

An
Adventure
of
Ideas

QUEST

Editors: Abu Sayeed Ayyub & Amlan Datta

AMLAN DATTA

Universities and National Integration

TROY ORGAN

Liberalism in Religion

KASTUR CHAND LALWANI

Academic Freedom

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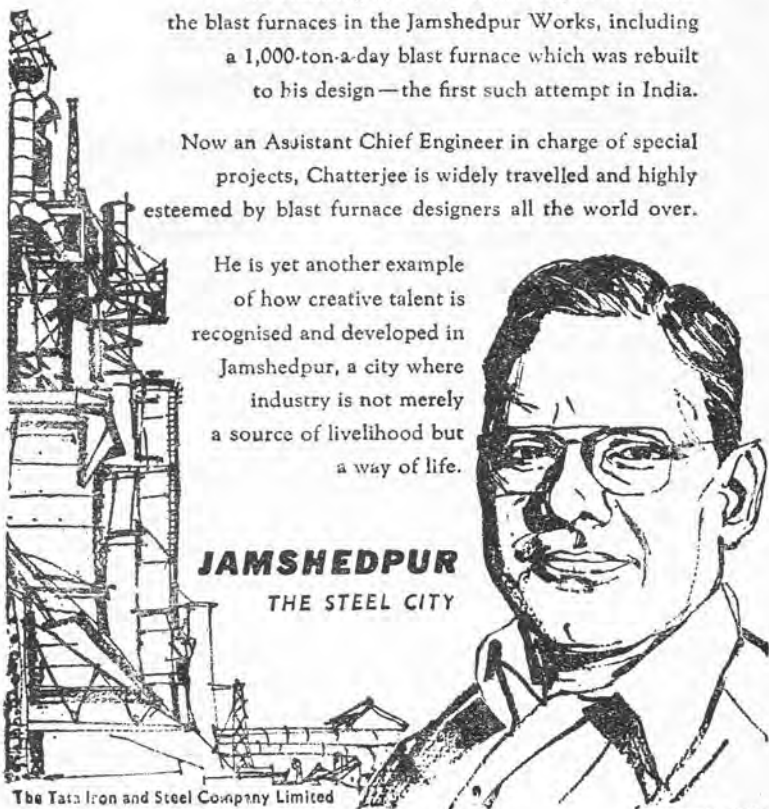
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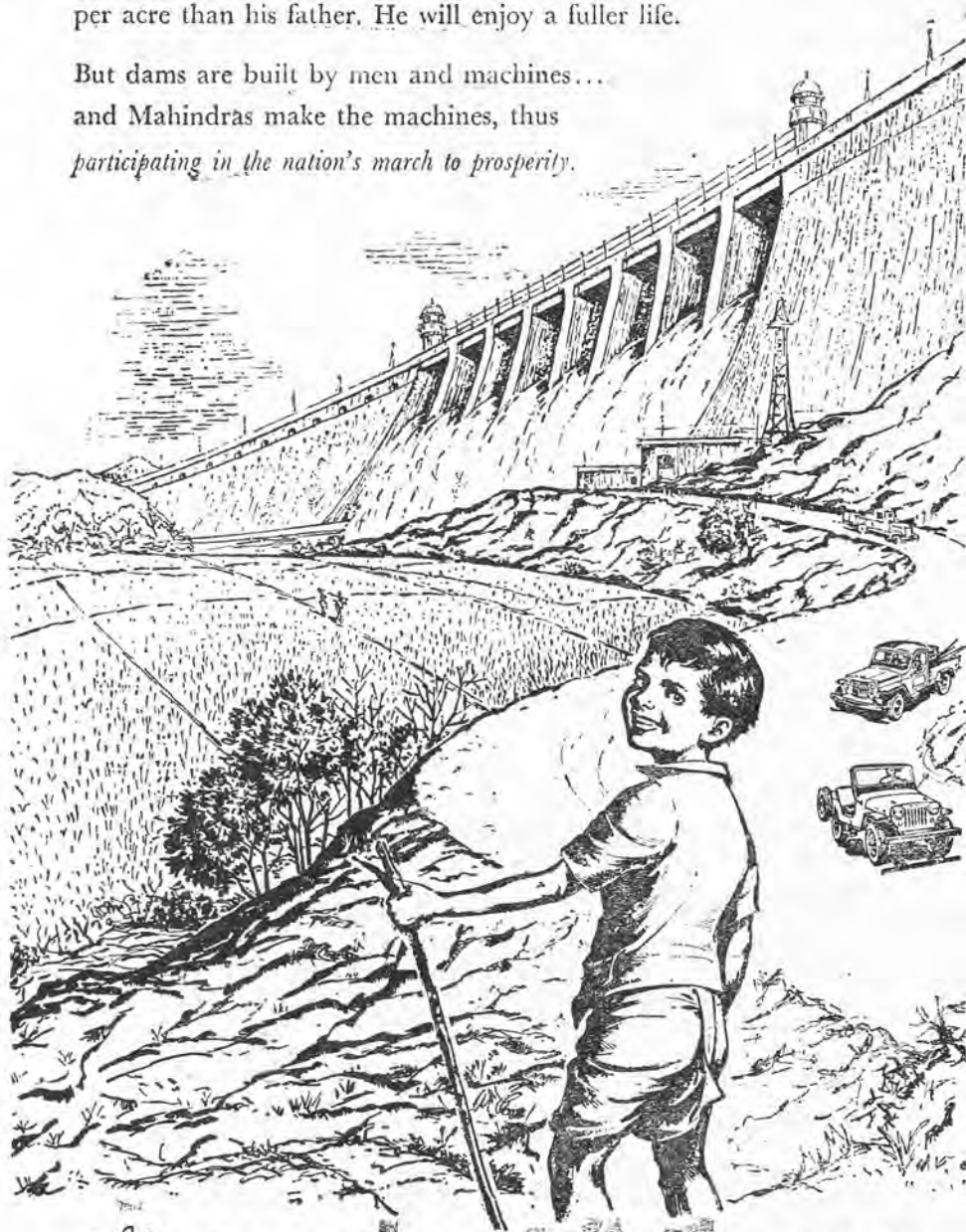


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A Common Language for Indian Universities

By AMLAN DATTA

THERE is not nearly enough contact among universities in India. All-India conferences in leading branches of study are held once in a year around Christmas time. People from different universities come together, are entertained, and then disperse. Occasionally, but infrequently, some distinguished teacher comes over from one university to another, delivers a few lectures in course of a short stay and then departs. These are mostly memorial lectures. Beyond this there is very little opportunity for exchange of ideas among leading seats of learning in this sub-continent.

This is a deplorable state of affairs. India is such a vast country that unless a deliberate programme is adopted to maintain close and continuous contact among different universities, these will inevitably slide into exclusiveness, isolation and parochialism. We have not as yet done enough to combat this tendency. It would be a good idea to have permanent residential establishments attached to principal universities in India where guest professors would come and stay for a whole session. Exchange of teachers among sister universities in this country should be systematically and extensively planned. In the United States of America quite a large number of professors are all the time moving about from one university to another. The need for such movement and exchange is at least as great, perhaps greater, in India. This is particularly the case right now when we are passing through a process of rapid reorientation of ideas. The much-talked-of cultural unity of India, which we took for granted in the past, has now to be deepened and renewed to provide the basis of a fast changing

society. At this time it is specially important to ensure that different parts of the country do not move in radically different directions. To this end ideas originating at different centres should be made continuously to confront one another and interpenetrate. This is a process which must be actively promoted, or the basis of national integration is likely to be seriously weakened.

It is possible to raise a fundamental objection to the tenor of this argument. One may boldly declare that one does not care much for national integration. Culturally, India is no more united than Europe; and there is no reason why she should be any more united politically. A detailed examination of this objection is outside the scope of this article. We can only point out here that it overlooks a number of facts. Even in Europe the trend today is in the direction of closer economic and political integration. The advantages of closer economic cooperation are being increasingly appreciated there. Admittedly, the trend towards integration in Western Europe has, to no small extent, resulted from considerations of common defence against a powerful enemy. But India too is in a similar situation today. We have formidable antagonists across our borders. India, further divided, will fall, separately, an easy prey to external enemies. Planning for economic development would also point towards the necessity of greater union rather than division. In any case, the Indian constitution does not admit the right to secession on the part of the constituent states of the Union. And it is extremely improbable that the majority of people in India will ever approve of any change in the constitution in this regard.

If we fail to develop a broad unity of mind in this country, the form of political unity will sit oppressively on a people divided in spirit. In the rest of this article, we will, therefore, argue on the assumption that 'national integration', liberally conceived, is a desirable objective.

Let us now return to our main theme. Suppose that at every university the regional language is adopted as the sole medium of instruction in higher education. What will be the result? Even such contact as exists today among universities in different parts of India will be further attenuated. Academically the country will be Balkanised. This will strengthen the trend towards cultural, and, ultimately, political fragmentation of India. To avoid this we need a common language for Indian universities.

This, however, is not an argument for excluding the regional languages at any stage of education. It is only an argument against making them the exclusive media of instruction in higher education. Regional languages should be adopted additionally to and not replacing a common language for Indian universities. Let us consider the point a little more closely. The usual argument against the adoption of regional languages as media of instruction at higher levels of education is that suitable text-books are not yet available in these languages. This is an argument of strictly limited validity. Advanced text-books can, I believe, be prepared in Bengali or Tamil or Marathi in the same way as these exist in Japanese, for instance. It is, at most, a question of time. And there is not much point in waiting for a full complement of books to be made available before a university switches over to the regional language. Books, like most other commodities, appear in response to demand. The adoption of the regional language as medium of instruction will create the demand, and the supply of books will follow in a not too distant future. There are, I believe, some very compelling arguments for imparting education through the medium of the mother tongue certainly at the lower levels

and even at the highest levels, and that without much further delay. Nothing can quite replace the mother tongue in the spontaneity of thought and the easy percolation of ideas from the higher to lower levels which it makes possible.

But neither today, nor in a foreseeable future, should the regional language be adopted in an Indian university as the sole teaching medium for higher education. This has nothing to do with the question of preparation of text-books in these languages. Basically, it is a question of maintaining the academic unity of India and of making possible continuous exchange of ideas among different seats of learning in this country. To argue that such exchange of ideas can in any case be maintained through translations from one language to another is to misunderstand the problem. With the help of translations we can keep in touch with ideas, particularly those abroad, with a certain time lag. Within the same country there is need for more instantaneous contact. What is necessary is contact through a common language immediately comprehensible to all those who take part in the great and continuing debate in which a living nation is involved all the time.

What should be this common language binding the higher academic institutions in this country? At the moment, it is English. In future, it can only be either English or Hindi. I believe it should still be English. But it has to be one or the other. Whoever presses the claims of the regional languages must either make it clear that he wants English to continue in its present position as a common link among Indian universities, or he should not complain if Hindi takes over.

Let it be made clear again that the point at issue is not whether students should learn Hindi at school. It is about the medium of expression in higher education that one is talking here. Even then some will no doubt argue that we are raising here an unnecessary controversy. Why cannot we have all the three languages — mother tongue, English and Hindi — side

by side in higher education? It is possible for people to have a nodding acquaintance with three or more languages. But one is not thinking now of such superficial acquaintance. One is thinking of the capacity to express higher ranges of thought, to comprehend and communicate subtle and, sometimes, original ideas. Not many people can master three languages to this extent. While people should be encouraged to learn as many languages as they can without taking too much time off other subjects of interest, it is the mother tongue and English that people going in for higher education should be required to learn really well. Only those who have been born to Hindi can and should reasonably be expected to learn both Hindi and English well enough for academic discourse.

For non-Hindi people there is one simple reason for preferring the combination we have suggested above. A language like Bengali, Marathi or Tamil, has much more to learn from English than from Hindi. This is not to depreciate Hindi, far less to bear ill will against it. As a sister language we can only regard Hindi with affection and good will. But both Hindi and Bengali have much more to learn from English than they have to learn from each other. The same thing can be said of every other Indian language. Thus, for a Tamil-speaking student, it would generally be more rewarding to learn English well than to learn Hindi, just as for a Hindi-speaking student it would be preferable to learn English rather than Tamil.

English (or, some other Western language) has, in any case, to be learnt for maintaining contact with Western learning. There are weighty reasons why English rather than some other European language should be our choice for this purpose. More people speak English than any other language in widely separated parts of the world. More books are written in this language, and more business carried through its medium. No wonder more people are, in fact, learning English in non-English countries, including Japan and the Soviet Union. Our historical back-

ground makes it easier for us to learn English than any other foreign language. For those who aim at higher education, knowledge of a language of international intercourse is essential. That language in India must be English. Particular scholars may, according to their special requirements, learn some other foreign languages too; but this should generally be in addition to English.

If we were in the position of a country like Japan, where one language automatically unites all the different parts of the land, or of the Soviet Union, where one language, viz. Russian, is the mother tongue of an absolute majority of the whole people and that same language is clearly superior to all other languages that the country can boast of, we would still have an appreciable proportion of our people learning English. But, in that case, most of them would learn it only well enough to read journals in English rather than to speak and write in it. Thus, the practical implication of what we have suggested above is not to make people with higher education learn a language which they would not have learnt otherwise, but rather to make them learn it a little better than they would have otherwise.

Let us restate the point to make it perfectly clear. It is our submission that English should be made part of higher education throughout this country, not simply as one more subject of study, but as the common medium of expression and instruction, side by side with the mother tongue, in all subjects. If a continuous interchange of teachers among different universities is actively promoted, some of the lectures will have to be in the common academic language rather than in the regional language. If this still gives rise to a tendency for one of the two languages to replace the other (students, for example, exercising their option in favour of one of the two languages all along), we would favour special measures to prevent this. Thus, after a period of trial, a rule may have to be laid down that students taking their examinations must attempt at least

one-third of the questions in English (or, in the mother tongue). The fundamental point to bear in mind, and one on which policy needs to be based, is that since each of the two languages will serve a special purpose, one cannot serve for the other: English cannot take the place of the mother tongue and the regional languages cannot bind together the academic world. Higher education in India should be imparted through the twin media of the mother tongue and English. In the process, the academic unity of India will be maintained and the mother tongue enriched. This is the central idea. Once the idea is accepted, details regarding its implementation should not be difficult to work out.

It has sometimes been said that the prevalence of English in higher education has stood in the way of the advancement of India's regional languages. This is a half-truth. It is true that so long as higher education was conducted exclusively in English and the higher offices in government were open only to those who showed proficiency in this language, regional languages did not have the same attraction for talents in this country as English had. Even then contact with English enriched the Indian languages. The gulf between Bharatchandra and Rabindranath is inexplicable except in terms of the widening of horizons due to contact with the West. Even if we agree that English came for a while to dominate our life and education a little too exclusively, this is an argument for greater attention being paid to Indian languages, not for exclusion of English. Retained side by side with the mother tongue, English cannot fail to assist the progress of Indian languages.

That English is a 'foreign' language is not necessarily a point against it. It ensures a cross fertilisation of ideas such as two

Indian languages coupled in higher education could never produce. There is also another and more subtle advantage in this situation. English will never be able to act as a substitute for the mother tongue of an Indian, except in rare and unusual cases. In the early period of English education in this country, a few tried to compose poetry in English. But, like Madhusudan, they tended later to return to the native fold; and, in any case, the bulk and best part of our poetry was all the time being written in the mother tongue. If ever Hindi comes to replace English in our higher education, the results may be somewhat different. Hindi cannot open up for other Indian languages the same wide horizons as English. Yet by its very affinity to these other languages, and favoured with political patronage, it may eventually take the place of the mother tongue for non-Hindi people to a greater extent than English ever did. Talented people all over the country may devote themselves in increasing numbers to literary pursuits in Hindi, while regional languages regress to the position of dialects spoken by women at home. This way of putting the matter only slightly exaggerates a possible tendency. Some may, indeed, welcome such a development in their heart of hearts, viewing it as a contribution to national integration. There is a slight snag in this grand calculation. Quite a few of the regional languages of India are already far too conscious of their identity to allow themselves to be reduced to this position without breaking out in desperate resistance led perhaps by leaders of the second rank. This may well mean the end of national integration. In our higher education English in combination with the regional languages will be a safer arrangement for the political stability and unity of India than Hindi in place of English.

Liberalism in Religion

By TROY WILSON ORGAN

THIS essay is concerned with four related topics: (1) the nature of intellectual liberalism, (2) the Western attempt to develop intellectual liberalism in religion, (3) the criteria for achieving methodological liberalism in religion, and (4) the possibility of achieving methodological liberalism in religion in America and in India.

1. *The Nature of Intellectual Liberalism*

Liberalism should always be associated with its etymological meaning—*free*. The liberal in matters of intellect—we are concerned only with freedom of thought in this essay—is the one who demands and grants freedom of opinion. Liberalism describes the activity of opining and not the content of opinion, the manner in which a position is held and not the position itself. Liberal and its opposite, dogmatic, characterize how beliefs are held; radical and its opposite, conservative, characterize what the beliefs are about. A position in religion or in politics may be described as liberal conservative, or dogmatic conservative, as liberal radical, or dogmatic radical. That is, one may be liberal or dogmatic in his conservatism, or liberal or dogmatic in his radicalism. A further distinction must be made as to whether the liberal or dogmatic attitude is taken towards the methods of gaining knowledge in a particular field or the conclusions reached in a particular field. When all the distinctions are put together, there are four possible varieties of liberalism and four possible varieties of dogmatism (or illiberalism): (In attempting to clarify in the briefest fashion the eight positions the following short-hand descriptions shall be used: liberal=‘open-

minded’; dogmatic=‘closed-minded’; conservative=‘rightist-view’; radical=‘leftist-view.’

1. Methodological liberal radicalism, i.e., open-minded leftist-view regarding methods of gaining knowledge.
2. Terminal liberal radicalism, i.e., open-minded leftist-view regarding conclusions.
3. Methodological dogmatic radicalism, i.e., closed minded leftist-view regarding methods of gaining knowledge.
4. Terminal dogmatic radicalism, i.e., closed-minded leftist-view regarding conclusions.
5. Methodological liberal conservatism, i.e., open-minded rightist-view regarding methods of gaining knowledge.
6. Terminal liberal conservatism, i.e., open-minded rightist-view regarding conclusions.
7. Methodological dogmatic conservatism, i.e., closed-minded rightist-view regarding methods of gaining knowledge.
8. Terminal dogmatic conservatism, i.e., closed-minded rightist-view regarding conclusions.

The ramifications of such a classification is a challenging issue which we shall forego at the present time, as it would be tangential to the subject of this paper. The distinction between methodological liberalism and terminal liberalism is sufficient for our present purposes.

To allow both methodological and terminal liberalism in an intellectual pursuit might be supposed to be allowing complete intellectual freedom. But complete freedom, if ever possible, is self-destructive. Limitations must be set for freedoms, whe-

ther those freedoms be intellectual, social, economic, or political, in order for those freedoms to continue. To allow freedom both in methodology and in the conclusions that are reached would be a confession that in this subject matter there are no techniques for gaining knowledge, and there is no conception of the results that will be achieved. Plato would say that such a study is not a skill (*techne*), since a skill must have limits which determine the scope of the labourer's efforts.

2. *The Western Attempt to Develop Intellectual Liberalism in Religion*

In the sixteenth century Christians in the Protestant Reformation made their first challenge to the methodological and terminal dogmatic conservatism known as Scholasticism. For a time both Catholics and Protestants tried to develop a significant liberalism and still hold to dogmatic creedal positions. Methodological liberalism was allowed. The Christian might follow the way of shared experience, the way of reason, the way of revelation, or the way of mysticism, but he must in the end arrive at the orthodox position — that of the infallible Church, if he be Catholic, or of the infallible Bible, if he be Protestant. Religionists in the Western world held that their religion gave the true picture of reality. They were tolerant toward those persons and institutions that reached conclusions consistent with the orthodox position. How those conclusions were reached was of minor significance. Western religionists since the sixteenth century in denying terminal liberalism have given evidence that they are more concerned with the preservation of dogmas than with the formation of true propositions about reality. Or perhaps one can say that, whereas they are concerned with truth, they also assume that they have the complete truth about reality, and therefore they can close the doors to the entrance of new ideas. Devotion to the truth already possessed takes the form of intolerance toward those propositions contrary or con-

tradictory to the possessed truth. Truth cannot compromise with error! But have religionists honestly supposed that methodological liberalism and terminal dogmatism combine to produce a significant liberalism? To tell a man that he is free to think so long as he arrives at a specified conclusion is to mock him. Intellectual freedom under such restrictions is a farce.

Modern science has pursued another sort of liberalism. It has allowed terminal liberalism, but it has rejected methodological liberalism. This liberalism is the product of the scientific method which also began to be applied in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Scientists are able to tolerate differing conclusions because scientists are methodologically dogmatic! That is, having developed a method for acquiring knowledge that has proved to be adequate for the data they examine, they insist that all must follow this method, and that having followed it, their conclusions must be respected. And what is it in the scientific method which makes the scientist as certain about his method as the religious dogmatist is certain about his conclusions? The element which justifies the scientist's faith in his method is not the deductive aspects of his method, nor the fact that it is built upon sense experience, nor even its pragmatic fruitfulness, rather it is its intersubjectivity. The scientific method provides for constant review, correction, and testing of the results achieved through use of the method. One is never asked to take the scientist's word as final; one is invited and encouraged to examine the evidence, to repeat the experiment. Any conclusion which has been reached by this method is open to revision at any time. While only one empirical observation confirmed Einstein's mathematical conclusions as to the bending of light-rays, further observations are welcomed when the right conditions present themselves — and no doubt other observations will be made. Intersubjective verifiability is the essence of the scientific methodology. This intersubjectivity has encouraged scientists to cooperate in their

search for an understanding of the nature of the physical universe, but among religionists — even among those who call themselves 'liberal' — cooperation has been conspicuously absent.

3. *The Criteria for Achieving Methodological Liberalism in Religion*

Turning from the historical attempts to develop liberalism in religion in the West, we now ask "How can a religion be liberal?" One way would be for religion to become creedless. Let religion make no cognitive claims. Let it be an emotional enrichment of human life. Let the words *true* and *false* cease in discourse on religion. The conception of religion as emotionalized morality has been recommended by many since Kant. A religion that makes no cognitive propositions would have no metaphysics, and thus could tolerate any proposition as to the nature of the universe. But would a religion solely concerned with values be valuable? Would it not have killed the goose that laid the golden egg? A prayer addressed to a god who is assumed by the worshipper to hear and to answer prayer has definite subjective values, regardless of the existence or non-existence of the god. But would this same prayer couched in the form of a soliloquy have the same subjective values? Do not the subjective values flow from the worshipper's belief in the metaphysical objectivity of the saint to whom he prays? Unless the worshipper is adept in self-hypnosis the soliloquy will not have the same psychological impact as the prayer addressed to a supernatural entity supposed to be existent.

Again a religion that makes no cognitive claims might become a liberal religion by becoming a religion of liberalism. John Stuart Mill was a man who was religious about liberalism. Pavlov upon his retirement pleaded with his students to get passion into their scientific research. A liberal religion might take the form of an emotional attitude toward scientific methodology itself. Or religion might become

liberal by becoming an emotional propaganda for the democratic way of life.

But can religion be liberal without giving up its claim to cognitive statements as to the nature of the universe? We doubt that it can. Can religion be liberal as science is liberal? We maintain it can. In order for religion to make meaningful cognitive statements about the nature of reality and in order for it to be liberal terminally, religion must have a method of acquiring knowledge that is as adequate for the subject matter with which religion deals as the scientific method is adequate for the subject matter with which the sciences deal. When such a methodology is formed, religion, like the sciences, can be significantly liberal. Such a methodology will conform to the following principles: (1) No knowledge is certain; (2) No other method than the scientific method of knowing is possible; (3) No metaphysical position is implied by the scientific method; (4) No propositions that contradict empirically verifiable propositions can be supported; (5) No belief can be held that is not pragmatically justified.

1. *No Knowledge is certain.* Philosophers, scientists, and religionists have been impressed by the certitude which mathematics gives and frequently have regarded mathematics as the prototype of all knowledge. The importance of Hume in the history of philosophy was that he first pointed out that if knowledge of reality must be mathematically certain, then man is cut off forever from any knowledge of the physical world. Modern studies of the formal nature of logic and the development of several consistent system of geometry further indicated that the certitude sought by the rationalists must be given up as a false hope. Rationalism, however, has been slow to die among religious thinkers. The religious liberal comes to the conclusion that no knowledge of reality is mathematically certain. The gods may be omniscient and incapable of error, but human beings are finite in their knowing, and are frequently in error. The only knowledge man

can have is human knowledge, and all human knowledge is hypothetical. That which man knows is known 'only in part.' As Aristotle said in regard to ethical subjects, 'We must be content, then, in speaking of such subjects and with such premises to indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and in speaking about things which are only for the most part true and with premises of the same kind to make conclusions that are no better.'

2. *No other method than the scientific method of knowing is possible.* Unfortunately the method by which man studies the nature of the universe is called 'the scientific method.' This may lead one to suppose that there is a subject matter which is handled by another method. If this method of acquiring knowledge about the universe were called 'the human method of knowing' rather than 'the scientific method,' men would less easily be led to the false assumption that the scientific method is an esoteric way by which a few people called 'research scientists' manipulate their microscopes, test tubes, galvanometers, and white rats. If this semantic alteration were made, then the contrary of the scientific method would be a sub-human or a super-human method of knowing. In the last analysis there is no other way by which man can acquire valid knowledge about his world. That which cannot be known by the scientific method cannot be known. Every hunch, inspiration, revelation, or rational conclusion based on self-evident principles is a *candidate* for knowledge, and does not become knowledge until it has stood the acid test of experience. The liberal religion will therefore be liberal in the same sense that a science is liberal: it will tolerate only those cognitive conclusions reached through use of the scientific method.

3. *No metaphysical position is implied by the scientific method.* It does not follow that because the method of the sciences deals only with that which is quantitatively measurable all of reality is quantitatively

measurable. The scientific method may or may not be adequate to deal with the *totality* of reality. The scientific method binds one to no theory of reality. The scientific method is adequate to deal with all reality that can be known by the human mind. There may be more reality which escapes the scientific tools, but, if this is the case, this 'more' escapes all human knowing, for the scientific method is the systematic way by which the human mind grasps the nature of the world in so far as the world is amenable to man.

4. *No propositions that contradict empirically verifiable propositions can be supported.* If the only reality that can be known is the reality that is known by the scientific method, then liberal religion cannot commit itself to views contradictory to those reached through the scientific method. The liberal religionist will not pray for rain for he knows that rain can be accounted for on the basis of the temperatures of moisture-laden bodies of air. To expect a deity to cause rain would be contradictory to empirically verifiable propositions. But to deny the existence of deity because the scientific method has not established the existence of deity is to assume that the absence of proof is proof of the alternative view. Therefore, the liberal religionist may believe in the existence of deity. But if and when the non-existence of deity can be empirically established, then the belief in the existence of a deity will be dropped by the liberal religionist. There is a place for Pascal's wager, for James' 'will to believe,' and for hypotheses enthusiastically embraced in liberal religion, but one is never justified in believing that which is contradictory to an empirically verifiable proposition.

5. *No belief can be held that is not pragmatically justified.* Religion cannot stay within the limits of the quantitatively measurable; for religion, unlike science, deals with values, and values sometimes depend upon beliefs that transcend that which can be established by the scientific

method. Also, religion, unlike philosophy, functions under the urgency of life. Religion is more than a way of thinking — it is also a way of living. Therefore, for purposes of action men must believe in the unattained, the unrealized, even the unknown. The propositions peculiar to religion are known as *beliefs*; the mental attitude peculiar to religion is known as *faith*. 'The mental attitude which, for purposes of action, is willing to take upon truth valuable and desirable beliefs, before they have been proved 'true,' but in the hope that this attitude may render possible their verification.' (F. C. S. Schiller). But the liberal religionist, having committed himself to the scientific method of knowing, cannot believe that which is contradictory to any empirically verifiable proposition however desirable it might be. He will first make sure that the proposition to be believed does not contradict any proposition produced by the scientific method. If it does not contradict any such proposition, he next applies the pragmatic test. Religious beliefs must make human life happier, or more beautiful, or more worthwhile. Any belief which makes man's life insignificant will be rejected. One may be comforted in believing that prayer is the direct cause of a desirable shower of rain, but one cannot hold this belief in liberal religion since it is not in accord with the scientifically established factors that determine rainfall. One may be uplifted in believing that the human race sprang from the ashes of Titans, but the scientific method when applied to anthropology and human origins reveals facts that make it impossible for the liberal religionist to exchange a pleasant belief for what might be considered to be an unpleasant scientific conclusion. Again one may be comforted in believing that human personality does not cease after the death of the body, and the religious liberal contends that this is a justified belief—it does not contradict any scientifically established propositions and it is defensible on the pragmatic grounds of the comfort and assurance it may give to the person—but how far can one go in

justifying beliefs on the pragmatic basis? For example, does religious liberalism sanction the creation of heavens of bliss? One might contend that these paradises do not contradict any scientifically established hypotheses; for some people they serve as motivators of human virtue. At this point the religious liberal demurs. Perhaps all he can do is to say in the spirit of Occam's razor that the creation of beliefs pragmatically justified must be kept to the minimum!

This is liberalism in religion. It is a self-correcting method and attitude in the area of ultimate concerns. Liberalism is difficult to maintain when man is dealing with his fundamental beliefs about himself and his relations to totality. There is always the temptation to take short-cuts: authoritative creeds, mystical revelations, dogmatic churches, infallible holy men, phrenology, astrology, palmistry, alchemy, and scores of other techniques which promise absolute knowledge about man and his destiny.

4. *The Possibility of Achieving Methodological Liberalism in Religion in America and in India*

Today there appears to be a temporary setback of liberalism in religion in America. The recent rapid growth of Protestant fundamentalistic sects, the popularity of Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, and other dogmatic evangelists, the rise of neo-orthodox Christian theology, the steady growth of the authoritarian Roman Catholic Church, and the new vigour of Orthodox Judaism are all signs of a retreat from the liberalism of the years between the World Wars. The growing illiberalism of the last quarter century may be part of the process by which the United States is moving into its maturity. Her people realize that no longer can they claim clemency by reason of the youthfulness of their nation. They find themselves today faced with mature international responsibilities because of the position, power, and wealth of their nation. The result is a definite curtailing of the adventurous, courageous liberalism which characterized the

American people during the first century and a half of their life as an independent nation. If the intellectual climate of a nation can be forecast by the character of its youth, America cannot look into the immediate future with expectation of the development of a significant liberalism. The American university campuses, in spite of a few forward social activities such as the Freedom Riders, have lately become the breeding grounds of right wing political movements such as the John Birch Society and right wing religious movements such as the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. In many an American university classroom the middle-aged professor is the only liberal. The professor, recalling his own college years in the 1930's, is dumb-founded to hear young people speak in defense of security, stability, tradition, and safety. He had thought ever since his own college days that youth was the time when adventure, novelty, change, and opportunity are the dominant value patterns.

Indian universities on the other hand have in recent years been the scene of student riots and other indisciplines, often of a leftist nature. Indian students reflect the mood of a new nation stepping rapidly

out of a centuries-old culture into the modern world. The behaviour of Indian university students reflects the current Indian attitude of rejoicing before the vision of great national possibilities, yet hesitating before the uncertainties of the future. Under such conditions the probability of the development of methodological liberalism in the organization of man's ultimate values seems more likely than in America. With the spread of elementary education and the improvement of higher education in India there will certainly be less scholastic dependence upon the *Rig Veda*, the Upanishads, and other religious documents. India today is in a position somewhat like Europe in the sixteenth century. She stands with one foot in the Stone Age and one foot in the Atomic Age, and there is no doubt into which age she will soon plant both feet. Those in the West who know something about India, her history, her problems, and her possibilities, are watching closely to detect which form liberalism in religion will take in India. Her long and distinctive tradition of tolerance^o in religion may result in the development of a different liberalism in religion than the typical liberalism in religion in the West. If religion in India moves in the direction of terminal liberalism and methodological illiberalism, as well it may, the old hope, 'out of the East light,' will be fulfilled.

^o See 'Two Forms of Tolerance', *The Visvabharati Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Autumn 1960, pp. 162-169 for this author's evaluation of tolerance in India.

Academic Freedom

By KASTUR CHAND LALWANI

MY acquaintance with these two sacred words, 'academic freedom', is not very old, and till the other day my own notion about them was extremely vague. As one reared in the British academic tradition in India, it never occurred to me that there could be any curb on a teacher's thoughts and expressions unless the latter incited open revolution or indulged in subversive activity, albeit on the plea of non-violence. I had even a feeling that during the British days freedom of thought and expression did exist in a fair measure for the administrative personnel too, for how otherwise could a high-ranking official like the late R. C. Dutt impose the severest, though constructive, strictures on the British land revenue administration in India, and still remain in service? At this distance of time, with the country liberated through a 'transfer of power' and all conceivable and inconceivable 'freedoms' safeguarded by the Constitution of India, I doubt,—I may, of course, be wrong—if the teachers, still less the administrators, have the same freedom of thought and expression that they had before 1947. And if that be a fact, I must say, our intellectuals have paid a heavy price to obtain the country's liberty.

Since 1947, our educational system has been passing through a severe agony of reconstruction. The critics call it a 'chaos'; the academic profession feels it is in 'utter confusion'. My own feeling, however, does not go that way. I have always felt that since the country has become free, our educational system also needs a re-orientation in the light of our short-run and long-run requirements. Reorientation there has been to a considerable degree during the past decade, but since it lacks

miserably the support of constructive thinking, we have almost broken from the past moorings but have not yet forged new ones for the future. My personal interest in the matter is purely academic. During the past decade I have seen many 'models' being imported to our country for its reconstruction and early modernisation. The MIT professor, C. P. Kindelberger, too, has prescribed 'imported techniques' for the under-developed countries. I was, therefore, wondering where our model for educational reconstruction has come from. It could not surely be West European, which we already had and which we are steadily discarding. It was not even the 'learning of our forefathers' which Gandhi had told Sir Valentine Chirol in the early twenties he would like to see restored once the British had departed. The choice, therefore, lay between the Russian model and the American. The former I could rule out because of its 'totalitarian' flavour which was unsuited either to our temperament or to our tradition. By elimination, therefore, I could guess that we were going the 'American way'. My guess did not betray me when Destiny at last brought me to Abraham Lincoln's famous 'land of freedom'.

My task was made extremely easy by a small paperback edition of Ray Ginger's *Six Days or For Ever*, which narrates in a readable style the famous 'Monkey trial' in the State of Tennessee. It was a scorching hot July back in 1925 when two titans—archenemies and crusaders—met face to face in a Tennessee court-room, one to defend, the other to prosecute a young teacher for violating a State law which prohibited the teaching of evolu-

tion. The trial of John Thomas Scopes began as a local battle, but it soon exploded into world prominence to become one of the most important issues of the twentieth century. The Bible has said that God created man in His own image and so man could not have evolved from lower animals as the scientists said. The State of Tennessee had taken the lead in anti-Darwinism by passing the Butler Act, under which Scopes became a victim. In this fascinating little book, Ray Ginger, Professor of American History at the Brandeis University, and editor of *Science Spectrum*, has exposed the cultural and political climate from which the anti-Darwin law and the subsequent trial developed. Ray Ginger writes: 'In the nineteenth century, most Americans had lived on farms or in small towns... the Protestant code of morality was almost universal... After 1890... expansion of cities, and the industrial cities overflowed with immigrant labourers from Eastern and Southern Europe. Most of the new arrivals were Catholics... Gone was the previous hopefulness, the cheery conviction that progress is inevitable. In its place was a massive distrust, the sort of distrust you would feel if a man stole your silver plate and your wife after you had invited him into your house and fed him at your table.' The logical outcome was the rise of Fundamentalism in the South and the Red-hunt in the North, both stemming from the same trunk. The Knights of Columbus, the American Legion, the Daughters of the American Revolution made a furore about the 'pro-British' bias of text-books on American history. Official clamour on the subject occurred in New York city, in Chicago, in other cities from Portland, Oregon to Boston. New York, Wisconsin and Oregon were among the States that, as Walter Lippman wrote, 'passed laws designed to do for patriotic Fundamentalism what the Tennessee Statute had been designed to do for religious Fundamentalism.' Two Southerners could write, probably with some justice, 'In a way it may be said that the

Fundamentalist craze was the Southern counterpart of the Northern Red-hunt... If Southern reactionaries were more successful in passing "monkey laws", Northerners were more active in discharging professors because of their opinions.'

The 'monkey trial' had a tremendous impact on both sides of the Atlantic. Albert Einstein declared in Berlin on June, 22, 1925: 'Any restriction on academic liberty heaps coals of shame upon the community which tolerates such suppression.' An entry in the *Journal* of André Gide dated June 14, 1926, reads: 'The difficulty comes from this that Christianity (Christian Orthodoxy) is exclusive and that belief in its truth excludes belief in any other truth. It does not absorb; it repulses... Culture must understand that by trying to absorb Christianity it is absorbing something that is mortal for it. It is trying to admit something that cannot admit it; something that denies it.' As I write these lines, I can visualise the figure of William J. Bryan, the Fundamentalist leader, thundering in a little court-room in Tennessee: 'The hand that writes the pay-cheque rules the school.' The Law against Evolution still stands in Tennessee and Darwin has no entry in the public schools in that State even in the year 1962.

My reading of the account of the 'monkey trial' enkindled my interest in the question of academic freedom and I was amazed at the size of the literature that has grown up in the U.S.A. around this non-existent virtue. Just to mention a few more important works on the subject, there are A. L. Lowell's *At war with Academic Traditions in America*, issued during the first war in defence of Harold J. Laski teaching at Harvard, and Howard K. Beale's *Are American Teachers Free?* (1936) and *A History of Freedom of Teaching in American Schools* (1941). *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States* (1955) by Richard Hofstadter & Walter Metzger, and its companion volume, *Academic Freedom in Our Time* by Robert M. McIver are more

scholarly works. I could now see that loss of academic freedom in America did not commence in 1859, the date of publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*; it had started much earlier in June, 1654, when the Harvard President, Henry Dunster, was obliged to present his resignation to the Overseers. The General Court of the University observed that 'it greatly concerns the welfare of this country that the youth thereof be educated, not only in good literature, but sound doctrine', and recommended to the Overseers and Selectmen of the towns of the province that they refuse to keep as teachers or officers of schools or colleges those persons 'that have manifested themselves unsound in the faith, or scandalous in their lives, and not giving due satisfaction according to the rules of Christ'. This conformist demand has told very heavily on creative thinking and original work in the United States, and those in that country who strive to pose as fearless thinkers are either critics or commentators rather than great masters.

