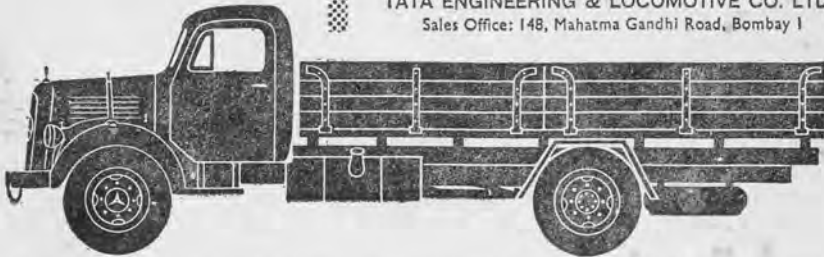
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