The situation did not improve in the eighteenth century when a number of 'firings' took place at Harvard and Yale. During the greater part of the century, close religious conformity by teachers was universally demanded as a norm and was enforced at the time of recruitment. The opening decades of the nineteenth century saw a definite retrogression in American education and a decline in freedom and capacity for growth. Francis Wayland attributed this in large part to the severance of educational relations with England after the Revolution. What was even worse, denominational sponsorship of colleges and local pride had created a virtual chaos. Josiah Quincy's *History of Harvard* (1840) closed with an eloquent appeal for educational freedom. To quote Hofstadter and Metzger, '... the American system of collegiate education was qualitatively almost as heterogenous in the first half of the nineteenth century, as it is today, and the name "college" was given to a multitude of institutions ranging from those

that respectably upheld the name of college to some that would not quite honour the title of high school. What was mischievous in all this was the competition that enabled the low-grade institutions, backed by political strength of denominational sponsors, to offer "college" degrees'. In the 19th century, the incorporation of science in the curriculum had, to some extent, loosened the grip of the ecclesiastics; but with the publication of Darwin's *Origin*, the Fundamentalists raised its head. For full three decades thereafter the battle of ideals became the battle for the schools, and the arena was dominated by the upholders of the faith. Synods gave warnings to trustees and trustees instructed presidents to reject the applications of Darwinians. The 'monkey trial' apart, the crusade against Darwinism had lost force by the end of the century and a new danger appeared, this time against the political and social sciences, from 'big business' and private fortunes. The authors of the 1915 Report on Academic Freedom issued by the Association of University Professors wrote: 'In the early period of University development in America, the chief menace to academic freedom was ecclesiastical, and the disciplines chiefly affected were philosophy and the natural sciences. In more recent times the danger zone has been shifted to the political and social sciences. . . . As the governing body of a university is usually made up of men who through their standing and ability are personally interested in great private enterprises, the points of possible conflicts are numberless. When to this is added the consideration that benefactors, as well as most of the parents who send their children to privately endowed institutions, themselves belong to the more prosperous, and therefore usually to the more conservative classes, it is apparent that . . . pressure from vested interests may . . . be brought to bear upon academic authorities.' The greatest work of this period was Thorstein Veblen's *The Higher Learning in America*, 1918. Critics of this period looked to the culture of capitalism rather

than to the intentions of the capitalists as the principal threat to academic freedom. At one extreme were the scientists devoted to the quest for knowledge; but at the other extreme were the businessmen on the governing boards and businessmen in academic garb assigned to the President's chair. It is the latter who almost unintentionally, by dint of sheer habit, foisted on American universities their crude utilitarian outlook, their parasitical, predatory tactics, their ethos of 'quietism, caution, compromise, collusion and chicanery.' In disgust did Jacques Barzun write, 'We were once clerics, now we are clerical.' According to a survey by the Association of American University Professors, between 1915-47, there were 73 cases of violations of academic freedom, of which 37 or more than half occurred at the State Universities.

The outcome of the infiltration of big business and private fortune in American education has been the establishment of 'lay government' in American universities and colleges, both governmental and private, which has created special problems for free teaching and scholarship in that country. In its essential features, this lay government had taken shape even in the middle of the 18th century in consequence of which the trustees, not the faculty, were in law the college or the university, and it were the former rather than the latter who could hire and fire faculty members and make almost all the decisions governing the institution. Discussing the sort of 'interests' that dominate academic administration in America today, Robin M. William (Jr.) writes: 'The educational system is subject to attempted influence by organised associations of laymen... business, labour, patriotic, religious, benevolent, youth, citizen-training, military, peace, fraternal and political associations. There are pro-minority and anti-minority groupings, associations of reactionary, conservative, liberal and radical inclination. Each is devoted to its own version of the American way of life.... As a result, the American university has moved far from the conception of a community of

scholars.' The trustees in an American university are like the directors in a joint stock company, the policy being actually administered by the President, who is akin to a Vice-chancellor in an Indian or British university. This dignitary, who is selected and named by the trustees, may be a professor; but more often, as F. M. Rogers of Harvard writes, he is 'a man active in politics, or a highly respected citizen with no political or academic affiliation... (such men) normally stay in office for a longer period of years. The position does not rotate as does the vice-chancellorship of major English universities.' Jacques Barzun has characterised the American university administration as 'a planetarium of deans with the President of the university as a central sun. One can see eclipses, inner systems and oppositions. But usually more sympathy obtains among fellow administrators than between them and the teaching personnel. If it came to a pitched battle, the more compact executive troops, animated by a single purpose... can rout the more numerous but disorderly rabble that are teaches.'

Looking back to the conditions in India since 1947 I could see that the government has closely followed the American model in the administration of our new universities and institutions. The older ones which were started during the British days and were based on the British model are still, despite growing limitations on their freedom, 'communities of scholars'. But a committee has already been appointed by the Government of India with the the UGC Chairman as its President to prepare a 'draft' for a Universities Act to cover all the older universities, and I shall not be surprised if on the basis of this draft and its subsequent modifications, our older universities too cease to be communities of scholars and adopt the system of academic governance from the new world. But I do not want to anticipate things. I was, however, interested to enquire where the Americans themselves got the model from, since, to my thinking, it was neither British nor West European.

and I got the clue one day in a lecture by W. H. Cowley delivered before the Western College Association. In this lecture, Cowley said:

'European universities have followed two historical patterns of government, the French and the Italian. American colleges see-sawed between the two until the 19th century and then chose the Italian. . . I call it the Italian plan, but we got it from the Scottish universities, which had copied it from the Italian universities. For several centuries after the emergence of the Italian universities in the late middle ages, students held all the administrative posts, and the student legislative bodies established regulations governing the fees to be paid to the professors, the length of their lectures, and the fines to be levied against teachers who came to their lecture-halls late, who failed to appear on time, and who taught less well than the students thought desirable. Eventually for a complex of reasons, student control waned and the civil authorities took over by appointing what we would to-day call board of trustees, i.e., lay bodies of non-academic people. They became the governors of both professors and students . . . professors being in fact hired men.'

The fantastic outcome of the subversive status of college and university professors may be noted in brief. During my stay in the United States, Leo F. Koch was dismissed by the University of Illinois on the charge that he had preached premarital sex relations among university students. Surprisingly enough, Koch was no pioneer, and if any harm has been done to American society where the evil is rampant, the blame should fall on Dr. Kinsey and the Rockefeller Foundation that provided \$1.5 million to finance his research. I followed the Koch controversy with some interest. Koch was an Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Illinois. On March, 18, 1960, the *Daily Illini*, the university student paper, published his letter on the subject of sexual morality in which he had urged premarital sexual intercourse. David D.

Henry, the President of the University of Illinois, considered it 'offensive and repugnant to commonly accepted standards of morality', and held that 'their public espousal may be interpreted as encouragement of immoral behaviour.' Koch was fired by the University administration for what Henry called 'a grave breach of academic responsibility.' Koch and his admirers considered it a 'violation of academic freedom'. Koch is the President of the School of Living, Brookeville, Ohio, and a director of the American Humanist Association, a group using educational methods to advance a naturalistic position in philosophy, ethics and religion. The Koch controversy enkindled my interest in Kinsey, who at one time had proved to be a best-seller in the American market. I looked for his four massive volumes in the MIT library but surprisingly all the four were 'missing',—a very unusual phenomenon in an American university. This made me all the more determined and I spent a half-day in various bookstores in Cambridge, Mass, discovering only one volume around midday in Harvard Co-op. In exposing a secret corner of the American society, Kinsey's work had created a sensation, so much so that the Reece Committee created by the 83rd Congress had passed severe strictures on him. A line from the report is worth quoting: 'It seems to this Committee that there is a strong tendency on the part of many of the social scientists whose research is favoured by the major Foundations toward the concept that there are no absolutes, that everything is indeterminate, that no standards of conduct, morals, ethics or government are to be deemed inviolate, that everything including basic moral law is subject to change and that it is the part of the social scientists to take no principle for granted as a premise in social or juridical reasoning, however fundamental it may heretofore have been deemed to be under our Judeo-Christian moral system.'

The position of the teachers vis-a-vis administration has had its impact on the former's social status. They are very sensi-

tive to community demands. They must be, or they will lose their jobs. Saxon Graham says, '...many educators have lamented that the community holds the public school teacher (equally true of college and university teachers) in low esteem; and the fact that teachers in many systems must be responsive to community attitudes allows them to feel the full brunt of any community respect or disrespect. Particularly in small communities, they often are extremely restricted in their behaviour. They are expected to live in certain respectable parts of the town, but not in the luxurious areas.... They are often forced to attend the Church, to act as youth leaders and to teach Sunday youth classes to the youth they have taught all week. At the same time, teachers in these areas are not invited to enter into the informal social life of the Community.' Being one who has been a teacher by choice, both before and after 1947, and who has served more than one university and institution in more than one State in India, I can say that in the money-centred society that we have been building up during the last decade, much that Graham has written about the American teacher can be adapted with only slight variation for his Indian counterpart. There is no question for a teacher in India today of living in an ivory tower; it is a life-and-death question for the profession, from which, so far as I can see, the more talented ones have been withdrawing for more lucrative positions elsewhere leaving the teaching profession only to the second, third and fourth rates, who have hardly any ideals to serve and who do not take to education as a mission.

The question is often posed in the United States whether the Communists should be allowed to teach. The National Education Association has declared that membership in the Communist Party and 'the accompanying surrender of intellectual integrity render an individual unfit to discharge the duties of a teacher in this country.' The American Federation of teachers has also upheld the same doct-

rine. Since World War II the proscription of communists has often been extended to those considered 'suspect'. The Feinberg law passed by the New York State Legislature in 1949 ordered the dismissal of all teachers who belong to any organisation which the State Board of Regents deemed subversive. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1952 that the law was constitutional. The effect has been very demoralising. Earl Raab & G. J. Selznick quote a report from the *New York Times*, dated April 5, 1954, saying that a poll of 250 social science teachers in the Los Angeles school system in 1954 revealed that 53% felt less free to discuss 'all phases of social studies, history, geography, political science and international relations', than they did five years ago. Over 20% of these teachers said they felt that it was dangerous for them to discuss the Bill of Rights in the classroom. The funniest thing is that in American education, not only outsiders, even about 40% of the students, as revealed in an eleven-university survey, demanded conformism on the part of the teacher and the latter had to abdicate. After learning this, I felt tempted to agree with H. K. Beale when he wrote: 'The significant fact is not, however, that teachers here and there smoke whereas it would have meant instant dismissal in 1925. The significant fact is that the teacher is still subjected to all sorts of regulations and prohibitions that are not applied to members of the community in other callings. It is the community mores that have changed, not the relation of the teacher to the community.'

When I read a report of victimisation of teachers on the basis of secret police reports in West Bengal published in *The Statesman* dated August 25, 1961, I felt that even in this matter we are going the American way. During the British days, there were cases of victimisation on political grounds; but the situation has deteriorated in recent years. During the British days, a Surendranath Banerjee could be fired from the Indian Civil Service and yet be the founder of a Ripon College, or a

Benoy Sarkar could provide intellectual stimulus to the *Swadeshi* movement and then spend the rest of his life in the service of University of Calcutta. These are not isolated cases. There were innumerable such people who were considered 'dangerous' for government service and yet were not boycotted either by the society or by our universities or private colleges which were more numerous than the government institutions. This had, of course, its impact on the quality of our education, some of the private colleges being no better than hot-beds of politics, functioning merely as graduate-manufacturing 'factories'. Lord Curzon sought to control the situation through the Universities Act but fortunately or unfortunately the move synchronised with the *Swadeshi* movement and so the country raised such a hue and cry that the Universities Act had to be abandoned and Curzon had to resign. That discarded bit of legislation has been revived and the private colleges including universities have lost their financial independence to a centralised financial institution. In England, too, the universities get finances now-a-days from the Government but the Government is not keen to inject politics into the universities and the academicians are known for their eternal vigilance. In consequence, there is no comparison between the position of the British universities and our own, and the islands of freedom that existed in dependent India to shelter academic freedom and provide subsistence to the victims of our national struggle are being fast merged with the vast ocean of bureaucratic domination. Even in the U.S.A., there are people who deprecate too much governmental influence over education, but they are in a microscopic minority. One of them, Norbert Wiener, Professor Emeritus at MIT, is worth quoting. Wiener writes in his famous book, *Cybernetics & Society*: 'Freedom of opinion at the present time is being crushed between the two rigidities of the Church and the Communist Party... In the U.S., we are in the process of

developing a new rigidity which combines the methods of both while partaking of the emotional fervour of neither... Our military men and our great merchant princes have looked upon the propaganda technique of the Russians and have found that it is good. They have found a worthy counterpart for the GPU in the FBI... They have not considered that these weapons form something fundamentally distasteful to humanity and that they need the full force of an overwhelming faith and belief to make them even tolerable... We have accepted the methods, not the ideals, of our possible antagonists, little realising that it is the ideals which have given the methods whatever cogency they possess.'

An outcome of this nervousness is the requirement of a teachers' oath both in U.S.A. and in India. In India, I do not know if it is universal. But in a number of institutions, it is a must. In the U.S.A., however, it is another visible, and widely felt, curb on academic freedom. I read of a case in the *Chicago Tribune*, dated January 5, 1961. The *Tribune* reported about Hjalmar Anderson, a janitor for the Eastern Elementary Schools at Evanston, Chicago, whose 'freedom fight' against the State of Illinois started in 1956. Anderson refused to sign a loyalty oath required by the State law on the grounds that he had promised to uphold the laws of the United States when he became a citizen in 1932, and that if that oath did not bind him by the laws of the country, any other oath would be useless. Obviously, Anderson was fighting on a point of principle, which is not devoid of significance for us in this country. The American Congress has a House Committee on un-American activities which is deplored by many college faculty members. (The Indian Parliament has no such Committee as yet.) The existence of this Committee is itself a matter of concern and controversy. Many faculty members have already sent a petition urging its early abolition. At the annual convention of the Association of American Colleges held at Denver in January, 1961,

a resolution was unanimously adopted urging the substitution of a milder pledge for the controversial loyalty oath in the National Defence Education Act. A number of college administrators and deans, however, support the existence of the Committee, since it strengthens their hands against the recalcitrants. They have even gone so far as to recommend that the Committee be given all the powers and money necessary to conduct "a more searching investigation of the international Communist conspiracy in the U.S.A."

The 'disclaimer' loyalty pledge is just one example of this sort of nervousness prevailing in the academic world in the U.S.A. There are several others. Thus a motive is often attributed to a fellow's too much 'concern' in his Ph.D., thesis with 'social problems'. But a much greater threat to academic freedom comes from 'sponsored research' which is increasing very fast in the U.S.A., and has started moving to other lands along with the American dollar. The *Chicago Tribune* wrote a very significant editorial on January 17, 1961. A portion of it which is worth quoting runs as follows: 'A far more serious threat to the proper independence of our colleges and universities than any oath-taking is growing dependence upon government-sponsored research contracts. Any of our private universities could be crippled by a sudden cut-back in these contracts'. This is a threat to academic freedom the intensity of which is not fully realised in India, since sponsored research is still in its infancy here, though a beginning has already been made in it in recent years. This was a fascinating subject for my observation in the United States and I found that while in the social sciences the Americans were busy evolving a novel way of eliminating the scope for controversy by using mathematics as a common denominator and building up 'models', in science and technology the fundamental as well as industrial research was fast migrating to private research labs, while institutions like MIT and the universities were increasingly taking to government-

Foundation—or industry-sponsored research contracts. To an outsider the whole thing would appear impressive; but, in reality, the entire scheme is narrowing down the horizon of knowledge and making the universities subservient to money-earning.

For a dispassionate analysis of the outcome of sponsored research, one should refer to W. H. Whyte's (Jr.) well-known book, *The Organisation Man* (1956), in which the author deals with the disastrous impact of organisation techniques on life in America. He rightly contends that the flow of really good ideas and scientific achievements is hindered rather than advanced by the habitual bigness of sponsored research. Scientists do not merely submit their findings to the judgement of others; they now depend on others also in the early stage when they decide what specific problems to investigate. Whyte believes that the distraction offered by the lure of funds for organisation-favoured projects seriously impairs the creative potential of the scientists. He quotes the examples of 20 top scientists in a particular field who had met for the purpose of listening to the plans of a chairman of a large foundation. About eight of them were on the verge of some really important work. But as no indication of interest in the preferences of the scientists was given by the Foundation chairman, the meeting dealt only with the latter's plans and projects. The feeling prevailed that the work to be financed by the Foundation would 'be in the long-run a net subtraction' of the scientific assets previously accumulated by the participating scholars. Quoting L. L. Whyte, W. H. says: 'The most fertile new ideas are those which transcend established, specialised methods and treat some new problem as a single task. Cooperative groups from great industrial concerns to small research teams, inevitably tend to rely on what is usually acceptable as common good.' No less disquieting is the position of research in the social sciences. Whyte had approached 13 top sociologists 'not working on currently fashionable "problems" but who were

thought first rate'. He found that several had applied to one of the big Foundations for grants and all but one had been turned down. Foundations always support group research at big institutions rather than fostering individualistic effort, no matter whether that means, as J. A. Gengerelli of UCLA put it, 'a great plethora of \$50,000 grants for \$100 ideas. I am suggesting' says Gengerelli, 'that scientific, technical and financial facilities are such in this country as to encourage a great number of mediocrities to go into science, and to seduce even those with creative talent and imagination to a mistaken view of the nature of the scientific enterprise.' Particularly drastic is the criticism offered by Norbert Wiener which has some relevance to our own research laboratories established by the government since 1947. Speaking of America, Wiener says,—and this is in a fair measure true of India as well—that 'we are bringing up a generation of young men who cannot think of any scientific project except in terms of large numbers of men and large quantities of money. The skill by which the French and the English do

great amounts of work with apparatus which an American high-school teacher would scorn as a casual "stick-and-string job" is not to be found among any but a vanishingly small minority of our young men. The present vogue of a big laboratory is a new thing in science. There are those of us who wish to think that it may never last to be an old thing. When the time comes at which the scientific ideas of this generation are exhausted, or at least have come to show vastly diminishing returns on their intellectual investment, I do not see the prospect that the next generation will be able to furnish the colossal ideas on which colossal projects naturally rest.' I am, however, not bothered much about America. So long as the Dollar is king, it will, as in the past, continue to purchase and import 'colossal ideas' from anywhere in the free world; but think of India, which is busy digging the grave for 'casual stick-and-string jobs', and while deifying the generation of Bose-Ray-Raman, is striving hard to build up the 'vogue of a big laboratory' with imported money and imported technology in a bureaucratic setting!

MR. LALWANI WRITES:

"If you at all feel like printing this article at the cost of incurring American displeasure, I would expect you to add a strong and drastic rejoinder". Our only rejoinder is to point out that Mr. Lalwani's criticism of America is almost wholly based on American sources; all the authorities he quotes are American. We share Mr. Lalwani's concern about the sad state of American academic life, also his delight at discovering that Americans are a very self-critical people.

EDITORS

Capitalism Today

By PRANAB BARDHAN

‘WHAT social science needs’, comments J. D. Bernal in his *Science in History*, ‘is less use of elaborate techniques and more courage to tackle, rather than dodge, the central issues. But to demand that is to ignore the social reasons that have made social science what it is’. Whatever we may think of the Marxist’s morbid suspicion of the ‘social reasons’ and motives responsible for the current state of social science, it is true that social scientists have often overlooked the broad central problems in the history of mankind. Width of vision is usually the price paid for intensity of gaze. Many of us, in our preoccupation with the analysis of particular aspects of social life, are in the habit of taking the general social system that we live in for granted, just as we take the solar system for granted, and if reminded of its eventual ‘breakdown’, we think of it in much the same unconcerned way as of the eventual cooling of the sun. The Marxist writers have it to their credit that they have repeatedly pointed, albeit in their own tendentious way, to the historic specificity of capitalism. It would be interesting if, from time to time, we raise our eyes from some minute aspect of capitalist society and try to have an over-all view of the system as a whole, and that is what we shall try to do in this paper. We shall abstain, as far as possible, from passing judgments on the shape of things. Our sole purpose is to look into the changes, some structural, some peripheral, which capitalist society has experienced over the last few decades and see if these involve any epochal transformation. Our frame of reference is the American economy which

is supposed to exhibit the characteristics of capitalism *par excellence*.

I

The last two decades have seen capitalism scaling prodigious heights of prosperity and the affluent society has been unmistakably ushered in. Capitalism, we are told, has ‘never had it so good’. It can, however, be noted in passing that the tempo of post-Second World War economic growth suffers somewhat in comparison with that of the post-First World War era; the average annual growth rate of the real Gross National Product in the U.S.A. was 2.2% during 1945-56 compared to 2.9% in 1918-29. What is really remarkable is that the recent prosperity has been of a more steady nature. The recessions which did occur, as those in 1948-49, 1953-54, 1957-58 and 1960-61, were much milder than those of 1920-21, 1923-24 and 1937-38. Any major depression of the scale of 1929-33 has so far been successfully averted. The nervous talk of a secular stagnation that filled the air by the end of the thirties is now more or less a matter of historical curiosity. It is important to analyse how capitalism has been able to reduce instability and see if sufficient immunity to depressions has really been achieved.

An investigation of the question of economic stability can today hardly avoid a consideration of the paucity of what economists call effective demand which notoriously tends to lag behind the growth of output capacity in a mature capitalism, rendering the maintenance of balanced growth the kind of tight-rope walking that it is. Instead of theorizing in a vacuum, let

us look into the actual structure of effective demand in the American economy.

In an era of 'high mass consumption' (Rostow's final stage of economic growth), personal consumption dropped from the average of 75% of total effective demand in 1937-39 to the average of 65% in 1954-56. Personal consumption can be subdivided into consumption of durables and non-durables. It has been estimated that while in the first decade of this century non-durable (e.g. food, beverages, clothing, shoes etc.) comprised over 60% of total personal consumption, by 1957 their share fell to 45%, and, correspondingly the share of durables shot up, especially since the early fifties. Not tea, but TV is the representative consumer good of the affluent society.

Consumer asset formation, we are told, is one of the most remarkable characteristics of a fully-developed capitalism, when the household with its mechanized kitchen, with its cornucopia of slick and glossy gadgets catering to entertainment, cleaning, storage and sundry other needs, tends to become 'a fully automated utility factory'. Some are even prone to distinguish between fully-developed (U.S.A.) and semi-developed (Japan) capitalism on the basis of the relative importance of consumer asset formation vis-à-vis business capital formation. In the U.S.A the purchase of major consumer durables and residential dwellings over 1953-57 was 120% of the total purchase of construction and equipment by business over the same period. This emergence of consumer asset formation as an important determinant of economic activity is regarded, in many quarters, as auguring well for the economic stability of capitalism. It has been pointed out with easy optimism that whenever there is a decline in business investment, excess savings can be channelled into households for consumer asset formation, thereby arresting any recession that might have followed in train. What is more, it was actually a rise in automobile sales and residential construction that are supposed

to have sparked off the recovery from the recessions of the fifties.

One is not, however, sure whether the effect of consumer asset formation will be all the way stabilizing. One can easily conceive of consumer inventory cycles and difficulties of adjustments due to the lumpiness of initial expenditure, the consequential demand inflexibility, the dependence of the durable's length of life on changes in market prices, and changes in consumers' price expectations and confidence, aggravating, and not always curbing, the business cycle. Even apart from these theoretical doubts, one can also raise some practical questions. Consumer asset formation is typically financed by instalment credit ('buying on the never-never'). Consumers are increasingly 'borrowing from their future income' to pay for the goods which have already been produced. During the fifties, consumer indebtedness rose three times as fast as personal income. The ratio of instalment credit outstanding to personal consumption expenditure rose from 4% in 1929 to 6.4% in 1949 and 12% in 1957. Debt creation is always a major source of uncertainty in economic behaviour, and debt-financed consumption may be as volatile as debt-financed business investment. A survey by insurance companies revealed that the average American family was only about three months from bankruptcy, pointing to a really explosive situation; 'one really bad year in business and this whole credit set-up will fall like a card house'. Apart from all that, there are other relevant questions. How far mortgaging the future is an effective way of solving the paucity of demand in the long run? Is it not possible to envisage that in the foreseeable future, there may be a relative 'satiation' in the consumption of durables, as seems to have already happened in the consumption of some of the non-durables? Of course, the stabilizing role of personal consumption in recent recessions reflects to a large extent the enhanced stability in the flow of personal income in the post-war period (due to the adoption of a fairly stable dividend policy by corporations,

anti-cyclical transfer payments, the increase in the proportion of workers having steady jobs in relatively cycle-insensitive industries of the 'service' type and occupations of the 'white-collar' type etc.), but for the future one cannot just be too sure, especially when vulnerable points are yet too many.

II

Another component of effective demand is business spending, traditionally a volatile factor. Although its volatility may have been reduced somewhat in recent years because of financial reforms (e.g. Federal Deposit Insurance, to eliminate the fear of cumulative bank failures), increased business confidence in the government's anti-cyclical responsibility, increased consciousness of the business cycle itself (being wiser after the lessons of the thirties), adoption of long-range capital budgets, closer control of inventories etc., we cannot count too much on them. More significantly however, one can point to the upsurge of technological innovations which have always been the core of capitalist dynamics. Ever since its early days the technical creativeness of capitalism has never failed to find avenues to enrich mankind in all its exuberance, from steam and steel to electricity, automation and chemistry, and then to the post-war cluster (sometimes known as 'the scientific-industrial revolution') of atomic energy, automation, electronics, aeronautics and new synthetic materials. In view of this technological dynamism, Prof. Pigou hoped that 'scientific discoveries will continue to be made' to enable 'economic men . . . to live and move in purgatory' rather than in Keynesian perdition.

Capitalism today has, of course, got technological progress more or less 'built in' (more on this later), but that in itself may not write off the Keynesian 'Day of Judgment'. Waves of innovations may not necessarily bring in their wake massive increase in investment. The kind of innovation that reduces the rate of depreciation

and obsolescence will lower the demand for capital per unit of output. The application of atomic energy again minimizes the need for capital-intensive hydro-electric works. And finally, in view of the enormous sums of amortization allowance that are continually available to the big corporations, a high but carefully regulated rate of technological innovation is compatible with a low rate of net investment. The Keynesian bogey remains.

Another type of business spending which plays an ever increasing role in buttressing capitalist economy is 'wasteful' expenditure. (Of course, the distinction between 'useful' and 'wasteful' expenditure must always remain a matter of uncertain value judgment). High-powered advertisement is continuously manufacturing wants and needs for the gimmicky gadgets that annually flood the market, propagating artificial obsolescence, aiding proliferation of styles (for instance, the fantastic outcropping of tail fins on motor cars, each year anew, in the late fifties) and product differentiation (an example: in 1959, there were 551 different brands of coffee in the U.S. market, 177 brands of salad dressing, and 249 brands of powdered soap) and moulding consumers' wants through 'hidden persuasion' and sly appeals to the subconscious needs and anxieties of the people, to suit the Moloch-like demands of business. Consumers are steadily being swept off their feet by the Pied Pipers of Madison Avenue, and advertising expenditure is steadily assuming fabulous proportions. In 1929 it cost 1.12 billion dollars, but by the end of the fifties it is estimated to have climbed to no less than 12 billion dollars and if we also take into account activities related to advertising — public relations and marketing research — it will exceed 15 billion dollars. As Vance packard notes in his recent book, *The Waste Makers*, wastefulness, assiduously promoted by U.S. industry in order to sell its ever-mounting stock-pile of products, has become a part of the American way of life. The emerging philosophy of reckless consumption and rationalization of waste

has been rather bluntly put in the words of a marketing consultant: 'our enormously productive economy ... demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfactions, our ego satisfactions, in consumption.... We need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced and discarded at an ever increasing rate'. The way to avoid gluts is evidently to produce gluttons. While in Marx's day the dominant urge in capitalism was to 'accumulate and accumulate', the pressure is now to 'consume, consume and consume'. Even steering clear of the philosophical issues involved, we can point out that a policy of proliferation of waste has its limits, if not for anything else, at least because it retards progress in productivity (and hence a country's competitive strength in world trade). Already productivity differentials between the U.S.A. and Western Europe have narrowed and cheap European commodities are infiltrating into the American market.

III

Now we come to public expenditure. Government expenditure and economic policies are an increasingly important factor in American economic life. Fifty years ago the combined expenditure of the federal, state and local government was about 7% of the dollar value of the national output; it rose to 10% in 1929 and 26% in 1957. Controlling more than one-fourth of the national expenditure, the government can certainly exert its considerable influence on business conditions to strengthen effective demand.

Among items of government expenditure, defence bulks largest. Whereas the proportion of defence expenditure to Gross National Product was only 0.8% in 1926-30, by now it is above 10%. On all counts, defence has been a 'leading sector' in the post-war boom. But for the near future it can perhaps be guessed that the present very high proportion of GNP spent on

defence is not likely to be surpassed substantially (even if one assumes that the protracted disarmament talks will be entirely futile).

Another item is capital aid to underdeveloped countries. Unilateral transfer of funds, either for economic or for military purposes, amounted on an average to 10.1% of the total gross saving of the economy during 1946-57. The amount of such aid and loans given will, however, depend on the political mood of the people and the temperature of the Cold War. Then there are the transfer payments to individuals which amounted to 6.5% of disposable personal income in 1958, as against 1% in 1929. Along with progressive income-tax and farm price support measures, these transfer payments are part of the 'built-in' stabilizing mechanism that the country has instituted to fight against economic (and social) instability. Finally, there is the expenditure on social overhead capital (e.g., schools, houses, highways, hospitals etc.). In the most affluent society of the world today, the standard of social services is astonishingly low. 'Bright new cars in sordid streets, ranch-type or split-level homes beside garbage-filled gutters, the family picnic basket in chromium beside the polluted stream'—these are symbols of a national pattern of expenditure that points to a clear social imbalance, of private opulence pitted against public squalor, an issue on which Galbraith seems to feel very strongly. And here we may refer to the famous question once casually raised by an American tank-driver: if America can maintain her prosperity by manufacturing a huge quantity of 'the instruments of death', why would not she be able to do the same by manufacturing instead more of the 'instruments of life'? Apart from the political issues involved in a massive programme of public production of the 'instruments of life' (to be dealt with presently), there is the technical fact that the 'instruments of life' are far cheaper than the 'instruments of death' and hence less effective per unit of output as 'offsets' to excess saving. (It has been estimated that

the cost of one modern heavy bomber is a modern brick school in more than thirty cities, that of a single fighter plane is half a million bushels of wheat, and that of a single destroyer is homes that could have housed more than eight thousand people).

In all, we can say that in the post-war years the American economy has gained much in depression-resistance and everybody is more prepared than before to face an eventuality, although it has not certainly become fully depression proof (the annual average unemployment rates in the last eight or nine years have almost always exceeded 4%). At any rate America can in the near future sustain her prosperity by intensifying the programmes of redistributive transfer payments and by expanding the public sector, of which there seems to be ample scope. But there lurks an important political issue and to that we now turn.

It is possible, we have found, for the state, by a system of appropriate fiscal, monetary, wage, price and other policies, to so regulate the rates of consumption and accumulation as to rescue capitalism from the 'fetters of straitened markets' and exorcise the ghost of intermittent crises. But the Marxist here raises the pertinent question whether the state in a capitalist society is capable of performing this task effectively. The state, according to him, cannot simply be dragged in as a *dux ex machina* to solve the 'contradictions' of the accumulation process. Its position and function in capitalist society must be examined to see what can and what cannot be expected of it. It is the besetting sin of the Keynesians, says Paul Sweezy, that they tear the economic system out of its social context and treat it as though it were a machine to be sent to the repair shop to be overhauled by an engineer state.

To the Marxist, the state in any society is an instrument of the dominant class to preserve a given system of property relations. In capitalist society, the state comes to form, to use Marx's telling phrase, 'the executive committee of the bourgeoisie', the state apparatus is controlled directly or indirectly by capital, and as long as capital

is interested in unfettered self-expansion any deliberate policy of state regulation and intervention is likely to be resisted with all the power that organized capital can muster. This is said to be amply confirmed by the history of the reform movements in capitalist countries from English chartism of over a century ago to the New Deal of the thirties when the relics of the 'horse and buggy' era rallied to fight against the 'progressive' forces.

The Marxist, for all his melodramatic exaggerations, here focuses our attention on an important feature of the decision-making process in the government and the power constellation that influences it in a capitalist society. Commercial capital in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, and industrial capital in the nineteenth and the twentieth have made ample use of the state as a means to realize their economic goals. All governments today are sensitive to group pressures and lobbying, some more (as in the U.S.A. and France), some less so. But by the middle of the twentieth century, it is not the capitalist class alone that rules the roost. Rather, we see a multiple pressure-group polity with organized industrial labour, farmers and consumers (the latter especially in England and Scandinavia) also throwing their weight about. Of course, capitalist business is often the most tightly organized and financially the most powerful group and to that extent the scale in society's balance of power is often tilted in its favour, but other organized and politically active interests often do exert a regulatory, if not countervailing, force. While on the one hand, no American government, even in a desperate mood to expand the public sector, will be able in the near future to enter the field of private residential housing, for example, in a big enough way to count, because of a very strong private interest vested in the sphere of real estates, on the other hand, it is no less certain that the problem of instability posed by administered wage claims of the trade unions can no longer goad the government into draconic wage-reductions.

Then again, the clash of interests which

the Marxists dramatize in their cataclysmic view of history has lost much of its pristine sharpness and ideological passion in many Western capitalist countries today. Apart from prosperity being a notable solvent of social tensions the capitalist class, with its increased consciousness of the long-term interests of 'preserving' capitalism (although conflicts between the long-term interests of capital as a whole and the short-term interests of particular segments of it are not infrequent) is today more prepared for compromise. Much of what the conservative of yesterday regarded as radical, is today accepted as commonplace. The way in many democracies the Right often 'steals the clothes' (Disraeli used these words to describe Peel's reforms) of its adversary is a pointer. No doubt, the capitalists have not changed their hearts (the Gandhian dream) and that class harmony (that is glibly talked about in some quarters) is, and will remain, a myth, nonetheless there is increasing evidence for varying but considerable degrees of political convergence in affluent societies now as compared to thirty years ago.

We have talked of the long-run interests of preserving capitalism. But how far, the liberals would ask, can the state 'save' capitalism, except saving it in the most Pickwickian sense? State action, we are told, takes away the very *raison d'être* of capitalism. In a system where a quasi-chronic industrial stalemate can be checked only by a permanent flow of government expenditure (or what Keynes called 'a somewhat comprehensive socialization of investment') and where the state ensures advance stability by putting an increasing portion of investment activity in a strait jacket, it is doubtful if the essence of capitalism will remain unaffected. Managed capitalism or what Schumpeter called 'capitalism in the oxygen tent' is but a poor apology for capitalism proper. As Myrdal notes in his recent book, *Beyond The Welfare State*: 'It will, as time goes on, be less and less possible to maintain that ours is a 'free' or a 'free enterprise' economy, with exceptions for a certain number of acts of

state intervention. The exceptions are gradually becoming the rule. As a matter of fact, ours is a rather closely regulated society, leaving a certain amount of free enterprise to move within a frame set by a fine-spun system of controls, which are all ultimately under the authority of the democratic state.'

This brings us to the more general question of the changes in social relations which contemporary capitalism has undergone. First of all, it is often pointed out that the distribution of income has become more and more equitable over the past few decades and with this 'income revolution', the fate of Marx's Law of Increasing Misery has been increasingly miserable, leaving very little chance for the hasty afterthoughts of the latter-day Marxists to salvage it. In corroboration, one can cite U.S. Commerce Department data that between 1929 and 1956, the percentage share of total *personal* income going to the lowest two quintiles rose from 13% to 16%, the share of the third and fourth rose from 33% to 39%, and the share of the highest quintile fell from 54% to 45%. But as Sweezy aptly points out, the share of the upper income groups does not take into account the large and growing proportion of national output that they absorb not in the form of personal income, but in various institutionalized forms, such as corporate savings, unrealized capital gains, expense accounts etc. The percentage of corporate savings to GNP, for example, rose from 5.8% in 1929 to 6.4% in 1956 (despite stiff corporate tax rates in post-war years) and there is no ground to believe that concentration of ownership of corporate stocks and bonds has dwindled substantially in the meantime. Again, if instead of size-distribution, we resort to the older concept of functional shares, we can have it from E. F. Denison's data that labour's functional share of private non-farm output was constant during 'the prosperous peacetime years' of 1929-52. Contrary to widespread belief, repeated empirical studies have convincingly shown that trade union activity has had but a negligible

effect upon labour's relative share. So in all, we can point out that though there may have been some change, it in no way amounts to a fundamental qualitative change (a 'revolution' to boot!) in the structure or functioning of the system.

The really important institutional change that capitalism has seen for quite some time is the atrophy of competition and oligopolization of society. The early capitalist society, as Adam Smith and Benjamin Franklin saw it, was a society of small business men. Capitalist development has led, along the path Marx foresaw, to concentration of economic power. The decisive *dramatis personae* of contemporary capitalism are the giant corporations which have crushed their smaller rivals by means of sales drives, new and cheaper methods, mass production and even political manoeuvring. Freedom of enterprise has been systematically smothered by trustification (despite the Sherman Act, Clayton Act, FTC Act and all that). The heads of the corporations that produce between a third and a half of the national product of the United States could, according to Galbraith, be seated comfortably in almost any small motion-picture theatre. The historical process since the end of the nineteenth century is too patent to require empirical elaboration. But it is interesting to note that the increase in concentration has been pretty fast even very recently. According to a Report of the Sub-Committee on Anti-trust and Monopoly of the Senate, in a span of only 7 years, the largest 50 companies increased their share of total value added by manufacture from 17% in 1947 to 23% in 1954, and the largest 100 companies from 23% to 30%. (In other countries also we have seen a spate of 'take-over' bids and mergers in recent years).

It has sometimes been pointed out that today the widespread ownership of corporate stocks belies the Marxian prediction of 'centralization' ('people's capitalism' and all that stuff). But any qualitative change in the structure of capitalism on this score is entirely illusory. Here are some facts.

the percentage of stockholders in the total population of the U.S.A. in 1956 was, if anything, lower than the corresponding percentage for 1930; in 1955, the total value of stocks held by all wage-earning families in the country came to only about 0.3% of the marketable supply of stocks; and in 1952, 8% of all stock-owners (comprising less than 1% of all American families) owned over 80% of all publicly held stocks. Clearly, control in corporate affairs is still vested in few hands.

Coming to the question of control, we may refer to the familiar idea of the separation of ownership from management. James Burnham dramatized the issue in his *Managerial Revolution*; he saw in the offing an inexorable transition to the 'managerial society', when the *de facto* control of the large corporations would be usurped by a separate class of managers having very little ownership interest. Later empirical research however, has, clearly indicated that the extent of separation between ownership and control has been rather overdrawn, and Burnham's prediction of a managerial revolution has met the same fate as his prediction of the inevitable triumph of Nazi Germany. Prof. Sargent Florence, on the basis of a study of 85 of the largest firms, concludes in his *The Logic of British and American Industry*, 'there is certainly evidence for believing that the managerial revolution has not proceeded as far as is sometimes thought (or stated without thought) and the leadership and the ultimate decision or top policy may remain in many companies or corporations with the largest capital shareholders'. Continuing with the general question of control, we may refer in this connection to the growth in the U.S.A., as also in many European countries of an inner circle of what Prof. C. Wright Mills has called the 'power elite'. The big rich, the politicians and the corporation executives form a centre of power that is tightly knit and basically irresponsible. 'This power elite is *not* an aristocracy, i.e. it is not a group based upon a nobility of hereditary origin. But members of this

group come from the upper third of the income and occupational pyramids. . . . We see to the point of totality, the continuance in power of a set of men who, by training and bent, are professional organizers of considerable force and who are unrestrained by democratic training'. A handful of tycoons, firmly entrenched in power and linked together by common interest thus rule the business world.

V

Monopoly capitalism upsets the multitudinous market barometers and cripples the automatic self-adjusting mechanism which has been central to the capitalist scheme of resource-allocation. Prices no longer indicate the spontaneous operation of the Marshallian scissors. They act, in Galbraith's words, rather as 'an umbrella which efficient and inefficient producers alike will tacitly agree to hold at a safe level over their heads and under which all will live comfortably, profitably and inefficiently'. The development of an integrated and mechanized production process with its inevitable 'indivisibilities' and 'discontinuities' has reduced the adaptability of the productive system to changes in demand and a slight short-fall in demand leads to the piling up of excess capacity. This excess capacity does not tend to be squeezed out under monopoly, and in turn tends to discourage new investment.

At this point we may clarify the issue of the relationship between monopoly capitalism and technical progress. Many socialists in the past assumed all too readily that the growth of monopoly would stifle technological progress. The monopolists, in zealous guard of their capital values, were supposed to linger in the lotus-field of profitable stagnation. But things have turned out differently. It is the big corporations that have carried through the spectacular technological innovations which account for much of the post-war capitalist affluence (not to speak of their role in the technical progress of earlier decades in the U.S.A., Germany and Japan). With large

protected markets, sizeable expenditure on research and development and substantial 'internal financing' out of accumulated reserves, only the big firms today are in a position to undertake the risks and provide the wherewithal for major technological innovations. But it is for about the same reason that we have to qualify the easy optimism of even many good-meaning protagonists of monopoly capitalism. Some of them would tell the trust-busting enthusiast that, after all, those poor monopolists are under the sway of the 'perennial gale' of creative destruction. New firms continually challenge the established ones or there is always the threat of it. In contrast to the text-book model of static competition, in a dynamic economy competition from new products, methods or organizations strikes not at the margins of the profits and the outputs of the existing firms, but at their foundations and at their very lives. 'This kind of competition', Schumpeter says, 'is much more effective than the other as a bombardment is in comparison with forcing a door', and so in the last analysis, 'it becomes a matter of comparative indifference whether competition in the ordinary sense functions more or less promptly'. But the trouble is that innovations are no longer typically embodied in new firms riding the wave of change that destroys the old economic structure and creates a new one. Today they are rather prosaically and systematically introduced as a matter of organizational routine by the big firms and the small ones can hardly make any headway against the big giants' entrenched market position, research efficiency and enormous internal resources. As Galbraith remarks: 'There is no more cherished view of the American economy than that which regards it as a biological process in which the old and the senile are continuously being replaced by the young and vigorous. It is a pleasant but almost certainly a far-fetched fiction. In fact, the present generation of Americans, if it survives, will buy its steel, copper, brass, automobiles, tires, soap, shortening, breakfast food, bacon, cigarettes, whisky, cash registers and cas-

kets from one or another of the handful of firms that now supply these staples'. Messrs. Collins and Preston in a recent empirical study of the size structure of the 100 largest industrial firms in the U.S.A. over 1909-58, concludes that 'there is considerable reason to believe that firms now at the top of the industrial pyramid are more likely to remain there than were their predecessors. The evidence of mobility *does* accord with a general assumption that large-scale corporations enjoy an increasing amount of entrenchment of position by virtue of their size'. And so, instead of a perennial gale of creative destruction, we see a sustained and carefully regulated flow of 'automatized' forms of modernization fortifying all the way the existing monopoly position. Instead of being scared by the perpetual threat of outside bombardment the monopolists are often found comfortably revelling in an ordered display of fireworks in the precincts of their own citadel.

At the same time, as technological progress becomes, like the technique of of modern warfare, increasingly depersonalized and automatized, the leadership of the dashing Schumpeterian entrepreneur tends to be obsolescent. The age of anthropomorphic business enterprise is now gone for ever. The mechanical teamwork of specialised employees replaces the inspired action of the individual and thus ousts the bourgeoisie from the function to which it owed its social weight.

We have come upon the fringe of what might be called one of the most fundamental changes in modern capitalist society for which literature, sociology and psychiatry of the last few decades furnish ample documentation. In particular, the sociological studies of David Reisman (*The Lonely Crowd*) and William H. Whyte (*The Organisation Man*) are of immense help in our analysis.

The characterological prototype of the nineteenth century capitalist society was the 'inner-directed' man with his deeply internalized set of aspirations of self-seeking, of conquest over new and challenging vicis-

situdes, of mastery of his total environment ('the captain of my ship, the master of my soul'). But today in large-scale industrial capitalism—with the pervasiveness of mass production, submergence of the individual in the huge corporate bureaucracy, the almost limitless capacity of mass media to set standards of taste in consumption, behaviour, culture, business management and education, the enormous costliness and risks of innovation, the rise of 'big labour' and 'big government' along with 'big business' the cult of the individual with his internalized goals is gradually on the way out. In all creativity, the 'team' is the unit, not the self-propelled individual. Creative leadership is a staff function. The typical member of society is an organization man caught at some point and in some fashion in the hierarchy, subject to the 'organization ethic' of conformity; or he is an other-directed man with a psychological radar constantly beamed on his peers and sensitized to their expectations and preferences. The emphasis is on being a good fellow, on team-work and on the importance of 'selling' oneself to the boss and to one's peers. There is no place for the 'lonewolf, who is not cooperative, no matter what his gifts'. 'Instead of the captain of his ship and the master of his soul, the individual is reduced to the bureaucratic position of a helmsman who conceives his major function as discovering the tides of the sea and then sailing along with them'. All this unmistakably implies the gradual withering away of the capitalist élan—individual initiative, personal entrepreneurial talent and self and family-oriented motives.

It is a Marxist contention that there has been no basic modification of capitalism since the *differentia specifica* of this system of production relations still remains unscathed. What differentiates one social system from another is the form taken by the social surplus of production over consumption and the institutional method of its appropriation. Under feudalism this surplus took the form of goods and services directly rendered, usually in kind, to the feudal lord for his personal use. Under

capitalism it takes the form of profit or surplus value, which is appropriated by the owners of the means of production and which, in historical fact, is mainly used not for personal consumption but for investment in new means of production. And finally, under socialism, this surplus takes the form of a social fund which may be used as society plans. From this standpoint, capitalism has indeed changed but little.* Profit is still the mainspring of economic activity (at least in the long run), is still generally under the control of private capital and mostly destined for investment. But even without a detailed examination of the materialistic interpretation of history involved herein, one can perhaps say that the differentiation of social systems may depend on factors somewhat broader than and qualitatively different from the mere form and method of acquisition of surplus value. What is central to the capitalist system is not a particular institutional method of surplus appropriation, but a much more general phenomenon of a particular type of rôle played by the individual in relation to social and economic activities. As monopoly capitalism suppresses the automatic self-adjusting mechanism of the economy, as freedom of enterprise is smothered by self-perpetuating oligarchies, as innovation is institutionalized and the inner-directed entrepreneur yields place to the team of specialized employees, as state activity circumscribes private enterprise in the name of the Welfare State, as the individual members of society passively surrender themselves to the crippling conformity of the organization or the standardized peer group expectations in a 'streamlined' society, as the free choice to own, acquire and sell, to work or to rest, to invest, to trade, to move becomes more and more restricted and the rugged individualism of the past succumbs to a 'progressive socialization' of human lives, much of what

was at the heart of economic liberalism wears away.

It is interesting that this de-individualizing process involved in the organizational exigencies of technological development is common to both contemporary capitalist and communist societies. Organization of productive relationships in the form of giant industrial units, whether under private or State monopoly, and the pervasiveness of an entrenched bureaucracy, whether in the large corporation or the state apparatus, have the same effect in both societies of putting the individual in the procrustean bed of impotent conformity. Thus, in a sense, 'relations' of production (relations between men and men) do mirror the 'forces' of production (relations between men and things) or the state of technological development. To the Marxist, relations of production primarily involve institutional forms of ownership of the means of production. But to concentrate on ownership—an essentially juridical concept—is perhaps to miss the essential point. Relations of production may perhaps be more fruitfully interpreted in the more general sense of the mode of organizing the rôle of individual human beings in the production structure. Changes in history brought about by changes in the ownership pattern are perhaps more dramatic, but really important changes from the point of view of the growth of human civilization are those that follow a revaluation of the place of the individual in a system of social relationships. Judged in this light, capitalism today has little, if any, resemblance to the system that prevailed in the early nineteenth century. The ghost of Adam Smith would find it as hard to recognize capitalism in the U.S.A. of today as would it be for the ghost of Karl Marx to recognize communism in contemporary Soviet Russia. If you still continue to call the system 'capitalism', then it is yet another case of semantic anachronism that mankind has always been slow to part with.

* This seems to be the view of Prof. Shigeto Tsuru. See Tsuru (ed.), *Has Capitalism changed?*

*The Tasks Before Indian Philosophers**

By N. K. DEVARAJA

PHILOSOPHY today is in a state of unprecedented crisis. It faces a challenge in respect of both the subject matter with which it has traditionally occupied itself and the methods which it has employed for dealing with that subject matter. A new emphasis on the need for evidence has quite upset the votaries of traditional philosophy; and the vogue of linguistic analysis threatens to dissociate this discipline from the time-honoured problems which lent it a halo and invested it with an almost sacred character. Philosophy, it is argued, should no longer bother itself about the existence of God, the existence, nature and destiny of the human soul, etc., for questions relating to these do not admit of verifiable answers. Philosophy should cease to be a handmaid to religion or theology, and should occupy itself with the useful work of clarifying the concepts and statements of the physical sciences.

The positivistic insistence on verifiability as the criterion of meaningful discourse would not have caused so much disturbance in the realm of philosophical thought had it confined itself merely to the elimination of metaphysics. The metaphysical way of thinking had already been seriously challenged and indicted by thinkers like Hume and Kant. The new attack on metaphysics based on analysis of meaning proved to have more sinister implications inasmuch as it denied cognitive significance to all talk of values. Advancing at a prodigious speed and marching from success to success, science had already, through its doctrine of universal determinism during the eighteenth century and the theory of evolution during the nineteenth century, administered rude shocks to man's sense of a spiritual meaning and purpose with respect to his career in the universe; the new positivism, coming forward as an inter-

preter not only of science but of cognitive enterprise as a whole, declared that sense to be a product of semantic confusion.

The positivist's challenge to metaphysics has inevitably had serious repercussions on the philosophical scene in India. Ancient Indian Philosophy, which still dominates the minds of the majority of the people, is mostly speculative and dialectical. Despite the empirical bias of such philosophers as Kanada and Sankara, it is difficult to find in Indian Philosophy many examples of analytical thinking of the type to be met with in the writings of John Locke and David Hume, and even in the works of Plato and Aristotle, Descartes and Kant. The discussions of logical topics including the problems concerning the ascertainment of Vyapti (universal concomitance) and the relationship between cause and effect have been conducted by ancient Hindu, Jaina and Buddhist thinkers in an analytical spirit, but these parts of Indian philosophy, besides being less known, are not what the admirers and interpreters of that philosophy tend to commend and comment upon.

The thinkers and reformers of modern India, such as Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, have drawn inspiration chiefly from the speculative parts of our philosophical tradition. As a consequence, the younger generation of teachers and students of philosophy in post-war India have been, under the impact of the powerful movement of analytical philosophy, drifting farther and farther away from the tradition of ancient Indian Philosophy.

This drifting away from the tradition would not have been unwelcome had it been accompanied by significant creative achievement in the present, or by the promise of such achievement in the future. As it is, the situation in the field of

*Presidential address delivered at the Rajasthan Philosophy Conference, January 1962.

contemporary Indian philosophy presents a sorry spectacle. At the one end are the scholars and leaders of thought representing, temperamentally and often chronologically, the older generation who continue to stress the achievements and glories of the past, and to exhort the Indian people to be good and united and spiritually worthy in the name of the great ancient Rishis who proclaimed the fundamental unity of all sentient creatures; at the other end are the admirers of Wittgenstein and Carnap and perhaps Sartre who will simply not put up with the metaphysical nonsense of the Mahayanists and the Vedantists, and who want to sever all connection with older philosophies and values.

Both these camps, in our view, are failing to meet the vital intellectual, moral and spiritual needs of the new Indian nation now in the process of emergence. The spokesmen of the traditional culture, of the traditional world-view and the sense of values derived from that view, fail to appreciate the new demand for evidence in respect of religio-philosophical doctrines and dogmas which is rapidly becoming characteristic of intelligent men and women all over the world; they also fail to take into account the new needs and values whose perception and realization have been made possible by the new world environment, created by science and technology on the one hand and the unprecedented volume of intercourse, human and cultural, on the other. I believe that the more developed sense of evidence which is characteristic of our scientific age is, on the whole, a sign of the greater intellectual maturity of our times; nobody has the right to discourage that sense in the name of the infallibility or sanctity of the traditional teachings. Nor is anybody justified in belittling the values whose realization has become possible only through the achievements of modern man.

Having conceded all this, I still fail to see eye to eye with those who advocate complete rupture with the past in the various spheres of culture. For, I hold that man is a historical being whose cultural

present necessarily springs from the womb of the past. Man progresses by absorbing and assimilating the riches of his cultural past, his progress depending as much on the extent and quality of this absorption and assimilation as on the vitality of his imaginative vision and the vigour of his purposeful endeavour.

I do not agree with the positivistic contention that the philosopher's activity should be confined to the analysis or clarification of scientific concepts and statements. Philosophy of science is one of the legitimate branches of philosophy, but it is not coextensive with the total enterprise of the philosopher. What the philosophical analysis of science aims at is not so much the furtherance of scientific research as the *comprehension* of the nature and value of science as a human adventure. The philosophical analysis of art and morality, similarly, does not directly aim at promoting the progress of artistic creation and of moral life. Progress in different cultural fields is achieved, generally, by the activities of the geniuses in those fields; the function of the philosopher is to make us aware of the values inhering in or produced by those activities, and of the standards by which the relative merits of those activities or their products may be assessed. By analysing and appraising the value-bearing consciousness of man, or the activities by which such consciousness is produced, philosophy contributes to the growth of critical awareness of the values realized in the human personality. This awareness, in its turn, leads to the appreciation and encouragement of the pursuits productive of the values under reference.

This view of philosophy, which the present writer has developed at length elsewhere, enables us to define the tasks that lie before the philosophers of contemporary India. At the present moment the younger generation of our philosophers seem to me to be in a state either without a worthy occupation or with an occupation which is mainly negative. They are inclined to voice their occasional protests against ancient philosophies, particularly

the idealistic systems, but they hardly have before them any constructive programme to be carried out in their lives. As regards their enthusiasm for the Anglo-American analytical philosophy or for continental existentialism it is expressed partly in the denunciation of the metaphysical systems, old and new, and partly in the production of papers which, when they are not purely expository, are pale imitations of the methods and discussions of the Western thinkers. Indian philosophers of the previous generation who, with the probable exception of Sri Aurobindo, had not been able to produce philosophical writings of marked originality, were still conscious of a worthwhile mission in their lives; they were engaged in the patriotic work of interpreting ancient wisdom to the westerners as well as to their own compatriots. This sort of interpretation or reinterpretation of the past had the highest value for a nation involved in a protracted struggle for its emergence and survival as a politically independent and culturally self-respecting unit in the community of civilised nations. The reinterpretations and readaptations of older ideals also helped the nation to insert new emphasis in its traditional system of values.

Most of our contemporary philosophers seem to have shaken themselves free from the burden or mission which lent meaning to the labours of the writers and scholars of philosophy in the previous generation. The unfortunate thing is that they have not been able to take up to any other mission. Nor have they been able to free themselves from the sense of inferiority which infected the earlier generations. The only difference is that while scholars of those generations were anxious to prove to the West that the ancient Indian philosophers deserved serious and respectful notice, our young philosophers today are content to pay compliments to the West by exhibiting their fondness to imitate their methods and modes of thinking.

This tendency to look to the West for the enunciation of both the methods and problems of philosophy is hardly in keeping

with the dignity of a great nation, which can boast of a rich, diverse and distinguished tradition in logic and metaphysics, in aesthetics and in religious thought; it is wholly inconsistent with the aspirations of a resurgent India, forging ahead on the economic, industrial and diplomatic planes.

The great task before Indian philosophers today is to shape the mind and spirit of the Indian people in a manner which would inspire them with confidence and courage to appropriate the new vistas of experience and the new domains of value opened up by science and by our encounters with other peoples and cultures, and to synthesize these with experiences and values distinctive of our spiritual and cultural history. At this crucial stage in our nation's life it will be fatal for our thinkers to accept the limited conception of philosophy popularised by analytical philosophers. In India the main concern of philosophy has ever been the values realized in the spiritual personality of man; there is no reason why we should consent to abandon this time-honoured and fruitful conception of philosophy today. The earnest seekers of truth in our time are often found working in the various scientific laboratories; this is a valid reason why reflection over the activity of the scientist should form part of contemporary philosophy. But this is no reason for the exclusion of other expressions of man's spiritual life, e.g. art and literature, morality and religion, from the purview of the philosophical thinker.

The definitions of philosophy given by the positivists and the neo-Wittgensteinians are mere recommendations; they are not by any means factual statements, which may be shown to be verifiably true. We Indian thinkers, like the existentialist thinkers of France and Germany, are at liberty to adopt a different definition of philosophy, a definition which suits our temperament and tradition.

I shall now indicate the special problems and tasks which deserve the attention of present day Indian philosophers. These problems and tasks cannot be envisaged

properly except in the context of our socio-political and cultural history. Ancient Indians who produced, besides the great classics of logic and philosophy, such outstanding works in different fields as the *Astadhyayi* of Panini, the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya and the *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana were undoubtedly a people endowed with unusual gifts of thought and perception. Prominent alike in intellectual ability and practical wisdom they scaled heights of spiritual greatness scarcely approached in any other culture. And yet it must be admitted that their reflective achievements in some spheres have obvious limitations. Confining ourselves to the domain of philosophy we may observe that none of our great philosophers took the slightest interest in mathematics and other sciences of his time; none of them ever produced an important treatise either on ethics or socio-political philosophy, or on aesthetics. Viewed in this light the achievements of our greatest philosophers, not excluding Nāgārjuna and Dharmakīrti, Sāṅkara and Rāmānuja, appear, when compared with those of such western philosophers as Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Hegel, to be partial and one-sided. While the genius of our people succeeded in offering to the world such immortal classics of spiritual wisdom as the *Bhagavadgita*, the *Dhammapada* and the *Bodhicaryāvalāra*, it failed to produce any works comparable to the *Republic* of Plato, the *Ethica Nicomachea* of Aristotle and the *Critique of Practical Reason* of Immanuel Kant. The philosophers of modern India should strive to combat and conquer the factors which produced this and other kinds of imbalance in our philosophical thought.

Two factors were responsible for the relative neglect of certain types of philosophy and the relative lack of diversity in other types of thought in ancient India. One factor was the more or less repetitive character of our socio-political experience, and our experience with the physical world including the means of production, from century to century. India did not suffer political and economic revolutions of the

type experienced by Europe in modern times; it also failed to give birth to the experimental sciences. It consequently failed to experience corresponding changes in the domain of socio-political thought on the one hand, and the logico-philosophical outlook on the other.

The second factor was the excessive preoccupation of the best minds in this country with the transcendent or the eternal, with a goal of destiny lying above and beyond the achievements possible in the familiar world. This preoccupation prevented Indian philosophers from paying attention to the most important problems faced by man as a socio-political, rational and emotional being. Moving in the rarified atmosphere of otherworldly detachment, of spiritual calm and tranquillity, they refused to occupy themselves with problems which have been considered respectable by the best minds in Europe. In India the questions relating to moral and socio-political norms were left to be settled by dogmatic law-givers like Gautama and Bodhayana, Manu and Yajñavalkya; and those relating to art and beauty to the teachers and critics of literature. Plato wrote his *Republic* to vindicate moral distinctions against the attacks of the sophists; and to Kant and Wordsworth good will and duty had almost the grandeur of divinity. Aristotle, in his classical work on ethics, seriously discussed the nature of such worldly virtues as courage and magnanimity, and such earthly phenomena as ambition and friendship. Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Hegel judged it important to develop serious philosophies of art; and Kant wrote his *Critique of Pure Reason* to vindicate the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments in physical science.

I adduce these facts not because I want to belittle the achievements of our great ancestors or because I am lacking in the sense of proper patriotic pride in respect of those achievements, but because I want the philosopher-Sanskritists of my generation to awaken themselves from their self-complacent slumber and to permit the new generation to be more daring and creative

in its approach to philosophical problems. The philosophies of the past should not be permitted to put brakes on the progress of contemporary thought; they should be used, rather, as sources of inspiration and as a spur to greater and nobler efforts in different philosophical fields.

The ancients tended to ignore the distinctions of better and worse, higher and lower characteristics of cultural life in its various earthly forms, moral and emotional, individual and social. They sought to enforce socio-political and ethical codes through supernatural sanctions. Their sense of the values and virtues of social life was often sound, but it was generally supported by dogmas of questionable worth. It is not possible for us now to continue to appeal to those dogmas in defence of the values that we cherish today. For the older scriptures and dogmas lend their support not only to the institutions and forms of behaviour which we want to preserve but also to those which we want to discourage and demolish. Thus, if we allow the authority of the *purushasukta* and of Manu to go unquestioned, we cannot reasonably be permitted to challenge the undemocratic division of our people into the four *varnas* and the four thousand or more castes and sub-castes.

In the physical science older theories are discarded and new ones formulated in order to accommodate the new experimental data which refuse to be fitted into the framework of the previous theories. The new theories do not ignore the old data, but they frequently restate them. A new sense of values similarly necessitates the formulation of new hypotheses in the domains of ethical and socio-political thought. The discovery of new values does not necessarily require us to reject the older values; however, it frequently demands a redistribution of emphasis in respect of the different values. Such change of emphasis is urgently called for with respect to the values hitherto cherished by the Indian people.

This change has to be accompanied by a fresh analysis and interpretation of the life of highest spiritual culture. Human

experience has been growing and developing with respect to not only scientific knowledge and art and literature but also morality and religion. The greatest saint of this century, Mahatma Gandhi, combined in his life detachment of the highest type with activity of the most vital kinds. No stranger to common human emotions in their most refined forms, Gandhiji managed to combine unparalleled intensity of moral endeavour with the cheerful calm of the greatest mystics. Surprisingly enough the same Gandhi was not only strictly punctual and regular in his engagements and habits but also scrupulously exact in keeping the accounts of expenditure. With a scientist's passion for experiment and precision, with the moral earnestness and indignation of a Socrates and with the spiritual ardour and purity of a Tukaram and St. Francis, Gandhiji was almost the replica of a perfect, Platonic man living in a necessarily imperfect and limited society. The delicate balance of innumerable virtues that inhered in this man of superhuman courage and divine compassion deserves careful study and analysis by the philosophers of values, particularly the philosophers of moral and religious values.

The philosophers of free India should rid themselves of the habits and complexes which make them look too much either to tradition or to the West for guidance and inspiration. Here again they can emulate the example of Gandhiji who was not afraid to be radically defiant with respect to tradition, alike as an interpreter and as a man of action. While reflecting on tradition we should not forget that history today requires us to be the heirs to all the great traditions including the Chinese and the Greek, the Arab and the Christian. Acquaintance with several traditions tends to liberate us from exclusive and slavish dependence on any one of them including our own. As for philosophical thought in modern Europe and America we should remember that the military and cultural superiority of these at the present does not make them infallible guides in all matters.

The Naga Sociological Background and the Impact of Civilization

By AMIT KUMAR NAG

THE colourful Naga tribes inhabiting part of the wild expanse of forest, mountain and stream-bathed valleys between the Brahmaputra Valley in India and the Upper Burma, have by now carved out a distinct place for themselves in the history of this region. On the Indian side they fall into some forty tribes, of which the Angami, Ao, Chang, Kabui, Kacha, Konyak, Mao, Marram, Rengma, Sema, Tangkhul and Yimchungur are somewhat prominent, while in the adjoining Naga territory of Burma the principal tribes are the Haimi, Htangan, Rangpan and Tsaplaw.

In spite of their exhibiting a general similarity of culture and common possession of many ideas, habits and occupations, there are numerous individual tribal traits which differentiate the culture of one group from that of another. Variations in physical type, in language, and in customs afford material for classification and segregation into more or less well-defined ethnic divisions. Indeed they have different dialects, religious practices and customs. And ordinarily one tribe cannot understand the language of another.

All of them in their backwardness, however, share something in common which regulates the general trend of their aspirations.

Their origin still remains a vexed question. But it is evident that they have diverse origins and that they do not stem from a common stock. Some of them appear remarkably akin to similar semi-primitive tribes of Indo-China, Malay, Indonesia, Taiwan and the Philippine Islands.

All sorts of origins have been ascribed to

them. They have been connected with the headhunters of Indonesia, and the communities of the Southern Seas on the one hand, and traced back to China on the other.

The Naga traditions of origin, according to Dr. J. H. Hutton, a leading social anthropologist who passed a considerable number of years in the Naga Hills, indicate almost all points of the compass:

(a) The KONYAK tribes ascribe their origin to the hills to the north and to migration from the plains in the west and north-west as well.

(b) Some of the AOS like some of the Lhotas are said to have come from the plains to the north-west, but the majority claim an autochthonous origin.

(c) The KHOIRAOs claim a western origin, from the plains of Assam.

(d) The SEMAS say that they came from the south. A connection is traceable between them and the Khoiraos of Ngari, pointing to a western origin—with the Garos, the Bhois, the Lynngams and the Kacharis.

(e) Others, for instance the KALYOKENG YU tribe claim a northern origin.

(f) The Southern SANGTAMS derive from the Chindwin Valley to the south-east, while the Northern SANGTAMS merely point to the south.

(g) The ANGAMI also afford indications of mixed origin. They came from south-east, first from Tangkhul country to the South.

(h) The RENGAMAS say that their origin was in the South.

'All the Naga tribes have legends of clans descended from indigenous women

out of caves, or from wild men caught in the jungle, as for example, the LHOTAS, the PHOMS, and the ANGAMI of Kohima.

Diversity of origin of the Nagas is further suggested by various other things. For instance, the reaping hook is used by most tribes, but the Semas use the hand. Again the Angami and the Tangkhul have an elaborate system of terraced cultivation, and this is also practised in some Khoirao and Kacha Naga villages, but little among other tribes.

They do not have a proper early history. Strangely enough, Ptolemy, the celebrated Greek scholar writing in 300 A.D., gives the 'Nango logae' almost exactly where the Nagalog (that is the Nagas) live now.

Saiab-ud-Din Talish, the Moghul chronicler, refers to them as 'Nanga' in 1662. About the same period, Tavernier, the European traveller, also mentions people in Assam, evidently Nagas, who wore a pig's tusk on their headgear and very few clothes, and had great holes for earrings through the lobes of their ears.

For a considerable length of time the Naga tribes were isolated in the hills where unmolested they went through their narrow round of life, which practically knew no variation from generation to generation.

As is to be expected, the polity in Naga villages shows spectacular differences. Among the Semas the hereditary chiefs are feudal lords, as also among the Changs and the Konyaks. But Ao and Tangkhul villages have bodies of elders representing the principal kindreds in the village, while the Angami, the Rengma, the Lhota and the Sangtam villages have a system of extreme democracy.

In their folklore some stories are common to all tribes while others are not.

According to an interesting Rengma Naga tradition, a youngman whose name is not known came from some other 'world' and alighted in the present Naga country in the days of yore. Wandering in the forests here he met a young woman, with whom he was so much pleased that he

took her to be his wife. They lived merrily together, and in course of time had four sons — Ram, Krishna, Asom and Naga and from them took birth respectively the Mikirs, the Kacharis, the Assamese and the Naga.

The Nagas live in bamboo huts and in choosing sites for their villages they show a partiality for the tops of hills which afford them a natural defence. Indeed they have the entire organization of tribal life on a war basis with villages built on high mountain spurs, surrounded by bamboo palisades or strong stone stockades and flanked by chutes.

The custom which has attracted most attention and which differentiates the Nagas from other neighbouring tribes is their strange craving for human heads. The belief that life-matter or soul-substances can be transferred to living organisms and material substances deficient in vitality is at the bottom of the deadly custom of headhunting, which is still practised in unadministered Naga areas for ensuring a good rice harvest.

Before the spread of Christianity, it was considered shameful for Naga boys and girls to sleep in the house of their parents when they reached a particular age. All the unmarried boys of a village used to sleep in the bachelors' community house or 'morung', known by different names in different tribes. There were dormitories for girls too in most villages.

A boy enters the 'morung' when he is six or seven years of age and sleep there till he marries and sets up house on his own. It was in the 'morung' that the average Naga boy fagged for other boys and was taught his duties in life and generally hammered into shape. The bachelor's dormitory is a club strictly preserved from feminine intrusion. In it raids were planned and discussed, and to it all heads taken were first brought. As the Naga villages of old lived in a state of perpetual hostility among themselves, all the youngmen could very easily defend their villages against invaders within the shortest possible time. Besides, in the bachelors' house

the old men used to tell of the greatest deeds of the past, and the coming generation was taught to carry on the old traditions in future.

The girls' sleeping houses were, however, not excluded from male entrance. Although no boy was permitted to pass the night there, dance and song parties, along with drinks, of boys and girls were often held there till late hours of night.

As the average Naga's very life depends on his crops, it is not at all surprising that from childhood to old age he spends most of his days in the fields, and that almost all the ceremonies of his pre-literate faith are designed to protect and improve crops.

It is not without significance that the Nagas have certain customs which compel them to place the interest of the community over that of the individual. Whenever communal labour is needed, every Naga village or group of villages forms field-companies which consist of boys and girls or of men and women of roughly equal age.

Such communal labour can be utilized for agricultural operations, for construction of village paths, for maintenance and opening of waterways, or for construction of boys' or girls' dormitories. If any individual wants to secure the help of the community for cultivation in his fields or terraces he has to offer them only rice beer and food in abundant quantity.

In spite of the spread of Christianity the bulk of the Naga population in the distant interior still sticks to the pre-literate faith. The worship a Naga village renders to its deities, if worship it may be called, is directed by certain officials, who, though in some cases of no importance socially, perform functions which, from the Naga point of view, are extremely important to the community. The priest directs all public ceremonies, fixes the days for them and also determines the days on which 'genna' (special taboos affecting individuals, villages or the tribal group—as the case may be) is to be observed. As the office of the priest is hereditary, he is also the repository of the historical and genea-

logical traditions of his village, clan and kindred.

Broadly speaking—for it is difficult to claim any feature, custom or religious tradition as a common characteristic of all Nagas—the Naga society is patrilineal and male ascendancy is complete with them. The smallest social unit is the family or extended household, the essential feature of which is that its members are descended from the eldest male resident in the house, the mother being, under the rule of exogamy, brought in from another clan, that is, an entirely different group of families.

There are among all Nagas two forms of marriage, one celebrated with ceremony and formality, and the other without, and although both forms are equally binding and the informal marriage confers no social stigma or disability on the wife or on her issue, the ceremonial form is preferred by persons aspiring to the respect of themselves and their fellows. It entails, however, a certain amount of expense.

The informal marriage consists merely in a man's taking a girl to his house, where they remain taboo for one day. Where such marriage takes place it is usually the outcome of an intrigue between the two, or is necessitated by the poverty of the parties.

The ceremonial marriage is very much more formal. It is fixed by negotiation. Parents or guardians of both sides settle the marriage price through a go-between. Omens, however, must be interpreted before finalizing the nuptials. The dreams of the young couple are noted; if these are favourable the marriage is solemnized.

Most young Nagas embark on the journey of new life in the winter after the harvesting of crops. They consider it as their best season and the entire village assumes a colourful appearance.

The position of the Naga woman in society varies from tribe to tribe. But among all Naga tribes women are regarded as persons with minds and opinions of their own. Of course they lead hard lives,

but no harder than the men, and all the time they are free.

Even the most eligible Naga girl has to work hard for her daily rice. While quite a tiny girl she has to look after her baby brother or sister, and later she helps her mother to husk the daily rice. She also learns to weave.

But she also enjoys some amount of pre-nuptial freedom the degree of which varies from tribe to tribe.

On festive occasions the Naga girl dances in firelight, often until dawn, with other girls and handsome youths of the village, who present a gorgeous spectacle with their bare, bronzed torsos, bright necklaces and head ornaments of vivid flowers, leaves and feathers.

Once she is married all that however comes to an end.

Hindu mythology and religious literature contain numerous mention of the Nagas with whom the rest of India had economic, political, cultural and matrimonial connections. Such ties, however, were not properly maintained in the dark middle ages of Indian history.

AHOM POLICY TOWARDS THE NAGAS AND OTHER TRIBALS

The Ahom invaders pursued a sober policy towards the turbulent hill-people in mediaeval periods of Indian history. Their policy in plain words would come to something like this: 'Conciliate these tribes by promising to furnish them their necessities as far as possible. If they indulge in wanton pillage, pursue and capture the miscreants, but never overstep the limits.'

The Naga tribes of the foothills were claimed as subjects of the Ahom government. They paid taxes of salves, elephant teeth, spear shafts, cloth and cotton. Their chiefs were granted land and retainers like the ordinary Assamese nobles.

Clashes with the Nagas, however, were matters of common occurrence. That the Ahom policy towards the tribals proved highly successful can be inferred from their

uninterrupted enjoyment of sovereignty in Assam for six hundred years.

COMING OF THE EUROPEAN

Along with the rest of the country the Nagas also came under Western influence with the establishment of British rule—at first in the plains. The story of the early British relations with them is one of perpetual conflict. But the early British Indian administrators pursued a practical policy which was embodied in the ever-reiterated command to frontier officers and commandants: 'Conciliate these savages if you can. Be persistent in demanding surrender of murderers, but endeavour so to approach the tribes, that a basis may be opened for friendly intercourse in the future.' (Quoted from *North-East Frontier of Bengal*, by Mackenzie.)

The Nagas had to undergo changes as a result of the British occupation. Such changes are inevitable when a primitive people come under settled rule.

At first contact with the European, the Nagas were greatly impressed by his material equipment, but this contact also led to many other changes concerning their habits of life and traditional culture, especially under the influence of various civilizing agencies.

Among the important factors or instruments of change were: (i) Government, (ii) Christian Missions, (iii) Modern Education, (iv) Medicine, (v) the two World Wars, and (vi) Other factors affecting reality ingredients.

Like other cultures or civilizations, the Naga cultures also have two aspects—reality ingredients and value aspect, it should be remembered.

(i) Government

The role of Government as a civilizing agency can never be over-emphasized.

The Nagas underwent a change—hitherto unthinkable—by coming under settled rule. Although the British rulers put down only two macabre customs—namely the

sacrifice of *mithan* by cruel methods and headhunting — the effects were crucial and lasting. The suppression of headhunting made it possible for them to grow crops in safety, and to cultivate lands farther from their villages. Under the old conditions men had to go armed to the fields, crops were destroyed by marauding expeditions, which brought hunger and distress, and women and children were massacred in the villages while the men were working in the fields at some distance.

This welcome change, however, removed a powerful disciplinary agency. In the old days the young men had to sleep in the 'morung' to keep night vigil. Since these precautionary measures were no longer necessary, the young men started to spend nights in the girls' houses with their sweethearts, and according to Davis (cf. *Assam Census Report*, 1891), the bachelors' houses or 'morungs' were 'seldom used except by small boys'. This matter became quite serious and means for improving the situation were taken into consideration, as may be evident from the following extract from a letter of the then Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, J. E. Scott: 'I have greater faith in the efficiency of suppressing, as far as possible, the girls' sleeping houses, and the S.D.O. will do his best to get this put down. In the future such houses will be assessed to Revenue like other dwelling-houses.'

Prior to British occupation, slavery was almost universal throughout the Naga hills. It was customary for a man to sell his children into slavery to cancel a small debt, and slaves were often paid as indemnities in inter-village feuds, to be cruelly butchered. But the new rulers gradually abolished this gruesome practice.

The Government also indirectly affected the ways of life of the Nagas in numerous other ways. But most of them deserve closer analysis as independent factors of change.

(ii) *Christian Missions*

A more active instrument of change than the Government was the Christian Mission.

When mission work was first started among the tribal people it was carried on largely by the light of nature, without training and without knowledge of the customs of the people. This naturally led to the condemnation as heathen and useless of some most excellent customs, which no one who had studied them could have failed to wish to preserve. No use was made of the bachelors' dormitory, nor of the traditional obligation on everyone to be unselfish and to help others.

Christianity weakened their taboos and their system of social control. This was obvious. When one particular group in the tribe secures exemption from certain requirements, others tend to become less scrupulous about fulfilling the customary obligations.

Such ceremonies as the great Feasts of Merit, at which the whole village, rich and poor alike, is entertained, and of which the religious aspect is far less important than the social, have not been remodelled on Christian lines, but have been utterly abolished among converts. This has been the fate too of all village sacrificial feasts.

Boys in Christian villages do not serve at the bachelors' house which served as the most important training institution for them. There were regular ranks through which the boys passed until they attained adulthood and were admitted to full membership. Each order had to perform some distinctive form of service for the men who belonged to the bachelors' dormitory. The break with this destroyed a valuable disciplinary agency and caused the boys to lose respect for the authority of their elders.

In the name of spreading the gospel and with the vain satisfaction of saving the souls of the damned, the Western missionaries suppressed many a good custom of the tribal people.

The reaction of some Nagas to this state of affairs captured the imagination of the bulk of the population loyal to the pre-literate faith of their forefathers. In the early thirties of this century the revivalists gathered tremendous support under the

leadership of Jadonang, a seer, and his principal disciple, Rani Gaidiliu. This movement was, however, cruelly suppressed by the British Indian rulers who sent Jadonang to the gallows and Gaidiliu to gaol for life.

(iii) *Modern Education*

The establishment of British rule was followed by the starting of schools, mostly managed by missionaries. These mission schools became a potent factor in producing changes. They were opening up a larger world to the pupils and new ideas were creeping in.

Learning to write was another noteworthy accomplishment which brought a further expansion of the tribal personality.

Besides, while certain forces of disintegration were at work, the reduction of tribal dialects to writing proved to be a unifying factor.

In addition to bringing about the expansion of personality through entrance into a larger world, the schools were a factor in undermining traditions and customs and in producing disorganization in the accustomed habits of life.

Similarly the girls were also influenced by the schools. But there were certain dangers encountered by them as they were making new contacts with the outside world through various civilizing agencies.

Commenting on the role of education, J. P. Mills, ICS, Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, wrote in the Census Report of 1931: 'Education of the type which is given has been on the whole an evil rather than a good. Some men have withstood its evil influence and have remained good Nagas, with something else very useful added. Not so the majority. Very rarely indeed does a Naga regard education as something which is going to make him more fitted for his ordinary life; he regards it something which will fit for a very different life, and he expects that life to be offered to him in the form of a Government post — aptly described to me once as a 'sitting-and-eating' job.'

An observation of Prof. Webster, once of

the Sanghai Baptist College, is worth recalling in this connection. 'It is not a pleasant fact to face,' he writes, 'but it seems to be true that the present methods of Christian education tend to decrease the number of producers, and consequently, to increase the number of idlers and non-producers, which means economic waste for any nation; this does not assume that material producers are the only producers. Christian education has failed to discriminate between real and apparent fitness for life; its estimate of values has been from the standpoint of the individual and the propagation of the Christian religion of the West!'

(iv) *Medicine*

The extension of medical facilities meant a very real boon to the tribal people. Furthermore, hospitals, dispensaries and an itinerant surgeon helped to break down old customs and superstitions and reduced the influence of the medicine-man, who used to treat the diseased. Before the missionary began his medical work in the hills the tribals had relied quite largely upon magical practices for the treatment of illness, but very soon they began to realize the value of medical treatment.

Newly established allopathic dispensaries and hospitals thus became an important instrument of change. Female nurses trained in mission hospitals and Government institutions accelerated the change of outlook of the community in relation to medicine. The change became effective because it was supported by a group of enlightened women who rendered valuable service to individual members of the community in distress.

(v) *Two World Wars*

I have intentionally included both the world wars among the 'factors of change'. Although a little room for controversy remains, it would be improper to leave aside the impact of the great wars which affected the Nagas considerably.

During the First World War several hundred Naga tribals had to work behind

the front lines in many countries, including France and Iraq. Naturally they had had experiences they never could have dreamed of. A few hundred of them were shipwrecked and faced dangers in the submarine zone.

These ex-servicemen exercised on the community some influence in favour of social change.

But the Second World War proved far more effective an instrument in disturbing the traditional tribal pattern of life. The Nagas were suddenly thrown directly into the vortex of world politics. The outbreak of the Japanese war changed the entire political panorama of dependent Asia. The semi-primitive tribal people on the Assam-Burma border rose one fine morning to find that their territory had become strategically important. Moreover, the victory of the ill-fed, and for that matter ill-clad and ill-equipped, soldiers of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's patriotic Indian National Army over the better equipped forces of the white men changed their notion that the Anglo-Saxon rulers were invincible.

The Nagas, both men and women, participated in the war and gained experience in different spheres. Again, some educated Naga youths, including the present rebel leader, Angami Zapu Phizo, also joined the Indian National Army.

Besides, the Naga masses underwent extreme hardship due to war devastations and most of their peaceful villages were converted into theatres of war.

Some nine hundred square miles of the Naga country went under temporary Japanese occupation while another two hundred square miles were liberated by the Indian National Army. As such the Nagas came under direct influence of the short and sturdy Mongoloid people of the land of the chrysanthemum and the sword who shared certain common features with them.

The Japanese rose in tribal esteem due to their highly praiseworthy attitude towards women. Unlike the British, the American, the Australian or the Indian soldiers of the Allies, the Japanese were

respectful towards women of the occupied region. In other respects, of course, the Japanese earned notoriety for rude and crude behaviour towards men.

All these factors necessarily made a deep impression on the average Naga mind.

(vi) *Other Factors Affecting Reality Ingredients*

In the Naga Hills contact with 'civilization' was brought about in two ways — by the visits of tribals to the plains lying along the base of the hills, and by the penetration of non-tribals into the hills. The latter is by far the more important.

Non-tribals residing in the hills "influence the culture and mode of life of the indigenous inhabitants in numerous ways — by administration, by missionary propaganda, by the innate tendency to imitate foreigners who display a culture in some way regarded as 'higher', by objects of trade imported from without, by the introduction of disease, by medical work, by communications that make travelling easy and safe, by the presence of an armed force strong enough to suppress any rising or inter-tribal war, and by countless subtle influences that react on the mentality of the tribals, usually to the detriment of their pride in their customs and history.

Apart from facilitating internal trade, improved communications actually spread disease and led to an increase in prostitution. J. P. Mills, ICS, Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, made the following observation in the Census Report of 1931:

"The opening up of the cart road to Manipur has undoubtedly led to an increase in prostitution. Except to a limited extent among the Eastern Angamis, prostitution, in the sense of women selling themselves for money to all and sundry, is not an indigenous Naga or Kuki custom. In many tribes girls before marriage allow their lovers every privilege but this is very different from a commercial transaction. Foreigners coming into the hills by the cart road often demand women, and where

there is a demand a supply is apt to be forthcoming.

'Far more serious in this respect is the presence in Kohima of a large number of unmarried foreigners, including the unmarried men of a battalion of Assam Rifles, and of Naga subordinates living away from their villages. A population is growing up of persons with no tribe or customary law and religion, and their settlement is a plague spot. Any girl who quarrels with her parents in a Naga village and can bolt to this sink of iniquity can find an old hag ready to take her in and start her without delay on a career which can only end in disease and misery.'

Among other factors, occasional cinematograph shows of cheap English and Hindi films dealing with urban vices and demonstrating pilfering tricks exercised considerable adverse effect over the unsophisticated tribal mind — particularly of the youth.

Conclusion

Civilization, in its impact upon the traditional Naga tribal societies, has resulted in a cleavage between different fluid layers of the community. A section of them has become more dissatisfied with their status than any section ever was under traditional circumstances.

The 'consciousness of being disinherited from one's ancestral place in society' is one of the principal causes of this resentment if Prof. Arnold J. Toynbee's bold line of analysis is followed.

Besides, the crisis has been deepened: the old balance between the tribal reality culture and the value culture stands thoroughly disturbed.

Hitherto the Naga had sunk his personality and individual rights for the good of his community; to set himself in opposition

to, or in competition with, his fellows was in his eyes a great offence. From 'civilized' man he learns the explosive idea that the individual has inalienable 'rights'. And he also learns to put himself before the community.

'From the moment when a tribal puts on his first shirt,' writes an expert, 'right up to the day when he passes his last examination, the whole civilizing process forces the attention of the man to himself. The first effect of this change is to make the man intensely self-conscious and selfish, so that he obtrudes his wretched individuality at every angle, and thus appears aggressively conceited.'

A general decline in tribal arts and crafts is another outcome of the civilizing process. Wood-carving on the 'morung' (bachelors' house) posts and other buildings constituted a principal material art of the Nagas. The spread of Christianity spelt disaster for it.

Besides, the suppression of the wearing of all ornaments or tribal finery, of dancing, of singing (except hymns), of village feasts and of all artistic outlet spread an unspeakable drabness over village life.

Told year in and year out by overzealous agents of civilization that all the past history, all the strivings, all the old customs of his tribe are wholly evil the Naga tends to despise his own race, and no night of the soul can be darker than that.

This is the general background against which the Naga impasse of today has its genesis. The problem confronting us in Nagaland is not the culmination of the revenge spirit of erstwhile headhunters nor the outcome of the capricious day-dreams of an adventurer masquerading as a Naga leader. The malaise is obviously deeper and deserves tackling at that depth.

Josh Maleehabadi

By MIRZA NASIR ALI

I

SHABBIR Hasan Josh was born in 1898 at Maleehabad, a suburban town near Lucknow. He belongs to a family of Afghans who crossed over to India in the 18th century and settled in Maleehabad. His forefathers were soldiers who had served the kings of Oudh and received considerable jagirs for their services. They were also poets of some standing and 'Mushairas' and literary discussions were the usual features of their household. Besides, Josh's grandmother who had brought him up, and who happened to be a descendant of Mirza Ghalib's family was a woman of literary tastes. All this must have exercised a good deal of influence upon his impressionable and precocious mind.

Like Rabindranath Tagore, Josh was born with a silver spoon in his lips; like Tagore, his family is accredited with a literary tradition—his father, grandfather and great-grand father were all poets. Like Tagore, Josh belongs to a family of aristocrats who owned considerable landed property and like Tagore, Josh has been extremely prolific. It has been claimed that his output runs to over two hundred thousand lines!

In those days aristocrats seldom condescended to send their sons to school. Rather, their training was entrusted to tutors, who were usually men of repute. The services of Mirza Mohammad Hadi Ruswa, versatile genius and author of 'Omrao Jan Ada', were requisitioned and young Josh began taking lessons in Arabic. For Persian and Urdu other tutors were appointed. After some time Josh was sent to school to prepare for the Cambridge School Certificate, but did not take the examination. It may

be that his too independent genius did not permit sustained devotion to anything or perhaps, as Josh would have us believe, an early love-affair stood in the way. But if he did not succeed in the academic sense, he made amends by private study. However, on his return to Maleehabad in 1919 after a six months' sojourn at Santiniketan, Josh devoted himself heart and soul to the study of the great masters of the East and the West. In Western literature he read Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Shaw, Goethe, and Tolstoy. So far as the literature of the East was concerned he concentrated mainly on Hafiz, Khayyam, Sadi, Firdausi, Nazeeri, Ghalib, Momin, Kalidas, Tulsidas, Kabir and Tagore. Josh also read a good deal of philosophy and some science.

Few parents have liked their children to be poets; not even those who were themselves poets! Hence it is not surprising that Shabbir Hasan's father was alarmed to perceive the poetical propensities of his son and did all he could to dissuade him from following the doubtful career of a poet. He even went to the length of depriving his son of his patrimony. But young Josh was made of sterner stuff. He refused to budge an inch from his resolve—all the more remarkable when we consider his tender age and the fact that parental wrath in those days meant a kind of social ostracism, even starvation. It is gratifying to note that the father did not take long to realise his mistake.

In the year 1925 when Josh was living a life of literary ease at Maleehabad, he received a major literary appointment in Hyderabad (Dn). For 10 years he served his department with great competence and skill; and as men who improve an office

are themselves improved by it, his appointment made it possible for him to come in touch with a number of intellectuals with whom there was a regular interchange of ideas. And it was here that his poetry took a new turn. From a passionate singer of love and the pleasures of the senses we find him turning to social and political questions. It must have been his iconoclastic zeal and revolutionary ideas that brought about his sudden dismissal, although the state authorities sought to rationalize their action on the pretext of an alleged slanderous insinuation against the Nizam in Josh's verse. Josh left Hyderabad in great sorrow. Loss of service or the Nizam's iniquity, meant little to him. What made it unbearable was the separation from his beloved whom he had followed all the way to Hyderabad, and who was the real motive of his ten year's stay there. In a poem remarkable for its passion and pathos, Josh has depicted how in spite of orders to the contrary, his love came to see him off. We must remember that like Goethe, Josh was almost always in love, and although rarely rejected, always unhappy. He admits to eighteen major love-affairs; 10 years ago he admitted 13!

For some time Josh remained in Delhi where he edited his journal 'Kaleem' which in spite (or because) of its literary worth did not pay. He returned to Maleehabad. In 1948, Josh was offered the editorship of the Government Monthly 'Aajkal' published from Delhi. This office he held till he left for Pakistan ten years later (1958). At present he lives in Karachi where he is busy supervising the compilation of a comprehensive Urdu encyclopaedia sponsored by the Government of Pakistan. It is said that Josh has not as yet been able to adapt himself to his new environment.

Josh is still a handsome man, even as a sexagenarian, tall and fair-complexioned, with a commanding presence. Unlike many poets he is usually well-groomed and immaculately dressed. But he is no slave of convention. Like Byron he believes that men being reasonable must get drunk, for

the best of life is intoxication. He therefore drinks every evening:

No sooner do I see Hyperion sink,
I rise, to saturate my soul.

Josh might agree with Emerson that 'consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.' For he is not only inconsistent in his writings but highly irregular and erratic in his ways. It is almost impossible to put up with him for any length of time. He will not keep appointments, he will disappear for weeks when he had only excused himself for a minute; he will play crude practical jokes with his best friends and will talk bawdy in solemn religious gatherings. His ribaldry would silence even Thomas Durfey into submission! With his friends and acquaintances he hardly talks without witty vulgarity, and his letters can appear in print only after some expurgation. But this is one facet of his personality. Often in his dealings with others he can show great benevolence and generosity. Josh is the sincerest of friends if one can put up with his tomfoolery and *espieglerie*. The fact is that there are always people around him and his circle of friends is large indeed.

II

Josh has devoted his life to poetry, and wherever he lived he always wrote poetry. At first for a number of years he wrote chiefly about the pleasures and pains of love following the conventional manner of Persian poetry. Little or no conscious effort at originality is discernible at this stage. If he looks at the chiselled features of his beloved, it is through the medium of convention, and his mind, steeped in the love-tradition of Hafiz and Nazeeri perceives only that which it is conditioned to perceive. But with the passage of years there is a perceptible effort on his part to wean himself from the '*ghazal*' and adopt a form that permits greater freedom of expression and in which it is possible to maintain a sequence of ideas. This form is known as '*nazm*'. The *ghazal* was thrown into the background.

In *nazm* there is a regular development of ideas. The individual couplets, though not quite independent have an individual appeal, although their main purpose is to contribute to the over-all appeal of the poem, which in a successful *nazm* always transcends the sum of the individual couplets or stanzas. The usual rhyme scheme of a *ghazal* is aa ba ca da... and of a *nazm*: aa bb cc dd... *Nazm* is the nearest approach to what in the West is understood by a poem. A *ghazal* on the other hand is something very different, and to the Westerner its poetical value may appear doubtful, as there is nothing in European literature quite like this. It is a 'poem' formed by putting together a number of closed couplets which are themselves poems of just two lines. And although there is no regular development of idea from line to line, it will be wrong to infer that a *ghazal* has no unity; for here the binding force is of a different kind. There is usually a conjunction of sympathetic feelings and the different items of the poem are strung upon the thread of a common theme. This might be remotely compared with the 'stream of consciousness' technique. It would be difficult to find analogies in English literature, except perhaps in the heroic couplets of the 18th century and in such poets as Edmund Waller. We have in Pope's independent and sententious couplets something akin to the spirit of *ghazal*:

How can he live who dotes upon her
locks;
For he, whom pois'nous serpents bite,
must die.

—Mir.

Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.

—Pope

Many of Pope's lines might fit a *Mir ghazal*.

The *ghazal* has been the standard medium of expression so far as Urdu poetry is concerned, and the bulk of Urdu poetry comprises *ghazals* rather than *nazms*. What

drama was to the age of Shakespeare, the *ghazal* was to the age of classical Urdu poetry, which reached its apogee in the first half of the 19th century, and whose chief exponents were Mir, Sauda, Ghalib, Zaoq, Momin, Aatish and Nasikh. In one way or another they were all children of the great *ghazal* writer of Persia, Shamsuddin Muhammad Hafiz (contemporary of Chaucer).

It was against all this that Josh rebelled, and by adopting the *nazm* assured the future of the kind of poetry which Hali and Iqbal were the first to initiate in Urdu. Hence we find Josh saying.

My thoughts I did not let convention
mould;

But followed methods of expression bold.
For brother singers' use, left specks and
dust,

And laid mine hands upon the sun,
behold!

However, in spite of this formal departure of his poetry, the essence remains very much the same, and the effect, as in the case of classical *ghazal*, to a great extent depends upon what is sometimes referred to as the 'aesthetic surface' of poetry.

Towards the beginning of the second quarter of the present century we observe a new trend in his poetry. India was in the grip of nationalistic fervour, and the Congress, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, was striving for political emancipation. So from that time onwards we observe in his writings a growing awareness of political and social questions. We find him preaching the lesson of Hindu-Muslim unity as a pre-requisite to freedom. And when the communal conflict took a bloody turn Josh was frantic with sorrow and anger. He lashed out at the homicidal maniacs of both communities with the vehemence of a Byron and used every effective weapon that a poet could handle. We also find Josh furious in his denunciation of social inequality. During his 10 years' stay at Hyderabad (1925-34) he wrote a good

deal of revolutionary verse and thus incurred the displeasure of the aristocrats of the Hyderabad of that time. Josh loved freedom as only Shelly could, and a good deal of his verse is written in denigration of British Imperialism. But although he denounced imperialism and social injustice with the vehemence of a Shelley, like Shelley his fervour always remained on the emotional plane. Without the constructive faculty of a political philosopher or the intentness of a man of action he could not trace out a course of action or even suggest a remedy.

The revolutionary fervour of his poetry fetched him the title of a revolutionary poet. Anything that smelled of convention or seemed to bear the stamp of authority was repugnant to his individualism. He laments over the inability of man to free himself from the shackles of heredity, environment and tradition. He longs to open the eyes of the people to the hollowness of rituals. He hated a cult not because it was intrinsically bad, but because it had become a time-honoured convention. He drank every evening because drinking is taboo in Islam, and because by doing so he thought he would be breaking the idols of conventional morality. 'There is a devil in every berry of grape,' and other such citations from the Holy Koran, coming from the pulpit, only gave zest to his bacchanalia. But if Josh does not genuflect before the authority of religion and God, he bows down before the Goddess of Reason. He considers the concept of God obsolete and religion the pastime of immature or senescent minds. His Shavian faith in Reason renders him incapable of accepting the idea of divine creation or providence. His witty derision of priest and clergy is Voltairian in its pungency and sarcastic humour. Josh does not let pass a single opportunity if he can take a fling at the so-called guardians of religion. Almost all religions have suffered at the hands of hypocritical priests who too often became self-canonized saints and encouraged mass hierolatory. Their exploitation of religion soon became his target. The priests on their

part retaliated by invoking Divine Wrath in their after-prayer harangues — their imprecations at times degenerating into invective! But Josh only taunts them:

'Why squander gems of eloquence, preacher fine?

Why sing and slander youth, O brother mine?

You warn *them* of the leaping flames of hell,

That swallow molten fire in draughts of wine!

Josh is a pyrrhonist; yet he has nothing but admiration for those selfless souls who are associated with the great religions of the world and who sometimes laid down their lives at the altar of human freedom. But he considers them worthy of veneration not because he believes them to have been prophets or apostles, but because to him they were good and conscientious men who strove for the general happiness of mankind. There is no place for spiritualism in his agnostic philosophy. Yet it is quite possible, that in a time of triumphant democracy and universal irreligion he would have been a champion of aristocracy and Godhood.

So far as the concept of the immortality of the soul is concerned he shares the ambivalence of a true sceptic. His mind refuses though his heart desires to believe. Whenever we find him under some emotional stress such as love or grief, there is a decided acquiescence on his part in the concept of life after death. But when his intellect regains control, he ridicules the idea. He has no sympathy with transcendental philosophy, and rejects the concept of Nirvan, metempsychosis, or the theory of spiritual evolution propounded by the Persian mystics such as Jalaluddin Rumi. Like Khayyam he believe that with death we vanish for good, and the only god is Bacchus.

But Josh is so inconsistent that he has been claimed both by the atheists and the faithful. Similarly in his attitude to nature, Josh is sometimes pantheistic, sometimes materialistic. We may put it this way: as

a thinker, he is a sceptic (no honest philosopher can be an atheist), but as a poet he believes in the existence of God. In his polemics and speculative writings (e.g. *Munajat*) he is the most uncompromising positivist. But we are more concerned with the emotion which inheres in a poem than with the emotion which is the history of the poet. The poetic or significant emotion expressed in his poems always leads to the conclusion that the poet in Josh believes in the existence of a Supreme Intellect or God. He also contrives to believe in both free will and predestination, a position strangely enough in complete conformity with the orthodox Islamic view.

Josh is least revolutionary of all when it comes to women. The hearth should be the centre of a woman's universe. He is not for women taking an active part in the affairs of the world side by side with men. Her role is mistress, housewife or mother.

Above all Josh believes in man, the imperishable greatness of humanity. His poem 'Man' reads like Hamlet's famous peroration. For man is the centre of the universe and however low he may fall, is always capable of regeneration. Josh optimism at times equal that of Browning and Hugo. And although he laments over the unhappiness of mankind, he would never advocate the self-abnegation of the Hindu yogis and sufi mystics. On the other hand, Josh is no worshipper of Mammon; he is of the opinion that true happiness lies in renunciation — ambition and wealth are the chief sources of man's unrest.

Josh's attitude to nature is quite different from that of Wordsworth or Shelley. He does not intellectualize or animate her as the romantics do. His pantheism is rare. A red rose is beautiful, no more — he does not want to interpret its beauty in spiritual terms. He delights in the sights and sounds of external nature, and loves to depict her charm with almost prosaic precision. In his nature poems objective description almost always preponderates over the emotive content. This is very unlike Tagore, or for that matter any true romantic, who is con-

cerned more with his reaction to nature than with objective nature itself. On the other hand, there is nothing of the almost supine unconcern of the Augustans. When in Kashmir, he gazed with wonder at the breath-taking beauty of the snow-capped mountains. The 18th century poets would certainly have treated 'Nanga-Parbat' as so much rubbish swept from the plains of India! That was their attitude to the Alps.

Although Josh's description of external nature is superb, his inability to select and reject resulting in a profusion of illustration, distracts us at times and obscures the underlying emotional quality of the poem. In the exquisite intensity of sense-impressions, he reminds us of Keats; and like Keats he is carried away at times into a luxuriousness of illustration that disturbs the structural equilibrium of his poems. In his poem 'The princess of the Forest', the wild profusion of imagery weakens the emotive content of the poem. But in his delicate handling of the beautiful and tender objects of nature we find him echoing Tagore, specially when he says:

'The sigh left the lips of the flower and
became its perfume'

or

'Night is busy doing its hair'.

Josh is most successful as a poet of love and the pleasures of the senses. His words impart a kind of elfin magic to commonplace situations. He somehow catches the essence of what he perceives, and by a kind of empathy or penetrative sympathy the reader is enabled to live the whole thing in imagination. His asking his beloved to arrange a loose curl, has to be read in the original to be appreciated. Urdu poetry does not easily lend itself to translation, and what begins as a glowing coal in the poet's mind usually ends as ashes and dust in translation.

To Josh plurality of loves, as to Donne, was no crime, and he did not mind wandering like the free hand of a pair of compasses so long as the other hand remained fixed at home. His love-life was

almost always a success; he never suffered from the pangs of unrequited love. Hence, contrary to the convention of the classical Urdu poetry, we never find Josh masochistically lamenting his fate or denigrating womankind. Men usually decry women when they should be decrying one woman. The rejection of Schopenhauer or Nietzsche by the women they desired led them to generalisations that resulted in universal disparagement of women. Whether in shady nooks or in moon-lit fields, his mistresses always agreed to meet him, and almost always kept their word! It is another thing that in the end all this left him miserable.

Perhaps he loved love rather than any woman. However the fact is that like Byron he could neither do with them nor without them. Yes, in the midst of happiness we are full of sorrow, or, to quote Josh:

'Every pearl of happiness conceals a tear-drop within.' Once when he had himself narrowly escaped death in trying to save his mistress from drowning, he spoke of death as a preserver rather than a destroyer of love. Love, being an ideal state, demands ideal conditions if it is not to end in frustration—it demands to use Ben Jonson's words, 'a spiritual coupling of two souls'—a state which Josh considers impossible in our temporal existence. To him a union on the physical plane is an incomplete union. In one of his couplets he tells us:

'Death would have put a seal of everlasting union upon our souls'

It is true that in depicting the physiognomy of his loves he has recourse to hyperbole, and his exaggerations at times mar the realism he may appear to be aiming at. Yet the net result is to heighten the overall effect of his lines; for by apparently deviating from reality Josh attacks reality at a higher level. And should not poetry, as Keats remarked, surprise by a fine excess? There is a strong element of sensuality in his love poetry, but Josh never

descends to banality. At times this epicurean delight in the sensuous joys of the world is mingled with a sense of frustration, for he realizes that there is no end to desire which increases with satiation. But he has no answer—except to raise the question in verse. Josh believes in love as a powerful humanizing force—an experience which softens our hearts so that we are capable of feeling for others. And he insists on the utter insignificance of life devoid of love. In one of his couplets Josh calls himself the Hafiz of his time. True, but rather sweeping. The earthly beloved of Hafiz is usually the symbol of a nameless divinity, and his poetic imagery is usually drawn from sufism. But the beloved of Josh is very much a creature of flesh and blood. Mysticism of any kind is incompatible with his empirical convictions.

III

Coming to his art of versification and diction, one thing becomes apparent immediately. This is his extraordinary command of words. For each situation there is one particular word which alone can do justice to it, and Josh comes out with this very word. He is never satisfied with approximations. It is quite probable that like Shakespeare, Josh has used more words than any other poet of his language. Yet he is never verbose, using only such words as the context demands in which they fit as precious stones do in a perfectly designed necklace. He is very conscious of his preoccupation with and mastery of words, rather proud, but his pride is not unmingled with sadness, for he laments in a quatrain: "Who is there left with a feeling for words?" His lines flow into one another with the utmost ease and grace. This is especially so in his longer poems such as 'Hussain-Aur-Inquilab' or 'Chand Jure'.

Apart from the longer poems (*nazms*) Josh has also written a large number of quatrains and *ghazals*, although the latter form does not bring out the best in him. But his quatrains, in their musical sensua-

lity, and in their somewhat inconsistent fatalism, remind us of Omar Khayyam. He follows the form adopted by the latter (aaba) and almost equals him when singing of the pleasures of 'the grape'. Like Ghalib, Josh is given to drinking and has exquisitely described the joys of intoxication in his quatrains. But whereas Ghalib sought refuge from the sordidness of an inhospitable world, Josh turns to wine for the sake of pleasure.

Regarding the nature of poetic inspiration we find Josh echoing Plato's 'enthusiasm' — an impulse that takes a strong grip of the poet and compels him to write. In one of his letters Josh writes how he is sometime helpless before some mysterious force, some indefinable inner urge, that commands him to express what is happening inside. Like Shelley, Josh has based his views regarding the nature of inspiration and composition on Coleridge's theory of imagination as outlined in 'Biographia Literaria', although he makes no attempt to base his judgements upon epistemological or metaphysical considerations. Shelley says, "When composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conception of the poet". We find this very view expressed in one of Josh's poems entitled, "The glowing coals of poetry". He says:

Impossible to reproduce in words
The glow of flames that flare inside my heart!

Or again:

My songs that still give warmth to you,
Are really damp with dew of words.

Josh believes that no poet can sing without himself undergoing intense mental torture. The poet is like a reed which produces music only when it is pierced through and through, and when like the heart of a living being, its pith is wrung

out of its body. He says in one of his quatrains:

'On me, my verse inflicted endless pain,
Each single breath brought torture in its train'.

In one of his poems he tells us:

'A poem is an incomplete picture of an inner emotion.'

'What is a poem but the saying of everything with the feeling that nothing has been said.'

'A poem is a conversation between speech and silence'.

IV

No poet as voluble as Josh ever succeeded in maintaining a high standard throughout. Hence we must forgive him if his verse is unequal. In fact there is much that is second-rate. In his uninspired moments he can be as jejune and mawkish as any hack-writer of verse. There is even a good deal of fustian and word-play, but these are the short-comings of his lesser verse only. There is also superficial thinking and want of depth — for Josh is a casuist rather than a philosopher. Yet he is never overawed when face to face with cosmic problems and if he cannot provide rational interpretations, he can at least lend to them a fresh emotional appeal. A philosopher wants to answer such questions, but a poet makes *us* want to answer them. There is an element of didacticism in Josh and we find him occasionally adopting the tone of a lecturer who suffers from the illusion that it has fallen to his lot to waste his breath before a set of ignoramuses! In fact, Josh has a very poor opinion of his countrymen's intelligence. In one of his poems he pities Tagore (as he often pities himself) for having been born in a country where people did not understand him.

Another positive defect of his verse is its reliance on conventional imagery and stock phraseology. There is a profusion of rose-gardens, grapes, nightingales, cup-bearers, jasmines and the like, which rob his verse

of much of its freshness, and makes it look like the catalogue-poetry of Kipling and Osbert Sitwell. For poetry to be great should as far as possible do without "poetic" diction. A good many of his poems suffer from lack of structural unity and coherence. Matter and form are not always fused into a whole. There is redundancy and even stop-gap terms. I quote from his "The Princess of the Forest":

...I saw a girl standing in the field who
was flower-faced, sugar-lipped, silver-
skinned, fair-visaged, young, source of
the world's unrest...

And so on and on. Josh is all too fond of expressions such as 'moon's embodiment', 'sugar-lipped', 'fatal to life', 'enchantress', 'sweet-gestured', 'gem of the desert', 'perfect of form', etc. But strangely enough these apparent blemishes are outweighed by an indefinable appeal — the ultimate test of poetic excellence. And this explains why he is so popular and so assiduously kept in print. Many of his poems have been translated into many European languages.

Urdu poetry is not to be judged by the canons of Western poetry, any more than

Indian music is to be judged by an ear attuned to Beethoven and Mozart. There has been a tendency for Western poetry to become excessively complex and recondite. Critics in particular have aided this tendency, so that poets come to have the critic in mind as his ideal reader. Apart from some rare exception, Urdu poetry has been and is anything but esoteric. Nothing of Eliot's abstruse symbology, nothing of the intellectulization of Pound or Auden. Urdu poetry knows no such movements as symbolism, imagism, surrealism and the like. Josh's poetry is simple, despite its cunning use of words, and accessible to the many, despite his complaints of not being understood. We should hesitate before disdaining this simplicity — did not Milton consider simplicity the *sine qua non* of all great poetry? And Josh is not devoid of irony, especially in his onslaughts on religion and morality. But when all explanations have been given, the poetry remains as the final test of his greatness — that indefinable union of sound and meaning, creating new sounds and new meanings, which cannot be analysed, only experienced.

Remembering a Poet

By TIBOR MERAY

1

THERE are unforgettable words and there are also unforgettable moments.

This happened on the night of August 22, 1951. A few hours earlier a series of explosions had shattered the quiet of Kaesong, headquarters of the Korean-Chinese delegation and at the same time—as neutral territory—the scene of armistice negotiations. The Koreans and Chinese alleged that the Americans had bombed the town deliberately, they protested by telephone and demanded an immediate joint investigation. The American liaison officers arrived within an hour. Accompanied by their colleagues they examined the sites of the explosions, the craters and shell fragments, questioned the witnesses, then the delegations met in the conference room. The leader of the Korean-Chinese liaison officers, Colonel Chang, declared that the bombing was an established fact, and demanded an explanation. Colonel Kinley replied in the name of the United Nations and stated that all the evidence pointed to grenades having exploded on the ground and there was no proof whatsoever to support the accusation of bombing.

Colonel Chang's sharp-featured face distorted with fury. I was standing next to him; he spoke Korean and I didn't understand what he said, but the current of that stream of words hit me in the chest. An officer of perhaps forty years of age stood slightly behind the Colonel: his interpreter. He seemed shorter and more delicately built than his superior and his face, compared to the other's, appeared almost boyish. His voice, however, as he began to interpret the Colonel's words into English, that deep, resonant voice, hammered the

silence of the night as if it were the echo of a whole people's bitterness—at least this is how it appeared to me then. I can still see that scene, I still hear that voice, my ear still recalls the words:

"If you are a true military man and a man of conscience, you cannot deny these adamant, rocklike proofs."

I did not know then that the interpreter, a Major, whom I had just met under such strange, dramatic conditions, was not only the delegation's interpreter from English into Korean but also the translator of Shakespeare into his own native tongue and one of the foremost poets of his country.

2

Later, strong ties of friendship developed between Chung-sik Sul (this was the name of the deep-voiced Major with the tormented face) and myself. What did we have in common? First and foremost the love of literature. There were very few people in Kaesong, where I spent a whole year, with whom I could have talked about authors, poems and plays. We re-lived the utter boredom of the endless negotiations by meeting in the evenings, at his place or at mine, and sipping rice-wine, vodka, or the brandy sent me from Budapest, discussed until late into the night whether the 'Macbeth' manuscript left to posterity was a mutilated one or not, and whether or not it was possible to make an adequate translation of a poem like, for instance, 'Ode to the West Wind'....

There was also something else that we might call a joint undertaking. A year before, Sul had suffered a heart-attack and for many months he had been a patient of

the hospital donated by the Hungarian government to aid North Korea. To express his gratitude he had written an epic poem about his hospital memories, Hungarian-Korean friendship, the Hungarian doctors and nurses. He translated a few verses for me into English and I thought they were excellent. I begged him to translate the whole poem into English and he did so with the help of two Communist journalists, Wilfred Burchett and Alan Winnington, and I sent the manuscript to a poet friend of mine in Budapest who translated it into Hungarian and the poem was published in an attractive little volume.

As I wanted to introduce the poet to the Hungarian public before the publication of his book I asked Sul to tell me the story of his life, — how, from a South Korean, he had become an officer of the North Korean army and how, from a student of middle-class background he had turned into a Communist.

The notes I took eleven years ago, sitting on the floor of a small house in Kaesong, are lying here before me. Let me give the word to him who can no longer speak:

I was born in 1912 at Tan Chun in the province of South Ham Yang. In the Confucian sense of the word my father was a *scholar*. He was not a revolutionary but in one of his books on agriculture he hinted at the necessity of land reform. The Japanese confiscated the book.

At the age of eight I was taken to Seoul where I attended agricultural grammar-school, but in 1929 I was expelled from school for having participated in the 'Kwang-ju' student movement that had called a strike against the Japanese educational methods. I went to China, to Mukden, to continue my studies. However, a year later the so-called Wanbo-san incident took place: the clash between Chinese and Korean students, and I could not remain at Mukden. After a brief stay in Peking I returned to Seoul and was admitted at a Protestant University, the Chosun Yan Bee College. I took my degree in history of literature.

In 1936, I travelled to the United States

to study English literature at Mount Union College in Ohio, then continued my studies for another two years at Colombia University. I returned to Korea before the outbreak of the war, but as I couldn't get any job I worked in a farm. These were wasted years; there was no possibility in publishing my writings, so that reading remained my only joy.

The end of the war, liberation gave me a new lease on life. When the Americans replaced the Japanese in South Korea I was full of hope, of optimism. I believed that my people's lot would at last improve. When one of my former professors at the university suggested that I seek employment with the Americans I accepted his advice and for over a year I worked for the Public Information Department of the US Military Government. Subsequently, up to January 1947, I was assistant secretary at the Interim Legislative Assembly of the US Military Government.

It was while working for the Americans that I joined the underground Communist Party. Why? I cannot accuse them of not having received me with open arms: I had graduated from a university in Ohio, I spoke good English, and they needed me. On my part, however, I was disappointed with them. I saw that they were more interested in their military bases than in the countries where these bases were. I noted no improvement in the economic situation: the peasants and workers lived just as miserably as they had before. I also saw that they were giving their full support to Syngman Rhee, this ruthless dictator, tolerating corruption, oppression and the suppression of human rights.

In 1948, I became editor of the English language daily *Seoul Times*. Syngman Rhee had the paper suppressed, saying that I had turned it red. I published my poems in three volumes: the third volume was banned. I started a long novel, a trilogy. The first was published, but when I began publishing the second volume in a serialised form in one of the papers, the government prohibited its publication. I escaped into Shakespeare: I translated Hamlet,

Romeo and Juliet, and Macbeth. The first two were published, Macbeth is still in manuscript. After that I could publish only under a pseudonym.

When the People's Army marched into Seoul I worked for a while in the Writers' Association and then I volunteered for the army. I said good-bye to my family, my wife, my three sons, my only daughter — and I have never heard from them since. I took part in the retreat, then I was in hospital with my bad heart, and now I am here...

3

At the end of 1952 I returned to Hungary and worked about six months on a book dealing with my experiences in Korea. Before its publication, the Korean Embassy asked the publishing house — by way of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs — to send them a list of the persons who had been mentioned in the book. A few weeks later they informed us what names would have to be deleted. I did not understand the decision and asked for an explanation. None was given.

Chung-sik Sul's name was among those to be left out.

In the summer of 1953, my newspaper, the official organ of the Communist Party, sent me back to Korea to be present at the signing of the armistice. I reached Kaesong on the dawn of the great day. I searched the tent at Pan Mun Jom for Sul; he wasn't there. I enquired about him and was given confused replies: that he had been transferred to another place, and that he was no longer with the armistice committee.

A week or two later I went to Pyungyang where I was informed by the Ministry of Information that a great political trial would take place the following day against 'American spies and conspirators', and that I could attend it if I wanted to.

I went, and this was where, after nearly a year, I saw Chung-sik Sul again.

After the judges had taken their places the wardens brought in the prisoners. Their

clothes were torn and creased and each had a big number sewn on to the back of his jacket — the principal accused a big 1, the accused of the second order a big 2, and so on. Chung-sik Sul was the fourteenth accused, the last in the line.

I can dimly recall the indictment; it contained everything that 'people's democratic' indictments were supposed to contain: conspiracy to overthrow the existing order and murder of Kim II Song, beloved leader of the entire North Korean people, restitution to the former landowners of the land now distributed among the peasants, return of the factories to their former owners, handing over of North Korea to Syngman Rhee's regime — and all this, naturally, in collaboration with the 'American imperialists', at their orders, and as their paid agents.

There was nothing surprising in the text. Applying the infallible Marxist-Leninist teachings to local conditions, they had prepared the same kind of indictment in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Roumania. There were high-ranking state and party officials among the accused, the Minister of the Interior, a secretary of the Central Committee, several Politbureau members. I believe that the background of this trial was in no way different from the one I had witnessed in Budapest: the liquidation of the 'native' communists, those who have lived in illegality at home and participated in the anti-Japanese resistance movement by the Moscovite party group, that is, those who had spent these difficult years in Moscow.

I was not surprised by the trial, but rather by the fact that the North Korean leaders should celebrate the termination of a long war and the restoration of peace by this sort of demonstration. And it deeply shocked me to see Sul the poet, Sul my friend, among the accused.

The expression of his beautiful, tormented face was dull with exhaustion and resignation. There was no light in the dark, only slightly Asiatic eyes; he moved like a robot. I thought it improbable that he

should have noticed me in the crowded room and of this I was glad.

In those days I was still a believer. Still, I found it very difficult to believe that Chung-sik Sul had been an agent of the Americans. I recalled the bitterness with which he told me how disappointed he had been with the Americans. I remembered that he had left his family and risked his life to come to the North and serve his ideals. And there was his epic poem in which he spoke deep sincerity and genuine love of the Hungarian doctors and also of the Soviet Union and Stalin.... No, it was impossible that this poem should have been a lie!

He was accused in the indictment of having concealed it from the Party that he had been an employee of the US Military Government between 1945 and 1947. This accusation appeared ludicrous to me. First of all the thing was too widely known for any kind of concealment; secondly, if he told me, a total stranger, why should he have tried to keep it a secret from his own comrades? To my mind, this accusation proved his innocence. If, after having been a high official in the US Military Government, he had come to North to join the communists, he had proved beyond all doubt, that he had broken with the past, once for all.

I was still a believer in those days, as I said before, and therefore I tried to guess what crime Sul had committed, if I disregarded the accusations of the indictment. As it was usual in such cases I began to rummage through my memories, trying to discover something 'suspicious', something that 'wasn't quite as it should have been', but there was nothing. Perhaps only that look in his eyes...

During those long winter evenings in Korea, Sul and I often talked about the war, its horrors, its victims, the terrible waste of human life. 'Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of our people get killed... and villages, towns, homes destroyed...' he would whisper, his face and voice full of pain. I tried to comfort him in my own stupid way, saying that how-

ever terrible this war was, he must not forget that it may prevent a world war, and to remember the wonderful part played by his people in the defence of peace, the peace camp and communism. 'Yes, sure...' he nodded and that was when that strange look appeared in his eyes, that tired, dreamy, questioning look, I now remembered. Then, and ever since, this look seemed to say to me: 'All right, the Korean people is playing a very important role in the defence of world peace and world socialism. But when the fighting parties are great powers, America, the Soviet Union, China, why do they have to shed in their conflict the blood of my small people?'

He never expressed it in words. But this was what his eyes said, I am certain of it. And this look was the only 'crime' Chung-sik Sul could be accused of. Who knows whether this crime was not more serious in the eyes of his accusers than the false accusations of the indictment?

4

What went on in his mind when, on the night before his execution, he walked up and down in his cell? After having been forced to admit the false charges? (by what promises, what tortures?) Whose line rang behind his beautiful forehead: Shakespeare's or Keats's or Shelley's? Or perhaps Karl Marx's? And what farewell poem was he writing in his mind as he was taking leave of life, of his family, of the sunshine and beauty and evil and himself?

He was born in the South and went to the North. He had studied in America and sided with the Soviet Union. He wanted to fight against poverty, against oppression, against foreign ideas and he sank into the morass. Perhaps, in his self-tormenting way, what he thought was not: 'I have wasted my life,' but rather 'I deserve my lot'. Perhaps he thought that you cannot defeat one kind of dictatorship with another, neither advancing from the North

to the South, nor going from the South to the North.

5

In 1954, when the rehabilitations began in Hungary and those sentenced on the basis of false charges were released from prison, one after the other, and the innocence of those executed was no long a secret, I remembered again and again Chung-sik Sul, the poet. I always sensed it, guessed it, but now I knew: he had been innocent.

At the occasion of the Indo-Chinese peace negotiations in Geneva, I came across Wilfred Burchett, the Australian newspaperman, who had once upon a time helped translate Sul's epic poem into English. I suggested to him that he, Alan

Winnington and I write a letter to Kim II Song asking for Chung-sik Sul's official rehabilitation. We owed this to the memory of our dead friend. Unfortunately Burchett didn't agree with me and thus the idea came to nothing.

The following months were spent in bitter struggle: this was the period preceding the Hungarian revolution. Then came the revolution, flight, exile...

But lately, I don't know why, I remember Chung-sik Sul more and more often. I see his delicate figure in the cold Korean night, hear his deep, ringing voice, and the words he said to the American Colonel but could never address to his own comrades: 'If you are a true military man and a man of conscience...'

I felt it was my duty to write this down in memory of a poet, in memory of a friend...

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

POETRY

LOVE

Her eyes were crushed cornflowers
Seeking ground, late,
To flourish again, or fade
In their dusty groove.
I offered her cracked rock,
Thistles, wildthorn, grit,
A desert without shade,
And called it love.

Her eyes turned to sapphires
To match that hard gift
When, together, we burnt
The lower, matted grove.
The dry rock sprang
Mantids, her thighs' cleft
Bred scorpions, but
I called it love.

How explain my death
By voluntary reversions
To a former state;
And hers, aching to move
Back to parched beds, sand?
We covered the dust, dead scorpions,
Hid the thorns, the grit,
And called it love.

ADIL JUSSAWALA

MEMORY

Memory is a starved crow
Beating its horned beak against
A stone that's flattened and pocked by the rattling
Winds bitten by frost and ice,
Smoothed by the flat water, primeval
Lava washed to a creaseless sea,
Glancing the sunlight like a mirror.

Around the stone no weeds grow,
No flowers, no marching children come,
No battle-drum, no toppled gods;
A famished plain of flat stone,
The stone repeated to the hills,
Shrubless, birdless, scalded, hard,
Repeated by a tedious river.

What if the boisterous blood is frozen
To this landscape? What if the heart
Is dry? The ravenous crow will go
Tapping each stone, prying it loose,
Its business being (though starved) to attack
No eat, till, under a flake worn smooth
With fire and water, live legs scamper.

ADIL JUSSAWALA

COME WITH ME TO THE WATER'S EDGE

Come with me to the water's edge

And there help me dredge

The sands for stone.

For I am alone

And filled with fear

And stones are still within

Having no sense of sin.

As the time draws near

It's doubt that infests

Me with fear and divests

Me of faith, making the mind

A misshapen thing;

Now that neither design

Nor accident

Can prevent

Or alter the final reckoning,

It's fear and not death.

Passion turned the rose red

But when a man lies dead

His spent flesh spurns the rose,

And it's only fear that grows

Not faith — out of Death.

PRADIP SEN

DUSK

Owl by owl the darkening night calls
To its own still hurt; and the shadow falls
Wing by feather where fear has restless feet
Small, swift, lost in the haunted wheat.

The feathers are soft as the light that sleeps in steel;
The air is knotted; the domed hills peal
Hollow as sepulchres. Beneath the hovering hours
Sound calls up the stillness that devours.

G. C. S. MARAR

SHORT STORY

We Three

By BUDDHADEVA BOSE

TOGETHER we fell in love with her, we three, Asit, Hitangshu and I. It was at Dacca, in Purana Paltan; nineteen hundred and twenty-seven was the year. Only to think of them again — Dacca, Purana Paltan, and those mornings darkened and made lovely by clouds!

Neighbours we three were. The first house to be built in Purana Paltan was Tara Kutir — that was where Hitangshu lived. His father was a judge who retired after saving quite a packet and built for himself an imposing house just where Purana Paltan touched the mainstreet. Tara Kutir was the first house in the neighbourhood — and the best. Many more houses rose later, smothering the grass and bramble under a pile of brick, but not one among them could rival Tara Kutir.

Our family moved in a little after Hitangshu's; the roof of the house that was to be Asit's was then being layed. There was a time when our three were the only houses in Purana Paltan; the rest was open land covered with bumps and bulges, dusty at places, muddy elsewhere, and when it rained, yellowish-green toads wallowed in the toe-deep water and upsprang fat blades of wet and green grass. Only to think of them, those noontimes in Purana Paltan when thunder clapped and rolled in the skies!

We were always together. No, not always exactly, but as long together as possible. At daybreak Asit used to call at my window: 'Bikash, Bika-ash.' I would

jump out of bed and find him perched on his bike, his long legs touching the ground. Tall he was all right, so tall that my joints would ache if I let my hand rest too long on his shoulder. There was no need to shout for Hitangshu, for there he stood beside the wicket-gate of their garden, or was seated on the low garden wall, his feet dangling in the air; and then would come the time for Asit to bike away down the metalled road to his technical school while Hitangshu and I would wander around, hand in hand, and a fragrance was afloat in the air — fragrance of what or of whom nobody knew, though at times it haunts me still and reminds me of what or of whom I cannot say.

Evenings we would occasionally go to town, the three of us on two bikes, for the delicious chops that Ghose's was famous for, or else to Dacca's only cinema. And on other days we would stuff our pockets with freshly toasted peanuts and ride down to the bank of the river. Despite strenuous efforts I have never been able to master the art of biking, and yet I have often been on that two-wheeled contraption, carried long miles by either Hitangshu or Asit, literally hanging on to their necks. But most evenings we spent in the meadows of Purana Paltan, lolling on sofas of deep grass and pricked by weeds whose spikes stuck to our clothes, while little dots of stars appeared above us and in the distance shone a light, twinkling as if it too were a star although it was merely a lantern burning

in the verandah of Tara-Kutir. Hitangshu had to return home by eight o'clock, so he could not stay with us long. Asit's parents were not as strict, nor mine; so we two sat on in the dark and on our way back we would softly call Hitangshu's name. He would sneak away from his books to whisper a word or two and then hurry back to his studies.

We three had fallen in love with each other and together we fell for another — the three of us. At Dacca it happened, in Purana Paltan, nineteen twenty-seven was the year.

Antara was her name. Too fancy a name perhaps, for the Dacca of nineteen twenty-seven, but then nothing about *them* was like anything at Dacca, and why should the daughter's name be an exception? The father used to wear European clothes even at home; the mother decked herself out in such gay saris that from behind she could be mistaken for her daughter; and her daughter, their daughter—how can I say what she was? In the morning, she saunters in the garden; in the afternoon she sits in the verandah with a book on her lap; in the evening she almost brushes past us in the street; she is to be seen all the time and often her voice is heard too; how could we, in Dacca of far-away twenty-seven, where our eyes rarely beheld a girl, and a sari-end glimpsed through the shutters of a hackney coach would bring us the promise of paradise — how could we not fall for one who was not merely to be seen, but floated before our dazed vision in a new sari every day, and who was called An-ta-ra?

It was I who discovered the name. Every afternoon it was my task to take delivery of the bread and sign the baker's book, where one day I spotted a new name written in well formed Bengali characters: Antara Dey. I gazed at the signature for a while. That evening I asked Hitangshu: 'Is the name Antara?'¹

'Whose — ?' But before it was uttered, he knew of whom I was speaking. 'Maybe,'

'A lovely name,' commented Asit.

'They call her Taru,' said Hitangshu.

Taru! There were at least three hundred Tarus in Dacca town; but at that instant it seemed to me, and I knew to Asit too, that there was no word more melodious in the Bengali language than Taru. But of course Hitangshu must put on airs now and then, for did not the person we were talking about live on the ground floor of his father's house and was it not therefore his right to be better informed than we two? So he turned up his nose and cut in: 'From Antara to Taru! This, I must say is not to my liking.'

'But why not? It sounds good. It does!' I asserted. I raised my voice and stressed the words, but something slumped in me.

'I would have just called her Antara and left it at that,' Hitangshu added in that brash manner he sometimes liked to put on.

What cheek! *He* would have called *her* Antara! Let alone calling her by her name, who are you, sir, to address her at all! I boiled over in wrath and was looking for a word or two that would prick and sting and teach him sense, when Asit butted in — 'I too would have stuck to Antara.'

Traitor!

Many were such quarrels over trifles that we had. Not a day passed without our discussing the Dey family, nor was there anything about them on which our views did not differ. Did the blue sari she wore the other day suit her better than yesterday's mauve? Did she let her hair fall loose on her back or was it plaited as she stood in the garden this morning? Was she writing a letter or doing sums as she sat in the verandah in the afternoon? Such were the questions that we disputed excitedly until our voices grew hoarse. The subject of the loudest controversy was somewhat unusual: whether there was a great resemblance, or some, or none, between her face and Mona Lisa's? That was the time when I had first seen a print of the Gioconda smile; I had shown it to my friends of course, and one day I had the impulse to observe that her face was rather like Mona

¹ This line is in verse in the original, being an echo of a refrain used by Tagore.

Lisa's. The words just escaped my lips, but they bore a harvest of controversy. Many were the words bandied over this discovery, but no decision was ever reached; the one tangible result was that we began to call her Mona Lisa. Maybe 'Anta-ra' had the tantalising music of a tambourine, and 'Taru' opened up visions of tender green,² but how could we share her name with others! Her secret name was our private possession; through it we got a bit of herself entirely and exclusively for ourselves.

We used to tell Hitangshu: 'You are bound to be introduced to her one of these days — after all, you live under the same roof!' He would blush and exclaim, 'Don't be silly!' thereby signifying that the possibility was not entirely absent from his thought. We speculated long over this possibility, but secretly we knew these were fancies — mere daydreams which could never come true.

It was after dusk that day that we were riding back from Ramna. I was perched behind Hitangshu on his bicycle, there were few people in the street, and we were talking among ourselves without a care in all the world. Suddenly Hitangshu stopped talking, his bike swerved in a strange fashion; I was on the point of being thrown off, but I clutched at the collar of his shirt and he uttered a groan and stepped down on the road and I too felt the ground under my feet once again. Then we heard a man's voice saying, 'Be careful, young man!' The words were spoken in English and the speaker was no other than Mr. Dey. Beside him was Mrs. Dey — and their daughter. Asit had stopped too; he sat on his bike with one foot planted firmly on the ground, and he tried to look heroic.

'Really you must —' Mr. Dey began in English again, but broke off as he let his eyes fall on Hitangshu. 'Oh it is you, Keshab Babu's son!'

I noticed the stupid look on Hitangshu's face.

'And these young —?' He looked inquiringly at us. 'I always notice you together. Great friends, eh? Good. I like young men. Why don't you drop in one of these days?'

They left. We turned off the road and stretched ourselves full length on the grass. After a pause, a long pause, Asit brought out: 'Gosh! What a scrap! You got a bit rattled, didn't you, Hitangshu?'

'Oh no! Only the brake didn't work.'

'It never happened before. To think that the first time it should happen, it happens with them in the front stall!'

'So what? Did I hurt anyone? Did I fall with a crash or topple over? Then what is it that's bothering you?' demanded Hitangshu. 'Only that the brake —'

'You braked in time all right, but didn't you look an ass! And Bikash —'

'Stop that chatter, Asit,' I barked on hearing my name uttered. 'You do become a bore sometimes.'

This didn't deter Asit from adding: 'I thought she smiled; you were so funny!'

'Let her smile!' shouted Hitangshu, and the shout tapered into a wail.

'And you, Bikash, I hope you haven't failed to observe whether she smiled like Mona Lisa?'

'Don't jeer at things you don't understand,' my voice broke as I said this. That night I slept badly, and for days I felt dejected.

Resent it as one might, Asit *is* our smart one. 'Come, let us pay them a visit,' he kept harping. 'What madness!' 'Why, didn't he ask us to?'

And gradually we convinced one another that Mr. Dey had really meant what he had said that evening, that his casual words actually amounted to an invitation and it would be improper and even boorish if we did not put in our appearance one of these days. We were persuaded that Mr. Dey would be glad if we called, and disappointed if we didn't, and it was for his sake really, just to show we were sensible of the respect due to him from us, that we should make this visit. Every morning we said 'Today!' and every evening we decided, 'Tomorrow!' We would observe them

² *Antara* is the second movement in Indian music, and *taru* is a word for tree.

sitting in the garden, or notice a car parked at their gate—which meant the only lawyer in the town with a British degree, Mr. Das, was visiting them — and it put us off. Then there were evenings when no one stirred in the house and for us they were days of relief, for we could assume the Deys were not in and we did not have to put our courage to test. But on some other days Mr. Dey would be sitting alone in the verandah reading the newspaper — and those were terribly trying for us, being the most opportune; we would approach the gate and falter — I more than Hitangshu and Hitangshu more than Asit — there would be nudgings and pushings and whispered consultations, and then we would shove each other forward and pass by Tara Kutir. Each time we feared we would be intruding. 'But why,' we told ourselves, 'why think so much about it— it's quite simple, isn't it — people do visit one another — and we aren't crooks or burglars, after all! We'll just drop in, chat, and take our leave. What's wrong in that, pray?'

That evening the sky was clouded and there was a light drizzle. It looked as if they were in. Asit — slim, tall and fair — was the first to enter through the wicket gate, Hitangshu followed — bespectacled, grave as a grown-up. I, looking frightened and small, brought up the rear. We climbed the steps to the verandah and stopped undecided how to make our presence known. Should we call aloud for some one? Whom to call? Before we could decide, Mr. Dey, emerged through the curtained door to step into the verandah. Clenching the pipe between his teeth, he brought out an English monosyllable: 'Yes?'

Even Asit was unnerved by this outlandish mode of reception. 'I...' he mumbled, 'I mean we... we just came... You had asked ...' he stammered.

It was a little while before Mr. Dey recognised us in that dim light. 'Oh, it's you. But...'

Asit tried again to explain and was more successful this time. 'You asked us to drop in,' he said.

'Oh yes, yes,' said Mr. Dey. Then, clear-

ing his throat, he invited us to enter. He parted the door-curtain and stepped aside, making way for us, but we too waited as he did.

'Please step in,' he repeated.

Hitangshu stumbled on the doorstep — his own doorstep — and in his clumsiness crushed my toes. It hurt, but naturally I tried not to show it. As we filed in, our soiled sandals left dirty patches on the polished floor. How well got-up the room was! We had never seen anything like it. A gas lamp lit up the room brilliantly. In the foreground, seated in a sofa, was Mrs. Dey, knitting. Further away sat our Mona Lisa in a chair pushed against the wall, a fat blue book on her knees.

Mr. Dey announced us: 'Shumi, here are the three musketeers of Purana Paltan. This is Keshab Babu's son, and ...'

Hitangshu introduced Asit and me. Mrs. Dey smiled and said in a gentle voice: 'Ah, you are chums! I notice you three always bunched together. Won't you sit down?'

We dropped one after another into a long sofa. 'Taru,' called out Mrs. Dey.

Mona Lisa raised her eyes from the book. 'These young gentlemen are our neighbours. And this is our daughter.' She laid the book aside and rose, graceful as a slender tree and slightly bowed her head as though swayed by a gentle breeze, and then returned to her reading.

I wondered if it was not a dream. Asit was a Calcuttan, better informed than either of us and more quick-witted. Hitangshu had travelled here and there with his father, there was no trace of the provincial accent in his speech, and, after all, Tara Kutir was his own home. They monopolised what little conversation there was; I stared fixedly at the floor, unable to think of a word to say, and even if I could have hit upon something worth saying I would not have dared to utter it, for fear of betraying my Dacca brogue. I was dying to look at Mona Lisa, but thanks to my accursed shyness, I was unable to raise my eyes even once.

After the usual subjects had been exhausted — how difficult life was without

electricity, what a pest were the Dacca mosquitoes, how beautiful was the Ramna view — Mrs. Dey asked: 'Have you all passed out of high school?'

Asit, after having informed her we had, proudly added: 'Hitangshu won a scholarship in the school-leaving exam.'

'Why, isn't that wonderful! My daughter is so scared of Maths. that she refuses to face the test, poor girl!'

Suddenly a musical voice rang out from her corner of the room: 'Baba, how old was Keats when he died?'

Mr. Dey turned his glance at us. 'Do any of you happen to know?'

'I'm sure Bikash does. Bikash writes verse himself!' Asit pertly answered.

'Really?' Mrs. Dey's lips put on a seemingly innocent smile and I could feel Mona Lisa's glance rest on me for a brief second. My palms grew moist with sweat and cicadas sang in my ear.

How long did it last in all? Fifteen minutes? Twenty? When we left, I felt more tired than at the end of a long series of lectures at the college.

Mrs. Dey forced two umbrellas on us, but without opening them, we vanished in the fine drizzle into the night. Suddenly Asit broke the silence to say — the fellow could never stop yapping — 'How nice they are!'

'Yes, they are wonderful,' Hitangshu instantly agreed.

I remained silent. I did not feel like talking.

After a pause Asit began again. 'We should have left our sandals at the doorstep. And you, Hitangshu, what made you stumble today?'

'When was that?'

'At the doorway — while entering.'

'Never!'

'Never indeed! And did you greet Mrs. Dey on entering?'

'Sure, I did,' replied Hitangshu. He was silent for a while and then added: 'But when... when Mona Lisa stood up and folded her hands in greeting, did we...'

We looked at each other, and though it was dark we knew our faces were pale as

death. A girl — no, a lady had gone to the extent of rising from her seat to greet us, and we sat placid as old cows, saying no word, making no answering gesture. They were sure to consider us boorish provincials, unenlightened rustics, barbarians. Even the Calcuttan Asit Mitra couldn't save us from this disgrace.

It is impossible to describe the gloom that descended on us.

The next day we went to return the two umbrellas. The servant shows us in and we wait in the drawing room. Then — yes, she herself, Mona Lisa enters the room and we jump to our feet and greet her with folded hands. With a smile we say, 'Just to return these...' 'Oh, these umbrellas! You needn't have bothered, really... but won't you sit down?' — This was how I had imagined it would be, but it happened differently. The servant took the umbrellas from us and vanished. He did not return, nor did any one else come out. We waited a while and retraced our steps, silent, our heads bowed, none daring to look at another.

No, no. That was no place for us, that room with lovely furnishings and walls gleaming in brilliant white gaslight, where in a corner seat the most wonderful girl in the world flicks the pages of a wonderful blue-covered book — that certainly was not the place for us. But what of it? Mona Lisa was Mona Lisa.

Came the dark rains with a bang. The mornings were clouded, noontimes with thunder atremble, moist and bluish the nights under the veiled noon. It rained for fifteen days without a break and the day the sun came out at last was also the one when I noticed the car of Dacca's most eminent physician parked in front of Tara Kutir.

I asked Hitangshu: 'Is any one sick in your family?'

'Why, no!'

Is it one of them, then? — though unuttered, my anxiety was apparent. When Asit and I saw Hitangshu the following morning, he gravely reported there was illness in the Dey household. 'But who?'

Who is ill? 'It is she.' 'She?' 'She. It's she who is ill.'

That day too the doctor's car was there, and on the next we saw it in the evening too. Couldn't we go in for a minute, wasn't there anything we could do for them? Hanging about outside the house, pacing the street or lurking behind the car, we watched and waited and hoped. There—the doctor was leaving and Mr. Dey was seeing him to the gateway. It seemed we didn't exist for him, but after the doctor left he suddenly noticed us and said in an absent manner: 'Could you step in, please? My wife wants a word with you.' Four or five steps led from the garden to the verandah. On the top step was Mrs. Dey. Asit stood one step below her and asked: 'Mashima,³ did you want us?' How effortlessly did he bring out that 'mashima!' He could, being a true Calcuttan. I couldn't ever have managed it — not to save my life.

'Taru is sick,' she said, and her voice stabbed at my heart.

'What is it?'

'Typhoid.' She let fall that terrible word in a whisper. Then, after a pause: 'I can't tell you how bad I feel.'

Asit cried out: 'Do not worry, mashima. We will do everything for you.'

'Will you, dears? Will you be able to?' There were tears in her eyes as she added: 'She is my only child, you know.'

Mona Lisa, you did not know, you can never know, Mona Lisa, what joy it was that befell us, what pure happiness, there, in the Purana Paltan of nineteen hundred and twenty-seven, day after day, and night after night, through the fevers and the rains and the squalls, through shadows that gave us the creeps and the darkness that palled. For a month and a half you were chained to the bed and for that month and a half you were ours. For one whole month and a fortnight the blissful fluttering in our hearts never ceased. Your father goes to work, peeps in when he is back and then, weary

and dejected, sinks into a low armchair. Your mother is always on her feet during the day, but even she droops when the night comes, and she sleeps in the sick room on a camp cot, and all night we keep vigil in turns, occasionally two and rarely the three of us together, but usually one at a time. And it's I who has most of the joy of sitting through the night alone with you. Asit is always running about, and Hitangshu too, for the nearest ice depot is a mile from Tara Kutir, the chemist's shop twice as far, and the doctor lives three miles and a half away. Asit has to make numerous trips on his bicycle each day; no one knows how often he gets soaked in the rain, and his dripping clothes dry on his back only to get wet again. Often Hitangshu has to make midnight trips to the ice-stalls to find all shops closed, so to the railway station he rushes. Not a soul stirs there, and so off to the depot by the river where he wakes up the folks and returns with the precious stuff at two in the morning while I am anxiously watching how much more ice has dissolved in the icebag and Asit is gathering with eager hands the little chips still strewn on the bathroom floor where we first crushed the ice before packing it into the bag. Since I cannot ride a bicycle, nor do errands, I shadow your mother all day, reaching things to her, measuring out the medicine and noting the temperature, and when the doctor calls, it is I who carry his bag from his car to the sickroom and back again to the car. Then dusk falls, the night grows older, and the dark swells like a sea where you and I drift on a bark with the pale faint glimmer of a light. Oh, how we drift, Mona Lisa, you do not know! And you never will.

All day and all night she lies still as though in a swoon. At times she gets delirious and raves, but the voice is too feeble for us to catch her words. The few, the rare words that we can make out we hoard in our memory; what one has heard the others must be told; and on those rare occasions when we are thrown together and have a moment of leisure, we turn these few words over and over again, like

³In Bengal it is customary for young persons to address ladies of their mothers' generation, at whose houses they are received, as *mashima* (mother's sister).

three misers closeted together, away from the world's eye in a dark room at night, fondling their secret treasures with loving fingers. If she sighs 'Oooh!' it sways our hearts like a note from a flute; if she says "water", all that is liquid and lovely trills through our aching hearts.

One night when Hitangshu had gone home and Asit was asleep in the verandah, I was keeping my vigil alone. On the table a candle flickered and monstrous shadows were dancing on the wall, as though the timid flame could no longer hold out against the darkness. And in the fight against sleep, I too was beginning to yield. Sleep, that horrid bandit, severed my limbs; my body was melting like the candle on the table; as often as I lashed myself up into wakefulness, a huge wave shot up from the bottomless abyss. As I lay sinking, I wondered whether you were fighting death as I was trying to ward off sleep, whether death was weighing you down as sleep was on me. And yet you *were*, you still existed, but how did you manage to do so! No sooner this thought flashed on me than sleep left my eyelids and I sat up straight, gazing at your face in that dim light with its dancing shadows at that still and awful hour — four o'clock in the morning. Would you live? Must you die? There was no one to answer. Did you feel sleepy? No answer. You were asleep? Awake? No answer again. Yet I kept my eyes fixed on you, sure that the answer would come, and come from your face or lips — in a look, a gesture maybe, or perhaps — who could tell? — a word. And I marvelled to see your eyes slowly open; they dilated and roved in a crazy manner and at last rested on my face. 'Who's 't?' a whisper escaped your throat.

I hastened to press the icebag on your head.

'Who are you?'

'It's me.'

'Who's me?'

'It's me, Bikash.'

'Ah, Bikash. Is it night?'

'It is.'

'Will this night never end?'

'It will. It will be dawn soon enough.'

'Soon? I'm sleepy, Bikash.'

I placed a hand on your forehead. My hand was cold from the ice and you seemed to like it.

'Ah! It's good,' you murmured.

'Sleep,' I said. 'Do sleep.'

'You won't slip off when I'm asleep?'

'I won't.'

'You won't?'

'No, I will not.'

'Then I sleep. You don't mind?'

'Sleep, sleep. Have no fear, I am awake.'

I breathed out these words in the softest of whispers and a great wave of a sigh rose from within me.

You sank into sleep, and outside the first few birds began to chirp. It was dawn.

Ravings, mere ravings of a fevered brain. And yet let this memory remain wholly mine, mine alone. Of this night I spoke not a word to the other two. Maybe they too have their secrets. And you, Mona Lisa, you know nothing of all this and you never will.

Then you were well again. It was good that you were well, but our occupation was gone. And the day your mother asked us three to dinner, a fortnight after you were well enough to have rice diet again, we felt that dinner was our farewell party.

But was it so, really? We still had the freedom of the house, we could drop in whenever we pleased, play records to amuse her, and if she was tired, rearrange the cushions to make her comfortable. Meanwhile in the sky the play of dark and light began, the dark mingling with clouds of a silvery sheen and patches of pure blue showing between; — and thus when Ashwin⁴ came and the holidays were there, they left for Ranchi to help their daughter convalesce. We three helped in the packing and accompanied them up to Narayangunge where they boarded the steamer.

When the image of Mona Lisa leaning

⁴ *Ashwin*: the sixth month of the Indian calendar, corresponding to September-October. It is a holiday-time in Bengal, for the biggest Bengali festival, Durga Puja, generally falls in Ashwin.

on the rails of the first class deck became blurred, we realised that we had forgotten to ask for their Ranchi address. I was longing to send off a letter as soon as I returned home, but now it seemed impossible.

Asit said, 'After all, she should write first.'

'But will she?' Hitangshu wondered, not quite hopefully.

'Why not? Why shouldn't she write?' demanded Asit.

None could tell why. Yet the fact was that no letter came, though twenty days were gone. What came was a money-order for Hitangshu's father — the rent. We noted the sender's address on the money-order form and decided to send a letter. There seemed to be no reason why we should hold her silence against her, seeing that she had gone to Ranchi almost straight from the sick-bed. Supposing she hadn't yet regained her strength, it was our task, rather than hers, to write and inquire about her health. But the question was how were we to write? What should the form of address be?⁵ And should we say 'you' or 'thou'? She had, of course called us 'thou' and we too had spoken to her in the same terms, but few were words we had exchanged and our right seemed too weak to set a 'thou' on paper in bold and gleaming characters. And then, what should we write about? 'How is it with you? Feeling fine?' — that would be enough to exhaust all that we could say. Of course it would be a long letter if we wrote how *we* were faring and feeling, what had happened to us in the meantime and so on, but could we be sure she was keen on having our news?

Followed a long discussion, but it failed to yield a formula on which we three could agree. Then Asit and Hitangshu suggested

that it was I who should draft the letter. I dabbled in versifying, that was why.

That very night, I sweated out these lines with a smoky kerosene lamp in front of me.

To the pure-souled one,⁶

We thought a letter would come; it did not. Twenty-one days have gone in expectation. Ranchi is very, very enjoyable — is it? Of course we want it to be so, and would be pleased enough if it is. The ground-floor of Tara Kutir is locked up; so Purana Paltan is steeped in darkness. We miss the gas lamp on its verandah.

We are building up fanciful pictures of Ranchi — hillocks, thick woods, pathways red and pebbled, dark-skinned santhals. Laughter, happiness, health. What a wretched disease it was, but let there be no illness again.

But couldn't something happen, something other than illness that would keep our hands full? How heavy a task it is to kill time! If this letter is answered, we would have to write again in reply; — then there would at least be something for us to do.

Our humble regards to Mashima and Uncle.

More than this I could not improvise, avoiding both 'you' and 'thou'. (The 'uncle' was of course meant to refer to her father.) Three o'clock struck before this little was composed. Among the words that I had struck off, the few that remained shone like clearings in a dark wood. I read it over and over again. Now it seemed quite a successful effort and the next moment it appeared utterly disgraceful and I was tempted to tear it to pieces. That I did, but not before I had copied it out on a clean sheet of paper. The next day we set down our signatures at the bottom and mailed it, resigning ourselves to whatever would happen.

From Dacca to Ranchi and back to Dacca — how long would it take? Four days... say, five? ... all right, six days. No. No letters. Instead of a letter, a light mist in the evenings, a cold nip in the air. Gone the *shephali*; the land-lotus in bloom. No letter.

At last a letter came, a skimpy postcard addressed to Hitangshu, written by her mother. It went somewhat like this:

⁵ Bengalis have several ways of beginning a letter, many different forms of address fitting the grade of intimacy or the nature of the relationship with the correspondent.

⁶ A 'neutral' form of address which one uses for a stranger or slight acquaintance to whom one wants to show respect but not necessarily affection.

To the well-wished ones,⁷

Hitangshu, Asit, Bikash, receive our *Vijaya*⁸ blessings. Our stay at Ranchi is drawing to its close; we shall soon get back. It would be a great help, Hitangshu, if in the meanwhile, you could get our rooms dusted by your servants. The keys are with your father.

I hope all is well with you all. Taru is in trim now and she mentions you now and then.

Your affectionate
Mashima

She mentions us now and then! But what of our letter? The closest examination of the postcard did not reveal any proof that the letter had reached her. What happened to it? But we had no time to think of what happened to it, for we started cleaning operations right away. So successful were we that within a day the floor shone like a looking-glass. A few days later came another postcard: 'Returning on Sunday; could you be at the railway station?' At the station! Just that! To Narayangunge we rushed to meet them.

Ah! the joy of seeing her on that day, in a sap-green sari with a red border, her cheeks pink with health, her figure fuller and a wee bit taller, perhaps? Lovely she was to look at, but I kept rather away from her, lest, if I got too close, it should be made clear she was taller than me. Hitangshu ran up and down the platform, buying ice and lemonades, while Asit, shoving the porters away, began to haul up the luggage himself, thrusting trunks and rolls of beddings right into the railway carriage, to the accompaniment of great gusty breathings.

'Come, come into this carriage with us,' said Mashima.

'It's all right ... after all, we ... there in the next carriage ...' We mumbled,

thus indicating the obvious fact that we had tickets for the third class.

'Oh, bother. Do come,' said Mr. Dey, patting Asit on the back.

From Narayangunge to Dacca. It seemed our whole lives' happiness was waiting for these crowning forty-five minutes. We sat perched on the luggage-heap, spurning the thickly upholstered first class seats. From our vantage-point we could see the goings-on and we noticed Mona Lisa's happiness, the pleasure on her mother's face and on her father's. Ours, too, their happiness: what had long been cramped in us was now freed, and what had long remained a wish turned into reality. We became hilarious and positively noisy, and it was the joy in us that seemed to propel this huge train. Mona Lisa even called us by our names; she chatted away all the time, and the stories she had to tell! As we were nearing Dacca and she was in the middle of the description of a waterfall, I suddenly interrupted her. 'Now did you ever receive our letter?'

'Was it "our letter" or "my letter"?''

I blushed. 'Why didn't you answer?'

'What am I doing all this while if not replying to your letter?'

She was right. Suddenly it seemed the gates of paradise were thrown open to us. We three became we four.

And then the day came when Mashima told us: 'Once you worked hard for Taru; you'll have to, again. Her wedding is on 29th Aghran⁹.'

On the 29th? Only ten days to go?

We rushed to her and cried out, 'Mona Lisa! What's this we hear?'

Squinting her eyebrows, she asked, 'What was it that you called me?'

I stopped short, aghast at the betrayal of the secret name. But once it was out, it was out, and my daring grew. It was the courage of desperation that propped me up as I looked into her eyes — for the first time, it seemed to me — into the purplish-black iris surrounding a diamond droplet, and repeated the darling name, 'Mona Lisa.'

'Mona Lisa! What does that mean?'

⁷ Customary form for addressing juniors. In Bengali these forms of address are compressed into single words.

⁸ *Vijaya*, the tenth night of the moon which concludes the Durga Puja festival, is the great occasion in Bengal for exchanging greetings and good wishes.

⁹ Short for Agrabayan, the eighth month of the Indian calendar, corresponding to November-December.

'It means you. Don't you know that you are Mona Lisa?'

'What a thing to say!'

'We can't imagine you with any other name,' said Hitangshu.

'You sillies!' She broke into a short laughter, amused and quizzical. Colour suffused her face, it vanished, and a fleeting shadow dimmed her eyes for a moment. Absently she looked at us; then we saw her eyelids descending.

Suddenly, we did not know why, we too felt vaguely melancholy, but a breeze of laughter dispelled that mood and our words came bubbly and crisp.

'Is there anything in it, Mona Lisa, any truth in what we hear?'

'What is it that you hear?' She said, covering her face with the end of her sari. And she ran away, laughing.

Two days before the wedding, the bridegroom arrived from Calcutta. He was very, very fair; his dhoti¹⁰ was fine as gossamer; the perfume he used was so exquisite that a whiff from his clothes made one feel ethereal. Stunning he was to us, and Hitangshu never tired of repeating: 'Handsome, isn't he! How handsome!'

'Look at the hem of his dhoti,' chimed in Asit.

'And his feet!' Hitangshu instantly rejoined. 'One has to have feet like his for those fancy dhotis to suit.'

'Say what you will,' the words escaped me somehow, 'his lips give him a rather blunt look.'

'What! He looks blunt!' Asit wanted to shout me down, but his voice had cracked with shouting over the wedding arrangements, so he brought out something bet-

ween a hiss and a growl. 'Seen anyone as handsome ever before?'

'Not half as fair as Mona Lisa,' said I, not yielding my ground.

'There are many ways of being handsome, aren't there? They're a perfect match. Perfect!' And away sped Asit on his two-wheeler, fast as the wind. Absurd for him to waste time in arguments, he had so much to manage and run about for.

On the eve of the wedding I rose from bed early, while it was yet dark, awakened by the notes of the *shantai*.¹¹ As I opened my eyes I remembered that other dawn when — this was how I felt it to have been — I had wrenched her away from the clutches of death. The joy that possessed me that night, as I sat watching the light slowly emerge from the darkness — that pure joy returned to me once again, the roots of the hair of my body tingled and tears rose to my eyes at the melancholy music of the *shantai*. It was impossible to stay in bed any longer. I rose and came out into the open under the stars and listened to the festive noise coming from the bridal house. Somebody blew a long note on the conchshell. I approached the house and I longed to have a glimpse of her at this hour before the dawn when the sky was still like midnight but the dawn was already being announced by the fluttering breeze. Just to see her, just once, at this wonderful and miraculous moment! But no — this was the hour of the turmeric bath¹², great would be the fuss, and many the women, strangers all, that would be surrounding her; there was not the faintest hope of a chance encounter. I listened to the stirrings within — sounds of movement and snatches of conversation — and then above all rose the notes of the *shantai*, sad and long and sobbing, flowing through and overflowing all else, and I saw the shoals of stars vanish in ripples before my eyes, and the shapes of the trees and the contour of the meadows being revealed, as once again it was dawn.

That day Asit got so busy that he could not spare me even a look of recognition. And so many were the commands he had

¹⁰The *dhoti*, a long piece of white cotton cloth with coloured borders, forms the lower garment of Bengali men. The finer kinds are 5½ yards in length and 46 to 52 inches in width. The wearer drapes it round his waist, letting the folds reach up to his toes.

¹¹A wind-instrument played on ceremonial occasions. Its notes are piercing and powerful; they carry over a great range. It is customary in India to play sad music on the wedding day.

¹²On the eve of the wedding day, Bengali Hindu brides have to take a ritual bath before dawn, of which turmeric-paste is an ingredient.

to bark out that he lost his voice completely and spoke in whispers like a new bride. Hitangshu too looked busy and important, for the bridegroom and his party were lodged with his family and he wore out his sandals running up and down the stairs in his new and proud role of a go-between. I tried all day to help them, but it was clear to me I was of no use. And finally, when the night came and the auspicious hour¹³ drew near, and the bride was to be carried on the wooden seat, I stepped forward to assist, but Asit and Hitangshu elbowed me away and lifted the seat between them. I could only watch her being carried the seven rounds, precariously perched in mid-air, with her arms clutching at the shoulders of my two friends.

Beginning the day after the wedding, we three became Hiren Babu's slaves. No one was more handsome than him, not better informed, nor wittier. Compared with him, all other men appeared to us to be simians, and even I ceased to think that the shape of his lips was blunt. More, I went as far as to try to imitate his gait, the way he spoke and smiled, his poise when he was on his feet; and the two others tried to ape him too, which I thought was rather ridiculous. Maybe each of us noticed the others' efforts and secretly laughed at one another, but we never mentioned it.

One noontime, after the mid-day meal was over and we three were sitting round Hiren Babu, he stopped in the middle of one of his funny stories and looked around. 'Please, chum, go and see what's happened to Taru,' said he.

'Should I ask her to come?' I asked before I shot out of the room.

Mona Lisa was combing her hair in the south verandah, with her back basking in the mild winter sun. I stopped near her and stood silently, almost forgetting what my errand was. That moment she seemed transformed, new and different with the flaming vermillion mark on the parting of her hair; the sari she wore was new and

stiff, the gold jewels on her wrists and neck and ears glittered, and around her wafted a fragrance — not that of Hiren Babu's perfume, nor the heady odour of the brand-new furniture in his room, nor of her hair-oil or face-cream — but a synthesis of all these, a distillation composed of the essences of all these smells and perfumes. Or so did it seem to me. I drew it in in deep breaths and it made my head swim.

She raised her eyes and asked: 'What is it?'

'Nothing!' Just then I remembered my errand. 'Hiren Babu sent for you'.

She went on combing her hair as if she had not heard me.

'Aren't you listening? Hiren Babu wants you.'

'Let him. Must I get up and go the moment he wants me? Oh, really — !'

The comb stopped as she looked at me. 'So, I'll be leaving soon.'

'How much better would Calcutta seem to you,' I said warmly, 'After all, is Dacca livable?'

'Very much so. Dacca is very nice.' She turned her face and gazed at the golden-green meadows of Purana Paltan spread out in the level sun of winter. 'You will remember me, Bikash? You three will remember me?'

I said in a flurry, 'No more talk, get up!'

'Can't you see I am busy combing my hair. Go and tell him I can't come now.'

I was taken aback by her tone, but after a while she rose and I followed her into Hiren Babu's room. 'And then? What happened to that adventurer?' I asked Hiren Babu as I entered.

But I noticed my two chums had disappeared and Hiren Babu had lost interest in story-telling. He gazed out of the window and Mona Lisa sat near the bedside table, pricking with her nails the cloth on it.

'Please tell me what happened,' I entreated.

'Later.'

I sat on the edge of the bed and turned the leaves of an English book. 'I have read this one,' I remembered. 'Very funny.'

¹³Hindu weddings are held at night, and on auspicious dates and hours marked in the almanac.

Hiren Babu suddenly stretched his hand and pulled out another book. 'This one too is very amusing. Do one thing — take this home with you and read it while I squeeze in a short nap. Okay?' He rose even before he finished speaking.

Without another word I left the room, feeling with my back the door being shut. Instead of going home, I moved to the verandah and sat down just where she had. The comb, steeped in the fragrance of her hair, lay there. I picked it up and passed my fingers along its teeth, slowly and lingeringly, many, many times.

Another day remained, then one more. The day of their departure came. It was put off. Then another day, one only. And they left.

A letter did actually come this time, addressed to all three but with my name on the thick, blue envelope. I wrote a joint reply for the three of us, a longish letter it became, and then I wrote a poem too, but that of course I did not mail. The flow of letters trickled to a stop, after which the poems came faster; before long a whole note-book was filled.

Mashima kept us posted with the news. They were enjoying themselves, enjoying themselves immensely. Hiren had bought a car. They had a car trip to Asansol. Talking films had come to Calcutta; tomatoes were a pice a seer, it was getting warmer and the epidemic season was ahead. When it was summer, they would go to Darjeeling.

In my mind I began to form pictures of the yet-unvisited Darjeeling, but those images were unexpectedly shattered. 'They are coming,' Mashima announced one day.

Coming! To Dacca! What about their plans for Darjeeling?

In reply to our unspoken question, Mashima said: 'She is rather unwell. She will stay with me for sometime.'

'What! Is she ill again?' We jumped up hearing her.

'No, not ill really, but only that she is not quite well,' said Mashima with a mysterious smile.

It left an unpleasant impression on me. I was disturbed over what Mashima said

and the way she smiled. Not well but not ill either — what sort of a riddle was that? And how unruffled Mashima was — as if the news had gladdened her. I secretly felt very indignant about it all.

An hour after they arrived, we three presented ourselves. Mona Lisa sat half-reclining on the sofa, with a cigarette tin in her hand. We three exchanged furtive glances — has Hiren Babu started her on smoking?

She greeted us with a pale smile.

'How are you, Mona Lisa?' We tried to sound cheerful.

She brought the tin close to her lips and then shut the lid. 'As you see —' she began, but left off feebly, abruptly.

'Is it true you are ill?'

'How is it with you?' she asked, not answering our question. Then she chatted about little nothings in a gentle voice, raising the tin often to her lips.

Hiren Babu entered the room with an air of great hurry. 'How do you feel now, Taru?' he asked anxiously.

'Better,' said she, raising her eyes to him, and we noticed how tired her eyes were.

'Why not lie down for a while,' he suggested.

'I am comfortable as I am.'

'Ah, here you are!' Hiren Babu noticed us at last. 'See what has happened to Taru? —' He was going to say more, but he checked himself.

'What exactly has happened to her?'

'Nothing really, but —'

But what? Was the illness too serious even to be named? How changed she was, almost half-dead, speaking softly, sitting sunken where she was without making the least movement, and gone was her gay, ringing laughter. Mother used to say that girls grew plumper after marriage, but what had come over our Mona Lisa!

Mashima came in carrying a small plate. 'Try this, darling,' said she.

'What is it, ma?'

'Taste it first,' said she, and forced a little of it into Mona Lisa's mouth with her fingers.

'No — please — no more!' cried Mona

Lisa, and her face was disfigured with pain. She put one hand on her throat and covered her face with the other.

We walked silently, gloomily for a while after leaving their place. Suddenly Asit said, 'She was spitting into the tin; yes, she was.'

'Nol' I exclaimed, indignant.

'Fact, I saw her doing it.'

'Then this is her disease, perhaps?' suggested Hitangshu. 'A sort of spitting sickness?'

'Not a disease,' Asit declared solemnly. 'She's expecting a baby.'

At this, Hitangshu giggled. 'What makes you giggle?' I demanded angrily. 'What is there amusing about it?'

'That's why Mashima gave her those pickles,' added Asit. 'Women in that condition like sour things.'

'A fat lot you know!' I growled angrily.

'What's wrong with you, Bikash?' Asit glanced at me and I thought his eyes twinkled in amusement.

'Damn you, I am fed up and going home.' I left them to return home alone. It was sunset-time; there was sadness in my heart and the sadness was sweet. I opened a book and began reading in the fading light of the day; the book seemed to better company than friends.

Hiren Babu left two days after our little row. His train would leave at noon. It was nearly time; a hackney-carriage was summoned and the luggage piled on its top. Hiren Babu was about to step in, but he stopped at the door of the carriage. 'Have you forgotten anything? Should I go in and get it for you?' I asked in a flurry.

'Don't bother. I'll go myself.'

With quick steps he made for the house. When he returned he walked up straight to the carriage and stepped into it without looking round. The coachman's whip whistled through the air. Asit mounted his bike; he would accompany Hiren Babu to the station. Craning his neck forward Hitangshu asked: 'When are you coming back?'

'Soon ... Look after her,' Hiren Babu

said, and he looked away. My heart ached.

How still that noontime was, beautiful as a picture that noonday in Purana Paltan, when the month was March and the year nineteen hundred and twenty-eight. The cab and Asit on his bicycle gradually grew smaller and then vanished from view at the turning of the road. Hitangshu and I traced our steps back into the house. Mona Lisa lay with her face buried in the pillow and her body shook as she wept disconsolately.

'Mona Lisa!'

'Listen, listen to us.'

'After all, Hiren Babu is coming back soon.'

'We won't let him go the next time.'

'No more — please — don't weep any more — don't — we beg you — we beseech you, Mona Lisa!'

She wept on. I knelt on the floor at her feet like a suppliant and crooned into her ear with my hand on her head. 'Enough — enough. I say — stop it, now — be quiet — listen — calm yourself a moment — do please, Mona Lisa!' And suddenly in the midst of my entreaties, my voice cracked and I too broke into tears.

Together we wept for a while and then she nudged me and said, 'Why are you weeping, silly!' I hid my face in my hands; she clutched my hair and gave it a violent shaking. 'Aren't you a man? Aren't you ashamed to be weeping. Stop it! Right now!'

I removed my hands and looked at her through my moist eyes. There was a fluttering in my heart as her eyes met mine. The fluttering lasted through the day and even in sleep I felt it.

We three kept guard over her, watchful for her well-being, wary that no disquieting thought visit her. She has a sudden desire to taste a rare food; Asit on his bike scours the town to get it for her. We know, of course, that her desire would be gone the moment she sees the thing. So we hang on her wishes, waiting hopefully for her to ask for something else. But if ever she deigns to have even one bite, and says it

tastes good, we virtually swim in happiness.

If Hiren Babu's letters are delayed, we tell her he is not writing because he is planning to give a big surprise by coming himself. She knows it is not true and yet every time she hears it, her face brightens. And we enjoy that look in silence.

Hiren Babu returned three months later. She was better now, ate more, went out, bought saris from pedlars. Her figure had grown heavier too. This time Hiren Babu stopped for ten days and when he came again during the Pujas, he stayed a whole month.

But by that time she was ill again. The doctor came often and prescribed any number of drugs and tablets, but, from all accounts, without doing her any good. What the nature of her suffering was we did not know, but its effects were apparent. Dark rings appeared under her eyes, she gasped for breath to speak even a few words, and at times her face took on a bluish tinge. We used to hang around her; when she lay down we cooled her with a palm-leaf fan; if she appeared just a little better, we tried to cheer her with amusing stories: all in vain.

One day I said, 'It would be fine if I could take her illness on myself as Babar had taken Humayun's.'

Asit burst into laughter. 'However hard you try, you can't have this one.'

I blushed. 'I mean — not the illness, but the suffering.'

'How she suffers really,' said Hitangshu. 'All night she can't sleep, it seems. Walks up and down, for it's painful to her even to lie on bed.'

'Naturally. Haven't you noticed how she looks now?' said Asit.

'How does she look! She looks perfect, beautiful.' I cried out acidly.

'However beautiful a woman is, at this last stage, you know ...'

'This is the time a woman looks her best,' I retorted, raising my voice to a still higher pitch.

And so, truly, did she appear in my eyes. Every day she seemed to grow more

beautiful; her whole body, filled and laden with a strange richness, was to me almost unbearably lovely. One day I could not help telling her as much. It was a day with the first nip of winter in the air, like the one last year when they returned from Ranchi and we tasted paradise in a railway carriage. She asked me, 'Tell me, Bikash, what has come over you these days? You seem to be gaping at me all the time!'

'Because you have grown so beautiful,' I replied boldly, without any trace of shyness.

'Wasn't I pretty before?'

'Not beautiful as you are now!'

'Really so?' Mona Lisa squinted her eyebrows as she gazed out on the meadows of Purana Paltan. 'You three do love me!' she said softly. 'But don't stare at me like that, it makes me uncomfortable ... oof, the sun is strong!'

I closed the shutters of the windows.

'I would like to sleep a little; you mind?'

There was a light shawl at her feet; I unfolded it and spread it over her. 'You are a little better these few days, aren't you?'

'Ye-es. I'm well.'

On her face was written courage, courage and fear, and patience too. 'Why did Hiren Babu go away?' I asked.

'Hasn't he work to do?'

'When does he return?'

'He will, when it's time.'

'But why did he have to go at all? I don't like it, if you ask me.'

'All right, all right, Uncle Greybeard. Now close shop.' She turned to the other side and closed her eyes. 'I am going to sleep now', said she, and was asleep in an instant. How tired she was, poor thing, how tired through lack of sleep at night! 'May all be well with her, may she be safe and well!' I whispered a prayer though I did not know to whom it was I prayed.

That night I tossed in bed, thinking that she must be fretting now, walking up and down in her room while outside was the darkness with jackals howling and a sky with the weight of seven more hours of

night. Why cannot I do anything for her, why is it that I cannot be at her side now, putting her to sleep by some magic? Is it man's fate merely to watch suffering without being able to lift one finger? Are our hands tied so inextricably? These thoughts drove sleep off my eyes; lines of verse rose in my mind and flickered, increasing my agitation. I sat up and looked out. The familiar landscape, darkly gleaming in a pale moonlight, seemed new and strange and secretive, and vague and dreamlike beyond my window rose the shape of Tara Kutir. I did not gaze at it long; instead, I lit the lantern and, steeped in the small of burning kerosene, began composing a poem with hordes of mosquitoes stinging me all the while.

It happened this way every night. Sleep abandoned me. I was sharing her unrest, I was the guardian of her wakeful nights and was keeping all her suffering at bay — such were the thoughts that filled me and made me feel like a god. And in my poems entered beautiful ideas — so beautiful that I myself was surprised.

One such night — or rather morning, for it must have been about two o'clock — I trembled in my writing as somebody seemed to call out: 'Bikash, Bika-ash.' My hand shook and the letter I was forming lost shape. I stopped and waited. The voice called again. I came out softly, and as I unbarred the door I found the two of them hovering like two shadows.

The moon had not yet risen — perhaps it did not rise at all that night, for the new moon was quite near — but the sky was bright with stars and on the earth was a faint and powdery gleam. Silently we faced one another in that cold wintry night, with our hearts throbbing.

'What is it, Asit? Hitangshu, anything wrong?'

'Seems it has started,' whispered Hitangshu.

'Started?'

'I heard people talking and hurrying about downstairs and I heard a faint moaning too. Heard it in sleep and could not stay

in bed any longer. I woke up Asit and came to you. Were you awake?'

I did not speak but looked at them, passing my eyes from the one to the other. Hitangshu's face was pale in the starlight and Asit was looking away into the distance. We too seemed to have changed during these days, no longer loafing or laughing over trifles; speaking less, and scarcely at all about her whom before we had never tired of discussing. We were waiting, waiting breathlessly. Unawares we began to walk, not noticing the shivering that quickened our pace, nor realising when we opened the gate into the garden and stopped at the foot of the stairs, I am sure we did not talk or make a sound, but Mr. Dey came out almost immediately with an electric torch in his hand, as if all this while he had been waiting for us. 'Asit,' he said in a low voice, 'do bike down to Dr. Mukherji's place. Wait there and bring him along with you.'

The darkness wafted Asit away. Hitangshu and I sat down on the stairs with nothing to do or think about. A cry, a stifled moan like a wail, continuous, pierced through our backs into where our hearts were — a cry without a sound as it were, a raw pure naked pain, issuing it seemed to us from the very heart of the earth, and therefore unending. Could it be only a woman in anguish?

A glimpse of her was not allowed us, not even from a distance, nor could we enter her room or stand at the doorway either. All we could do was to wait outside in the cold night, neither awake nor asleep, under the stars, face to face with fate and the silent skies.

Began the bustle of the doctor's coming and going; it continued through the remainder of the night into the next day. At daybreak we sent a special telegram to Hiren Babu, but however swift the message and swifter be Hiren Babu's desire, I realised he would not be able to come before afternoon tomorrow. How helpless a creature was man! How weak! Doctor and nurse, drugs and injections, care of devoted hands and prayers full of love —

and man was helpless still, not an eye to shine in answer to anxious unspoken questions. The doctor's face was grave as stone and from her parents' lips issued crisp commands. Not once did Mashima meet our eyes, nor had we guessed before that a shrunken old man lay hidden under Mr. Dey's smart appearance. And who knew that the soft blue sky was merely a veil for such anguish? And had we really nothing to do but listen to this moaning?

That day it became evening at afternoon and it was dark as night by the time it was evening. Suddenly as the night deepened, a shriek rose upon the air, as if from the bowels of the earth it rose and sank, then rose again towards the sky. But heaven was still and not a star was disturbed. Once again rose the shriek, long as the cry of the sacrificial goat, and it seemed to go echoing hour after hour, interminable. We fled into the open but the cry pursued us as we ran; an animal cry it was, blind and nameless, the primeval cry of Earth the Mother from which there was nowhere to escape.

We returned to the house. Within there was wave on wave of bustle with the doctor's voice booming in between, and outside the night was beautiful with stars and an infinity of darkness. But why did the earth's deep moan never stop?

The stars that were overhead descended to the west and those not visible till now clambered above the horizon; in the east the blackness paled and specks of light fluttered and vanished, while brighter shone a large green star, still and all alone. This was that unearthly hour, that moment of miracle, the same as when I awoke from sleep on her wedding day, and when, adrift in a glimmering bark which was the only one in a sea of darkness, I had received her from the hand of death. At least for an instant she had been mine that day; was this not another such moment?

'Something seems wrong,' whispered Asit.

'Seems all right to me,' said Hitangshu.

'The house is strangely silent.'

'Yes ... that is so.'

'Should I go in and find out?'

Asit stood up but paused. We waited

long; it was all still; no sound nor tremor to tell us what was going on. And then we suddenly saw Mr. Dey standing in front of us. In the first grey light of dawn we watched his lips tremble, and so still was it around us and so intently did we gaze at him that it seemed we did not so much hear as see the words his lips formed.

'Come in and see.'

Once again, it was Asit and Hitangshu who did everything; they heaped flowers on her, piles of flowers they got from who knows where and they worked till two o'clock bedecking her, and when the time came to carry her away, it was they who were first as carriers. Many others lent their shoulders; only I could not help, being too short to walk shoulder to shoulder with the others, and so I brought up the rear all by myself. No, not quite by myself, for by this time Hiren Babu had arrived, and barefooted and in his travelling clothes, he walked beside me behind the carriers.

He married again a year later. Mr. Dey was transferred from Dacca. People talked about the Deys for a while, but soon another family rented the ground-floor of Tara Kutir. Many more houses rose in Purana Paltan, now blazing with electric lights. After leaving the technical school, Asit got a job at Tinsukia in Assam; six months later he died, I am not sure of what disease. Hitangshu took a Master's degree in Science, went to Germany for higher studies and did not return, having married and settled there; — now that the war is ended I wonder where and how he is. And as for me, I am still here — no, not in Purana Paltan, nor at Dacca, nor in nineteen hundred and twenty-seven or twenty-eight — all that is a dream today, fragments of dreams that break through my work sometimes, — a whisper, a breeze, a shudder, tingling and rustling through my hours of toil — those noontimes when the thunder rolled in the skies, those days of rain, those nights — and you! Mona Lisa, who but I still remember you — you as you were and will always be!

Translated from the Bengali by JYOTIRMOY DATTA

A R T S

Kanchanjan

A Disquieting Mirror

By JYOTIRMOY DATTA

'Blind praise in the name of criticism of the experimental film (*Kanchanjan*) is being showered on Satyajit Ray depicting him as a master genius in cinematography and confusing millions of cinema-goers as to the true position and worth of Ray's film. It is... a "tale of sophistication", appealing less to the heart—to which it should have appealed more, if it aspired to rank as great art.'

'*Kanchanjan* seems like a minute quantity of food served on a beautiful golden plate before a famished man.' '... Is new in form but hollow in content. Too bizarrely intellectual to be called art for the people.'

'Actors—the mainstay of a drama—are deliberately made ciphers in the play, to say nothing of the dramatic element itself. To create something new in cinematographic art, the proper utilization of life-force is essential. Just as life itself is not without some drama, so also cinema, the mirror (not the mirage which Satyajit Ray has made it) of life cannot be wiped clean of all dramatic quality.'

—Quoted from letters published in an English daily.

I SUPPOSE there is some manual on good writing which expressly forbids opening an article with a long series of quotations. But I could not resist the temptation of doing so because, even from this meagre evidence, it is possible to gather why *Kanchanjan*, the shortest feature film made in India, has aroused the warmest controversy.

Those who find the film unsatisfactory agree, however, on one point: it is like a 'beautiful golden plate', it is 'new in form', Ray is a 'master genius' in cinematography (meaning photography?). This may seem mystifying: if it is true that *Kanchanjan* has formal beauty, why do people grumble? Are films of perfect form so numerous that we need no more such?

This is no real mystery, however. *Kanchanjan* is not just a 'beautiful golden plate'—it is like a minute quantity of food served on a beautiful golden plate before a famished man'. It is a 'tale of sophistication, appealing less to the heart'. It is not just 'new in form'; it is 'new in form but hollow in content'. It does not have 'life-force'. These irate correspondents had lusted for a great message, for 'life-force' and a 'tale of the heart'; therefore they felt cheated by the perfect form of *Kanchanjan*. The Indian viewer is sentimental; he considers his money well spent only if his endocrine glands are squeezed so mercilessly that his eyes sprout tears as fast as artesian wells. He wants a film to show 'Life' triumphing

over 'Death'; he believes in such grand sentiments as patriotism and love and the sanctity of marriage. It is natural, therefore, for such a sweetly naive creature to dislike Kanchanjangha.

For Kanchanjangha is sly and witty and ironic. Not that Satyajit avoids patriotism, love, etc., (it might have been easier on the audience if he had) but his treatment of these is cruelly ambiguous. Which patriotic Indian would not wish to see the anglophile Rai Bahadur unmistakably 'defeated' at the end? I for one would have liked to see him get a straight one on the nose. But what actually happens is that one of the Rai Bahadur's fond schemes has a minor setback. Similarly, while it would have been a great triumph of romantic love if Manisha had clearly spurned 'Mr. Bannerji' and had fallen in love with that awkward youth, Ashoke, one is gnawed by a vague disquiet: Manisha may after all end up as Mrs. Bannerji. Or, think of that estranged couple, Anima and her husband, who patch up their differences because of their daughter. In commercial movies, this would have been celebrated as the triumph of true love over false and an occasion for a sermon on the unbreakable, Godrej-like strength of wedlock. But, alas, the rapprochement is not a victory of romance but of commonsense; it is a domestic compromise involving petty sacrifices on the part of both.

If the romantic in each of us is disappointed by Kanchanjangha, the good Bengali feels irritated and humiliated by the dialogue. Like too many raisins in a cake, or rather, flies in milk, the Bengali dialogue teems with English words and gives one a sickening feeling. One blushes at the thought that this is the khichry language each language-proud Bengali uses

even while in love. The absurd aping of British manners is not as irritating, not as deflating to one's ego, as the inability of apparently civilized human beings to express quite simple thoughts without recourse to English.

It is a disquieting and unflattering mirror that Kanchanjangha holds before the viewer. And the easiest way of escape is to refuse to see one's image in it. That is exactly what they who wrote those letters did: 'it is new in form but hollow in content', said one. 'It is like a minute quantity of food on a golden (not gold) plate' exclaimed another. It is impossible not to be, in some vague way, impressed by the film, but it is hard to accept its disturbing content. It is more comforting to believe that its effect is not due to anything that Ray might have to say but solely due to its formal beauty. Thus, alas, are many vital things made trivial. There are some who read the Bible not for its content but merely its beautiful prose.

But is the beauty of Kanchanjangha independent of its content? Unlike Satyajit's earlier films, there are few shots in this film which can be said to be beautiful out of their context. The sequence in *Pather Panchali* where the children listen in wonder to the music of telegraph poles is beautiful even in isolation. Similarly, some of the Banaras shots in *Aparajita* are charming even as stills. In Kanchanjangha, however, there is hardly any single scene which would retain its magic if abstracted from the flow of the film.¹ How moving, in the film, is the shot where Manisha presses her face against a tree (to weep?) while in the background is the blurred but colourful Gurkha band. Did she weep? We don't know; her sobs, if she sobbed, were lost in the gay music. It is a composite image made not only of colour but also of sound.

But not just colour and sound. Its effect is due primarily to the contrast between the lonely girl and the crowd and the pathos of her attempt to be alone in the most crowded and public spot in Darjeeling.

¹ I have looked at an album of Kanchanjangha stills, helping to select some to accompany this article. It was very hard to choose the best. The scenes that had seemed so poetical on the screen appeared quite dull photographs on the dead page. Those that appear in *Quest* were finally chosen not because they are photographic gems but because of their bearing on the theme.

Can one ever be alone in Darjeeling? Mr. Bannerji tramps endlessly with Manisha but whenever he thinks he is safe enough from interruption to ask the question (he is not Prufrock; he knows his own mind; having a good job, he is sure of his place in the solar system), someone pops up and Mr. Bannerji has to again start from Adam and Eve. One is never sure of not being overheard; no one is safe with his sorrow. This, fortunately, is what brings about the rapprochement between Anima and her husband. This is also what makes it possible for Manisha to chance upon Ashoke after Mr. Bannerji temporarily discontinues his courting.

These encounters and meetings being accidental, the moralist may find no order, no inevitability in the way Satyajit resolves his little problems. Maybe, his solutions are no solutions at all because they do not have the finality of destiny. It certainly would have been more comforting if we could say that the relations between the characters, which changed so fast in course of two hours, would not change at all in all the years to come. Who would not have been pleased if he was sure that there would never again be any rupture between Anima and her husband and Manisha would not marry for money? But, alas, life flows and Satyajit, artist that he is, can only do what he does in the film: by transporting the characters to such a place as Darjeeling, where some of the social restraints and taboos that rule people lose their hold, he makes the accidental seem almost inevitable.

Darjeeling, Queen of Hill Stations, looks in the film as artificially pretty as in a picture post-card. Did Satyajit intend it to look so? I think he did. Or else why should he use colour? Ashoke recognizes that in Calcutta he would not have rejected the three-hundred-rupee job. In a

vague way, Mr. Bannerji too feels that Manisha is temporarily transformed and he hopes time would cure her of her romantic waywardness. But is it a romantic disease, or is it her true grain showing up at last? Is she (and all the others) on a holiday from life or on a voyage into reality? One is not sure; but it is sure the Darjeeling of the film is a magic place, in some mysterious way different from all the towns marked on maps. And the colour photography helps to substantiate this feeling of ambiguous differentness—heightening on occasion the illusion of reality, diminishing it, making objects look too picturesque to be real, at other times.

Ambiguity, innuendo, paradox, irony—how different are these from the high stuff of romantic drama! What a shock it must be for the Bengali audience to be confronted with something as different from the Apu trilogy as *Kanchanjanga*! There has been no classical period in Bengali culture; the modern Bengali is only acquainted with shapeless, gelatinous, anti-rational grandeur because no Kalidasa nor any Racine has taught him the poetry of form.² Most of his favourite characters of fiction are adolescents. Therefore, he did not find it hard to admire the Apu films. Although Satyajit was not always a faithful interpreter, the viewer could not only trace the outlines of his favourite classic but also discern a grand design in the trilogy. The Apu cycle is epic in span; the action in *Kanchanjanga* happens in as much time as it takes to screen the film. The subject of the trilogy is impressive: Death, the spiritual education of a child who matured into a genius, his rejection of Art and return to Life. And the subject of *Kanchanjanga*? It apparently is as trivial as the progress and failure of a plot engineered by a silly and pompous father, the emergence into the open of a family rift which is somehow patched up, a faint spurt of revolt by an overawed wife. Not that such themes have never before been treated by sentimental, let alone realist, artists. But Satyajit's Anima is an even more anti-romantic

² These remarks, although made specifically about Bengali culture, is true I suppose of the rest of India too. And these blanket generalizations do surely have their exception as is proved, among other things, by the not-too-brief run *Kanchanjanga* had in Calcutta.

creation than *Madam Bovary*; it is Anima herself who is the first to see through the absurdity of her little romance. As for the fleeting acquaintance between Manisha and Ashoke, all the comment one feels like making is that they are pitifully awkward children learning their first heartbreaking lessons of life.

And it is not love alone that comes in for ironic probing. Marriage, that great pillar of society, is similarly examined and found to be a sham. The Rai Bahadur is not aware of it, of course, but one can read the history of his despotism in the weather-beaten lines on the face of his wife. The relation between Anima and her husband had also been hypocritical but they are able to cut out the cant when they give up the illusion that marriage necessarily involves love.

But Satyajit's cruellest 'comment' on life is implied in the actions of the most endearing character in the film. Even he who seems out of all this, the bird-lover, is a trifle silly. And, he is entirely ineffective. He is an observer not only of birds but also the characters of the human drama. Whenever he leaves his rôle of the outsider, whenever he tries to intervene, he either bungles or finds his intervention needless. He can only grieve if things turn out badly, or be pleased if they take a happy direction, or, better still, transfer his gaze to birds who present no emotional problem. But even the birds lead him to disturbing thoughts. If, with all these nuclear tests, the birds lose their instinctive sense of direction...if they go

mad...or come down like raindrops over the steppes...Things have gone awry. The world is not safe even for birds.

This is the kind of 'comment' one can deduce from the film. It does not come straight from the lips of the director. But one can infer this must be somewhat similar to Satyajit's own view of life. Instead of *Kanchanjangha* being hollow of content, instead of this being a sort of playful virtuoso performance by Satyajit, we have got him at last, Satyajit himself, in the dock. His previous films were creative interpretations of past novels; in *Kanchanjangha* he betrays his own leanings. If our audience rejects it (Western audiences are likely to be even more unsympathetic; they used to be grateful to him because he could afford to be unashamedly sentimental unlike his sophisticated and ironic Western contemporaries), it only shows the understandable reluctance of men to face the truth about their favourite illusions. For, *Kanchanjangha* is a disquieting mirror, and the silly creatures who flit across it are ourselves. It is significant that at the end of the film the Rai Bahadur, who had dutifully trekked to the Mall everyday of his stay in Darjeeling to get a glimpse of *Kanchanjangha*, turns his back to the peak at the very moment the cloudbank shifts. He does not see the wave after wave of eternal snows—only we do. Or, do we really? Anyway, neither he nor we understand the meaning of the song the Nepalese boy breaks into, feasting on a bar of chocolate meant for somebody else.

Kanchanjangha

Experiment in "Anti-Film"

By P. LAL

JOHN GRIERSON, writing on 'The Cinema' in the Thirties in a symposium called *The Arts Today*, suggested that the French avant-garde movement [he named René Clair, Cavalcanti, Epstein, Renoir] would die out, and be replaced by the 'propagandist' film. It is amusing to look back at the charming socialist naïveté of the Thirties; far from dying out, the avant-garde has come into its own. Serious film magazines and critics are agog over Cocteau's new film, and specially over Resnais' *Marienbad* which, mélange and montage notwithstanding, they say classifies as the classic anti-film. 'The new spatio-temporal doctrine—the uncertainty-factor—in modern literature and abstract painting—and who wants to reveal himself as an unintellectual philistine?' The words are François Bondy's, and he adds: 'One day, perhaps, Resnais will show us a few isolated stills instead of a film, and the pundits will explain that it is the audience's business to think some motion into them...' The pundits are already busy. Whitebait glorifies the French; Dilys Powell debunks the slob tastes of the British middleclass, Macdonald loathes Hollywood cliché. *Marienbad* continues the trend set by *The Beauty and the Beast*. *Kanchanjangha* is not quite as experimental and successful as that, but it is an anti-film nonetheless. A sophisticated film that is much more than sophisticated only. The mischievous Nepalese boy [inspired by Steiner's flute-playing Mexican boy on *The Family of Man's* Cover] winks at us from an oversize 'K' in the posters, though he doesn't do so in the film. A pointer, perhaps, for Satyajit Ray designed the

poster himself. It sets the mood for a serious spoof, an elaborate doodle of film and feeling. And the joke is on the audience if it doesn't see through that wink.

The anti-film has illustrious precedents in the other arts. In *Samson Agonistes*, nothing happens except the steeling of Samson's mind [Harappa, Manoa and Delilah are cardboard characters and contribute to that end]; in *Waiting for Godot*, the tramps, and the audience, are still waiting when the curtain falls. In the novel *Djuardin* develops on Proust, Joyce [Molly Bloom's unpunctuated soliloquy in *Ulysses*] on *Mrs. Dalloway* and her neurotic plan-less fussings. Robbe-Grillet spearheads the modern anti-novelists. The anti-art of abstract painters, the anti-poetry of Aragon; in Germany the 'syllable-breakers' led by Gottfried Benn, in Italy the 'black rage in the breast' of Pasolini; and, if you like, the transatlantic Howls and Coney Islands of the Mind, the underplayed 'realizations' of Zen mysticism.

Consider the requirements of the anti-film, and analyse *Kanchanjangha* in that context. First: the story. Allow it to meander in a succession of details—let there be no real resolution or climax—let the stream of events be linked by a tenuous unity imposed by directorial skill [the story and scenario are Ray's], not arising organically out of the material. Though the action takes place on a single day [the classical touch!], the events in *Kanchanjangha* sprawl with Romantic aimlessness. The story 'ends', but the conclusion remains intriguing and unsatisfying—will Ashok [Arun Mukherjee] meet Monisha [Aloka-



Ashok (Arun Mukherjee) and his uncle come up from the bottom of the town.

ASHOK: "From tomorrow you'd better do no more climbing."

SIBSANKAR: "No more climbing indeed! Come to the queen of the Hill stations and sit at home by myself?"



Indranath (Chhabi Biswas) and Labanya (Karuna Banerji) facing Kanchanjangha which is shrouded in mist.

INDRANATH: "What are you worrying about? Look, Moni (their younger daughter) knows very well I have no objections to the marriage."



Ashok (Arun Mukherjee) "the outsider" is explaining to Manisha (Alokananda Roy) why he has refused the job offered him by her father; in the background Mr. Banerjee the prospective bridegroom from whom Manisha has just fled.



Mr. Banerjee (N. Vishwanathan) says to Manisha (Alokananda Roy): "If you ever feel that security is more important than love, you let me know," — and he releases her.



Anubha Gupta as Anima, the elder daughter enters the Children's park when her marriage is about to break up.



Labanya says to her brother, Jagadish (Pahari Sanyal): "I'll stand up to him (Indranath) if necessary. If you have to endure everything without a murmur, life's not worth living."

We are indebted to Miss Marie Seton for the photographs and captions
—EDITORS

nanda Roy] in Calcutta, does the father Indranath Chowdhury [Chhabi Biswas] have a nervous collapse, will the reconciled couple live happily ever after [or will the letters continue to be sent to Anima (Anuva Gupta)], will Mr. Banerjee find a disillusioned Monisha returning to him for 'security', as he calls it? And whatever happened to the playboy Anil and his Keventer's café girl friends?

The anti-film avoids any physical conflict. Blood dripping down the chest of Spartacus, gory chocolaty details on the brow of the King of Kings, charioteers mangled under the spiked wheels in *Ben Hur*—all crude. Ray never did go in for physical melodrama [though he has Apu slap his brother-in-law in *Apur Sansar*, a solitary and forced instance of straightforward action], and in *Kanchanjangha* he carries this to its limit. The fact that in most conventional movies the 'greatest' scenes are those in which emotion is brashly exhibited, must leave him—as it does other sophisticated directors—cold. When Mr. Banerjee [N. Vishnanathan: he is introduced as Mr. Banerjee, Arun Mukherjee as Ashok-babu] is about to pop the question, a devilish clatter of ponies and mules jams his words: one more dramatic situation nipped in the bud. Anima turns her face away when moved to tears; Monisha sobs pitifully into a tree after escaping from Mr. Banerjee's attentions. Ray consciously avoids any display of sentiment—so much easier and subtler to let the audience fill in the feeling themselves. When Ashok flails his arms towards the end, explaining to Monisha his reasons for refusing the job offered him by her father, the logic is all irrational—he attributes his behaviour to the mountain, the heady atmosphere, the Darjeeling touch, you might say. But is he *himself* when he gives the reasons? Which brings us to the supreme anti-film irony—the climax of *Kanchanjangha* occurs when the protagonist who commands our sympathy is not responsible for what he says. He is so worked up that he isn't himself; his isn't an admirable mature act.

The anti-film avoids chief characters, 'heroes' and 'heroines'. Too vulgar, too pit-pat. *Kanchanjangha* is a clutter of sketches, vignettes almost documentary in nature presented with consummate skill, flowing into and out of each other with bewildering speed [and with equally bewildering slowness at times!]. Calcutta's billboards displayed 14-hero posters and the day of the film's release saw the local newspapers running advertisements of thirteen faces all given star billing. Anil Chatterjee, the rakish-capped playboy, gets 3 minutes on the screen, and is a 'main' character: Lily [Vidya Singh] gets less, Lila [Nilima Roy Chowdhury] about three seconds. The viewer's interest is deliberately diffused until he cannot, even if he wants to, concentrate on the salient theme. The kaleidoscope of characters continually forms strange new patterns.

The refusal to commit itself to any significant moral attitude or comment is another characteristic of the anti-film. 'The world of the Grand Hotel is after all boredom', as Bondy says, 'and the moments of fatigue and the sense of chill and aridity that creep over one are themselves to be assessed as artistic effects from which we cannot escape.' This is a delightful begging of the question, for the answer to a disintegrated civilisation is not a disintegrated poem, and the presentation of confused and amoral people is not to be achieved through a confused and amoral film. Superficially, *Kanchanjangha* sides with young love and love at first sight, and seems to glorify Arun [who is happy with his Rs. 50 a month tuition] in his encounter with Indranath, managing director of five companies. But it is Arun himself who, in his declamatory speech in front of Monisha, says, 'I look bad. But I am good. You are good, I am good. We are both good. Scratch us and see: we are both good.' Such nice people, all: bird-watchers, bored wives, climbing engineers, haughty directors, penurious tutors, playboys, giggly schoolgirls, cruel cuckolds—all good. Durrell's Relativity Proposition: the theme of the uncommitted anti-film.

Which should remind us that none of Ray's earlier films reveals lack of responsible moral comment. But that's the newest gimmick. Speaking on new trends in the Cinema in a broadcast on the Third Programme, Paul Mayersberg described *Marienbad* as a 'Correlative' film, 'because it presents a number of situations each suggesting many possible interpretations, and each interpretation is valid... The traditional psycho-analysis of motive and behaviour is rejected.' No motive, no crime; no crime, no punishment. No commitment; only confusion, conflict, tension—the Theory of the Absurd, not the Rime of the Ancient Mariner. I do not think that anyone can deny that Arun's act is absurd in nature and in effect. Camus catches the modern milieu better than Coleridge. 'The implication of the last shots of the film is that Indranath has somehow been routed by this attractive young man Ashok...' *Somehow* is the operative word here: for it is an irrational defeat, if it is a defeat at all.

I need not stress the other qualities [or anti-qualities]. The wearisome attention to dialogue, ignoring the conventional film principle that the finest scenes are purely visual and invariably dialogue-less, the emphasis on subtle repartee, sarcasm and litotes; Marie Seton reports Satyajit Ray as saying, 'It surprised me to find I could write dialogue. I didn't know I could.' The de-glamourisation, human figures sacrificed at the altar of figures of speech, the female cast swathed in heavy woollens for protection against a Darjeeling winter [the scenes are mostly outdoors, the shooting was completed in October—no conventional sex-appeal here, only the profound irony of glamourlessness in Eastmancolor]. The dry documentary touch [the prolonged shots of Windermere Hotel, the stock Darjeeling tourists, the ponies, the bagpipe band, the blind beggar] which chills the creative imagination and encourages the satiric view. The element of imposed order is of the essence in an anti-film. 'The shooting script of *Kanchanjanjha* begins with a carefully drawn map of Darjeeling's

Observatory Hill, with its focal point of The Mall, to which all paths lead and on which all the people of the town converge. There are seventeen numbered circles on the map, each marking a location. The only location away from the Hill is the teeming market on the lowest level of the many-tiered town. This is near the impoverished quarter where Ashok and his uncle live. So Ray has linked the bottom of the town to the top through the movements of his characters.' Who would have guessed? But together with the mechanical must go a strong dose of the improvised. In *A Woman is a Woman*, Jean-Luc Godard 'rejects the conventions of the well-made film', because he wants the spectator to be 'a witness to the creation of the film.' Take the case of Scene 8 Shot 141 of *Kanchanjanjha*, which has Chhabi Biswas and Karuna Banerjee walking down a flight of steps towards the road. Suddenly Ray sees an English tourist couple coming up: he asks them to walk into and out of the frame. For the next shot, he has two other hotel guests watching—an American couple. He sprints after them. 'If you keep on talking you're all right.' 'I'm getting a wonderful international cast!' he tells Marie Seton. When Miss Seton points to a great spray of pink-mauve dahlias 'hanging with grace against the background of mist,' he puts them in too. Several bystanders; his wife and sister-in-law; Marie Seton; three old Tibetans, a group of schoolboys, his American distributor and the ice-cream man—all are grist for the documentary mill.

The anti-film is also fond of the cliché symbol. A rose is a rose, we know, and that's cliché enough, God knows; but a rose, as Gertrude Stein says, is a rose is a rose is a rose, and that, in her anti-prose, makes it something special. The obvious, in other words, becomes invested with the writer's superior awareness that it is the obvious, and thereby—if the reader is superior too—it becomes illuminatingly non-obvious. It's quite a trick, and very well played in *Kanchanjanjha*. Here are a whole lot of

queer birds, says Ray: the Chowdhury family holidaying in a hill resort. So he has a bird-watcher who not only looks at the winged members of the plumed tribe but on two climactic occasions trains his binoculars on N. Viswanathan and Arun Mukherjee. It's a short leap from the binoculars to the camera lens; and when we are given a shot of amorous pigeons in the background while a cigarette-fuming Viswanathan pursues the hapless doe-eyed Monisha, the first reaction is: How blasé can you get? But there's a whole clutter of them. Afternoon mist moving up the mountain to signify the misty confusion in the minds of the various protagonists. Kanchanjanga, the father figure: Indranath humiliated and defeated. The picture postcard opening shot, suggesting picture postcard artificial relations in the film. Tortuous roads suggesting complicated human relationships. Clouds of cigarette smoke everywhere, suggesting I am not sure what, though it couldn't be lung cancer. The dried-up marriage suggested by withered leaves falling in a park while school children romp in the background. The triangle indicated by a perfectly triangular children's slip-chute. 'Two's company', says Jagdish the bird-watcher, 'three's a—', and he leaves the sentence unfinished. But we know: three's a triangle. Chhabi Biswas's anglicisation suggested by—guess what? That's right: admiration of a bagpipe band, reminiscences of

cricket days, 'Good mornings' from passing Englishmen. And the sweet, virginal Monisha wears sweet saffron sari and innocent white coat, of course; but Anima, who is carrying on with another man behind her husband's back, wears glaring striped purple sari; of course.

Sometimes the symbol gets fuzzy, the image blurs. What does the blind beggar symbolise? What does the Nepali boy's song mean? Why does Kanchanjanga unfold through mists for three seconds as the film ends? How does Ashok change from naïve, good-natured, open-mouthed Rashbehari Avenue addā boy into a brave, job-rejecting, philosophising Faunteroy? His uncle, a Hindi film-style, Mukri-type clown, is crudely portrayed.

The loss of voice perspective in long shots of characters walking and talking is, far from being a subtle technique [as Marie Seton suggested] actually just repetitive and irritating. On the Mall, people stare into the camera, touristy types pass to and fro at the director's bidding, three wooden young men sit on a bench woodenly reading newspapers. Pimpley, blotchy faces with bad make-up [and perhaps weak focus] alternate with beautiful glimpses of Monisha's delicate Bengali good looks.

There you are: an anti-film, a new art-form. The first Indian anti-film. The first colour anti-film anywhere. How does one assess an anti-film except by anti-criticism?



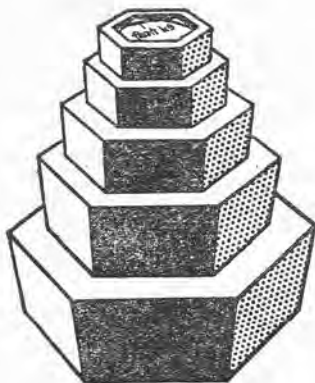
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Director of Publicity, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay

B O O K S

FEATHER WOMAN OF THE JUNGLE by
Amos Tutuola (Faber and Faber, 132 pp. 15s.)

THIS is Mr. Tutuola's fifth book, and if the excitement inspired a few years ago by the novelty of his earlier efforts — notably of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* — has indeed established his reputation securely and widely, there must be a public thirsting eagerly to lap up this latest keful. *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was greeted with an inebriated clamour of praise. It was the first important literary work in English by a West African to be published in London, and not only was it thoroughly original, but it was also supposed to be thoroughly African. Since a benign sympathy for the awakening of African national aspirations is so fashionable in England today, critics were quick to seize upon Mr. Tutuola as a portent of the dawn of an indigenous Nigerian literature.

Feather Woman of the Jungle glows with the same auroral light. It bears the same stamp of aboriginal procreation, at once primitive and exuberant, confronting us with a witch's stare, bizarre, savage and unpredictable. Its macabre fantasy and nightmarish, pointless violence will doubtless work the same magic on Mr. Tutuola's following as did *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* and *The Brave African Huntress*.

The book takes the form of ten Yoruba Night's Entertainments: an elderly chieftain tells his villagers tales of the journeys he made in his youth. Six times he leaves his home with his gun, game-bag and 'usual matchet' in search of 'wealths'. Each time, he walks on and on until he stumbles into some terrible, strenuous adventure. He encounters a raw jungle of the imagination, in the grip of violent, magical powers, a phantasmagoria of hideously de-

formed creatures whose viciousness is immediate and instinctive. One of them had fins on shoulders, elbows, knees and ankles and there were a number of moustache on his upper jaw, which was that of a big fish. . . . Sometimes he would scratch my face with his sharp nails, sometimes he would slap me on the ear and sometimes he would be frightening by pointing a sharp iron on my eyes.'

A feather-covered Jungle Witch, who wobbles about guided by an ostrich, turns him and his brother into mud images and whips them daily for two years. He meets a queen who has turned the lower half of her husband into a snake and cudgels him every midnight. An 'immortal night woman', six times his height, whose 'both breasts were nearly touching the ground,' follows him 'pushing' his nose with her thick finger, and chases him up a tree. Death himself, twelve feet high, with eyeballs 'swelled out like a big knob of a big tree', raises his stone cudgel above his head when they meet and shouts, 'Who are you? who are you eating my mangoes? Stop in one place and let your death meet you there or be running away and let your death chase you! Please, choose neither of the two! Because I am the death who is coming to kill you all now! Willing or not all of you will go in my soup pot tonight!'

And so, bedevilled with the paraphernalia of cudgels, whips, spit, blood, hats full of skulls, coffins and cutlasses, the search goes on. 'Where are you going?' I replied: 'We are going to the town of wealths!' 'What for?' he asked. I replied: 'We are going there for wealths!' 'Wealths?' he repeated it with great wonder and I confirmed it loudly: 'Yes indeed!'

It must be admitted that these stories

have punch. They move with a simple vigorous assurance, the tempo is well sustained, and the strength of Mr. Tutuola's colourful imagination is undeniable. For many readers, however, this type of literary fare is not merely unattractive: it is unbearable. For one thing, the gawky language, apt though it is, can soon become exhausting. Jolted along over all those rough bumps, clumsy omissions, curtailed sentences and misplaced words the reader is lucky if he does not suffer from a kind of car sickness. After a time, each oddity jabs at him painfully. As for the stories themselves, the yorubas were delighted with them, no doubt; by the tenth evening they were flocking in from neighbouring villages to hear the 'rest story'; and 'those who too old or too young to walk were brought by heads and shoulders'. But by no means everybody will share their enthusiasm to hear the old fellow through.

S. MELLUISH

Pasternak's Ordeal

COURAGE OF GENIUS: *The story of Boris Pasternak by Robert Conquest (Collins and Harvill, 191 pp. 18s.)*

WRITTEN by a poet, dealing with the life of a great poet, and dedicated to a poet (Philip Larkin), *Courage of Genius* is a significant production. Outwardly, it details the story of Boris Pasternak and the storm that rose and swallowed him up in Russia after the publication of *Doctor Zhivago*. What is really on trial, however, is not the Russian dictatorship only, but every totalitarian system where the artist cannot breathe freely.

It must be admitted that much of the outburst of anger against Pasternak in Russia, in the year 1958, was quite genuine. It was provoked not so much by the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* as by the award of the Nobel Prize to the author. In this the Swedish Academy, or rather the Nobel Prize Committee which recommends these awards, is largely to be blamed: the award

was badly timed. The Russians seem to have a grievance that the Nobel Committee had ignored some of the best Russian authors in the past. They are right in that. It does look queer, for instance, that the Committee should think Winston Churchill good enough for the highest honour in the field of literature but not Leo Tolstoy. There have been many other Russians whose claims have been similarly overlooked: Chekhov, Maxim Gorky, and, in our own times, Sholokhov. So when the award was made to Pasternak, it took the Russians by surprise; and they felt that merit was not the only consideration which had elicited the gesture — for, after all, merit had been repeatedly bypassed earlier.

The surmise of the Russians was that the award was made for the political connotations of the novel. The general appraisal of the book in the West almost justified their suspicion; for in the West, it has to be owned, *Doctor Zhivago* was read as a 'political' novel. Maligned at home, glorified abroad for the wrong reasons, poor Pasternak was caught between two currents, both unfair to him. In this context, Pasternak's own literary intentions in writing the book are of prime importance. He wrote to Khrushchev, after he had been expelled from the Union of Soviet Writers as a measure of punishment: 'I am linked with Russia by my birth, life, and work. I cannot imagine my fate separate from and outside Russia. Whatever my mistakes and errors, I could not imagine that I would be in the centre of such a political campaign as started to be fanned around my name in the west.' There was some talk then of exiling Pasternak from Russia, and he goes on in the same letter, 'A departure beyond the borders of my country would for me be equivalent to death.' He ends with this touching sentence: 'With my hand on my heart, I can say that I have done something for Soviet literature and I can still be useful to it.'

All this information one finds, in detail and in chronological order, in *Courage of Genius*, whose sub-title 'The Pasternak

Affair: a documentary report on its literary and political significance' is an accurate description of the character of its contents. There is nothing interpretative or explanatory in the book. The story is resurrected from the material which has already appeared in the press, in one form or another. But in the careful piecing-together process, in the marginal comments one discerns the impatience, indeed annoyance, of an artist at the way a brother artist was bullied and became a victim of circumstances in another country.

Pasternak undoubtedly loved his motherland. If in his portrayal of *Dr. Zhivago*, he revealed certain unpleasant facets of the society there, it was not to embarrass the present rulers of the country nor to usher in a new revolution. It was because those revelations were essential to the larger unity of purpose of the artist. Pasternak's courage lay in the fact that knowing the sort of repercussions he might have to encounter if he spoke his mind, he did not lose heart and he neither abridged nor falsified his vision. He knew he meant well.

But *Doctor Zhivago* was misunderstood and Pasternak condemned. Once the Russians had decided against Pasternak, the force with which they crushed him defies description. After all, it was not Pasternak's fault that he was awarded the Nobel Prize. In reading the course of the persecution let loose against him, one comes to the conclusion that it was actually the fearlessness of his work which prompted the resentment; the award of the world prize only gave the Russians a convenient ground for mounting the attack. Almost half of *Courage of Genius* consists of appendices which give the text of the statements and articles in which the campaign against him was launched. Nothing that I have ever read in the form of adverse criticism can match the vindictive tone of these texts. His earlier life and achievements ignored, Pasternak is summarily dubbed there 'a decadent poet,' *Doctor Zhivago* is 'an artistically poverty-stricken and malicious work,' the decision of the Swedish Academy 'sensational' — 'penetrated with lies and

hypocrisy.' They did not 'liquidate' Pasternak, but it might be more harrowing to keep a proud man alive in these circumstances.

Communist Russia has sent men into outer space and is the leading nation in that field. But so far as the 'inner space' of man is concerned, it is, in many ways, the most backward of all nations. At least that is how one feels, after reading this book.

C. L. NAHAL

More Political Cliches

PROBLEMS OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY:
Editors: M/S P. D. Devnandan and N. M. Thomas. (The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 210 pp. Rs. 4)

THIS book is the result of a corporate study by a group of Christian friends largely belonging to the academic profession. Though it comes out just before the third General Elections it is intended to direct the attention of the readers to focus on a few important problems of political life in the country.' This quotation from the preface and the fact that it is a part of the *Social Concerns Series* tell us all that can be said about this book. Anyone proceeding to read further will encounter fuzzy earnestness and a complete lack of style on every page till one comes to this valediction: 'And in God's Providence our mutual involvement in political and social activities may well lead to more fundamental conversation, conversion and commitment.'

The first part of the book is concerned with 'Crucial Issues of Indian Politics' — Parliamentary Democracy, National Integration, Planning for Development, Social Justice, Dynamic Secularism, Foreign Policy and Relations. The second has twenty pages on each of the four national parties — Socialist Parties (the Praja Socialist Party and Dr. Lohia's Socialist Party), the Swatantra Party, the Communist Party and the Bharatiya Jan Sangh. The Epilogue discusses the Sources of Christian Political Concern and is strictly for the faithful.

Why, one asks in bafflement, with such an exciting list of contents does it fail to be even mildly interesting? The dreary mixture of academic jargon and journalese could not be the only reason.

The Christian Group which has produced this book has not made up its mind about any one of the 'crucial' issues of Indian politics. The air of condescending detachment merely irritates; and there is not even the compensation of an incisive statement of the facts of Indian political life. The discussion of social justice, for instance, is reduced to an enumeration of legislative measures with an inane observation that much more needs to be done to make these measures effective. The evaluation of our foreign policy ends by suggesting that Indian policy-makers are part-time preachers and part-time peace-makers. In the section on Parliamentary Democracy there is the curious suggestion about 'a centralisation and a decentralisation' of sovereignty as if that most elusive concept of political science were a method of division of administrative responsibility.

A marvellously complete substitution of thought by cliché is achieved in the discussion of Planning for Development. The appraisal of the four political parties in the second part is no less vapid, even if amusingly opinionated. Here is one gem: 'The Sarvodaya movement is a non-political expression of the Socialists, with an individualistic approach.' Almost instinctively, however, the writing becomes sharp and clear when it is analysing the role of Hinduism as a source of Sarvodaya, and as the dominating influence in Jan Sangh politics, or the mystique of Dharma in Swatantra defence of 'farm and family.'

But one must not be too harsh on the Christian Group. For the fact of the matter is that much of the writing on our politics, whether by Indians or by foreigners, depressingly reminds one of the fable of the blind men and the elephant. De Tocqueville noted long ago that 'of all the civilised countries India is the poorest and most miserable.' Poverty is the cardinal fact of Indian politics and the direction and quali-

ty of the effort to remove it will determine the form and contents of our democracy.

The experiment of economic development by consent on the Indian scale has posed and will pose more questions and will call for more authentic answers than can be found in the pert conclusions of political scribes. The form of democracy that is familiar to the intellectuals may not remain the same, with millions of our countrymen emerging from ignorance and poverty year after year, and wanting to take a hand in shaping it so that they too may be familiar with it. Political parties give an impression of fumbling because not one of them, not even the Congress, is big enough to lead this gigantic process nor humble enough to follow it. Political writing concerned with the formal analysis of this fumbling cannot but be unreal.

MAHESH DESAI

The Good King Asoka

ASOKA AND THE DECLINE OF THE MAURYAS by Romila Thapar (Oxford University Press, 276 pp. 45s.)

ANCIENT history is known to be a closed preserve of respectability where sedate antiquarians browse. If you are what I am, a layman of modest intelligence and few marked enthusiasms, you are sure to fare ill when you venture to intrude. Complications of chronology are not inviting. Controversies in numismatics do not excite. The ancient world is lost in trivialities. It is difficult to blame the historians for this because they have so little to build upon. This is why it is easy to praise Dr. Romila Thapar whose gifted pen assists an intrepid imagination.

She writes about the good King Asoka and what happened to the Maurya Empire after Asoka died. The theme calls for, and is given, considerable sections of steady descriptive writing. But all through Dr. Thapar attempts to bring Asoka into line with broad Indian developments and

to understand the King in the context of his society. As you read you become aware that behind this attempt there is a well-formulated attitude towards history. 'With the exception of authentic mystics,' writes Dr. Thapar 'who may have an inner isolated life which is not dependent on the doings of the men and women around them (though even this is a questionable point) the actions of other men are schooled by their experience of the thoughts and deeds of the people amongst whom they live. Asoka was thus not a visionary.' (p. 137). This is something you may not accept; but it is a point you cannot ignore. And it is good to feel provoked when reading ancient history.

It is not a very large volume that Dr. Romila Thapar has written, although the book has a format which tends to deceive. The main body of the work takes up two hundred and seventeen pages in seven chapters and five pages of conclusion. This is followed by six appendices which include a translation of the Asokan Edicts (appendix V) and one on Mauryan Art (appendix VI). The last written item is an up-to-date bibliography which includes books in French and German and one in the Dutch language. Presumably Dr. Thapar is good in Sanskrit and, probably Pali. This adds up to an impressive linguistic equipment. She puts it to good use as she brings the facts together to work out her theme.

The first chapter on 'The Background and the Sources' (pp. 1-19) states the argument of the book, takes a look at the materials for the historian and, very briefly, reconstructs the chronology of the period and takes us from Chandragupta to Asoka. The argument we shall notice in some detail a little later. The crux is stated in the opening page: 'It has been said on occasion that Asoka was amongst those who stood in opposition to his age. This we believe to be a false view. He was ... in many ways representative of his time. His greatest claim to recognition lies in the fact that he understood his age and in

terms of the Indian background realized the requirements it demanded.'

The examination of sources, specially comments on archaeological excavations (p. 11) gives one a comfortable feeling of being brought up to date. Chandragupta is necessarily perfunctory. The second chapter (pp. 20-54) takes the story from the birth of Asoka to his death. There is quite a considerable discussion on chronology interspersed which tends to be a little frustrating. Buddhist accounts are narrated in some detail, frequently to be discarded because 'the monks' were naturally prejudiced. The problem here of course is to determine where to draw the line between fact and fancy. All historians agree that Buddhist accounts are not reliable. But no two of them agree as to how much can be accepted. In this, I do not feel that Dr. Thapar has improved matters. She makes an interesting suggestion however when she says that 'to refer to a precise point during his reign as the moment of his conversion to Buddhism is to overstate what actually took place.' (p. 33).

The three chapters which follow are chapters of discussion. 'Society and Economic Activity' is a theme treated on the basis of Megasthenes, the *Arthashastra* and a little bit of the *Jatakas* (pp. 55-93). The discussion in this chapter is steady, even plodding, as is only to be expected when little more than a summary is being attempted. None the less Dr. Thapar will jerk you to attention by wayward statements of an historical philosophy: 'No single force is entirely responsible for the development of a society...nevertheless the economic factor...can modify the form of a society.' (p. 55) She concludes the chapter on the cheerful note that 'the Mauryan period was one of an expanding economy'. She also speaks confidently of 'increasing trade' (p.93). It is well to notice at this point that the chapter does not go beyond the well-known sources.

The fourth chapter (pp. 94-136) deals with Administration and Foreign Relations mainly on the basis of the *Arthashastra*, the Greek accounts and the Edicts. There

is little here that is spectacular. Dr. Thapar stresses the fact that the Mauryan state was the first centralized Empire that India saw. This emphasis is present throughout her book and occasionally becomes a trifle irksome. The fifth chapter (pp. 137-181) discusses Asoka's religious policy. Dr. Thapar maintains that Asoka formulated his policy of *Dhamma* because it helped him to stabilize his empire. This is the most provocative section of the book and I shall turn to it a little later.

The sixth chapter (pp. 182-196) attempts to reconstruct what happened in the fifty odd years between the death of Asoka and the assassination of Brhadraha which terminated the Mauryan dynasty. The account scarcely rises above compiling a king-list. But Dr. Thapar revives the suggestion of Dr. Vincent Smith that the Mauryan Empire was partitioned after Asoka's death (p. 194). In her last chapter (pp. 197-212) Dr. Thapar considers the reasons which led to the spectacular downfall of the Empire. She considers and rejects the well-known arguments of military weakness and Brahmanic reaction. She also discards Dr. Kosambi's suggestion that the Empire collapsed because of an economic crisis, and also Professor Nihar Ranjan Ray's theory of a popular uprising. Her own answer is that the Empire collapsed because of a top-heavy administration which broke down and because national consciousness did not exist. In this concluding section she puts her points briefly, almost in haste. It would be good to read Dr. Thapar in her more leisurely moods when she can explain for example how national consciousness is linked with the downfall of a particular dynasty.

What she has given us in this book is, however, in itself extremely interesting. But it would have been nice to see her argue the case a little more tidily. One example to make this clear. 'Up to a point,' Dr. Thapar writes, 'economic changes (in Mauryan India) forced the political pattern. The fact of the state being supported by an agrarian economy necessitated the development of a bureaucracy and

a properly organized administration. Improvement in trade was brought about by a tendency towards the uniform administration of the country. The size and scope of the imperial structure entailed a strong centralized control. The political pattern had therefore to place an overwhelming emphasis on governmental machinery and authority, if such a vast edifice was to be kept in working order.' (p. 5).

Now, an agrarian economy does not necessarily entail a bureaucratic state. India remained an agrarian country throughout but a state of the Mauryan type was not the usual rule. And without this prop the paragraph I have cited only proves that upto a point political development (the emergence of a centralized empire) helped the development of economic forces (trade). This, of course, is exactly the reverse of what Dr. Thapar contends but it, or something like it, is all that she can prove. Can she do any better with her main argument? Her views are best stated in chapter V and can be briefly put like this: During the Mauryan period there were 'tremendous changes in the economic life' of the Indians. These changes were related to an expansion of trade and the growth of an urban culture. The merchants became prosperous and 'it was natural that the commercial classes would assert themselves and chafe under the indignity of being regarded socially as a lower order.' (p. 142). This resentment was reflected in those schools of thought which opposed the Brahmanic tradition. Buddhism, a recent school, was supported by the commercial classes and was suited to the new urban culture. Asoka understood this situation and 'declared himself in favour of a new belief...possibly even an eclectic collection of views from varying groups. Thus the dominance of the other groups could be undermined and the central authority could increase its power.' (p. 144). This in a nut-shell is how Dr. Romila Thapar sees the Emperor Asoka and his religious policy.

To my mind this thesis requires con-

Culture Analysed

CULTURE: AN INTRODUCTION by B.S. Sanyal
(Asia Publishing House, 314 pp. Rs. 16.75)

siderable substantiation and careful formulation before it can be accepted. First, there is little concrete evidence to show that there was a spectacular expansion of trade in the Maurya period. It is likely that the establishment of a centralized empire helped the Indian merchants. But this is no direct evidence and it is impossible to form an idea of the *magnitude* of this expansion purely from this assumption. It is true that both Kautilya and Megasthenes describe a prosperous country. But the prosperity of a country does not prove the existence of tremendous economic changes. The *Jatakas* build up a picture of growing trade. But they do not pertain directly to the Mauryan period (p. 8) and can therefore scarcely substantiate a hypothesis of this nature.

Second, even if there was a considerable expansion of trade there is absolutely nothing to show that the merchants felt humiliated about their position in society. This is an assumption which Dr. Thapar makes but it is an assumption which others may not share. It is true that from the sixth century B.C. onwards there was a great deal of philosophical disputation. But no one so far has seen any reason to connect it with the commercial classes. If Dr. Thapar wishes to maintain this position she will have to substantiate it. Third, it is clear that Dr. Thapar believes it would have been to the political advantage of Asoka to have preached some form of Buddhism. But we do not know whether the Emperor shared this belief. Fourth, Dr. Thapar acknowledges (p. 149) that Asoka's *Dhamma* was in fact not Buddhism. Fifth and last it is difficult to see how preaching a new faith in a land of ancient beliefs could have helped the central power. This in fact could well have added a serious new embarrassment. The feeling therefore remains that Asoka preached his *Dhamma* not because he wished to woo the merchants but because he felt it was the right thing to do.

ASHIN DAS GUPTA

IN intention, this book is pragmatic, in sensibility, metaphysical; in methodology, analytic; in outlook, holistic; in aim, missionary; and in ideal, as the author would like to think, harmonious. The purpose: to defeat the communists. To save Culture with a capital C. Hence two problems: the problem of ends and the problem of means, or the why and the how.

The result is a philosophical treatise treading a traditional path to gather resources for a new situation; a theory, a rare conglomeration of various strands of human thought fused into a unity by a purpose almost didactic and therefore perhaps a little too strong for modern taste.

Dr. Sanyal begins with an analysis of the 'Individual'. The individual is not just a particular but 'a systematic unity of reflex actions, instincts, precepts (material, organic, psychical), scientific categories (physical, biological, psychological), philosophical valuation and realization (natural, human, ideal), practical activities or realization (crude arts, useful arts, fine arts), educational or vocational activities (primary, secondary, tertiary)'. He is analysable in terms of these but not reducible to any of these... A systematic unity of these makes up the harmonious man: this is the ideal.' (p. 29).

Ontologically, then, Culture is realization of values where the component of value has a regulative function and the constituent of value is hedonic feeling (pp. 44-47).

Ideal culture is non-fixational culture. 'Any fixation of feeling at a lower level of experience (that is, finding the greatest satisfaction in it) checks the development of the human individual' (p. 29).

The Communist Culture, for example, is fixational in character: it has the efficient feeling fixated on the level of social theory and practice (p. 66-67). Where does modern education come in? 'The

problem is to devise positive means of individualization' (p.70).

Dr Sanyal defines three closely related terms.

1. Acculturation is the educational process which seeks to prevent any fixation of some theory and practice (either primary or secondary or tertiary) of the cultural system or congeries in which he is born and bred.

2. Humanization is the educational process which seeks to prevent any fixation of feeling for the partial cultural systems, which seeks to give the acculturated man the universality of a non-fixational total cultural system.

3. Individualization includes and supersedes humanization. It equips the humanized man with the partial particularity of his creative self. (pp. 186-7).

What lends individuality to culture is religion. 'Religion' is one word for 'realization of the highest value in theory' (73). History is the next means after education. 'The problem is to devise effective means to check all tendencies to acculturation by way of genocide on the part of any cultural system or nation-state or empire.' (p. 70)

The writing of history is different from the making of history. The former involves 'the statements of a class of facts... and the explanation, both factual and valuational account, of them'; while the latter involves 'the choosing of one's group or society from among the existing ones, or creating a new one; and the making of facts favourable to the society one chooses or creates.' (p. 208). 'The typical historical proposition may not be a scientific law. But an historical explanation involves 'laws' of history as major premises of the syllogism which makes up the explanation' (p. 209).

On the level of philosophy, 'a theoretician of history in the widest sense not only wants to know the factual what and why but also the valuational what and why' (p. 213).

Perhaps the most brilliant part of the book is the chapter on gregational ethics.

Gregational ethics is concerned with the problem of intersocietal behaviour. The term genocide is given its broader meaning in terms of the present historical context. It is 'a revolutionary method of alienation and conversion' (pp. 286-7). Communism practices genocide. It aims at a communist world state and world culture. (p. 287).

The book is a compilation of a lifetime's study and work and brings together various approaches that otherwise are scattered and arrests a major characteristic of the historical situation. It is difficult to arrive at simple value-judgments on a book of this nature which has copious abstractions synthesized into a system. Perhaps one should allow these to grow on oneself so that they cease to be unreal or purely ideational. For a mere cursory reading can result in a rejection that would be too easy and gratifying.

K. D. VALICHA

Introspection

THE WRITER'S DILEMMA (Oxford University Press, pp. 88 12s. 6d.)

AGAINST the 'depressive fabric of a proof, 'the real cloth-of-gold fabric of a possible Way'; against conditioning and conformity, a 'mule-like, camel-like individuality'; against God, no-God or *vice-versa*, against all ills, the creative genius. Each dark thought throws up a reaction, and it is usually a singular one, for though the list includes men of diverse vocations such as a historian, some novelists, a philosopher, a poet and a few journalists, they all represent a creative order, so that each of the contributors to this little collection of essays winds up his reasoning with an affirmation of faith in himself and in the public too. The miraculous is always round the corner, and the situation even now, as Mr Stephen Spender says in his introduction, 'is pregnant with impossibilities.....'

The pessimism of these essays flows from their discussion of averages and generali-

ties, the optimism from faith in the creative spirit which is born tough, and a rebel. After all, 'It is not new, this cry that man is less important than technology. . . . Men were (always) less important than God, less important than the State, less important than order, less important than an idea. . . . man never has been important to most men'. It is only the means of effecting his subjugation that have changed.

In the last essay, *The Consequences of Communication*, Richard Wollheim makes a fundamental point. 'It is lightly assumed', he writes, 'that the age in which mass culture was unknown was a period of diffused eccentricity and happy anarchy'. One has only to see India or the other materially less advanced countries in which such total mind-mechanization has yet to come, in the modern sense, I mean. For, instead of brainwashing, subliminal advertising and the stultifying conformity of commercial T.V., Westerns and the comics, we have superstition, prejudice and dogmatic religion. The effect is the same. There is the added danger that the more modern substitutes will replace the older ones here without even an interval of possible awakening. The writers of the West are afraid that the creative response of their public might be killed altogether under the impact of cheap mass media. Here the response has yet to make a beginning and the writers themselves are sunk in pitiful platitude.

But here or there the problem is a problem only so long as one does not take the extraordinary into account, the fact that '... the change... will come, because it will come, because the human spirit is limitless and inexhaustible. Just round the corner are the Shakespeares and the Mozarts, inexplicable, miraculous' (William Golding).

Forceful, impassioned, analytical or detached but never cold, according to the style and feeling of each writer, these essays begin by seeming of only academic interest to situations such as exist in countries like ours. But one realizes gradually that the problem in essence is similar. A

cocoon of clichés and ready-made ideas' which characterise our thinking here, matched by Women's serials and somatic drugs there. Only genius is transcendental. Only genius can change the situation by becoming a factor in it. Only the unpredictable has solutions to offer. For that one must have faith, and the courage to wait. That I think is the recurrent and most hopeful theme of this book.

UMA VASUDEV

Appraising the Cold War

AN END TO MAKE-BELIEVE by Edgar Ansel Mowrer (Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 219pp.)

THE struggle in Soviet-American relations, which at least in the latter half of the Twentieth century has become the world's Number One disease, goes back to the closing days of World War II, when the then Masters of the globe — Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met to discuss and decide the future of mankind. Many political analysts now have it that at these discussions, a fulminating Churchill was bypassed by a slowly dying Roosevelt, who in turn was cunningly lulled into a false sense of security by Stalin.

Or, if one pretends hard enough to be an impartial observer of history, the origin of this struggle can be traced to the closing days of World War I when Imperial Russia collapsed, when Communism was hoisted onto one of Europe's most glittering thrones after which the Democracies, taking fright, tried first to strangle, then to isolate it. The effort was bound to end in futility because Communism, then better known to theoreticians as Marxism, set out as a genuine reaction to Europe's industrial revolution and the inequalities this revolution created. But somewhere along the way, the reaction lost its idealistic impetus, it turned itself into a rigid, diehard, monolithic type of Capitalism, while the Capitalists of the West, under their own indigenous pressures, converted themselves into votaries — sometimes quite unwilling — of the welfare state.

The struggle, therefore, in the course of several unrestful decades, has got itself converted from a war between Emperors and their industrial-warlord henchmen on the one hand and the people on the other, into a war between the self-appointed Emperors of the people, exercising the dread powers of life and death—mostly death—in the name of the world proletariat and the elected representatives of still more people, who, without abandoning their individual rights, are well on the way to achieving the goal of the greatest good for the greatest number.

'An End to Make-Believe' is the story, a journalistic story, of this ghastly mix-up written by a reporter who was a war correspondent in 1914, who as head of the Berlin Bureau of the *Chicago Daily News*, watched the rise of Nazism and Fascism and, like several other distinguished members of his tribe, suffered the frustration born of disbelief in his findings, a disbelief resulting not from study and knowledge, but from complacency. The Democracies have one thing in common the world over. They refuse to accept anything that is even remotely unpleasant until it is almost too late to do otherwise. They would prefer to see and hear nothing—if possible—which if accepted and believed, might upset the even tenure of their lives. And yet these very Democracies are so constructed that they can never resist the temptation to find out what really is going on everywhere. They employ their best men in this task and until one minute before midnight, choose to disbelieve their findings.

Edgar Ansel Mowrer's story, packed with hard-hitting facts and well-documented, unfolds the reasoned narrative, not only of the struggle between Democracy and Totalitarianism, but between an insatiable curiosity—call it love of truth if you will—and an unshakeable complacency. Says Mowrer in an author's note: 'Now, as always, the future is with the brave and the purposeful. Good intentions are not enough. Unbeautiful nonsense has prevailed too long. Further make-believe can

lead only to what it sought to prevent—catastrophic war or shameful surrender.' He continues: 'In the sinister game of international poker forced on us by Moscow and Peiping, America has lost hand after hand simply because of halfheartedness. Yet the West still holds the aces.'

For us in India, the exposure of this make-believe is of particular interest. Mowrer, it is true, essentially is writing to point out, during the years of first-hand observation, what his country did and did not do, what according to him, should have been done, what even at this eleventh hour still can be done. He does not pretend to be objective and we can accept or reject his arguments. But we, who also indulge in our own forms of make-believe, who since our independence have indulged in so many pipe-dreams of peaceful co-existence, can only derive profit from the frank exposures by this author of his own country's many policy bungles and weaknesses.

Mowrer's book is one of several to be published in recent months to expose what he calls the overwhelming psychological weakness of the free world when it is dealing with Communism. He does, in journalese, what former US Ambassador to Moscow George Kennan has tried to do in a more erudite way, to present to readers, not only the facts that are picked up at first hand, but also their meaning in the light of subsequent events which they created. All of which confirm the imperfectly-understood fear that the world is in crisis, with a third of the world's population living under a tyranny whose long duration does not help one to get accustomed to live with it, even if those who live under it temporarily are quiescent. Mowrer has tried to explain this crisis in simple terms, how it arose and what should be done about it, first because he is a journalist and then because he obviously agrees with Goethe that the trouble with democracy is that it has to wait for an enlightened public opinion.

SHAROKH SABAVALA

The Problem of Germany

THE NEW GERMANY AND THE OLD NAZIS
by T. H. Tetens (*Secker and Warburg*, 257 pp.
21s.)

HERE is a book which is meant to shock, to awaken the public to a potential menace to world peace but which will probably do nothing of the kind. Mr. Tetens has gone to great trouble to prove that the Bonn Government has restored old Nazis to power — to a stage where it might be said that the Nazis prefer to rule indirectly; to establish that this is known to the British and American Governments and connived at by them; and to point out the implication of all this to world politics. 'That the Nazis have had a successful comeback in the Bonn Republic has been admitted even in the German press. Unfortunately, however, the general public in those countries which have aided in Germany's postwar recovery are shockingly unaware that the men who once faithfully served Hitler have quietly returned to key positions in the government.' This, briefly, is Mr. Tetens' thesis and he has presented a well-documented case.

To some extent, the process was inevitable. Frankly, it has always been a revolting spectacle to see a nation turn against a leader it had till lately blindly followed — as in post-war Italy or in post-Stalin Russia. Up to a point, one can sympathise with the German resistance to 'de-nazification'; moreover, an administration needs men with administrative experience and the dependence of Bonn on men who had acquired their experience of government and politics during the Nazi regime, is understandable. If Nazi-ism was to be overturned, it was not by democratic methods that it had to be done, and this was the underlying weakness of the occupying powers which applied the only remedies known to them. But the democratic processes, insisted on and loudly acclaimed, served to restore the Nazis to power.

In contrast to the reparations paid to Israel on Dr. Adenauer's insistence — and against the opposition of his own party —

the compensation due to individual victims of the Nazi race laws was withheld and grudgingly paid. 'The Bonn Republic has pampered Nazis and war criminals with high pensions, interest-free loans and other privileges; more than a million survivors (50 per cent) of Nazi persecution — inmates of concentration camps, those whose property was stolen, whose livelihood was destroyed — have not received a penny. The multi-billion dollar aid from the United States was used primarily for the benefit of those who had brought untold misery to Europe and the World.'

Something not very dissimilar is going on in East Germany — except that communism needs more adaptation than democracy. But what Mr. Tetens makes a point of is that it is with Soviet Russia that the final decision for unification of the two Germanys rests and that this fact might influence the Bonn administration to shift its allegiance. Mr. Tetens fears that the day may come when 'a militant leader again dominates the German scene.' If prosperity continues in West Germany, he does not think that there will be a Nazi or nationalist upheaval; but a recession or a political crisis will touch off trouble again. All this is very disturbing and Mr. Tetens makes no attempt to offer a solution. The cold war situation has naturally added to the opportunities of the Nazis.

Given the conditions in which the administration of post-war Germany had to be supervised by the Allies, there seems to have been little else they could have done. Even in Japan where the task was made easier by one power assuming responsibility, by retaining the central figure of the Emperor, and by the custom of unsuccessful politicians eliminating themselves, these difficulties prevailed. An objective appraisal of the spread of democracy in all these countries would be very useful. It would reveal that progress has not been as spectacular as official opinion would like to believe. But it would certainly demonstrate that it has not been as negligible as Mr. Tetens believes it is — despite the documentation. S. NATARAJAN

The Fashion of the Twenties

ALDOUS HUXLEY, A CYNICAL SALVATION-IST by Sisirkumar Ghose (Asia Publishing House, 202 pp. Rs. 12.75.)

HARDLY any recent writer, far less a living writer, has suffered as much on the whirligig of taste as Aldous Huxley. Here is a writer who blazed forth in the twenties and the early thirties as the most powerful intellect, the sharpest manipulator of irony among the post-war generation of English writers. To many readers of the interwar decades, Huxley was a stimulating encyclopaedia of modern knowledge, sometimes irreverent to traditional modes of thinking but always hospitable to the latest ideas, especially the scientific. It seemed there was nothing worth knowing that Huxley did not know. His debunking was convincing, his analyses of motives remorselessly correct. 'The ultimate debunking of all human pretensions,' to use the words of Anthony Beavis in *Eyeless in Gaza*, seemed to be the one resolute aim of the writer, and Huxley's youthful readers—at least many of the Indian readers among them—would be encouraged by the admired writer's shock-tactics into a rejection of the conventional and authoritarian values of their own set-ups.

But there is a limit to the administration and reception of shocks, even in intellectual matters. Fashions in smart thinking pass as much as fashions in smart trousers and frocks. The interwar values changed—they had to change—and several writers who had established themselves as thoroughbred representatives of interwar outlooks and attitudes, also fell from public grace. As the thirties rolled on to the forties, as the clouds of the Abyssinian and Spanish wars thickened into the tornado of a second global war, Huxley seemed less and less to be the voice of the intelligentsia. He became a recluse whose personal development no longer corresponded to the development of contemporary society.

If Huxley has lost his position as the

intellectual mentor of the age, he can perhaps still endure as either a seminal thinker or a creative artist, in either capacity outstripping glories of the moment. A seminal thinker he certainly is not, but even so, what are his ideas, what their genesis and growth, what the ultimate validity? Asking such questions (not in the blunt language in which I have put them), Dr Ghose leads us through the four stages that he discerns in the evolution of Huxley's thoughts; glances at the affiliations, both conjectural and provable, between Huxley and such other writers as Blake, T. L. Peacock, D. H. Lawrence, the French Satanists and the English Decadents; correlates Huxley simultaneously to Voltaire and to Bunyan ('Intellectually a Voltairean, is he not emotionally a Bunyanite', asks Dr Ghose on p. 39) and to the fold-loving Buddhists ('the eight-fold marga of the Buddha'), and so on through two packed chapters entitled 'Towards the Weltanschauung' until he finds it possible to conclude that ultimately Huxley's grand theme is the theme of Salvation or Conversion or (the words in the Huxley context seem synonymous to Dr Ghose) Freedom.

However rooted in his own age, Huxley's mind, Dr. Ghose argues, also goes far beyond it and indeed ranges eclectically over Eastern and Western thought, ancient as well as modern, in pursuit of one of the noblest of aims, Freedom. Huxley therefore is certain to live. He who began as a sardonic collector of human curiosities, an acidulous Humorist (in the seventeenth century sense of the term), ends as an Apocalyptic visionary whose vision is supportable in the minutest details by scientific data and calculation. 'He is his own Brahmin,' says Dr Ghose of the mature Huxley, a Brahmin who is not only aloof but is analytic rather than synthetic, negative rather than integrative. 'The fear, the isolation and the unhappiness of the intellectual is writ large on Aldous Huxley. Nothing can save him from himself, and, it is easy to see, his flight from—or towards, if you will—reality has

been largely conditioned by his fears and aversions, above all, disgust.' (pp.66-67) And so Dr Ghose asks, 'Is Huxley's Perennial Philosophy a dead end for him or will he move on?' and quoting Jalaluddin Rumi who says that the astrolabe of the mystery of God is love, Dr Ghose wonders if Huxley will acquire that astrolabe.

Perhaps Huxley will. All his works, as Dr Ghose suggests and as is evident to whoever studies Huxley's poems, essays and fiction, are the record of a long quest, a quest of which his concern for Perennial Philosophy is a logical climax rather than what his Materialist critics would call aberration. For an intellect lesser than Huxley's the quest might lead to a frightened and self-deluding escape into a tower. Huxley's growth is a chain-reaction, irony and satire yielding place to affirmatory perception, biology merging into *yoga*. And Jalaluddin Rumi's love is indeed the final and only possible effulgence of that reaction. If Huxley fails to reach that astrolabe, I for one shall consider his moral growth as more of promise than of fulfilment but I shall certainly not consider that there has been any deviation or aberration, that his later works are anything but of a piece with the earlier.

Dr. Ghose's estimate of Huxley's artistic technique is as perceptive as his evaluation of the thought. Very rightly does Dr Ghose read in the cogitations of Philip Quarles (*Point Counter Point*) and Anthony Beavis (*Eyeless in Gaza*) the author's own principles, highlighting what he calls, 'the scientific and multiple treatment' of Huxley's craftsmanship. Dr Ghose is impressive though not original when he draws our attention to such features of Huxley's art as 'the house-party method', movements in space, the dominance of dialogues, essays, diaries and meditations, the in-weaving of sub-plots.

Altogether, Dr Ghose's book makes profitable and enjoyable reading, not the less enjoyable on account of the leisurely and sometimes rather recondite notes. The book is pleasantly free from the ponderous paraphernalia of the usual



Rabindranath TAGORE

A Biography

KRISHNA KRIPALANI

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Krishna Kripalani is married to Tagore's grand-daughter. He lived and worked with the poet at Santiniketan from 1933 until Tagore's death in 1941. At present he is Secretary of the National Academy of Letters, New Delhi.

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doctoral dissertation and is substantially sound and original in its critical method and conclusions. My only complaint is that although the Introduction of the book begins with the statement that among living authors, Huxley makes the deepest appeal to the Indian mind, Dr Ghose does not explain or discuss the nature and stability of this appeal. As an Indian reader, I would have valued such a discussion. Surely the Indian reader does not respond to Huxley, Dr Ghose himself does not respond to Huxley, for the sole or even the preponderant reason that this inheritor of characteristically British and Victorian traditions of thought has drawn upon the mystic and Hindu view of life for his scheme of world recovery!

A. BOSE

The Admirable Administrator

WITH MALICE TOWARDS NONE by S. G. Barve (Asia Publishing House, 372 pp. Rs. 12.75)

THE book contains a lot of second-rate Indian history, politics, economics, foreign affairs, and even sociology, written incoherently but with irrepressible gusto. That an ex-I.C.S. officer, who must have been a brilliant student in his youth, could produce such a huge mess would normally be unbelievable. Mr. Barve undoubtedly has a measure of enthusiasm rarely to be found among Indian bureaucrats, and he must be complimented on this score; but to write a book is altogether another matter.

The effort, however, is not wholly wasted. Here and there the author makes some observations which an experienced administrator alone could make. He says, for instance, that India could have planned for better utilization of her sterling balances, and that the imprudent exhaustion of these balances could be blamed on the Administration. He also observes that the Community Development Programme over-emphasises its welfare aspect and under-rates the importance of the productivity aspect. The author opines that the Plans

have failed to generate as much enthusiasm as they could have, and makes the profound suggestion that all the parties should regard the Plans as *national* endeavours; he also says that there is considerable scope for improvement in the Plan publicity programmes of the Government. He criticizes the ambiguity which characterizes the formulation of objectives by the Government, and observes that there has been much double-talk on issues like state trading, cooperative farming, etc.

There is also some meat in a chapter entitled 'Good Government'. Here Mr. Barve repeats some of the observations made by Dr. Appleby several years ago in his report on the Indian administration. He strongly criticizes the lack of coherence between the different Ministries and administrative agencies, the encroachment by Ministers on the Administration, and the absence of proper delegation of power. Like Dr. Appleby, the author also pleads for a re-orientation of outlook and reassessment of the traditional values in the field of finance and audit. He explains at length why governmental administration in a democratic country can never be as efficient as that of commercial firms.

At one place in the following chapter the author sums up the achievements and failures of the Administration as follows: 'While the Administration has many achievements to its credit in several fields, it must be confessed that its performance in general can only be classed as short and inadequate compared to the call of the times. There is widespread apathy, lack of coordination, evasion of responsibility, general stalling, monumental dilatoriness, apart even from corruption and nepotism. It is this malaise and paralysis of the administrative machinery, as compared to the resounding manifestos of policy at high levels of abstract principle, which has engendered the present climate of frustration, cynicism and apathy in the general public.'

As far as Mr. Barve's treatment of Indian politics, sociology and foreign policy

is concerned, the less said the better. It is obvious that the author has malice toward none, and is essentially a good-natured person; but he need not have written about every conceivable subject. Scholars are unlikely to touch this book on account of its clumsiness, incoherence and its emotional and amateurish character, while laymen will probably find it quite unreadable. Had Mr. Barve concentrated only on the administrative aspects of Indian planning, the effort would probably have been much more worth while.

JAYANTANUJA BANDYOPADHYAYA

SHORT NOTICES

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 LAEEQ FUTEHALLY

THE ART OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY by D. G. Naik
(Vidarbha Marathwada Book Co. 230pp, Rs. 15)

IT IS NOT EASY TO SEE why this slight book, indifferently printed on poor paper should be so

expensive. Possibly, one feels, the reader might get his money's worth in the gems of thought contained in it. The subject of the thoughts is 'the very resourceful, but so far neglected art of self-revelation.'

This self-revelation, the author claims, is one of the most important aspects of literature. 'If the student of literature takes up . . . a Shakespearian drama, it is not so much to study its dramatic technique . . . but to understand the personality of the writer so far as it is reflected in the work.' And, 'the main attraction of *Paradise Lost* is not so much due to its being a grand Epic . . . as to Milton's own personality.' Now we know why Shakespeare is studied with such diligence. It is in order to discover all about the poet's own personality, or even perhaps to discover whether that personality belonged to Shakespeare or to Bacon.

The author then goes on to write a chapter on each one of those English writers (and on a few others) who recognized the importance of the Autobiography in Literature and wrote one. In repeating the facts about their life and work, however, the spirited originality of the sentiments I have quoted soon gives way to platitudes which, in addition, are clumsily expressed.

Now the only valid excuse for adding to the number of books about books should be that

FOREIGN POLICY OF INDIA

S. R. PATEL

Pp. 232 + xvi

Rs. 15, Sh. 30, \$ 4.50

In this provocative and challenging book the author has scientifically examined and perceptively criticised the Indian policy and called for its more positive orientation towards freedom and national interests. It gives valuable insights into the subject and may especially interest foreigners. "With a piercing eye Shri Patel takes unkindly to the policy-making by the Prime Minister and lashes out at his henchmen. The book gives the impression of a leather-lunged leader of opposition in the Parliament slashing at the so-called grandiose way of conducting foreign affairs. The corrosive sharpness for dissection remains undiluted from cover to cover. The author tears to pieces the official view and its fundamental tenets with cogent arguments and merciless logic. The account is rendered in a manner that one who takes up the first page goes up to the last. On the whole the book is a brilliant essay on the failure of our foreign policy and no one can fail to be impressed by the appeal that it carries."

—*Hindustan Times*
New Delhi

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the new book is sharp, is well organized and well written. It has been said that the only criterion for a literary critic is that he should be *very intelligent*. Judged by these standards, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that it was not necessary to allow the present work to see the light of day.

RED HIBISCUS by Padmini Sengupta (Asia Publishing House, 165pp., Rs. 6.50)

THIS NOVEL is dedicated to two sociological propositions, (a) that there is much to be said for arranged marriages and (b) that untouchability is a wicked practice. Of these two rather simple messages the first, (a) is conveyed through the story of Sita, the well-born beauty, who loves and is betrayed by a handsome young officer and then finds happiness with a husband who was 'arranged' of her. Theme (b) has as protagonist one Rasmi, a sweeper woman possessing all the virtues and beset with all them misfortunes which could be devised for her. The destinies of the two heroines are neatly linked together because they both like to wear a red hibiscus in their hair.

THE AIR-CONDITIONED NIGHTMARE by Henry Miller, (William Heinemann, 264pp., 30s)

IT IS ONLY when your own country is rich, prosperous and on top of the world that you can attack it savagely in print. If your country is poor and struggling against odds, then you are constrained to cover up its defects and hide your own irritation with it.

The material for Henry Miller's attack on his own rich, strong country was collected in 1939-42. He travelled all over the American continent during this time, mainly for the purpose of discovering how much more immature, vulgar and uncultured the U.S. was compared to Europe. 'Why is it that in America the great works of art all Nature's doing?... Nowhere in America was there anything comparable to the cathedrals of Europe, the temples of Asia and Egypt... no exaltation, no fervour, no zeal - except to increase business.'

The reprinting of this book seventeen years after it was first published seems to show that there is still a demand for it. The Americans certainly seem to have a taste for self-flagellation in a crude form.

GERMANY. *Countryside, cities villages and people*, (Umschau Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 244pp.)

IN THIS VOLUME, the separate halves have been united....', for this is a book of photographs celebrating Germany as it used to be in 1937. The sixteen colour plates and 228 full page black and white photographs have been chosen from the work of some of the best photographers in Germany. The poet Rudolf Hagelstange has contributed a short and nostalgic Introduction, while the captions, printed in three languages, are the

work of Dr. Harald Busch, a former director of the Hamburg Art Gallery. Altogether a great deal of talent has been collected to bring out this affectionate tribute to the Fatherland.

The landscape as it was before the war is covered pretty efficiently by these photographs. Not only the different types of natural scenery, but all the more important towns are beautifully presented. Some of the photographs of churches and palaces have a particular significance and are likely to be specially valued by students of architectural styles.

Our Reviewers

S. MELLUISH works for the Oxford University Press in Madras.

C. L. NAHAL teaches English literature in Delhi University.

MAHESH DESAI is a Trade Union Worker in Jharia, Bihar.

ASHIN DAS GUPTA teaches History in Calcutta University.

K. D. VALICHA teaches Philosophy in Bombay.

UMA VASUDEV writes regularly for various Indian periodicals.

SHAROKH SABAVALA is the Indian correspondent for the **Christian Science Monitor**.

S. NATARAJAN was editor of the Free Press Journal. Now works for the Council for Economic Education.

A. BOSE is the Head of the Department of English, Calcutta University.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir,

The sarcasm of your correspondent from Ithaca, U.S.A. (Mr. S. C. Saberwal) in his letter published in your Monsoon edition, is devastating. Nevertheless, a reply is due to him.

One of the aims of my article was to elucidate and prominently display the rather unprepossessing character of the old upper-class. Therefore, each of the elements composing that class, the industrialist, businessman, intellectual and professional, was subjected to a realistic appraisal. To your correspondent from U.S.A. it sounds as a lament for the old upper-class. It seems that instead of cursing Baal, the object with which I started I have merely succeeded in producing a lament for him. If a lament there is, it is that the people of India are still incapable of independent thought and judgement, not able to recognise the risks to their freedom.

Frankly speaking, I am not aware of any procedure, scientific or statistical, by which it can be established to the satisfaction of your correspondent that an Indian Government with monopoly of all means of production and distribution would be able to find employment for a sizable minority of the Indian population of 440 millions and an annual increase of 8.8 millions. It is possible, however, that such procedural and statistical proofs might be evolved. Socialistic dialectism and the so-called science of statistics can prove anything. May I suggest Gallup poll?

There is one omission in my article which seems to have been the cause of a great deal of upset to your correspondent and for which I must apologise. After the words italicised by your correspondent, the words 'by common sense and elementary arithmetic' should have been added.

H. R. PASRICHA

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

AMLAN DATTA is Reader in Economics at Calcutta University. His latest book, **Socialism, Democracy and Industrialisation**, was published by George, Allen and Unwin last spring.

TROY WILSON ORGAN, Professor of Philosophy, Ohio University, was at Santiniketan during 1958-59 as a Fulbright Fellow. Apart from contributions to numerous journals in USA and India, he is the author of **The Examined Life** (Houghton-Mifflin, 1956).

KASTUR CHAND LALWANI was Lecturer at Calcutta University (1947-49) and Delhi Polytechnique (1951-54) and since then has been attached to the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. Author of **Industrial Efficiency in India, Indian Planning, its History, Politics and Psychology**, etc.

PRANAB BARDHAN, Lecturer in Economics, Calcutta University, is now working for his doctorate at the University of Glasgow.

N. K. DEVARAJA, Sayaji Rao Gaekwad Professor of Indian Civilisation and Culture at Banaras Hindu University, has published a collection of poems and a novel in Hindi. His **Introduction to Sankara's Theory of Knowledge** has just come out, and **The philosophy of Culture** is in the press.

AMIT KUMAR NAG is a journalist whose especial field of study is tribal life in Assam.

MIRZA NASIR ALI is Lecturer in English at a Govt. College, Calcutta.

TIBOR MERAY, the Hungarian novelist and journalist, visited Korea twice, in 1951-52 and in 1953, as the correspondent of the Hungarian Communist Party's central organ, *Zsabad Nep*. He was decorated by the North Korean government with the highest decoration given to civilians. After his return to Hungary he joined the ranks of those who fought against Stalinism and Soviet oppression. Author of **The Enemy, The Revolt of the Mind**, etc.

ADIL JUSSAWALA is a young Bombay poet who deserted Architecture to write a play. His collection of poems is to be published shortly.

PRADIP SEN belongs to that small group of creative writers in India who have chosen English as their medium of expression.

G. C. S. MARAR has just completed his educational career and is a free lance journalist at Hyderabad.

BUDDHADEVA BOSE, Professor and Head of the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, is one of the leading writers of modern Bengal.

JYOTIRMOY DATTA, a young Bengali poet and critic, is on the staff of an English daily.

P. LAL, Lecturer in English literature at a Calcutta College, is spending a year at New York as special professor of English, Hofstra College.

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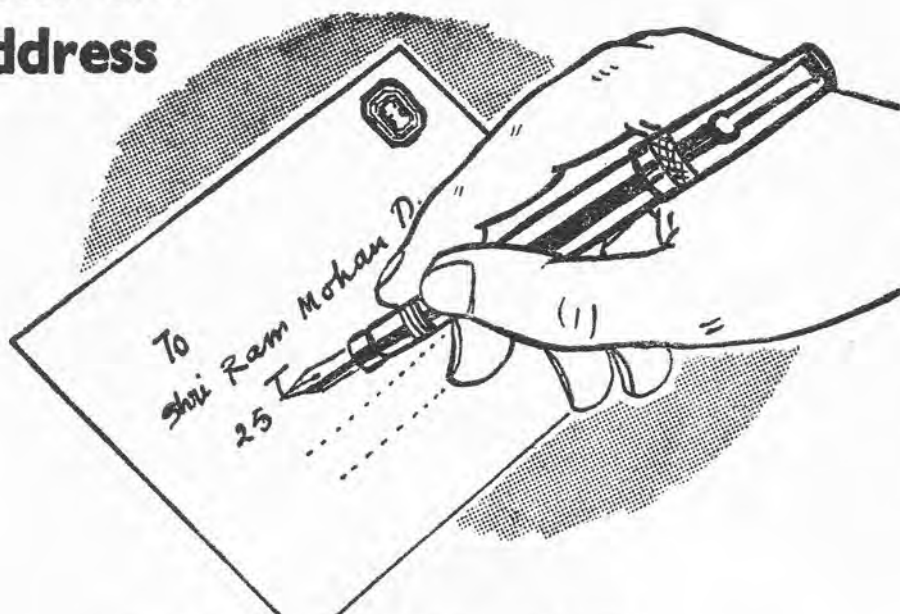
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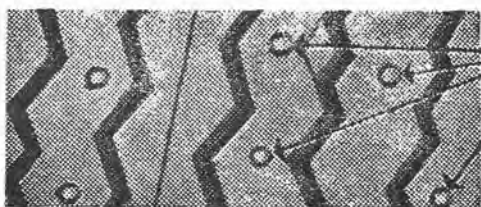
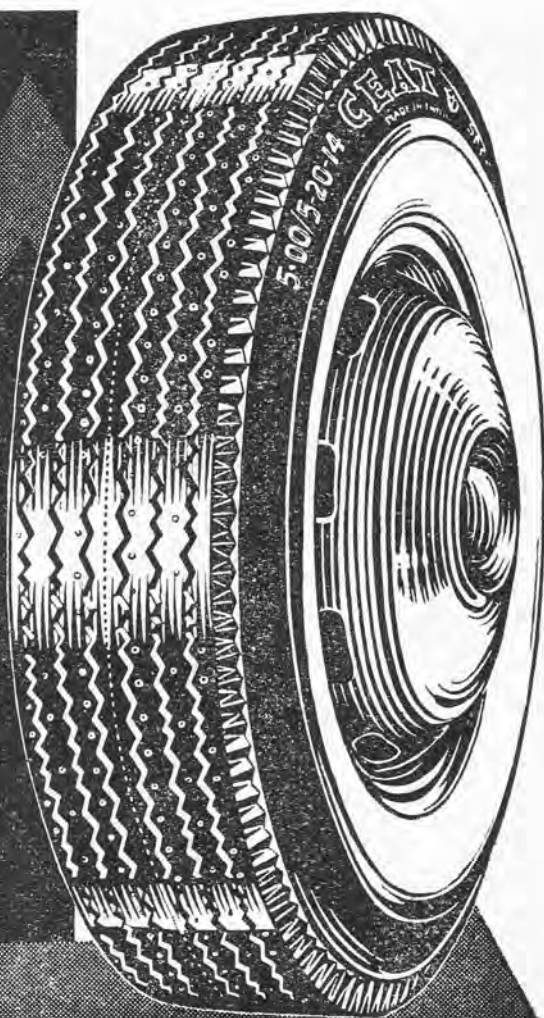


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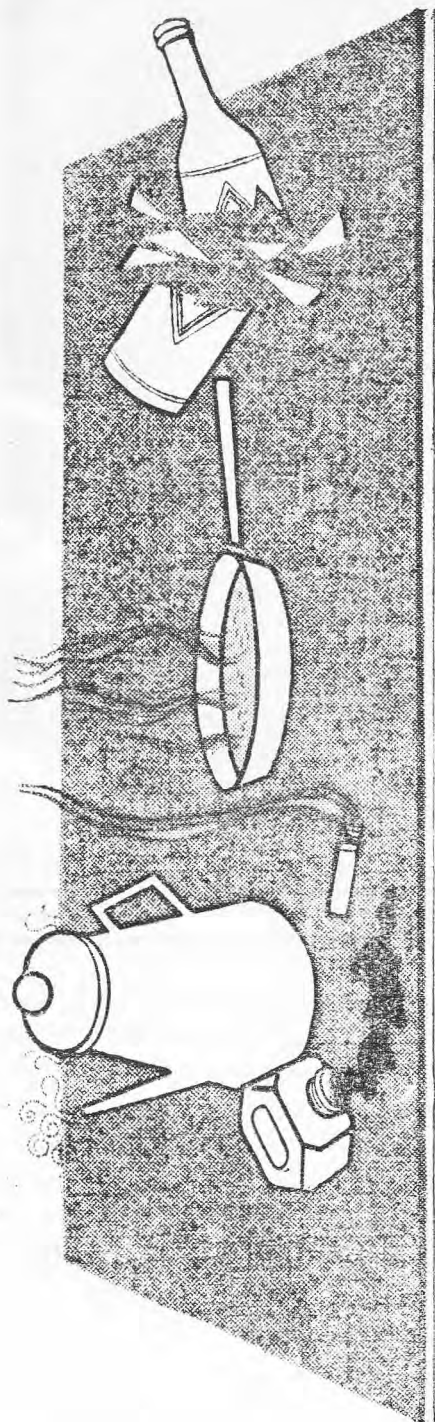
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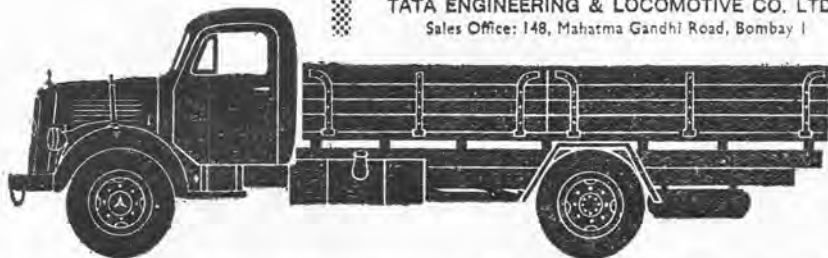
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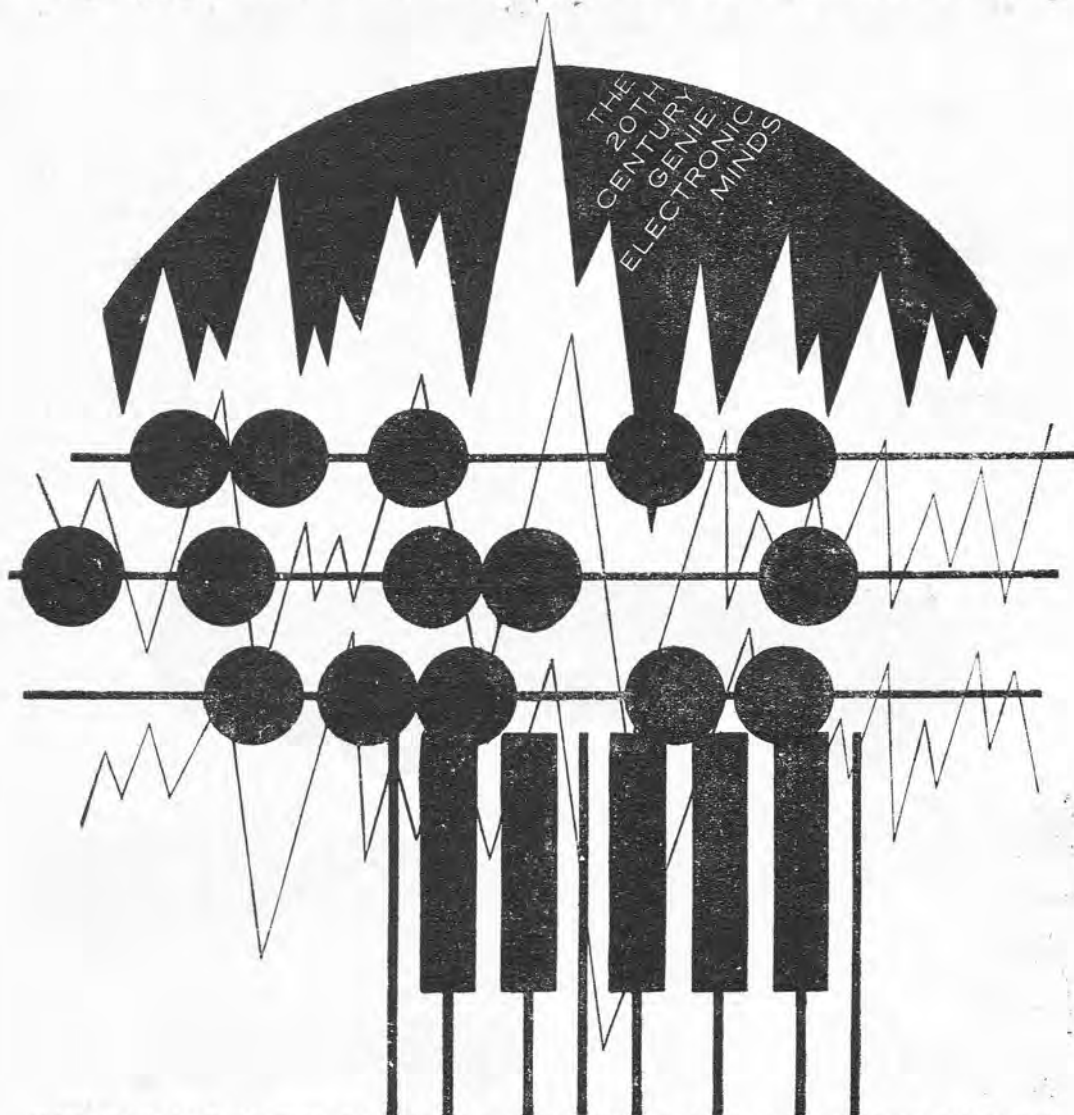
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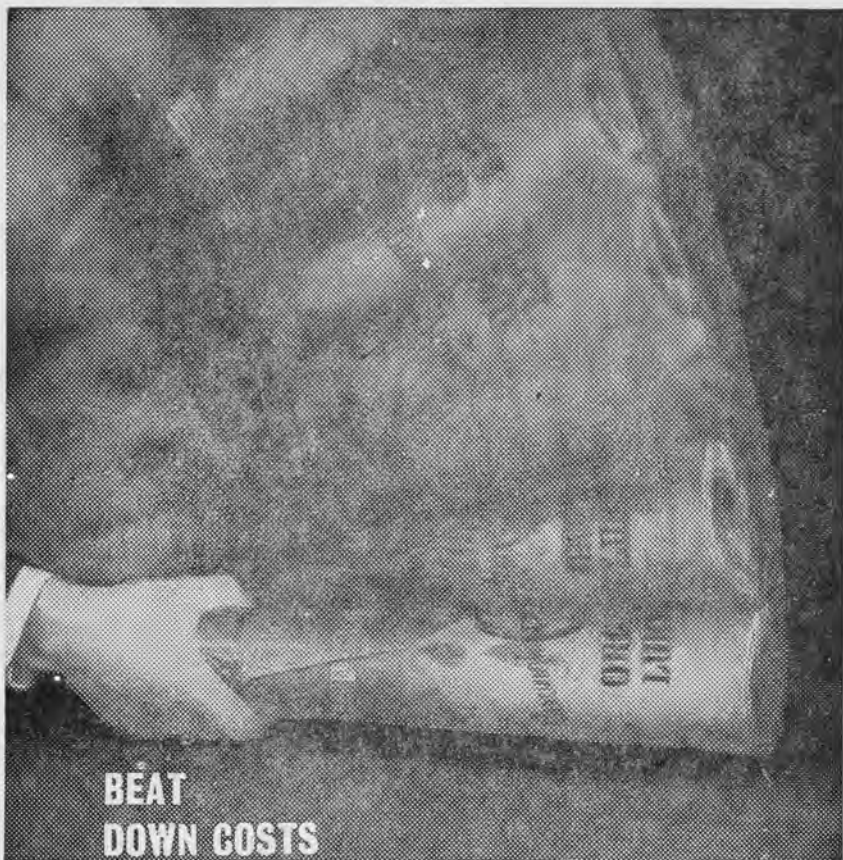
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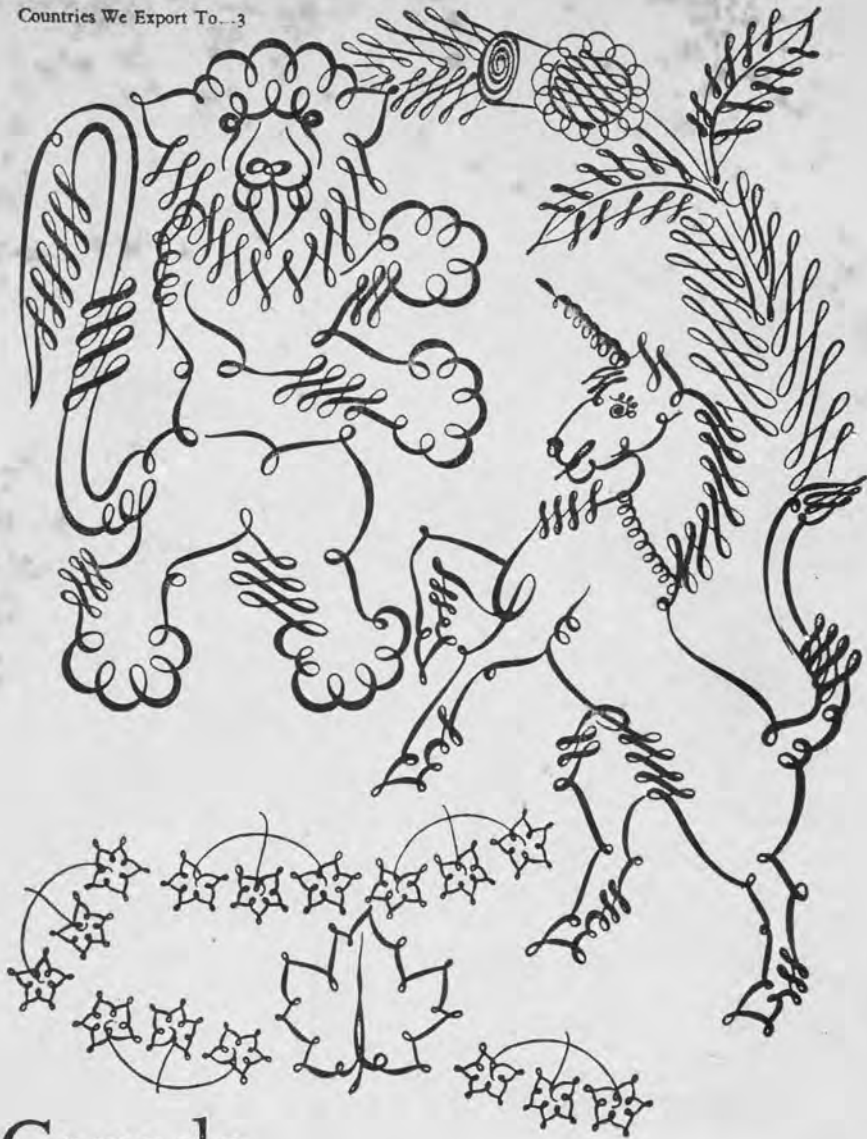
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